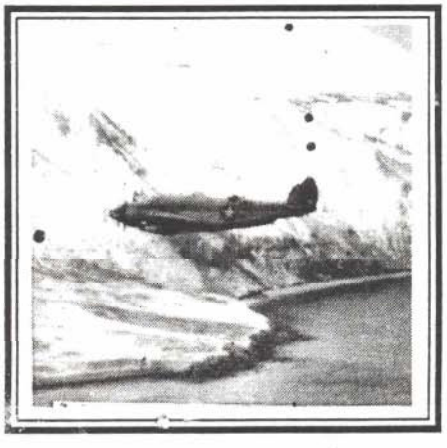
Aleutian Airdales

Stories of Navy Flyers
in the North Pacific
During World War II



Edited by Carl H. Amme
Capt. USN (Ret.)

ALEUTIAN AIRDALES

STORIES OF NAVY FLYERS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

OF WORLD WAR II

Carl H. Amme, Editor

Printed by *Plainsman Publishing*,
Box 489, Plains, MT 59859
Don Coe, VP43, VP 61, Publisher

FOREWORD

Herein Captain Carl H. "Bon" Amme, USN (retired), has done a masterful job of collecting and editing a book of World War II stories of the fighting in Alaska and its Aleutian Islands. I am sure they will bring back many cherished memories among our veterans who attend a Patrol Wing Four Reunion, 26-30 August, 1987, at the Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, Washington. Not the least of the exploits recorded is Bon's own, when, as C.O. of VP-45, he put his "blind eye to the telescope" and remained incommunicado while Roy Evans landed his PBY in the lake on Russia's Komandorski Island, rescued the crew of a disabled PBY, sank the plane, and returned to base at Casco Cove, Attu.

A major contributor is Elmer A. Freeman, now a resident of Spokane, Washington, who served as second mech, plane captain, and chief petty officer, who had duty in VP-41 and VP-42. The second largest contributor is Paul C. Carrigan, our enlisted weatherman, who accumulated more flight time than some of our pilots since he rode the westernmost and longest flights to record the weather moving in on the Aleutian bases. Paul lives close to the Pacific Ocean at Tokland on Willapa Bay, Washington. Both Elmer and Paul are writing books. Their consuming desire for accuracy has led both to much research.

Byron Morgan's "I'll Take My Vodka Straight" is a fascinating yarn, a teaser for the whole story forthcoming in his book. He can count me as a subscriber. I want to learn how he made out during his internment in the USSR. Under a "lend-lease" agreement, we in the U.S. gave the Russians upwards of 7,000 airplanes. They were ferried up the interior route from Great Falls, Montana; Edmonton, Fort Nelson, and Whitehorse, in Canada; to Fairbanks in Alaska. At Fairbanks, the aircraft were turned over to Russian crews, who flew them to Nome and on into Siberia. Under a similar agreement, we turned over 149 ships to the Russians. The transfer point was Cold Bay, where the Russian crews were trained in operating their new ships and the ships' armament. Among these ships were thirty infantry landing craft (LCIs) which the USSR used to land their troops in occupying all the Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin, Japanese territory until the surrender of Japan on 1 September 1945. These lands remain in the communist grip today, in striking contrast to Iwo and Okinawa, which the U.S. won by military action and returned to Japan after the war.

On behalf of all the Airdales of Pat Wing Four who attend the 26-30 August, 1987, Reunion, and on behalf of all those who, for one reason or another, will not be present, I thank Bon Amme for the compiling and editing, and express our thanks to the authors for their contributions.

James S. Russell, Admiral USN (Ret.)
Former CO VP-42

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Samuel Eliot Morrison, in his History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II, wrote:

"The Aleutians theater of the Pacific war might well be called the Theater of Military Frustration...None of the operations accomplished anything of great importance or had any appreciable effort on the outcome of the war. Sailors, soldiers, and aviators alike regarded an assignment to this region of almost perpetual mist and snow as little better than penal servitude. Both sides would have done well to have left the Aleutians to the Aleuts for the course of the war."

Captain Edward L. Beach, in a preface to his book, The United States Navy: 200 Years, wrote:

"There are essentially two views of history: that which one has studied and that which one has experienced. It is not possible to combine the two."

What follows are the stories in the second category by Naval officers and men, all under the sobriquet of "Aleutian Airdales," who have contributed to this collection of remembrances: their experiences, their impressions and perceptions, and many anecdotes.

I especially want to thank Paul Carrigan, Elmer Freeman, and Byron Morgan, all of whom have made available extensive portions of their own manuscripts, and Charles L. Scrivner, the author of The Empire Express, and Jack "Ole" Haugen, who wrote the history of VP-43 in 1968. They may be reassured that all their contributions remain protected under copyright, as this collection is.

I also want to thank the many Airdales who wrote letters and whole chapters recounting their experiences and telling anecdotes.

My job as editor has been to arrange these motley and heterogeneous stories in some sort of coherent, chronological sequence. In doing so, I did some cutting and rewriting. As you read this book, your memory will be jogged and you will recall the great camaraderie experienced by all of us, despite the hardships we endured in that inhospitable clime. To hell with historian Morrison's judgment. Our efforts were not in vain. They contributed to the weakening of Japanese forces on other fronts. And we did throw the Japanese off territory of the United States.

- Carl H. Amme

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PART ONE

THE EARLY DAYS

Experiences of a Typical Aleutian Airdale

Day of Infamy, No.II, June 3, 1942
Japanese Attack Dutch Harbor

I

PBY PATROL SQUADRON, SITKA OPERATION

by

Elmer A. Freeman

When I reported to Patrol Wing Four, I was assigned to VP-41. For a part of the year, VP-41 and VP-42 shared the same hangar at N.A.S. Sand Point, Seattle. During the other part of the year, the squadrons would alternate moving north to Alaska. The older hands talked about operating from tenders at Kodiak or Sitka, but bases had not yet been built in those places in 1940.

There was a lot of friendly rivalry between VP-41 and VP-42. There was competition between the Beach Crews, the Flight Crews and the Maintenance Crew. Disparaging remarks were traded constantly. Unfortunate perpetrators of foul-ups were immediately taken in hand by squadron-mates and given an extra dose of training to make sure there was no repeat of the error.

VP-43 and VP-44 operated from a different hangar and were equipped with the older-model Consolidated aircraft known as P2Y's. They were also seaplanes but were biplanes, having the lower wing on top of the hull and the higher wing attached above it with struts. The engines were monted between the wings. I guess these squadrons had some sort of rotation to Alaska too, but VP-41 and VP-42 didn't seem to be involved with their operations very much.

In addition to the four seaplane squadrons, there was also a ship assigned to Patrol Wing Four. U.S.S. Williamson was one of the old four-piper destroyers of World War I vintage. It had been converted to a Seaplane Tender. This meant that one boiler, one fireroom and two stacks had been removed and replaced with tanks for hauling aviation fuel. She also had stowage for bombs and ammunition, as well as some spare parts for our aircraft.

From time to time, the squadrons would have advance base exercises. Williamson would go to sea, anchor in a selected bay along the coast and set up a seadrome for the aircraft. This consisted of marking out landing areas with buoys for the planes to land and then planting other buoys where the planes could moor.

When planes needed fuel, they would taxi up to the fantail of the ship. With the ship's crew and the plane crew working together, the plane was held as steady as possible while being fueled and otherwise serviced.

There were no aviation personnel on permanent assignment to

the ship, so squadron personnel would be temporarily assigned when the ship was operating with aircraft, to assist with fueling and handling. The squadron personnel also helped with setting out the seadrome and running boats to and from planes moored at buoys.

In August, 1940, Hitler's armies were dominating Europe. Hirohito's forces were dominating China. And Admiral Yamamoto was thoughtfully studying a chart of Pearl Harbor aboard his flagship.

Completely oblivious to all of these global happenings, I was busily laying out six lengths of manila line on the seawall overlooking Lake Washington, at the Sand Point Naval Air Station. The squadron had completed the 1600 muster for the day, the duty section had posted the watches, and the liberty sections were all happily donning their dress blues in preparation for a night on the town. All except me.

The marlinspike seamanship training was continuing, and earlier in the day the Boatswain's Mate, who ran our Beach Crew, had assigned several of us to make up some seaplane tiedown lines. This job consisted of cutting the lines to the proper length, putting an eye-splice in one end and a whipping at the other end. When Boats came by to inspect the finished tie-downs, all of them passed but mine. "They look like a gob of week-old spaghetti." Now, when you heard a verdict like that, you knew the sentence was going to be close behind. "After muster, you stay here and undo this mess, get more line, and make up six of these things. When you're finished the Duty Section Leader will look at them. If they are done right, he may let you have your liberty card. If they aren't, you just keep doing them over until he says you can secure."

Learning the basic skills was sometimes just a little painful for young sailors. And it may seem hard to relate making a proper eye-splice to becoming a Flight Engineer in a flight crew. But the fact of the matter was that if you didn't learn to do a good job for the Boatswain's Mate, it was assumed that you wouldn't do a good job for anyone else either. Boats got to know us all pretty well, and he knew what our aspirations were. When it came time to assign a few people from the Beach Crew to Flight Crew, Engineering Shop or Radio Shack, it was pretty important to have a good recommendation from him.

As I say, it was a little painful. Hitler, Hirohito and Yamamoto had their worries. But at that particular time and place, my only concern was to make six decent eye-splices. Who wants to spend his whole Navy career in the Beach Crew?

In 1940, there were new ships and new airplanes being built, and thousands of new people were being trained to man them. As the Petty Officers, who had been waiting so long, began to be promoted, there were vacancies to be filled. A vacancy for Third Class Aviation Machinist's Mate was what I hoped to fill.

The ordinary path of advancement was: Apprentice Seaman,

Seaman Second Class, Seaman First Class, and Third Class Petty Officer. But I, among others, got a break. Those of us who had attended Aviation Machinist's Mate School were allowed to take the test for Third Class without having to make Seaman First Class. Everyone of us went about his daily duties with a Third Class Course Book sticking out of his hip pocket. If we got a ten-minute break, we studied. The senior Petty Officers held classes for us. Our immediate superiors were on our tails constantly. Nobody wanted the guy who worked for him to be the only one who flunked the exam for advancement. It would make him look bad.

And so it came to pass that I was advanced to Third Class Aviation Machinist's Mate in January, 1941. The First Class Mech on our crew had shown me several times how to open the fuel-tank filler cap, place the fuel strainer over it, place the strainer nozzle in the hole, release the center valve in the strainer, and call for the man in the pit to start pumping gas. He always stressed that the center valve in the strainer had to be released so that the gas could go through the strainer. Otherwise, the strainer would fill up and overflow all over the top of the wing.

The day eventually came when I was on top of the wing alone and we were fueling the plane. The Chief was standing down below, just aft of the trailing edge of the wing, where he could see me and also be in a position to give orders to the man in the pit. The fuel hose was passed up to me, and I proceeded to get the strainer in position over the tank filler and insert the hose. Finally, I gave the signal to the Chief that I was all ready. He told the man in the fuel pit to start pumping. And he did. As soon as the fuel started coming, I knew I was in trouble. I had forgotten to release the center shut-off valve.

The strainer filled up in about a second and overflowed the wing. The lowest part of the wing was the trailing edge, and fuel was flowing down and over the edge in about two seconds -- on top of the Chief's head. I was trying to get the fuel stopped by yelling at the top of my lungs, and finally succeeded, but not before the Chief was soaked with gas.

The crew behind us, waiting to fuel, thought the scene was the funniest thing they had ever seen. By this time, I had the strainer valve open, which did absolutely nothing to help the situation. I had never felt so alone in my life, standing there waiting for the Chief to take off on me. What he did was calmly walk to the seawall, hop off and walk into Lake Washington.

Further astonishing me, he sloshed around for a minute or two, came out on the beach, disrobed down to his scivvies, and deliberately took up his former station. "Freeman, do you think you can do it right this time?" And I did.

In a minute or two, the First Class took over and the Chief disappeared into the hangar. We finished fueling and nobody had to tell me to get soap and water and scrub every trace of fuel off the top of the wing. The scary thing was that nobody said

anything to me. We eventually got our plane parked in the hangar, and I saw the First Class talking to the Chief, now decked out in a clean uniform. When the Chief patted his shirt pocket and shook his head, I knew what was happening. The First Class came over and told me to forget my liberty card for awhile. I knew that it would be in the Chief's pocket for an undetermined length of time.

Maybe there was some regulation against the Chief depriving me of liberty without due process. But when you have pulled as stupid a stunt as I'd pulled, you don't argue. You are just grateful that they have done away with the cat-o-nine-tails. After ten days, I checked for my liberty card but it wasn't there. It was about two weeks before it showed up.

Two months later, our squadron moved to a new base at Sitka. Those of us not in-flight crews rode the Williamson up the Inside Passage to our new base. Sitka was pretty primitive compared with the facilities at Seattle. The ramp was about twice as steep as the one at Sand Point, and it was a real pull for our tractor to haul a plane up to it. We double-checked all of our towing gear after every launch and recovery. At first we had only partial use of the hangar, because it was still under construction. But there was progress every day on the construction, and we eventually had a pretty complete seaplane facility.

Sitka was a preview of the kind of operations our seaplane squadrons would be seeing for the next three years. Move into a new base. As soon as it gets to be livable, move on out to another new base. For recreation we did a little drinking in Sitka, we did a little mountain climbing on the mountain behind Sitka, and we played poker.

As far as I know, there has always been a Navy regulation against gambling on ships and stations. From a practical standpoint, enforcement of this regulation was usually up to the commanding officer. In situations like Sitka, there was little or no enforcement. Every night we had a poker game going in the head. Lights out was at 2200 in all the barracks. But the lights in the head were never turned out.

One night, at about midnight, the usual poker game was going on in the head, when in walked the Duty Officer, Ensign Jack Litsey, and the Master-at-Arms. in Sitka this wasn't exactly a cause for alarm, but Mr. Litsey was telling the Master-at-Arms to make a list of the names and rates of all of us. Things were getting serious. When he had the complete list, he took out a piece of paper and began comparing the list with the piece of paper. Then he called off six of our names and told us to get our seabags packed. The Master-at-Arms was instructed to get our hammocks out of storage and give them to us.

Hearing this, we were certain we were in for a "Bag-and-Hammock Drill." This was a punishment that was sometimes used in the Navy. It consisted of loading your complete seabag and

hammock on your shoulder and marching up and down an assigned area until you were told you could stop.

When we had completed packing and gotten our hammocks rigged around our seabags, the Master-at-Arms told us to leave them by the office and report to the Duty Officer at the hangar. Still wondering what was going to happen, we arrived there at about 0200. There was a sleepy-eyed yeoman going over a set of orders with the Duty Officer. It turned out that a dispatch had come in, instructing our squadron to transfer six men, in specified rates, to VP-42 in Seattle. There was a Destroyer, KANE, leaving Sitka at 0700, and this six-man draft was to be aboard for the run to Seattle. There would be a boat at the pier at 0530 to take us out to the ship.

We never did know just what instructions the Duty Officer had from our skipper when he came to the barracks. But the PatWing Four dispatch from Seattle was our ticket for a ride back down the Inside Passage. The poker game furnished the Duty Officer with the exact people he needed. He didn't even have to wake anybody up. And when the squadron mustered at 0800 that morning, we were long gone to Seattle.

II

SEATTLE, KODIAK, THE ALEUTIANS

by

Elmer A. Freeman

Having been in VP-41, I found joining VP-42 just a little bit difficult. Having so recently been so critical of everything VP-42 did, it was a little unsettling to now find myself an actual member of the squadron. It was tough to swallow all of those snide remarks I had made about their operations. But in reality, there wasn't much difference between the two squadrons. Of course, within a couple of weeks, VP-42 was my squadron and we did everything better than anybody else did. We got a new skipper in VP-42 just about the time I checked in. Lieutenant Commander James S. Russell relieved Lieutenant Commander Nash.

Seattle was not only the home base for VP-42; it was also a dream place for liberty. First Avenue! That's where the real action was. There was a nightclub called the Music Hall, and it was headquarters for VP-41 and VP-42 sailors. If you were looking for anybody who was on liberty, you looked there first. They had a bar and booths and tables. There was a dance floor and a guy playing a huge theater organ on which he could play anything. A beefy bouncer at the door checked ID cards and once in awhile forcibly ushered a couple of would-be prizefighters out into the street. And there were girls.

These girls worked at department stores and banks; they worked at Boeing and the telephone company. They came from all over Seattle and liked to dance and have a couple of beers as much as we did. The Music Hall was a kind of meeting place. From there we would go to the Trianon or maybe the movies.

One day, I decided to shop for a Mother's Day gift for my mother. She always liked religious gifts, so I went to a religious supply store. I kind of browsed around for awhile and finally stopped at a table to look at some things. A girl came over to see me to see if she could help me. She was absolutely stunning. I began fumbling around with the things on the table and promptly forgot why I was even in the store. She suggested a small prayer book for Mother's Day and I bought it. It could have been a Webster's Dictionary and I wouldn't have noticed. When she made out the sales slip and I paid her, she looked up at me and said, "Thank you." And I walked out of the store in a daze.

The sales slip had a little square on it for the clerk's name. Her name was Rose. I had to see Rose again. Every time I

had the chance, I went shopping in that store. I bought a rosary and then a Bible. I bought a crucifix and then a picture. And I always worked it so Rose waited on me. I don't think she was too surprised when I finally got up the nerve to ask her for a date. But that Friday night was a bad night for her, and she couldn't go. So the gift purchasing went on and on. Pretty soon I had about half a seabag full of religious articles, but no date. Finally, after I had bought one of almost everything in the store, I went in one day and Rose wasn't there. When a lady had waited on me and I was about to leave, I nonchalantly asked where Rose was. "Oh, she went to Pennsylvania to stay with her grandmother. She's going to college there this fall."

All of my relatives were impressed with the Christmas gifts I sent out that year. That was the first time I ever got my Christmas mailing done in August. It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

The Music Hall closed at midnight. Sometimes we weren't ready to go back to the base at midnight. There was an all-night cafe almost directly across the street from the Music Hall, and a half dozen of us would continue the night's festivities there. I suppose they had a menu, but we never looked at it. We just ordered ham and eggs. They didn't serve beer in the cafe, so once in awhile one of us had the foresight to have a pint of bourbon hidden under his jumper so we could sweeten the coffee. They weren't exactly blind to what was going on and always gave us the high sign if the Shore Patrol showed up at the door. We got to know the couple who ran the place quite well. To us they were Ma and Pa Russell.

At four o'clock in the morning, Russell's cafe closed for one hour of cleaning. Ma Russell would chase us all out the door. There were a few times when we took our cups of coffee with us and sat on the curb until they reopened at five. If we had to be back at the base, we were again kicked out by six so we would have time to catch the bus back to Sand Point.

When you have spent most of your life on the plains of North Dakota, you can't get used to seeing Mount Rainier or Puget Sound. One guy from Kansas and I used to buy round-trip ferry rides on the Kalakala over to Bremerton and back just to look at the scenery. For a young sailor on liberty, it just doesn't get any better than Seattle. Wherever we were, we always hoped to get back and fight the "Battle of Seattle."

When VP-42 received orders to move to Kodiak, I didn't have a permanent spot in a flight crew. That meant I would make the move as a temporary member of the crew of the U.S.S. Williamson. When a squadron moved, it meant moving everything but the hangar. We crated shop equipment. We packed files and records. We boxed up spare armament and ammunition. Finally, we loaded it all aboard the ship and got underway for Kodiak.

Because of the "Machinist's Mate" being part of our rating, those of us who were Third Class were assigned to the "Black

Gang," the Engineering Division, for duty. I ended up standing watches as after-throttleman in the aft engine room. My friend, Birchman, stood watches in the fireroom. We had a rough passage.

Our new duties were tough enough to handle, but we also battled high seas and storms all the way to Kodiak. When we got there, the storm was so bad we couldn't even get into the harbor. We spent the next two days being beaten and battered by the sea as we went around in circles outside the harbor. There was green water breaking over the weather decks all the time. Whenever the watch changed every four hours, we had to make the exciting trip from or to our watch station. That meant a trip of a hundred feet across the open deck. You watched for a big one to break over the ship, and then when she rolled away from it, you got a few seconds to make a dash for it before the next big one came along. Of course, when your watch was over, you had the same fun and games getting back. The romance of the sea wears a little thin after about seventy-two hours of that.

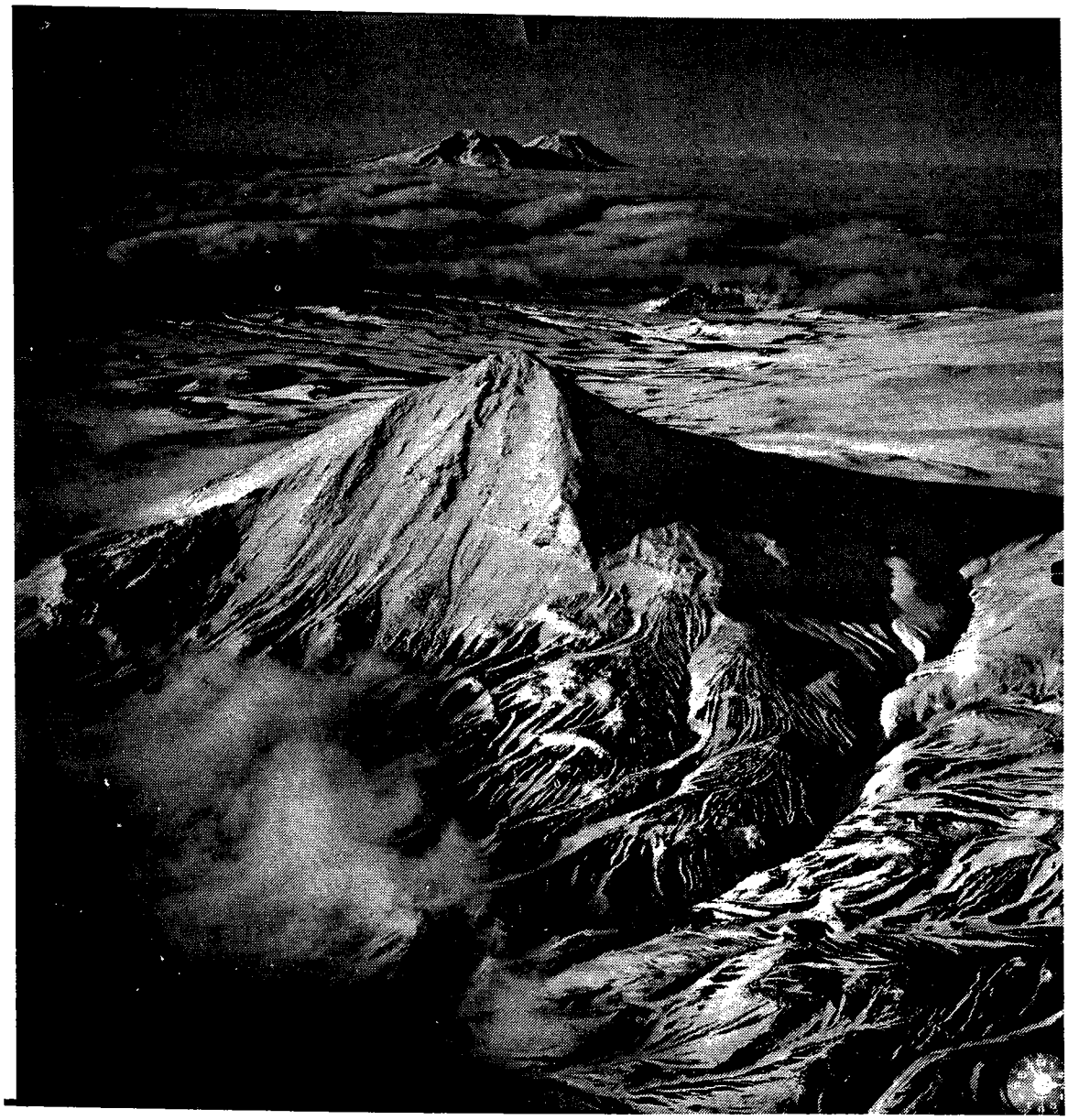
In 1941, the Navy's charts of the Aleutians were inadequate and needed updating and correcting. The Williamson was to do some of that on this voyage. Our Captain, Lieutenant Commander Frederick N. Kivette, was also scouting out likely-looking bays where we might set up for seaplane operations if needed. We would steam along for awhile, then we'd lie dead in the water and lower a whaleboat and take the skipper ashore. He would do a little exploring and we'd take him back to the ship, pick up the boat and move on. The scenes and routines were pretty much the same every day until we visited Bogoslof Island.

Bogoslof Island, about one mile in diameter, is located by itself, about 100 miles north of Umnak in the Bering Sea. When we went ashore there, we were greeted by the entire population, all sea lions. There were thousands of them. Big ones and little ones, they paid little attention to us, and we didn't bother them. The skipper got the information he wanted, and we returned to the ship and moved on.

Finally, we dropped anchor in a harbor at an island called Kiska, put our boats in the water and set up a seadrome. With crews of six in each of our two whaleboats, we planted buoys to mark a landing area, and in an adjacent area, we placed several mooring buoys. Fueling was done at the fantail of the ship.

With the fueling detail waiting on the fantail of the ship, a plane would taxi slowly into position. A mooring line would be fastened to the bow of the plane, and two long bamboo poles, fitted with padded "U" ends and manned by six sailors each, were thrust toward the leading edge of the wing to port and starboard. Finally, with the mooring line fast to the ship and the bamboo poles fending the plane off the fantail, the pilot would cut his engines and the fuel hose was passed to the plane crew and they checked their oil. There was always lots of hustle and bustle as we replenished water and food supplies and needed parts for the plane crew.

After several days of operations, the planes headed back to Kodiak and Williamson retrieved all of its seadrome equipment and went to sea again.



On a good day you could see forever. View looking southwest from Umnak Island. Islands of Four Mountains in the distance. (About 100 miles from foreground)

III

KODIAK, SQUADRON TRAINING, PEARL HARBOR DAY

by

Elmer A. Freeman

At Kodiak, we moved from the ship to the barracks and rejoined our squadron-mates who had already commenced flying operations from the new base. The hangar was still being built, but the barracks and the mess hall were complete, and the launching ramp and parking apron were ready to use.

At this stage of building, the base did not have an Enlisted Men's Club. Somehow, though, we did have a brig. It was located in the basement of the barracks and was quite modern. It had one large cell and one small cell, both enclosed with the latest system of steel bars. The cells even had electrically operated doors that clanged ominously when they were closed, as if this were planned for death row.

Since we were not in need of brig facilities at this time, it was decided that the space should be used for something else. It became the barber shop and the Enlisted Men's Club. The barber operated during working hours, and after working hours the duty storekeeper sold beer. We scrounged a couple of mess tables and some benches and used a shipping crate for a bar. The mess hall furnished us with a washtub full of ice every day and even gave us some cheese and crackers once in awhile. It wasn't the Ritz, but it was a nice snug harbor for us beer drinkers.

There was also an added advantage for the Master-at-Arms. When he declared beer drinking hours over at midnight, he and the storekeeper moved the stock of beer into the small cell. Then he gave us about ten minutes to clear the area, at which time he merely slammed the doors closed, and whoever wasn't out stayed there until 0600, when he let us out to go to work. At first, waking up in the brig was quite a shock, but after awhile we got used to it.

I got plenty of flight time operating out of Kodiak. Being assigned as a regular in a crew, I got to know a PBY intimately. Now and then we made a particularly rough landing and popped a few rivets in the bottom of the hull. This allowed tiny fountains of sea water to spring up in the bottom. One of my jobs on these occasions was to scramble from stem to stern with my head in the bilges. I was equipped with a bundle of quarter-inch dowling sticks, sharpened like pencils. I would stick one of these in each hole where a rivet was missing to plug the hole. When we were beached, I would retrieve all of my little sticks

and the Metalsmiths would replace the rivets.

Our commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Russell, always had reasons why we should be getting out there on more flights. One reason was for gunnery practice: we had guns and we had to know how to use them.

On gunnery practice days, all kinds of unusual things were going on. Our 50-caliber machine guns were designed to be loaded with magazines (cans) of sixty rounds. There were six cans for each of the guns. For gunnery practice, the ordnancemen took belts of 50-caliber ammo and dipped the tips of the slugs into various colors of paint. With the paint still tacky, the ammo was loaded into the cans and they were placed in the planes. At the same time, one or two planes were being equipped with reels mounted in the tunnel hatch section. The reels were wound with about 200 yards of steel cable, which could be released through the tunnel hatch and rewound when desired. Sleeve-targets were then made ready alongside the reels. These sleeve-targets were made of light canvas and were about 30 feet long and three feet in diameter.

Each gunner was assigned a certain color of paint-tipped ammo to use, and these assignments were duly recorded. When the planes were airborne and had flown to a designated area for gunnery, the tow-plane reeled out a sleeve, and the gunners prepared to commence firing. Various kinds of runs were made, parallel, crosswise, high and low. Each gunner fired his designated color and quota of ammo as the various runs were made, and targets were changed by tow-plane. When the exercise was completed, all planes returned to the base, and the sleeves were spread out to count the scores. If a slug hit the target, the colored paint left a ring around the hole. It was a sad day, indeed, when you had fired a couple of cans of ammo and your color didn't show up on any of the sleeves.

Before our tour of duty at Kodiak came to an end, we even made a few flights out to another new base, at Dutch Harbor. It wasn't much of a base yet, but there was enough there for some limited operation of PBY's.

In November, 1941, we were back in Seattle. The flying routine continued as always, but now the liberty was much better. I was now Third Mech on a crew, with another Third Class Mech named Walrath and Tom Harper, the Chief in charge. He never let up. If we weren't flying, we were working on the plane. Whenever we got the plane up to his expectations, he had us studying. He had waited sixteen years to make Chief, and he couldn't see anybody wasting time when some studying could result in an advancement in rating in the expanding Navy. Largely because of his unrelenting work on us and with us, Walrath and I made Second Class on December 1, 1941, less than a year after making Third Class. A few years before, that would have been impossible. But this was 1941, and we had a whole new ballgame. My pay went to $72 a month. Because I was in a flight crew, I received 50% extra, or $36. I felt extremely prosperous with a

monthly paycheck of over $100.

On the day I made Second Class, the Imperial Japanese Navy was planning a real hardball game. On that day, they made the final decision to attack Pearl Harbor. Vice Admiral Nagumo had his fleet at a predetermined position in the Pacific and was awaiting further orders. The next day he received the orders. "Proceed with the attack on Pearl Harbor." He set course for the launch point for his carrier aircraft. Admiral Yamamoto studied his chart of Pearl Harbor back in Japan and began the days of waiting for the report of the attack. If it was successful, Japan might buy enough time to consolidate her advances in the Orient before the U.S. and England could stop her.

In Seattle, VP-42 continued training. When Sunday rolled around, I was on liberty in Seattle. A civilian friend and I were driving along looking for a place to eat a late breakfast, and we were listening to the radio. Suddenly, the program was interrupted and the announcer was talking about Pearl Harbor being attacked. Pretty soon, he was saying that all personnel of Patrol Wing Four should report back to their base immediately. Bill, who had an enlistment in the Navy, headed the car toward Sand Point and said, "We'd better get you back to the base right now."

When I got to the hangar, the Duty Officer was getting a flight crew together. The Duty Section had a plane parked at the head of the ramp, loaded with depth charges and ready to launch. Within a few minutes, we had a crew together, manned the plane and were launched. As we lifted off from Lake Washington and headed out to sea, we knew that this was no drill.

We searched the ocean as we had never searched before, but at the end of ten hours, we landed back on Lake Washington, having seen nothing and hoping we hadn't missed anything we should have seen.

Admiral Nagumo had long since sent his message of success to Admiral Yamamoto and had his fleet headed west at flank speed.

When the Beach Crew pulled us out of the water that night, I couldn't believe the scene. It was like a beehive. There was activity everywhere. The squadron had received orders to move operations to Tongue Point, Oregon, at the mouth of the Columbia River. Trucks were being loaded with all of our equipment. Planes were being fueled and worked on, and there were still some planes on the water, coming back from patrol and ready to be beached.

The trucks spent half the night getting to Tongue Point. The next morning, we took off for patrol from Seattle and landed in the Columbia River at the end of the day. Our skipper and a couple of other planes landed in Ucluelet, a bay up on the west coast of Vancouver Island. They operated from there for a few days but then had to move to Tongue Point because of the lack of maintenance support.

We would fly out of Tongue Point for about six weeks, until Consolidated Aircraft Company could equip us with the PBY5A's. They were the amphibian model, with retractable wheels, so we could fly from the water or operate from runways.

Within a few days after we started flying out of Tongue Point, we received orders to meet a convoy headed our way from Pearl Harbor. One of our planes was to meet the convoy about 700 miles out and start an anti-submarine patrol around it. We would continue the patrol until the convoy reached Bremerton.

The convoy turned out to be a group of ships damaged at Pearl Harbor but able to get underway to the States for repairs. It was good to see the Tennessee steaming along in the convoy. I had a good friend aboard.

There were self-appointed coast-watchers all up and down the Pacific Coast. Our squadron received a steady stream of submarine sightings, and I think we checked out every one we got. On Christmas Day, our crew had been out on patrol, starting at dawn. We came back in about the middle of the afternoon and headed for the mess hall for Christmas dinner, a little late but nevertheless ready to enjoy it. We had just sat down to dig in, when a messenger came running in with the word that we were to report back to our plane on the double.

Lieutenant Norman Garton was my plane commander at that time, and when we got to the plane, he was already in the cockpit. I got aboard, climbed up in the engineer's tower and reported, "Ready to start engines, sir." We had no more than gotten them running than the beach crew was launching us. The rule was that the cylinder head temperatures should be at least 100 degrees for launching and 200 degrees for takeoff. The beaching gear was barely clear of the plane when Mr. Garton called on the intercom, "Ready for takeoff." I came back with, "We barely have a hundred degrees cylinder head temperature, sir." As we went to full throttle, he answered, "Fine. They'll be a lot hotter when I pour the coal on." And we went looking for another submarine that wasn't there.

Christmas dinner was a bit stale when we got back. But some patriotic soul out there had the satisfaction of knowing that a submarine report brought fast action from Tongue Point.

IV

FLYING IN THE ALEUTIANS

by

Elmer A. Freeman

When VP-42 returned to Kodiak in early 1942, we were flying the new PBY5A's. It made quite a difference in our beaching and launching procedures. When we landed on the water, we merely lowered the landing gear and proceeded to taxi right up the ramp to a parking spot. When launching, we taxied down the ramp, raised the wheels, and were ready for takeoff from the water. As bases gradually were built out to the west, we made good use of amphibious options. Some of the runways were pretty hairy for landing, but we learned to use them.

Not long after our return to Kodiak, there was a shuffling of flight crew personnel. A few of the Chiefs were promoted to commissioned officer status and others were assigned to ground jobs in shops. When all of the reassignments had been completed, there was a whole new flight crew. I was made Plane Captain, Babbitt (North Dakota) was Second Mech, and Stallings (South Carolina) was Third Mech. Townsend (Montana) was First Radioman, and Summers (Texas) was Second Radioman. Because of a shortage of pilots, we had about a half dozen enlisted men who had been trained in navigation. One of these guys, Pearson (Minnesota), was assigned to our crew as Navigator. Lieutenant W. M. Dickey (Texas) was our Plane Commander.

I don't know how Mr. Dickey felt when we prepared for our first flight together, but I was nervous. I had always had some Chief watching over me, but now the load had been shifted to me. Mr. Dickey was in his thirties, but not one of the enlisted members of the crew was over twenty-two. Of course, at that age, we knew everything and could do anything, so we took whatever assignments were handed to us and got the job done. It must have been a bit scary for the skipper sending out such young crews, but I guess he knew what he was doing.

One of the first advanced based operations we went on was an operation in the Shumagin Islands, a small group of islands southwest of Kodiak and south of the Alaska Peninsula. We were to operate from the Williamson, which was anchored in a bay out there; it had a seadrome in place and was ready to take care of our service needs. By advancing our operation this far out, we would be able to cover many more miles toward Japan in our searches. There was a suspicion that the Japanese were preparing to launch some kind of move toward the Aleutians and the mainland of Alaska.

Enroute to the Shumagins, we were to fly a search some 300 miles out to sea and return to the peninsula before joining a couple of our other planes who were to operate from Williamson. The weather was really bad, so we had trouble fixing our location at the end of our search. The charts we had didn't have much of any detail on the area, and we couldn't raise Williamson on the radio, so something had to be done to find out where we were. With the ceiling so low, it would be dangerous to go flying around and around hoping to spot our ship, so rather than taking a chance of running into a mountain or wasting fuel, Mr. Dickey spotted a likely-looking bay and we headed in for a landing.

There was a fairly stiff wind blowing, so we made a full stall landing. (In a rough sea, the pilot gets down almost on the wave tops and gradually throttles back until the plane stalls out and drops on top of a wave.) With a promising-looking beach as our destination, we started taxiing. I got up on the bow of the plane with a boathook and probed for bottom as we moved along. When I felt bottom, it seemed firm enough and smooth enough to put the wheels down for an attempt at taxiing up on the beach.

When the wheels touched bottom, Mr. Dickey added enough power to pull us along, and in a minute or so, we were parked high and dry on the beach. After tying the wings down to some big logs which had washed ashore, we continued to try to raise Williamson on the radio.

That didn't work at all, but wonder of wonders, a YP boat from Kodiak pulled into our little bay to get out of the weather. When Mr. Dickey got up on top of the wing and asked them by semaphore where we were, we received no response. But in a couple of minutes, they launched a small boat and a couple of guys proceeded to join our little beach party. They showed us exactly where we were. It turned out that we were right at the foot of Pavlov Volcano. With the ceiling so low, we couldn't see if the terrain was 800 or 8000 feet high. Pavlov is almost 9000 feet.

We were actually within forty or fifty miles of our ship. With our present location determined, we thanked the YP boat folks and proceeded to get our plane back in the water and flew along under the soup to our anchorage with Williamson.

Working on the engines when the plane was tied up to a buoy was a real adventure. We were equipped with small workstands which could be hung from the leading edge of the wing and hooked to the speed-ring, or forward part of the cowling. The stand itself, once rigged, was about a foot wide and five feet long. The idea was to hang one of these stands in place and then climb down over the leading edge of the wing, try to open the cowling around the engine, keep from dropping anything into the water, and finally get to the engine. If you dropped a tool, it was just one more addition to Davy Jones' toolbox.

Our port engine didn't quite come up to full power on

takeoff one morning, and I decided to take a look at it when we returned from our patrol that afternoon. We were tied up to a buoy a few hundred yards from the ship as I got out the workstand and rigged it alongside the engine. Whenever you are doing anything around a seaplane tied up to a buoy, you wear your Mae-West life vest. It kind of gets in your way sometimes, but you feel naked without it. These things can be inflated by blowing through a hose, or in an emergency, they can be inflated by pulling on a toggle which releases a little CO2 bottle, which does the inflating in an instant.

I proceeded to lay out some tools on the wing, where I would be able to reach them from the workstand, and started to climb down over the leading edge of the wing. Just about the time I was getting both feet on the stand, I got hung up with my Mae-West. To get free, I jerked on it. The CO2 toggle had gotten caught in the rigging, and my jerk discharged the bottle. There is a whistling sound when this thing is discharged, and it surprised me. I took a step backward -- into thin air -- and was paddling around in the water. Boy, was it cold.

I paddled around to the waist hatch to try to get back in the plane. We never had the ladder out when we were at a buoy, so the radioman was trying to help me climb into the hatch. I had almost made it when I slipped and fell back into the water, and we started all over again. By the time we succeeded, I was getting pretty numb. He signalled the ship to send a boat out for me, and they had one alongside in a few minutes.

When we got to the ship, I was shaking so badly I could hardly get up the ladder. They took me to sick bay, where a corpsman sized up the situation. His prescription was simple. He poured out about a tumbler full of brandy and said, "Drink this." I grabbed it with both hands and started drinking. The prescription worked. In a minute or so, I started to feel warm somewhere around my stomach. As the warmth moved up my body, I was able to stop shaking. In ten minutes' time, I was joking with the corpsman. Maybe I was a little jollier than the occasion called for, but he finally pronounced me cured and locked up the bottle. Now that's a first-class party-pooper.

About April, 1942, I received orders to start sending one or two planes at a time to the Naval Air Station at Alameda, California, to have radar installed. Most of us had never heard of radar, which was invented by the English. At this point, the United States was building and installing it as fast as possible. It was supposed to enable you to look through fog and even see at night. We made our hurry-up trip to Alameda for our radar installation, with quick stops at Kodiak and Seattle, and spent three days getting our new equipment. We just had time for a night's liberty in San Francisco and Oakland, and we headed out for the Aleutians again.

PART TWO

DUTCH HARBOR

V

WEATHERMEN AT DUTCH HARBOR

by

Paul Carrigan

Dutch Harbor was not the end of the earth, but on tippy-toes one stood a chance of glimpsing it from there. Unalaska's onion-topped Russian Orthodox church steeple was also proof that the area was not quite God-forsaken. Nonetheless, it was a forlorn place which seemed even more bleak to Bob Calderon and me than had Kodiak earlier.

Casco's launch deposited us at the small-boat landing. Leaden skies began to swirl and boil. It started to snow and blow. We trudged around in the slushy mud with our hands full of all the gear we possessed, while trying to find the weather shack. We asked directions from half a dozen people, all of whom appeared to be civilian workmen. None had the foggiest notion where the Navy weather office was located. Out of the snowflakes appeared a man wearing a few items of Navy-issue foul weather clothing. He waved vaguely in the direction of some large wooden barracks and warehouses as he passed and said, "I think it's over there someplace."

The office was a wooden shack that fronted on the "boardwalk." This raised, wooden walkway extended a short distance into the base from the main dock area. There were no paved roads or other walkways on the base. Vehicular traffic had churned the snow and mud into the usual quagmire.

Calderon and I reported to Ralph P. Darr, CAerM, USN, for temporary duty. As the only two Patrol Wing Four aerographer's mates present, we were to be assigned to separate weather office watch sections in order to help out and keep busy when we weren't flying weather/search patrols.

O-in-C of the small, Navy weather office was Commander Thomas C. Thomas, USN, who, like Commander Howard B. Hutchinson at Kodiak, was also the Executive Officer of NOB Dutch Harbor.

The office weather staff was few in number, so Calderon and I were welcome additions. There were no other officers other than Commander Thomas, and only four enlisted men besides Chief Darr. The four were: Robert D. Darden, AerMic, USN; AerM3c's Kenneth "Shady" Lane, USN, and D.C. "Red" Morrow, USN, both of whom were in primary class at Lakehurst with Calderon and me; and A.B. "Swede" Hultman, S1c, USN. A fifth man, L.R. "Little Shoes" Upton, AerM3c, USN, would arrive shortly from the States via Kodiak aboard the Navy frigate U.S.S. Charleston.

Calderon and I were added to the watch list, assigned bunks and lockers with the other enlisted men in a nearby barracks, and issued chow passes to the Navy messhall.

Several thousand civilian construction workers far outnumbered the three hundred or so Navy personnel. These workers had their own messhalls, and the majority were quartered in triple-story barracks adjacent to ours. The remainder lived on an old steamship, the S.S. Northwestern. This venerable ship's ocean-going career was over. With bilges ballasted with cement, she was firmly secured to shore and permanently beached. Her generators supplied additional power for the naval base.

Calderon and I stood weather shack watches and flew on long, lonely search patrols to gather vital weather information. Our dog-leg sector searches fanned out westward from Dutch Harbor. One sector took us along the north side of the Aleutian chain, over the Bering Sea. Another brushed the same volcanic peaks on the south, or North Pacific, side. Others probed far out over the trackless ocean wastes to the northwest and southwest.

In spite of being bundled up in heavy, winter, fleece-lined, leather flight pants, jackets, boots and gloves, the aircrews returned half-frozen from these reconnaissance patrols. This was especially true for the two blister gunners. Insidious, creeping cold began on one's extremities and slowly penetrated to the very bone marrow. It was not unusual to endure the last half of a patrol with uncontrollable shakes and chattering teeth.

Icy conditions, snow, rain, sleet, savage winds, fog, poor visibility and ceiling frequently occurred on the same turbulent flight. A typical patrol droned for six hours just above the vicious, storm-tossed, cold grey waves on the outward leg, made a ninety degree turn at the end, flew another hour or so on the short cross leg, then made another ninety degree turn to start the long homeward leg. These patrols, of thirteen or more hours, were by means of dead-reckoning navigation. Without use of celestial navigation, with no checkpoints between, and using only the courses flown, indicated air speed, estimated wind drift, and distance covered, the navigator had to lead us precisely back to Pillar Rock and the dangerously narrow, rocky entrance to Unalaska Bay. I always hated the implications of the term "dead-reckoning" navigation. This was especially true after I overheard one of our navigators answer someone's curiosity with, "Oh, you know, I reckon I'll get us back or I reckon we'll be dead."

Chief Ralph P. Darr proved to be a real taskmaster. Most dismaying, from our standpoint, was his almost constant presence, figuratively and literally. His living quarters were a small room attached to the Dutch Harbor weather shack. Being absent only at chow times, Darr put in long hours at the office.

Darr was an excellent weatherman, an "old-timer." Commander Thomas, engaged primarily with his urgent duties as base executive officer, pretty much let Darr run things as he saw fit. And, you'd better believe me, Darr, regular Navy, ran things his

way!

There was a plus to this situation, of which I was not aware until several years later. No one ever questioned the watch-standing ability of an aerographer's mate who had served under Chief Ralph Darr.

Things started happening rapidly in April, 1942. Our new, AVP class, U.S.S. Casco Bay came into Dutch Harbor again, along with the older AVD U.S.S. Williamson. An arrival of still older vintage, and a new addition to PatWing Four's small fleet, was the U.S.S. Teal, a quasi-seaplane tender of the Bird Class. This class seaplane tender, so called because they were named after birds such as Teal, Avocet, Pelican, etc., had been converted shortly after WWI from small tug-type minesweepers. They displaced 840 tons and had a dazzling top speed of ten knots. They had been used in 1918-1919 to sweep the thousands of mines with which the Allies had blocked the German U-boats from the northern exit of the North Sea.

When the increasing size of patrol planes outgrew the facilities of the Bird-type vessel, no other type of ship was available to replace them. As a temporary substitute, WWI flush deck, four-stack destroyers such as the Williamson and Gillis were converted to seaplane tenders and designated AVD for aviation destroyer. The Bird Class tenders were relegated to roles such as supply, support, and transportation with a designation of Aviation Tug (AVT).

Our other three Aleutian tenders, although small, were fairly fast and were considered adequate mobile bases for patrol plane operations of a limited nature. By crowding, the Casco could handle a twelve-plane squadron, while the Williamson and Gillis were busy servicing four to six planes apiece.

The Navy also considered these small seaplane tenders great training commands for promising skippers, especially on decision-making and small ship handling.

It was also excellent training for the crews, because they had to "make do" and be innovative out on isolated duty. None of our tenders had aerological officers on board at this time, only aerographer's mates performing the duties as "acting" aerological officers. Martin and Maurer were still ship's company on Casco, and Lester Roberts was still temporary duty aboard the Williamson. No aerographers were on the U.S.S. Teal.

On April 22, 1942, the armed transport U.S.S. Ulysses S. Grant from Seattle arrived at Dutch Harbor. On board were supplies, U.S. Army troops, three of seven aerological ensigns, and the remainder of the enlisted men of the four aerological expeditionary units.

It was like old home week when the weather personnel came ashore. Our tiny boardwalk weather shack became crowded overnight with the arrival of Ensigns Mull, Jack, and McQuarrie,

and enlisted men Hudson, Omang, Lynch, House, Beer, Medaris, Curtis, Stewart, Babic, Vernon, and Hollihand. Upton also arrived about this time, coming ashore from the gunboat U.S.S. Charleston, on which he had been a passenger. Ensigns William J. Douglas and Basil Frank reported for duty a few weeks later.

Chief Darr wasted no time taking advantage of this sudden wealth in manpower. Before the newcomers could unpack, he had them all on watch sections. Even with all these people on hand, Cmdr. Thomas would not let anyone except Chief Darr put out the forecast. This speaks volumes for Darr's ability.

Mountains of crated gear for the four island expeditionary units were off-loaded from the U.S. Grant. These crates were all stenciled with markings indicating Aerological Units 1, 2, 3, or 4. Weathermen became stevedores until this gear was sorted and stacked separately in a nearby warehouse. Stenciled crates and boxes for additionally proposed, isolated weather units began to arrive. Most of this gear showed up piecemeal, at odd times by odd means. It was sorted and stacked in the warehouse accordingly.

In addition to the original sites of Attu, Kiska, Atka, and Kanaga, it had recently been proposed to place weather units on St. Paul and St. Matthew Islands, Nome, and possibly other isolated spots as well. Ultimately, an ensign was to be in command of each weather-reporting unit after it was established. Tentative assignments for four of the ensigns were already known. Max W. Mull was slated to be in charge of the Attu unit; John G. McQuarrie, Kiska; Burton W. Lindley, Nome; and Max C. Jack, St. Matthew Island. The Japanese would shortly knock most of these weather plans rudely into the proverbial cocked hat.

On April 23, 1942, tragedy struck our patrol wing. One of VP-42's PBY's crashed on takeoff with the loss of four lives.

Wing Commander Captain Leslie E. Gehres, USN, was present on an inspection tour from his headquarters in Seattle. He wanted to see how the advance elements of his Wing, the scattered units of Lt. Cmdr. James S. Russell's VP-42, were getting along. Gehres flew north to Sitka, where Russell went to fetch him for the flight to Kodiak, then out to Dutch Harbor.

They arrived at Dutch Harbor late on the afternoon of April 22, 1942, the same day the U.S. Grant came in. Russell suggested to Gehres that it would be good for morale if our leader were to ride along on a combat patrol. To avoid favoritism, Russell also suggested that Gehres should select his sector and flight crew at random. Gehres agreed completely and said he would make the flight the following day.

Russell's concern about our flagging spirits can best be illustrated by a morale chart posted in the operations shack of our seaplane hangar. The curve began high enough upon our arrival at Dutch Harbor, then dipped until the monthly beer ration arrived, at which time it would take a sharp upward turn.

Each succeeding peak, however, was lower than the previous one. Finally, the curve had plummeted off the chart, continued on down the bulkhead, and was presently enscribed across the deck.

That Wednesday night of April 22, 1942, it turned bitter cold. Temperatures dropped into the low twenties. Snow flurries, accompanied by gale-force winds interspersed with extremely violent Williwaws, hit the Dutch Harbor area. Chief Darr had anticipated this and issued gale warnings and the approach of a strong cold front from the west.

When Russell and Gehres arose the next morning, they stepped out into a frozen world. Blowing snow had plastered the planes, and in the clear areas, ice had formed on everything. It was still blowing hard and a second, stronger front was approaching. Russell cancelled all scheduled flights for that day. He and Gehres went back inside and sat down to breakfast.

Several PBY's had already been warmed up at the seaplane ramp when the patrols were cancelled. Ensign Frederick A. "Andy" Smith, USNR, and his crew were ready to go and were disappointed and a little frustrated. They might have been the crew chosen by Gehres. Ensign Smith talked the duty operations officer into letting him make the prescribed inshore patrol to check out the local area. Upon receiving permission, he decided to get it over with and proceeded to take off immediately.

A loaded PBY weighs some fifteen tons. In order to quickly lift this much inert weight up out of the water and onto the planing step of the hull for take-off, it is necessary that the pilot open up the throttles of the Pratt-Whitney "Twin-Wasp" engines to full power. This causes a very characteristic roar.

Russell heard this sound. Knowing exactly what it meant, he rushed outside. The roar abruptly ceased and was replaced by the unmistakable hiss of fire.

Smith's plane had crashed into the sand spit which curved out from the left shoreline and extended halfway across the bay. In his haste, Smith had not removed the clear ice from his wing and tail surfaces. This changed the airfoil, which in turn reduced the lift below that which was needed to get airborne.

Smith had aimed to the right of the spit to allow himself plenty of room for takeoff. But each time he momentarily lifted the PBY off the water, the strong cross wind set the plane toward the end of the spit. On his last attempt, he was well inside the hook at the end of the spit. He could have chopped the throttles and mushed to a safe stop, but this was not Smith's nature. He chose to try and lift off one more time and failed.

Russell ran to another warmed-up PBY and taxied across to the burning plane. He broke out a rubber life raft, pulled the inflation toggle and jumped in. Because the cold had stiffened the folded rubber, the raft inflated slowly. Russell, half-submerged, was forced to paddle frantically with his hands, not

only to reach the wreck but to keep from sinking.

Three of Smith's crew members in the gun blister area aft were miraculously alive and not seriously injured. The four up forward on the flight deck were charred corpses. Both armor-plated pilots' seats had been wrenched loose on impact and had pivoted 180 degrees.

Four live bombs carried by the plane had been torn loose. Three were found clear of the burning PBY. The remaining one was located partially in the fire. Without hesitation or regard for personal safety, Russell, with the help of a few crewmen, secured a line to the bomb, which was quickly dragged out of the flames and away from the searing heat.

Captain Gehres arrived huffing and puffing, after hurrying the long way around on foot.

"You might have been on that plane," said Russell somberly.

"That's right," reflected Gehres.

With a feeling of desolation, I stood on a small rise with a group of weathermen and watched Smith's PBY burn. I'd flown with this pilot and crew several days earlier. The aerographers who flew a lot also realized that one of us might have been on that plane.

Killed in the crash with Ensign Smith were co-pilot Ens. Glenn R. Van Bramer, USNR, navigator Ens. John B. Carroll, USNR, plane captain Harold Day Cunningham, AMM2c, USN.

The following day, the weather improved sufficiently for search patrols to go out and Gehres made his flight.

Commander Russell had once told Ensign Smith, "You are one jump ahead of the undertaker." Russell had repeatedly cautioned Smith to observe and follow all prescribed safety doctrines. Smith had broken one of Russell's cardinal rules: make certain that all snow and ice are removed from both wing and tail surfaces before attempting a take-off.

On one flight, Smith had unknowingly taken off with the extra large (for Aleutian operations) sea anchor, still resting on top of the outside fuselage between the two gun blisters.

Russell was already airborne in another PBY when Smith joined him. Russell looked over and to his horror, saw the anchor. To avoid panicking Smith, Russell did not mention the anchor. Instead, he gave him calm, clear, precise orders to make a wide circle and return to base, executing a smooth let-down and landing. After he grimly watched Smith safely carry out these orders, he called him again on the radio and chewed him out about the anchor.

If the anchor had become dislodged in flight, an eventual certainty, it would have ripped off the tail assembly and the plane would have crashed. It was Smith's responsibility as Patrol Plane Commander (PPC) to insure that all gear was properly stowed and the plane ready for takeoff. Careless, impetuous pilots are not long-lived, especially in the Aleutians.

Toward the end of April, 1942, the aerographers at Dutch Harbor were set to work digging a zigzag trench complex for our battle station. This position was atop the nearby high hill and adjacent to the communications shack. We labored on this pick-and-shovel project most daylight hours, whenever we weren't on watch or flying, until it was completed.

After a time, we had it fixed to our satisfaction. It was neatly, but extra heavily, sandbagged. A small section, also sandbagged, was roofed over with timbers to form a bunker. This timbered section had not been authorized but was a comfort added on our own. It enabled us to take brief turns in out of the weather and warm ourselves with coffee. There were many piles of stacked lumber at construction sites about the base. Whenever we passed these unguarded stacks, we simply pretended we were civilian workmen and shouldered lumber of needed dimension for our own construction job.

Wooden entrance steps were built which led from the rear, or radio shack side, down into the doorless, roofed-over section. A space eighteen inches high between the roof timbers and sandbags provided a good view from the small bunker. The two sides of the bunker were also open and led directly to the sandbagged, zigzag trench sections.

The commanding height of the Navy weathermen's fightin' trench gave us a 360-degree, eagle's eye view of the entire area.

VI

PRELUDE TO ATTACK ON DUTCH HARBOR

by

Paul Carrigan

Oblivious to the overwhelming forces Japan was massing against the Aleutians, the Dutch Harbor Navy weathermen went about their duties. It was about this time, in early May, 1942, that we were issued 30.06 Springfield rifles, bayonets, full bandoliers of ammunition and those funny little, flat World War I "Doughboy" steel helmets.

Logically, the weathermen had been chosen to operate the base air raid siren. Our office was centrally located, equipped with telephone, teletype, radio, and men on duty twenty-four hours a day. Word to sound the alarm was received from the Naval Command Post.

This ear-splitting, brain-numbing siren was mounted on a tall pole immediately outside our boardwalk weather shack. The alarm switch could be reached in two steps from our doorway. This added responsibility kept watch-standers busier than one might expect. False alarms and subsequent "all clears" increased. Beginning in early May, Dutch Harbor also conducted standard pre-dawn and pre-dusk air raid drills.

In addition to being issued the standard 30.06 rifle, Omang, House, Hudson, Lynch, and most of the radiomen had also been issued the heavy, .45-caliber, automatic service pistols.

This weapon is technically a gas-operated semi-automatic. Cartridges are contained in a clip which inserts upward into the heavy stock of the pistol grip. Escaping gas from each fired shell operates the mechanism, which ejects the empty shell and moves a new cartridge into firing position. You merely have to keep pulling the trigger to continue firing until the clip is emptied.

One evening, in the crowded confines of the hut, we experienced a classic case of "I didn't know it was loaded." A radioman was seated by the oil heater cleaning his pistol when the gun accidentally discharged. The errant bullet missed his left knee by an inch and blew the oil flow control valve off the stove. Inside the tin hut, it sounded more like a bomb had gone off and someone hollered, "Jap attack!" The headlong scramble that ensued can well be imagined.

Equally startled, the radioman jumped up, waving the still-

loaded gun all around the room, finger still on the trigger and hammer cocked. Despite the confusion, it was Boyd Omang who realized what had happened. He grabbed the automatic away from the rattled radioman before it went off again. Luckily, no one had been hit and the shot was muffled inside the hut, so the base was not thrown on a needless alert.

Tragedy struck our Patrol Wing on May 9, 1942. Ensign Edwin R. Winter, USNR of VP-42, and a crew of eight took off on a routine PBY patrol south of Dutch Harbor on that date and never returned. No clue to their fate was ever learned. Whatever the cause, it most likely happened quickly, for no emergency radio message was received from Winter's PBY.

Listed as missing with Ensign Winter were co-pilot Ensign Edwin C. Sindel, Jr., USNR; navigator James T. Crumpton, AP1c, USN; plane captain Robert Hiram Welch, AMM2c; Ervin E. Trampe, ARM2c, USNR; Leo C. Vozak, ARM3c, USNR; Veryl R. Holman, AMM3c, USN; John F. Purvis, S1c, USN; and Robert L. Smallen, AMM3c, USN.

There was one other member of our Dutch Harbor weather office that I failed to mention earlier, Chief Darr's pet dog, Rusty. This pampered pooch lived with the stern Chief and had the run of the office. For some reason, precious Rusty chose to sleep each night under our weather map desk rather than with Darr. This led to trouble.

To put it mildly, Rusty passed gas in his sleep. This was bad enough, but both ends were busy. He also snored and had very bad halitosis. We didn't know what Rusty's diet consisted of, but it didn't take a scientist to know that it contained neither Rolaids nor Pepto-Bismo. The noise and stench that came rolling and welling upward from under our map desk was overpowering.

John Lynch, who didn't like the dog to start with, could stand it no longer one night. He grabbed the little stinkpot and threw him outside into the cold darkness. Rusty, awakened from a sound sleep and pleasant dog dreams, was not used to this rough treatment. Immediately, he began to cry and whine to get back inside. This brought Darr out of his bunk and onto Lynch. Sharp words were exchanged and Darr rescued his pet. The Chief told Lynch, in no uncertain terms, that if he didn't like it he could take his weather work outside. That was that!

To illustrate the odd, varied experiences of Navy weathermen in the Aleutians, I'll use the case of Max Jack. On May 4, 1942, newly arrived Ensign Jack got the shock of his young life. He was ordered to report for temporary duty to the YP-93. YP's were tiny, wooden, district patrol vessels known as "Yippy-boats." This order, in itself, was unusual, but he was to be the Executive Officer. The regular Executive Officer had the mumps.

Other than his trip north on the U.S.S. Grant, Max Jack had never been on a ship. Now, he found himself second in command of a U.S. Navy vessel.

YP-93 left Dutch Harbor on a westward patrol into the Bering Sea the following day. Their orders were: if they sighted enemy ships, they were to get off a message in the clear, then run like hell. This last was a very tall order, because the YP-93 could make all of eight knots, wide open, with a following sea.

Executive Officer Max Jack was gone twelve days on this patrol. During that time, he sat down to exactly four meals, as the seas were not cooperative. At one point, the small vessel logged a roll of sixty-eight degrees.

When Jack arrived back at Dutch Harbor on May 16th, he apparently had done such a good job on the YP-93 that he was promoted to the Public Works Department. In his absence, the base had received a badly needed shipment of .50-caliber machine guns and some 20mm. light anti-aircraft weapons. Emplacements were needed. Max was put in charge of a detail to dig gun pits. This was a little out of his line, too. "But," Max Jack recalls, "anyone can dig a hole and put a gun in it. This work can be done speedily and efficiently, especially if one is expecting, as we were, to be attacked at any moment."

Two distinguished guests arrived at Dutch Harbor. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had sent one of his top aides, Navy Commander Paul Foster, to Alaska for a firsthand report of the situation there. At Kodiak, Foster had met with General Simon Bolivar Buckner, head of the Alaska Defense Command. The two decided to fly out to Dutch Harbor and conduct a personal assessment tour of the entire Aleutians.

Adventurous General Buckner was loaded for bear or anything else that he might run into on the trip. He had his sleeping bag and scope-mounted hunting rifle. At Dutch Harbor, Lt. Cmdr. James S. "Red" Russell, skipper of VP-42, tried to dissuade General Buckner from going any further west because of the risks involved. Although Buckner appreciated this concern for his safety, he also typically considered such suggestions to be nonsense. Buckner and Foster were going to inspect the entire chain of islands all the way to Attu, period.

Russell selected Lt. Samuel E. Coleman, USN, like the skipper, an experienced Aleutian pilot, to accompany him in another PBY in case of emergency or breakdown. As a further safety precaution, Russell chose Ensign Clark ("Joe") Hood to be his navigator for the flight. Hood was considered by his peers to be the finest navigator in the squadron. Both of the PBY's were radar-equipped.

The two planes, with Buckner and Foster riding in Russell's PBY, headed westward. Attu was the first scheduled stop. A short way past Kiska, they ran into the storm that was causing unloading problems at that moment for the Casco at Attu. Unable to get through the weather front, the two PBY's turned around and landed on the choppy waters of Kiska Harbor for fuel and to await more favorable weather. The Williamson was off-loading into her shuttling boats the last of six months' stores and supplies for

the Kiska weather group.

Buckner, Foster, Russell, and Coleman went ashore and visited with the ten-man Kiska weather unit. The four tramped about the island with aerographer's mate House. They were looking for a possible airfield site. During the hike, Russell advised House to make a few food caches well away from the three frame buildings of the main camp.

Russell was worried about General Buckner, as well he might have been. With the situation becoming more critical by the moment, he did not want to be the agent responsible for delivering the head of the Alaska Defense Command into the hands of the Japanese. Russell finally convinced Buckner that he should get out of Kiska while the getting was good. Buckner grudgingly agreed to return to Kodiak. By the time this decision was made, the bay was too rough to permit takeoff.

The situation was discussed with Commander K.N. "Knappy" Kivette, skipper of the Williamson. He agreed that Alaska's top general should not be at Kiska. The Williamson would transport Buckner and Foster back to Kodiak.

Since the Williamson had first anchored in Kiska Harbor on May 18th, Kivette had kept lookouts and signalmen posted ashore at high vantage points. They were instructed to alert the seaplane tender if any Japanese planes or ships appeared. These men had been told that in this event, the ship would immediately get underway for sea in order to have maneuvering room in open water. The lookouts and signalmen would be left behind to take their chances with the men of the weather station.

The storm from the west slashed into Kiska Harbor and raged into Tuesday, May 19th. Late that afternoon, the Williamson got underway for Kodiak. A fast-moving weather front blasted through Kiska that night. By morning, wind and waves had abated enough for Russell and Coleman to get airborne and conduct search patrols. When they returned to Kiska late that afternoon, the flight crews went ashore to get some sleep while the weather unit fueled both PBY's by hand-pumping aviation gas from 55-gallon drums. A second storm system intensified and came roaring in from the west. Russell and Coleman were weathered in for three days.

At the height of this storm's second day, the Casco came rolling and pitching into Kiska Harbor on her return trip from Attu. Ensign William C. Jones, a radio technician, went ashore to help the radiomen set up some of their new gear. Jones had initially installed and fine-tuned the radio equipment of the original four members of the Kiska weather unit some six months earlier. At that time, he had presented Turner, Winfrey, Christensen, and McCandless with a mascot pup named "Explosion." Ensign Jones had acquired the pup at Dutch Harbor. He had given it the odd moniker because it had been born the night that a small dynamite storage shack exploded near the place where a bitch had whelped.

Boyd Omang and John Lynch also went ashore for last good-byes with the men of the Kiska weather unit. A photograph of the ten-man Kiska team was taken at this time. Ensign Max Mull and Patrol Wing Four Chief Photographer's Mate Lou Yaconelli, who appear in the picture, were attached to the Casco.

In spite of sloppy takeoff conditions on May 23rd, Russell and Coleman got airborne and headed for Dutch Harbor. After standing by until both PBY's were safely in the air, the Casco also departed Kiska.

The fate of the ten-man weather unit ashore was sealed.

John Lynch could not be dropped when the ship reached Kanaga, because seas were too rough to launch a boat. The Casco returned to Dutch Harbor to off-load the ten-man Attu weather unit and gear, survey party, and John Lynch. She then proceeded east to Cold Bay, where Russell had been ordered to set up his squadron headquarters.

Back at Kiska, House and his men started digging a zigzag trench for protection against bombing/strafing or a shelling attack. Several food, rifle and ammunition caches were established at widely separated locations, as Russell had suggested. These were placed in steep draws and sheltered with camouflaged tents.

House established a routine whereby a combination lookout, radio and weather watch was maintained from 0600 until midnight. From midnight until 0600, a sentry and radio watch was on duty.

And they waited.

The disclosure, in mid-May 1942, of Japanese designs on the Aleutians jolted Captain Leslie E. Gehres and his Seattle-based Patrol Wing Four Staff into action. Almost overnight, Gehres moved his headquarters to Kodiak.

All essential staff, men, and necessary equipment that could be crammed into the twelve PBY's of Commander Paul V. Foley's VP-41 took off for Kodiak. This first segment to arrive included the Wing's Tactical Air Officer, Lt. Cmdr. R.R. McCracken; Communications Officer, Lt. Cmdr. J.C. Picken; and Staff Gunnery Officer, Lt. Ralph Humes. Commander A.R. "Daddy" Nash, Staff Operations Officer, had to remain in Seattle for a short time in order to coordinate the details of moving so many men and so much equipment in such a short space of time outside the continental limits of the U.S.

The Wing's Staff quickly discovered it had flown from a land of plenty into a land of short supply. All that Communications Officer Picken could find in the way of radio gear were the old sets still in use in our weather office at Kodiak's seaplane hangar. These, as I've mentioned, were geared for casual, slow-speed, peacetime use. As of late May, 1942, there was still no

direct communicatios link between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor suitable for high-speed wartime military operations.

There was no telling when urgently requested radio equipment might arrive from the States. As one stopgap measure, Wing Gunnery Officer Lt. Humes was able to persuade four civilians that they would be much happier if they turned their radios over to Commander Picken. In this manner, the Wing "acquired" four powerful radios to monitor four different channels.

In spite of supply, moving and organizational difficulties, Patrol Wing Four's staff settled into its new Kodiak headquarters, a makeshift frame building. Wind whistled through cracks and blew papers off desks, but they at least had a roof over their heads and a place for maps, records, and plans for operations.

About two-thirds of Foley's VP-41 PBY's were sent out to Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor to operate with those of Russell's VP-42. Ensign Jack Litsey, VP-41, took over the PBY mail run between Kodiak, Cold Bay, and Dutch Harbor.

Back in Seattle, additional staff members, officers and enlisted personnel of Wing ground support units, and all remaining gear, supplies, and equipment were loaded on an Alaska Steamship Company vessel, the S.S. Columbia. With her convoy, destroyer U.S.S. Fox, the S.S. Columbia arrived at Kodiak about 1000 hours on May 29, 1942.

Among Columbia's passengers were Lt. Cmdr. John F. Tatom, Staff Aerologist, CAerM Charles C. Herold, AerM3c Donald N. Livingston, and S1c Emmet L. Smith, Elzie B. Carey, and Richard W. Carter.

Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Theobald steamed out of Pearl Harbor for Kodiak on May 21, 1942. Four days outbound from Pearl, his small task force was still slamming into heavy North Pacific seas but maintaining a speed of 22 knots. Theobald had had an almost impossible task dumped into his lap. How could he defend 34,000 miles of Alaskan coastline with a dozen-and-a-half, mostly old ships?

While still a day and a half from Kodiak, Theobald received the following coded dispatch:

> 25 MAY 1942
> FROM: CINCPAC
> TO: COMNORPACFOR
>
> THE JAPANESE HAVE COMPLETED PLANS FOR AN AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION TO SECURE AN ADVANCED BASE IN THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS...FOLLOWING ESTIMATED JAPANESE TASK FORCE HAS LEFT JAPAN WITH PROBABLE OBJECTIVE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND/OR ALASKA 2 AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, 2-3 SEAPLANE TENDERS, 3 HEAVY CRUISERS, 2 LIGHT CRUISERS, 12 DES-TROYERS, 8 SUBMARINES, HEAVY BOMBERS (PROBABLY FLYING

BOAT TYPE) AND TRANSPORTS AND CARGO VESSELS...ON MAY 25 THE ABOVE FORCES WILL ARRIVE IN NORTHERN JAPAN, FUEL, AND PROCEED TO THE ALEUTIANS.

The mention of two Japanese aircraft carriers did nothing to improve Theobald's dour outlook. He had no aircraft carriers and he knew that Alaska's land-based fighter/bomber strength was woefully weak. Without adequate protective air cover, it would be suicide to expose his fleet to enemy carrier aircraft. Theobald decided to keep his small force 400 miles south of Kodiak and await developments. This order was given, and he proceeded toward Kodiak in his flagship Nashville. Before he arrived on May 27, 1942, Theobald received a dispatch that U.S. Naval Intelligence believed that Dutch Harbor would be the Japanese target.

At his new headquarters office at Kodiak, Admiral Robert A. Theobald, Commander North Pacific Force, met General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Alaska Defense Command, who had returned from Kiska a few days earlier in the Williamson. The two top commanders in Alaska discussed strategy.

Theobald felt that Nimitz had been fooled by a Japanese ruse, and he was not convinced that an attack on Dutch Harbor was the main objective of the enemy. If they bypassed Dutch Harbor and gained a toehold on Kodiak Island or Anchorage on the mainland, they would be within relatively easy bomber range of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Bremerton and the Boeing Aircraft Company plant in Seattle. Theobald considered it his responsibility to see that this calamity did not happen.

Theobald was following war college doctrine, which stated: one, it was wrong to act solely on information provided by intelligence, which was often incorrect, incomplete, or, worse still, false if planted by the enemy. Two, one had to act, rather, upon the enemy's capabilities. In this present case, the enemy's capability was similar to, "Where does an 800-pound gorilla sleep?" The answer is, "Anywhere he chooses."

With his small, carrierless task force, Theobald could not directly oppose such a greatly superior force with which the Japanese were planning to attack, but he did have a plan, which he proposed to General Buckner.

Part of the command that Theobald was given included the Alaska Fleet. This leaky armada consisted of eight WWI four-stack, flush-decked destroyers, equipped with ancient three-inch, open-deck guns and torpedoes. He had also inherited the six old WWI-vintage S-boats of Northern Submarine Division, under command of Captain Oswald Colclough, USN, and a motley fleet of "Yippy boats" and commandeered wooden fishing vessels, which had been placed under the command of Lieutenant Commander Carl E. "Squeaky" Anderson.

Theobald's plan was to have the eight destroyers escort Anderson's "fleet" to Dutch Harbor, then anchor in Makushin Bay

on the north side of Unalaska Island. Here the destroyers would wait in readiness to oppose any attempt by the Japanese to make an amphibious landing at Dutch Harbor.

Theobald further proposed to set up a north-south picket line west of Dutch Harbor, using Squeaky Anderson's fleet, the six submarines, and augmented by intensive search patrols by the PBY's of VP-41 and VP-42. Theobald was confident that the Japanese fleet would not be able to penetrate this shield without being detected. A vital and immediate part of the plan was to move all available 11th Air Force fighters and bombers from Anchorage (800 miles from Dutch Harbor) to the secret airstrips at Cold Bay and Umnak.

When contact reports came in, Theobald would order Buckner's bombers to attack. After the Japanese aircraft carriers were sent to the bottom, Theobald would engage the enemy cruisers and destroyers in surface action.

With the exception of moving the U.S. Army 11th Air Force aircraft to Cold Bay and Umnak, outspoken General Buckner was in complete opposition to Theobald's plan. Buckner believed the intelligence estimate that Dutch Harbor would be the focal point of the enemy attack. He proposed that all available forces, including Theobald's task force, be concentrated immediately in this area to await the coming of the Japanese. He was certain that Theobald's picket line would not work. None of the "kidnapped" fishing vessels, Navy YP's, or S-boats had radar. Only a few of Buckner's Army bombers were equipped with radar. Many of our PBY's did have radar, but the sets were a very unreliable older British type.

Buckner pointed out to Theobald that the Aleutians are plagued year-round by sudden, violent storms. We were also moving into the dense cloud cover, poor ceiling and visibility, and blanketing fogs and drizzles of late spring and summer. Under these conditions, an enemy might pass within a hundred yards of a picket boat and not be seen. Even if a speeding enemy ship were sighted in the mists and reported, it would be quite another matter for bombers to sink it. They would first have to locate it after a long, overwater flight.

Strong objection to part of Theobald's plan, the one part that Buckner was in agreement with, came from an unexpected quarter. Brigadier General William O. Butler, USA, recently appointed Commander of Buckner's Army 11th Air Force, expressed unwillingness to move his fighters and bombers to Cold Bay and Umnak until the new, experimental Marsden steel mat runways were paved with concrete. There was neither the cement on hand nor the time to do this.

Upon assuming command, General Butler had made an inspection tour of the Cold Bay and Umnak airstrips. To his deep concern, he learned that fighters bounced high upon landing, while heavy bombers pushed a rippling wave of steel mat immediately ahead of their wheels each time they took off or landed. Butler

considered the two secret airstrips, rushed to completion by General Buckner, to be dangerous in the extreme, no better than long trampolines, and unfit for combat operations in their present state.

Buckner and Theobald thus reached an impasse. Buckner, brilliant, tough, strict, supremely confident and Alaska-experienced, was adamant. Theobald, equally brilliant, tough and unyielding, sent a message to Admiral Nimitz for a clarification of command roles.

Nimitz's reply was of no help. It merely stated that the command relationship between Buckner, the Alaska Defense Command, and Theobald, the North Pacific Force Command, was to be one of mutual cooperation.

As Commander North Pacific, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and Canadian Forces in Alaska had been placed under Theobald's command. Nimitz had declared Alaska to be in a state of fleet-opposed invasion. Under this condition, Buckner's U.S. Army 11th Air Force was also turned over to Theobald. If the enemy secured a beachhead on the mainland, a state of ground-opposed invasion would exist, and control of the 11th Air Force would then pass back to General Buckner.

Buckner had built his fledgling Air Force from scratch. It must have been particularly upsetting that his few trained pilots, aircrews, and aircraft were taken away from him at this critical moment and turned over to a newcomer -- a Navy man, to boot. Buckner knew that those not familiar and experienced with the peculiarities and dangers of Alaska/Aleutian weather, terrain, and vastnesses would misjudge, resulting in ineffectual deployment of aircraft and imperilment of aircrews.

On May 26, 1942, a few days after the PBY's of Russell and Coleman and the Casco left Kiska, a radioman on duty at our Dutch Harbor weather office received a relayed report that House and his men had spotted a Japanese float-type reconnaissance plane.

House sent most of the men into the hills, while he and Echols, RM2c, coded and enchipered a message of the contact. At first, Dutch Harbor could not be raised, because we were only monitoring Kiska every three hours during established weather transmission times.

Echols, the savvy senior radioman, told House that he could turn the transmitter down to the emergency 500 band and could probably raise someone on this frequency. This was done, and the naval base at Sitka, in far-off southeastern Alaska, picked up the message that would be relayed to Dutch Harbor.

The Dutch Harbor radioman asked House for a confirmation of the report. The report was repeated. The Naval Command Post at Dutch Harbor instructed our radioman to ask House for a precise identification of the plane, its altitude, course, and speed. House reported back that the plane was a type carried by Japanese

I-class submarines and designated with the Allied code name: "Glen." All of this radio traffic took time, because each message and reply required encoding-enciphering and deciphering-decoding.

Finally, Dutch Harbor's radioman was ordered to ask House, "Did you really see a plane?" House ignored this and had Echols shut the transmitter down after signing off the air.

Every night at midnight, the men of the Kiska weather unit tuned into a Stateside news broadcast, then tuned to radio Tokyo immediately following for the Japanese version of the news. That night, a San Francisco station reported that a Japanese scout plane had been seen reconnoitering the Aleutians and that an enemy attack on these islands, or possibly on Alaska itself, appeared imminent.

On the same day that the "Glen" scouted Kiska, the Japanese Northern Force, under Vice Admiral Hosagaya, sortied from Ominato in Northern Honshu. This included the Northern Second Mobile Force under Vice Admiral Kakuta -- the carrier-striking force that would attack Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4, 1942.

On May 27th, the Kido Butai, under Admiral Nagumo, sortied from the Inland Sea of Japan into the North Pacific Ocean by way of the Bungo Suido Strait. This was the main carrier task force that would attack Midway on June 4, 1942.

The combined fleet of Admiral Yamamoto sortied from the Inland Sea by similar route on the following day, May 28, 1942.

Vice Admiral Kondo's Midway Invasion Force also sortied on May 28 from staging areas at Guam and Saipan.

Gigantic, fateful, the Japanese Midway-Aleutian Operation was underway.

Dutch Harbor had been on the alert for sometime, but it doesn't do much good to be prepared to fight if the equipment is inadequate. The majority of emplacements still lacked guns. The Navy gunboat U.S.S. Charleston came in toward the end of May with about twenty 37mm and a few 20mm anti-aircraft guns, but most of these were consigned to the Army at Fort Mears. Our shipment of heavier anti-aircraft guns had not arrived.

Chief Darr continued to ride herd on us, and as a result, he was not well loved by all, especially John Lynch. Because of all the alerts, we had been carrying our weapons with us wherever we went. Lynch was halfway to the messhall when an alarm was sounded and realized that he'd left his trusty .45 in his office.

The loud, piercing siren always frightened Rusty, making him quiver and shake. Darr must have been kneeling near the office door, comforting his dog, when Lynch hit the door, coming on the dead run for his automatic. The door hit Darr in the head, knocking him unconscious. When muster was held in our trench,

someone asked where Darr was. Lynch said that the last time he saw him, he was lying on the office deck.

I'm afraid that if the word had gone out on some alert to fire at will, "will" might have been our leader.

Red Morrow added to the excitement by wrecking the Crosley, The Commode. Apparently, he was running a little late that morning and didn't want to take time to lace his hobnailed boots. Instead, he put on a pair of tennis shoes. He was partway through his forecast delivery run when, without warning, an Army deuce and a half ten-wheeled truck stopped in front of him. Red tried to make a panic stop with his tennis shoes, but without the traction of his hobnailed boots, he failed miserably. With a sickening crunching of metal, he slammed into the back of the high-bed truck. Although it took a can-opener to get Red out of the tangled wreckage, he suffered only some minor cuts and bruises, but our "Four-Wheeled Commode" was totaled.

Squadron Commanders Foley and Russell had been ordered to have their PBY's fly constant search patrols out of Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor. Overnight searches were inaugurated. These PBY's took off toward dusk at around 2130-2200, flew through the four or five hours of darkness, and were scheduled to return around noon. Others took off in early morning and returned late that evening. As a result, our PBY's were in the air twenty-four hours a day.

Because of limited hangar space, apron, and related facilities, the Dutch Harbor seaplane base could handle only four to six planes. Seaplane tender Gillis, a recent arrival at Dutch Harbor, took care of the rest. CAerM Max White and Glenn "Swede" Olson, S1c, were the Wing weathermen assigned under temporary duty orders to the Gillis.

During the week preceding the Japanese attacks, our PBY's were also operating from dispersal points in the Dutch Harbor area. This reduced the risk of having a large number caught on the water in strafing attacks while at anchor buoys. PBY's were serviced at the seaplane facilities or by the Gillis, then either took off on patrol or were sent to isolated bays, inlets, and even a lake. A few PBY's were also operating from the secret Army airstrip on Umnak Island.

The number of PBY's flying in and out of Dutch Harbor changed on a day-to-day basis, depending on operation orders. The numbers also fluctuated because a plane from Dutch Harbor would get "weathered out" and be forced to seek shelter at Cold Bay or vice versa.

This state of affairs caused a few mixups and disruptions in our flying weathermen's routines. Calderon and I were flying from the base seaplane ramp. I returned from a flight and spent the night on the Gillis. Calderon spent a night aboard a PBY anchored to a buoy in Beaver Inlet. Situations such as these would soon be the norm for Patrol Wing Four's aerographer's

mates.

At Dutch Harbor, we were not going to be caught napping on Sunday, as Pearl Harbor had been. Starting in the middle of May, we went to the trenches before dawn and dusk seven days a week. Wednesday was designated our day off, but only between air-raid drills.

Dutch Harbor was scouted by a Japanese I-boat's float plane on May 29, 1942. This plane caused one of the many unscheduled alerts. After the war, it was learned that this reconnaissance plane crashed while attempting a landing in rough seas near the submarine. The plane sank but the pilot was rescued. Two other I-boats reconnoitered Kodiak and Cold Bay by periscope that same day.

This was also the day that Lt. Cmdr. Tatom and the other Wing weathermen arrived at Kodiak aboard the S.S. Columbia. Elzie Carey and Dick Carter were ashore at Kodiak less than an hour. They had found their assigned barracks and were unpacking when Tatom gave them new orders. Both men went back aboard the S.S. Columbia for transportation to Dutch Harbor. Carey's orders were to Wing Operations at Dutch Harbor. Carter's temporary duty orders sent him to the Gillis.

Two days later, Tatom ordered Chief Herold to the Williamson and Emmett Smith, the "LaVeta Lancer" to Dutch Harbor for temporary duty at the weather office, or "for further PatWing Four assignment as is deemed necessary."

After the Williamson had transported General Buckner and Commander Foster from Kiska to Kodiak, she had immediately refueled and replenished and headed westward again for Cold Bay to support the Casco. Herold was to join AerM3c Lester Roberts, Jr. on the Williamson. As senior "acting aerological officer," Herold was charged with the duty of preparing the daily flight forecasts for planes operating from the Casco and the Williamson, so long as both tenders remained at Cold Bay. Although Roberts and Martin had been doing a good job for quite some time, this would relieve them both of a great responsibility, even if it were only for a short time.

Don Livingston, AerM3c, received orders to the U.S.S. Hulbert. This AVD had recently been added to the Wing's small seaplane tender fleet. A carbon copy of the Williamson and Gillis, she was expected to arrive at Kodiak on June 5, 1942. For the time being, Tatom would remain at Kodiak with Wing Commander Gehres and his staff.

On June 1, 1942, Herold and Smith caught a ride with Ensign Jack Litsey and his VP-41, PBY mailplane. Herold was dropped off at Cold Bay, while Smith continued on with Litsey to Dutch Harbor. I flew a daylight search patrol on June 1st and was delighted to see Emmett Smith at Dutch Harbor upon my return late that evening.

A Japanese submarine made a periscope reconnaissance of Dutch Harbor on June 2, 1942. The boat's skipper sent a radio signal to Admiral Kakuta that instead of the full Army division that Japanese Intelligence estimated, there appeared to be only about 5,000 men at Dutch Harbor, and most of these were service and support personnel.

Kakuta flashed a radio signal to Yamamoto asking for permission to capture Dutch Harbor. Yamamoto knew that Dutch Harbor could be taken, but it was too far from Japan to be kept supplied and held for any length of time. He vetoed Kakuta's request.

While this decision on the fate of Dutch Harbor was being weighed, Kakuta's undetected Northern Carrier Force, now less than five hundred miles away, was racing toward us at 22 knots.

The outcome of the war in the Pacific would be determined during the next forty-eight hours at the Battle of Midway. Victory or defeat would hang on a very slim thread.

At Dutch Harbor, we were about to pay the price of years of peacetime public apathy, which had left Alaska practically defenseless.

One of the series of strong cold fronts ripping into the Aleutians from the west was providing excellent concealment for Kakuta's carrier task force. He was keeping his ships just inside the leading edge of the fast-moving front, where heavy clouds, fog, sleet, and rain obscured everything from view beyond a few hundred yards.

These current, closely bunched cold fronts were not as disastrously violent as one that had smashed its way through Dutch Harbor a month previous. Howling winds and shrieking Williwaws accompanying that monster had plucked two-by-fours from a lumber pile and driven some, like arrows, into a barracks wall.

With an awesome display of power and fury, these same winds had also flipped a lashed-down PBY over onto its back before they subsequently blew it off the cement apron and into the bay, where it promptly sank.

In spite of very poor flying conditions, including winds gusting over 50 knots (57.5 mph), our PBY's took off on search missions the morning of June 2, 1942. The attendant low ceiling, visibility, and weather associated with the fronts prevented effective search patrols. Calderon flew out of Dutch Harbor on this day.

Early that afternoon, the chilling sound of the alarm sent men racing for the trenches. An unidentified ship had emerged from the murk and was entering the harbor. An Army gun battery fired a warning shot across her bows before the ship belatedly identified herself. She was the U.S.S. President Fillmore, an Army transport arriving with troops and supplies, including some

of the desperately needed heavy anti-aircraft guns and ammunition we'd been waiting so long for. Unfortunately, the guns and ammunition were buried deep in her holds and would therefore be among the last of the cargo unloaded.

Dutch Harbor's shortage of weapons of all types was so great that CAerM Edward S. "Duck" Hudson had turned over to the Base Commandant, Commander William E. Updegraff, USN, all of the small arms and ammunition from the remaining aerological unit stocks still stored in a warehouse. These weapons, including the sporting .22's and shotguns, were issued to weaponless Navy base personnel. The supply was meager and quickly ran out.

Shotguns and .22's are not adequate firepower with which to beat off attacking Japanese carrier planes or to oppose an amphibious landing. At best, they may have boosted the morale of the men receiving them. The several thousand civilian workers on the base and at Fort Mears were unarmed.

Dutch Harbor's weather deteriorated still further the evening of June 2, 1942, but Ensign Marshall C. Freerks of VP-42 somehow bounced his radar-equipped PBY off the churned-up waters of the bay to conduct an all-night search. In equally poor weather conditions, one hundred eighty miles east at Cold Bay, Lt. Jack Bingham, VP-41, took off in a similarly equipped PBY. These were the only two PBY's to get airborne for night searches. Calderon had returned safely to Dutch Harbor late that afternoon, but he was on the Gillis, at least for the night.

Meanwhile, at Kodiak, where the weather was much better that evening, one of the few U.S. Army, 11th Air Force, four-engined bombers was preparing to take off on an overnight search. Tatom sent Don Livingston in this LB-30 to "fly the weather." This early version, B-24 Liberator took off at 2000 hours June 2, 1942, flew southward approximately 600 miles into the Gulf of Alaska to latitude 48 degrees north, then turned for home. Livingston's LB-30 landed at 0600 hours on June 3, 1942.

Late spring and summer nights in the northern latitudes of the Aleutians are short. The darkest hours, depending on the weather's whim, are from about 2230 to 0230. At midnight on June 2, Kakuta's task force was rapidly approaching the position selected to launch his attack against Dutch Harbor. We knew the Japanese were coming, but we did not know exactly when or where they would strike.

VII

THE JAPANESE ATTACKS ON DUTCH HARBOR

by

Paul Carrigan

Attack of June 3, 1942

Shortly before midnight on June 2nd, Kakuta had increased speed to twenty-five knots to get clear of the leading edge of the weather front he had been using for cover. At 0200 hours on June 3, 1942, the weather surrounding his speeding carrier force was still so poor that first light was delayed. Kakuta would have to wait for sufficient light and an improvement in weather conditions before he could safely launch aircraft. He had already passed the scheduled time and launch position.

At Dutch Harbor at 0200 hours, word was received in the weather shack to sound the air raid alarm for the pre-dawn alert. In wet, windy darkness, we manned our dug-in positions. Soggy dawn broke and with it, no attack. We were secured about 0330.

All published accounts of the Battle of Dutch Harbor state that only aircraft of the carrier Ryujo attacked on June 3, 1942. While this has long been accepted as a fact of history, it is perhaps just as well that it was never etched in stone. Admiral Samajima indicates in his letter to Admiral Russell that two of Junyo's Zero fighters joined Ryujo's planes and attacked Dutch Harbor.

The banshee wail of the air raid siren awoke me from a sound sleep about 0400 hours on June 3, 1942. In our hovel next door to the radio shack, tired weathermen and radiomen grumbled, searched for gear, hurriedly put on boots, thrust arms into foul weather jackets, crammed steel helmets on heads, and grabbed rifles and ammunition belts.

Our hut door flew open and a radioman, in hasty search of his rifle and helmet, burst into our midst.

"What's up?" someone asked.

"This is it," he replied. "Seventeen unidentified planes off Eider Point."

This terse radio message, in the clear, is believed to have been transmitted by Ensign Jim Hildebrand of VP-41. Hildebrand's PBY was airborne, having just taken off from a dispersal inlet.

Red Morrow, AerM3c, has the dubious distinction of being the first U.S. casualty of the Japanese raids on Dutch Harbor. Six-foot-three, the lanky, long-legged redhead beat us all to the trench. Morrow, with the rest of us hot on his heels and his rifle held crossways, high over his head, took a flying leap down the wooden steps of the bunker's narrow entrance. Red's legs flew through the entrance, but before his feet reached the ground, his athwartship rifle jammed in the opening. With both arms almost torn from their sockets, Red was flipped on his back. The stampeding herd behind had no time to stop as it hurtled down on top and over him, trampling him into the mud. Fortunately, his injuries were not serious, and in a few weeks, he was as spry and chipper as usual.

The Japanese planes had arrived just as a storm front passed through. A break in the lower cloud cover appeared behind the front, and in this relatively clear hole lay Dutch Harbor, spread out below the enemy pilots.

I first became aware of anti-aircraft guns firing at a "V" formation of three high-flying specks approaching from the north, the entrance to the bay. Slowly, it seemed, the specks became black crosses against a background of grey sky. Scattered puffs of black flak from a few three-inch guns appeared to be bursting far short and well below the enemy bombers. These guns, the heaviest anti-aircraft weapons at Dutch Harbor, were being fired from the Gillis, army transport President Fillmore, and U.S.S. Charleston. A fourth ship, desperately attempting to get clear of the harbor, is believed to have been the unarmed S.S. Columbia.

37mm. guns from Fort Mears, and the few from the Navy base, began to fire busily but ineffectually. Tracer shells from widely scattered 20mm. gun positions began lacing curved arcs across the sky in the general direction of the oncoming bombers, which were still several miles away and at an estimated altitude of 8,000 feet, far out of range of these small-caliber guns.

The high-flying "Kates," locked into their bombing runs, unswervingly kept coming, unhurried, somehow quietly detached from the noise around us, strangely remote, inevitable.

With my neck craned way back, mouth open, and eyes riveted on the bombers, the unseen Zeros appeared as if by magic. They had come flashing in low and were snarling and swarming among us.

With the exception of Marshall Freerk's PBY, in which he had recently returned from an overnight patrol, the only other Catalina present was that of VP-41's Ensign Jack Litsey. Litsey had the mail run between Dutch Harbor and Kodiak. He had his PBY warmed up and ready for takeoff, when the attack began.

Litsey was carrying two passengers, just as a few days earlier, when he had transported Herold and Smith to Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor, respectively. As Litsey gunned his engines for takeoff, he instructed his radioman to get off a message in the

clear that Dutch Harbor was under attack.

Two Zeros spotted Litsey's PBY attempting to take off, and they made a strafing attack. Litsey's radioman bent over his key as he tapped out the message. A chief petty officer of Litsey's crew, intent on seeing that this message got out, had placed his hand on the radioman's shoulder. A machine gun slug from a strafing Zero passed through the chief's hand and into the back of Martin Zeller, AVRM2c, killing him instantly. Bullets ripping into the PBY killed Rolland Geller, AVRM3c, one of the passengers. Other slugs struck the other passenger, Bert Brown, AVRM3c. The attack had also set Litsey's plane afire. The Zeros made sharp, banking turns and returned to finish the job. Badly wounded, Brown dove out an opened blister hatch and drowned. Litsey brought the burning plane to a skidding crash stop on the spit, where he and the remaining crew members escaped just before the PBY blew up.

A Zero strafed the hangar and another came directly toward our trench on a strafing run at the radio shack. Other Zeros strafed the docks, warehouses, and barracks, then attacked Fort Mears.

Distracted by all this, I'd forgotten about the bombers. I thought the world had come to an end when the first heavy bombs exploded in the dock, warehouse and barracks area. Another string of bombs shook the earth as they struck halfway up our hillside. Amidst this chaos, L.R. Upton and Rebel Hollihand, out of breath, came tumbling pell-mell into our trench.

Bombs and explosions rocked the base and Fort Mears for what seemed like forever. Small flights of enemy bombers came in from different directions, at different high altitudes. One large bomb landed near our trench and close to a gun emplacement, which was just across the dirt road from the dug-in Command Post.

Zeros kept coming back, zipping and diving all over the sky, as they made streakingly fast strafing runs. Although the high-priority radio shack was the target of many of these attacks, the sandbags of our weathermen's fighting trench also absorbed a beating. The bombers were out of range of our rifles, but we repeatedly fired at the incredibly swift Zeros with no apparent effect. They attacked at will.

Dutch Harbor seemed a shambles. Heavy black smoke poured from the old S.S. Northwestern, which had taken a direct bomb hit. Two large fuel storage tanks were burning fiercely. A warehouse and a barracks were in flames. Behind us at Fort Mears, there were many buildings afire. Black smoke rolled over the whole area.

Our tormentors finally left, but only when the bombers were out of high explosive bombs and clusters of incendiaries, and the Zeros had nearly exhausted their supply of 20mm. cannon shells and machine gun ammunition. Japanese records indicate that on the morning of June 3, 1942, their attack planes were over Dutch

Harbor for thirty-five minutes. This is an abnormally long time for a tiny area to be subjected to bombing and strafing.

The aerographers remained alert in their zigzag trench, rifles still clutched or resting on sandbags, not knowing whether this was just a temporary lull before the enemy resumed its attack. The "All Clear" had not sounded. Someone wondered aloud why no dive bombers had taken part. Perhaps they were on their way in to finish the job.

"Anybody hurt?" someone hollered from down the trench.

"No."

"No."

"Not here," came the replies.

A hush settled over us. In the relative quiet that had descended, I became conscious of my thumping heart. It sounded so loud that I wondered if the men on either side of me could also hear it. My lips were dry and I licked them, but my tongue was equally parched. I tried to swallow but couldn't. Someone handed me a canteen. I'd forgotten mine.

Apprehension and brains numbed temporarily by shock kept us quiet for a time, but this did not last long. Some men may have sensed that the attack was over, and reactions set in in the form of chatter.

"Sweet Jesus, I hope it's over," someone muttered.

"How about those friggin' Zeros? Balls, they're fast."

"What the hell size were those bombs?"

"I dunno, probably 500 or 1000-pounders."

"Hell, I'll bet they weighed a ton."

Then a pissed-off voice demanded to know, "Where the hell were the goddamned Army P-40's?"

This was a very good question which nobody could answer at the time.

A Navy radioman at Dutch Harbor had transmitted in the clear, "ABOUT TO BE BOMBED." This message was received all down the line to the east as far as Kodiak. P-40's took off within minutes from the secret airstrip at Cold Bay and headed for Dutch Harbor. Some accounts say that these P-40's arrived only ten minutes after the attacking Japanese planes had departed to the south. We weathermen, from our high vantage point, did not see any P-40's over or around Dutch Harbor, and the Japanese planes headed west on the north side of Unalaska Island. It is our considered opinion that the Cold Bay P-40's were not able to get

through the intense cold front, which at that time was sweeping eastward between Dutch Harbor and Cold Bay.

At the other secret Army fighter strip on the eastern tip of Umnak Island, only forty miles to the west of Dutch Harbor, word that we were under attack was not received at all.

The tragedy of fifty casualties from a single bomb hit on a Fort Mears barracks caused the Navy to close down its barracks and messhall for several days. Men who had been bunking in these main barracks buildings had to scrounge a place to sleep, and we were fed from portable Army field kitchens.

With the approach of darkness, the first day's Battle of Dutch Harbor came to an end. VP-42's Ensign Marshall Freerks, whose PBY had been in the hangar being serviced and escaped damage, took off on another night patrol in an attempt to locate the Japanese carrier fleet.

Ensign Jim Hildebrand, VP-41, who had narrowly avoided being shot down by Zeros that morning, also took off for an overnight search. Hildebrand and his crew never returned, disappearing without a trace.

The Williamson, with aerographer's mates Herold and Roberts, left Cold Bay on June 3, 1942, under orders to proceed to the Dutch Harbor area to help the Gillis service-dispersed PBY's.

Just as the location of our secret Army fighter strip on Umnak Island was a mystery to the Japanese, the whereabouts of the Japanese carrier task force remained a mystery to us. As far as we knew, neither Russell's nor Foley's PBY's, nor the two LB-30 Liberators and several early model B-17's of Colonel William O. Eareckson's 36th Bombardment Squadron, had been able to discover the elusive enemy ships.

Two PBY's, one piloted by Lt. (jg) Jean Cusick, VP-41, the other by Lt. (jg) Lucious D. Campbell, VP-42, had taken off on June 3, 1942 to search to the southwestward. By nightfall, both "Cats" had failed to return and were listed as overdue. Both had found the Japanese carrier fleet.

Three days would elapse before we learned the fate of Campbell and his crew. It would take thirty-nine months for the story of Cusick and his men to come to light.

Cusick took off at 0300 June 3, 1942 from the secret fighter strip on Umnak. On the return leg of his sector patrol at 1000 hours, 200 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor, he was jumped by Zeros of Junyo's air cover. It happened so quickly there was not time for Cusick's radioman to transmit a contact report.

In the slashing attack, Cusick was severely wounded in the shoulder by a tracer bullet. The starboard engine was knocked out, the wing set on fire, and the radio destroyed. Cusick and his co-pilot brought the burning plane down to a safe landing on

the open sea. Engulfed in flames and sinking rapidly, the PBY was quickly abandoned. Three men inflated the large rubber raft and jumped in. The raft had been pierced by many bullets and it sank, sucking the three men down with it. Cusick, his navigator Lt. (jg) Wylie M. Hunt, and two enlisted men, Carl Creamer and Joe Brown, crowded into the two-man raft. There was no room for a fifth man, who, immersed in the icy water, clung to a line which ran through loops around the outside of the raft. He endured it for almost half an hour before he died of exposure and slipped below the wave tops. Cusick died of his wounds shortly afterward. Without hope, Hunt and the other two survivors on the wildly pitching raft waited their turn to die.

The Japanese heavy cruiser Takao happened upon the bobbing raft about noon. The three men, near death from exposure, had to be helped aboard. They were wrapped in blankets and fed soup and hot tea. Later the men were separated, Hunt by himself, and the two enlisted men together in another compartment. They were interrogated. The Japanese especially wanted to know where the American fighters were based. The men pleaded ignorance, even though they had taken off from the Umnak strip, and gave only their names, rank/rate, and serial numbers.

Lucius Campbell took off from Dutch Harbor the afternoon of June 3, 1942 with orders to search the sector of the unreported Cusick. Campbell reached the outer limits of his sector search without finding signs of Cusick's PBY or the enemy. He was on the return leg when he found the Japanese carrier task force.

Unlike Cusick, Campbell had just enough time to get off a complete contact report as to position, course, speed, composition, and deployment of the enemy ships. Campbell had no way of knowing that atmospherics had garbled his message so totally that Dutch Harbor's radioman could not even tell which PBY had transmitted it.

Immediately after transmitting, Campbell nosed over into a dive from 5,000 feet in an attempt to gain cloud cover, but it was too late. Zeros flying Combat Air Patrol (CAP) pounced before the lumbering Yoke boat could safely hide. Machine gun and 20mm. explosive cannon fire quickly reduced the PBY into a flying wreck. Bullets cut the rudder control cables, wounded one of Campbell's waist gunners, AMM3c B.T. Gillis, in the thigh, stitched holes in the starboard gas tanks, started a fire in the tunnel compartment, and a 20mm. cannon shell carried away the forward starboard wing strut. Zeros made a total of five passes at Campbell's cripped "Cat" before he could escape into dense cloud cover.

Nobody had told Campbell that a PBY could not be flown without a rudder. The aeronautical engineers who had designed the plane considered this impossible. Campbell, nonetheless, manhandled the unwieldy beast by means of the ailerons and elevators and set a course for Umnak, the nearest base.

Fuel was pouring out of the sieved starboard gas tank. When

the plane captain flight engineer told Campbell that they only had a half hour's fuel left, Campbell climbed back to 5,000 feet. He had already set the carburetors on their leanest mixtures to conserve fuel, but he knew that they weren't going to reach land. The extra altitude would afford a longer glide path when the engines quit. Forty miles from Umnak, the fuel-starved engines died.

At 5,000 feet, the "Cat" started down into the solid overcast, dead stick, on instruments. With no rudder, Campbell fought the PBY down through the soup. They broke out of the cloud base a scant 300 feet above the cold grey seas. Campbell, somehow, managed to set his crippled crate down safely.

Water began pouring into the hull through the many bullet holes. Crewmen stuffed rags into these holes to keep the PBY from sinking. The first aid kit was opened and the wound in Gillis' thigh was tended to. For the next forty-five minutes, the crew fought the stubborn fire in the tunnel compartment, plugged holes, and bailed. The radioman worked to repair his equipment, which had been damaged by fire.

The fire in the tunnel was finally extinguished, but the combined efforts of the crew could not plug all the leaks. Despite bailing, the plane was slowly sinking. The radioman effected repairs to the radio, at which time the auxillary "putt-putt" generator motor was started and an SOS was transmitted. At this time, the enemy contact report was repeated.

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Nemaha, patrolling nearby as part of Admiral Theobald's early warning line, picked up Campbell's SOS/contact report and headed in the direction of the signal. The drifting, slowly sinking PBY was quickly located and Campbell and his crew rescued. Doomed, the PBY was set afire and sunk by gunfire from Nemaha.

The Nemaha, under orders, continued to patrol for the next forty-eight hours, maintaining strict radio silence. Her skipper, a Warrant Boatswain, and Campbell both assumed that Campbell's enemy contact reports had been received back at Dutch Harbor and Cold Bay.

Three days later, the Nemaha put in at Sand Point in the Shumagin Islands, and Campbell learned that his two contact reports had been garbled by atmospherics. It was at this time also that Lt. Cmdr. Russell discovered with great relief that one of flight crews was safe and not dead as presumed.

Campbell was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and every member of his crew received the Air Medal.

Upon recovering planes after the aborted attack of June 3, 1942 on the American destroyers in Makushin Bay, and the shooting down of both Cusick and Campbell, Kakuta's carrier striking force had reversed course and retired to the southwest. The dawn of June 4 found Kakuta's ships over four hundred miles from Dutch

Harbor.

Meanwhile, Hunt and the other two survivors, Carl Creamer and Joe Brown, had been treated with some kindness by their captors until, late in the afternoon of June 3, a Japanese pilot from the heavy cruiser Maya came over to Takao by small boat. This pilot had flown one of the four catapulted "Petes" that had been jumped so unexpectedly and shot up by P-40's from Umnak. Still shaken from this experience, and infuriated by Hunt's refusal to talk, this enemy pilot stormed into Hunt's compartment and proceeded to try to beat the truth out of him. This didn't work and the pilot returned to the Maya. A short time later, Hunt was grilled again as to the location of the secret American fighter airstrip. Hunt and the two enlisted men still feigned complete ignorance.

The following day, June 4, the Japanese were about to launch their second attack on Dutch Harbor, still not knowing where the P-40's were based. They were determined to make Hunt talk or else. He was bound hand and foot and set down roughly in a chair. A Japanese sailor held the point of a bayonet at Hunt's throat while the officer/interpreter thrust a piece of paper in front of him. Hunt was ordered to answer the three questions written upon it:

1. Where is the American fighter airstrip?
2. How many fighters are there?
3. Where are the remaining American flying boats based?

Even though he had taken off from the Umnak strip, Hunt said that he didn't know the answers. The Japanese officer became furious and ordered Hunt's legs untied. Hunt was marched topside at bayonet point to a platform that protruded over the ship's side. A large weight was fastened around his waist, and with the bayonet pricking him in the back, he was asked the three questions again. Again, Hunt told his captors he did not know the answers. He was then blindfolded and forced forward near the edge of the platform. The interpreter told Hunt that he would have one last chance to save his life by answering the questions truthfully. Hunt insisted he could not tell them something he did not know; that he had only recently arrived in the Aleutians and knew little or nothing about Navy units and nothing whatsoever about U.S. Army groups or activities. Then, in one last, desperate attempt to delay his fate, Hunt asked if there were a chaplain aboard, might he be permitted to make his peace with God before he died?

The interpreter left but returned a few moments later and removed Hunt's blindfold. He told Hunt that they were convinced he was telling the truth. As Hunt was being led away, General Quarters sounded on Takao and the ship went to battle stations to fend off the attacks of two American B-17's from Umnak.

After three weeks, Hunt and the two enlisted men were transferred from Takao to another ship, which transported them to a POW camp in Japan, where they remained until the war's end.

On June 4, the Japanese launched another attack on Dutch Harbor. Greater damage was suffered on this second attack, because the Japanese knew the layout of the base and the dive bombers participated. Our casualties, however, were slightly less, with a total of eighteen killed and twenty-five wounded.

Raging fires and clouds of thick black smoke rolling over the whole of Dutch Harbor, Fort Mears, and Unalaska Village caused it to appear that our installations had been thoroughly destroyed. With their blood red markings, the attacking planes, being low on fuel and ammunition and out of bombs, finally flew away to return to their carriers.

Still unaware that the secret Army airstrip was located on the eastern tip of Umnak Island, Senior Air Officer Okumiya had selected Ship Rock, in the center of Umnak Pass, as the rendezvous for his returning planes. Ship Rock was only about three miles from the P-40 fighter field.

Eight Japanese aircraft gathered over Ship Rock in plain view of the airstrip. Eight P-40's took off to intercept, and in the ensuing dogfights, four "Vals" were shot down, three damaged, and one Zero damaged. The cost to us was one pilot and two P-40's. Lieutenant John J. Cape was shot down in flames, but Lieutenant Winfield E. McIntyre crash-landed his shot-up, on-fire P-40 on a strip of beach and walked away from it.

The Williamson happened to be south of Umnak Pass at the time, having been dispatched earlier to search for a PBY reported to be down and adrift. The Williamson searched through fog and squalls in vain and then received a radio signal that the report had been a false alarm. The ship also received the latest position report of the Japanese task force at this time. Commander K.N. Kivette checked his chart and found that his seaplane tender was within eight miles of Kakuta's ships. He reversed course and rapidly headed back for Umnak Pass. This placed his ship directly in the path of the returning Japanese planes.

The Williamson went to General Quarters when a large bomber was reported on the horizon in the direction of Umnak. This turned out to be a B-17, which was suddenly attacked by several Zeros, each of which made one pass before they banked in the direction of the Williamson.

Unbelievably, a submarine popped to the surface between the Williamson and the approaching Zeros. This submarine was quickly identified as "friendly" (one of Admiral Theobald's six old S-boats on picket-line duty). A Zero dove at the submarine and made a strafing attack. The enemy fighter also dropped what looked like a bomb, which hit and bounced off the conning tower. This missile did not explode and was later believed to have been an empty auxillary belly gas tank. It must have been jettisoned in the hope that it might cause a fire when it hit. This was clearly no place for an S-boat to surface, and its skipper quickly pulled the plug in a crash dive.

Aerographer's mates Herold and Roberts were outside the weather office watching this action as the Zeros came slashing in at the Williamson. Roberts, rooted with fascination, was sitting on the flag bag and shielding his eyes from a few feeble rays of sun when the lead Zero made its first strafing pass. A machine gun bullet flicked Robert's flat-combed, straight brown hair, missing his skull by a quarter of an inch. Herold bellowed orders to take cover, and the two dove into the weather shack.

The two Zeros banked sharply and came back for another strafing attack, as the ship's four .50-caliber machine guns attempted to blast them out of the sky. During the second strafing run, machine gun bullets stitched a diagonal row of holes through the thin steel bulkhead just above the heads of Herold and Roberts. Had Herold been standing in the position of the shorter Roberts, he would have been hit in the head or neck.

The Williamson suffered eleven casualties in the strafing attacks, including one man who lost an eye and another whose leg was broken. After the attack, Captain Kivette found three armor-piercing slugs lodged in the fleece lining of his greatcoat.

The Japanese reported this incident as an attack by two fighters on a small destroyer south of Umnak Pass on the afternoon of June 4, 1942.

Late in the evening of June 4, the Dutch Harbor weather office watch learned that Ensign Albert E. Mitchell's PBY had been shot down in flames outside the entrance to Beaver Inlet. This had happened a few moments before the enemy attacked the base at 1740 hours that afternoon.

An Army gun crew atop a hill at Fisherman's Point on English Bay had watched helplessly while, a few miles away, three Zeros attacked Mitchell's PBY. The gun crew, including their sergeant, had been at Dutch Harbor only a few days, having arrived with CArter and Carey aboard the S.S. Columbia. The soldiers were serving as lookouts at their isolated post until their heavy gun was unloaded. They had spent the past two days laying miles of telephone line over the rough ground from an Army command post in the hills above the village of Unalaska to Fisherman's Point. At 1743 hours, the sergeant sent a report over this line that he and his men had witnessed a tragedy. Mitchell had crash-landed his on-fire PBY on the water. Most of the crew had survived, and they climbed into a rubber raft as the plane began to sink. They began paddling toward the nearest shore. Not content with shooting down the PBY, the Zero pilots strafed the men in the raft until all were killed.

The following is an excerpt from the War Diary of the U.S.S. Gillis, detailing one of her many activities on June 4, 1942:

> "11. At 1948 received a dispatch from Dutch Harbor that a PBY had been shot down off Beaver Inlet near Egg Island and that survivors were afloat in a life raft. Proceeded there at eighteen knots and just east of Unalaga Island, between

that island and Egg Island, a wingtip float with approximately eight feet of wing attached was found. Further searching revealed a life raft unfolded and uninflated with several bullet holes through it, minor debris including a parachute bag and a mattress and a body that later was identified as W.H. Rawls, Aviation Machinist Mate First Class, U.S. Navy."

Killed in action with Ensign Mitchell were: Ensign Joseph M. Tuttle, USNR; Wheeler H. Rawls, AMM1C, USN; Frank G. Schadl, AMM3c, USN; Burton J. Strom, ARM3c, USN; Neal R. Sparks, ARM3c, USN; and James D. Pollit, S2c, USN.

The deaths of Mitchell and his crew brought the two-day total of men killed in Aleutian action to seventy-eight. At Dutch Harbor and Fort Mears, the focal point of both days' attacks, the total killed was forty-three, miraculously few, of about five thousand Army, Navy, and civilian personnel. Twenty-five of the forty-three victims were claimed by one single bomb. The other thirty-five men killed in action -- almost half -- were flight crews of U.S. Navy and U.S. Army aircraft.

That evening of June 4, 1942, we learned that VP-41's Ensign Hildebrand and his crew had failed to return and were listed as missing. No trace of them or their PBY was ever found. Japanese records do not indicate that they were shot down by enemy ships or aircraft. It therefore has to be assumed that the blame rests with Aleutian weather or mechanical trouble. The deaths of Ensign Hildebrand and his crew were listed as operational and are not included in the total of men killed during the Dutch Harbor attacks.

Regardless of how the deaths were officially listed, the casualty rate of flight personnel and aircraft was alarmingly high for the two squadrons of our Patrol Wing. At that point, Cusick, Campbell, Stockstill, Mitchell, and Hildebrand had all taken off and failed to return. In addition to these five crews and PBY's, three men aboard Ensign Litsey's strafed and destroyed plane had been killed; "Cy" Perkins' PBY was badly damaged, and we had lost another PBY in our bombed hangar. Adding the PBY and four men killed in Ensign Andy Smith's takeoff crash on April 23, 1942, and the PBY and the eight-man crew of Ensign Edwin Winter, missing on patrol south of Dutch Harbor since May 9, our total losses were nine PBY's destroyed and one damaged, out of an original twenty-four. As of the night of June 4, our personnel losses stood at seven complete crews, for two days would pass before we learned of the Nemaha's rescue of Campbell and his crew. These PBY losses, amounting to 41.6% of our aircraft, occurred from April 23 to June 4, 1942, a period of only forty-three days, with all but two occurring during a thirty-six hour period on June 3 and June 4.

Historians may classify the Japanese attacks on Dutch Harbor as minor skirmishes in an insignificant theatre of war, resulting in little damage and few casualties, but it was a major disaster for our small Patrol Wing. The future looked none too bright for

those who flew in PBY's.

The low casualty figure at Dutch Harbor can be attributed to the fact we were alerted and dug in in widely scattered, well-protected defensive positions. That the targets were military installations and the Japanese bombs, for the most part, especially on the raid of June 4, were well-aimed were other contributing factors. Enemy pilots scored direct hits on their primary targets, including fuel tanks, hangar, warehouses, barracks, and the Northwestern on both days. Why and how the old vessel could remain afloat must have been a mystery to the Japanese. If they had returned a third time, I'm certain the Northwestern again would have been a prime target.

The enemy failed to score a direct bomb hit on the radio shack. This major target was repeatedly attacked by bombers and fighters on both days but remained in operation. These persistent attacks on the radio shack notwithstanding, none of the U.S. Navy weathermen was injured. Bombs exploding on our trench side and classified as near misses on the radio shack were closer to being direct hits on our position. Jarring concussions from these bombs left our ears ringing, and we were showered with dirt and small rock.

VIII

VP-42

STALKING THE JAP FLEET

by

Elmer A. Freeman

Admiral Kakuta's carriers sneaked in within 200 miles of Dutch Harbor. We were flying out of Dutch Harbor at that time and had planes searching twenty-four hours a day. On the morning of June 3, our crew was heading toward Dutch Harbor after an all-night search to the west. Suddenly, the radioman picked up a message that Dutch Harbor was under attack. Next, there was a message for us to land in a bay about 100 miles short of Dutch Harbor and wait for further orders.

Around noon, we received the all-clear message and proceeded on to Dutch Harbor. Some airplanes and buildings were wrecked, and a ship sitting at the dock was putting up a plume of smoke. A couple of VP-41's PBY's had been trying to take off from the bay when the attack came. A Japanese fighter strafed Mr. Litsey's plane while he was still on his takeoff run, killing two people and setting the plane on fire. Mr. Litsey was able to run his plane up on the beach, and the crew got clear before it blew up. The other plane, Ensign Hildebrand's, got airborne with the Zeroes chasing him, but he got up into the soup and got away from them. This same crew got caught in a severe storm the very next night, while shadowing the Japanese task force, and was never heard from again.

There was some confusion in communications, and we had orders waiting for us to load up with gas and head out on a search to the north over the Bering Sea. We put in twelve hours looking for the Japanese carriers up there when, in fact, they were to the south of the Aleutians. We did have some planes out to the south, too, and one of them, Mr. Campbell's, found the enemy ships. They tangled with some Zeroes and had some control cables shot away and were leaking fuel, but Mr. Campbell was able to maintain enough control to get them back toward Umnak, losing altitude all the way. When they finally made a dead-stick landing at sea, they were near enough to a Coast Guard Cutter to be rescued. The plane couldn't be saved, and thus another PBY was scratched, courtesy of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

From then on, it was our mission to keep radar contact with the fleet and send in position reports so the Army bombers could come out and carry out an attack. The fog was our best friend for the kind of mission we had. With the radar, we could keep in contact, but they couldn't find us in the soup. At least that

was the way it worked most of the time. We lost two planes during our round-the-clock surveillance, when the Japanese Zeroes were able to spot them through a hole in the soup. Mr. Stockstill's crew was lost when they were shot down while trailing the Japanese fleet. Mr. Perkins tried to make a torpedo run on the carrier group and got shot up pretty badly but was able to pull up and get back to the base. Birchman, Mr. Perkins' plane captain, was not gung-ho for torpedo runs after that trip.

The Army bombers had all kinds of trouble in the weather. They didn't have radar and had to depend on dead-reckoning navigation. A couple of their planes found the carrier group but couldn't attack effectively in the blind weather.

On June 4, the Japanese managed to get some more bombers in the air and carried out another attack on Dutch Harbor. The weird part of these operations was that there were times when our planes passed each other, probably within a mile or so, and never saw each other. But on this second day, the Japanese met some unexpected opposition. As they headed back toward their ships, they were met by P-40's coming from the west. That was a rude surprise, because they had no knowledge of any base west of Dutch Harbor. In fact, the same thing should have happened on June 3, but the patchwork communications setup failed to get the message through to the P-40 outfit at the secret base on Umnak that there was an attack in progress.

When one of our PBY's, Mr. Mitchell's, with "Rebel" Rawls in the crew, tangled with a Zero, one of the gunners was able to inflict enough damage so that the Zero had to make a forced landing on one of the islands. The PBY was destroyed and the crew lost, but the Zero proved to be one of the great prizes of the war for our aircraft design people. It was salvaged and rebuilt and flown to reveal design weaknesses. U.S. aircraft design and flight tactics would take deadly advantage of those weaknesses after that.

The urgency of our searches took on a new dimension after June 3. Previous to that date, we <u>thought</u> the Japanese were heading our way. Now we <u>knew</u> they had arrived and were dead set on giving us a hard time. We flew a lot of hours with the blisters open and the guns rigged and ready, because if we made a contact, there would be some shooting going on.

Admiral Kakuta's carriers were as intent on trying to evade us as we were on trying to find them. Every contact report put them in a different location, and we adjusted our searches accordingly. If we departed from Dutch Harbor, we returned to Umnak. If we departed from Umnak, we might return to Cold Bay or Dutch Harbor, always trying to set up a new departure point as near as possible to the Japanese fleet.

Cold Bay was located near the end of the Alaska Peninsula, and the Army was flying P-40's and B-26's from there. It also offered a haven for the Navy's vagabond PBY's. On June 4, we landed there, coming in from a ten-hour search. As usual, we

topped off the gas tanks and checked the planes over for departure on short notice. At Cold Bay, our communication procedure was unique. The Operations/Communications center was in a dug-out hole in the ground about a half mile away from our parking area, across the runway. Once we were gassed up and ready, we watched a mound of dirt right outside Operations. Gabriel, our Leading Chief, would appear on the mound every so often and start sending semaphore. He didn't use flags as signalmen did. He just used his arms. During our training in the Beach Crew, and as Third Class, we were all required to learn semaphore, so he expected us to be able to read his signals. He would send "Dickey stand by" or "Russell stand by," using the name of the plane commander to designate the crew to let us know who had to be ready to go. One of us would send back "ready" so he would know we were ready to go and had received his message.

As we stood by the airplane on June 4 waiting for our signalman to show up on the mound, the air raid signal went off. All of the residents of the base headed for their foxholes or gun stations, and those of us who were transients headed out across the tundra looking for a place to hide. Our crew found a series of shallow trenches a couple of hundred yards from the runway, and we all dived in and then started searching the sky for enemy planes. After a few minutes of waiting with no attack, we began a closer examination of our surroundings. I noticed what appeared to be some metal showing through the turf next to me and pulled the grass apart to get a closer look. It turned out to be a steel drum of gasoline. A little more frantic examination revealed that we had picked a gasoline storage area as our "safe" haven. There never was an attack that day, and the "all clear" sounded as we madly bailed out of our trenches. If a bomb or strafing attack had hit anywhere near where we had been, a whole acre of tundra would have gone sky high with us right in the middle of it. As we walked back to our plane, Gabriel was signaling us from his mound: "Dickey stand by." Cold Bay was a nice place to visit, but I would not want to live there.

Searching for submarines was like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. Trying to spot a submarine periscope sticking up in the North Pacific or Bering Sea was a tiring and frustrating experience. Sometimes we would pick up a radar indication of a vessel on the surface fifteen miles away, but when we arrived at the spot, there was nothing to be seen. The target had long since disappeared.

Our submarines moved in and out of the base at Dutch Harbor at regular intervals, and we might see one on the surface if we happened to be flying near the mouth of the harbor when he was entering or departing. But outside the harbor, we could be sure he would be submerged and we would never spot him. Some of our submarines would hang around Kiska Harbor or out along the Aleutians, looking for Japanese ships, but sometimes they ranged all the way over to Japan, hunting for targets. If U.S. submarines were operating where we were searching, our plane commander was furnished with a grid chart showing where they were and what their movements would be. We always assumed they saw us

before we saw them, and they had a signaling device with which they could fire colored flares to identify themselves so we wouldn't be dropping depth charges on them.

When we sighted a periscope, we immediately started a depth charge run on it, assuming that if it was U.S., he would fire a flare to let us know who he was. Most of the time, we would see green smoke or red smoke or whatever color was proper for the particular time of day, and we would make our pass over the periscope without dropping our depth charges. But if no signal came up, we would blow a couple of holes in the ocean.

When we spotted what we even thought might be a submarine, our run had to be quick and accurate. There wouldn't be a second chance, because by the time we could get back around for another run, the target would be long gone. Sometimes we were not one hundred percent sure that what we saw was really a periscope, but we always made a run on it. A few times we recognized our target as a large fish as we closed in on it and saved our depth charges. If the uncertainty could not be resolved, we made our attack and tried to see if we had done any damage afterwards. I suspect we blew up a couple of fish along the way, but I like to think that we shook up a few Japanese sailors, too.

Whenever we were on patrol in the vicinity of Kiska, we were on the alert for reports of Army Air Corps pilots being shot down. Nobody could survive for very long in the icy waters, but on several occasions our planes were able to get there in time to set down and rescue downed pilots. One of the Army pilots thought so much of this service that he wrote a poem about it. Our Wing Commander issued a letter with the poem and had copies distributed to all hands in the PBY squadrons.

IX

AFTERMATH

by

Paul Carrigan

Even though official U.S. Government press releases concerning the enemy attacks on Dutch Harbor were highly propagandized, they became part of published history. These accounts falsely stated and stressed the fact that Dutch Harbor was heavily defended and that we threw up a furiously intense curtain of heavy anti-aircraft fire that blackened the sky. This "story" was intended to boost morale and calm the jittery nerves of the American public, thereby avoiding possible panic, especially on the West Coast. Official U.S. Navy photographs taken during the attacks clearly show Japanese aircraft against a background of leaden grey skies, but there are few puffs of black anti-aircraft fire visible.

Afterward, it was quite natural for the aerographers to also recall and recount several incidents that took place among our small group during the period of the attacks. Considering the deadly serious nature of conditions around us, it is incongruous that some of the incidents had a humorous aspect. This incongruity of an odd kind of humor in such situations seems a mechanism for the release of ongoing tensions that could otherwise become intolerable. Such tension release can also explode as rage. We experienced both kinds.

The Reason Was Not an Excuse

The rest of us had been curious as to why Hollihand and Upton were so late arriving at the trench the morning of June 3. The two had had the 1600-midnight duty in the weather shack and had hit the sack about 0030. An hour and a half later the dawn alert had sounded. They were supposed to go to the trench, but there had been so many alerts for so long that they chose to ignore this one and catch a few more winks. Neither one claimed to have heard the "all clear" sound at 0330. The second alarm around 0400 had only stirred Upton's subconscious enough to become part of a dream. He did not awaken until exploding 20mm cannon shells from a strafing Zero ripped into the barracks.

Upton was up, dressed, and headed for the door within seconds. He turned to check on Hollihand. Instead of being in feverish activity, Hollihand was sitting on the edge of his bunk in his skivvies, with a pair of dungarees clutched in one hand.

"What the hell are you waiting for?" asked an incredulous

Upton. "Hurry up! Get your clothes on. The Japs are here!"

"Ah'm tryin'," Rebel Hollihand replied, "but ah cain't stop mah knees fom shakin'."

They had sprinted from the barracks to near the base of our hill. Here they had taken temporary refuge from a string of exploding bombs by crouching alongside a cylindrical, cement sentry tower. From here they had run up the hill as a string of bombs, dropped by Lt. Samajima's "Kates" and meant for the radio shack, hit halfway up the hill. These bombs missed Hollihand and Upton by mere seconds. After hearing their story, we could understand why they were both gasping for breath when they dove into the trench.

Chief Darr Was Upset

While the other weathermen calmed down after the attacks, Chief Darr remained agitated and incensed to the extreme. Just prior to the attack on the morning of June 3, 1942, Darr had received word by phone from the Command Post to sound the alarm because the Japanese planes were on their way in. John Lynch was sitting on the boardwalk railing, completing a weather observation, when Darr came charging out of the office. In his haste to reach the alarm button, Darr slipped, landing on his butt in the mud. Someone saw the soiled seat of the Chief's trousers and spread the tale that Darr had crapped his pants. We suspected that Lynch started this rumor even though he claimed innocence. His suggestion that "It was probably somebody hurrying by" lacked the ring of truth.

Bill Stewart's Case of Bubonic Plague

Several hundred sailors became displaced persons for several days when the Navy shut down its barracks on June 3, 1942. Bill Stewart, along with other weather-guessers who had been bunking in one of the main barracks, decided that if they could not sleep in the barracks, they would sleep under it. On the evening of June 3, these men gathered up their bedding and selected a place under the barracks that had about four feet of crawl space. The past twenty-four hours had been trying ones and the exhausted weathermen quickly settled down and dropped off to sleep.

About midnight, a large rat bit Stewart on the ear. Stew screamed in terror and pain as he took a frantic swipe at the filthy creature. His loud cry and commotion in the inky blackness startled the other men into wide-eyed wakefulness.

"What is it?" an alarmed voice asked.

Before this question could be answered, another screaming "AAAHHRAAGH!" pierced the night. Someone, momentarily forgetting where he was, grabbed his rifle and tried to stand up. In the

process, he crunched his head into a floor joist.

"Sonuvabitch, what the hell's happening?" someone demanded.

"I can't find my f-----g shoes!" exclaimed another.

Pandemonium took over when Stew told the men he'd been bitten on the ear by a rat. Another scream from a different man, additional cursing and commotion in the dark caused it to be chillingly imagined that a whole pack of slimy, beady-eyed, sharp-fanged wharf rats was attacking. Additional heads met assorted floor joists as men hurriedly attempted to collect their belongings and beat a hasty retreat from under the building. This ended that sleeping arrangement.

Stewart reported to sick bay for treatment of the puncture wounds. Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen were busy tending men wounded during the Japanese air attack and gave him the brush-off. He hung around until a corpsman found the time to at least dab some Tincture of Merthiolate on the rat bite and supply Stew with a couple of Band-Aids.

Stewart, understandably concerned about the possibility of infection or disease from the bite, borrowed a medical book from the pharmacist's mate and started studying the day-to-day symptoms of bubonic plague.

Bill Stewart enjoyed practical jokes and was adept at them. He softened us up for this con job by solemnly reading a brief history of the dreaded disease, the rapidity with which death arrives, and the extremely high mortality rate. He would each day read aloud the new day's symptoms and in all seriousness, announce that he felt exactly that way. The power of suggestion worked so well that some others believed they were suffering from similar symptoms.

After two days of this farce, a gullible one asked Stew, "What happens tomorrow?"

This was the straight man and the line Stew had been patiently waiting for.

"Tomorrow," (dramatic pause) "I die...Heh..heh..heh."

We had no tomatoes, so someone threw a boot at the actor.

Upton and The Sunshine Recorder

The sunshine recorder was an instrument with a clock mechanism that drove a small, cylindrical metal drum to which a chart was attached. A large magnifying glass mounted on the top of the case was supposed to catch the sun's rays and burn a pinpoint trace on the slowly revolving chart. No one could recall ever having seen a sunshine mark on any of the charts. The sunshine recorder sat expectantly on a post outside the

weather office.

In addition to his regular duties, the task of changing sunshine recorder charts had been assigned to L.R. Upton upon his arrival at Dutch Harbor. Chief Darr held him responsible to see that this duty was performed without fail. Upton took quite a ribbing about all this and soon developed a hatred for the sunshine recorder.

During the height of the second day's attack, with bombs exploding, Zeros strafing, and a great amount of firing taking place, Upton momentarily ran out of Zeros to shoot at. He searched for a target and spied an enemy, the sunshine recorder, below and several hundred yards away. He got off two shots and missed before a Zero came in on another strafing run at the radio shack. During the remainder of the raid, Upton did not get a chance to take aim again at his secondary target. When the firing ceased, it was too late. Upton had missed his golden opportunity. As a result, he had to continue changing unmarked sunshine charts until he was transferred to Nikolski on Umnak Island about the middle of June, 1942.

The Smitty's Jug and "Preacher" Vernon Incident

This was not the least bit funny at the time and involved all of the weathermen in the trench. We planned to have a short celebration if we survived the Japanese attacks. Emmett Smith, fresh from the States, still had a precious pint of good sippin' whiskey. He had carefully hidden this between some sandbags. Seconds before the attack of June 4 began, Smitty announced that when it was over he would pass the jug around.

Emmett's trench mate was R.E. "Preacher" Vernon, a devout Mormon. Slender of build, Vernon had sparse, light brown hair combed straight back. His brown eyes were close set, his nose and chin sharp and separated by thin lips, all of which gave his features a narrow, slightly pinched look. He was neat in appearance and habits, bouncily energetic, inquisitive, and he expressed his sense of humor with an odd, snuffling, nasal laugh. A good watch-stander and bright, Vernon was well liked by his shipmates except when he got off on his zealous, missionary tangents. He was unswervingly strict and dedicated in his church beliefs. Vernon would not tolerate the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and he was valiantly fighting a losing battle in his attempts to stamp out cussing among us.

Vernon and Smith, antipodean in beliefs and appearance, found themselves side by side in a fighting trench.

Bulky from top to bottom, heavy-jowled Emmett Smith from LaVeta, Colorado, was a happy-go-lucky, fun-loving extrovert. Possessed of a fine sense of humor, he had a quick wit and a wryly sarcastic, often sacrilegious tongue.

While the "all clear" was sounding after the Japanese

attack, Vernon discovered the hiding place of Smitty's whiskey bottle. Before Emmett or anyone else could stop him, the "Preacher" poured the bourbon out into the mud of the trench, proclaiming as he did so, "This is the devil's brew!"

The bystanders were momentarily stunned into immobility by Vernon's act. Then they exploded with cursing rage and a bit of shoving. The "Preacher," stunned in turn by the venom and hatred suddenly directed against him, must have feared for his life at that moment. He didn't even attempt to scold anyone for swearing, and the words heaped upon him were the foulest that a furious group of sailors could conjure. Luckily for Vernon, the more violent members of our band in the narrow, zigzag trench were not close to him at this instant.

What harm would have come from our each taking a slug from the jug? The bond among a small group of Navy weathermen, who together had endured and survived two days of prolonged enemy air attacks, was not to be celebrated as planned; a blood brother symbolism that instead of the prick that draws blood, brought the flow of whiskey -- and ill temper.

The Prototype Navy Chowhound

The civilian messhalls, unlike the U.S. Navy's, remained open during the Japanese raids. After sampling the food at our assigned temporary Army field kitchen on the evening of June 3, 1942, some of us wind-guessers (along with a number of other enterprising Navy personnel) fell in line for breakfast with the civilian workers on the morning of June 4, 1942. Because of the mixed bag of clothing worn, it was impossible to distinguish sailor from civilian, and we trooped in undetected and sat down to the best meal we'd had in months.

Unfortunately for him, Walter Babic did not learn of our sly chow maneuver until late that evening. Babic, a massive young man from Montesano, Washington, possessed a huge, passionate appetite for food which had earned him the nickname "Sea Pig." As our undisputed knife-and-fork champion, he was incensed that we had not cut him in on our good chow deal sooner.

After he spent a restless night of mouth-watering anticipation, Babic joined us for breakfast on the morning of June 5. We fell in at the end of a long line that wound around several corners and which eventually led to the main entrance of a civilian messhall.

After numerous slow, shuffling steps, we worked our way around the final corner only to discover that all Navy personnel were being turned away at the door. The construction company had issued special chow passes to their workers, thereby effectively putting a stop to the Navy freeloaders. The Sea Pig could have cried.

Because of the time wasted in the civilian chow line, we had

to run for the Army field kitchen before it shut down. We barely made it. Instead of the well-prepared, sumptuous meal we'd eagerly looked forward to, cool, rubbery, scrambled, powdered eggs were slapped down into our proffered mess kits, and at the end of the line stood a bin of cold, curled-up toast.

Babic's face clearly showed deep disappointment and frustration as he stared at the unappetizing glob in his mess kit. The episode, capped by Babic's expression, struck the rest of us as being so comical that we started to laugh. At first, Babic became angry and began cussing and blaming us for most of his troubles, which only made it seem funnier. Then, as we broke up in contagious laughter, he saw the humor of it all and joined in. Our rollicking hilarity reached an almost hysterical pitch as two days of pent-up tensions were released like waters from a bursting dam. Laughter would subside with convulsive sobs, only to erupt again when Babic pointed at his food with disbelief, saying, "God! Just look at this stuff!" and again when someone gasped, "Are...you...going...back...for...seconds?"

Our sideaches finally subsided and the tears stopped flowing as we regained control of our emotions. It had been a good tonic and we felt better for it.

After eating instead of dining, we headed for roll call at the weather shack. Babic was still bemoaning the way he'd been shafted by the fickle finger of fate. In happy spirits, we reported to John Lynch, the senior petty officer of the watch that morning. After two straight days of Zeros in our midst, Lynch, always the realist, greeted us with, "Okay, you clowns, fall in outside and line up for strafing attack." This sobering thought brought us back to a world we had momentarily forgotten.

A third Japanese attack, which we had expected might occur at dawn on June 5, 1942, did not take place. We did not know it, but the Battle of Dutch Harbor was over. An air of tension remained, however, for we had failed to damage either of the Japanese carriers when presented with the opportunity and had lost contact with them since the previous afternoon. The enemy raiders were still on the loose somewhere in the mists, and there was no reason to expect they would not return.

We prepared for another attack, and the Japanese surely would have hit us again had not the Battle of Midway intervened and developed as it did.

LOST IN THE FOG: One enemy carrier task force. If found, please notify.....

My boss, Lt. Cmdr. John F. Tatom, whom I had not seen since leaving Seattle in February, flew into Dutch Harbor from Wing headquarters at Kodiak late in the afternoon of June 5, 1942.

Tatom was upset. He wanted to know why the patrol flight weather reports taken by his aerographer's mates seemed to cease

at the most critical moment when they were so vital to the preparation of accurate forecasts for PBY pilots seeking the enemy carrier fleet.

Tatom wanted to know the reason, for instance, I wasn't out on patrol at that moment, or Smith, or Carey, or any one of the dozen other aerographer's mates at Dutch Harbor.

I attempted to explain that we'd been busy at Dutch Harbor. Most of our PBY's had either been shot down, shot up, were missing, or had been dispersed.

Tatom wasn't interested in excuses and had even less tolerance for impertinence.

"Do I have to fly the weather myself? What the hell do you think I sent you out here for in the first place? You've got a plane now -- the one I came in. Get your toilet kit, extra clothes, and a sleeping bag and get down to that PBY right now. It is being refueled and will fly out to either the Gillis or Williamson for the night."

"Max White, Calderon, and Olsen are already on the Gillis and Carter has orders to her," I ventured, "and Herold and Roberts are on the Williamson."

"Goddamnit, Carrigan," Tatom exploded, "I'm not sending you to a tender for duty, I'm sending you to fly the weather until I tell you to stop. Do you understand me?!"

"Yes, Sir."

"Tell White and Herold that I want them to send at least one of their aerographers daily into the sectors where they expect the worst weather. They are not to hesitate to each send two men out in different sectors if the situation warrants. There is no other way to pinpoint these storm systems and fast-moving fronts. The only damn accurate weather reports to the west will be the ones taken by us. Now get going before you miss your plane."

I reported as ordered to the PPC of the PBY at the seaplane ramp. The VP-41 crew, having been sent out as a replacement unit, were new to me and the Aleutians. The senior pilot told me to throw my gear aboard and climb in. Refueling was almost completed, and as soon as he'd made a last-minute check with the duty operations officer, we'd get airborne.

Twenty minutes after takeoff, we landed in Trident Bay, Akutan Island. Mooring gear was broken out as the pilot taxied to a buoy, and our PBY was quickly secured for the night. A crash boat came alongside to take us to the anchored Gillis.

When I walked into the tender's weather shack, Chief Max White thought I was returning from a long sector patrol. When I told him I'd just come from Dutch Harbor, he couldn't understand why I'd been sent to the Gillis when she alredy had about thirty

percent of the Wing's aerographer's mates. With typical patience, the seldom ruffled Max White received Tatom's verbal orders that I passed on in partial explanation of my presence. With a wry smile, he wondered aloud if Tatom knew there was a war going on around Dutch Harbor. Max knew the value of accurate in-flight weather reports as well as anyone, and he'd been sending us out on sector patrols at every opportunity. White surmised that if Tatom had not received all of the reports at Kodiak, it was probably because of overloaded, fouled-up communication.

The Gillis was dreadfully overcrowded, and that night I spread my sleeping bag in a corner of the tiny weather shack. Plane crew members, including some of the pilots, had to sleep on the steel deck in any space they could find. Many crew members chose to sleep in the planes.

Max sent me on a flight into the Bering Sea early the following morning. All PBY's operating from the Gillis were sent on Bering Sea patrols that day, a Japanese task force having been reported in that area.

Our flight lasted almost twelve hours, all of it in solid soup under a thick overcast. Most of the patrol was at an altitude of 50 feet to maintain visual contact with the wave tops.

Ceiling and visibility were near zero-zero at Akutan and Dutch Harbor upon our return. Our pilot was advised to try for Chernofski Bay. We flew southwestward along the northern shore of Unalaska only to find conditions there equally poor. After a rather rough but safe landing outside the entrance to Chernofski, we taxied in and up to the stern of the anchored Williamson.

Chief Aerographer's Mate Chuck Herold received my verbal report from Tatom with mounting fury. The Williamson had been in the area less than sixty hours. She had spent almost the entire time underway, searching for reported downed PBY's. Zeros had strafed the ship south of Umnak Pass on June 4. Later that day and the following day, the Williamson had rescued two PBY's and crews found forced down at sea.

One plane had searched for the Japanese fleet beyond a safe fuel margin and upon its return, had used up its reserves while groping in the fog for its base. The Williamson found this plane and refueled it at sea.

Lt. (jg) Jep C. Johnson's PBY had been forced down at sea by mechanical trouble, and this plane had been located and towed into Chernofski.

Search patrols from the ship had only commenced that morning, and Roberts had been sent out to fly the weather. Herold felt that Tatom should be well aware of the Williamson situation.

"Christ, C.C.," I said after he'd vented his wrath, "don't

take it out on me. I'm only passing on The Word. I've got troubles of my own. Tatom ordered me to fly every damn day from wherever the hell I end up until he tells me to stop."

The following day, June 7, Herold sent Roberts on a search patrol southwest of the Aleutians. He sent me on another patrol into the Bering Sea. This time it was on a western sector just to the north of the Aleutians. Again, the weather was stinking with a solid, low overcast of stratus, dense fog patches, and intermittent drizzle. Upon our return, we taxied into Chernofski Bay to discover the Gillis anchored there.

The Williamson had gone to Dutch Harbor to top off fuel tanks and take on stores. She had been pressed into service as hearse/hospital ship for victims of the Japanese attacks. With sixteen dead and fifty wounded, the Williamson was on a high-speed run to Kodiak. Near Cold Bay, she would pass the Hulbert, which had been ordered to the Dutch Harbor area.

Upon taxiing into Chernofski, there were no planes being serviced by the Gillis, so we maneuvered up to her stern for refueling. When this operation was completed, we were fended off and taxied to a mooring buoy. A crash boat collected us and took us to the ship.

Max White sent me on a sector patrol southwest of the Aleutians on June 8 that turned out to be almost a duplication of Robert's flight the previous day. For endless hours, our PBY droned along under a solid overcast, in and out of fog patches and drizzle, with conditions zero-zero on numerous occasions. The ceiling was seldom over 200 feet, and the visibility fluctuated between zero and a mile at most.

When we came within range of the Aleutians, our radar set, which had been acting up all day, became even more erratic. All attempts to adjust or tune out false echoes failed, and the readings could not be trusted. With the fang of Ship Rock waiting within, our pilot was not about to go charging blindly into the narrow jaws of Umnak Pass. He turned eastward and began the nerve-wracking job of skirting the jagged southern shore of Unalaska Island. An hour and a half later, after some trying moments flying through dense fog patches, we landed at Dutch Harbor.

During my three days' absence, the weather office had been moved from the shack on the boardwalk to the building on the hill that had been the communications stations during the Japanese attacks. Communications had moved into a new reinforced concrete structure near the docks. Radio towers had been erected in the hills on the south side of the bay. One transmitter and receiver had been left in the old radio shack, and there were still radiomen on duty there to copy and transmit our weather schedules. The bat cave hut next door still housed these radiomen and eight aerographer's mates.

In addition to the old radio towers which were left

standing, the civilian workmen had erected a dummy tower next to the building that was our new weather shack. This was done to fool the Japanese into attacking the old communications station again, if and when they returned. The aerographers were unhappy about this Navy brass brainstorm to use the new weather office as bomb bait.

The Rat Islands Acquire a New Batch of Rodents

During the past week, our four seaplane tenders had been hopping around like Mexican jumping beans in their attempt to stay one step ahead of operations and the rapidly fluctuating situation. This game of musical chairs was played to a fast tempo and would continue until August 30, 1942.

By June 10, the Gillis, which had been in and out of Dutch Harbor, Beaver Inlet, Akutan, Chernofski, and Cold Bay, all within a week, had moved 350 miles west to Nazan Bay on the eastern end of Atka.

About eighty Aleuts lived at Nazan Bay, along with three Caucasian employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Mrs. Ethel Oliver, the school teacher, and Mr. and Mrs. Sam McGee, who ran the store. Sam also took weather reports and operated Nazan Bay's radio. He was one of the men whom Wild Bill Lindeman and Squeaky Anderson had recruited for their "Fish Net" radio circuit at the outset of WWII.

When the Gillis moved west, the Casco was ordered from Cold Bay to join the Hulbert at Chernofski. Casco's place at Cold Bay would be filled temporarily by the Williamson.

Extensive operations quickly depleted the aviation gas, bombs, depth charges, and various stores of the AVD tenders, Gillis, Williamson, and Hulbert, necessitating frequent speed runs to Dutch Harbor to refuel and replenish. Whenever a tender had to leave her flock for these purposes, another tender took her place to service returning PBY's.

If this tender juggling could not be accomplished on time, the returning planes either landed on the untended bay, anchored to buoys and waited, or if the delay would be too great, the returning planes were ordered to bases such as Dutch Harbor or the airfield on Umnak Island, or to a bay where a tender was operating. Occasionally, a plane was sent to Cold Bay.

When one adds this situation to the almost daily occurrence of various PBY's being "weathered out" and seeking shelter anywhere they could, it is no wonder that plane crews, including aerographer's mates, led gypsy lives. This total lack of assurance that we would return to the same takeoff location heightened the aura of impermanence.

PART THREE

PBY SQUADRON STORIES

X

VP SQUADRON FORTY-ONE

IN THE ALEUTIANS (1941-1942)

by

Paul Foley, Jr., Rear Admiral USN, Ret.

Squadron 41 was one of two PBY seaplane squadrons: VP-41 and VP-42, assigned to Patrol Wing Four (subsequently Fleet Air Wing Four) based at Naval Air Station, Seattle, Washington, more familiarly known as NAS Sand Point -- "the country club of the Northwest." The date was June, 1941. Our world was still (for us) at peace, and my personal change of duty from a tour in U.S.S. Northampton as senior aviator of a four-plane heavy cruiser aviation unit (in Pearl Harbor) to a VP squadron was a welcome change.

My wife, formerly a student at the University of Hawaii, University of London (the Slade School of Art), and a graduate of the University of Washington, Seattle, felt very much at home in our new duty location. We settled into a delightful little house overlooking the Naval Air Station with our small son, David, expecting a pleasant two years ahead.

My PBY-3 type squadron, commanded by a softspoken Lieutenant Commander F.B. Johnson (later Rear Admiral), was quietly busy training, training, training, set upon qualifying every pilot as a Patrol Plane Commander as soon as possible. Our able and dynamic Flight Officer, Lt. P.H. Ramsey, cigar and all, kept us going and meticulously checked every single qualification on an elaborate board posted in his office. There were 50-plus categories to be completed. Each day, we climbed into our seaplanes, rolled down the semi-submerged ramp into Lake Washington, paused to remove the beaching gear, and taxied out across the water for takeoff on the first flight of the day.

Our busy, but relatively relaxed, schedule was interrupted about every two months by what were called "Advance Base Operations," during which the entire squadron took off for a week or two's maneuvers at an Alaskan base. Sitka was the first one and during our successive visits, was gradually completed as a seaplane base by the civilian private contractor, so that it became more hospitable: hangars were constructed, seaplane ramps, parking aprons, docks for aircraft tenders, modest repair facilities, etc., were completed. A radio range was installed, weather facilities, as well as a bachelor officers' quarters (50 officers), enlisted barracks, mess halls, etc., which soon took care of most of our needs. At first, roads or sidewalks were

constructed around the bases. In the usual wet weather, there was a great deal of mud about -- "muskeg," as we learned to call it. But our planes were protected and safe. There was plenty of aviation gasoline, oil for transportation, plus ferry service to the nearby old town of Sitka. It was pleasant and enjoyable.

After our first operations at Sitka in August of '41, on a subsequent visit we flew across the Gulf of Alaska to Naval Air Station Kodiak. Here a large NAS was rapidly being completed by the contractor: several large steel seaplane hangars (alas! still without floors), several seaplane ramps, large parking areas and a full-fledged airfield with 5,000-foot paved runways. There was also an overhaul shop, communications station, and an elaborate fire department. Quarters had been completed for married officers -- at first located in the ubiquitous muskeg! Wives plotted ways and means of avoiding it when stepping out of buildings!

Another 625 miles west, along the Aleutian Island chain, lay Dutch Harbor, on Unalaska Island. This had been a small naval base for years, but quite primitive until World War II. There was a little fishing village there -- Aleuts and their families. The limited naval base had been established for small ships, coast guard, fishermen, etc. A seaplane ramp had been built, with a parking apron. Navy fuel oil was available in limited quantities, as was aviation gasoline and diesel oil. As we noted when we arrived there, a general contractor had begun building wooden barracks for defending Army troops, supply facilities, even a bomb-proof power house. There were a few slips for submarines.

Such were the bases to which, from Seattle in 1941, VP-41 and VP-42 flew irregularly to familiarize pilots with their layout and limitations. Contingents from each squadron stayed a few days at a time, operating in the vicinity before returning to the Seattle area. By Fall of 1941, I had sampled all of them as far west as Dutch Harbor. Meanwhile, training at NAS Seattle went on, each of us getting closer to the coveted PPC rating.

During this time, the war in Europe began to impinge more actively upon our lives. Senior officers in the squadron, one by one, were detached for other duty: a war cruise in <u>H.M.S Illustrious</u>; to become commander of a newly organized Carrier Air Group; duty in carriers preparing for wartime operations, etc. Those remaining moved up in the squadron; by December of 1941, I was to become Executive Officer of VP-41.

A month before, however, in November of '41, my squadron was deployed to Kodiak for a more sustained routine duty. Pilots were allowed to take their wives and children to Kodiak for the first time. Despite warnings, many elected to take their automobiles, only to be urgently importuned to sell them right on the docks by the ever-hungry Kodiak taxi drivers! Slowly, however, a reasonably normal social life developed at the new air station, and for those who went with the squadron, it proved an interesting and unusual interlude. Some wives, including mine,

elected to remain in Seattle with small children.

Ten miles away, by a rudimentary road, was the "town" of Kodiak proper, looking very much like a typical Hollywood frontier town of the U.S. West, and every bit as wild and badly behaved. It was a liberty town for the enlisted men and for construction workers. Officers, too, enjoyed its pleasures. Transportation to and from the air base to Kodiak was by commercial, so-called "taxis," driven by enterprising civilians. Their method of operation resulted in a unique local custom. First, it must be known that Kodiak is within 75 miles of the volcano, Mount Katmai, which in 1912 blew its top in one of the strongest blasts in recent history, spewing the islands surrounding it with more than five feet of ash and pumice. This abrasive material is devastating to working machinery such as automobile engines, drive-trains, gears -- even to bomb sights, etc. -- literally grinding them to pieces in short order. Cars, for instance, could not be expected to operate for more than a few months in taxi service. Thus, when a steamer arrived bringing automobiles belonging to private owners, the taxi men would meet the boat and offer premium prices which could hardly be resisted in a bid to buy the "new" vehicles. The effect was to eliminate personally owned automobiles in the area. So to go to town, one went inevitably by taxi! Because Kodiak was largely lawless, too, few carried cash money. It was deemed safer to accept a simple IOU for the inflated price of an automobile sold to a taxi man, which was later redeemed at a bank.

Kodiak marked only the beginning of the Aleutian Island chain. Other communities farther west began to come into existence as future war needs arose. First of these was Cold Bay -- 430 miles west. This was an airfield made for the Army Air Forces with usual wartime facilities, on flat ground including deep open revetments to shelter aircraft from weather and enemy attack, with runways adjacent to the bay. The base was simply a military port with good runways but no civilian population. The facility was useful to us, especially as a safe stop-over between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. Seaplane facilities at Cold Bay were rudimentary, and the bay itself was not too convenient for our type of craft, although of course we could anchor there and refuel or rearm from a tender.

As of December, 1941, I was ordered to report for temporary duty with VP Squadron 13, Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, to take indoctrination training in the new, larger four-engine Consolidated PB2Y-3 seaplanes. So, in late November, I left the rest of the squadron in Kodiak and returned to Seattle to prepare for the trip south. Cornelia and our small son, David, accompanied me, and we settled into a cottage rental attached to the El Cordova Hotel in Coronado. I reported to my new squadron and launched at once into the business of learning to fly the "big boats." They were housed in a huge double concrete hangar on North Beach. We launched from the adjacent ramps, taxiing into the bay for takeoff each day on training missions up and down the coast. Often we chose San Pedro Bay, near Long Beach, for practicing landings and takeoffs in its

relatively calm waters, before heading back to San Diego.

Meanwhile, the U.S., along with Great Britain, had been keeping a close watch on what the Japanese might be up to. Shortly before the first of December, the cessation of ship-based, long-range radio traffic was a clue, among others, that the Japanese fleet was at sea. A number of other factors caused suspicion, especially to our code breakers, but there was no definite indication of the Japanese fleet movements, which caused undue alarm.

I had been eager for a chance to see my mother again, who had an apartment near the water in Long Beach, so, at the first opportunity, on Saturday, December 6, we drove the 100 miles up the coast for a weekend visit. On Sunday afternoon, following a leisurely lunch, we took a walk on the sand, then returned to Mother's apartment and casually turned on the radio. To our horror and consternation, we learned of the devastating surprise attack by the Japanese on our fleet in Pearl Harbor, with many ships damaged or sunk and hundreds of men and officers killed.

I immediately gathered up Cornelia and David, and pausing only long enough to admonish my distressed mother to take a few belongings and drive her little car inland, perhaps to Palm Springs, to a less vulnerable spot (in case of a possible large-scale attack on the coast), we sped back to San Diego, where I reported at once to my squadron. I found all hands "on deck," and we were advised to move at once onto the base and be prepared to sleep in the hangars with our planes. Sandbags were being placed as protective shields near the living areas and we set up portable cots in the Ready Room.

The radio was barking out a continuous stream of news about "sightings" of submarines and strange ships off the coast, of unidentifiable airplanes seen and persons being held on suspicion in many places. It was frightening and bewildering. No one could guess what the enemy might try next, and on the second evening after the attack, a massive blackout of the entire San Diego area was planned, for a rumor had spread that a coastal attack might take place that night, on prime target spots such as our Naval Base. Along with the other officers in Squadron 13, I called my wife about 6:00 p.m. and told her that all the wives had been urged to drop everything, get into their cars, and drive away from the San Diego area as soon as possible.

Cornelia decided to pack our belongings hastily and check out of the cottage, since we had expected to be there temporarily anyway, and the next several days were so uncertain. She packed the car, and with little David asleep in the back seat, headed in the dark for the ferry between Coronado and the mainland, from where she intended to drive north to Laguna Beach, which was a place she knew. By a stroke of pure luck, she caught the same ferry carrying all the other wives of the squadron, whom she had never yet had a chance to meet, and learning of their plans to drive 30 miles up into the hills behind San Diego to Alpine, she joined the group and felt greatly reassured in their company.

The blackout was scheduled for 11:00 p.m., and as the caravan of family cars wound higher into the hills, their occupants looked back and watched the city lights go out section by section, leaving a darkened city still lit (perhaps too well) by a full moon overhead. Ironically, too, the Consolidated Aircraft Factory on the edge of the bay -- surely a prime target -- had been exempted from the blackout order, and its lighted windows beckoned brightly throughout the night.

Almost all the wives and their families found shelter for the night in a motel on the outskirts of Alpine, but two leftover carloads at the end of the caravan (including mine) could not be accommodated there and were guided by a helpful forest ranger to an old boarding house in a grove of eucalyptus trees in a nearby valley. There, at 1:00 p.m., they were given the last two available rooms, one for each family. Cornelia and David were lucky -- a big double bed was theirs. But the other family, consisting of the mother, three children, a dog and a large black nursemaid, had to somehow squeeze into a single room. It was no wonder that the next morning, no attack having occurred, they headed right back to Coronado. "I left my beds unmade and the dishes in the sink!" the anxious wife explained.

Cornelia and David stayed in Alpine for a week. It was quiet and peaceful and "the war" seemed far away. I was in touch with them daily, and things had simmered down a bit when they returned. We spent a modest Christmas that year under blackout conditions and strict military regulations.

In early January of 1942, I was ordered to rejoin VP-41, which in my absence had returned to Seattle. Then shortly, to be better able to patrol the Pacific coastline, we were sent down to Tongue Point, Oregon. From there, the squadron's planes, one or two at a time, were ordered south to the Overhaul and Repair shops at Naval Air Station, Alameda, California, where radar was installed. These were British-type ASV, which employed vertical "a" scopes aimed forward, or beams aimed horizontally from the ends of each wing. Because of heavy "sea return," adjustments had to be made. Our pilots flew the new gadgets on mock patrols to test them against hard targets off San Francisco. If they couldn't detect reasonably large targets at 40 miles, they brought the planes back to the shops for finer radar tuning. When each installation passed the at-sea test, the planes were flown back to Tongue Point and restored to the sector patrols. Our demand for these practical tests resulted in generally good gear for us. Our flights at sea off Oregon were generally beneath a low overcast (200 feet), often with heavy fog adjacent to the coastline. This prepared us well for similar conditions in the Aleutians. Good navigation was critical to making a landfall where expected -- the radars helped substantially. By April, all of our planes were radar-equipped.

About this time, with no advance warning, the authorities in Washington decided that VP-41 and VP-42 should be re-equipped with brand new planes -- PBY-5A amphibians. For this purpose,

our planes, once more in groups of two or three, were flown again to NAS, Alameda, for the changeover. The new planes, smelling like new automobiles, were immensely popular with all the pilots. Their higher power was a great boon, and their added flexibility in being able to take off from a field increased their load-carrying ability. The assurance that we could use both land and water in Alaska was great for morale.

In April, our "skipper," Cdr. F.B. Johnson, was detached from the squadron and ordered, as it happened, to new duty in the office of the U.S. Naval Attache for Air in London. I succeeded to the command of VP-41.

We continued to patrol our quiet sectors off Oregon, but the effect of the continued long flights caused our flight time to mount to an exhausting level. Many PPC's counted out 180-200 hours per month. However, these day-long flights, plus practice with our new radars, resulted in our pilots becoming very proficient in making their landfalls precisely where they wished -- later of inestimable importance to our Aleutian patrols.

While we were operating at Tongue Point, in the small village of Astoria, Oregon, at the very mouth of the Columbia River, a modest airport had been constructed. Its 3,500-foot crossed runways were enough for our new PBY's, and occasionally for Air Force Hudsons. On tri-cycle landing gear, the PBY's were more secure than the three-point Hudsons, especially with the deep drainage ditches on each side of the runways. We arranged for an ambulance to stand by during each takeoff, but luckily had no accidents.

As the diplomatic exchanges and the subsequent code-breaking preceding the Battle of Midway in the Pacific were taking place, the Wing received orders to prepare to deploy on short notice. Because of the strict secrecy required outside the squadron, I found it necessary to defuse the rumors about our probable destination by directing all personnel to ready their "tropical whites," fill out their bag allowances, etc., which caused a bit of mystification among the men. Eventually, of course, we were ordered north -- to Kodiak, via Sitka, and took off directly. We arrived at Kodiak on 26 May, 1941, were briefed on the situation in the area, assured that the Japanese Navy would be near us soon, and consequently found ourselves in VP-41, dispatched post haste to Dutch Harbor. VP-42 was sent to Cold Bay.

At Dutch Harbor, another twist of fate caused an important change in my position. Because the Wing Commander, Captain Leslie Gehres, USN (styled "Commodore") was headquartered at Kodiak and VP-41 was now at Dutch Harbor, I was designated "Staff Advance Operations Officer" (ADSTOP), and directed to coordinate the forward operations of the PBY's, plus the six attached assigned aviation tenders. All Wing commanding officers were directed to "take their orders from Foley."

Dutch Harbor, in May, 1942, was somewhat more ready now than it had been earlier to receive a group of twelve amphibians, and

our PBY's settled in rapidly. The Wing Commander had established a "fan" of patrol sectors, centered on the axis of the Aleutian chain, originating at Dutch Harbor and extending out to 600 miles. I was to allocate the sectors daily as ordered to fit the situation and availability of planes and pilots.

My first consideration was to avoid the heavy loss of aircraft which the PBY squadrons had incurred in the operations against Japanese carrier planes in the Southwest Pacific. To this end, I elected to fly our patrols at night, depending on our radars to snuff out targets encountered in the darkness. Planes were to take off shortly before sunset, fly their sectors and return to Dutch Harbor, taking care to avoid concentrations at the base on their return. We flew darkened and observing radio silence except for contact reports. Normally, planes were able to refuel, rearm, and breakfast at Dutch Harbor, then take off for a short flight to a nearby fjord elsewhere on Unalaska Island. There they would land and anchor in the vicinity of a small aircraft tender (AVP), remaining there quietly during daylight to avoid being caught on the water. The mechanics checked the engines, messed, and rested on the tenders until time for the night patrol. Usually they changed sectors every night. Entire crews could be changed at intervals at Dutch Harbor, which helped to ease the tension for the pilots. With the customary low ceiling (200-300 feet) of cloud on the hilltops, we felt reasonably secure with this plan. If the Japanese discovered our dispersed planes in the area, there was no indication of it, and we suffered no losses.

On the morning of June 3, returning aircraft reported a Japanese two-carrier task force close in to Dutch Harbor (210 miles), running just ahead of a low weather front. A few of our aircraft were mauled by the nimble Zero fighters, and I lost two planes and their crews. It happened that the PPC's of both were former enlisted pilots, and in all, sixteen fine enlisted men and officers died, despite vigorous evasive tactics. (One officer was captured and later returned to the U.S. following the war.) Two Japanese bomber groups got lost in the fog, and one had to return to its carrier. The other followed the fighter planes, which flew in and bombed Dutch Harbor, inflicting some relatively minor damage. One of them shot up one of our PBY's -- our mail plane, which happened to be on the water. The U.S.S. Gillis (DD260), a WWI four-stack destroyer converted to a seaplane tender (one engine room converted to hold aviation gasoline, bombs, etc.), was caught offshore of Unalaska Island. Blazing away with .30 and .50-caliber machine guns, plus an antique, three-inch AA gun, she fought off Japanese attackers and distinguished herself.

In my capacity as ADSTOP, I, with one nonflying officer, Lt. (jg) Fred Sibley, as my "staff," had been operating in very makeshift quarters in one room of the newly constructed Administration Building of NAS Dutch Harbor. It consisted of a messhall, galley on the ground deck, and a series of offices, radio rooms, a code room, plus a few live-in bedrooms on the second deck. Mr. Sibley ably handled the ever-increasing load of

encrypted messages and backed me up during the long night watches, so I could get an occasional "shut-eye" when there was a quiet period. The submarine commander, Cdr. O.E. Colclough, USN, also had his headquarters in this building. He commanded at this time six old S-boats, ill-adapted to the Aleutian climate.

Following the first raid by the Japanese and recognizing at once how vulnerable were the senior officers of the station, the aircraft, and the submarines in the clapboard Administration Building, the station commander, LCdr. W.N. Updegraffe, had the general contractor hastily excavate sites for three Quonset huts on a nearby hilltop. Quonsets were quickly erected and presto! we had semi-protected bomb shelters. Mine, though relatively bare, had a field telephone, a radio set, a bulletin board, a coffee pot and a bunk. Immediately outside, overlooking the seaplane apron, was a 40mm twin-gun mount -- very reassuring! My new work station was sparse but adequate, it seemed, except that in the subsequent Japanese bombing attack, the 40mm gun and its crew were blown into oblivion.

Apparently, the Japanese CinC (Admiral Yamamoto), having been severely mauled at Midway (four Fleet carriers with their airgroups lost), decided to recall the two carriers in his Imperial North Pacific Force, under Admiral Kakuta, and ordered them south at high speed as soon as their planes, which had raided Dutch Harbor, could be recovered. The intention was that they should rejoin the Japanese Fleet. But Japanese staff members persuaded the CinC that it would be better to retrieve some of the situation by going ahead with the captures of Kiska and Attu as first planned. So, about mid-afternoon, the Japanese CinC cancelled his orders to Kakuta and his carriers and ordered them to rejoin the Kiska Attack Force and resume their offensive against the two Aleutian Islands.

On the fourth of June, however, because of poor weather to the West, Admiral Kakuta decided to make a second raid on Dutch Harbor. Running directly in, he launched his attack in mid-afternoon, using his most experienced pilots in 15 VF's and 17 VB's. This raid was more effective than that of the day before. Six large fuel tanks were destroyed, part of a hospital, the roof of a hangar, etc., as well as the aforementioned gun emplacement. After the raid, the planes joined up over the west end of Unalaska within sight of the new airbase at Umnak, so that our P-40's and PBY's, along with B-26's, took off from there to bomb the Japanese carriers. Zeros were also launched, and for a short time there was a real scramble. No hits were made on the ships. Two PBY's were shot down and one was strafed on the water, killing all aboard.

After the Japanese had recovered their planes, the Task group commander apparently headed west in the heavy fog, parallel to the island chain, toward Adak, Kiska, and Attu. We lost track of the group and could only speculate on its destination.

As soon as the Japanese carriers had departed after the second raid, the Seabees started constructing a landing strip at

Dutch Harbor. There was not much room, but by using heavy machinery, the workers were able to flatten the sea-level grades on the slopes of Mt. Ballyhoo adjacent to the seaplane parking apron and create a strip of about 3,000 feet by 300 feet. This was enough for lightly loaded PBY's and for the landing of an occasional fighter from Umnak or Cold Bay short on fuel. Once, as a test of the field, four P38's landed on the dangerously short runway, the first two planes not bothering to clear the area before the following two came in. Incredibly, all four were able to taxi back, turn, and promptly take off, proving to themselves that there really was a place they could land in an emergency.

Because the Americans had lost track of the whereabouts of the Japanese and therefore had no knowledge of their movements, it wasn't until the weather had cleared on June 10 that Lt. (jg) Litsey of VP-41, flying over Kiska, spotted enemy troops on the island and many ships in the bay. The Japanese had landed men both on Kiska and Attu, under cover of the fog, and with a respite from bombing for two days, had set up anti-aircraft guns and various other protections. Army Air Force aircraft from Umnak initiated raids on Kiska as soon as practical with B-26's, B-24's, and B-17's, some of them newly arrived. PBY's from Umnak followed as soon as they could be re-armed, and thus began the so-called "Kiska Blitz," which was to continue for the following three days until all ammunition in the magazines of the Gillis (AVD), anchored at Atka, was exhausted. Kiska, like Malta, proved an unyielding target, with many caves and rock-protected areas.

Around the starting date of the Kiska Blitz, VP-43, a PBY squadron commanded by Lt.Cdr. C.B. Jones, arrived with thirteen PBY's from San Diego. They were immediately sent on to Nazan Bay, Atka. Joining at once in the Blitz, they distinguished themselves and bolstered the diminishing numbers of PBY's available.

Following their attacks on Kiska, the PBY's were landed at Nazan Bay, Atka, where the converted tender Gillis was ready to receive, re-arm, and refuel them. As they were readied, augmented by the thirteen newly arrived PBY's of VP-43, they continued the attack on the new Japanese installations on Kiska. Army land planes had to return to Umnak. During the three-day Blitz, pilots and aircrews bedded down aboard the Gillis, but when space gave out, others had to sleep ashore at Atka in the dubious comfort of Aleut fishermen's shacks, pervaded by the smell of sea lion blubber.

Following the intense aerial activity of the "Kiska Blitz," the PBY squadrons withdrew to our home bases -- VP-41 to Dutch Harbor, VP-42 to Cold Bay, VP-43 to Chernofsky Harbor (a small port on the western side of Unalaska), VP-61 and 62 to the Shumagin Islands -- and resumed their routine patrols. It was a welcome interlude. I began to experience a true fatigue in my patrol plane commanders and looked around for ways to bring them a little rest and recreation. On this deserted island, there

were few facilities; however, one suggested itself: fishing. A crew would go up into the hills about us, looking for a stream or brook where they could relax with their rods and flies. It was not much and it did not last long, but it helped.

A significant discovery took place about a month after the Japanese carrier raid on Dutch Harbor. On a rare clear day, a PBY pilot, on a return flight from Kodiak to Dutch Harbor, reported sighting the wreckage of a Japanese plane in the center of Akutan Island. The base commander and I immediately organized a salvage party composed of civilian riggers, SeaBees, and squadron personnel to go to the site and see what could be done. They found a scarcely touched Japanese Zero fighter upside down in the marshy terrain. The pilot had apparently put his wheels down and attempted to land in the bog. Alas, the wheels caught and flipped the plane onto its back, breaking the pilot's neck and killing him. It was a distasteful situation, and needless to say, after the month's exposure, the number one priority was getting the poor fellow's body out and burying it as fast as possible. The plane, however, was free of damage and intact. It proved to be a most important find. By sledding it to the nearest water and maneuvering it onto a barge, we were able to retrieve and preserve the precious wreckage. It was sent to the Overhaul and Repair Department at NAS, San Diego, where it was completely restored, flight-tested, and flown across the continent to Anacostia Naval Air Station in the District of Columbia. There, the flight test experts thoroughly analyzed its flight characteristics. Subsequently, the Grumman F6F carrier fighter was designed to exploit the Zero's weaknesses and to give our carrier pilots the special "extra" they needed to overcome the enemy plane's agility in dogfights. It is ironic, however, that in the middle of a war, this enemy aircraft was flown across the entire continent and despite its Zero silhouette (the Japanese red balls were replaced by U.S. insignia), was not challenged at any point! (NOTE: Since 1980, the Japanese have twice sought to find out the exact location of the unfortunate pilot's grave on Akutan Island, that the remains might be returned to his family in Japan, but the spot has proved too difficult to pinpoint, unmarked as it was, and efforts have been abandoned.)

An increasing uneasiness had been growing, arising from the continued presence of Japanese troops on American soil at Kiska and Attu. Although action as I have described had taken place several times and lives had been lost, the big headlines were reserved for other areas of the war in the Pacific, and the American public knew little or nothing of the activities in the Aleutians. But CincPac (Admiral Nimitz) at Pearl Harbor continued concerned and wished to insure that this irritation be removed as early as possible. To this end, ComNorPac, Admiral Theobald, was directed to bombard by ship the Japanese positions at Kiska at the earliest practical moment.

On July 18, 1942, the U.S.S. Indianapolis, Louisville and St. Louis (CA's -- heavy cruisers), plus the Honolulu and Nashville (CLS -- light cruisers) and nine destroyers sortied from Kodiak and headed for Kiska. The entire 11th Air Force,

under General William Butler, plus the Navy PBY's, were directed to support the bombardment with simultaneous bombing raids. As the attacking ships neared Kiska, the weather became increasingly rough, with heavy fog and low overcast. It was judged dangerous to take the ships into the largely uncharted waters off Kiska, and the Admiral decided to postpone the bombardment. From above, the target was poor to bad, and many of the planes returned without dropping their bombs. The ships milled about, south of Kiska, for four days, waiting for a break in the weather and eventually returned to Kodiak without firing. It was very frustrating. Three destroyers were damaged by collisions in the murky weather. Throughout this operation, my planes (VP-41), now reduced to seven, armed with one torpedo and one 1,000-lb. bomb each, found climbing slow and tedious. In a squadron formation which I was leading, I had to help planes keep together by shining Aldis lamps astern in the cloud and fog banks we encountered. Eventually, we discarded the useless bombs, etc., and returned to our advance base at Nazan Bay, Atka. Conditions at the unprotected bay were rough, and it would have been inadvisable to try to land there in the dark, had we not jettisoned our armament load.

Following the return of the U.S. Task Force from the aborted mid-July bombardment, CinCPac insisted that Rear Admiral Theobald remain ashore at Kodiak and appointed Rear Admiral "Poco" Smith to bombard Kiska again. On August 7, 1942, Smith took his task group to Kiska, with heavy Navy and Air Force aircraft again in support. Staying five miles offshore, he bombarded by radar, out of sight of his targets. He dug a hole in the middle of Kiska but did not damage the Japanese significantly. He fired all of his ammunition in seven minutes.

Finally, in September of 1942, the Wing Commander ordered me to take my squadron with its exhausted pilots and aircrews home from Dutch Harbor to Seattle for two weeks of uninterrupted rest and recreation. The Sand Point Air Station was to accept my planes for the R&R period, clean them up, repair and prepare them for another session of heavy wartime patrols. Upon arrival, we taxied our craft to our old home hangar and with great relief, turned them over to the NAS personnel. Private family cars swirled all around, picking up pilots and crewmen in joyous reunions. Since my own home was nearby, Cornelia and my little son David met and drove me back to the house -- what a pleasure! A needed break for all.

Local newspapers learned of our return and immediately arranged for interviews regarding what had gone on in Alaska since our May departure. So, as bullet holes were patched and engines checked, a handful of my pilots had colorful tales to tell of their exploits. For two weeks, we feasted on fresh vegetables, fresh eggs, and good meats! We visited one another's houses, despite the restrictions of gasoline rationing. Condolence calls to the families of some of our casualties absorbed some of my time; we had lost five highly qualified Patrol Plane Commanders with their crews. It was sad and exhausting to try to comfort their wives and families. It was

ironic that although two of the planes lost had been shot down by Zeros, three had gone down on operational missions, claimed not by enemy fire but by the foul, insidious Alaska weather with its blinding fogs, making landing hazardous or impossible while precious fuel was dissipated, resulting in a crash.

Bright and early a fortnight later, the squadron reassembled on the Sand Point apron, divided into groups (one for each of our seven amphibian Catalinas), climbed aboard, and soon the engines were roaring into life. There was exhilaration in contemplating our freshly cleaned and equipped planes. I led the group to the takeoff runway, and soon we were airborne over Lake Washington. In ten minutes, all were rendezvoused, and in casual "V's," we started west through Puget Sound. Rounding Cape Flattery, we headed north along the west coast of Vancouver Island toward Sitka -- 500 miles away. Halfway there, in the usual Alaska fashion, the overcast came down and by midmorning, the entire group was at 100 feet, the surface dark, and the shoreline within a half mile. (I once calculated that I had flown 11,000 miles thus in this area, seldom getting more than 200 feet above water and often not seeing the shoreline.) By the time we reached Sitka, at about 1400 hours, we had once again each enjoyed a tasty, thick steak with mashed potatoes, served with canned pears and coffee. The last for several months! We landed in the ample channel beyond the air station on Baranov Island and taxied to the ramps. It was good to be back in this quiet sector of the war where the BOQ, new and fresh, was familiar to us and a relaxed Scotch and soda proved a pleasant appetizer before the meal. Next morning, it was on across the Gulf of Alaska to Kodiak. The building activity incident to the war had added much improvement to Kodiak, and it was quite a change to those of us who had seen it earlier in the year.

One new feature bothered the Commanding Officer -- the 100-foot water tower on the edge of the Kodiak landing field. He was convinced that it would prove an ideal point-of-aim for an offshore submarine's gun. A sympathetic Air Force major stationed at the base agreed with him. The major, a well-known Hollywood film director, readily volunteered that camouflage would be easy.

"After all," he claimed, "we have fooled movie cameras for years at a distance of 500 feet. We can surely disguise this tank to fool the Japanese half a mile away!"

Confident that his suggestion would be followed, the major went about his business. But nothing was done because another solution had been found -- a site where a cachment for water was being constructed on a nearby mountainside. Work on the new water supply completed, the SeaBees started to disassemble the offending tower. As the tank was partially cut down, the major returned and exclaimed triumphantly, "See! I told you! Now you cannot see the tank above the halfway mark!" Of course, by the next day, it was <u>completely</u> concealed.

Meanwhile, my group was briefed at Headquarters. In our

absence, the Army and Navy, on orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, had approved an amphibious assault on Adak Island, 350 miles closer to Kiska and about 350 miles west of Umnak. General Landum and Admiral Reeves had landed 4,000 men on the island and were rapidly setting up an amphibious occupation. In another of Aviation Engineer B.B. Talley's miracles, he and his crew had dammed a mountain stream spilling onto a black sand field and established the areas as an air field. An unfortunate accident had lost the Marsden matting intended for the runways, but Talley managed without it until replacement matting arrived, and already, fighters had begun to use it, followed later by larger planes. This new location was a great help in putting pressure on the Japanese at Kiska and Attu. The island our forces were occupying was not being attacked, and except for the usual bad weather, the operations went quite smoothly. With the new air field, the heavy bombers were able to take off for bombing raids twice a day.

As for my outfit at Kodiak, we found that VP-41 had been moved to our old stamping ground in Dutch Harbor, and we were now ordered to Cold Bay to resume our regular searches from that field. This, of course, meant operating on wheels, with fewer salt-water problems. On the other hand, as the weather grew progressively colder, we suffered for lack of suitable cold weather gear, especially the ground crews. The more open, windswept territory was responsible. As a result, we simply had to fall back on the Army quartermaster for clothing and wore whatever we could get. Naval officers, who normally were in khaki with their insignia of rank on their collars, now found the insignia concealed by outer jackets. Getting past sentries was often a hassle. Finally, I authorized my pilots to adopt corresponding Army Air Force insignia and wear them outside on their shoulders so that their rank could be seen.

Another difficulty was the complete inadequacy of two-wheel drive trucks in the Alaska muskeg; four-wheel drive was essential. To emphasize our shortages in clothing and vehicles, I directed the squadron photographer to assemble all crews daily and take a picture of the oddly clad group with a few muddy vehicles, and then I was careful to send the photos to the appropriate people in the supply system, with delayed but heart-warming results.

Cold Bay Air Base had originally been used as a bomber base with very limited facilites, especially recreation-wise, and there was nothing to do except for the movies at night. Earlier in the year, I had sent an enterprising, young, non-flying officer to Seattle to bring back what he could to entertain our men at these Alaskan outposts. He had succeeded in getting a hold of six pianos and had them loaded, finally, onto an Alaska-bound ship. Alas, by the time the ship arrived at Cold Bay, five of the six pianos had been purloined by envious groups along the way. We ended up with only one.

Weather-wise, Cold Bay lived up to its name. It was dull and cold, with an unceasing fresh wind blowing across the bare

landscape. For warmth, we depended upon small, wood-fired, cast-iron stoves. When they got red hot, they were comforting close up, but were inadequate to heat the air in a Quonset hut. We shifted to woolen shirts and Kersey-lined khaki trousers. Long Johns helped a good deal, but laundering was difficult. Food supplies throughout the Aleutians were limited, with no variety. It was easy to become bored with what was available. Even so, for some reason, most of us put on weight.

Work on aircraft engines was also difficult and frustrating. The planes were out in the open, and the only shelters were small canvas "igloos," which provided only a partially protective screen against the unceasing wind. Luckily, however, our P&WR 1830 air-cooled engines were extremely reliable and able to make do with only minimal attention, so we seldom experienced a failure to perform.

About the end of October, 1942, the Wing Commander decided to move my squadron west from Cold Bay to the new base at Adak. We reverted at once, again, to the more primitive living conditions which were standard at the newer bases. All personnel lived in tents. The messhalls also were in tents, so that we were continually in sloppy ground conditions underfoot. It was a real effort to get out of a warm bunk onto the sloppy floors and get thence to the equally sloppy messhall to try to find an acceptable meal. The food was largely C rations -- a few varieties of meats in small cans -- occasionally with canned fruit for dessert. To this day, I find it hard to look at a dish of canned peaches in the face!

My own quarters offered "comforts" somewhat better than for those living in tents. I had a bunk in a Quonset hut located on a small hill at the end of the runway. Adjoining was a second Quonset with radio, Aldis lights, and primitive field-lighting equipment. It was a sort of minimum "tower" for the field. Located about 50 feet above the lowest ground level, it provided a spectacular view of the runway. Almost half of the time, the runway was covered with three to four inches of water. A plane landing in this water was enveloped in a vast spray extending 30 feet over the cockpit. It was quite a spectacle. Luckily, the tri-cycle landing gear on most of the planes helped to keep the landing straight, and the pilots survived this inconvenience very well. After landing, the planes would taxi to parking places along and next to the airstrip. There were no tie-down points in the volcanic, granular soil. With winds averaging 20-60 knots, the parked planes rocked back and forth in their places, and the movable control surfaces whipped about hard as the wind varied. The standard tie-down we contrived to combat this problem was rather ingenious. Three 1,000-pound bombs (without fuses) were lashed together and secured under the wings of the PBY's -- a group of three to each side. As the wind picked up, it would lift one side of the plane with its bomb cluster two to three feet off the ground, plunging the other side down hard. This insidious wind was generated by the cold air from the Bering Sea area playing across the Aleutians and mixing with the relatively warmer air present over the Japan current area on the south side

of the island chain, thus forming the frequent and rapidly generated "low pressure areas" which hit us about every six hours. As the "lows" approached the field, circulation was in one direction. Then came a short interval as the low passed over, and the circulation would abruptly reverse. We had to watch every plane constantly and be on the alert to re-orient each one promptly to avoid damage to the control surfaces: ailerons, tail elevators, and rudder. We could not afford to be casual about that weather!

Our routine patrols continued to the west of Attu, and from time to time, we or the Air Force units or our submarines would encounter one or more of the Japanese supply ships enroute from Paramushiro to Kiska or Attu. There would be a sharp action, often a sinking.

Our NORPC force of surface ships was often changed. Normally, there were one or two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, six to eight destroyers, and occasionally a battleship would be added for amphibious bombardment. On one assault, an escort carrier was added. When action was light, the force could be reduced. Its composition varied. The strategy was at this time to blockade Attu and Kiska. From time to time, this force would slip in after dark at night to Adak harbor to refuel from an oiler and sortie before daylight.

On one such replenishment night in November, 1942, I, as senior naval aviator, was invited aboard the flagship, U.S.S. Richmond, (CL) to talk with the Task Group Commander, Rear Admiral C.H. McMorris. Of course, it was pitch dark in the bay, all ships blacked out as usual, and I had to feel my way around the obscure shapes of black ships in search of the flagship. I was riding in a well-used LCM with a coxswain who had never navigated the bay at night. We had to pass a series of Army sentries posted along the shores. I didn't trust their reactions to a small boat in the darkened harbor. I held my breath and waited for a challenge or a rifle shot. With luck, we escaped detection and I finally discovered the shape of the old cruiser alongside the oiler and awkwardly climbed the sea ladder to go aboard.

The Admiral had a spartan cabin on the main deck forward. He received me cordially and we talked operational considerations (air and surface) for about an hour. When the officer of the deck announced that fueling had been completed and requested permission to move away from the oiler, the Admiral directed him to summon my boat. Climbing back down into my LCM, we started back to base, even as the cruiser shifted away from the oiler's side. There were no lights of any kind except the eerie red-colored flashlights of the watch-standers. Orientation in the blackened harbor was really difficult. I waited again for the sentries' rifle shots, but none came. Somehow, we found our berth in Sweeper's Cove near the beach. It took me a while to simmer down from the tension of that boat ride -- not a trip I would care to repeat.

Later in that month of November, 1942, the mail plane brought a set of orders for me: "Detached Patrol Wing 4 and command of VP-41, etc. -- Proceed Washington, D.C. for duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics." A week later, I was back in Seattle with my family, preparing to depart on the cross-country rail trip to a new assignment. Washington, as I understood it, was a relatively formal duty station. I decided I would need at least my personal sword, perhaps to have when reporting for duty. It was, of course, a prized possession, so I wrapped it carefully in its protective outer chamois cover to carry with me and in civilian clothes, went with my family to the Seattle railroad station. As I alighted from the taxi, the colored porter, spying the long thin parcel, called out: "Carry your golf club, Sir?"

Ten days later, on my desk in my new office in Washington, I found the following official notice:

"ATTENTION ALL NAVAL OFFICERS:

The sword is hereby abolished as an article of uniform. All officers are urged to turn their swords in to designated collection points for conversion into scrap."

* * *

I, Cornelia Foley, add this postscript:

Because of the outstanding performance of my husband, Paul, as Advance Staff Operations Officer in the Aleutian Islands in the last half of 1942, he was awarded the Legion of Merit medal by the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, on October 20, 1943 in Washington, D.C. I quote the following citation which he received:

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commander of a patrol plane squadron in action against enemy Japanese forces, and later as Advance Staff Operations Officer and as Senior Naval Aviator during the Aleutian Islands Campaign from June 15 to December 21, 1942. In addition to leading his squadron on two hazardous night formation flights in weather requiring instrument flying, Commander Foley (then Lieutenant Commander) also directed the details of the complicated schedule of flights supporting the movements of surface forces with skill and daring. Despite the severe winter weather, inadequate basing and lack of facilities, he succeeded in carrying out scheduled operations. By his outstanding ability and heroic example, he inspired his group of fatigued and flight-worn pilots to renewed efforts, and when called upon to accept extraordinary responsibility, he discharged his duties in a distinguished and resourceful manner."

As an additional tribute to Paul, it is interesting to note that while he was in the Aleutians, I was invited, as his wife,

to christen a ship in the shipyards at Tacoma, Washington, on August 23, 1942. It was a merchant craft converted to a small aircraft carrier, and named the U.S.S. Prince William, after an Alaskan Sound by that name.

Our son David, then three years old, a neighbor couple, and Paul's sister-in-law, who was visiting me while her Navy husband was at sea on a carrier in the Pacific, accompanied me in the limousine which was sent to pick us up.

With a successful swing, I broke the champagne bottle across the ship's prow. Delighted as he watched it slide down the ways, little David called out, "Do it again, Mommy!" to everyone's amusement. For my part in the brief ceremony, I received a beautiful, inscribed wristwatch, four dozen roses, and a treasured album of photographs of the event.

Although Paul could not be present for the excitement, upon his return to Seattle he shared with me the one other bonus I had earned: the second bottle of champagne (wrapped in red, white and blue ribbons like the first), which is always reserved in the hands of a man below the launching platform to be broken on the ship's hull in case the christening lady above should miss the swing!

XI

VP-43 JOINS THE AIRDALES

by

Carl Amme

Patrol Squadron 43 was operating out of North Island when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. I reported there for duty fresh from flight training at Pensacola with a total of 248 pilot hours. By April 13, I had made enough "touch and go" landings in south San Diego Bay and at Salton Sea to qualify as a second pilot. Then, as co-pilot on patrol out of San Diego, we ran into a small aircraft carrier which bore no recognized characteristics of any known U.S. Navy carrier. Certain that we had a Japanese carrier in sight, the plane commander almost went into a spin from fright. Upon recovering, we sent a contact report to the base and began sending MO's. Finally, Base sent a belated message to us that it was the first "jeep" carrier, U.S.S. Long Island, coming around from the East Coast. We should have known!

June 6, 1942. We received orders to transfer the squadron to PATWING FOUR in the Aleutians. That night, we all had a party at the Del Coronado Hotel. June 7, we readied planes and equipment for daybreak departure the following day. Here's what my diary says about it:

> "Monday, June 8th, we left (eight planes) for Alaska. Harrowing navigation all the way. At Gray's Harbor, we attempted to get over to Seattle, but we ran into fog and rain between two hills and had to make a clipper turn to get out. Arrived at Tongue Point and slept for five hours. Up at 0500, June 9th, for Kodiak via Sitka (for gas)."

At Kodiak, "Doc" Jones (Lieutenant Commander C.B. Jones), our commanding officer, took a pencil out of his pocket and, claiming that it was a magic wand, waved it over my head and said: "Hocus Pocus, Rub-a-Dub-Dub, you are now a qualified plane commander!" Then, the skipper took a section of four planes to Dutch Harbor. As next senior officer, I led the other four planes to Dutch Harbor, dropped off our ground crew passengers, and backtracked to Cold Bay with only three planes, since "Cactus" Raithel had run aground at Dutch.

Before we had a chance to turn in, our section received orders to join Joey Ray (Lieutenant Commander Herman L. Ray), our executive officer, at Nazan Bay, Atka "immediately...repeat, immediately." Ray had arrived ahead of the rest of the squadron with four Catalinas, since he was operating from Alameda when we received the word to join PATWING FOUR. We took off at midnight under a heavy overcast and once clear of Cold Bay, we ran into

instrument conditions. Thank God for radar! Jacobson and I were in the first plane, and Johnston and George were in the second. The third plane, with Baggee, stayed over until morning.

We finally had to go "on top." The planes iced up considerably, but somehow we stuck together. Frankly, I was scared. Strange country, high peaks all around. We flew south to avoid trouble and returned at daybreak when we found a hole to come down through. We were only 100 miles from our point of departure. We poured on the coals and arrived at Atka three hours late. On the way, we sighted a submarine which, luckily, made a recognition signal as we were headed to it on a bombing run.

When we arrived at Atka, we had flown (and been without sleep) for 28 hours. Everyone was bone weary. At the Gillis, we turned in to our assigned bunks at 0830. By the time I awoke at 1430, Joey Ray had already sent Jacobson and Johnston out to bomb the enemy ships at Kiska.

That night I had a good night's sleep. During the night, the Captain came through with his four planes. He took off with three planes of his section at 0330, headed for Kiska. After they dropped their bombs, the skipper called up his wing pilots to see if they were okay.

"Hansen and Decker," he called, "are you all right?"

Hansen answered, "Hansen, aye aye." No response from Decker.

Jones repeated the call. Again, Hansen answered up. Still no answer from Decker.

Finally, on the third call, Decker responded. Later, Decker said that he had heard the two previous calls and that when Decker didn't answer, he, Decker, thought that "the poor bastard had been shot down." It finally dawned on him that the call was addressed to himself. I guess I wasn't the only one who was a bit scared.

June 12. I went out with Jacobsen as his co-pilot. He was the most experienced pilot in the squadron, having fought against the Japanese in the Philippines before joining VP-43. We climbed to 12,000 feet and sneaked in from the north around Mount Kiska. The harbor was filled with warships. They didn't see us, for we only had a brief look at them through a hole in the clouds. Then we started down, circling the hole in a spiral descent. The shore batteries opened up and I saw a burst of flak on each side as we dropped through the clouds. Our selected targets were four Mavis four-engine seaplanes, anchored close to the shore. We were going pretty fast when we leveled out at 500 feet, just under the cloud cover, and dropped two 500-pound bombs on the target. One landed on the shoreline, and one between the two planes that were moored in a line. Later, we figured that we sank two of the four planes.

Meanwhile, our gunners strafed the planes in the water. The bow gunner, Buergey, N.A.P., silenced an AA guncrew firing from a nearby cruiser. Then everyone seemed to be firing. Ack-Ack and flak everywhere. In a matter of seconds, we were back into the clouds, making a hard left turn out to sea.

Claude Privett, the radioman in our crew, also remembers this first dive bomb attack with Jacobson and me. His station was the tunnel gun hatch gunner. "We were going down at such a steep angle, I was almost hanging out the hatch to see what there was to fire at, when suddenly I saw some ships sending what I thought was Morse code by blinked light. Finally, it dawned on me that they were tracers in the Ack-Ack firing. Also, I recall a float plane flying alongside, just out of range, while we were over Kiska commencing the dive."

On the way back, a seaplane fighter chased us, so again we poured on the coals and dodged into the clouds. Further diary excerpts:

> "We returned at about 2130. We bombed Kiska at about 1600. We stayed in the plane all night and at 0400 took off...eight planes...and headed for Kiska again. This time, we picked a destroyer as a target. But we dived back into the clouds before we could observe the results. Maybe we hit the destroyer. We'll never know. PBY's were never meant for this kind of bombing!"

On our last mission over Kiska, we had orders to return to Dutch Harbor. We had picked up three shrapnel holes in the side of the fuselage. Meantime, the Gillis practiced a bit of the scorched earth policy. The village of Atka was burned to the ground, and the whole town of hysterical natives (Indians and Eskimos) were evacuated when the Gillis left. This was June 13. Upon arriving at Dutch, we were immediately told to fly over to Chernofski Harbor on the west side of Unalaska on the Umnak strait. This would be our home for a while...a chance to collect my thoughts.

Lieutenant (jg) Milton C. Dahl, from Joey Ray's early contingent of VP-43, had discovered Japanese ships in Kiska, as well as the occupation of Attu, on June 10, 1942. On the same day, Captain Robert E. Speer, of the 36th Bombardment Squadron, and Lieutenant (jg) William F. Bowers of VP-41 had also observed ships in the Kiska harbor.

It was on June 11, 1942 that Captain Gehres, the Wing Commander, ordered all the patrol squadrons to bomb the ships in the Kiska harbor around the clock until all the ships are sunk or there are no PBY's left to fly. That I put these words in italics does not imply that they are a direct quote. It was the way it was told to me, for I never saw the message. But I do have it on good authority that Nimitz called Gehres on the phrase, "regardless of weather conditions," as not conforming to accepted practice. Gehres then deleted part of the phrase

referring to the weather conditions but left in the word "regardless."

The receipt of this message started four days of "the most fantastic merry-go-round of aerial activity that the squadron had ever known." The VP-43 crews, fresh from sunny California, were completely uninitiated in the kinds of weather and terrain to be encountered in the Aleutians. Instinctively, the pilot recognized that, whereas the weather was the greatest hazard, it was at the same time the greatest protection against enemy planes and anti-aircraft guns. When faced with enemy opposition, safety was sought in the almost ever-present clouds.

The method that Al Jacobsen adopted in attacking the planes and shipping in Kiska Harbor was called "dive bombing" by the press. In reality, it was a series of complex maneuvers in descent from cloud to cloud, in order to deliver a bomb load as expeditiously and surreptitiously as possible on whatever target appeared in the path of the PBY. It was standard procedure, dependent upon the last-minute judgment of the pilot as he surveyed the cloud cover and the opportunities presented. In no way could it be compared to the precision dive-bombing of carrier aircraft, as practiced so successfully in the Battle of Midway.

> "A Catalina is a graceful ship when she is flying along sedately as she should be flown, but as a dive bomber she looks more like Disney's Dumbo than an airplane. The planes were loaded with bombs, depth charges, and anything else that was available and sent to attack the Jap wherever he could be encountered. It was impossible to make an approach from the level, so the pilots kept above the overcast and then once over the target, headed her down and prayed for the best. The Japs were not to be caught napping, however, and they kept their guns trained on the solid grey, and whenever one came through, it was sprayed unmercifully with machine gun and heavy surface fire. The targets for the "P" boats of FORTY-THREE were one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, one destroyer, a half dozen transports, and four large Mavis seaplanes, all anchored in Kiska Harbor.
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> "Repeated attacks were led by Cmdr. Jones in his plane with Lt. James H. Davies, Lt. Roy Green, Ens. R.G. Johnston, Ens. W.T. Soronsen, Machinist Davis, Lt. (jg) Arthur Jacobsen with Lt. Carl Amme, Lt. (jg) James Masterson, fondly called "The Monk" by his shipmates, Ens. Russell Gish, Lt. (jg) Ralph "Bud" Hagen, Lt. Cmdr. Herman L. Ray, Ens. Herbert George and Ens. James O. Clark.
>
> "On the first attack, Ens. Clark's plane was caught in a storm of enemy fire. Seaman 2/c Ellis J. Keith, the second radioman, and AMM 1/c W.H. Lansing, the plane captain, were killed. The port engine and aileron were shot away, and Chief ARM H.R. Mortensen was critically wounded. Yet Clark brought the remnants of his battered plane and crew to his base, three hundred and fifty miles to the east of Kiska. Machinist Davis' plane was so riddled by machine

gun fire that it sank upon landing at the tender Gillis. Though FORTY-THREE suffered greatly in loss of life and planes, the damage they inflicted was not much. Two Japanese four-engine seaplanes were were set afire and sank in Kiska Harbor, and Lt. (jg) Dahl claimed a direct hit on the heavy cruiser; however, this was not a particularly inviting place to be hanging around to observe the results of the bombing and strafing, and all planes headed for base immediately after dumping their cargo of explosives on Jap targets.

"On June 14, Machinist Davis, in company with other planes of Patrol Squadron FORTY-THREE, again headed for Kiska and the Japs. He was last seen plunging into a cloud bank over Kiska Harbor. Dead with him on his last run-in with the enemy were: Ens. Keller, co-pilot; AP1/c Gyrofe, Navigator; ARM3/c E. Alford; AMM2/c J.H. Hathaway. This was the last sortie for FORTY-THREE."*

June 15. When the cost of planes lost and damaged vis-a-vis the results obtained was finally realized, round-the-clock bombing attacks by PBY's was called off. I really never found out who authored the order, but I strongly suspect that someone higher up than the Wing Commander had something to do with stopping this senseless activity.

Most of us gave an occasional thought to our weathermen and radio operators in the detachments on Kiska and Attu. We hoped that they would escape or, if captured, be sent to Japan as prisoners of war. But we feared the worst. What happened to them is well documented in Paul Carrigan's forthcoming book.

During the period of these attacks on Kiska, Lieutenant Thies of VP-41 landed at Tanaga, destroyed the aerological station and took off with the five weather and radiomen stationed there. Also on June 25, Lt. (jg) Jack Litsey of VP-41 was attacked by a Japanese Rufe aircraft near Kiska.

July 1. VP-41 was running patrols out of Dutch Harbor, VP-42 out of Cold Bay, and VP-43 out of Chernofski.

We received a message from the Wing Commander, Captain Leslie Gehres, USN, which is documentary proof that every last mother's son who served in the Aleutian flight crews is a hero. Here is the message:

"My wing's unbelievable good fortune to date of such small personnel casualties cannot last forever, now that the Jap is established. Squadrons and units all widely scattered and operate singly [sic]. Reports are days late. Some never come. To provide for eventualities, loss of records, etc., Commander Patrol Wing Four recommends now that all

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*The Story of VP-43, published in March, 1967, by Jack O. Haugen, Secretary of VP-43 Association, representing "an amateur's report of what he has seen and heard."

squadron and tender commanders and every patrol plane commander combat flying in this campaign be awarded at least the Navy Cross for extraordinary achievement in line of profession, heroism in fact of enemy, utter selflessness in support of the mission. Every second pilot, navigator, plane captain, radioman, bomber and gunner at least the Distinguished Flying Cross with same citation..." (so on, enumerating members of his staff)..."If events permit, formal recommendations will be submitted, but it will never be possible to do justice to all. What was extraordinary heroism or incredible flying achievement last week is taken in stride tonight. No awards which may be made will be too great recognition for what these officers and men have done, and I desire to place this in the record before any more go further west than Kiska..."

(What does the phrase "at least" mean? A Congressional Medal of Honor?)

June 25. The AVD Hulbert, which was our base at Chernofski, was relieved by the tender AVP Casco. We were still making bombing runs to Kiska. Someone had the mistaken idea the PBY's were the last word in bombing and attack planes. But the Captain ("Doc" Jones) said that he would be damned if we would go "bodaciously" into the enemy camp again, as we had done during those four days earlier in the month. Torpedoes with us would be a weapon of opportunity in the future.

July 16. The Casco got underway for Dutch Harbor. When we arrived on the 17th, the group of us went to the officers' club and then went on a quick bender. We got hold of some 151-proof Hudson Bay rum and went to town. When we arrived back at the ship, Bill Decker disappeared. Later, someone found him on the fantail of the Casco. Shivering, he was waiting for the Coronado Ferry. "I'll never go to San Diego again," he vowed.

While ashore, we heard about finding a Japanese Zero fighter that had nosed over in the mud on Akutan Island. The pilot's neck was broken, and his head was buried in the muck. But the plane was not damaged very much. At any rate, it was sent back to the States and later, by the time I became operations officer of FAW 14 in San Diego, Captain John Crommelin was flying it from the Naval Air Station, North Island.

July was a busy month of patrols in the Bering Sea and bombing forays to Kiska. Everyone felt tenseness in the air. As "Monk" Masterson said, "No one wants to go over to Kiska again, but then, no one wants to be left out when others go."

July 18. We left Chernofski and joined the Hulbert at Atka. At midnight, the skipper woke me up and told me, "Green has crashed." Jacobson was flying around the Northhead of Mt. Korovin at Atka in foggy weather when he spotted a wing tip sticking out of the water. He returned to the ship and reported his find. We contacted every plane by radio except one. So. We knew it was Roy Green. Mr. Ray, the exec., took a motor launch

to the scene and spotted the entire body of the plane about forty feet under and about 100 yards from the beach.

Just about that time, the Gillis, which was in Kuluk Bay at Adak, reported being attacked by Japanese four-engine seaplanes. The advanced staff of Dutch Habor ordered us to send planes to help...(What are we, "interceptors?") So I took a flight of four planes and arrived to find the Gillis underway and steaming out. No damage. When I returned, we were ordered to Chernofski.

It is funny how little you let your thoughts dwell on those who are killed. Not a tear was shed. Everyone went about his work as if nothing had happened. Green and Joe Segall, Machinist Neunger, Jack Heath, Plane Captain James Smith, Radioman Mercer and Hulse went and we acted as though they'd just stepped out to get a beer. I figure it was stretching a point or two to act so unconcerned. But we couldn't be otherwise. As the skipper said, we expected it to happen to each one of us.

Finally, in one of my leisure moments at Dutch Harbor, I wrote the following "Schmaltzy" verse. I forgot all about it until Claude Privett sent me a copy about three years ago. More recently, I saw it in a microfilm of the VP-43 war diaries held in the Navy Archives at the Washington Navy Yard:

THE EPIC OF VP FORTY-THREE

Now, this is the story of forty-three,
Who never knew defeat,
Who fought the battle of Kiska brave,
And never did get beat:

Out of the south with its warm sunshine,
And into the fog and cold,
Roared twelve slow planes of the "thin blue line,"
All eager, courageous and bold.

With nary a pause to consider the cause,
They were hurled in the Jap tiger's lair,
They cancelled their lives in glorious dives,
Desperate, resistless, unthrottled by fear.

For hundreds of miles they had to fly,
Besieged by fog, wind and snow.
Lumbering slowly through the treacherous sky,
Unerringly, unswervingly, straight to the foe.

Through a withering curtain of shrapnel and flack
They persistently spurred their dray-horse planes;
The bombs they dropped from the heavy loaded rack,
Then their visions were blurred; there was ice in their veins.

Now up through the cloud, flying blind in the gloom

Dodging the peaks that would seal their doom,
Chased by fighters, all guns ablare
They plodded back home, their planes to repair.

Now, swift is the "wildcat" in combat,
Fierce is the avenger in flight,
But the enduring Catalina, unwieldy and fat
Valiantly returned from the raging flight.
"Supermen!" their commander called them.
"Jones' shock troops we'll send!"
Embattled and damaged, the Catalinas rampaged,
For the crew that flew them were men!

Though riddled and maimed, they flew the same planes,
Again and again into Nippo's dread hive.
Though tired and sore, they were guts to the core,
Bombing and strafing with no hope to survive.

You've heard of the man who drew an inside-straight.
You've heard tell of catching a fish with no bait.
A twenty-two rifle shot a thirty-point buck.
But you never heard anything like forty-three's luck!

In the future, mighty tales will be told,
Of great fighters, courageous and game;
But none will be told more desperately bold
That will equal the fame of forty-three's name.

- C.H. Amme
Lieutenant, USN

P.S.
When piloting planes that resemble Noah's Ark,
Consolidated praises we'll sing,
For our memories will hark to that classic remark,
"I've got a big hole in my wing."

XII

CASCO TORPEDOED BY JAP SUB RO-61

AND AVENGED BY THREE PBYs

by

Carl Amme

A good way to start this story is to quote a few remembrances by Oden Sheppard, who flew co-pilot to Carl Bagee. In the first place, he had written a long letter for this volume in early December '86 and promptly lost it in the computer. Finally, he had to start again and do it the old-fashioned way -- type it over.

Oden recalls that in August, 1942, he was flying with Bagee with orders to "fly Captain Gehres and some Army officers including Colonel Talley out to Adak. There was a lot of wind, and the harbor at Adak was extremely rough in the air as well as the water. All the passengers except the Captain were sick. Gehres stood between the pilots, and when, after several rough approaches, Bagee determined it was too rough to land, Gehres ordered him 'to land.' On the next approach, we hit a bump which banged Captain Gehres' head on the overhead in the cockpit, knocking him unconscious. Bagee diverted to Atka, where we landed in water so rough that it took some hours to tie to a buoy and get the passengers and crew off the plane, using a rubber raft. Captain Gehres, recovered by now, was the only man in the plane who could tie a bowline to secure the raft for the evacuation. By the time we got aboard the Casco, which had several anchors out to hold it against the wind and the waves, it was after 9:00 p.m. and nearly dark. Colonel Talley and the Army engineer with him were transferred to the destroyer Reid to be taken to Adak. Gehres remained on the Casco."

On the Casco also were a number of aircrewmen, including Jesse Jolley and the few survivors of his crew, who had been rescued by the AVD Williamson after landing at sea. During the rescue, a depth charge was dislodged from the plane near the fantail of the ship and exploded in the water, killing and injuring members of the crews of both the plane and the Williamson. "Doc" Jones, the CO of VP-43, also was aboard. Earlier that day, August 30, he had dispatched Carl Amme with two planes to Dutch Harbor to operate patrols from that base. The day before (August 29), a Japanese Mavis four-engine seaplane scouted over Nazan Bay and obviously spotted the Casco and Williamson at anchor. Thus it was no surprise when someone spotted a torpedo crossing the bow of the Casco on the night of the thirtieth and sounded General Quarters.

The second torpedo struck the Casco amidships and knocked out the electric power of the ship. To keep from sinking, the Commanding Officer slipped the anchors and beached the ship broadside to the shoreline. Someone paddled out to one of the PBY's, started the APU (putt putt), and sent a message to Dutch Harbor and other places, informing these bases what had happened.

Aviation gas was leaking from the ship, and a flare had been dislodged into the water around the ship. Soon someone yelled, "Put out that flare!" Cobean, a gunners mate third class, jumped overboard immediately and tried to hold the flare down under the water, which was difficult to do, since it was a floating flare. He then held it up high over his head so it could not ignite the gasoline around the ship. For this heroic action, Cobean was awarded the Silver Star and a couple of jolts of medicinal brandy.

Around 11:30 p.m. that night, Amme in Dutch Harbor and Coleman in Adak received the news of the disaster to the Casco. Killed were John H. Bramfield, S1c, and Lawrence L. Davis, S2c; missing were Cornelius N. Cremer, CMM, Carl W. Manar, F1c, Dail I. Richard, EM2c; wounded were John W. Jacobs, SC2c, William W. Porter, RM3c, and Elmer H. Kracke, SK2c. Rumor also has it that Wing Commander Gehres on the bridge at General Quarters was knocked down and bruised his buttocks. We are unable to verify that he received the Purple Heart.

In any event, Lieutenant Carl Amme rounded up a couple of doctors and some first aid splints and bandages that night and took off at first light of dawn on August 31 for Nazan Bay. At the same time, Lieutenant Sammy Coleman took off from Adak and proceeded to Atka, looking for the Japanese submarines.

When Amme arrived at Nazan Bay, the whole bay was socked in with fog. Rather than wait around for the weather to break, he decided to go west towards Adak, looking for a bay or cove where he could set down and conserve fuel. After about one and a half hours, the crew noticed a wind shift from the southwest, so the plane turned back to Atka, hoping to find conditions improved enough to land and deliver his medical task force.

Arne Havu, the co-pilot, noted that it was clearing up near Mt. Korovin for about 100 yards offshore. He looked back out of the side window and saw another PBY at a lower altitude, then suddenly saw the conning tower of a submarine surfacing directly ahead of the other plane.

Phil (Andy) Anderson, co-pilot to Sammy Coleman, saw the submarine at about the same time. Havu and Anderson bounced around in their seats, yelling to their respective plane commanders. Both reacted immediately. Amme made a tight 180-degree turn and saw Coleman commence his bombing run. Two depth charges straddled the submarine.

Amme leveled off at 500 feet and prepared for a maneuver that he had practiced many times on the rocks along the coast of

Amchitka. From 500 feet at the proper moment, he would close the throttle, nose over directly at the target, drop his depth charges manually by pulling the lever under the instrument panel, then pull up again, adding full throttle simultaneously. Only about 200 feet in altitude was lost, but the accuracy of aiming the lumbering plane directly at the target was uncanny.

Havu released his depth charges on signal, and by the time the PBY turned around, the submarine had dived.

Coleman was running low on fuel and left the scene to return to Adak. Amme stuck around, as he had the medical personnel to deliver to the Casco. Then it was noticed that an oil slick was beginning to appear in an easterly direction from the point of attack. About a mile off Mt. Korovin, the slick took a 90-degree turn to the left to a northerly course. It was obvious that the submarine was not sunk but damaged enough to leave a telltale stream of oil. In the distance, about ten miles away, the destroyer Reid was sighted. Whether she had delivered Colonel Talley to Adak and was returning, or whether she herself was sub-hunting from the previous night we never found out. But when she received our Aldis message about the submarine, the Reid put on full speed to the scene, and we began to drop smoke signals in advance of the oil slick, which we thought to be the submarine's most likely position. The sub was "running silent and deep," for the Reid apparently could not detect it with sonar. Finally, having only two smoke flares left, Amme blinked a message to the Reid: "Am dropping my last smoke floats, request you drop a pattern of depth charges where indicated. Acknowledge!" An acknowledgement was received and Amme dropped the smoke markers; the Reid dropped her cans exactly on target. Then the Captain secured from General Quarters.

At that point, with no ammunition left and the doctors and medical supplies still to deliver, Amme landed and boarded the Casco. He was met by "Doc" Jones, his skipper, who told him that the torpedo had wrecked the bunkroom where he usually slept and that all his clothes, except what he had carried to Dutch Harbor, were destroyed.

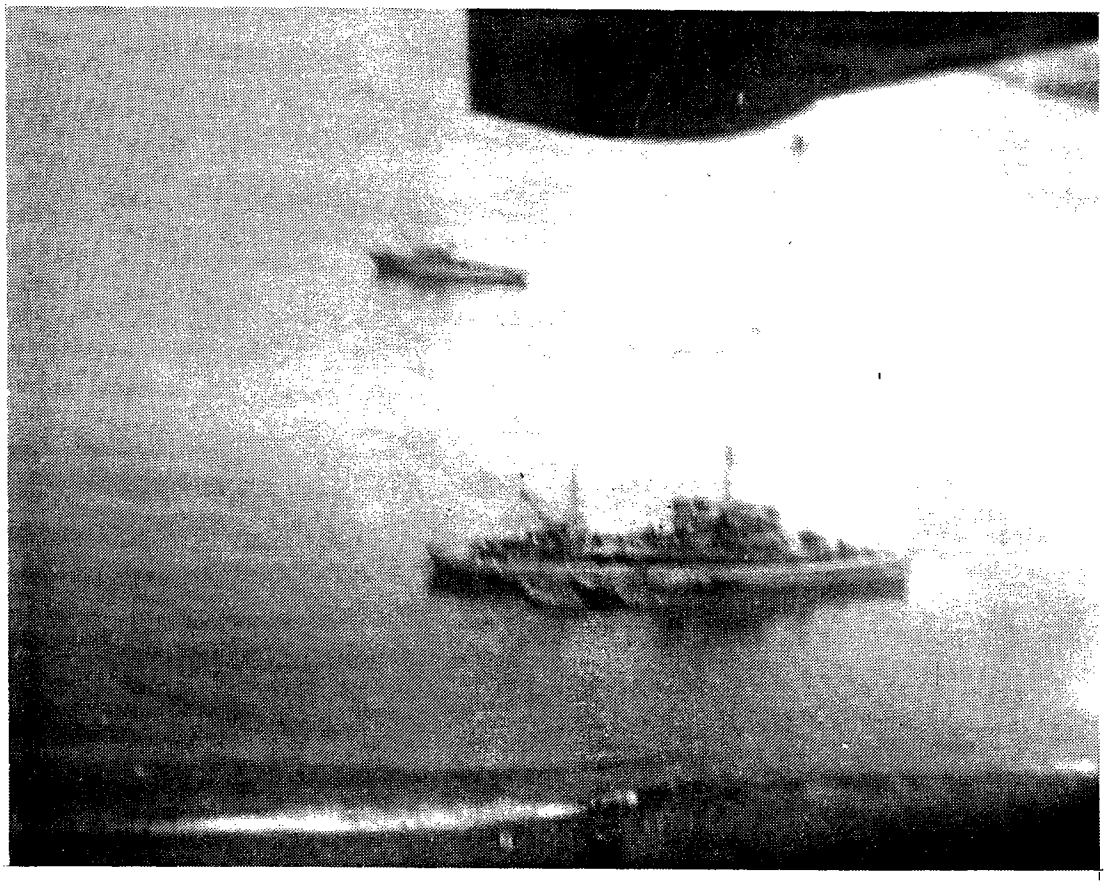
In the meantime, Lt. Sorenson and his co-pilot, Ensign Don Coe, took off to pick up the trail of the damaged submarine. Sorenson dropped his depth charges ahead of the oil slick with no evidence of results. He continued to mark the trail with smoke floats. Later, we were told that one gunner on the 40-millimeter gun on the fantail was cleaning up around his gun when the RO-61 surfaced astern. He saw the Japanese running to the deck gun, and the Reid's gunner opened up on them without further orders. The gunfire naturally caused someone on the bridge to sound General Quarters and swing the ship around so all guns would bear.

CinCPac sent a message to ComTask Force Eight:

CONVEY TO REID AND PLANES WHICH PARTICIPATED X COMPLETE APPROBRATION CONDUCT OF ENGAGEMENT WITH JAPANESE SUBMARINE

AND RESULTS OBTAINED X THIS AFFAIR DEMONSTRATES CORRECT PROCEDURE BASED ON SOUND FUNDAMENTALS PLANE SIGHTED SUBMARINE ATTACKED INFLICTED LESS THAN REPEAT THAN FATAL DAMAGE BUT MAINTAINED CONTACT AND BY SMOKE FLOATS DIRECTED REID IN FOR THE KILL X REID BY WELL PLACED DEPTH CHARGE BARRAGES BROUGHT SUBMARINE TO SURFACE AND COMPLETED DESTRUCTION BY GUNFIRE X CAPTURE OF PRISONERS CLIMAX OF PERFECT JOB X SUBMIT APPROPRIATE AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS X FROM CINCPAC COMINCH ALSO INFO X

The Captain of the U.S.S. Reid was awarded a Navy Cross and the pilots Coleman, Amme, and Sorenson received Distinguished Flying Crosses, while the co-pilots received Air Medals.



The *Casco* slowly drifts toward shore after being hit by a Japanese torpedo. Jagged dark spot (center at the water line) is the large hole made by the missile. Photo is typically Coe--out of focus.

PART FOUR

THE WING MOVES WEST TO DISLODGE THE ENEMY

XIII

VP SQUADRON FORTY-TWO ADDS ITS CONTRIBUTION TO DUTCH HARBOR RAID

by

James Russell

World War II began for us on 7 December 1941, with the Japanese carrier aircraft attack on Pearl Harbor. My squadron, VP-42, expanded from six to twelve planes. We also reequipped with Catalina amphibians, that is, we turned in our PBY-5's and drew PBY-5A's. It was a joy to be able to fly from airfields ashore with greatly simplified maintenance, yet we retained the ability to operate from the sea and our seaplane tenders. When the Japanese carrier aircraft struck Dutch Harbor on the 3rd of June, 1942, the day before they struck Midway Island in the central Pacific, and struck Dutch Harbor again on the 4th, none of my squadron planes were there because we had an elaborate plan for dispersion. We used to service in Dutch Harbor, or at one of our two Army airfields in the area, then fly to a dispersion point in a bay, inlet, lagoon -- even a lake -- in the vicinity but far enough away not to be identified with our base.

We were always looking for new dispersion points, and one day an aircraft from a sister squadron spotted what he thought would be a good dispersion point in a salt water lagoon. He landed and found to his intense embarassment that when his seaplane settled down off the step, he was hard and fast aground. With a combination of high tide and the jettisoning of much equipment, he got off a day later. Determined that such an incident would not occur in our squadron, we developed a way of sounding the depth of a likely body of water; for dispersion, without landing. The method was simple. We took a fathom, six feet of twine, the span of a man's arms. At one end of the twine, we tied a chip of wood, at the other a rock -- the rock large enough to sink the chip. Flying to the intended dispersion point, we would fly across the body of water while the waist gunner dropped out chip and rock every five seconds. Returning to our track across the water and flying low, we could see if all the chips of wood were under water -- if so, it was safe to land; the water was six feet or deeper.

Something that made a vast difference in our flying happened in April, 1942. We flew down successively in pairs to Alameda, California, where we installed the British ASV Radar in our airplanes. While the radar was being installed, we in the flight crews went to school to learn how to use it. Returning to the Aleutians, we looked much like porcupines -- hay rakes under the wings and dipoles around the hull. Being able to see through

the fog made a tremendous difference in our scouting capability on patrol and a great improvement in safety of navigation.

During the two days of carrier raids against us, 3 nd 4 June 1942, my squadron of twelve planes lost three to Japanese Zero fighters. Lou Campbell lost his airplane on the first day, but saved his crew. Gene Stockstill was shot down with all hands while trailing the carriers on the second day. Albert E. Mitchell was shot down with all his crew lost near Beaver Inlet, Unalaska Island, also on the second day. While there were no eye witnesses surviving, all evidence points to Mitchell's crew as having brought down the Zero recovered on the island of Akutan, which was repaired at Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego, and became the first Zero flown in the U.S. -- October, 1942. The Zero's mortal damage occurred when a .50 caliber bullet severed the oil return line from oil cooler to engine. This was one of several .50 caliber bullet holes. The pilot, Flight Petty Officer Tadayoshi Koga, seeing his oil pressure drop to zero, executed the Japanese emergency plan and landed on Akutan Island, where a Japanese lifeguard submarine was cruising the shoreline. Koga made the mistake of lowering his wheels to land on a meadow, which, like all meadows in the Aleutians, was a bog. His wheels took the soft ground, flipped the Zero on its back, and Koga's neck was broken.

The manner in which Lou Campbell saved his crew is interesting. There was no pilot in the squadron more skilled than Lou. When the Japanese first struck Dutch Harbor, he, with his crew and airplane, had gone to their dispersion point at Akutan Island, the next large island east of Unalaska upon which Dutch Harbor is located. On news of the attack, received over his airplane's radio, he took off and was the first to locate and report the Japanese carrier force -- the carriers Ryujo and Junyo with two heavy cruisers and four destroyers. A Zero fighter chased him into a cloud and sprayed his airplane with machine gun bullets, one of which severed the rudder wires of his airplane. Flying back to base with no rudder control and leaking gas tanks, he ran out of fuel 50 miles out. At that point, he made a letdown through six thousand feet of cloud and sighted the water when his altitude was only about three hundred feet, just in time to pull up the nose of his airplane and make a successful landing, without engine power and with no rudder, in the open sea. He and his crew, one of whom was wounded, kept the plane afloat until rescued by a Coast Guard patrol boat.

When Campbell described this escapade to me, he said, "Skipper, I made a mistake." When I asked, "What?" he said, "When I ran out of fuel and my engines quit, I forgot to cut the ignition, and when I pulled the nose up to land, a slug of gasoline reached one engine, which started." He paused a moment, then said, "But it was the downwind engine, and all it did was to kick the airplane around a little bit more into the wind!" Lou Campbell was a seasoned and expert aviator, and it was a pleasure to fly with him.

After the Japanese carrier raids on Dutch Harbor on June 3

and 4, 1942, their occupation of Kisha was discovered on June 10. The seaplane tender Gillis (AVD-12) moved forward to Atka Island and used Nazan Bay of that island as an anchorage. Catalinas were used to shuttle-bomb the Japanese in Kiska Harbor before their defense ashore was too well-established. This employment was in addition to maintaining our network of offshore patrols. It became customary to complete a patrol by stopping at Atka to do a bombing rn on Kiska before returning to the Dutch Harbor area. This went on until Gillis had emptied her magazines of bombs and almost exhausted her aviation fuel. At that time we were pleased to turn the bombing of Kiska over to the Bomber Command of the Eleventh Army Air Force whose Liberator (B-24) airplanes were better suited to the task. Catalina attacks thereafter were against ship targets of opportunity as they developed in the course of a patrol. To be mentioned also were a number of at-sea rescues of crews of ditched bombers -- B-24's.

As the advance back down the chain of Aleutian Islands toward Kiska began in the summer of 1942, my squadron, VP-42, was the first Navy air squadron to base on Adak when our Army had made an unopposed landing there in August. After the landing, an airfield was improvised and useable in ten days by using the bottom of a shallow salt water lagoon. The lagoon bottom bared at low tide, so the Army engineers kept the high water out with a tide gate. Fresh water coming down from Mount Moffett in Sweeper Creek was diverted by bulldozing a dike, which diverted the water around the edge of the field and on into the Bering Sea. The hard-packed, black volcanic sand of the lagoon bottom made an excellent surface for the airfield.

My squadron had come back to the Army air base at Otter Point on Umnak Island in accordance with the Wing winter deployment plan, when I made the grade of commander. As squadron commander of VP-42, I was in a Lieutenant-Commander's billet, and it was time to move on. I was ordered to Washington, D.C. and became the director of the Division of Military Requirements in the Bureau of Aeronautics.

XIV

MOVING WEST THROUGH UMNAK

by

Elmer A. Freeman

Semisopochnoi, Chuginadak, Vsevidof, Khvostof, Anagaksik. Names from a Russian novel? No. Names of some of the Aleutian Islands.

Following the Dutch Harbor attack on June 3, the Japanese put occupation forces ashore at Kiska and Attu, in the western Aleutians. Anyone looking at a chart of the Pacific area can see the possibilities for an invasion route from Japan through the Aleutians to Canada and the United States. Some sort of defense had to be set up out there -- and right away.

My own theory of how the defense plan was set up is that the Army and Navy appointed a committee of desk jockeys in Washington, D.C. When they finally found a chart of the Aleutian Islands, they couldn't pronounce anything on it, so they came to a profound and far-reaching decision. "We won't build a base on any island unless at least two of us can pronounce the name."

Can you imagine some headquarters picking up a radio transmission: "This is Navy Flight 305, enroute to Semisopochnoi, passing Chuginadak. Our next checkpoint is Vsevidof, estimating at 1305 Zebra. Do you wish us to check out Khvostof or Anagaksik on the way?" Headquarters would immediately stick a pin in the middle of their Siberian map, report Navy Flight 305 2700 miles off course, and prepare to notify the next of kin.

Kodiak and Dutch Harbor, with the small base at Cold Bay in between, were too far away from Kiska and Attu to allow for the kind of surveillance and attacks needed on those islands. We needed bases to the West, and until they were built, we could use a couple of spots for the Seaplane Tenders to set up and take care of the PBY's and flight crews. With this arrangement, we would be able to patrol the entire Aleutian chain clear past Attu, the westernmost island.

Umnak was a pronounceable name, so that was where the first base was built west of Dutch Harbor. When the Japanese carrier planes were surprised by the fighter planes from the west during their June 4 attack on Dutch Harbor, they figured there was a secret base out there. Top secret? Well, the same terrible weather that prevented us from finding the Japanese task force before they attacked also hid the base-building activities. You could have built New York City out there, and nobody would have known it.

The base at Umnak consisted of a stretch of steel matting laid out on a flat part of the island, and numerous tents. Our planes had retractable wheels, so we could operate from either water or land. Landing at Umnak, you never knew which you were doing. There was a time when I thought the roller coaster on the Pike in Long Beach was the wildest ride in the world. One takeoff from Umnak convinced me I was wrong.

"Advanced Base Operations" is a term used to describe flight operations where you leave your permanent base behind and give up the comforts and amenities for the sake of battling the elements twenty-four hours a day -- air, land and sea -- and, with any luck, become more adept at your job under adverse conditions. In academic terms, Umnak was "Advanced Base 707" and fulfilled all the requirements for a Doctoral Degree.

The names Atka and Adak aren't too difficult to pronounce, so they turned out to be our next advance bases. Atka was about 300 miles west of Umnak, and Adak was about another 100 miles out. That put us within 300 or 400 miles of Kiska. Attu would be a couple of hundred miles further to the west. Cold Bay was the base right at the tip of the Alaska Peninsula, but it was so far from Kiska that it was not practical to run regular bombing missions from there once we began making Kiska the prime focus of operations. In July, VP-42 used Cold Bay as a sort of home base from which we sent detachments to operate from Atka. After a couple of weeks of operations from one of our tenders, the detachment would be relieved by fresh crews and planes, and the original detachment would return to Cold Bay for maintenance and search operations further up the chain. We also had a detachment up near the Arctic Circle patrolling from Nome for a couple of weeks.

U.S.S. Gillis, another Seaplane Tender just like the Williamson, set up a seadrome at Atka. Gillis was commanded by Lieutenant Commander Norman Garton, with whom I had flown during VP-42's operations at Tongue Point. We started operating from Atka shortly after the Japanese attacks on Dutch Harbor. Adak was to be a shore base, and it became operational a short time later. It was another of those steel-matting-and-tent type of bases, built by Army Engineers.

VP-43 arrived in the Aleutians at about the time the Gillis set up shop at Atka. VP-41 and VP-42 had had several months of Aleutian seasoning before the Japanese occupied Kiska and Attu, so we were familiar with the territory. VP-43 must have found their first month or so of operation pretty tough. I know they started right off with bombing Kiska.

The movement west was not exactly uneventful. Since there was no such thing as fighter protection for the ships playing mother hen for our PBY's, the tenders were pretty vulnerable. While serving as tender for VP-43 aircraft (and itinerant VP-41 and VP-42 planes) at Atka, Gillis survived a couple of bombing attacks from the Japanese flying out of Kiska.

When a VP-43 plane reported being down in heavy seas off Amlia Island and needing assistance, Williamson went to the rescue. Towing a flying boat in the open sea is never easy, but at night, when the sea is heavy, it becomes pretty hazardous. When the wave action caused the plane to collide with the starboard screwguard of the ship, a wing broke off, releasing the depth charges being carried on the plane, and they exploded right under the ship. There were casualties on both the ship and the wrecked aircraft, even though the skipper decided to illuminate the area with searchlights to assist with the rescue of the aircrew. Illuminating your ship when enemy submarines are in the area can be awfully risky, but the action did allow some rescues which would not have been possible otherwise.

Bases such as Umnak did have some improvements as time went on. There eventually got to be several buildings on the island, and quonset huts replaced most of the tents. We even got to fly to Dutch Harbor once in awhile and bring back a cargo of beer. And it was about this time that the chaplains began visiting on a regular basis. Catholic and Protestant chaplains alternated their visits. The Catholic chaplain would fly in one Saturday, and the Protestant chaplain would come in the next Saturday. The Catholic chaplain always held Mass on Sunday morning when he was there. The Protestant chaplain always held services Sunday evening when he was there. It sounds like a normal and satisfactory arrangement, but a problem developed.

The problem stemmed from the fact that the chaplain brought our weekly movie with him. The movie was always shown on Sunday evening. With Catholic services in the morning, everybody got a fair shot at the movie seats. But when the Protestant chaplain held evening services, the movie followed immediately in the same building. So the Protestant guys always got all of the good movie seats.

I guess all of us Catholic guys had heard about the early Christians being thrown to the lions for their faith and wondered whether we could stand up to that. But being forced to have a lousy seat for the movie seemed to be more than even the martyrs had to endure. So we took our problem to Father Smith, the Catholic chaplain.

I'm sure Father Smith had the finest in Catholic seminary training and knew all the rules and regulations concerning his religion. But when you have heard confessions in the Aleutian Islands and the guys are confessing mortal sins like, "I lost the starboard sea anchor out in Nazan Bay the other day," or, "I punched a 50-caliber machine gun through the glass in the port blister last week," or, "I dropped the tool box in the bilges and put a hole in the bottom of the plane," theology begins to take on new dimensions -- or loses some of its dimensions. "These guys live by different rules. It's a different dimension."

The Pope couldn't have been more solemn than Father Smith: "I am granting you permission to attend Protestant services."

Then he smiled, "Everybody knows that Protestants sing lots better than Catholics. So you guys concentrate on learning how to sing. And I'll expect to hear real results the next time I come out here."

So at Umnak we had Catholic Mass with the beautiful old Protestant hymns. It would be thirty years before the Catholic Church finally did the same thing officially.

Church music wasn't the only music at Umnak. We had one guy, Hoot Smith, who always carried a set of drumsticks with him and who could go like crazy on a couple of the cook's dishpans. Then there was Marcus with his guitar. And I hauled my clarinet with me wherever I went. I had the idea that if I practiced for the whole war, I might emerge as a latter-day Benny Goodman. Well, at least I ended up on the winning side in the war. You can't have everything.

We played together whenever we were at Umnak at the same time. We finally got to where we started and stopped together, and sometimes people even knew what we were playing. There were some who claimed our music helped to drive the Japanese out of the Aleutians. Could be.

Late in 1942, our skipper was Lieutenant Commander "Cy" Perkins. One evening in the mess hall, we played "Beat Your Feet in the Mississippi Mud" for him. I was never sure whether he was punishing us or complimenting us, but he decided that we should put on a show, "you know, like they do in the movies."

Well, we had a Second Class Mech named Bill Brady who was pretty fast with the one-liners, and we got him to be Master of Ceremonies. Then we combed the squadron for talent. Any talent. We didn't come up with Hollywood calibre, but it was the best show on the island.

The title of this production was, "From Craps to Reveille." It opened with some guys shooting craps. Pretty soon, one guy lost all his money and decided to hit the sack. The band played "Goodnight, Sweetheart," he started snoring, and we swung into "Dream a Little Dream." A guy walked across the stage with a big sign that said, "HIS DREAM." The show was on!

Bill Brady ran out and did a ten-minute monologue and then introduced a tap dance act. Two guys in GI shoes did a routine to "Tea for Two" and brought down the house -- almost literally. We had to straighten out the planks we had rigged for a stage after their encore.

A guy did a recitation of the poem, "Hiawatha," and we played some Indian music like "Indian Love Call." Then one of the cooks, who really was a fine singer, sang "Chloe." With proper accompaniment, he would have been tops on any stage. But he would never get a greater ovation than he did that night on Umnak.

We had about eight acts and lots of Bill Brady's patter in between, and finally we worked our way to the grand finale. We had four of the beefiest guys in the squadron do a takeoff on the Rockettes. While one of our planes was in Kodiak, the crew managed to get some girdles and bras and garters and anything else they could get hold of to outfit these guys. They were a smash. Their kicks weren't very high and they lacked something in precision, but the audience kept them coming back until they could hardly move any more.

Then the Master-at-Arms came on the stage and held reveille on the guy sleeping; the whole cast came on stage, and we closed with "Beat Your Feet in the Mississippi Mud."

That show would never make it in Peoria, but we were the toast of Umnak for one grand night. We did the show again for those of the crew who couldn't attend the first night, but somehow it didn't come off quite as good the second time. Within about a day or so, the cast was spread out all over the Aleutians, and we never got up the nerve to impose that kind of treatment on our squadron-mates again.

XV

TACTICS, LOSSES AND AWARDS

by

Elmer A. Freeman

Prior to the war, the Navy used a standard system of marking planes so that a twelve-plane squadron was divided into four sections of three planes each. The first section would be led by the skipper, the second by the executive officer, and the remaining two by the other senior officers of the squadron. The marking allowed identification of each section and the leader of the section. The system was a good device for identification when there were several aircraft getting into formation. But from the time the war started, I don't believe our squadron ever had as many as two planes in any formation. The concept of the skipper's leading a twelve-plane formation out on a search would have been ridiculous. We needed to cover as much ocean area as possible, and to do that, every plane flew independently.

Not only was the formation concept abandoned, but even the idea of all planes operating from the same base was forgotten. On any given day, we would have planes flying out of Dutch Harbor, Umnak, Atka and Adak. And there were times when we would be spread as far as Kodiak or even Nome. VP-41 and VP-42 operations were so intermingled that it was sometimes hard to know which squadron you belonged to. The inter-squadron rivalry was pretty much forgotten as we battled the common problems of weather and maintenance, to say nothing of the Japanese.

One result of all of this dispersed operation was that we lost track of friends for a month at a time. Then we might fly into Atka to join that particular contingent for a few days, and there would be the friends still grinding out the hours over the ocean as always, ready to share the latest scuttlebutt about going back to the States.

The sad part of all of this was that sometimes a friend disappeared from the scene completely. Ensign Litsey's crew was caught in a strafing attack during takeoff while the Japanese were attacking Dutch Harbor. There were a couple of people killed, but the rest of the crew escaped. While keeping contact with the Japanese task force southwest of Dutch Harbor, Ensign Hildebrand's plane and crew disappeared and were never heard from again. Lieutenant Cusick's plane got shot down, and there were three survivors, who were dragged out of the water by the Japanese and taken prisoner. We had a plane run into the side of a mountain in the fog. We had planes shot up by Japanese Zeroes from the task force, but they were able to limp back to one of

our bases or tenders. Mr. Brough's plane crashed on landing in heavy weather out at Nazan Bay, Atka. Most of the crew was lost, but Schreck, Chesnutt and Gebhart managed to get out of the wreckage and were saved.

When I heard a report of a plane and crew gone, I sort of rationalized it as a transfer. I knew I wouldn't see any of those guys again and hoped they were enjoying a new tour of duty somewhere. I suppose that was my psychological defense against the realities of war. When we were scheduled to fly out to relieve another plane which had been declared missing, I invented a way to keep psyched up. There's an old Navy expression which is used to describe the passing of a shipmate: "He was transferred to the staff of the Supreme Commander."

Were there heroes in the Aleutian Islands? Surely the men who gave their lives would have to be listed as heroes. But to me, it boils down to "all or none at all." If flying was tough, it was no less tough to fight mud, rain, snow and wind as a member of the ground crew. And if it was tough ashore, it was no less tough on shipboard personnel, fighting waves, wind and cold. The great battles of the war were not fought in the Aleutians. Indeed, the war reports from the Aleutians were so sparse that very few people knew there was anything happening there. Africa, Europe and the South Pacific got all the headlines. But we were trying to halt the enemy on the only front where they actually invaded the continent of North America.

Jumping back and forth between bases was pretty much routine for us. If a more concentrated search was needed in a certain area, a few extra planes would be dispatched to the nearest base to join in the search efforts. So it was no surprise when we were told to fly a search along the south side of the Aleutian chain and end up in Umnak. It had become a sort of headquarters for our squadron. It was where most of us kept our seabags. When we flew into Umnak, we would all get out our dress blues and reminisce about the good old days in Seattle, then pack them away and fly back out west. There was always the hope that maybe this time there would be orders to go back and fight the Battle of Seattle.

When we arrived at Umnak on this trip, we got the plane secured and headed for a quonset hut to get a bunk for the night. The Master-at-Arms notified us that we were to be in dress blues and fall out for inspection the next morning. Now this was something new! Of course, they would want to inspect us before sending us back to the States! Get the shoes shined. Get the wrinkles out of the blues and get a clean hat. Every one of us needed a haircut. Every one of us got a haircut. The guy who cut my hair was a metalsmith, and he used his tinsnips. I thanked him fervently and hoped he did a better job of patching bullet holes in airplanes. It was the first and only haircut I ever got standing up, outside, in a forty-knot wind.

The next morning, we mustered outside the squadron office at 0800, the sharpest-looking group ever to gather on Umnak. When

muster had been completed, the Leading Chief reported to the Executive Officer that we were all present. The Exec went into the squadron office and came back out shortly with the skipper and, of all people, the Wing Commander. They took up a position directly in front of the formation, and another officer ordered, "The following advance to front and center." Then he began reading off names. When he had finished his list, there were about twenty of us lined up, facing the Wing Commander. The skipper began reading citations, which accompanied the awarding of each medal. Most of the pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the rest of us were awarded Air Medals. I have to say that I was proud to be in that group, but the experience was a little bit unsettling for me. I wasn't sure I belonged there.

There was a citation from Admiral Nimitz and another one from the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox. The one from the Secretary of the Navy not only awarded the Air Medal but included advancement to the next highest rating. I had flown into Umnak Second Class Aviation Machinist's Mate, and when we departed for Adak two mornings later, I was First Class Aviation Machinist's Mate. As we droned along the way, I couldn't help thinking that Seattle was getting further away every minute, but if I ever did get back, there I would be, First Class. Maybe that would impress the girls along First Avenue.

There was one unusual twist to the medal award. During all of these months, I was never allowed to mention anything in a letter home about where I was. The censor would cut it out. On this occasion, the Navy sent the whole business to my hometown newspaper, Aleutian Campaign and all. Of course, I still couldn't write home and tell anybody where I was; the censor would cut it out.

Writing letters home was always a hard task. You couldn't say where you were or what you were doing. You weren't even allowed to mention the weather. My letters usually consisted of saying I felt fine and that I had gotten their last letter. On some occasions, I could say I had received a package from home. I think all packages had to be fired from a 16-inch gun on a battleship before they were delivered to us. Cookies looked like brown flour. Fruitcakes got to us in packages that felt like beanbags, with the fruit in one end and the crumbs in the other. sometimes we received a wad of paper with our names on it.

One break we did get from the Post Office Department was free mail. We just had to put our return address in the usual location on the envelope, showing our Fleet Post Office address, and then, instead of putting a stamp on the letter, we just wrote "Free" in that spot. So we saved three cents per letter.

My parents had four sons in the Service, two in the Army and two in the Navy. Not knowing where they were or what they were doing must have caused them a lot of anguish. All of us were in the Pacific, but that fact was not known to any of us until late in the war.

My oldest brother, Aubrey (Aub), had been in the Service for about ten years. He was a Staff Sergeant in the Army Medics. He was at Clark Field in the Philippines when the war started and ended up being taken prisoner at Bataan. He was listed as missing for a year, but then turned up in a prison camp.

My second oldest brother, Claude, was a Second Class Storekeeper in the Navy. He was with some supply outfit on Guadalcanal with the Marines.

My third oldest brother, Kenneth, was a Master Sergeant in the Army Air Corps. He got shipped to Australia a few days after Pearl Harbor, aboard the Queen Mary with 15,000 troops. He was moved up to New Guinea shortly after that and was in a B-24 outfit.

I guess my dad and mother watched for the stage every day and hoped for a letter. As sparse as the news was in the letters they got, it sure beat hearing nothing at all.

In the fall of 1942, some promotions came through for some of our squadron officers, and some of the "old guard" were transferred to other duties. The skipper, Lieutenant Commander Russell, made Commander and left us, turning over the squadron to Lieutenant Commander Perkins. Lieutenant Dickey, our plane commander, was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and went back to the States to await further assignment. Our new plane commander was Lieutenant (jg) McFarland.

Getting a new plane commander is like getting a new quarterback on a football team. Both Lieutenant Dickey and Lieutenant McFarland knew their business, but each had his own way of going about it. The basics always remained the same, but Mr. Dickey's deliberate and thoughtful methods were now replaced by the instinctively faster pace of Mr. McFarland. Our crew didn't have much trouble adapting, and it didn't make any difference who was in the plane commander's seat -- our PBY wasn't going to make more than 115 knots anyway.

APPRECIATION

by

Jacob W. Dixon
First Lieutenant, Air Corps

I don't have much use for the Navy,
   being an Army man.
But I must take off my hat to some pilots
   of this seafaring clan.

These boys didn't give a damn for the weather,
   and Jap lead meant even less.
I've seen 'em fly through storms aplenty,
   their plane a riddled mess.

I'll always remember the way they informed us
   of the Jap's position at sea.
And how they told us, almost to the minute,
   the time an attack would be.

Then when we went on the offensive,
   and flew with no land in sight,
We knew that in the clouds above us,
   a rescue plane watched the flight.

They even patrolled where we were fighting,
   to save us if we fell.
They hid in the clouds from the "Zeroes,"
   and the ack-ack go to hell.

So here's to those boys of the Navy,
   a bunch of damn good guys,
And especially to those great pilots
   who fly the PBY's.

XVI

OPERATING FROM ADAK

by

Elmer A. Freeman

When we first started operating from Adak in late August, early September, 1942, it was more or less a secret base as far as the Japanese were concerned. They hadn't spotted the ships bringing General Landrum's expeditionary force to the island, and during the construction the weather had been so bad that they hadn't seen it from the air. From the day the Army Engineers landed, it only took them ten days to have the runway ready. From then on, the Army fighters kept the Japanese far enough away so that they couldn't find out the exact location, even though they did figure out that there was a base somewhere on Adak.

There was complete radio silence from Adak so that the Japanese couldn't get a radio fix on that location. The first PBY to come in from patrol in the afternoon would land and pick up all the radio traffic to be transmitted from the base. Then he would take off and fly out to sea a hundred miles, and the radioman in the flight crew would send all the messages.

By the process of eliminating areas they did get to see on the island, the Japanese got an idea of where the base might be. Just to keep us from getting too smug about our secret base, they sent a plane over our way almost every morning at just about daylight. He would make one pass and head for home. He would drop a couple of bombs through the overcast strictly by guess and by gosh. He never did hit the base. Sometimes the bombs hit five miles away, and a few times they came within a half mile. But they did let us know the Japanese were thinking of us.

The Navy SeaBees moved in right behind the Army Engineers, and every day a new building or quonset hut or shack would blossom around the runway. The wind blew them down a few times, but the SeaBees rebuilt them until they stayed put.

In the pre-war days, we had strict specifications on how many hours PBY engines could be operated before being sent to an overhaul shop. Our planes had R-1830, Pratt and Whitney engines, which were to be sent to overhaul after 500 hours of operations. There were circumstances when this could be extended to 550 or 600 hours, but this was the absolute maximum.

During the first months of the war, we were accumulating hours on our engines at a rate that was unheard of in the past. At the same time, the availability of new or overhauled engines couldn't begin to keep up with the demand. We just had to forget

the 500- or 600-hour limitations and keep churning around in the fog out towards Kiska and Attu. By the time the engines had about 800 hours on them, there was very little compression left, and you were using three times more oil than you would normally use. The engines ran on gas, oil and imagination.

Finally, some new engines started coming through. The engine changes were to be done in Kodiak, so we started a rotation system in which we flew one plane at a time back to Kodiak to turn in for engine changes. The Kodiak crew would have a plane with new engines ready to go, and we would trade planes and head back out for Adak.

We had taken our plane back to Kodiak for engine changes, and there was a plane waiting for us with new engines, ready to fly back out. We were also supposed to haul a much-needed pump and a lot of hose out to Dutch Harbor, where some ship was waiting for it. Although I was regular plane captain on the crew, Gabriel, our Leading Chief, had made the trip with us. As senior man in the crew, he was sort of ramrodding and generally observing to see if the rest of us knew what we were doing.

Mr. Dickey, Gabriel and I discussed the gas-loading the night before our departure, and it was decided that because of the extra weight we would be carrying, we would not top off the tanks, which would have taken about 800 gallons. We decided to put in 400 gallons, which would give us plenty of gas to reach Dutch Harbor but still not be so heavy for takeoff. I proceeded to call the gas truck and put in 400 gallons without telling Gabriel. A little later, not having heard from me, Gabriel called the gas truck and put in another 400 gallons. During the fueling operations, word had been passed to Mr. Dickey that the Wing Commander, Captain Gehres, was to ride with us to Dutch Harbor. Now, besides the load of cargo, we would have a VIP aboard to worry about.

The crew was alerted to the latest development, and we arrived at the launching ramp earlier than we normally would have to make sure we were ready when the Captain showed up. The pump and hose made a pretty cumbersome load, and it was spread all over the walkways and bunks. The plane was not all that shipshape for the VIP, but there wasn't much we could do about it. While Gabriel and Mr. Dickey stood by to pipe the Wing Commander aboard, I was making our routine pre-launch check and suddenly realized that our gas tanks were all but topped off. About the time I hustled out to tell Mr. Dickey, Captain Gehres showed up and we became occupied with getting him into a Mae West and up the ladder into the waist hatch. Finally, Mr. Dickey took a moment to verify with me that we indeed had a full load of gas. He commented that it would be a good test of the new engines getting us off the water. There was nothing else we could do at that point.

Meanwhile, Townsend was preflighting the radio gear and radar. Sitting at the head of the ramp, all he could check on the radar was that something showed up dead ahead and something

showed up to port and starboard. All seemed in proper order, and he so reported. What he couldn't tell was that the radar had been hooked up backwards and his indications on port and starboard were reversed.

The water conditions were good, and we became airborne after a few extra hundred yards of takeoff run; at an altitude of fifty feet, we were swallowed up in the usual fog. After we set course for Dutch Harbor, the radioman reported land on the starboard side. The navigator said the land should be on the port side. Most of the time, when we climbed through the fog and came out on top, we could spot a mountain and take our bearings from there. But that day all the mountains were covered, and all we could see was white fluff. The big argument continued.

Listening to the conversation, I visualized us flying along some unknown valley with land on either side. Mr. Dickey had faith in the radar and wanted to believe it, but he had no reason to doubt the navigator either. We stayed on top for awhile and finally went down to try to get under the soup, but nothing worked. We were lost.

Captain Gehres began clambering back and forth from the cockpit to the waist to the cockpit, trying to get a better view of the nothingness outside. After four hours, Gabriel relieved me in the tower, and I joined Summers on watch in the waist. About every twenty minutes, Captain Gehres would show up in the waist and stand between the blisters, looking out. About six hours out on our flight, which should have taken five hours, I was betting Summers a dollar that we would spend the night at sea. The Captain showed up during this loud conversation, looked at us as if we were some kind of nuts, and scurried back forward again. He wouldn't even offer to hold the stakes for us.

At one point, we were below the fog at about forty-five feet altitude and suddenly came upon one of our destroyers. We circled him a few times, and Summers tried to blink out a request for our position. Due either to the lousy weather conditions or the fact that they didn't know where they were either, we got nowhere with that effort. I guess we began some sort of square pattern after that and picked up a landfall when we were about eleven hours out. We skirted the coastline cautiously, trying to recognize something.

Finally, Mr. Dickey recognized a rock or bay or something and judged that we were in the vicinity of Cold Bay. It turned out that he was right on the money. The next hour was a little scary, dodging hither and yon, but eventually, Cold Bay came into view and we dropped in at just about dark. The gas was so low I expected the engines to quit while we were taxiing to a parking place. Never did hear any further word about the foul-up in gassing the plane at Kodiak.

After we got the plane tied down and secured, we headed for the mess tent to beg something to eat. The officers had left earlier for the officers' mess. For some reason, their mess was

secured for the night. Our crew had just gotten seated at a table in the enlisted mess tent, when Mr. Dickey stuck his head in the door and asked if they could feed four more vagabonds.

It's not often that a flight crew shares a table with the Wing Commander for dinner. Captain Gehres was all smiles and seemed happy with his lot. But the next morning, he contacted a destroyer in the harbor and caught a surface ride the rest of the way to Dutch Harbor.

By nightfall the next day, we had stopped in at Dutch Harbor, gotten our radar fixed, offloaded our cargo, and arrived back at Adak. Operations had us scheduled to take off an hour before daylight the following morning to go out and see what there was to see on Attu. The Japanese were always trying to sneak in more airplanes. Maybe we could head them off.

Instead of returning to Adak, we were to land at Nazan Bay, Atka and proceed to operate from a tender. We did mostly night searches from Atka. On night searches, we would take off about an hour before dark and get to our sector departure point. The navigator would be getting wind readings as we started out on our first leg. Once darkness set in, he couldn't get any more wind readings, and we would use his last reading for the remaining ten hours of the flight. With no other navigational aids available, we were depending strictly on dead-reckoning navigation, which can become pretty inaccurate if you don't allow for wind changes. It was not unusual to find ourselves fifty miles off course at the end of a night search. But the rocks and islands had become familiar enough so that within a few minutes, we would know where we were and could return to base with no great difficulty. We were never lost, just a little off course.

Returning from one of these night searches, we realized we were more off course than usual. Our usual landmarks were nowhere to be seen. At this time, we were not observing one hundred percent radio silence, but communication with the ship was kept to a minimum. We didn't call in and say we were lost. But the big question remained: which way were we off course? Did we go east or west in search of a recognizable landmark? We flew east for about a half hour and knew we had guessed wrong. As we headed back west, our fuel supply began to be a concern, and as we skirted along an island, we decided that we were looking at Amlia Island. We were a good hour's flight from the ship, but we didn't have an hour's fuel left. As the gas gauges showed lower and lower, we started looking for a decent bay where we could avoid being down in the open sea.

When I reported that we were showing empty fuel tanks, we were already in a landing attitude and headed for a small bay. The sea was fairly smooth, and Mr. Dickey made a nice landing right toward the little bay and then taxied on in. We had just cleared the mouth of the bay when the engines quit. We continued coasting for a short distance with Summers standing by the anchor. On Mr. Dickey's order, he let it go and we came to a stop about 100 yards from shore.

There was a small reserve supply of fuel to be used for running the Auxiliary Power Unit, so we could use the radio for a short time if we wanted to. With this in mind, the plane commander and the navigator were poring over the chart of Amlia Island, trying to identify our little bay. They finally arrived at a conclusion, and we fired up the APU. It was a little risky to broadcast our position, because the Japanese might send out a search-and-destroy mission before our ship could get a search-and-rescue mission out our way. But Townsend got on the radio and sent out the message. He got a "roger" from the ship and that was all. It was their move next; it was a cinch we weren't going anywhere.

We always carried emergency rations aboard, but in addition to that, we had started carrying a couple of cases of C-rations. We were good for a number of days as far as food was concerned. Our fresh water supply might become a problem, so it was decided to send a party ashore, not only to scout for water but also to look over the possibilities for mounting a machine gun or two ashore if we had to. We pumped up a rubber raft, and our four-man invasion force hit the beach.

There was a nice, clean, clear stream close to where we landed, and it was full of fish. When we began inspecting rocks for possible gun mounts, we flushed out four blue foxes. As we moved along, we spotted more blue foxes scurrying around. The place was alive with them. Toward the middle of the afternoon, we heard a plane going over -- one of our own from the sound of it -- but the heavy overcast hid him from view. One of the guys on watch in the plane fired a couple of flares from the signal pistol, but the plane kept right on going.

We decided to have fresh fish for dinner, and one of the pilots got out his .45 and fired at a good-sized salmon in the stream. He didn't hit him, but the concussion in the water dazed the fish. Before he could recover, we had him out of the water and lying in the grass. The place was so quiet that we could call back and forth from shore to the plane with no effort at all. We told them to get out the C-rations, and we set about gathering wood for a fire and cleaning the fish. There weren't any trees, but there were good-sized bushes and some brush. You don't see roast salmon and C-rations on many restaurant menus. That's too bad. It is very good.

We spent the night aboard the plane, taking turns sleeping and standing watches at the guns. That was an uneasy night. Everything had been going our way so far. The overcast had persisted, but the general weather conditions were good. We were pretty sure we would have visitors by the next day, but would they be friend or foe?

At noon the next day, we had a party ashore and our usual watches posted on the plane. The weather was still good, but a little fog had settled in. Suddenly, one of the guys on watch spotted a ship outside our bay. He let everybody know about it.

The ship hove to a few hundred yards from the mouth of our bay. It was our tender, Hulbert, and they were lowering a couple of boats in the water.

All hands hurried to get back aboard the plane, and when Townsend and Stallings came aboard, each of them was carrying a blue fox. Three of us stayed on the plane to assist in the towing of the plane to the ship. The others boarded the other boat and headed back for the ship. As we moved slowly out toward the ship, we saw their boat unloading at the accommodation ladder. Before we got to the ship, we saw Townsend and Stallings getting back into the boat and heading toward the shore again. Mr. Dickey felt that war and weather were enough troubles to cope with. The smell of those foxes as shipmates in our crew was too much to have to endure. So back to the fox farm they went.

With the tanks full of gas, our food supply replenished, and our crew back in the plane, we blasted off for an assigned patrol sector and the ship turned around to go back to Atka. We were mighty thankful for the favors we'd had in those thirty hours. The Japanese hadn't found us, and the weather had been as good as it ever is in the Aleutians. In spite of all efforts to keep track of each aircraft, our method of operating on individual patrol missions made it tough to know just where each plane was at any given time. The expression, "overdue and assumed lost," was used on a number of occasions when planes were missing. We could have been one of those.

XVII

DOES THE WIND BLOW AT ADAK?

by

Paul Carrigan

Don and I made our way to the lee side of a Quonset about thirty feet from the new, unoccupied ACS building. With protection from the hut and the revetment in which it nestled, we watched in awe as a considerable amount of Adak's material went soaring by.

Sheets of corrugated tin roofing, plywood, boards, wooden boxes, cardboard boxes, bits and scraps of lumber, sheets of paper by the countless thousands were all whirling and cartwheeling through the air. Some of these items, including sheets of plywood and tin, were hundreds of feet in the air. Some pieces were gaining altitude as they sped seaward. It was all being blown out into the Bering Sea. Debris was visible as far as the eye could see.

The ACS building was trembling and jerking against its guys when an exceptionally violent gust blew in one of the small window panes. An immediate explosion followed.

As wind whistled through the shattered pane, it had created a sudden and tremendous increase in pressure inside the building. This blew the roof off. Intact, it went up thirty feet or more like a two-ton kite, then out to sea. Four walls followed suit amid the sounds of shattering glass and splintering wood. One eight-foot by twenty-foot wall section's eyebolt held long enough for the wall to thresh back and forth several times at the end of its anchor cable like a berserk, tethered beast. This was the last section to go. The twenty-by-twenty foot deck had preceded it.

In seconds, all that remained of the building were the four guys.

Elsewhere on the base, a SeaBee was reportedly struck and killed by a flying object. A soldier found dead was believed to have been decapitated by either a whirling piece of metal or plywood. Dozens of men were reported to have suffered broken bones, severe bruises, or cuts when their duties had required them to venture outdoors.

A considerable number of aircraft were destroyed and many damaged. There was great damage to tents, huts, warehouses, other buildings and installations. On our hilltop, in addition to the destroyed elephant Quonset and ACS building, there was

major damage to Quonset roofs.

Mother Nature's absolute power at times like these does not well lend itself to description.

Flying Backwards

The foregoing examples of Aleutian wind were observed from ground level, while the following ones relate to PBYs in flight:

Our PBY had taken off from Adak one crisp winter day in early 1943. Westerly winds at the time of our dawn takeoff were only about twenty-five knots. The flight forecast called for good weather during the patrol and similar conditions at the base upon our return. Before being obscured by clouds, a short, nighttime, upper air sounding had indicated stronger westerly winds aloft. Below 10,000 feet, these were not expected to exceed fifty knots.

Our assigned sector was immediately to the south of the chain. The pilot headed westward and climbed through a thin, scattered deck of low stratocumulus. From our jump seats, facing aft, the other gunner and I watched the eastern sky turn shades of peach, pink, then brighten into a new day. The mountains and peaks of Adak and Kanaga were brilliant white in their snowy mantles.

As the PBY flew on, the westerly winds increased markedly, and turbulence became heavy. Upon taking my first hourly observation, we had progressed only about forty-five miles westward and were south of Kanaga.

In seeking less turbulent air, and to gain altitude in case we were struck by williwaws, our pilot climbed to an altitude of 4,000 feet. This extra height, under sparse cloud and good visibility conditions, enabled us to search a large area below and to the horizon.

It seemed to take forever to pass Tanaga and approach the Delarof Islands. On the third hourly weather observation, we had reached a point south of the eastern tip of Amchitka. We were still cruising at an airspeed of 110 knots, but our ground speed had decreased to 30, indicating headwinds of 80 knots. Whitecaps and foam streaks indicated winds of about 35 knots at the surface. After completing my observation, I returned to my starboard blister gun, plugged in my earphone jack, and sat down, facing aft.

Within five minutes, the surface winds increased to an estimated 45-50 knots. About ten minutes later, the pilot's voice on the intercom said, "Hang on. We're heading for the barn."

He banked and the PBY almost flipped over on its back as the low, jet stream west wind struck the exposed underside of the

large parasol wing. Our PBY went streaking downwind, eastward, boosted by a tremendous tailwind. Islands that had been standing still a moment ago disappeared rapidly astern. Our action had been reminiscent of a seagull that suddenly tires of flapping its wings merely to maintain position, turns, then sails off downwind and out of sight.

In flying the weather, we were required to take an observation at each dogleg and each turning point of our sector, in addition to the standard hourly observations. So I went forward to complete this observation.

The navigator said we were returning to base because it was impossible to continue the search patrol. This decision had been reached when two successive triangular sights on mountain peaks proved that we were LOSING GROUND at our indicated airspeed of 110 knots.

Pilots and crew facing forward on the flight deck had actually been flying backward, while the other blister gunner and I, facing backward, were the only crew members flying forward.

It had taken us three-and-one-quarter hours to reach our unscheduled turnaround near Amchitka, but our PBY landed at Adak in just forty-eight minutes. Surface winds had increased but were less than 40 knots.

Everyone who has flown any length of time in the Aleutians has run into this kind of problem. Because our PBYs were so slow, we were the most affected.

Most readers may recall seeing similar wind phenomena, although likely not of the same degree. Winds at your ground position were light, or even calm, but clouds several thousand feet above were racing silently past at a high rate of speed.

What's That Mountain Doing Out Here in the Middle of the Ocean?

Earlier in the Aleutian Campaign, CAerM C.C. Herold had a spine-chilling experience with low altitude, jet stream winds. This happened on a long search patrol from Nazan Bay to the west of Attu. Radar on the PBY was either malfunctioning, or the operator could not adjust the tuning. Pilots, navigator, and crew were new to the Aleutians.

Outbound, the flight was made at an altitude of fifty feet against moderate headwinds, below a low stratus ceiling and in and out of fog patches -- an experience which proved nerve-wracking to pilot and co-pilot.

Near the Russian Komandorskiye Islands, the weather improved. On the homeward leg, the pilot took the PBY up to 3,500 feet. With a feeling of elbow room at this height, the pilots relaxed, but Herold grew apprehensive because visual contact with the sea had been lost. Unknowingly, they had

climbed to an altitude of a low jet stream's fierce winds. Flying between cloud layers, the PBY headed east.

About an hour and a half later, the navigator was peering out his little port above the chart table.

"What in the world," he asked Herold, "is that mountain doing out here in the middle of the ocean?"

Herold took one horrified look and told him it was the volcanic peak on Kiska. The navigator said this was impossible, as they were still somewhere west and slightly north of Attu, according to his calculations.

The cloud layers began to merge. Herold told the pilot they had just passed Kiska's volcano and Semisopochnoi's was dead ahead. He urged the pilot to alter course to the north and get down quickly through the first hole in the clouds before it was too late.

The PPC was hesitant. He checked with the navigator, who was busy rechecking his DR figures. A lengthy discussion ensued between pilot and navigator. The navigator finally admitted that he could have made an error, and the mountain peak might have been on Attu but certainly not on Kiska. Herold was adamant and told pilot and navigator that he damn well knew Kiska's volcano when he saw it.

"Look out!" yelled the co-pilot.

Both pilots horsed back on the yoke, made a wing-straining pull up and an equally violent wing-over to port so violent that both gyro horizons tumbled. The plane had narrowly missed flying headlong into the volcanic peak of Semisopochnoi.

Pilots and navigator were convinced. The PBY continued northward away from the Aleutians into the Bering Sea, where the pilot let down through the first convenient hole. They had traveled the eighty-five miles between the Kiska volcano and Semisopochnoi's in less than twenty minutes.

It was later determined that although the indicated airspeed was 105 knots, the ground speed had been close to 250 knots.

XVIII

VP-45: THE FIRST SQUADRON BASED AT ATTU

by

Carl Amme

The main body of Patrol Squadron 45 completed its training at Oak Harbor and departed for the Aleutians on June 30, 1943. The pilots in charge of these planes were flying their first flights as designated Patrol Plane Commanders (PPCs). They were all very experienced in flying in the Aleutians as co-pilots in other squadrons, and now they were out to prove their mettle as PPCs.

Joining this new group was an advanced echelon of experienced crews under the Executive Officer, Lt. Robert Donley. What I didn't know at that time was the early history of Donley's group. It all began in March of 1943. Let Donley tell it in his words:

"In that month, I was called to make an appearance before Commander Fleet Air Seattle, along with another pilot...I can't remember who he was. The Admiral (I think his name was Wagner) stated that he was establishing a squadron of six PBY-5s for a special mission and asked me to take charge. He said I would be reporting to Commander Fleet Air Wing Four (L.E. Gehres) after the squadron was formed. When I stated my reluctance, he gave me the choice of voluntering or being ordered to go. I told him that didn't appear to be much of a choice and that I would volunteer to go if he would make me the Commanding Officer. He said it was a deal and added that I could name my duty once the mission was over. He wouldn't tell me what the mission was, however.

"The next month was spent receiving new planes from Consolidated, getting crews trained and planes properly outfitted. On April 21, I received orders to take the six planes and report to VP-45, which really didn't exist, and further, to report to ComFair Seattle. On April 22, I received confidential orders as Commanding Officer, and on April 25, we took off for Adak, arriving on May 2. We landed in Andrews Lagoon, a real mud hole, being run by Squeaky Anderson. As the Commanding Officer, Gehres treated me well and gave the squadron adequate transportation, but told me nothing of what the mission was all about. On 13 May, Gehres ordered the squadron to fly to Attu and report to Commander Task Force Six. ASW support to the Task Force in the Battle of Attu was our mission. The weather was very bad that day, and the Task Force was in radio silence, so we had our problems. Finally, my repeated calls were answered and I was ordered to do ASW patrol seaward of the Force. After eleven hours in the air, I notified the air controller that my

fuel was running low and requested instructions. I was ordered to proceed to what would later be called Casco Cove. Somehow, all six planes made it safely...I guess the Lord was with us. We stayed on the U.S.S. Casco, which had secured the bay with its 40mm. guns. We did ASW patrol for the Task Force, westward interdiction patrols, dropped surrender leaflets, carried the Army Brass and Intelligence to places like Chicagoff Harbor, coordinated with the Army for P-38 strikes against the Bettys, and any other odd jobs that came along. Sometimes, as we flew along, we could see the Japanese AA batteries zero in on us. However, they never fired, as they were low on ammunition and we were low-priority targets. Once in a while, we took a few rifle holes in the hull and had to use some sea plugs. We saw some pretty gruesome sights in our travels with the Army, usually when a specific battle had been completed. On the fifth of June, true to his word, ComFair Seattle ordered me back to Seattle via first available Air. However, instead of getting to choose my duty, I was informed that the squadron was being expanded to twelve planes and that I was to become the Exec. under one Lt.Cdr. Carl Amme. By the first of July, we were on our way back to Attu. I can remember the Skipper (Amme) taking me out back of the hangar at Kodiak and offering to knock my block off when I said the weather was too bad to proceed the next day."

There you have it, folks, straight from the Executive Officer. I remember that we had a slight altercation, but it was patched up quickly. Two things we definitely settled: one, we did not fly the next day...Donley was right about the weather; two, we settled the point that I would not permit decisions to be made by a committee. The delay was beneficial; we had a few days to get acquainted at Kodiak and establish a rapport that lasted. As Bob wrote at the end of his letter to me: "By the time we returned to Seattle in October, every officer in the squadron, including myself, thought you were one hell of a Skipper." I assume he meant it as a compliment. He also was "one hell of an Exec."

By the fourth of July, the weather cleared and we proceeded to Dutch Harbor and then to Adak on the same day.

At Adak, the Wing Commander advised us that we were to relieve VP-62, who, in turn, was scheduled to move from Adak to Attu. The weather had held up the VP-62 departure for over ten days before our arrival.

Over cocktails on July 6, I respectfully suggested that the Commodore change his plans. I suggested that, inasmuch as VP-62 had been on an extended tour for a long time, the squadron was due for rotation to the States. I proposed that VP-45 be sent immediately to Attu, as we had a bunch of eager beavers. Gehres looked at me a long time. Then he smiled. "Good idea," he said.

Two days later, when the weather cleared up, we took off for Attu.

After Attu was recaptured, the 18th Army Engineers built an

airstrip at Alexai Point on the east side of Massacre Bay. On July 8, 1943, the newly formed PBY squadron VP-45, flying old-fashioned, water-landing seaplanes, arrived at Attu and began flying patrols out of a cove which was an arm of Massacre Bay on the west side. This cove was named Casco Cove, after the tender Casco that serviced VP-45 planes operating there.

Two days later, on July 10, under orders of Wing Commander Leslie E. Gehres, three planes, led by me, made a night bombing raid to Paramushiro. The weather was closed in at the target area when the three planes arrived. We were on top of the overcast. However, the radar showed the sharp contours of Paramushiro matching our chart. On command, the 500-pound bombs were dropped on the best estimate of the harbor edge and the shoreline. There was no way to assess the damage, if any. Another bombing mission was attempted on July 19 with the same disappointing results.

Meanwhile, the SeaBees were working ashore, building quonset huts, a radio shack, and a mess hall. I had some sharp words with the C.O. of the Construction Battalion. Progress building our camp was slow, because carpenters and other skilled workmen were drilling with rifles every morning against some imagined attack by no-longer-existing enemy forces on the island. The SeaBee commander finally knocked off that foolishness and put his men back on construction work on an urgent basis. Our tender, the Casco, had to leave to refuel, and we had to have shelter ashore.

We moved ashore at the end of July. All hands who were not flying patrols were put to work building a network of wooden walkways from huts to mess hall and administration building. Micky Tappan, the Administration Officer, was put in charge. The mud was soggy and deep and there was a creek, or salmon stream, that ran right through the construction site.

A quonset facing on the stream on the high ground was selected for the Commanding Officer and staff. We erected plywood partitions for six rooms, with curtained doors for privacy. We scrounged linen and blankets for real beds. At one end of the quonset, we had a shower and flushing toilet. A couch for the living room was built out of two small mattresses for the seat and back. Slipcovers and upholstery were cut and sewn together from two Army blankets. These amenities paid dividends later, when the Wing Commander paid us a visit.

My determination not to move ashore into tents also paid off. No one lost his boots in muskeg and had to be lifted out by a crane, as once happened to me in the very early days at Amchitka. Food was reasonably fresh and, once in awhile, fresh eggs were substituted for the powdered variety. Morale was high.

At the head of the cove was a ramp of Marston matting, so that we could pull planes out of the water to work on them. Still, many PBYs had to be anchored in the cove at buoys, calling for plane watches when the weather was blowing.

We ran full-sector searches whenever we could. The weather was mostly unpredictable, and I know that I used to argue with the weatherman about the forecast. I figured that if the aerologist put up a good opposition, then he was probably right. The weather would be stinking, and I would cancel the flights. One day, I figured that the ceiling would hold up until the planes returned. It was touch-and-go for awhile, but then, about two hours after the planes had left on their sector searches, the base was socked in and it looked bad all along the chain. I ordered the planes recalled. That's the time the memorable message was sent out: "Base socked in. All planes return to base." Immediately after the message was on the air, I realized how stupid it sounded. Even so, I knew that my pilots were enterprising and would have enough fuel to find some clear spot to set down. But I saw to it that that phraseology was never used again. You will find out what happened in the last part of this book.

One day, I flew by the north tip of the Komandorski Islands and noted some construction going on there. I continued the sector search until I saw Kamchatka before returning to base. The next day, I directed Lt.(jg) Stitzel, an excellent PPC, to take some pictures of the work going on for Wing Intelligence. He took excellent close-ups from directly overhead and from just offshore. We sent them back to Adak to the Wing Staff.

Commodore Gehres blew his top when he saw Stitzel's pictures. Since the Russians were not at war at the time, there was considerable concern in diplomatic circles about any violation of neutral territory. It was accepted that if any plane was forced down in Russian territory, the crew would be interned. To let me know of his displeasure, Gehres sent me a message direting me to give Stitzel an unsatisfactory fitness report. Certainly the Wing Commander must have known that I wouldn't do that. Also, he had no way of enforcing the order, nor checking compliance. But it did alert me to his feelings on the matter of Soviet neutrality.

A couple of weeks after the Stitzel episode, one of our planes in that same bleak sector near the Komandorski Islands reported engine trouble, and the pilot advised that he didn't think he could get back to Attu and that he was going to try to reach the harbor at the larger Komandorski Island. (I can't recall who was the plane commander of this flight.)

On approaching the harbor, a Soviet "post-mounted," 30-cal. opened up on the PBY and knocked out the damaged engine. With only one engine, the pilot pulled away to the right and headed away from the harbor in the direction of a large lake in the center of the island. The pilot sent a message: "Am landing on the lake. Only one engine operating."

In the meantime, I had alerted Roy Evans, one of the more experienced PPCs, to round up his crew and stand by. I sent a message to the plane in distress that help was on the way, and

walked with Evans to the ramp where his crew was checking the plane. I told Evans to maintain radio silence, rescue the crew, remove all classified documents and sink the disabled plane, and that he was not to respond to any messages or transmit any messages until he was airborne after rescuing the crew. I warned him that he might receive a message from Wing Headquarters to return to base. He was not to receipt for the message, and he was to disregard the instruction.

Next, I hurried back to the radio shack and gave orders to the radio watch to copy all messages but not to touch the key. "Your transmitter is hereby out of commission!"

Lt. Bob Thurmond, the air intelligence officer who acted also as communications officer, protested to me. I stayed in the radio shack to see that my orders were carried out.

Sure enough, the Wing headquarters began calling us and Evans' plane. NOt receiving answer for about fifteen minutes, a message was broadcast "in the blind" by the Wing, recalling Evans' plane. Bob Thurmond was having a fit by that time. Finally, Adak stopped sending messages.

Three hours after Evans departed, we received a message from his plane: "Mission accomplished." I turned to Thurmond and said, "Your transmitter is back in commission. You may operate normally." Then I left the radio shack.

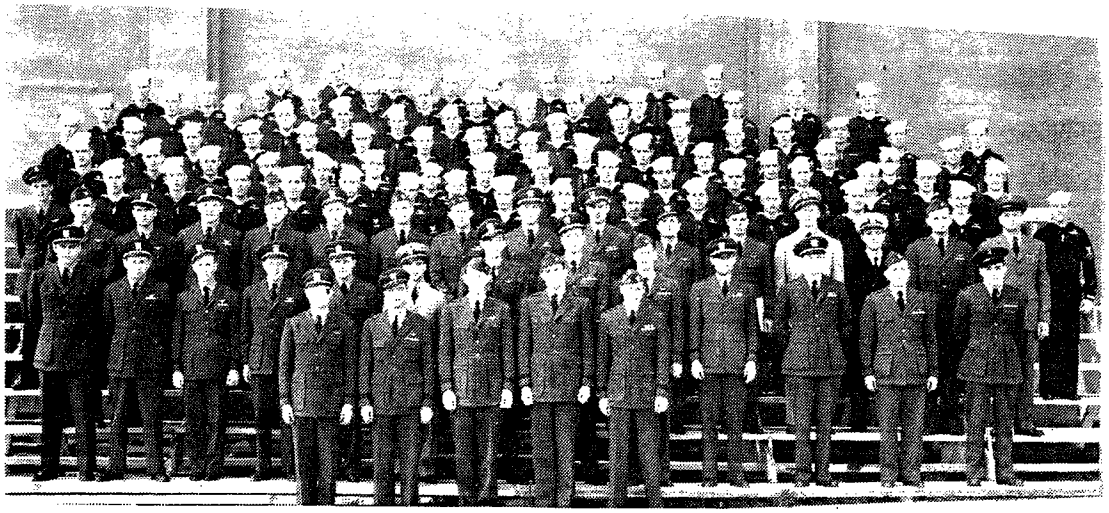
I realized that my neck was out a mile on this incident and that I could get into some real trouble if anything went wrong. However, I comforted myself with the thought that the very illustrious Admiral Lord Nelson did the same thing at the Battle of Copenhagen. When a senior admiral hoisted a flag signal to retreat, Nelson put the telescope up to his blind eye so he couldn't read the signal. Then he proceeded to go ahead and win a glorious victory over the Danish fleet.

Two days after the rescue mission, we received a message that the Commodore was on his way to pay the squadron a visit. I met Gehres at the ramp, and the C.O. of the base came up in a jeep and offered him VIP accommodations. Gehres thought that he would have to sleep in a sleeping bag at our camp, and was about to accept, when I piped up:

"But, Commodore, we have clean sheets and blankets in a private room for you in our quonset. Besides, we are having a salmon barbeque in your honor tonight."

We drove up to our camp, poured a few good bourbon drinks, and he never once mentioned the trouble we had had with our erratic transmitter! Thank God. The salmon we barbequed that night were caught by hand under the tundra overhang of the stream, then filleted immediately, basted in olive oil and placed on the fire, which was ready. The Commodore was intrigued with the whole operation.

As Autumn came on, the winds got stronger and stronger, and more swells rolled into Casco Cove, making takeoff extremely hazardous. An airstrip was finished at the head of the cove and, in all logic, keeping seaplanes in that area, when amphibian PBY-5A's and PV-1's could operate more safely, didn't make sense. By October 1, VPB 136 arrived, and on October 10, 1943, our relief, VP-43, arrived. On October 12, 1943, VP-45 left for home. We had a big bash in Seattle on October 18 or 19, and then went to our respective homes on leave. Except Bob Donley. He got orders to Jacksonville and got married.



PATROL SQUADRON VP43-2
JUNE 1943 - MAY 1944

PART FIVE

CARRYING THE WAR TO THE ENEMY

XIX

DIARY OF A SLAIN JAPANESE OFFICER

DURING THE BATTLE OF ATTU

The U.S. seizure of Attu and the Japanese evacuation of Kiska are recounted in other books and articles.* PBYs of FAW4 participated in both operations. The recapture of Attu was no picnic, but the U.S. forces were superior and eventually prevailed. The following diary by a Japanese medical officer gives an account from the other side of that desperate struggle:

[Editor's Note: From a notation at the end of the diary, it was revealed that the Japanese officer studied medicine at Pacific Union College at Angwin, California. This information could only have been ascertained by the U.S. Army from the personal effects of the slain Japanese officer and included in the reproduction that was made on August 1, 1943. I wrote to the President of Pacific Union College and received the following additional information on Paul Nobuo Tatsoguchi, who attended Pacific Union College to study medicine from September, 1929 to May, 1932. Tatsoguchi received his California Medical License September 8, 1938.

[During his stay in California he met his wife, Taeko Miyake, whose parents were missionaries in Hawaii. They fell in love at Yosemite, and they married before returning to Japan. They had two daughters, Joy Misaka, born September 4, 1940, and Lori Mutsuko, born February 15, 1943, after Paul was inducted in the guards. Paul was supposed to be given a commission in the Japanese Army, but after he bought his uniform, he was drafted instead as a medical attendant -- apparently because of his suspected American sympathies and the fact that he did not believe in war. Paul was a medical missionary for the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

[After the war, Taeko and his daughters came to the United States and became naturalized U.S. citizens. Both daughters went to Pacific Union College.]**

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*e.g. The Thousand Mile War by Brian Garfield, New York: Ballantine Books 1969, and The Mysterious Withdrawal from Kiska by Masataka Chohaya, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Feb. 1958.

**A definitive study was made by Floyd C. Watkins of the English Department of Emory University, Even His Name Will Die, in the Journal of Ethnic Studies, Winter 1976.

MAY 12 - 0155

Carrier-based plane flew over, fired at it. There is also fog and the summit is clear. Evacuated to the summit. Air raids carried out frequently until 1000. Heard land noise. It is naval gun firing. Prepared battle equipment. INFORMATION -- American transports, about 41, begin landing at Hokkai Miokai. Twenty boats landed at Massacre Bay. It seems that they are going to unload heavy equipment. DAY'S ACTIVITIES -- Air raid, naval gun firing, and landing of American troops.

MAY 13 - BATTLE

The U.S. forces landed at Shiba Dai and Massacre Bay. The enemy has advanced to the bottom of Missumi Yama from Shiba Dai. Have engaged them. On the other hand, Massacre Bay is defended by only one platoon, but upon the unexpected attack, the AA machine gun cannon was destroyed and we have withdrawn. In night attack, we have captured twenty enemy rifles. There is tremendous mountain artillery gun firing. Approximately fifteen patients came to the field hospital. The field hospital is attached Arai Engineers Unit.

MAY 14 - BATTLE

Our two submarines from Kiska assisting us have greatly damaged two enemy ships. The enemy has advanced to the bottom of Missumi Yama. First Lt. Suyuki died by shots from a rifle. Continuous flow of wounded in the field hospital. Took refuge in the trenches during the daytime and took care of the patients during bombardment. Enemy strength must be a division. Our desperate defense is holding up well.

MAY 15 - BATTLE

Continuous flow of casualties to our field hospital caused by fierce bombardment of enemy land and naval forces. The enemy has a great number of negroes [sic] and Indians. The West arm units have withdrawn to near Shitigati Dai. In a raid I was ordered to the West arm but it was called off. Just lay down from fatigue in the barracks. Facial expression of soldiers back from the West arm is tense. They all went back to the firing line soon.

MAY 16 - BATTLE

If Shitigati Dai is occupied by the enemy, the fate of East arm is decided. So burnt documents and prepared to destroy the patients.* At the moment there was an order from Hq. of sector unit. Proceeded to Chicagof Harbor by way of Umanose, 0100 in the morning. There was an air raid so took refuge in the former field hospital cave. The guns of a Lockheed spitted fire and flew past our cave. *[The Japanese custom was to kill patients rather than allow them to be captured.]

MAY 17 - BATTLE

At night about 1800, under cover of darkness, left the cave. The stretcher went over muddy roads and steep hills of no-man's land. No matter how far or how much he went, we did not get to the pass. Was rather irritated in the fog, by the thought of getting lost. Sat down after every 20 or 30 steps. Would sleep, dream and wake up again. Same thing over again. The patient on the stretcher who does not move is frostbitten. After all the effort, met sector Commander Yousaki. The path is a straight line without any width and a steep line toward Chicagof Harbor. Sitting down on the butt and lifting the feet, I slid very smoothly and changed direction with the sword. Slip in about twenty minutes. After that, arrived at Chicagof Harbor after straggling. The expended time was nine hours for all this, without leaving any patients. Opened a new field hospital. Walking in now extremely difficult from left knee rheumatism which reoccurred on the pass. The results of our navy, the submarine and special underwater craft since the fourteenth: cruisers, 3, destroyers, airborne troups and transports, 6. By favorable turn since the battle of East arm, reserves came back. Offshore of Shiba Dai, six destroyers are guarding one transport.

MAY 18 - BATTLE

The Yenegouia detachment abandoned East and West arms and withdrew to Umanose. About 60 wounded came to the field hospital. I had to care for all of them by myself all through the night. Heard that enemy carried out a landing in Chicagof Harbor. Everybody did combat preparations and waited. Had two grenades ready. Second Lt. Omura left for the front. Said farewell. At night, a patient came in who had engaged a friendly unit by mistake and had received a wound in the wrist. The countersign is "Isshi Hoke."

MAY 19 - BATTLE

At night there was a phone call from sector unit Hq. In some spots on the beach there are friendly float-type planes waiting. Went to Attu Village Church felt like someone's homespun blankets were scattered around. Was told to translate field order presumed to have been dropped by an enemy officer in Massacre Bay. Was ordered to evaluate a detailed map sketch which was in the possession of Capt. Robert I. Edward, Adj. of Col. Smith. Got tired and went to sleep. First Lt. Ujue is now in charge of translation.

MAY 20 - BATTLE

The hard fighting of our 303rd bn. in Massacre Bay is fierce and it is to our advantage. Have captured enemy weapon and used that to fight. Mowed down ten enemy closing in under the fog. Five of our men and one medical NCO died. Heard enemy pilots' faces can be seen around Umanose. The enemy naval gun firing near our hospital is fierce, drops about twenty meters away.

MAY 21 - BATTLE

Was strafed when amputating a patient's arm. It is the first time since moving over to Chicagof Harbor that I went in an air raid shelter. Enemy plane is a Martin. Nervousness of our C.O. is severe and has said his last word to his officers and NCO's -- that he will die tomorrow. Gave all his articles away. Hasty chap this fellow. The officers on the front are doing a fine job. Everyone who heard this became desperate and things became disorderly.

MAY 22 - BATTLE

At 0600 air raid again. Strafing killed one medical man. Okayaki wounded in right thigh and fractured arm. During the night a mortar shell came awfully close.

MAY 23 - BATTLE

Seventeen friendly medium bombers destroyed a cruiser offshore. By naval gun firing, a hit was scored on the pillar of a tent for patients and the tent gave in and two died instantly. From 0200 in the morning until 1600 stayed in foxholes. The day's rations 1 go. 5 shaker (1.5 lbs.), nothing more. Officers and men alike in frost. Everybody looked around for food and stole everything they could find.

MAY 24 - BATTLE

It sleeted and was extremely cold. Stayed at Missumi Barracks alone. A great amount of shells were dropped by naval gunfire. Rocks and mud fell all over the roof, it fell down. In a foxhole about 50 yds. away each -- Hayasaka, a medical man, died instantly by a piece of shrapnel through the heart.

MAY 25 - BATTLE

Naval gun firing, aerial bombardment, trench warfare, the worst is yet to come. The enemy is constructing a position. Bn. Commander died at Umanose. They cannot accommodate their patients. It has been said that at Massacre Bay district, the road coming through sector unit headquarters is isolated. Am suffering from diarrhea and feel dizzy.

MAY 26 - BATTLE

By naval gun firing it felt like the Misaumi barracks blew up and things lit up tremendously. Consciousness becomes vague. One tent burned down by a hit from incendiary bombs. Strafing planes hit the next room, two hits from a .50 calibre shell, one stopped in the ceiling and the other penetrated. My room is an awful mess from sand and pebbles that have come from the roof. First Lt. from medical corps is wounded. There was a ceremony to grant the Imperial Edict. The last line of Umanose was broken through. No hope for reinforcements. Will die for the cause of

Imperial Edict.

MAY 27 - BATTLE

Diarrhea continues, pain is severe. Took everything from pills, opium, morphine, then slept pretty well. Strafing by planes. There is less than a thousand left of more than 2000 troops. Wounded from coast defense unit field hospital Hq. field post office here. The rest are on the front line.

MAY 28 - BATTLE

The remaining ration is only for two days. Our artillery has been completely destroyed. There is sound of trench mortar, also of AA gun. The company on the bottom of Attu Fuji has been completely annihilated except one. Rations for about two days. I wonder if Commander Yenegami and some of his men are still living. Other companies have been completely annihilated except one or two. Three hundred and third battalion has been defeated. Yenegami is still holding Umanose. Continuous cases of suicide. Half of the sector Unit Hq. was blown up. Heard that they gave 400 shots of morphine to seriously wounded and killed them. Ate half fried thistle. It is the first time I have eaten something fresh in six months. It is a delicacy. Order from the Sector Commander to move the field hospital to the island, but was called off.

MAY 29 - BATTLE

Today at 2000 we assembled in front of Hq. The field hospital took part too. The last assault is to be carried out. All the patients in the hospital were made to commit suicide. Only 33 years of living and I am to die here, I have no regrets. A Banzie to emperor. I am grateful that I have kept the peace of my soul which Enkist bestowed upon me. Goodbye Taeko, my beloved wife, Misaka who just became four years old will grow up unhindered. I feel sorry for you Mutsuko, born February of this year and never will see your father. Well, be good Matsue (brother), goodbye. The number participating in this attack is almost a thousand to take enemy artillery position. It seems like the enemy is expecting an all-out attack tomorrow.

March 6, 1929, Graduated from Middle School
March 19, 1929, Graduated from Fraziu
September 1929 to May 1932, Pacific Union College, Medical Dept., Angwin, Calif.
Received California Medical License Sept. 8, 1938

[Reproduced at APO 729, U.S. Army, August 1, 1943]

XX

THE NEW VP SQUADRON FORTY-THREE GOES TO ATTU

JUNE 1943 - MAY 1944

by

Jack "Ole" Haugen

Forty-Three's rest was of short duration, because the new Forty-Three, the squadron we came to know the best, commenced to form immediately. In command during this formation period was Lt. Cmdr. Gerald E. Pierson, known as "Pappy" to those who served with him. "Pappy" Pierson was an outstanding "P" Boat pilot. And although he was kind and thoughtful in his dealing with all hands, he was a stickler for the performance of all duties, for he was an old-timer to the Aleutians and all too familiar with the flying hazards the men in this new Forty-Three would soon encounter.

This Forty-Three was formed on July 2, 1943. For the most part, the patrol plane commanders were experienced veterans of previous overseas duty. Fellows such as "Little Joe" Weibler, Lloyd "Boot" Black and Lt. Marshall C. Freerks had previously flown a tour of duty in the Aleutians before, as had Chief ARM Ray Fitch, Chief AMM Don Walrath and AMM2/c Bennie Delgado.

Added to this nucleus of Aleutian veterans were a dozen new patrol plane commanders from old VP12 and VP72, all seasoned veterans of the South Pacific. Included in this group were Lt. Al Lorenger, who would soon be sporting a handsome handlebar moustache, Lt. (jg) Glen Violette, whose crew would earn the distinction of surviving a fifteen-minute aerial battle with a Japanese medium bomber of the Betty class, Lt. King "Doc" Wardall, who always took everything in stride (long ones at that), Lt. Newell P. "Lefty" Wyman, who, with his crew, was to suffer a tragic death that was and still is heartbreaking to all of us. Lt. (jg) Arthur J. Fleet, who carried a set of lucky dice in his pocket until his death, Lt. Jack Pilgrim, who, as later events dictated, assumed the duties of executive officer, and Lt. (jg) Carl O. Reidel, who was to be the plane comander of the first Naval aircraft to bomb the Japanese homeland.

This was a unique squadron in many ways. It was young, eager and full of enthusiasm. It was one of the first squadrons in Naval aviation to have commissioned non-pilot navigators; certainly, they proved a sound investment and no praise is too high for any one of them. Many of them were to lose their lives before Forty-Three was to come home again to that magnificent seaport city of Seattle -- John Erdwins, Don Mattison, Ray Rozuk and Bob Janson.

But at this moment the future was far ahead. For the men of Forty-Three now temporarily operating out of the Naval Air Station, Tongue Point, Oregon, the program was orientation flights, bombing practice, sea patrols and fun. Seaside and Geahart are only a few short minutes from the air station at Tongue Point, and after the day's flying had been done, the Model A's and early V8's owned by squadron personnel would stream through the gate without a seat to spare, heading for the temporary home with wife, or for town and something new.

Such was the life and the mood of the day that it was the practice of the married pilots, on returning to the coast in late afternoon from a sea patrol, to "buzz" their temporary homes to let their wives know they could soon expect them. This was great sport and a contest was on to see who could give his wife the biggest and wildest "buzzing" in a PBY 5. The story has it that Art Fleet took the honors. At any rate, he received concrete proof that he had done one "helluva" job "buzzing" his PBY 5. According to the senior Naval officer who was playing golf on the course adjacent to Fleet's temporary home, the diving, the quick climbs and turns, and the changing of the propeller pitch were very effective. The senior officer's vision was excellent, for he read the bureau number from the tail, tracked down Fleet and awarded him ten days in "hack" for his feat.

Then there was the young, twenty-two year old navigator from Hibbing, Minnesota, Ens. Bill Carroll, who, shortly before the squadron left Tongue Point to return to the Oak Harbor Seaplane Base at Naval Air Station Whidbey, turned in to sick bay to have his tonsils removed. When he was released from sick bay several days later, the squadron was then operating out of Oak Harbor. The discharging medical officer failed to mention to Carroll that he should return to the squadron immediately. With this lack of information preying on his mind, it took him eight days to find his way from Tongue Point, Oregon to Oak Harbor, Washington. It took eight months to wipe the smile from his face, even though Al Lorenger, the operations officer, provided him with a severe discussion on discipline, conduct and behavior expected of young Naval officers.

Before leaving for Oak Harbor, Lt. Cmdr. Pierson, his job of forming the squadron done, turned over command to Lt. Cmdr. John A. Horton, Jr. This was Lt. Cmdr. Horton's first squadron command, and this would be his second tour of duty in the Aleutians. Backing up Horton as Executive Officer was Marshall Freerks, a former enlisted musician who had dropped out of the Navy then returned to take flight training and gain his wings. Freerks was a veteran Aleutian pilot and as a patrol plane commander, had won the Distinguished Flying Cross during the Battle of Dutch Harbor.

Thus, under the leadership of Lt. Cmdr. Horton, Forty-Three resumed its training program at Oak Harbor. Once back at Oak Harbor, the flight schedule -- sea patrols, bombing runs, torpedo

drills, night bounce hops -- was stepped up. It was during one of the night bounce hops that ill fortune first struck Forty-Three. A PBY 5A, piloted by Lt. (jg) Bob Watkins, on impact with the water, broke in half at the tower, killing ARM3/c Emmett Lee Covey. This was to be the first of twenty-seven casualties suffered in Forty-Three's operations during the next eight months.

The date for Forty-Three's departure for the Aleutians was set for October 1, 1943. The squadron was prepared to go on October 1, but inclement weather held them up for four days. It wasn't until October 4 that the squadron was able to shove off for another chapter of Forty-Three's history to be written in the snowy, bitter weather of the Aleutians.

On the morning of October 4, in the face of a brewing storm, twelve PBY 5A's took off from Ault Field for Yakatat, Alaska, the first stop some ten hours flying time north of Oak Harbor. The weather was fierce and more than ninety percent of the flight was made under instrument conditions. By nightfall, only ten aircraft had landed at Yakatat. Tragedy had struck again!

At about 1000 hours, Pacific War Time, the four-plane section led by Lt. Joseph P. Weibler and composed of Lt. (jg) Lloyd W. Black, Lt. (jg) Norwood M. Cole, and Lt. (jg) Charles H. Essig, encountered a severe squall in the Straits of San Juan De Fuca. The formation immediately broke up, with every pilot shifting for himself.

The radar was not functioning in Lt. (jg) Cole's aircraft and he started climbing as fast as possible to avoid other aircraft and hoping to top the squall. Fully loaded, the climb was slow and at 10,000 feet, the clouds were as black as the darkest cellar and the turbulence was the greatest that Lt. Cole had ever experienced. According to firsthand reports, the heavily loaded PBY 5A was tossed around as if it were a feather in an unsure summer breeze. Several of the crew were violently ill, and tensions were high before the aircraft finally broke into the clear. Without radio or radar operating, it was decided to return to Ault Field for repairs. After an interval of circling off the straits of Tatoosh, Lt. Cole headed back for Ault Field. After flying towards Whidbey Island for twenty minutes, the ceiling and visibility again became zero-zero. Now over water, Lt. Cole dropped lower and lower in an attempt to maintain surface contact. After narrowly missing a cliff, and with the zero visibility getting worse, Lt. Cole set the aircraft down on the water and taxied toward land, hoping to find a protected inlet or bay where he could await better conditions.

After a wait of about one hour, the storm had practically dissipated, and a takeoff was attempted by Lt. Cole, with Ensign Bob Honsa as the co-pilot. The straits were storm-tossed and Lt. Cole knew that there was danger in the snarling whitecaps, but it was decided that the need for return was imperative and the takeoff attempt was made. The aircraft, bouncing from one white-cap to the next, was airborne when a rough gust caught the

aircraft broadside, flinging her against the rough sea and splitting her hull. Lt. Cole took one look and saw that the damage was so severe that the aircraft was in danger of sinking. He pushed the throttles forward and headed for shore, ending the first leg of the journey with the aircraft hung on a rock some one hundred yards from his goal. All hands made it to shore via rubber raft, and salvage of all personal and other gear was started while the report of the accident was being sent to N.A.S. Whidbey via Army personnel, who had raced to the scene in their jeep to determine what all the commotion was about.

Lt. Cole, his crew and passenger, Ensign Bob Waldren, the squadron personnel officer, eventually made it to Attu via the Military Air Transportation Service.

But luck ran out for Lt. (jg) Charles Essig that stormy October 4th morning. Caught in much the same circumstances that predicated Lt. Cole's problem, Essig, in his descent from the turbulent altitudes, crashed into a mountain near Pysht, Washington. There were only two survivors, Radioman Blair and AOM3/c R.C. Peterson, the bombardier from Lt. Art Fleet's crew, Crew #8, who was a passenger. Killed were Lt. (jg) Essig, Ens. Edgar E. Anderson, Ens. John A. Erdwing, AMM3/c Hilliard Mullenix, AMM3/c Garland W. Knight, ARM3/c Richard J. Buschle, ARM3/c Bernard J. Lauer and ARM3/c Roy J. Highsmith, also from Lt. Fleet's crew.

Upon Forty-Three's return to the Aleutians in October, 1943, they found that the war had definitely moved westward. Kodiak was practically the same as any stateside Naval air station. Dutch Harbor was definitely out of the zone of activities as far as enemy raids were concerned, and Adak was the big operating center and headquarters for Fleet Air Wing Four.

Under the leadership of Commodore Leslie E. Gehres, Fleet Air Wing Four had participated in the big push to oust the Japanese from Attu in May of 1943 and in the bombing and retaking of Kiska in July of 1943. Now Commodore Gehres was deliberating about pressing the attack closer and closer to the Japanese positions in the northern Kurile Islands with the big Naval base on Paramushiro as the main objective.

Forty-Three's stay on Adak was of slight duration, and after reporting to Commander Fleet Air Wing Four, the squadron's ten aircraft took off for Attu, where they were to be based for the next seven months. Immediately upon Forty-Three's reporting for duty, VP-45, operating from the U.S.S. Casco, anchored in Casco Cove at the southeastern end of Attu, and VP-61, stationed at Amchitka, returned to Seattle, and Forty-Three possessed the dubious honor of being the only "P" Boat squadron in the Alaska-Aleutian area.

Forty-Three arrived at Attu on October 10, 1943, and regular searches, in accordance with the Fleet Air Wing Four operational plan, were instituted the next day. There was no time for indoctrination and introduction to the Aleutian weather. Such

experience was obtained firsthand by the crews as they began operational flights.

Upon arrival at Attu, Forty-Three operated from a single mat strip, completed by the hard-working SeaBees in time for the squadron's arrival. Revetments were still under construction, so aircraft were parked at either side of the wide landing strip at the end of the day's flying.

Such was the situation the evening of Forty-Three's third day on Attu, October 13, 1943. At about 1800 hours that evening, the air raid sirens began wailing in their customary high pitch, and all hands took to the bluff behind the squadron hut area on Casco Cove. The men of Forty-Three, for the most part, were new to such things as air raids, and to a man, they all headed for the mountaintop, because, as one man explained, "Who ever heard of a bomb hitting a mountain peak?" Under normal circumstances, it was slow going in the soft and sticky tundra, but that night, the flow of men up the mountain was rapid as the anti-aircraft guns opened up to emphasize the fact that the raid was for real.

At about 9,000 feet, in the most perfect formation, with the rays of the sun highlighting the emblem of the Rising Sun, nine Japanese medium bombers (Bettys) flew over the island and dropped their load of bombs, trying to hit the unprotected aircraft and the ships anchored in Massacre Bay. With anti-aircraft bursting near the formation and two Army Air Force P-40's repeatedly attacking, the Bettys turned from the island and disappeared to the west. Fortunately, the Japanese bombardiers' aim was particularly bad, and there was no damage to the aircraft or to the ships in the harbor.

This attack was the last attempt of the Japanese to either bomb or attack Attu, which at that time was the furthermost outpost of the U.S.A. on the northern march to Tokyo. The attack, however, was not without its amusing aspects and after-effects. Ens. Vane Harrison, from Morrocco, Indiana, was busily engaged in repairing the stove in his quarters and had both hands full of nuts, bolts, pliers and a screwdriver when the alarm sounded. Harrison led in the race to the top of the mountain, and upon reaching the top, still had not dropped a single washer. The ascent was so steep that he had to make a detour on the way down, and to the present day, he wonders how and why he got to the top.

As a result of the raid of October 13, the squadron was dispatched to Shemya Island thirty miles east of Attu. At that time, Shemya was a secret base of operations, and the men from Forty-Three wished that the small island had been kept a secret from them. Shemya is a small, flat, windswept island that offers no protection from the fierce elements of the Aleutians. It was here that the officers and men lived in tents, completely exposed to the elements and warmed only by a coal-burning stove that required constant attention.

While operating out of Shemya, and only one week after the

bombing attack on Attu, Lt. (jg) Glenn Violette and his crew of Ens. Noble DeHart, Ens. Walt Carlson, AMM2/c Manuel Rosello, AMM2/c Ted Lesney, ARM2/c Lucian "Luke" Watkins, ARM2/c Clyde "Bob" Barber and ARM3/c James Alexander had the next brush with the Japanese. Violette, in 55V, was about 100 miles west of Attu on the return leg of his patrol sector, when he was jumped by a Japanese Betty. The Betty made several runs at the PBY, each time attempting to bring the 20MM tail cannon in position to demolish Violette's Yokeboat. Violette, with superb skill and extreme calmness, evaded each run at precisely the right moment and in doing so, allowed Alexander and Lesney in the after-stations, and Watkins in the bow, opportunity to fire at the Betty. It was generally thought that Watkins was one of the best gunners in the squadron, and it was the constant firing of his twin 30's that helped keep the Betty from closing the attack. After several unsuccessful attempts to get close enough for the "kill," the Betty broke off the attack and headed for home, all guns silent.

When the inital contact was made, Navigator Walt Carlson and Radioman Bob Barber, who were in the navigation/radio compartment, immediately flung themselves flat on the catwalk, Barber reaching from his prone position to the top of the radio table to tap out a contact report.

Barber and Carlson must have had a premonition, because there were thirteen holes in the navigation/radio compartment, all above table surface. Ninety percent of the plexiglass surrounding Alexander's gun mount had been shot away. And Manuel Rosello, the plane captain, probably still remembers the whoosh as a 20MM cannon shell, which entered the aircraft just aft of Violetta's window, passed between "Rosie's" legs as he sat in the tower seat, and pierced its way out of the aircraft just forward of the starboard blister. This was Forty-Three's last combat action until 20-21 December.

In November, Forty-Three returned to Attu along with the first heavy snow and continued operations from there for the remainder of this tour of duty. By now, replacements were arriving to fill in for the losses suffered the day Forty-Three departed from the States. Their newness brought an accidental opportunity to create a serious game called "Judge and Jury." This game, which actually involved a judge, jury, prosecutor, defender and witnesses, provided the enlisted men with many an entertaining evening. It all started when one of the replace-ments saw another fellow reading our mimeographed, daily, single-sheet newspaper, the Attu Sun, which was available to all each morning at the squadron office. The man reading the publication was A.C. "Amos" Ford, then an AMM2/c, now a practicing attorney in Chicago. The replacement asked Ford if he could see what he was reading.

"Sure. Read it," said Ford. "It's the Attu Sun. I get it every day."

Ford then informed the replacement that if he wanted to read

any future editions of the "Sun," he would have to subscribe to it at 50 cents per month. This sounded reasonable to the replacement, and the bargain was made. After pocketing the four-bit piece, Ford told the replacement that he would make arrangements that very day to have his copy of the Attu Sun delivered to the squadron office daily, and that is where he was to pick it up. After several days, the replacement got wise, and the game of Judge and Jury began. One of the last cases that was tried involved the exact definition of the word, "coat hanger." Coat hangers were at a premium, and one of the later replacements jumped at the chance to purchase two of them for one dollar each. When his dollar coat hangers turned out to be two nails, he demanded a trial. The trial was never completed because several of the participants, including the one who had purchased the coat hangers, were killed.

Another game we played was the "We Don't Hear You" game. This was played by the patrol plane commanders and the plane captains, and it could only be played after a snow, which was practically every day during the winter months. Here's how this game started: It was the practice of the duty officer to dispatch armed masters-at-arms to awaken the patrol plane commander and the plane captain of each crew scheduled to fly patrol. This horrible event happened between the hours of 4:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m., depending upon the weather and the time of the year. The master-at-arms would enter the hut, awaken the PPC or the PC and stand by his bed until the crewman was on his feet and wide awake. It was then the duty of the PPC to awaken the officers in the crew, and the PC had the responsibility of rousting out the other crewmen. The morning after the first big snow, the PPC's and PC's were awakened by the master-at-arms, who stood on the roofs of the huts and, through the fresh-air ventilators, shouted down the names of the men he wanted to awaken. Being responsible, the designated PPC's and PC's promptly arose, acknowledged this fact to the master-at-arms on the roof, and awoke their crews. When they opened the doors of their huts to leave, every last crew found that the entire opening was blocked by snow. If they wanted to get out, they had to dig their way out. That was the morning the "We Don't Hear You" game was born. The next morning, when the masters-at-arms made their rounds to awaken different crews by shouting from the roofs of the huts, their efforts brought no response from within. Consequently, each morning thereafter, the doors of the huts were cleared of snow by the conscientious master-at-arms force.

In early December, rumors started circulating among the officers and men that the Commander of Fleet Air Wing Four, Commodore Leslie E. Gehres, had selected Forty-Three to initiate night bombing missions from Attu to the northern Japanese Island of Paramushiro. The rumors were true. In mid-December, Lt. (jg) Don Norton and his crew successfully flew a simulated mission from Umnak, Alaska to Agattu Island in the Aleutians and back to prove that the PBY 5A could fly the 1,500-mile, round-trip missions to the Japanese homeland.

The crews of the then commanding officer of Forty-Three, Lt.

Cmdr. John A. Horton, Jr. and Lt. (jg) Carl O. Riedel, were selected to fly the first mission. After several false starts due to bad weather along the line, takeoff for this historic mission was accomplished at midnight, December 20, 1943. The takeoff was unsure and the climb out slow, as the strong PBY's were carrying a full crew, 1,485 gallons of high octane gasoline, four 500-pound bombs, six explosive flash bombs, a heavy photo-electric aerial camera in the tail, and several boxes of extra ammunition.

Navigating by the stars and calculating drift by guess and by golly, Lt. (jg) Riedel's crew, with Lt. (jg) Charlie Duncan as second pilot, Ens. Wally Sellman, navigator, AMM3/c Phillip Grace, plane captain, ARM3/c D.W. "Pat" Palmer, first radioman, AOM2/c Sal Salinas, bombardier, mechanic Carl Willson and radioman John Hamers, hit the target square and brought back aerial photos as proof. Thus, Carl Riedel's Crew #13 of Forty-Three became the first Navy flight crew to bomb the Japanese homeland during World War II.

Lt. Cmdr. Horton, in the other PBY, had been maintaining radar contact with Riedel's aircraft, but as the target neared, Cmdr. Horton lost radar contact and got lost. In this predicament, Horton turned from the island before reaching it and jettisoned his bombs at sea. For participating in this mission, Lt. Cmdr. Horton and Lt. (jg) Carl Riedel each received the Distinguished Flying Cross. The other members of both crews each received Air Medals. Medals promised to other crews for subsequent Paramushiro missions never materialized.

The Catalina was ill-equipped to attempt these long, mid-winter missions. Fuel was marginal and the bomb load was light, compared to the length of the mission. But the most severe handicap was the fact that these PBY's of Forty-Three were not equipped with cabin heaters, nor did the aircraft have facilities for more than one electrically heated flying suit. Crewmen, in dressing for one of these missions, would start with three pair of wool long johns, then put on a pair of Army-issue wool trousers, then a pair of fleece-lined khakis. Add to this four to five pairs of heavy wool boot socks, two wool shirts, and two to three wool sweaters plus a heavy, fleece-lined leather flight suit, and you had the uniform of the day for one of these missions. Even with this heavy dress, minus 20-degree to minus 40-degree temperatures would bring each man great physical suffering during the thirteen to fourteen-hour flight. Eyebrows would frost and a running nose would turn to ice. Hot coffee in thermos jugs would freeze within an hour after takeoff, and piping hot, prepared food loaded aboard the aircraft at the last moment in heavily insulated containers would not be eaten for the same reason.

It was in this condition that the aircraft and crewmen approached the target, sometimes in heavy icing conditions, sometimes in severe turbulence, and sometimes in zero-zero weather; and oftentimes with two to three of the aforementioned conditions prevailing. Yet the purpose of the mission had to be

carried out. As aircraft approached the target, the hatch in the tail section was removed and the photoelectric aerial camera was installed and hooked up. Once the camera was hooked up, the crew took up battle stations for the bombing run. This was no ordinary bombing run. The runs were usually made with benefit of radar, and the four 500-pound bombs released on the radarman's signal. At the same time, other crewmen were unstrapping the dangerous, magnesium photoflash bombs, which were lashed to a bunk, loading them, one at a time, into the cradled arms of another crewman, who carried each bomb to an open blister, where the arming wire was manually pulled as it rolled out of his arms to the target. After these six bombs had been disposed of, it was time to drop the fragmentation bombs. These were small, 20-pound bombs, neatly stacked in a large munitions box next to the open blister. It took two with coordination to do this job. One crewman would take a bomb from the box, and as he was moving it toward the open blister and Japan, the other crewman would pull the arming wire. Unsteady air and the concussion from anti-aircraft fire made this hand-bombing routine a risky procedure. The flash bombs, which were highly dangerous, were not meant to be carried on bunks inside the aircraft. However, on an earlier mission, these flash bombs had frozen to the external wing racks and could not be released. As photo reconnaissance was one of the major reasons for the missions, it was decided that these magnesium bombs should be handled in the manner described.

During the latter part of December, 1943, all of January and the first part of February, 1944, bombing missions to the Japanese Empire were carried out by designated crews of Forty-Three, while other crews of Forty-Three maintained daily war patrols in assigned sectors.

Shortly before Forty-Three was detached from bombing duty, there was further proof that these were difficult missions. In late January, the Commander of Fleet Air Wing Four, Commodore Leslie E. Gehres, came to Attu from his Adak headquarters to observe a bombing mission in the company of several of Forty-Three's aircraft. The takeoff was at midnight, as was usual, and Commodore Gehres, with a personal pilot and a specially outfitted PBY 5A, headed west towards Japan for a firsthand look at what Forty-Three had been doing for the past two months. As Commodore Gehres' aircraft moved westward against adverse winds, the fuel supply became critical and the Commodore's aircraft had to return to Attu before reaching the Japanese Empire. In the meantime, Forty-Three's aircraft found the target and bombed it with only the Japanese as observers.

For awhile, it looked as though luck was again with Forty-Three, as the bombing missions had brought on only two casualties, and these were minor. Navigator Bob Lampman suffered a small cut and a bump on his head when he was tossed to the overhead of the aircraft by anti-aircraft concussion or violent weather. The other casualty, Radioman Phil Goodman, incurred a frozen ear when he raised the flap of his fleece-lined helmet to receive instructions from another crewman during a hand-bombing exercise over the target. But on January 17, 1944, tragedy again

struck Forty-Three.

It was a typical Aleutian morning in January, dull, slate grey with frequent squalls of hard snow driven by the usual wind. The ceiling was 1,000 feet, lowering to zero. The stand-by aircraft, 51V, with the stand-by crew of Lt. (jg) Merle J. Noe, Chief Aviation Pilot; James Bolton, the co-pilot; Ens. Donald Mattison, navigator; AMM2/c Julian D. Malcolm, plane captain; AMM2/c Walter Grisson; ARM2/c Lynn S. Archerd; ARM2/c Clifford Guidry; AOM2/c Leo A. Hoff, the bombardier; and ARM2/c William C. Miller, a passenger from Fleet Air Wing Four, took off from the runway at Casco Cove at 1011 hours. The aircraft faltered as it became airborne, and it crashed in Massacre Bay and burned at 1012 hours. There were no survivors.

As stand-by crew, Lt. (jg) Noe's crew had been moved into the flight schedule to replace Squadron Commander Horton, the scheduled flight crew.

Tensions had been building since the day the squadron had been directed to leave Oak Harbor in the face of the storm which took two of Forty-Three's aircraft and one of its crews. Some tensions were released that morning when the officers and men protested the death of their friends in the windswept snow drifts of the squadron area.

Forty-three's last mission against the Japanese, as members of the "Empire Night Express," was conducted on the night of February 5 by Lt. (jg) Arthur J. Fleet and Lt. Newell P. Wyman. Since the bombing missions began on December 20, each additional mission had brought on more intense anti-aircraft fire, and now the Japanese were using night fighters to meet the attacks. So the job of carrying on the "Empire Express" was handed over to Patrol Bombing Squadron (VPB) 139, with their faster and more heavily armed Venturas.

Even though Forty-Three was no longer engaged in bombing missions, Forty-Three's outstanding navigators continued to fly missions as navigators for the Venturas, in addition to navigation duties on regular war patrols with the PBY's.

In the middle of February, Commodore Gehres presented Air Crew wings to the enlisted personnel as a token of his personal appreciation for "a difficult job, well done." During the ceremonies, Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals were awarded Lt. Cmdr. Horton, Lt. Riedel and their crews. There was a promise that the Commodore would return with additional medals "you all so justly deserve." More than forty officers were recommended for the DFC or the Air Medal, but only a handful ever received them.

On February 20, 1944, Lt. Cmdr. Horton received orders to report to N.A.S. Kodiak as Executive Officer. Lt. Marshall C. Freerks, who had shown great strength and leadership as the squadron Executive Officer, assumed command. And Lt. Jack Pilgrim, a very capable officer whose Yokeboat had been dubbed

"Pilgrim's Progress" by a war correspondent, assumed the responsibilities of Executive Officer.

In March of 1943, scuttlebutt was running high among the crews that Forty-Three would soon be relieved. Pools for picking out the date of departure for the bright lights of Seattle and leave in the States were many. However, Forty-Three was not due to leave in March, and before Forty-Three finally departed Attu, tragedy struck again -- twice, in rapid succession.

On March 25, Ensign Bob Janson of Forty-Three was scheduled to navigate a mission over the Kurile Islands with Lt. James Moore of VB-139. His primary purpose was to assist and thoroughly check out Ensign Mitchell Lambert, also of Forty-Three, on navigating the mission. On takeoff, Lt. Moore's Ventura crashed in Massacre Bay and all hands were lost.

Again, on March 31, the grim reaper beckoned another gallant crew from Forty-Three, Crew #11: Lt. Newell P. "Lefty" Wyman, Ens. Mannix Moriarty, Ens. Raymond Rozuk, AMM2/c Arvo A. Ranta, AMM2/c Lavere Ryther, ARM2/c George Huschka, ARM2/c Armstead S. Hardee, and AOM2/c Charles "Lucky" Olson.

On that day, the weather was violent and getting rapidly worse. All search planes had been recalled to Attu and were returning as rapidly as possible. With snow squalls becoming thicker and more frequent, they raced the storm to Attu. All of Forty-Three's aircraft acknowledged the return-to-base message except 57V, Lt. Wyman's aircraft.

As Forty-Three's aircraft were returning to base, Lt. Cmdr. F.R. More, commanding officer of Amchitka-based VP-62, also returning to base, reported wreckage of a PBY and two life rafts containing six survivors in sector #10. Forty-Three's "skipper," Lt. Marshall C. Freerks, and Lt. Joseph P. Weibler were dispatched to the scene of the sighting. The PBY's circled the two rafts and maintained contact with increasing difficulty, as the storm had now brought visibility to practically zero-zero. Joining the PBY's in their attempt to keep the rafts in sight was Lt. Stevens of VB-139, also homeward bound. In contact with Attu, Lt. Freerks requested permission to land a lightly loaded PBY near the rafts and make an attempt to pick up survivors. He was told that the destroyers Badger and Luce, from Admiral Fletcher's North Pacific Force, were on their way to effect the rescue and was denied permission to land under the existing stormy conditions.

Lt. Weibler, with another patrol plane commander, Lt. Don Norton, flying as second pilot, left the rafts from time to time to seek out surface craft and lead them to the area. Their efforts were in vain, as torpedo boats headed toward the area were forced to turn back because of violent seas, and the destroyers supposedly already under way had not yet left Attu. Unaware of this, Lt. Freerks and Lt. Weibler continued to keep the rafts in sight as best they could under the deteriorating conditions. With darkness coming on and gasoline running

dangerously low, Lt. Freerks came in low towards the rafts with floats down. There was movement on the rafts, but the low pass told the Aleutian veteran that the sea was now too violent for an open sea landing.

Now in a perilous position themselves, Lt. Freerks radioed for the location of the rescue destroyers. He was advised that they were approximately eighteen miles from the rafts. With assurance from the Wing Commander that the destroyers were nearing the rescue area, Forty-Three's PBY's left the scene and headed for Shemya, as Attu was now completely closed in. Darkness had fallen and little hope was held that the rafts could be spotted, for they had no flares or other means of signaling and the storm had closed in unmercifully. Lts. Freerks and Weibler arrived at Shemya just minutes before the storm completely enveloped the little island. The weather maintained this condition for three days.

On April 3, Lt. Rehill of VB-139 spotted one raft at 1121 hours and sighted the other about eight miles northwest of the first. Lt. Rehill immediately sent in his contact report and made voice contact with the destroyers Badger and Luce. PBY's from Forty-Three, piloted by Lt. Freerks, Lt. Riedel and Lt. Fleet, circled the rafts until the destroyers arrived at 1841 hours. In recovering the rafts, one body was lost. It is not known who the man was; but whoever he was, he had tied a line around his wrist and jumped into the icy, turbulent sea in an apparent last effort to move the raft toward Attu.

Burial of the five survivors was conducted at Little Falls Cemetery, in the foothills of Attu's fog-shrouded mountains, on Good Friday, 1944.

The long-anticipated day finally arrived, and on April 23, Forty-Three was relieved by VP-61. The same day, Forty-Three departed Attu for Adak and the return journey to the continental United States.

For once, the weather favored Forty-Three, and this stroke of good fortune saved a crew and an aircraft. The PBY's that Forty-Three was bringing home were tired Catalinas. The engines were most all overdue for overhaul, and the crews were nursing them down the final stretch. The squadron was flying south with a position of about 130 miles west of Sitka, Alaska. The day was bright and sunny and the sea was calm. These were the conditions when the port engine of 50V, piloted by Lt. Glenn Violette, failed. The heavily loaded aircraft quickly lost altitude, and with the crew still tossing equipment overboard, Lt. Violette softly set the Catalina down on the smooth sea.

Lt. Norton left the squadron and headed in the direction of Sitka to lead three PT boats back to the downed aircraft. Lt. Freerks and Lt.(jg) Williams circled Lt. Violette's Catalina until Lt. Norton appeared, leading the PT boats. Violette's aircraft was towed to Sitka for repairs, and the crew arrived in Seattle on May 12, 1944.

In the meantime, the other eleven planes had landed at Annette Island for an overnight stop. The next morning, April 27, the squadron proceeded to NAS Seattle, Washington. Nearing home, Forty-Three could not resist the opportunity to exhibit a bit of its pride, and as a consequence, Seattle was treated to a fine show of formation flying as the squadron flew majestically over the city before landing at Sand Point. All hands were eager to depart on leave, and by May 18, 1944, another chapter in the history of Forty-Three, Queen of the Yokers, had been completed.

On the right--

Marriot and Rutter lost in air battle with Japs November 4, 1944

XXI

THE EMPIRE EXPRESS

by

Charles L. Scrivner

Foreword

On October 1, VPB 136, LCDR Nathan S. Haines commanding, arrived at the newly constructed airstrip at Casco Cove in Attu. Haines initiated patrols in the search sectors toward the Kurile Islands, while VP-45 took the sectors in the Bering Sea toward the Northwest and in the South. On those initial patrols, Japanese Bettys were encountered on two occasions and chased away by the Venturas.

Then on 16 November 1943, after the departure of VP-45 from Attu to go back to Seattle for R and R and refitting with amphibians, Lieutenant H.K. Mantius conducted an extended sweep to Paramushiro and back to Attu. Mantius was airborne nine hours and thirty-five minutes and landed at his base with 135 gallons of fuel remaining. This was the longest search that had been flown by a PV-1 in the Aleutians up to that time. It demonstrated that the swift Ventura had the range as an attack plane to bomb targets in the Kurile Islands. Thus, the Empire Express campaign was inaugurated by the Wing.

Charles L. Scrivner of Independence, Missouri, wrote a book, The Empire Express, which is now out of print. The author, however, has given us permission to include excerpts of his book in this volume. The remainder of this chapter is in Scrivner's words.

The flight by Lt. Mantius and his crew had great significance. After that flight, VP-139, VB-135, VB-136, and VB-131 regularly made the Empire Express run, weather and takeoff conditions permitting, until the end of WWII. These four squadrons were continuously based at Attu, on a rotation basis, two squadrons usually being deployed on Attu at any given time and two reforming with Fleet Air Wing Six. CINCPAC wanted photographic intelligence of what the Japanese were doing in the Kuriles.

Commodore Gehres' Empire Night Express was initiated by VP-43, a PBY squadron, with Lt. Carl Riedel making the first night flight over the Kuriles on December 20, 1943. The PBY's of VP-43 continued these missions through February 6, 1944. After that, the Empire Express was strictly PV (Ventura) work. By installing special camera equipment in the nose of the PV-1, it was possible to make night photo-recon flights over the northern Kuriles. Special racks were installed in the cabin to carry four magnesium photoflash bombs of one million candle power brilliance. The K19-A camera in the nose was equipped with an automatic shutter, triggered by a photoelectric cell from the photoflash bombs. The flash bombs were thrown out of the tunnel hatch by a crewman. By carefully timing the release of the bombs in relation to airspeed, the proper interval for overlapping pictures could be obtained.

A 280-gallon fuel tank was fitted on the aft part of the bomb bay, leaving racks for three 500-pound bombs forward. Cabin fuel tanks and an extra oil tank were also installed. All armor plate aft of the center of gravity and the tunnel guns were removed. In this condition, the PVs were dangerously overloaded and suffered considerable tail-heaviness. Lockheed had established 31,000 pounds as the Maximum Gross Overload for the PV-1. With all this added fuel, oil and equipment, Empire Express PVs regularly took off at 34,000 pounds, or 3,000 pounds over the manufacturer's Maximum Gross Overload. All this resulted in an extremely dangerous takeoff situation. Several planes and crews were lost on takeoff. The photoflash bombs also constituted a real hazard. One crew was lost in a water landing, after takeoff, when the flash bombs and fuel overload exploded.

The normal PV crew complement was five men, with the co-pilot doubling as the navigator. Due to the extreme distance to the target, and the navigational problems present in the Aleutian area, the Empire Express carried a six- or seven-man crew. An additional officer navigator, and/or an additional enlisted navigator, enabled the co-pilot to devote full time to flying.

In flying land-planes across the freezing North Pacific, far beyond the plane's normal range, fuel conservation was of the utmost importance. Lockheed recommended a constant cruising speed of 145 knots, and the pilot set the power so he could maintain this. In the early part of the flight, power settings were fairly high, but as fuel was consumed and ordnance expended over the target, the power settings would be brought back. The

Navy developed a "How-Goes-It" curve, which was a graph of time-distance over fuel-remaining. The pilot had to stay ahead of this How-Goes-It curve at all times. If he fell behind, there was a point beyond which he could not go and still make it back. VB-135, on their second tour of duty in 1944, had two planes which could not stay ahead of the How-Goes-It curve. Different crews flew them on different missions, and each time they were forced to turn back before reaching the target. These PV-1s were labeled "Gas Burners" and shoved aside.

On one occasion, there were not enough planes in an "up" condition for the mission, and Lt. J.F. Rumford was assigned one of the "Gas Burners." He reasoned that since he would not make it to the target, he would "shoot the coal to it," and get the flight over with. He cruised at 155 to 160 knots, staying ahead of his How-Goes-It curve all the way. When he returned, he had more gas left than anyone. The PV-1 had two angles of attack at which it would fly that heavily loaded. If you flew at the slow speed, you had high angle of attack and high drag. However, if you gave it more power, bringing the plane over on the other angle of attack, she would really stay up there. So, quite by accident, it was discovered that a high cruising speed gave better gas consumption.

The engines were started and warmed up in revetments. After taxiing to the end of the runway where a fuel truck waited, the engines were killed and the tanks topped off; thus, takeoffs were made with every possible drop of fuel aboard. These operations assumed a carrier deck atmosphere, with the duty officer going from plane to plane giving last-minute verbal instructions. No radio was permitted, even on takeoff. Radio silence was observed all the way to the target, everyone flying on instruments, every crew on its own until the target was reached and an attack made...then the radios would come alive with chatter.

A large, 18-inch diameter, loop antenna was installed under the nose. This loop was needed to combat precipitation static, which was a serious problem in the area. A battery-powered, Lear portable radio receiver was issued to each crew. These units covered not only the broadcast band but also the low-frequency aircraft bands. One of VB-135's crews was saved by the Lear portable. They lost their electrical system and were able to get down using the Lear hooked up to the main antenna.

Weather was the number one operational problem. The fog was usually so dense that the flyable condition was anytime in which the wind was coming from the opposite side of the island. With the wind in that direction, the air was lifted over the mountains. The moisture was wrung out by the lifting and some of it would be precipitated out in the mountains. The compression-heating on the lee side of the mountain would be sufficient to form a bubble, and that is where the airstrip was located. The weatherman's chief problem was being able to predict that a bubble would form. The missions were usually of nine to ten hours duration, so he had to project whether the wind would be coming from the proper direction for the field to be open. The

only reports he could depend on were those received from the Guard Ship. This ship, a small AVP, was deployed about 200 to 250 miles out, toward the target. They sent frequent weather reports; the one which was of principal interest was the wind direction. Attempts were made, albeit not very successfully, to pick up Russian weather reports from Kamchatka, particularly the weather at Cape Lopatka. Usually these were garbled. Also they were many hours old, so the weatherman really did not have much to go on. There were occasions when the bubble was collapsing as the planes were making their final approach. If this happened, the only alternate field was Shemya, some 25 miles from Attu. Shemya was a flat island and if Attu was closed in, chances were that Shemya had been closed in for some time. There really was no alternate, except ditching in the freezing water. In such an event, anything in the way of a rescue had to be extremely prompt. Even in a rubber raft, if you got wet, and there was no way of getting into the raft without getting wet, you could only last about twenty minutes before you died of exposure.

On 11 June 1944, Lt. J.P. Vivian, on a daylight weather hop, found weather conditions right and continued over Shimushu, where he found a new airfield full of Mitsubishi Bettys. He was able to get some good pictures with a K-20 camera. The finished prints definitely located the field. The Bettys were equipped as torpedo bombers, and since there was an American task force in the area, it was imperative that the field be neutralized. Lt. M.A. Mason, Exec. of VB-135, and five other volunteer crews took off on 12 June in the first daylight raid since the disastrous Army raids in September, 1943. The mission was a complete success and exploded the myth that it was suicide to fly over the Kuriles in daylight. The raids between 11 and 14 June 1944 demonstrated that daylight missions were much more satisfactory. From then until the end of the war, with few exceptions, daylight intruder missions were carried out. In these operations, low-altitude attacks were made with planes striking in pairs and fours. These raids were most successful when low cloud cover prevented enemy fighters from making overhead runs. Bombing was much more accurate from such low levels. The extreme distance to the target precluded the feasibility of fighter escort. Most fighters of the era would have been hard-pressed to keep up with the PVs had they possessed the required range.

In the daylight missions, the approach to the target was made "on the deck." The props were almost chewing the water: the slipstreams would stir up the salty water enough to leave wakes that could be seen behind each plane all the way to the horizon. This kept the PVs under enemy radar until the last possible moment. The raids were sporadic and the enemy's first warning to scramble came not much before the PVs streaked across the beaches. Even among the best trained, it takes a few minutes to communicate the warnings and have fighters airborne.

Due to the inherent difficulties of night photo reconnaissance, small coverage per picture, and few available shots in four flash-bombs (most of the pictures were of clouds), the night missions did not prove successful.

The Japanese now feared an invasion from the Aleutians and were frantically building up their defenses in the Kuriles. Fighters were encountered more frequently, but the PVs proved able to deal with them. Several were shot down in head-on attacks with the bow guns, and the turret gunners began to run up an impressive score. If the fighters were able to chase them, the situation was usually in the PVs' favor. Both the Venturas and the fighters were gulping fuel at the maximum rate, but there was a big difference in what each was accomplishing. The PVs were heading for home; the fighters were heading away from their base. With an eye on their fuel gauges, the enemy usually followed for awhile, staying well out of turret range, finally doing an Immelmann turn and going back to their home field. If they were able to close on the PVs, they were prevented from making the typical fighter pass due to the PV's speed. They were nearly always forced into making stern chases. There was no coming up from underneath because of the PV's evasive tactics of hugging the water. The closure rate being so slow, the fighters presented a simple zero deflection shot to the PV gunners. They soon learned that the turret's torrent of accurate, .50-calibre fire was deadly. The enemy became less and less aggressive in pressing their attacks.

After June, 1944, the Empire Express changed from photo-recon to intruder operations. VB-135 was relieved by VBP-131 in October, 1944, and they brought a new weapon to the Empire Express -- aircraft rockets. The PV-1 being a fighter-bomber, 131 went at it in that fashion. High-speed strafing runs included rocket attacks. VPB-131's PVs carried the "Chin Gun" package, increasing their forward fire power from two to five guns. No bombs were carried in this configuration. The bomb bay was filled with a 480-gallon fuel tank, which greatly extended their loiter time over the target area. The squadrons attacked targets of opportunity -- canneries and fishing vessels ranking high on the list, the strategy being to hit Japan in the Bread Basket (or Fish Basket). Empire Express operations were geared to coincide with the Navy's operations in the South Pacific and were stepped up in intensity prior to any big push in that area. Throughout their long operations in the Aleutians, never once did the PV-1 Venturas have fighter escort. As a matter of fact, on several occasions they were called upon to fill the escort role themselves for Army heavy bombers.

When VPB-139 arrived on Attu in March, 1945, a new PV appeared in the Aleutian theatre, the PV-2 Harpoon. Conceived early in WWII to replace the PV-1 and to correct some of its faults, the Harpoon more accurately reflected the patrol-bomber concept. The early PV-2s were plagued with teething problems and arrived in the Aleutians before many of these discrepancies were resolved. Although range was increased and flying characteristics improved, the top speed was reduced. It is doubtful if the Japanese ever recognized the difference or realized this reduction in performance. By the time the Harpoons arrived, Japanese fighter pilots had developed a keen respect for anything that resembled a PV!

Why the PVs emerged with so little recognition in WWII histories remains a mystery. They lived down their early reputation as bad actors, and the Navy found them to be safe and reliable airplanes. All who flew them grew to love and appreciate the little beasts. All the crews who had the misfortune of receiving battle damage, or experienced mechanical malfunctions over the Kuriles and had to make a forced landing, or parachuted into Kamchatka, received rather ungrateful treatment from Russian allies. Some of the men of the Empire Express, who had to land in Russia, stated later that if they had it to do again they would have risked a ditching in the freezing Pacific waters. Some were fired on as they made final approaches to Petropavlosk, with flaps and landing gear down! Although they endured many hardships, all were eventually returned to the United States, usually through Europe.

In retrospect, wars are viewed differently by the participants. One weighs the loss of friends against the victory to which they contributed everything. Information which became available after the war indicated that the Japanese took the bait dangled by the Empire Express and the losses were, indeed, justified. Estimates vary, but from one-sixth to one-fourth of the Japanese air forces were diverted to deal with an anticipated invasion from the Aleutians. These were men and machines which the real thrust from the South did not have to encounter. This caused great frustration by the Japanese High Command, who so badly needed these resources in the Central Pacific. The Empire Express was undoubtedly a factor which affected the ultimate outcome of WWII in the Pacific.

VP 131: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

by

Ed Vance

VPB 131, commissioned in March, 1943 at Deland, Florida, joined the patrol squadrons destined for anti-submarine operations in the Atlantic off the shores of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and South America on June 28, 1943. LCDR John A. Gamon was in command and the bases of operation included Guantanamo Bay, San Juan, Port of Spain, and finally, at Zandery Field in Dutch Guiana, where coverage included flights from Georgetown, British Guiana and Cayenne, French Guiana.

Zandery Field was unusual in that, besides our PV-1 squadron, the U.S. Army had several planes such as observation and a modified DC-3 used for bombing practice and freight; the Dutch Army had a B-25; the U.S. Coast Guard had a few PBY's; and on top of all that, Pan American operated civilian passenger service to points north and south. In addition, British, French, Brazilian planes and goodness knows what else flew in and out of Zandery. For ground protection, there was the Dutch Army and the U.S. Army, made up of Stateside personnel and soldiers from Puerto Rico.

How can I describe some of the activities at Zandery? You can bet that they were varied. With the field located about thirty miles inland from the Atlantic, and in the jungle, little events became big events.

I arrived at Zandery in October, 1943 with several other fresh graduates of the August, 1943 PV-1 aircrew training class at Lake City, Florida. Our 131 Chief, Punchy West, was a good-sized man, but since there was also a somewhat smaller man named Punchy West, they were known as "Big" and "Little" Punchy. Another of our chiefs had a blue eye and a brown eye. It was difficult to look straight at him in a close-up conversation.

This was rum-and-Coca Cola country. We had two jungle parrots. A small, green-feathered one and a much larger, red-feathered bird that made a mess of things in our barracks. Native women walked around the base selling jungle bananas and other fruit. A narrow-gage railroad ran through the field, carrying passengers or mining equipment to the boxite mines deeper in the jungle. Most of us wore pith helmets, Frank Buck style, for protection from the sun. There was a shoemaker's shop where you could have flying boots tailor-made for twelve dollars American or twenty-five Dutch guilders. The radio in our barracks could only pick up the BBC for news and music.

One enjoyment for us was the "Liner Diner," where the best and only hot dogs and hamburgers in Dutch Guinea were sold. I believe the diner was part of the Pan Am operation. The Liner provided snacks for that in-between crunch that young sailors managed to have.

Being in the jungle, someone got the bright idea that we should explore the surrounding areas. On my first and only "safari," I walked about twenty-five feet down a path into the undergrowth and hastily stopped. A long, large-diameter snake was dangling over the path from two trees. A Frank Buck I'm not, so I left to return to the barracks. That snake certainly had brothers and sisters and I wasn't about to meet them. Other men, who spent several hours in the jungle, started to shoot at anything that moved before they came back to the field. A group of our squadron met some natives on their jungle adventure but soon left when the native chief wanted them to meet his daughters.

Once a month, the Army would invite the USO girls from the capital city of Paramaribo for dinner at the mess hall and then a dance. This was a real gala event. These Dutch, English, Indian, French, Chinese, and everywhere-in-between girls became more beautiful the longer we were stationed in Zandery. Don't tell me you don't remember.

The Army operated the mess halls and on Sunday mornings, the cook would ask you how you liked your eggs. He would fix them up to order. Unbelievable, but true.

The only movie house was operated by the Army. This indoor house had two shows a night, and by the time the second show got underway, you couldn't see the screen because of all the cigarette and cigar smoke. The smoke did keep the bugs down, however.

Illona Massey, a famed opera and movie star of the thirties, toured Zandery with a USO team. The grapevine had it that she wore low-cut gowns during her performances, and when she finished singing, she would bow. If the applause was great enough, she bowed even more. You said it, Danny, we applauded more and more. Miss Massey almost lost her life when she arrived in an Army plane during a heavy, heavy tropical rainstorm. You couldn't see five feet ahead and they were low on gas. They overshot the length of the runway and flipped over at the end of the field. That USO tour was rain-soaked and shaken up. They had a two- to three-day rest before the show could go on.

One of our men thought so much of one of the base hospital nurses that he raided their barracks one night. Naturally, there was a fuss and when the MPs arrived, our Romeo was found under the barracks. He was sentenced to thirty days of hard labor.

We played ball and tried to fry big steaks over a large, open fire on the first anniversary of VPB 131. Well, it didn't

work. The fire, the sun, and the temperatures were much too hot for us. Our steaks were taken to the mess hall for completion of cooking and returned to the ball field.

Our paydays included base pay, overseas pay, flight pay, and thirty-three-and-a-third percent, due to an agreement with the Dutch Government. (Did someone say "heaven?") And we were paid in guilders, worth two to one American. Our pockets had to carry dollars, pounds, francs, and guilders to accommodate the country out of which we operated.

The Navy put out a call for potential students for flight school. Several of us made it through the mental tests but did not pass the physical. We were over the weight limit. We were told to lay off the candy, cake, pies, hamburgers, and beer.

Zandery was not all wine and roses. VPB 131 lost more planes and men trying to make the Atlantic safe for large convoys than it did doing the Empire Express. I can't say for certain how many tragic events happened, but here are a few: One crew was lost in training operations and was never found. Another plane ditched during a night patrol and began to sink in the Atlantic. The radar station was in the nose of the PV-1 at that time, and by the time the operator was able to move from his seat in the nose to the pilot's compartment and out of the plane, his hair had turned white. Then there was the plane that couldn't land at Zandery after a night patrol because of a dense fog. The pilot ditched the plane in the mouth of the Paramaribo River. The crew began to swim for the nearest mud bank but were cautioned by one of their passengers, a chaplain, to pray. One of the crew retorted, "Pray hell, let's swim." The night on the mud bank almost did them in. The bugs were fierce.

One afternoon, while we were at the Ready Room near the line, word was flashed that one of our planes was having trouble with its landing gear. One of the wheels didn't come down, and when they tried to raise the one that did, it wouldn't. Therefore, Lt. George Earle IV had a crack at landing his plane on the grass strip between the runway and the aircraft parking area. Prior to attempting the one-wheel landing, the crew lightened the ship by throwing out all loose gear. Somehow, one of the dye markers hit the side of the hatch on the way out and covered most everyone with powder. The crew was then known as the "Gold Dust" twins. Lt. Earle made a spectacular one-wheel landing with the plane softly settling on its starboard wing. All hands were safe.

There were several crackups shortly after dawn takeoffs, and again, I believe all hands were safe. However, one mid-day PV-1 flight plunged into the jungle just after takeoff. All hands were lost. One of our pilots borrowed the Army observation plane and made a hasty takeoff from the taxi strip to locate the burning plane.

Morale was low because of all the operational problems. I don't know whose good idea it was, but we received a four-day leave on the British island of Barbados. They call it R&R

today. Several crews at a time were flown to the island in a PBY. Now that was an airplane, what with its bunkbeds and a galley where coffee and tunafish sandwiches were served, but oh, was it slow, and we blew a nose tire on the return trip. The PBY ended the trip in a cloud of dust, completely off the runway.

VPB 131 enjoyed Christmas 1943, but our gifts from home did not arrive until February 14, 1944. Someone forgot to mail early, or else the mail came down a very slow boat. Anyway, we were happy to receive them.

I flew with many of our pilots during our stay at Zandery, but I was a member of Lt. Stan Arnold's crew most of the time. A check of my log book indicates that we averaged about twenty-five flight hours a month.

On March 12, 1944, our white-painted planes, loaded with extra passengers and squadron gear, left Zandery and with a sputtering engine, headed for Norfolk, Va. The first stop north was at Trinidad, where our officers ordered up fried chicken to be enjoyed under the wings of our plane. Then it was on to San Juan, Gitmo, Camaguay (for whiskey by the case), and Jacksonville, where our pilot, Lt. Jones, declared our airplane a disaster and unfit for flight. We had to wait seven days for a plane from Norfolk. It wasn't so tough, though, as the Jacksonville NAS had a swimming pool full of WAVES in bathing suits. They looked great to us jungle bunnies. When our rescue plane arrived, Lt. Brown was a welcome sight. We found out that a ten-day leave enjoyed by others had shrunk to four days because of our delay at Jacksonville.

After the short, four-day leave, VPB 131 left Norfolk and headed west for Whidbey Island. Lt. Brown was our pilot, with Ens. Rouse handling co-pilot duties. There were stops at Montgomery, Alabama; El Paso; San Diego; Alameda; Medford, Oregon; and finally, at Ault. Our plane was a newly overhauled ship and sported the new blue paint pattern.

VPB 131 was granted a thirty-day leave about sixteen days after arrival at Ault in May, 1944. I flew home to Pittsburgh via United Airlines. We departed Seattle at 9:00 p.m., and after several stops along the way, the DC-3 landed in Pittsburgh at 3:00 the next afternoon.

When that beautiful leave was over, VPB 131, under the command of LCDR Rolland Hastreiter, began training for the Aleutians in earnest. Our PV-1's were fitted out with three 50-calibre machine guns in the lower nose to add to the fire power of the two 50s in the top nose section. We also received the new weapons of the future: rockets launched from wing mounts. We began to be known as that "Buck Rogers outfit." The plane lost its bomb capacity when gas tanks were installed in the bomb bay.

The summer of 1944 was spent in training, such as instrument hops, cross-country trips, sector flights, bombing and strafing Birds Island, radar navigation hops, trips to Alameda to pick up

new aircraft, rocket-firing target practice at Pasco, Washington. In addition, 131 had torpedo-bombing practice prior to the installation of the bomb bay tanks.

One must consider our off-duty recreation that was spent, for the most part, at the Green Gate in Mt. Vernon. Women, beer, and music. Now, it didn't get any better than that, or have you forgotten?

I remember when the squadron was outfitted with winter clothing, flying suits and sleeping bags. One part of the gear was a nifty hunting knife that one could attach to his belt. Well, we were told that the gear would be sent up to Attu by separate means and we would be notified on arrival. All the gear was received except the hunting knives, and I just know that Santa did not take them.

The squadron had its final Stateside picnic at a cottage in an area known as Smick Beach. Here we played ball, drank beer, ate hot dogs, drank beer, had hamburgers, drank even more beer, and played golf at the Smick Beach Country Club. A great time was had by all.

On October 4, 1944, VPB 131 began its long flight to Attu but had to return due to nasty weather over our first planned stop. Finally, on October 7, we were able to fly to Annette, Alaska. Here, more rain and fog grounded the planes for eight days. The squadron arrived on Attu on October 20, 1944 after stops at Yakatak, Kodiak, Umnak, and Adak. The remainder of October was spent in getting to know Attu and patrol flights.

LCDR Rolland Hastreiter, our Commanding Officer, was a great, aggressive flyer tempered with caution for his men. He checked out the squadron at Whidbey by flying with each crew to check out their mettle and later, by leading each group of planes flying its maiden combat mission.

An innovation in weather control was the placing of oil-filled drums along the edges of the Attu runways, the principle being the same as the use of smudge pots. When the drums were fired, the hot air would raise the fog so that an acceptable ceiling would be reached for takeoffs or landings. I don't recall how the plan worked out.

Evenings were spent going to the movies, Ships Service, the beer garden, gym, letter-writing or reading, card games, playing recordings or listening to the shortwave radio, where we had two choices, the Armed Force Radio programs or Tokyo Rose. One of the most enjoyed AFR programs on Saturday nights was the recorded pickups of big band music from various hotels across the USA. Our lone record player was rotated from hut to hut and back. Two recordings that were popular at that time were Glenn Miller's "Pennsylvania Six-Five Thousand" and the Harry James rendition of "I Didn't Want to Love You."

Another evening event in our hut was the "Gravel Gerty"

party. This event usually started at about 9:00 p.m. when Al Hitch, with his loud, raspy voice, would drop in for a cup of coffee. Al was thirty-five years of age, and it was believed that he was the oldest man in our outfit. When the coffee was ready, most of us had a supply of bread and canned goods to make up some very good sandwiches.

A great pastime event were the evenings we spent at our photo developing lab. It was constructed from old shipping containers and installed in a corner of our hangar. Because of this lab, we were able to have pictures of our stay at Attu.

The hut I was assigned to was built in a large, ditch-like depression in the side of a mountain. The front entrance was level with the boardwalk, so that you could walk right in. The roof of the rear portion of the hut was just about even with the surrounding soil. When it snowed, we had to shovel out the rear entrance. Then publicity photos were taken to reveal how the hut was covered to the rooftop. These pictures also showed that the pathway to the rear of our hut was waist-high. What a tall story this made when we sent back our letters.

One of the USO tours to hit Attu was headed up by Amy Arnell, former vocalist with the Tommy Tucker dance band. She was a looker and her bulging-eyed audience loved her "singing." Yea, boy, some troops got Bob Hope. We received Amy.

One part of the old TV series, "Victory at Sea," that I remember was the beginning of each program, when the battle action would begin with the ominous words, "And now..." The VPB 131 "And now..." action began on November 4, 1944, when LCDR Hastreiter lead a four-plane attack force for 131's first mission to the Kurile Islands. Our job was to divert the Japs' attention so that another part of the region could be bombarded by the Army Air Force. The decoy work by 131 was successful but at a loss of Lt. Ellingboe's plane and crew. The area where his plane was shot down was covered by the remaining three PV-1's, but all we spotted was a burning slick. It has been said that eleven Jap planes did the attacking just after our initial strafing run. I remember the anti-aircraft fire coming up at us, and when some Japs headed for a frontal attack on our plane, Lt. Arnold responded with a blast of his five nose guns and the Japs left without a bow.

The cabin door of our plane was opened by Chief Art Hoffman on arrival at the hangar. He asked, "Vance, did you burn out the barrels?" I replied that we did not but we did use the guns. Before we were to have chow after that 7.3-hour flight, the crews were taken to Interrogation. Here, besides the questions, we were given grapefruit juice laced with you-know-what. We were feeling so good that I understand they cut the whiskey ration down somewhat when future missions returned.

We had two brothers in our squadron. One of them was in Lt. Ellingboe's tragic crew. As I remember, the remaining Pannetti brother was offered the opportunity to return to the States by

LCDR Hastreiter but refused the offer.

Our officers presented the crews with three bottles of rum to help make Christmas Eve more festive. Al Hitch was in charge of refreshments. He solicited a large kettle, milk, and eggs from the mess hall and mixed up a potent eggnog with the rum and these ingredients. That mixture soon had us flying high about midnight. Our dogs lapped up the mixture from their bowls and were soon "in the bag." Bob Seifert became a father that night when his son was born in Ashtabula, Ohio. Bob never got to see his son, as he died with Lt. Patton later in 1945. The songs played over the radio that night, "White Christmas" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas" by Bing Crosby, together with all that eggnog, made us very, very homesick.

The first rocket attack, with LCDR Hastreiter in the lead plane, was conducted in late January, 1945. Lt. Feiten, Lt. Earle, and Lt. Patton's crew made up the rest of the flight. The targets were radio towers and a lighthouse. Both targets were hit many times but remained standing. It is not known if the targets remained operational.

The targets in February, 1945 were radar stations. After LCDR Hastreiter fired his rockets at the stations, he spotted marching Jap soldiers and gave them a lesson they wouldn't forget. Lt. Newby followed to give the station a direct hit, but when he pulled up to avoid the hill behind the target, he felt the plane shudder. On examination back at Attu, it was found that the starboard wingtip was bent and torn open about a foot and a half and loaded with dirt. Next to have a go at the target was Lt. Dawson. After firing off his rockets, he nose-gunned a horse and wagon. Nothing like upsetting the Paramushiro transportation system.

There were many more missions to various targets, including shipping and fishing canneries. During one of these runs in February, Lt. Powers received a hit and had to feather the prop. They prepared for a landing at Petropavlosk (Petro kits -- remember?). The crew began to throw out all loose gear to lighten up the plane. On arrival at the Russian coast, fog prevented a landing at Petro. A safe, one-engine, belly landing on the rock-bound beach or the rough, high seas made the only option a good choice. The crew hit the silk and all landed in a deep cushion of snow. VPB 131 had its first interned crew when the Russians picked up the crew.

Preparations to have the plane ready for the dawn patrols were a hectic event. The auxillary power cart had to be pulled in the snow to the plane, the frozen wing covers had to be removed, tank levels checked, props pulled through, radio tested, guns checked, a water check of the gas tanks, engines started, warmed up and mag checked, and finally, the topping off of the gas tanks to make sure we had all the gas we could carry. Then, at the runway prior to takeoff, a team of Hedron men would swab our wing and tail surfaces with anti-freeze to help prevent the formation of ice.

Before one unforgettable dawn patrol, we met the enemy and they were us. Somehow, water got into the Attu aviation gas supply, and when we topped off our tanks prior to leaving for the runway, what we received from the gas truck was almost all water. One plane made its takeoff but soon returned, in a May Day situation because of the water-contaminated gas. LCDR Hastreiter and his crew should remember that short flight. Their action prevented the other three planes from flying into a similar dangerous situation and no doubt prevented a tragedy.

VPB 131 continued anti-shipping and rocket attacks until March, 1945. VPB 139 and their new PV-2 Harpoons arrived and were assigned the rocket attacks. VPB 131 was given the task of sector patrols.

Tragedy hit 131 when, on return from a sector search in early April, 1945, Lt. Patton and his entire crew were killed. Jim made an approach, but with the williwaws howling down the landing strip, he decided to have another try. They almost made it when a super gust flipped the plane over and put the plane into the cove on its back.

On August 6, 1945, VPB 131 and their happy crews returned to Whidbey. Years later, I read a Naval account of why we were in the Aleutians. The article described our flights to Japan as nuisance raids to divert the Japs' attention from the South Pacific and lead them to believe that the big invasion was about to come from the Aleutians. We all know that VPB 131 did its share to create a big nuisance to the Japs.

From the tropical shores of South America and submarine patrols to the frozen Aleutian chain and rocket attacks on the Kuriles, I'm sure there must be more to the saga of VPB 131, and after all of these passing years, I hope that others will remember more 131 events and actions.

And now, let us have a moment of silence for those who died doing their duty, and for those who have passed on since our great return to the States in 1945.

XXIII

"I'LL TAKE MY VODKA STRAIGHT"

by

Byron Morgan

Attu is a fog with an island in the middle; a piece of tundra-covered rock stuck too far out on the Aleutian chain for anybody to care. All it meant to me during those days was an excuse for a steel-matted runway -- one end in the mountains and the other in Massacre Bay.

I go back to those takeoffs as navigator in the fog always with a deep, uneasy gasoline smell of danger and excitement as we powered up and then released brakes to get one hundred and ten knots before pulling up from the rough Marston matting that ended in water. Out over Massacre Bay, past Murder Point, climbing toward the enemy in the Kuriles seven hundred cold, leaden, sea water miles west across the International Date Line and into the next day.

Admiral Whiskey Jack Fletcher's Task Force of destroyers and light cruisers were raiding the Kuriles. We were his air support. The purpose -- to bomb the main airfield of Shimushu To; to engage the Japanese fighters of Shimushu and Paramushiro as a diversion to the success of the mission of the Task Force.

The date: June 14, 1944.

I had departed operational training in PBY's in March and reported to Commander Fleet Air, San Diego for my orders to the fleet. Vern Wegner and I walked into the assignment office together. We drew Bombing Squadron 135 at Whidbey Island, Washington. It was a crack squadron flying the Lockheed PV-1, Ventura...a fast, long-range patrol bomber. There was a hitch: we were assigned as third pilot-navigators.

Right off we were issued feather gear: parka, trousers, boots, and gloves, down-filled and warm as toast. We would be operating in the Aleutian area, making long-range, night photographic-bombing attacks. It was an exciting challenge.

Eighteen new third pilot-navigators reported in to VB-135, the Blue Fox Squadron. Day and night we were stuck in the navigational training building just below the B.O.Q. at Whidbey for a crash course in celestial navigation. I didn't see the inside of a Ventura -- let alone the cockpit -- until the squadron pulled up stakes and flew north to the Aleutians.

It was out the Straits of Juan de Fuca, up the Inside Passage, landing for fuel at Yakutak, Alaska. Two crews stayed

overnight at Yakutak with engine problems. Their planes burned up in a hangar fire that night. It was a bad omen for the squadron -- if anyone was keeping track of such things.

We went on to Kodiak, where I picked up a Labrador Retriever pup as squadron mascot. I named him Peter Victor and together we flew out the chain to Adak and then to Attu.

On Attu the SeaBees built a dog run for Peter Victor out of camouflage fencing. It happened to be near the lair of a blue fox, who took up a morning and evening patrol around the fence hissing and snarling to Peter Victor's cries and yelps.

There was a time when Commodore Gehres inspected Peter Victor's dog run thinking it was an anti-aircraft gun emplacement, but that's a story for another time.

Our missions were to be night photographic bombing of the Japanese Home Islands in the Kuriles. These flights were flown at the extreme radius of action of our aircraft through the worst flying weather in existence. The weather started out over the Russian continental land mass and moved in waves of cold fronts toward the Aleutians. Operating way over our maximum allowable gross weight, with bombs and extra gas tanks, we were to fly missions of 1500 to 1800 nautical miles, ten hours flying time.

My abilities at the navigation table, I felt, were going to be sorely tested.

While operating patrols for Japanese surface ships and submarines out of Adak, one of our eighteen crews, McNulty's crew, was overdue and presumed down at sea. At low level over the water, we searched the sector McNulty was flying for days -- a life raft, a yellow Mae West, an oil slick, anything the cold water would give up which could tell the story. As each crew came back, the word was always the same, no trace.

I had flown over a lot of ocean, but these flights, looking at every whitecap, every cloud shadow on the water, watching each sea bird and heavy, glassy swell as the Pacific moved into the Bering, left a dull, senseless dread that the sea would always win this one; there was no possibility, no hope, no recourse nor cry you could let out that would pierce the impassive, heavy being of this dead water.

Yet it held a fascination for me, and I must watch it. It would change with the thin light. Wind lines would appear to streak the surface, and our low-flying shadow would race across the waves.

At Adak we were put through the LORAN school. LORAN was a system of long-range radio navigation. Our squadron was the first to be equipped to receive LORAN signals. It would prove to be invaluable on our missions, especially when flying through weather fronts, or in between layers of clouds. Celestial fixes would always be primary, if we could see the stars, but we

learned to rely on this measurement of microseconds' difference in the triangulation of master and slave signals.

We took over the Empire Express Mission from VB-139. We were called the Blue Fox Squadron, and our emblem showed a blue fox riding a gas tank with his eyes blindfolded, bombs and guns under his paws.

Once we started on the missions to the Kuriles, the Empire Express Run, I felt fine. They were at night, in very cold and smooth air -- except when we penetrated a cold front. Of course, each flight, I absolutely terrified myself several times when my star shots didn't work out and the triangle of my fix was the size of my hand. Then some flights, the LORAN would be down and we would be sailing along on track, but with no real idea of just where we were along that imaginary line. I would have to admit, to myself only, that we were lost, and I'd damn well better arrive at some reasonable idea of where we were.

It was no good sharing this information with Schuette or Brassil, the pilots. It would only disturb them and they could do something stupid like taking a different heading, or trying to help me. A navigator really doesn't want "help;" he wants to find himself, to sort out the problem. Of course, he can always use a good radio bearing or a radar fix from the pilots, but out in mid-Pacific you didn't have that luxury.

My rule of navigation said, "When you're lost, keep it to yourself. You got yourself lost and it's up to you to find yourself." It always worked and if given enough time, as a navigator I could solve the situation. As the flights went on, I became a fairly competent navigator and the whole challenge became sort of a fun game to solve. At least on long flights you were occupied with something of the mind, and you didn't just sit there watching the instruments flicker.

One pilot in our squadron would get so bored on these long flights to the target that he carried a screwdriver in his pocket. Going to Paramushiro, he would take the instrument panel apart, having the radioman hold all the screws. There would be a few minutes of excitement, maybe terror, over the target. Returning to Attu for four or five hours, he would put the instrument panel back together. This was Jim Rumford.

Once, Rumford took a war correspondent along on the flight to photograph and bomb Paramushiro. It was a night mission. Three hours into the flight, the newsman wandered up to the flight deck, past the radioman, who was asleep. He leaned over to talk to the pilots to get their reaction for his story on the dangers of Aleutian flying, the Empire Express Run, and the Blue Fox Squadron. Rumford and his co-pilot, Frank Spiva, were fast asleep; the plane was on "George," the happy auto-pilot, and the mission was going on just as planned, cruising toward the enemy.

Most of these Empire Express Runs were anything but routine. The very first such operation by our squadron was a nine-plane

mission at night against Shimushu. We went through two cold fronts to get to the target and found the weather so rough that our "how-goes-it" plot, the computation of fuel consumption against distance, told us we couldn't make it back.

Two hours out on the flight, my LORAN turned sour. We were operating between layers with no hope of celestial sights, and no possibility of obtaining a drift sight. I had to guess at the force and direction of the wind revolving around those two cold fronts and run a dead-reckoning plot as my track.

Howard Schuette, the plane commander, got a radar sight of land before us as we searched for our target in and out of the storm clouds. We made an abrupt one-eighty to avoid a mountain and then turned for home.

John Brassil, the co-pilot, and I played with the wind prediction on the return flight until we got the "how-goes-it" curve to admit there was a possibility of making Attu. I don't really see how it mattered that much; we certainly had no place to land on the outwardbound leg. We were going to make Attu even though we had to return through those cold fronts and some seven hundred nautical miles.

Howard Schuette and John Brassil went from auto-lean to manual lean on the R-2800's, and we threw overboard everything that would go -- even the parts to the twin 50's we could reach. I added the octant and some books and dividers (the long twilight when the stars were down and the sun was not up made that seem a good idea).

We picked up the radio range about fifty miles out, landing with ten minutes of fuel remaining.

Logan's crew was missing that night and presumed lost.

The squadron continued to run night photo-bombing missions until June 12th. On one of these, Lt.(jg) Wheat's aircraft blew up right after takeoff. On another, Lt.(jg) Jackson Clark and his crew were forced to make a water landing when they were closed out by weather from Casco Field at Attu. On this one, all hands were safe.

Now it was June 14th and we were scheduled to go out in support of Admiral Whiskey Jack Fletcher's Task Force. This was the mission that would end the Pacific War for me and my crew.

We all volunteered to go. Presumably since we normally operated under the cover of night, this was rated as a dangerous mission. The darkness had protected us from Japanese fighters on previous missions, with only the ground anti-aircraft fire, weather, mountains and cold North Pacific as our adversaries.

I was the lead navigator on the mission for our formation of three loosely gathered bombers. During the four hours toward the target, the weather continued to be CAVU, ceiling and visibility

unlimited. We had counted on some clouds to mask our approach to the Japanese islands. Our aircraft had been configured to operate without the tunnel guns -- 30-caliber machine guns in the ventral position under our tail. The armor plating in the rear of the plane had also been removed to save weight for these long-range missions; weight which was used by extra fuel tanks in the cabin by the navigator's table. We were extremely vulnerable to attack from fighters below us.

Our track toward Shimushu To on the last third of the run-in paralleled the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula. We were exposed, not only to unlimited visual sighting by the Japanese, but to long-range radar tracking as well. I plotted the course in over the Kamchatka Peninsula and then down to the target. It was not a serious extension of the range of our mission. The thought of being met this far from Attu by Japanese fighter aircraft was not very attractive. I didn't mind facing them, but I thought we should have every advantage we could take.

"Pilot from Navigator."

"Go ahead, Morgan."

"If we head in toward Kamchatka and mask our radar return with the mountains, we stand a better chance of avoiding fighters."

"How much does that alter our course, Morgan?"

"We can do it with a seven-degree change in heading."

"What about distance?"

"It won't add twenty miles and it's a lot safer."

"I agree, Mr. Schuette," Brassil said.

We were indicating one hundred and sixty-five knots air speed as the distance back to Attu grew longer.

"Mabus, this is Schuette. We want to head in toward Kamchatka -- use the mountains to mask our radar return."

"This is Mabus. Affirmative. Good choice."

"Okay, thanks." Schuette now went on intercom. "Morgan, what's our heading?"

"Take two six zero."

"Roger, two six zero."

Years later this same decision to alter a course over Kamchatka would result in the deaths of over two hundred people in a Korean 747, but now we weren't concerned with any action the Soviet Union might mount against us. We didn't even consider

that they would object to us flying over their country. We were allies, weren't we? Of course, they weren't at war with the Japanese, but we considered that a technicality and of not much concern.

As we flew over the coastline, we were about one hundred miles from our target, Shimushu To. I started clearing the navigation table of loose gear, my dividers, the E6B hand navigation computer, pencils, the ruler, and I watched Dunnaway, the enlisted assistant navigator, as he went aft under the twin 50's in the turret to talk to Wally Morris, our gunner.

Schuette had increased power and the loose formation of three planes flew close to the jagged peaks of Kamchatka.

Now we were boring down upon Cape Lopaka, the tip of the Kamchatka peninsula. Our speed had increased as Howard Schuette shoved the throttles forward and increased RPM. Out of the astro hatch, a clear bubble on the top of the aircraft, I could see the Japanese island of Shimushu dead ahead about ten miles away.

Wally Morris in the turret had charged and cleared his twin 50's. I went up on the flight deck, past the radioman, Eddie Jage, and stood between the pilots, Schuette and Brassil, to get a better look at the target. The airfield cut across the island in an east-west direction. There was considerable flack rising into the sky above it.

Schuette asked me to spot flack bursts from the astro hatch in order to keep us out of the heavy stuff. We were now diving down from seven thousand feet as we approached the western end of Shimushu for our run on the airfield. I could see aircraft on the runway taking off. Brassil, the co-pilot, opened the bomb bay doors as we approached the near end of the runway.

The run-in was fast and the air was rough from the bursts of flack around us. Black bursts followed at our altitude and off to our right, a hundred feet off our wing tip. We were now down below three thousand feet and in a shallow dive, our nose pointed toward the center of the runway.

The excitement was high and the interphone was filled with reports of anti-aircraft fire as Dunnaway and John Beggin, our plane captain mechanic, watched from the tunnel hatch. Wally Morris sat in his turret hunting back and forth with his mount, looking for fighters.

At fifteen hundred feet, we released our bombs and closed the bomb bay doors. These doors, when open at high speed, set up a considerable vibration and noise in the aircraft, and now with the doors closed, we were smoothing out and sliding away from the flack bursts. Beggin reported that we made hits on the runway with our bombs. Schuette increased power to 2600 RPM and set the throttles up to 48 inches as he dove down over the water once we were clear of the island.

I could see another Ventura off to the right about a half mile. It was Lt.(jg) Mabus's airplane and he was being closely tailed by a Jap fighter plane. Just then, Morris reported that we had picked up a fighter. I looked back and spotted it; it looked like a toy back there. I couldn't imagine that anything so small could do us damage.

The fighter wasn't yet within range of Wally's guns, but the PV off to our starboard was receiving fire from the fighter on his tail. The VHF was alive with excited talk, plane to plane. Six aircraft from our squadron had made the run that day. Three had preceded us in over the target, and we were all hightailing it toward Attu.

We were right over the sea, at a hundred feet, and indicating two hundred and eighty knots -- that's about three hundred and fifty miles an hour. I looked back and the fighter now was not so much of a toy. I could see red winks, his 20mm cannon fire. In the sea below us, I thought I could spot the splashes his fire made. He was consistently missing us.

Wally Morris couldn't get him in his gun sight. The fighter, a Tony, an in-line engine fighter which resembled the ME-109, was tucked in under our tail. Because of our speed, the nose of the Ventura was held considerably below the horizon to keep from gaining altitude. We wanted to be right above the waves where the fighter couldn't make a run on us from below. This threw our tail high and Wally's guns wouldn't depress enough to get the Tony in his sight.

I told Wally not to fire -- it would only tell the Jap we couldn't hit him. Then, too, I was afraid the interrupter wouldn't work and we would shoot off our own rudders. The PV-1 had twin rudders which sat like fingernails off the end of the horizontal stabilizer.

The Jap pilot wasn't making any hits on us, and I felt pretty safe. He would creep up with his nose low and lob in some cannon fire, but this would force him to raise his nose when he fired and then he lost headway in the tail chase. Again, on he would come, nose low, to pull up and fire and to fall back again.

This same routine went on for twenty minutes. Finally, the Japanese pilot gave up and turned back to Shimushu. We throttled back and assessed our situation. We were some one hundred and fifty miles away from the Japanese island and about five hundred and fifty miles from Attu.

There was something the matter with our starboard main gas tank. The gauge indicated that we were down to about fifty gallons in that tank. Schuette called back and asked Dunnaway to check the underside of the wing for gas leaks.

"Mr. Schuette, I can see gasoline just comin' off that wing! We got us a real gas leak."

"Do you see any holes, Dunnaway?"

"No, sir. But I can see the gasoline pretty good."

"It looks like smoke!" Johnny Beggin called over the intercom.

"Okay, keep an eye on it."

"Yes, sir."

John Brassil added up the available gasoline we had aboard. There wasn't enough to get us back to Attu. The closest safe land was Kamchatka. We had been briefed on Petropavlovsk as a possible emergency landing area. There was an airfield west of Petropavlovsk, a hard field of some five thousand feet runway length.

In an apologetic manner, Lieutenant Howard Schuette said, "It looks as if we can't make it back to Attu. We've lost the fuel in the starboard tank. I don't know whether it siphoned or we got hit. How do you all feel about going into Petro?"

I took a survey of the men beyond the flight deck with me, Wally Morris, John Beggin, and Aubrey Dunnaway. The answer was automatic -- it was a matter of a water landing or one in Russia -- and everyone said, "Russia."

Schuette, with a lift to his voice, said, "Well, Morgan, what's our heading for Petro?"

I made a quick guess. "Take two nine zero...two nine zero."

"Roger, two nine zero."

We swung in a broad arc to the left, back in the direction of our attacker, but a good forty degrees to the north. We were turning away from Attu, from the War, and all that it meant. We would not return to that rough, steel-matted runway, to the mountains of Attu, to the wet, cold tundra and the wood-slatted walkways over the tundra to our quonset huts, rounded like low mounds of earth, to military trucks and jeeps wearing the mud down deeper into more mud and more mud and water, to the faces in the squadron, vital and alive, seeking something in that next mission, some incident, some action which would give a point of reference to that flight into the grey sky over north water dead and molten grey, like lava that slowly moved in rhythm to some great beast beneath.

"Schuette to Sparks."

"Go ahead, Schuette. This is Sparks."

"We have a bad gas leak in our starboard mains. We're going into Petro. Over."

"Okay, I'll notify them back on Attu what happened. I'll get word to Edna. Good luck."

Then another pilot cut in, "Schuette, this is Vivian. How bad is the leak? Were you hit?"

"I don't know if we were hit. It's a pretty bad leak. I think we'll make it to Petro."

"Okay, I'll let them know on Attu. Good luck, and don't drink too much vodka."

"Schuette, this is Mabus. Take care of yourself, boy. And watch out for those Russian gals. Maybe we'll be seeing you. Good luck."

We shared the same quonset hut with Mabus, his co-pilot Spiva, and Bud Lester, the navigator. "Hey!" I broke in. "This is Morgan. Tell Lester to take care of my dog."

"Okay, bye, I'll watch him," Lester said. Then there was a garbled rush of voices on the radio as everyone tried to get on at once. It was a busy party line and it was rapidly growing longer and thinner, the voices fading out as we flew toward the Soviet Union and they flew back to Attu.

As we approached the Kamchatka coastline, Schuette asked, "Morgan, do you recognize this part of the coast from your charts?"

I spotted a white, crescent-shaped beach we had flown over on our way in to the target. "We're coming in to the same spot that we entered before."

"How far is Petro from here?"

"About fifty miles up coast."

We turned north to parallel the shoreline. Inland to the west, extending down the peninsula, lay tier after tier of snow-capped peaks. Petropavlovsk provided harbor and facilities for the Soviet submarine fleet in the Pacific. I had studied charts of the harbor, a cloverleaf, deep-water port with a small city at the inland head; a city of perhaps ten thousand. Beyond that, I knew nothing, absolutely nothing of the Soviet Far East.

If we had flown to any other part of the world, certainly we would have seen travel films, read magazine articles, books, seen photographs, or talked with travelers -- something to give body to the place in our imagination.

I remembered some Eisenstein epic of people who kicked their heels and threw their hands into the air with every other kick, or circled on the ground, one leg in front of the other and yelling, "Hi...hi...hi!"

My image of the Russians was straight out of the Don Cossack Chorus; shirts embroidered, pants baggy, tucked into polished boots, and topped with Astrakhan hats. Their exuberance was what caught you, constantly moving about as they sang, arms about each other, forming and reforming. And there was always that little guy in and out of their legs. Did he play the harmonica? My images were so mixed. Maybe they all played the harmonica, but their pants were baggy -- I knew that.

We had several pieces of classified gear aboard, our LORAN and our I.F.F., which stood for Identification, Friend or Foe. Somehow we had to get rid of this equipment. The I.F.F. was easy -- it had a detonating device attached which would take care of it. The LORAN was another matter.

As we approached Petropavlovsk, John Beggin and Dunnaway went to work on the LORAN with a fire axe. They chopped it from the navigation table and threw it overboard into the Siberian forest. My navigation charts were torn up and they too littered the forest.

A squat Russian Mosca fighter came over the top of us.

"Fighter at six o'clock...crossing!" shouted Wall Morris as he tracked the fighter with his twin 50's. The Mosca dropped in beside us. We put down our landing gear.

Lt.(jg) John Brassil was broadcasting a radio message to the Russians..."in the blind." It was a message we had been briefed to deliver on an assigned frequency under these circumstances. He rattled off the Russian phrases. It was supposed to assure them that we meant no harm and wanted to land.

Schuette looked across the cockpit at Brassil. "What did they say?" He was playing into John's playful sense of humor.

"They said we're cleared number one to land." And he laughed uproariously at the absurdity of it all. But the Russian fighter was glued to our wingtip.

Now we could see the airfield ahead. It was a large grass area with a single east-west concrete strip. We reduced power, put down the wing flaps, and touched down on the runway. We were in the Soviet Union; indeed, we had entered a new world. It was to be a point of reference, a dividing line, for us.

And now I was going to step out on ground that belonged to a neutral in our war, an ally in Europe, Russia of the atheistic Communist Party, the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics. We had parked the Ventura on the grass and shut down our engines. We were met at the door by a soldier carrying a bayoneted rifle. He motioned for us to get out.

The reality of that bayonet shocked me. I retreated into the plane to tell Schuette we were being met with guns. The two pilots were still in their seats, fussing with the details of the

checklist to secure the aircraft. The soldier followed me up to the flight deck and continued to motion that we should leave.

Brassil turned to him. "Okay, Boris, okay! Take it easy. We are leaving." And he laughed in his square-jawed, Boston Irish way. "Howard, I think he wants us out of here. You're senior officer, you can follow me out. Okay, Morgan? Let's leave."

He motioned the Soviet soldier with both hands to clear out so we could get through the narrow passageway. I remembered the chronograph and a notebook I kept in the drawer of the navigation table. I opened the drawer and took out the notebook. The soldier took exception to this and tried to grab it out of my hand. We had a tug of war for a couple of moments. He got very angry and started yelling at me. I let go. It wasn't worth the trouble.

We were herded into a tight group and made to sit down in the tall grass. Around the edge of the airfield, near the slim birch trees, were several American B-24 aircraft with vacant nacelles and faded paint. This looked like the elephant graveyard of U.S. aircraft from the Aleutians. I wondered how long they had been resting there.

Another PV-1, Ventura, from our squadron was parked at a distance from us. A group I couldn't recognize was seated as were we on the grass near the aircraft. Dunnaway got to his feet. "Hey, that's Bone's crew!" We all got up and started toward the other crew from our squadron. The Russian soldier blocked our way and indicated that we were to stay seated.

A roar of laughter came from the direction of our plane. A crowd of Russians were grouped by the door, looking at a large-scale cartoon the Lockheed factory had painted aft of the door on the fuselage. It pictured a badly worn and torn Japanese pilot reporting to an elegant and fat Jap general. Resting beside a palm tree was his riddled airplane.

It was strictly for the consumption of the factory workers at Lockheed -- one of those morale builders thought up by the public relations department. It broke the ice with the Russians, and soon officers and non-coms from the Red Navy and Air Force came over to talk. It was a friendly sort of laughing, acting-out conversation.

When they learned that I was the navigator on the flight, it became a big joke. "Sturman!" they exclaimed. Then they all broke up into laughter. I tried to pantomime that we really weren't lost, that our gasoline tank had been hit, and we had no fuel. It was far too complicated in sign language, so I just laughed with them and wet my finger, holding it up to find out the direction of the wind. They laughed at that. They laughed at everything we said.

A Soviet officer, who was to become a good friend, came

toward us from the road beyond the birch trees. Every step seemed to be a new adventure for him; he walked as though someone was pushing him along against his will. He didn't bend his knees, and when he put his foot down, it didn't seem to want to stay where he put it. From his broad-toed, black boots to the black-visored, green-topped garrison cap, he seemed to be constantly in motion. It was as if he were delicately strung together and might fly apart at any moment.

He stopped before us and his heels came together, his hand fluttered up in salute. "My friends, listen me now. I am interpreter. Please sit down." And he started to sit down. He braced himself with one hand, holding his pistol down with the other, as he let himself sink to the ground. He heaved a little sigh of relief and smiled at us.

"I am Suborta Lieutenant Michael Dondekin."

We introduced ourselves to him as we sat in the grass. With each name, he smiled and nodded his head. You couldn't help but admire his courage; he was such a frail man, and so eager to please.

After a few minutes, he staggered to his feet. "Please come." He led us down the dirt road and a short, happy fellow wearing blue mechanics overalls, on top, a leather flying helmet, ear flaps up, waved a greeting to us. He was the pilot of the Mosca fighter we had met in the air. He was smoking an American cigarette. He smiled broadly, gave each of us a hearty handshake.

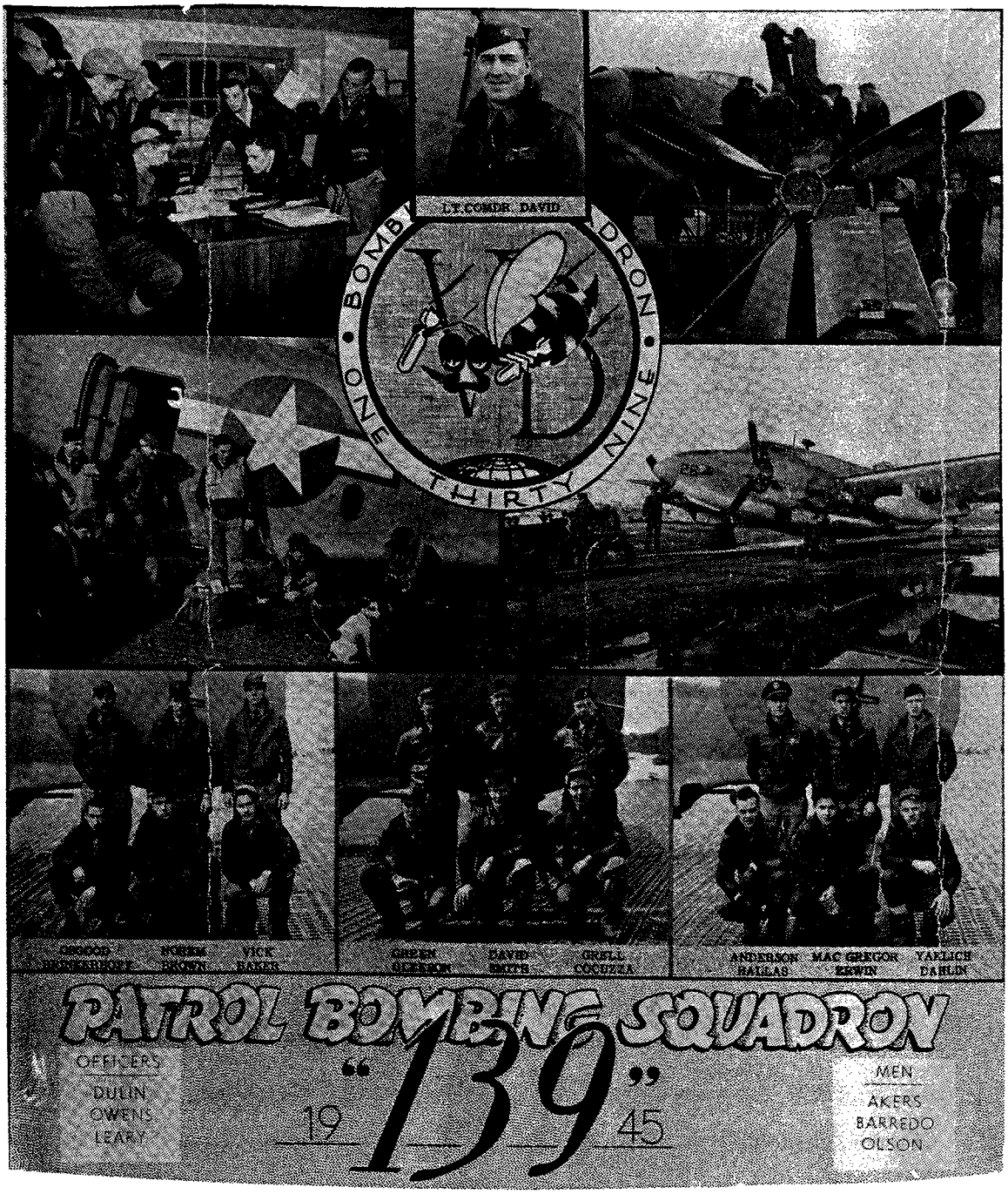
Again, Lieutenant Dondekin, whose name we had already shortened to Mike, said, "Please come." We followed him down the road, past Soviet airplanes parked near the trees. An American C-47 with Soviet markings was on the edge of the grass.

"My friends, please sit down. Give me..." And he pointed to the revolvers we wore on our belts. Schuette volunteered the word, "Guns, Mike?"

"Yes, guns and knives." We stripped off our hardware and made a pile in front of Mike. I didn't have a hunting knife, and offered him my pocket knife. He shook his head, "No, you may keep. Not need pocket knives...only these."

Lieutenant Dondekin and a soldier carried the pile away to a low dugout building with a turf roof. As they walked away, several Soviet Navy officers approached. One showed us a weather chart of the area between Kamchatka and the Aleutians. He was obviously a meterologist, and we discovered many words in common as we traced the weather we had flown through to get to Kamchatka.

The officer said that he received regular weather reports from Alaska and the Aleutians. I knew that this was according to international agreement and not strictly a war-related matter.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"139"
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MEN
AKERS
BARREDO
OLSON

Airstrip at Fort Glen--Umnak

The conversation with this fellow was fairly easy. He was a professional; we could communicate information using his synoptic chart and our common words.

Lieutenant Dondekin appeared with his wooden-soldier-like walk. He handed me a sheet of paper. "Please write names...officers...and..." He made a gesture including us all.

"Men?"

"Yes, all." He took the list of the two crews, fourteen in all, and tried to fold the paper with his shaking hands. He finally made it by bracing the paper on his knee and folding it.

He noticed that we were all watching him. "I am a sick man. Monkeys do this to me. You bomb monkeys...good!"

We learned that Mike had been a part of the Soviet Army forces that battled with Japanese Army Regiments several years before on the Manchurian-Siberian border. The Russians had finally prevailed, but had lost five thousand casualties. There was little love lost between the two armies over this affair.

Presumably, the list with our names would be sent to Moscow. Our Embassy in Moscow would be notified, and the Ambassador, Mr. Avril Harriman, would notify the U.S. Navy in Washington. In due course, our relatives would be informed where we were and that we were safe.

The process was that the list was translated into Russian. The message went to Moscow, of course, in Russian. It was then translated back into English by the Russians and communicated to the Embassy. No one in the American Embassy in Moscow could make any sense out of these strange names which came out of this. They certainly didn't match any of the names the Navy had listed as Missing in Action in this theater of war.

In between Petropavlovsk and Moscow raged a major battle of the European front, as the German war machine and the Soviet forces were fiercely engaged at Minsk. There, the Russians had just captured over a hundred thousand Germans.

We had landed at Omaha Beach just eight days before this in Normandy. Our forces were now consolidating the beachhead and moving into France to engage the Germans.

That we continued to be listed as M.I.A. was a mere bookkeeping detail. It didn't affect our lives, but it raised havoc in the homes we left behind.

Down the dirt road, a group of Russian officers advanced toward us. Mike stood up. "My friends, listen me now, I say you. Our General comes. He speaks to you."

In the center of a line of ten officers walking abreast toward us was a short, wide, quite bald gentleman with a roll-top

desk shape. He wore an aquamarine silk shirt gathered at his middle by a wide black belt; below the overhang was a pair of polished black riding boots. Two oversized red stars bloomed on either side of his collar.

Somehow we formed ourselves into a ragged line and saluted the General and his advancing line of officers. The party stopped twenty feet in front of us, returned our salutes. The General began to make a speech which Mike translated in a fashion, but he was so nervous that he forgot most of his English.

Thirty seconds of speechmaking, according to Mike, boiled down to, "Welcome to Russia. Where did you fly from?"

"Attu," answered Howard Schuette.

"How many planes are there?"

"Two planes here. Six altogether on the mission."

"Where are the others? Why did they not land here?"

We all laughed, and the smile with which the General had asked the question widened. He seemed to be getting quite a bit of amusement out of our being here. And, when you think of it, we must have looked fairly irregular to the General. Our uniforms were anything but uniform; everyone was dressed differently. The only common piece of clothing -- our flight jackets -- had emblems, flags, names, all over the front. On our feet were winter flying boots, unzipped and flopping.

The General talked with Mike a moment. Then the entire party did an about-face and walked away -- still in a line abreast. I wondered how they ever bellied up to the bar with that kind of protocol.

Suborta Lieutenant Michael Dondekin turned to us, greatly relieved that his General had departed. "My friends, listen me now. Please go to automobiles." He pointed toward two old flatbed trucks, vintage early Model A.

"We go to Petropavlovsk," Michael Dondekin said.

* * *

[Editor's note: The saga of the internees is another story, as interesting and gripping as any you will ever read. Byron Morgan is writing a book on his life and his experiences in the U.S.S.R. He is taking a group of externees back to Russia in September, 1987 for a tour that includes Tashkent. He will see that you are informed when the book is published.]

XXIV

A PERSONAL HISTORY OF VPB-136

by

Robert R. Larson

Early in 1943, PBY squadrons VP-41 and VP-42 were decommissioned, and PV-1 squadrons VB-135 and VB-136 formed at NAS Whidbey Island. Commander N.S. Haines, the last CO of VP-41, became the skipper of VB-136. Former pilots and crewmen of VP-41 and 42 made up the experienced nucleus of his command.

This was an exciting time for a brand new PPC (Patrol Plane Commander). We were about to check out in a hot, new PV-1 Ventura, whose speed was about double that of the PBY. Its top speed was almost as fast as some of the fighters of that day. After spending a couple of tours in the Aleutians in the painfully slow, under-armed PBY, getting into a PV-1 was like getting a new lease on life. My former PPC, "Wild Bill" Thies, was now instructing in PV's and checked me out. On the first indoctrination flight, Bill demonstrated how well the airplane could recover from a spin, driving my pucker factor rather high! He did a rather convincing demonstration of the speed and maneuverability of the Ventura. Landing speed was not too much more than the PBY, due to large, effective flaps, but landing with a conventional gear instead of the PBY tricycle gear took some change of technique.

The Ventura was a direct descendent of the Lockheed Lodestar passenger liner, but with significant changes. The 1200 HP engines were replaced by two 2000 Pratt & Whitneys, which upped its speed considerably. A Martin turret with twin fifty-calibre guns was added on top of the fuselage. A pair of thirty's was mounted below, and two fixed fifty's added forward. A shallow bomb bay could accommodate up to six 500-lb. bombs or two gas tanks. The fuel system was a pilot's nightmare! Gas tanks were added wherever they could find room in order to get the range the Navy wanted. Counting the optional tanks in the bomb bay, eleven different tanks and associated pumps and plumbing were installed. And if they couldn't find enough room for gas inside the airplane, they went outside. Two drop tanks were mounted under the wing. The oil tanks in the engine were not big enough for long patrols, so an extra 40-gallon tank and hand pump were provided inside the cabin. All in all, the PV was a rather patched-up design, but it worked.

The airplanes we had were originally destined for the British, who used only one pilot in their crew. The Navy took over the airplane production and modified it for a two-pilot crew by adding a seat on the right side, very close to the window. It

turned out to be quite uncomfortable for the co-pilot on long patrols. Very few flight instruments were mounted on the right side, so if the co-pilot had to fly on instruments, he had to look over to the PPC's side. However, in spite of the various shortcomings of the airplane, most of the pilots liked the Ventura.

The crew complement consisted of a PPC, co-pilot, radio/radar man, mechanic, and gunner. Navigation was supposed to be done by one of the pilots getting up out of his seat and going back to the navigation table, mounted on top of the cabin gas tank. This was felt to be too awkward, so we set up a training school to teach some volunteer enlisted men the fundamentals of dead reckoning navigation. It was my duty as the squadron navigation officer to set up a classroom, prepare a text, and teach the class. The enlisted men proved to be very eager pupils, and they did a very good job of keeping logs and doing the DR navigation during the next several months.

After a few months of training, VB-136 was deployed to the Aleutians in May of 1943. The trip up turned out to be a good indoctrination into Alaskan weather. What started out as a loose formation of PV's headed for Kodiak ended up as "every man for himself" when the weather turned foul. Morrison and King made it into Kodiak under extremely low visibility, and the rest of the airplanes ended up at various alternate bases along the way. During the next few days, everyone made it to Adak, where VB-135 had arrived three weeks earlier. That squadron was then deployed to Amchitka and VB-136 took over patrol duty out of Adak.

After a few patrols, we soon learned that some of the approach techniques that worked well for a slow, boat-bottom PBY did not necessarily work for a PV. A PBY could fly close to the water and under the usual overcast, using radar to pick up land falls. Flying close to the water in a PV was something else. If a PBY hit the water, it bounced back up. If a PV hit the water, it was usually the end of the line. Bill King came close on one approach, and when he descended below the overcast, he found himself heading rapidly toward the water. He pulled up hard, but the airplane mushed toward the water and contacted the aft fuselage and tail before bouncing back up. Permenter and Malloy were not so lucky. They crashed during an attempted approach and became the first VB-136 casualty. Tactics were changed so that the PV was flown more like an airline. Searches were flown above or in the overcast at several thousand feet and an instrument approach made into the home base, using the old, low-frequency radio range. The ASD-1 radar provided valuable assistance as soon as the operators gained the experience to recognize certain land forms.

Attu was taken in the spring of 1943. Army Engineers had constructed a fighter strip on a sand spit at Alexai Point. A bomber strip was being constructed near Casco Cove. Aleutian operations would soon be moving westward. To get prepared for some possible raids on the Kurile Islands from the Attu airbase, the Navy wing commander decided to "borrow" some longer range

B-24's from the Air Corps and train some Navy crews to fly them. More than half of the VB-136 crews were assigned to an improvised training school, and the remainder of the squadron took over all of the patrol duties. This meant that the patrol group had to fly nearly every day, with an occasional day off if the weather was too foul. Our patrol crews got a lot of flight time during that period. The B-24 group also put in a lot of time, checking out and getting familiar with the airplane. Somewhere along the line, the Air Corps brass learned of the scheme and decided that if B-24's were going to be used to raid the Kuriles, Air Corps crews were going to fly them! The B-24 training program was cancelled and VB-136 became an all Ventura squadron again.

Some time later, the Air Corps sent a formation of ten B-24's and twelve B-25's on a raid to Paramushiro, but the Japanese were ready. Five B-25's and four B-24's failed to make it back. That discouraged further missions for a while.

One of the B-24 trainees, "Throck" Throckmorton, decided to take up a PV on a familiarization flight, since he had not flown one for several weeks. He crashed into the water off the end of the runway during an attempted take-off. Some of the crew survived, but both pilots were killed. An examination of the wreckage showed that the elevator trim tab was in the full nose-down position. It was likely the pilot had forgotten which way the trim tab handle had to be turned to reduce elevator forces, and had turned it the wrong way. The PV could be unforgiving sometimes.

The PV had an ASD-1 type of radar installed that gave a kind of distorted picture of the topography. Our skipper, "Nate" Haines, was toying around with the idea of bombing Kiska, using radar guidance. An attack group of five PV's was formed and proceeded to Kiska. It turned out to be a very unusual day over Kiska, not a cloud in the sky! Haines led the group on a straight and level radar course to Kiska harbor, and the Japanese anti-aircraft batteries opened up big! In short order, the attack group was enveloped in exploding shrapnel. The formation broke up, and each airplane delivered their bomb load individually. That ended VB-136 radar bombing, but VB-135, operating from Amchitka, perfected the method and kept the pressure up on the Japanese by bombing Kiska in all kinds of weather. They would often lead Air Corps fighter bombers over the target.

In the late summer of 1943, the bomber base at Attu became operational, and VB-136 was ordered there, becoming the first PV squadron to operate from that field. After being there a few days, we were treated to a raid by a formation of Japanese Bettys, their medium bomber of the time. They didn't do much damage, but we got a fine display of all the anti-aircraft fire power that had been installed. Apparently, our fighter defenses had been caught napping. Some P-38's caught them after the bombing and shot down two of the Bettys.

The Japanese ran searches east of Paramushiro with their

Bettys. With VB-136 running searches west of Attu, it was inevitable that they would eventually meet in the area between. "Sandy" Dinsmore met one Betty during one patrol, and a kind of dog fight ensued. Sandy ended up chasing the Betty home and slowly closing in. The PV had two fixed, fifty-calibre guns in the nose, and the Betty had a tail gun with a movable 20mm. cannon of longer range, so the Japanese gunner had the advantage of fire power. Several bursts were fired at long range, but neither airplane could inflict serious damage on the other. Dinsmore broke off the chase and returned to Attu.

"Hap" Mantius had been assigned the task of determining the actual fuel consumption of the squadron's PV's to establish the practical operating range of the aircraft. He kept fuel usage records of all the squadron aircraft and experimented around with power and mixture settings to determine the best combination for maximum range. He managed to demonstrate that a combination of RPM, manifold pressure, and manual leaning of the carburetors would significantly extend the range of the PV. He piloted his PV to within sight of Paramushiro and returned to Attu to make the point. However, additional fuel would be required to maneuver over the target, which was well defended by several fighter fields. The honor of the first PV raid to the Kuriles was given to VB-139, the relief squadron of VB-136. VB-139 had more modern PV's with additional fuel tankage. In addition, they used half a bomb bay for additional fuel, which made an important difference in making it back from the target area. Their first flights were night photo missions, using the dark of night for protection against fighters.

VB-136 had one more important assignment to do, that of providing a torpedo attack group to cover the Kiska invasion. Six PV's were fitted with torpedoes and director sights. The bomb bay was too shallow to accommodate a torpedo internally, so it was necessary to keep the bomb bay doors open and the torpedo hung out in a semi-exposed position. This meant extra drag and slower speed during a torpedo run, but once it was dropped, the doors could be closed and the airplane returned to a normal high speed configuration. Our group proceeded to Amchitka, then waited for a call to action that never came. The weather turned very foggy, and we were unable to fly. As it turned out, we were not needed. The Japanese had evacuated Kiska the week before our invasion, and no Japanese fleet came out to challenge us.

VB-136 returned to NAS Whidbey Island late in 1943, just in time for Christmas leave. The aircraft were turned in and eventually given to training commands. Brand new PV-1's were assigned, with significant new improvements. Another cabin tank was added, armament increased with the addition of three .50-calibre chin guns, and better radio gear installed. We especially liked the ADF (automatic direction finder), which gave continuous radio bearings with no ambiguity. The co-pilot's seat was much improved, and he was given flight instruments so he didn't have to look over to the pilot's side. There was a considerable personnel change as well, since a lot of the old-timers were rotated to shore duty. A third pilot was added to

the crew to serve as a full-time navigator, making a total of six in a crew. VB-136 was re-designated as VPB-136. We thus became a "Heavier-than-Air Patrol Bombing" squadron, indicating a dual mission.

After a few months of navigation, bombing, and gunnery training flights, VPB-136 started up on its way north in June, 1944. Two crews had their share of bad luck with airplane problems, and it took them several weeks to get to Attu. One airplane was forced to land at the very short Japanese fighter strip at Kiska, which was only 2200 feet long. He was unable to take off again with the load he was carrying. The crew was finally brought to Attu via a DC-3. The airplane was stripped of all excess weight and fuel, and a special ferry crew took it out of there.

The very first patrol that my crew made out of Attu turned out to be the hairiest. When we returned from our search, the weather at Attu turned very foul, and the normal "bubble" over the base was collapsing. I tried one instrument approach, but the range failed just before the low cone was reached. The attempt was aborted and we decided to head to Adak, about 400 nautical miles away. On the way, we received a report that Amchitka weather was improving slightly, so we changed course to go there. The fuel remaining was very marginal to make it to Adak, so Amchitka seemed like a good choice. On the first letdown attempt, I descended until only 100 feet was indicated on the radar altimeter, but visual contact was not made. It was past sundown, and it turned out that the tower operator had not turned on the runway lights! He did so only by special request. We discussed the matter briefly but passionately, and he turned them on. They were the new, experimental Bartow high-intensity lights, and I was able to pick them up nearly a mile away on the next approach. I could have cheerfully paid for all of them out of my own pocket that night!

When we arrived at Attu, we were soon given the task of doing daylight raids over the Kurile Islands. The extra cabin tank and half a bomb bay tank provided enough fuel for the long trip and about a half hour of high-power operation over the target. The other half of the bomb bay was loaded with one 500-lb. general purpose bomb, one fragmentation cluster, and one napalm bomb. Apparently, we were to look for some wooden buildings, drop the napalm, then look for a concentration of troops, drop the frag cluster, then find a general purpose target and drop the GP bomb. In actual practice, we dropped everything at whatever target we could find. Paramushiro was well defended with anti-aircraft batteries and fighters, and we couldn't hang around long. Since the Kuriles weather was not much different from Aleutian weather, the targets would often be fogged in, and we would drop using radar. We avoided the fighter bases as much as possible.

Due to the uncertain nature of the weather, it was difficult to maintain formations, so we usually ended up in single or two-plane formations. We often found enemy fighters in the area, but

if you saw them in time, the high speed of the PV allowed you to keep your distance. "C.B." Nelson recalls one mission when he was approaching Paramushiro at an altitude of 2000 feet, just over the clouds, when his gunner reported Japanese fighters following them: "We dropped down a few feet to get out of sight, still heading west, and every minute or so we would pop up to take a look. Each time, the Japs were still with us and, fortunately, out of range. After a few minutes (it seemed like hours), we decided to go down to the water and head home. The man in the turret told us he had counted as many as seven Japs within sight behind us, so it was good that the usual cloud cover was with us." We usually came in at low or medium altitude, dropped the bombs, then retired at high speed. Usually, the fighters could not close the range in time. During one raid, Littleton shot down a "Tojo" fighter who came toward him in a head-on attack. Littleton raised his nose a bit and shot him down with his fixed nose guns. One of his crewmen took a picture to prove it.

The first VPB-136 pilot who was unable to return to Attu from a bombing mission was Carl Lindell. So much gas was consumed in high-speed operation at Paramushiro that he did not have enough fuel remaining to make it back. He chose to land at Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatkan Peninsula, becoming the first VPB-136 pilot to be interned. Russia was neutral in the war with Japan because of its dependency on the sea route from the U.S. to Vladivastok to get lend-lease supplies. Had they declared war on Japan, the route would have been closed by the Japanese Navy. Some Army Air Corps crews had preceded Lindell, so an internment camp was already in operation. John Dingle became the second one to land at Petro. He was shot up by fighters and came in on one engine. Some time later, Cowles became the third one to arrive. He had been jumped by several fighters on the west side of Paramushiro and was unable to escape. He had one engine shot out but managed to crash-land on a beach on the Kamchatkan Peninsula. He and the survivors of his crew were transported to Petropavlovsk by the Russians and joined the others. Charlie Wayne, the VPB-136 skipper, had his turn next. He also got attacked by Japanese fighters and had spent so much time in high-blower operation that one engine failed. He flew to Petropavlovsk and joined the expanding group. Wayne soon found out that he was the senior officer of the internees, and he took charge. All of the internees were sent to a camp in Tashkent. It turned out to be the same place that had housed Jimmy Doolittle and the Tokyo raiders two years before. After months of negotiations, they were taken by trucks to the Iranian border and eventually turned over to U.S. authorities.

One unusual incident happened during a mission by Lt. Price. He spotted a vessel in Japanese waters that looked much like a carrier in the rather poor visibility of the day. He attacked it, hitting it with the napalm bomb. A study of the pictures taken by the crew during the attack showed that he had bombed a Russian tanker, rather poorly marked. Fortunately, the bomb made a lot of fire and smoke but did very little damage. Shortly thereafter, Russian ships were clearly marked with "USSR" in very

large letters on the sides of the hull.

With the loss of the VPB-136 skipper, further daylight bombing raids were cancelled as being too costly. Normal patrol duties were resumed. It is difficult to determine how many bombing missions were made by VPB-136. If my experience was average (five missions), then the squadron must have made over seventy-five sorties. Although the PV raids may not have done extensive damage to the Japanese, the effect was to tie up a lot of troops and fighters in the Kuriles. These were badly needed in other war theatres, especially in the South Pacific.

One particular mission was unique and took advantage of the speed capability of the PV. An invasion of Paramushiro was being planned, but accurate, up-to-date information on the most likely beaches was needed. The west side beaches offered the best possibilities. C.B. Nelson, Ralph Morrison, and John Bacak were assigned to make a photo reconnaissance flight to get the necessary pictures. This meant putting a lot of Japanese fighter bases between themselves and the escape route to Attu. Success depended on getting there undetected, taking the pictures, then retiring at high speed before the fighters had time to react. The three PV's approached the Kamchatkan Peninsula at low altitude, crossed over Russian territory to the west side, then turned south on a high-speed dash to the Paramushiro beaches. After taking the pictures, they crossed over Parmushiro and retired eastward. No Japanese fighters intercepted them, and all three airplanes returned safely to Attu.

VPB-136 was joined by VPB-131 ("Rollie" Hastreiter commanding) in the spring of 1945. The new squadron was equipped with rocket launchers and resumed daylight raids, using five-inch rockets. The rockets were in short supply, and a formation of PV's could expend a month's supply in one raid. As a result, the raids were not too frequent.

After being relieved by VPB-139, VPB-136 returned to NAS Whidbey Island. Most of the old-timers of the squadron were assigned to shore duty at various locations in the United States. The war ended a few months afterward, and the squadron was eventually decommissioned.

XXV

A HISTORY OF BOMBING SQUADRON 135

by

Pat Patteson

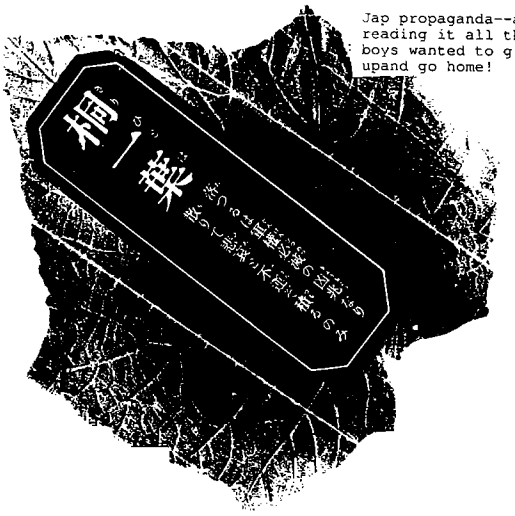
Bombing Squadron 135 was commissioned 15 February 1943 at Whidbey Island, Washington, under the command of LCdr. P.C. Williams, USNR. The nucleus of the squadron was obtained from a decommissioned PBY squadron, VP-42. The latter had made an impressive record in the defense of Dutch Harbor when it was attacked by a Japanese task force in June, 1942.

This squadron was the initial Navy PV-1 squadron to operate in the Pacific and the Aleutian area. The transition from PBY's to a "hot" airplane like the PV-1 was not easy. The ex-P-Boat pilots, accustomed to the slow, docile, and forgiving P-boats, found the powerful PV-1 skittish. Slowly, they gained confidence. However, one crew was lost in a training accident. The squadron trained at Whidbey Island from 15 February to 25 March 1943. Whatever the training syllabus, the time allowed for training was inadequate and left much to be desired. The first pilots completed training with from 60 to 80 hours time in the PV-1 type aircraft. Instrument time consisted of work under the hood, which is not suitable for flying in the Aleutian area. Being P-Boat pilots, they kept the "keel" next to the water, and would never let go, VFR no matter what!

Upon the completion of this brief training period, it was the lot of VB-135 to pioneer cold weather patrol with an airplane which had originally been designed as a fast attack bomber. They were assigned to an area which consisted of a narrow chain of volcanic islands, which has the most treacherous weather found anywhere in the world.

On 25 March 1943, the squadron departed Whidbey Island for Adak. Due to bad weather, they arrived at Adak on 12 April 1943, about three weeks enroute. At Adak, the squadron flew photo-reconnaissance missions over the Japanese-held islands. Special equipment was scarce, and the planes were not equipped with proper camera installations for this work. Hand-held K-20 cameras were used, with fair results.

On 5 May 1943, the squadron set down on Amchitka and began flying late afternoon patrols. At Amchitka, ten enlisted navigators joined the squadron, increasing the crew strength to six men. Amchitka was within bombing range of Kiska, and it was this fact plus the faith that LCdr. Williams had in the merits of radar bombing that led to successful raids on Jap-held Kiska by Army planes, led by PV-1 Venturas of VB-135, which had the more



Jap propaganda--after reading it all the boys wanted to give upand go home!

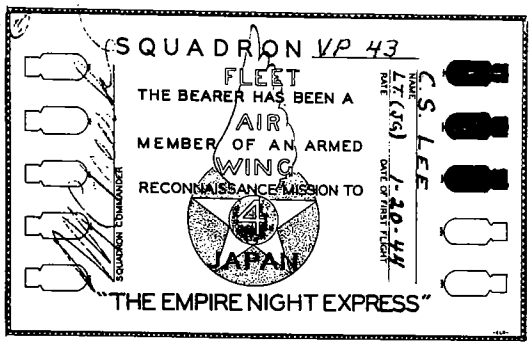
Best damn crew in the Navy

Gotta get a woman in this book someplace

and some mascots

VP 43 officers
Skipper "Doc" Jones and Bon Amme standing in center.

Best damn crew in the Navy!



Best damn crew in the Navy

advanced ASD-1 radar. Although the results obtained by this type of bombing were completely satisfactory, VB-135's primary mission remained patrol. The reconquest of Attu began 11 May 1943, and it was feared that a strong Japanese task force would try to intercede. The PV's were loaded with torpedoes. The weather closed in and the torpedo attacks did not materialize.

During the squadron's stay at Amchitka, two of the personnel were killed. The accident occurred during take-off, when the pilot, thinking he was airborne, retracted the landing gear. The plane settled back to the runway and crashed. Quick action on the part of a nearby Army B-24 crew saved the lives of three members of the PV-1 crew.

Living conditions at Amchitka left much to be desired. The personnel were housed in tents. Food consisted of Army field rations. The runways were rough, and it was a standing joke among the Navy men that the Army Engineers would not build a runway unless it was 90 degrees to the prevailing wind. In their criticism, however, they overlooked the fact that there was NO prevailing wind. During the last seventeen days of the squadron's stay at Amchitka, the weather closed in and not a wheel turned. It was during this period that the Japanese evacuated Kiska. A destroyer patrolling the entrance to Kiska Harbor claimed two direct hits on a Jap submarine, firing with the aid of radar. Lt. (jg) Davidson of VB-135 photographed a sub near Twin Rocks, broken up on the shore. This was sufficient evidence to credit the destroyer with a definite kill. When the destroyer put into Attu in August, they contacted Lt. Davidson and made him a present of a box of food, plus wining and dining him aboard the ship.

The occupation of Attu had been completed, and the squadron set down on a partially completed air strip at Alexai Point on 10 August 1943. The same conditions prevailed as at Amchitka, crosswinds on a rough runway, living in tents, field rations amid a generally miserable existence. Lt. (jg) L.W. Fischer had flown to Adak for maintenance work on his plane. Upon returning, he purchased twenty (20) cases of beer. These were loaded in the bomb bay. Weather grounded him at Amchitka. That night, Hedron pulled a routine hydraulic check on his plane. When they opened the bomb bay doors, out dropped ten cases of beer, a rare and welcome sight to a maintenance crew on the Island of Amchitka. The ten cases were immediately salvaged. Lt. Fischer arrived on Attu with five full and five empty cases of beer aboard.

From Attu, the squadron flew searches 500 miles west and south of Attu. Due to Japanese air patrols from Paramushiru, the squadron was called upon to fly anti-aircraft patrols. Results of all these patrols were negative.

On 5 November 1943, the squadron departed Attu for Whidbey Island, Washington. They returned in four planes. The remainder were unserviceable. This group had been the PV-1 pioneers in the Aleutians. They had sweated out a tour of duty where the weather constituted an extremely great hazard. What they lacked in

experience, they made up for in cold courage.

VB-135 was officially reformed on 3 January 1944, under the temporary command of Lt. M.A. "Butch" Mason, who later became the Executive Officer of the squadron. The training syllabus was under his direction. Lt. Mason came to VB-135 from Pensacola, where he had been an instrument instructor in multi-engine land planes. He had learned instrument flying at Pensacola under Jack Thornburg, who had formerly been Chief Pilot for TWA, an instrument pilot of great renown. Because of Lt. Mason's background, he was able to train the squadron in instrument flying so they could fly instruments with the greatest of ease. They took to it like ducks to water. Fleet Air Wing Six furnished four PV-1's. The squadron was divided into four groups of crews, and they flew around the clock in shifts. Hedron FAW-6 managed to keep three of the four PV-1's in an "up" condition at all times, and one in maintenance. They flew the FAW-6 syllabus, regardless of the weather, day, night, rain, snow, unless there were some special exercises like torpedo drops.

Late in the training period, LCdr. P.L. Stahl assumed command of the squadron, Lt. Mason becoming Executive Officer. On 16 April 1944, the squadron departed Whidbey Island for Yacutak, and then on up the line of islands to Adak, arriving at Adak 21 April 1944. Upon arrival at Adak, the squadron was scheduled for four days of intensive training in the operation of LORAN, at the same time Hedron crews would be installing the LORAN in their PV's.

The instructions in the use of the LORAN completed, the squadron took off for Attu, landing at Casco Field on 4 May 1944. The primary mission of the squadron would be to fly night photorecon missions over the Northern Kuriles in an attempt to discover the full extent of Japanese military activities. These flights were the outgrowth of their predecessor VB-139, which had proven that by taxing the PV to its greatest capacity and overloading it by 3,000 to 4,000 pounds, Paramushiro could be bombed in nuisance raids. The crews took off with never less than 34,000 pounds. These nuisance raids were initiated to harass the Japanese while operations in the Central Pacific were in progress.

On 5 May 1944, the squadron initiated operations with a nine-plane strike against Shimushu Island. Night reconnaissance and bombing missions of four to eight planes were carried out every night the weather permitted from 5 May to 12 June 1944. Three planes and crews were lost in these night operations.

The squadron became quite proficient in night radar bombing. On one occasion, Lts. Mason, Patteson, and Sparks made a night bombing attack on an airfield on Shimushu. They attacked from three different directions, using three different radar aiming points. The PV's were armed with three incendiary-clusters, about 200 bomblets assembled in one big cluster and hung on a 500-pound rack. These incendiaries would paint a line on the ground 50 yards wide by 150 yards long. If everything went

perfectly, the bombs dropped in train; using the Intervalometer, the three bombs would paint a strip on the ground 50 yards wide by 450 yards long. On this particular night, strike photos revealed that all three strips actually crossed! Many secondary fires resulted among the Betties on the field.

Lt. Mason, the Exec, was ordered to get five OTHER volunteer crews for a six-plane daylight strike to neutralize the field on Shimushu in order to prevent the Betties from opposing our Task Force, which was going in to bombard the coast. Lt. Mason approached the Leading Chief, told him his problem and asked him to canvas the enlisted aircrewmen for five volunteer crews for the mission. Lt. Mason succeeded in obtaining five crews, plus his own, among the officers. When he returned to the Leading Chief, the Chief said he could not find five volunteer crews. Lt. Mason asked why. The Chief replied, "Well, no one wants to fly with anyone except HIS PPC. 135 has eighteen of the best damn PPC's in the Navy, as far as the eighteen crews are concerned. They will go ANYWHERE with THEIR PPC, but not with anyone else." As soon as Lt. Mason gave the Chief the list of PPC's who had volunteered, their crews immediately volunteered.

The next day, the six planes took off to bomb the field. The field was bombed by radar, due to clouds and fog over the target area. Lts. Mason and I proceeded down the west coast of Paramushiro and discovered a new airfield at Kakumabetsu. It was under construction, runways paved, and revetments almost finished. They bombed and strafed the installations there. During the runs, Lt. Mason's navigator, Ensign Richard J. Hanlon, opened the tunnel hatch, and while the AMM sat on his legs, hung out of the hatch, snapping pictures with a hand-held K-20 camera, until he and the film magazine were exhausted.

On the 14th, with a a specially rigged photographic PV, I made a daylight photo run along the full length of both Shimushu and Paramushiro, getting excellent pictures of five major airfields. At the same time, to create a diversion, Lts. Sparks, Vivian, Clapham, Mabus, Bone, and Scheutte carried out a raid against Miyoshino airfield on Shimushu. By the time we reached the northern end of Shimushu, the activity below was a most confused and active encounter. The diversionary force's surprise was successful, but we were all surprised at the beehive they had stirred up. Aboard was my regular crew plus a PhoM to set and activate the cameras. It was CAVU -- not a cloud in the sky. At 11,000 feet, we headed for the first target, Kataoka. We had a bomb bay full of extra fuel, and I set power for maximum cruise, so we had good speed. Everyone craned their necks for Bogeys, but none appeared. All five cameras were turned on as we approached the first field, then the second target was spotted, and the crew shouted that they could see planes taking off below. We continued south over Kashawabara, when two Bogeys appeared ahead of us and went by before they knew who we were. Our next target, Dago Zaki, was about 40 miles on south. The Zeros turned around and gradually began overtaking us. At first, they just flew parallel to us, staying a respectful distance from our top turret guns. When they got in close, the turret gunner,

Jacobsen, opened fire. Having a very healthy respect for the twin .50s, they quickly jinked out of range. After a few minutes of this, they climbed above us to make the typical fighter passes from 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock high. My navigator stood in the astro hatch with an intercom mike and warned me when one began his run. All I had to do was turn into the direction of the fighter's pass, and this shortened the angle so steeply that their fire always went behind us. The fighters were faster and more maneuverable at this altitude than we were, but our relative speed was the big equalizing factor. By the time we reached Dago Zaki, we were untouched and felt we had some kind of edge. Of course, during this time we had only caused damage to their ego as well. By now, we were approaching our final target, Dago Zaki, and saw many fighters coming at us from ahead and below. They had apparently come up from the big base at Kurabu Zaki. Much shouting and shooting ensued. The turret gunner, Jacobsen, got a "probable" here -- he certainly had plenty of targets to shoot at. Two things were running out: the film magazines and our cool. We managed to get a good oblique shot of Kurabu Zaki. Miraculously, we still had no damage. We shut off all cameras, and I was only intent on shaking loose. I made a shallow dive from about 8,000 feet to the deck; I "firewalled" everything and prevented any of them from overtaking us -- they just did not have enough overtaking speed. One or two of them stayed with us for several minutes, but Jacobsen had little trouble keeping them off our tail.

Of the six planes in the diversionary force, two were forced to land in Russia, battle damaged; the four planes that returned needed engine changes from excessive use of power, and two received damage from enemy AA. On 25 June 1944, I made another daylight run over Kakumabetsu, showing the development of the field in eleven days. We were attacked by eleven fighters and returned with two bullet holes in the tail surfaces. My turret gunner, Floyd Jacobsen, AOM2c, was credited with one "kill" and one "probable."

On 23 July, Lt. Vivian, on a CAVU day, attacked and sunk an armed Picket Boat. Due to battle damage, he landed in Russia. On the same day, Lt. J.W. Pool was attacked by eight Tojo-type fighters. He shot one of them down with the bow guns.

On 4 August, Lt. Mabus, on a low-level bombing run, placed three 500-lb. bombs directly on the Kakumabetsu airstrip and obtained photos from 200 feet showing his hits.

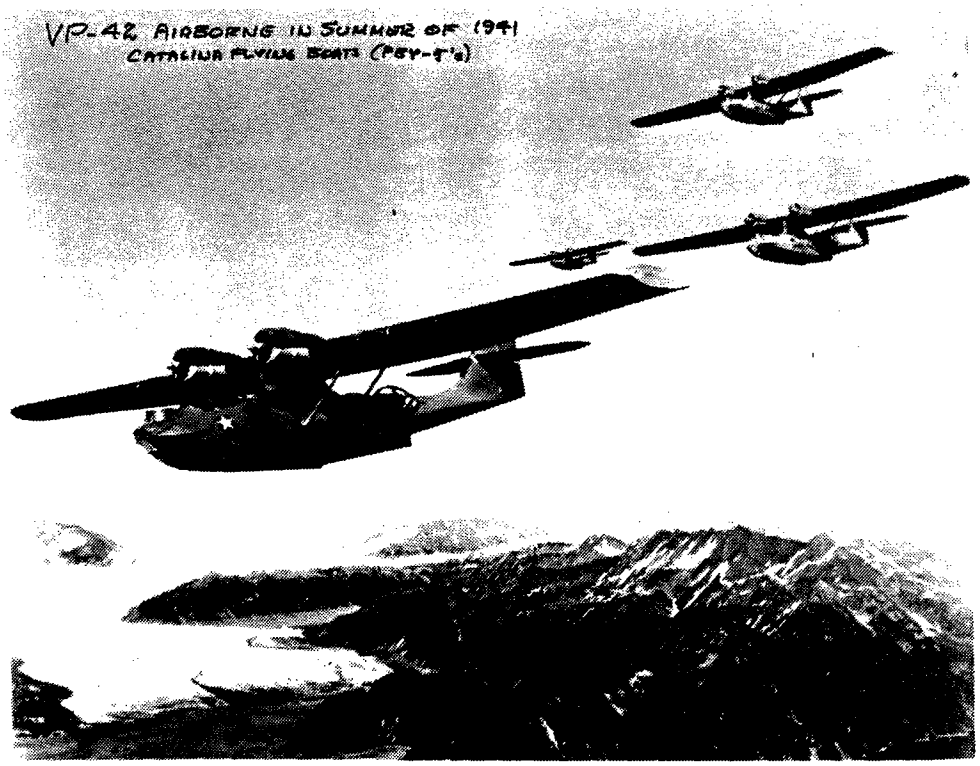
On 12 August 1944, Lts. Mason, Rumford, Sparks, and Mabus made bombing and strafing runs on Arido To Island. Jim Rumford had hit a cannery building with an incendiary and had a good fire going, when Butch Mason made a low pass and laid a 500-lb. GP in the front door. Jim Rumford was in position to watch the bomb go in the door. When the delayed action fuse set the bomb off, the building literally blew apart. Lt. Rumford came on the VHF radio and said, "Hey, watch that, you blew my fire out."

On 12 September, Lt. Rumford, on a low-level run, placed a

500-lb. bomb diretly on the docks at Dago Zaki.

Beginning 15 October, the squadron provided cover for three days for the Task Force going in to bombard Matsua.

On 23 October 1944, the squadron was relieved of all duties in the Aleutians by VPB-131. 135 had sustained more losses than any Empire Express squadron, twelve planes and ten crews, five of the ten crews landing in neutral territory (Russia). On 23 October, VPB-135 departed Attu, having flown 287 combat sorties. Upon arrival in the United States, the entire squadron was given thirty days leave.



A bunch of the boys from VP 61 were whooping it up!

PART SIX

REMEMBRANCES OF WAR

XXVI

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER:

A 90-DAY WONDER REMEMBRANCE

by

Fred M. Sibley

"At 0600 on June 3, 1942, I made a reconnaissance flight over Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. At 15,000 feet, there was excellent visibility of all Unalaska Island through the scattered overcast, following three days of storm winds, rain, and dense fog." Vice Admiral Hiroichi Samejima of the former Imperial Japanese Navy was addressing a luncheon gathering of some 250 veterans of the U.S. Navy's ten Aleutian Squadrons of World War II on August 18, 1972 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary reunion of the survivors of those gallant squadrons: Patrol Squadrons VP-41, 42, 43, 45, 61, 62, and Bombing Squadrons VB-131, 135, 136, 139 of Fleet Air Wing 4. This event took place at the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, about 100 miles north of Seattle on the shore of Puget Sound. The fir-clad, rocky islands of the Sound and the shimmering snows of Mt. Baker and other high peaks of the Cascades were soon forgotten, as the Admiral continued, "Our primary objective was to annihilate the radio-command post. I flew back to the carriers and returned shortly, leading large formations of fighters and Kate bombers from the carriers Ryujo and Junyo. The first drop of bombs ringed the radio command post, and others destroyed seaplanes, standing in the as yet unroofed hangar by the water's edge."

This improbable confrontation of former U.S. Naval officers and crews by a former implacable enemy leader under the friendly auspices of the U.S. Navy marked the opening of an extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime reunion of former comrades-in-arms and friends of 30 years ago from the Aleutian Campaign.

It was a heady experience, feeling the warmth of friendship of these doughty Aleutian warriors after no less than 30 years lapse of time. Men who had flown together through the Aleutians' dense fog, slashing rain, and howling winds and sloshed through years of mud, tundra, and desolation embraced and toasted each other. There were ecstatic hours spent reminiscing and recalling the unforgettable voices of the many who never returned from their missions and others who lived far away.

As the Admiral concluded his talk, describing the Japanese impressions of the Aleutian Campaign from his personal experience, suddenly the events of 30 years ago appeared again through the mists of memory in sharp detail.

Behind a cluttered desk in a dingy basement office of the old Navy Department Building in Washington, a bright young man, Ensign Lee Loomis, explained to me how the Navy was preparing to fight a two-ocean war by expanding its forces. Many new administrative and technical officers would be needed to help man the Navy's far-flung air bases and aircraft carriers around the world. The Navy appealed to me because, as Loomis explained, the Bureau of Naval Personnel computers placed its men where their special talents could be most readily used. With a fluency in French, German, and Spanish and a good education and executive business background, I applied for a Navy commission and assignment to the Mediterranean Fleet for duty. The first indoctrination class for these special Naval aviation officers was to convene at N.A.S. Quonset Point, Rhode Island, January 15, 1942. I returned to Detroit to await my appointment.

Whether Ensign Loomis was overselling the Navy's "efficient" personnel placement system, or whether because of a typical military snafu, things did not work out quite as Loomis had described. With the Japanese lightening thrust at Pearl Harbor and the loss of such a large part of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, suddenly all predictions and pre-war plans were cancelled. I was waiting impatiently for my commission at the time of Pearl Harbor and still waiting in January, 1942, in spite of letters and phone calls to the Navy Department. Early in February, Loomis called me to inform me that my orders and commission had finally come through. After a lengthy attempt to explain the long delay, he finally admitted that the orders had come through weeks before but had fallen off his desk behind the radiator and been lost. This was the Navy, which the Japanese attacked at Pearl Harbor!

The problem now was that the first Quonset indoctrination class for these special Naval officers had begun over six weeks before and had only one more month to run. Nevertheless, I reported to Lt. Commander Schieffelin at Quonset and was promptly "eaten out" for arriving late. I was informed that being late was "no good for myself or for the Navy."

As I look back, I believe it was a distinction to receive orders to this first A-V(S)-aviation volunteer specialist-class, known as Quonset 1-42. This was a motley group of men, many perhaps a little flabby and past 30, but mature and eager. Most were complete novices to military ways, much less the Navy way. But these men had other qualities, which they were to bring to the Naval Service. Executive or legal backgrounds had fitted them to be administrative leaders and get the job done in a businesslike way, if not altogether the Navy way.

I believe I learned things of extraordinary importance in the short, four-week course, such as a new vocabulary with strange words like scuttlebutt, wardroom, officer country, head, bulkhead, G.Q., etc. We learned to stand watches and were introduced to the mysteries of basic, close-order drill with wooden rifles on the cold, windswept seaplane ramp in thin Navy raincoats. We were supposed to read and know thoroughly books such as the Blue Jacket's Manual and those ponderous tomes known

KANSAS CITY STAR
July 9, 1944

ATTU'S COW IN 'CLOVER'

NEW ARRIVAL GETS CHOICE QUARTERS AT BASE.

Barn Built for Her by Navy Air Wing Has Hot and Cold Running Water and Concrete Floor.

By Justin D. Bowersock.
(The Star's Aviation Editor.)

So the cow finally arrived at Attu.

Warships have come and gone, raids over the Kuriles have been completed night after night and the ship with the liquor supply arrived all right. But the arrival of the freighter carrying the cow that lives in the barn that Gehres built has had all the pilots of Fleet Air Wing Four in a dither the last few weeks.

BARN A LIVELY TOPIC.

For the last few weeks the construction of a cow barn on the desolate island has been watched and discussed, perhaps even cussed occasionally, by the army. If the navy was going to have a cow, Bossie was going to have good quarters.

"I'll trade my hut for that barn anytime," a visiting colonel from the nearby army base commented. "She gets hot and cold running water and a concrete floor. That's more than I got."

Whether the band came out to celebrate the arrival is not known here in Kansas City. It is a good bet it was a gala occasion Perhaps there was a 19-gun salute—because the boys are trigger happy anyway. And a cow, the first animal aside from a dog to arrive on Attu would be really something.

A general or an admiral? They're a dime a dozen. Let's see the cow.

A STRANGE SIGHT.

There on Gehres Point, named after Commodore L. E. Gehres, the commander of the fleet air wing, where the navy's bomber and patrol plane pilots are based, has risen this strange structure, a cow barn. It is a marked contrast to the many quonset huts which house the pilots who operate the "Empire Night Express" with bombers over Paramashiru.

When they come back in the morning from their missions over the Kuriles, they first ask if the cow has arrived, then tell of the results of their bombing trip. They stop by the barn on their way to their huts to note that the cupola has been added and workmen are applying the green paint.

Many of the boys haven't seen a cow in a year or two. And Bossie's barn is a masterpiece, with copper weather vane and all. There is a hay mow with the usual extension for a hay lift. But hay doesn't grow on Attu. So along with the cow came a ton or so of hay and other feed. There is a stall and a little spare room in case Miss Attu the First has an offspring.

Lieut. O. W. Kershaw of Smith Center, Kas., has been given the title of commander of the cow squadron. Lieutenant Kershaw, a farm boy at heart, is attached to the staff of Commodore L. E. Gehres, commanding officer of Fleet Air Wing Four.

From a Money Pool.

One of the items not on the menu in the officer's mess hall is fresh milk. One day one of the boys suggested they buy a cow. They all helped form a pot of $120 and the purchase was made in the states. The type of cow selected was an Ayrshire, a breed which can stand severe weather.

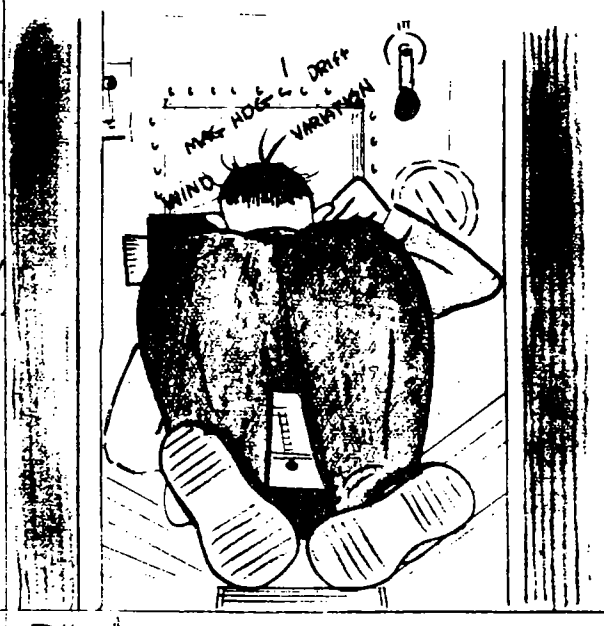
There was some fear as the barn was being completel that the cow might be "highjacked" on its way from the states. There were daily checks on the position of the ship that was taking the cow to Attu.

There was considerable wagering that the Attu cow would be dry upon arrival. And there was equal betting that the two dozen chickens which are to share the barn, would disappear one by one and there would be some fried chicken parties in the pilots' huts.

Some of the boys of VPB [illegible]

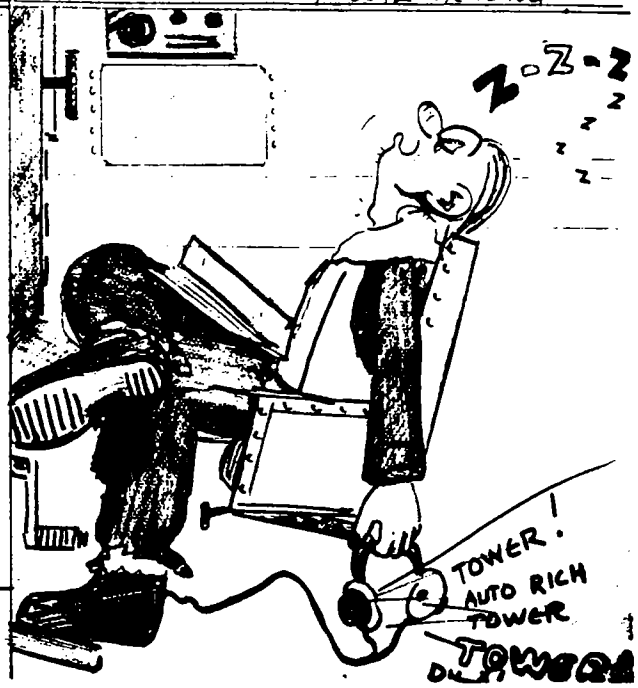
VP-43 ON THE MARCH!

THE "P.P.C." (DIAL TWISTER) WHO SPENDS HECTIC HOURS PEERING— THRU THE FOG - OUTGUESSING THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS - SCARING HELL OUT'A THE CREW ——— ©



THE "NAVIGATOR" (SLAVE) — A PILOT WITHOUT A PLANE - A MISERABLE SOUL, SQUEEZING BETWEEN BULKHEADS - TAKING THE P.P.C.'s "BITCHING" — ALWAYS READY WITH A RECIPROCAL HEADING

THE RADIOMAN — 'NUFF SAID!



as Navy Regulations and Courts and Boards. Above all, we learned that the Navy likes to do things "by the book," even when it is obviously better to do things differently.

The disaster at Pearl Harbor brought "graduation" prematurely in April, 1942 for this first class, Quonset 1-42. A new class was already forming as our entire class received orders to duty with the Pacific Fleet. "Proceed and report" orders allowed four days plus travel time to the new duty station.

My orders directed me to San Francisco, thence to wherever Patrol Squadron 41 might be, which turned out to be at N.A.S. Tongue Point, Oregon, close to the mouth of the Columbia River. Lt. Commander Paul Foley was the competent and experienced Commanding Officer of this PBY (Catalina) squadron with a complement of some 350 officers and men. At that time, due to the fear of a possible Japanese Naval assault on our West Coast, this squadron was flying night patrols, using radar, far out into the Pacific along the Oregon-Washington coast. While the scenery along the mighty Columbia at Tongue Point was splendid, this was indeed a poor place for the PBY's to make a water takeoff with full fuel and bomb load because of the constant danger of striking floating logs and other debris in the darkness. Hence the amphibians usually took off from a nearby landing strip at Astoria.

Two days after reporting aboard, I was buttonholed by the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Frank Browning, a slender, soft-spoken man. With a twinkle in his eye, Browning informed me that because of my intimate knowledge of Naval Courts and Boards, I had been selected to prepare a court-martial case involving a man who had "failed to report to his duty station, the United States then being in a state of war."

Welcoming this opportunity to perform my first specific duty, I prepared a case concerning this man with considerable imagination and skill, according to my own estimate. Using the testimony of witnesses and several cogent arguments, I believe my defense would certainly have gotten the man off scot-free in a civil court. But this was the Navy, and I had apparently gotten the Navy signals mixed up in the backfield. When I submitted my brief to the Exec, he took a short look at it and then informed me that it was obvious I had completely misunderstood his order. Apparently, the man had already been prejudged and was guilty un-officially, so that all that was needed was a brief statement of facts in Navy terms and format. Browning turned over the papers to the experienced first class yeoman, who, in the space of half an hour, typed up the standard specifications for the court, which found the unfortunate man guilty and busted him back to apprentice seaman. Thus ended my first attempt to defend the underdog in the Navy.

The night searches out of Astoria did not uncover any enemy movements at sea of any consequence. The main result of these VP-41 night patrols was to exhaust the flight crews and bring about the first psychological fatigue among the pilots before we

were actually in the war zone. In May, 1942, Patrol Squadron 41 was ordered to Seattle for further assignment. In charge of some 150 men, I departed with a convoy of three busloads of men for Seattle, and after one false start (someone had forgotten to take along the health records), we finally arrived at N.A.S. Seattle May 22.

We were hoping for some brief leave; however, the Commander Fleet Air Seattle ordered us to go immediately on board the U.S.S. Gillis for transportation to the Aleutians. The Gillis was a World War I destroyer, converted into a seaplane tender by the changing over of two of the old boilers for storage of aviation gasoline. The Gillis was also known already at this early date as a "taut" ship. The destroyer's hard-bitten crew looked askance at the heterogenous men of VP-41 who came aboard with their seabags. It would be a while before VP-41 would be welded by the heat of battle into a fighting unit.

The officer of the deck immediately assigned the "passengers" to various watch details, and space was at such a premium that many had to sleep on the decks and in storage compartments. For a brief while, it was possible to enjoy the spectacular, rugged beauty of the inside passage to Alaska; however, we soon set course across the Gulf of Alaska, and we became all at once part of a grim and efficient warship. Anti-aircraft and anti-submarine watches were set up around the clock, and there was regular gunnery practice.

The Gulf of Alaska must be one of the world's roughest seas, particularly in a narrow World War I destroyer, which seemed to roll with every wave at least 45 degrees to port and then 45 to starboard. Standing the lookout watch in the forward crow's nest, I, like many others, became so violently seasick that I had to have a pail constantly beside me and keep my arms locked through the rungs of the crow's nest ladder to prevent myself from falling down in exhaustion.

One of my greatest friendships came about as a result of this voyage. On the first day, as I was entering the officers' wardroom for the first time, I was appalled at the mayhem taking place there. Two, and sometimes three, of the junior officers were wrestling and punishing a lone officer on the floor. Apparently, not all Navy commissioned officers were "officers and gentlemen," in the language of the book. Stripping off my jacket, I immediately went to the aid of this underdog, using all the skill and pressures I could recall from my college wrestling. The bullies soon had had enough, and the husky man who had been on the bottom stood up and thanked me. Ensign Francis Crane became one of my lifelong friends. He would later become president of the Washington Apple Growers Association and send me a box of apples annually, after finally retiring from the Navy with the rank of captain.

How can one adequately describe that desolate archipelago, known as the Aleutian Islands, which stretches nearly 2,000 miles from the Alaskan mainland toward the northern islands of Japan?

Those treeless, windswept, volcanic islands appear to be a part of Earth that the Creator never completed in the beginning. After leaving Kodiak astern, we steered for Unalaska Island through the North Pacific. As we made our approach, we could see from far out at sea a vast curtain of swirling fog, which completely enveloped the island chain and rose from the surface of the turbulent sea to form an impenetrable barrier of thousands of feet, blending finally with the heavy banks of black clouds, which covered all. As the destroyer entered this forbidding realm at reduced speed, one could see nothing in this dark fog until, suddenly, there loomed dead ahead a stark, black mountain wall, rising sheer and dripping 2,000 feet into the clouds. Only the navigator recognized the dark landmark of Priest Rock, which guards the entrance and points the way to the tortuous channel, leading to the narrow, invisible opening in the rocky wall to the haven beyond. At length, the channel opens into a large, horseshoe-shaped harbor, ringed all around by high mountains. This is Dutch Harbor.

It was May 28, 1942. That incredible construction arm of the Navy, the Seabees, had built a sturdy, small frontier defense post in this most sinister of places. Everywhere, there was feverish activity and mud, ankle-deep mud, and the howling wind drove the rain with such force that it stung the cheeks. The buildings were painted a greenish brown to blend with the bleak landscape. There was an inky darkness on that early evening, and there was no glimmer of light to guide one's footsteps. All buildings were sealed with permanent blackout shutters.

The officers soon discovered that their natty Naval uniforms and shoes were no match for this inhospitable terrain and were issued various and assorted kinds of Army field clothes and boots. By May 29, all hands had been assigned living quarters in huts and duty stations. My duty station was in the hilltop radio-command shack, clearly identifiable because of the many antennae and high aerial wires.

Already, the Catalinas had begun their night patrols, searching the Bering Sea and the North Pacific for enemy naval units. A fierce storm broke on May 31 and continued through June 2, during which time all planes were grounded by the terrible wind, rain and fog.

By 0600 on June 3, the storm had abated and some blue sky could be seen through the high, scattered overcast. As I stood scanning the sky, I observed a single airplane at a very high altitude circling slowly over the island (this was Vice Admiral Samejima). It disappeared and returned shortly, leading large groups of other aircraft. Inasmuch as there were only our Navy PBY's in the area, most thought these planes must be the long-delayed first groups of U.S. Army P40's and bombers just arriving from the States enroute to their landing strip on Umnak Island, 40 miles west of Dutch Harbor, which were supposed to attack enemy units discovered by our Navy PBY's.

Suddenly, as I stood watching on a hummock beside the

command shack, pandemonium burst loose. The aircraft above suddenly dove down and began shooting and strafing every target in sight. Then followed the Kate bombers in low, glide-bomb runs, hitting their targets with great accuracy. To me, at first it seemed as unreal as a Hollywood movie, until the bombs started blowing up things in every direction. Barracks, hospital, ships, hangar, parked planes, supply dumps -- all were blasted by the bombs. A heavy salvo bracketed our radio-command shack in a perfect circle with crunching thuds, but miraculously, without damage to us. Apparently, the bombs detonated so deep down in the soft tundra around us that all the explosive force was spent straight up and down. Nonetheless, one of the two Bofors 40mm guns, together with the gunner, was destroyed by a direct hit right next to the shack, and the other gunner never did succeed in firing, due to lack of familiarity with the gun. A few timid souls took to the hills at the first blast, but everybody else did his duty as best he understood it in the protracted confusion of that day.

Most of our PBY's, which had been dispersed to small, hidden coves around the island, were soon in contact with the enemy fleet, consisting of two carriers, cruisers, destroyers, transports, and other support ships. Our six command radios crackled every minute with messages from our planes, such as, "attacked by enemy aircraft," "taking evasive action," "tracking enemy carrier."

As communications and coding officer, I was the liaison between our PBY's and Lt. Cmdr. Foley, who was not only squadron commander of our VP-41 but also advanced staff operations officer for the Fleet Air Wing. Our big problem was lack of coordination between our Navy command and an Army colonel liaison officer, who was senior to Foley and did not like to take orders from a Navy officer who was junior to him.

The actual attacks around Dutch Harbor lasted only a few days, but the enemy fleet cruised in the area for several weeks, eventually landing troops and digging in at Kiska and Attu Islands. Our patrol planes constantly followed enemy fleet movements and continued night searches. Because of the slowness of the Army in sending planes to help and our lack of any other Navy planes, the lumbering PBY's not only kept tracking the enemy, but even made repeated bombing, torpedo, and strafing attacks on their ships in spite of devastating anti-aircraft fire and Jap Zero fighters.

VP-41 had many losses, and planes returned to base riddled with bullet holes. When the Army belatedly joined the action, I remember the first message intercepted from a B-17: "Made direct hit on carrier deck. Bomb failed to go off." No doubt they had forgotten to arm the bomb.

The week of June 3-10 will no doubt stand out as the crisis week of my life. For five consecutive days and nights, while we were engaging the enemy at close range, I stood my communications watch without sleep, sustained only by strong black coffee and

the super-adrenalin of battle excitement. Contact reports and distress calls from our aircraft flooded the air waves. a few of those on ground duty were cited for devotion to duty under these trying circumstances, but it was the brave pilots and crews flying the dangerous missions who rightfully were decorated for their constant gallantry. As the enemy began to realize we were not going to yield, he began trying to break contact with us and to establish his own bases near us. But still the PBY's continued to hunt and harry the Japs.

My watch was finally regulated from every midnight to noon, and I well remember the noisy night poker games, which kept me from catching a few winks of sleep before going on watch. To satisfy the need for physical exercise after going off watch, I often hiked to the top of nearby Ballyhoo Mountain, 1,800 feet high, which I did regularly in thirty minutes. Weeks later, when operations became better organized, I climbed many a lonely peak ringing the harbor with friends and was constantly amazed by the fascinating tundra and the myriad streamlets and pools underlying it on the mountain saddles. The Dolly Varden trout were spawning, and scores of tiny, cascading streams in the tundra were literally choked with fish struggling to climb to the highest pool to spawn and die.

The tundra itself is a dense, matted blanket of grasses, mosses, and millions of minute flowers, often five to six feet in thickness, which was so soft that we could jump off a fifteen-foot-high rocky pinnacle into this springy cushion without any danger of injury.

While we lost men and planes in enemy action, at least 75 percent of our losses were purely operational. Some planes disappeared on day or night patrol, while others crashed in fog or darkness on rugged mountainsides. Our worst enemy was battle fatigue, but at least we did not have any instances of personnel shooting off their own fingers or toes out of sheer boredom (like some of the Army units stationed too long in the area) in order to be transferred back home. In August, 1942, VP-41 was ordered back to the States for rest and equipment overhaul. Returning with many new crews and PBY's in September, we were based this tour at Cold Bay on the westerly-most tip of the Alaskan mainland at the foot of Mt. Frosty. We spent our first Christmas at this lonely, frigid outpost. On the way to Cold Bay, we passed by Kodiak Island, where it is never dark at night during the summer. We flew low along the beaches to observe the Kodiak bears, feeding on fish near the sea. As we buzzed them, these gigantic monsters reared up on their hind legs in rage and clawed the sky ten to twelve feet in the air.

Most of our surviving pilots had been amply decorated with Air Medals and some with the Navy Cross for "bravery and dedication beyond the call of duty." Lt. Bill Thies, returning from a night patrol, had spotted a Jap Zero upside down in a grassy marsh on a peak of Akutan Island and personally led a party of men to drag the plane down the mountainside to be barged back to Dutch Harbor. He recovered all the Jap pilot's personal

belongings, including Buddhist mementos. The Akutan Zero was made flyable at NAS San Diego and painted with U.S. markings. When it flew across the country, it was provided with a fighter escort in case anyone should take it for an enemy plane.

Once again, the Executive Officer, Browning, approached me with a twinkle in his eye to hand me a specific assignment. "It is customary," he said, "for a special entry to be made in the ship's log on the occasion of passing into the New Year. Also, we are to welcome aboard a new skipper on New Year's Eve to take command. With your background, you have been selected to prepare this special entry. Can do?"

This time I was ready for the task, although the time was short, for it was the evening of December 29, 1942. I decided to write a narrative poem, called "The Saga of the Squadron," in three long cantos. It was a satirical poem in heroic style and meter, relating the actual history of the squadron, the gallant deeds of the men, and the unbelievable physical conditions which they had to cope with during this long tour of duty. It was at the same time full of pathos and whimsey. It was so well received that it was later sent to the Navy Department, and thirty years later at the Whidbey Island Reunion, the Squadron Historian, Commander Bob Larson, said that I was the poet laureate of the Squadron and the Wing.

In due course, the new skipper, Commander N.S. Haines, reported aboard. He brought with him mail bags from home with belated Christmas presents, consisting mostly of letters and cookies which had been smashed to pulp in transit. He also brought with him a duffel bag full of spirits, which he presented to us "to revive the spirits of the squadron." The morale at the time had reached an all-time low. Many of our personnel were confused as to what we were accomplishing in the Aleutians. In fact, it was not until thirty years later at the Whidbey Island Fleet Air Wing 4 Reunion that Squadron Historian Larson finally informed as to what we had done there!

A dispatch at this point led to a complete reorganization of VP-41 into two, completely separate units. About 80 percent of the men became part of a large, permanent Base Unit (Basu) at a fixed location, while the remaining 75 or so became the small, streamlined flight squadron. The flight squadron was made up of only the actual flight crews for the twelve aircraft, plus two non-pilot officers, one administrative and the other technical-ordnance. These two officers (myself and Crane, respectively) were to fly with the squadron to whatever base Commander Fleet Air Wing 4 might direct. By March, 1943, VP-41 had again been reduced by attrition to a total of only three aircraft and crews. We were ordered to fly back to our home port, Seattle, and VP-41 was decommissioned in April of 1943.

Immediately afterward, we were reorganized into Bombing Squadron 136 (VB-136) and were assigned new crews to fill out our complement for the twelve, new-type aircraft we were to receive, Lockheed Venturas (PV-1), which were land-based, medium bombers.

While the pilots were being checked out at N.A.S. Whidbey Island in these new twin-engine aircraft, I was assigned as the administrative aide to the Commanding Officer, Cdr. Haines. I condensed the magnificent Navy records and files of the squadron, which easily would have filled a large business office, into four, small wooden boxes, which would henceforth accompany us everywhere in the aircraft.

By April, 1943, we were established at Adak Island, which the Seabees, in the meantime, had miraculously built up into the virtual military capital city of the Aleutians, with a small assist by the Army. Our new planes sought out the enemy and ranged as far as Atka, Kiska, and Attu, bombing the Japs in their new strongholds. While the Venturas were much faster and better armed than the Catalinas, their lack of lift capacity made them very dangerous on takeoff with full fuel and bomb load. It was on takeoff at Adak that the squadron lost its beloved humorist, Lt. Throckmorton, whose clever cartoons depicting Aleutian life were the pride of the Fleet Air Wing. A suddenly violent williwaw forced his plane on takeoff to plunge into the Bering Sea, where the fuselage broke off and sank deep under the sea. By September of 1943, our base was on lonely Attu Island, at the extreme western end of the chain, close to the Japanese, who now resorted to land-based planes to bomb us in our new base, recently wrested from them. Our Venturas made regular raids on Paramushiro and other military installations on the northern Jap islands.

The Army, meanwhile, had attacked the Japs on Attu and occupied their former positions. The physical evidence we found everywhere, as well as captured Japanese documents, revealed how fanatically they had fought and died to the last man. No prisoners were taken, as each Jap soldier was handed a grenade by the last commander at the end and ordered to salute his Emperor and then destroy himself. A few starving Jap soldiers, hiding in the desolate Attu mountains, later came down and mingled in the chow line of our Army messhalls, but they were not recognized until some time had passed.

The toll of Navy pilots decreased as the Japs retreated. Still, however, our losses continued, due to operational causes such as weather or mechanical failure. In addition, the mysterious electrical and magnetic forces of these sub-artic regions, which can completely reverse compass readings and change radio beacons, caused many a navigational disaster.

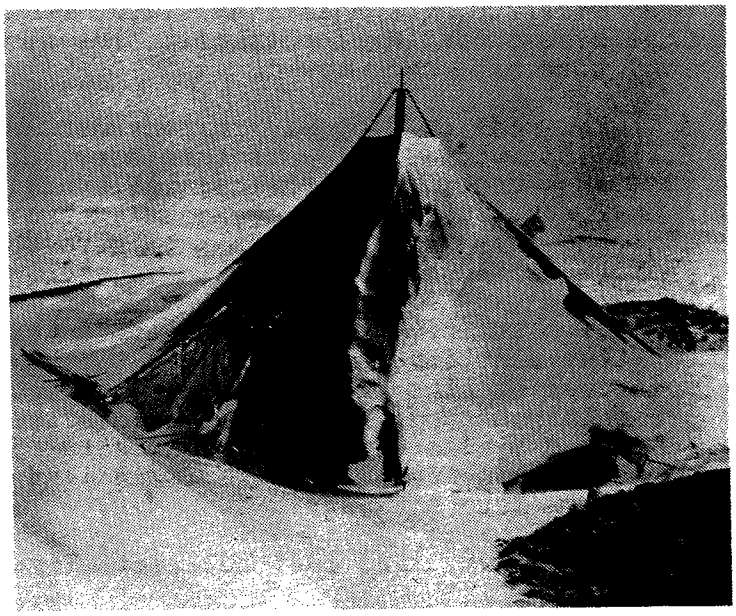
Lt. Jim Breeding, an oft decorated Naval aviator, survived the Aleutians only to drown in the cold Pacific off the Oregon coast, after his training plane was forced to land at sea and after he had successfully placed his crew in a life raft. Lt. Brad Brooks also died heroically after his plane was shot down by fighters near Kwajalein Island and after he had ordered all his crew into a rubber raft.

Christmas, 1943 on Attu! Icy winds and blizzards. And over

and over, we heard over the Tokyo Rose Radio the demoralizing strains of the popular tune of the year, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." It seemed as if the mail plane would bring no gifts from home that Christmas. But wait! Arriving with the mail plane, long delayed by weather, were transfer orders for the remainder of the original Aleutian officers: "Detached this date, December 29, 1943, from all duty VB-136. Proceed to San Francisco..."

While the cow was snug and warm in this building on Attu . . .

. . . Navy pilots and crews were snug and warm on Amchitka



"SAGA OF THE SQUADRON"

(Ballad in Three Cantos)

I

Behold a gallant A-V(S)
As he struts and shouts aloud,
By all the medals on my breast
I'll tell a tale to thrill the crowd.

We sailed from port full long ago,
The men of Patron Forty-One,
And the Gillis bore us 'gainst the foe
Toward the land of the Rising Sun.

Wracked by a storm-tossed per'lous trip
And a curse called mal de mer,
At length we spied from atop the ship
The land of the Kodiak bear.

Ere aught were said of Aleut maid
Which our lads did love right well,
The Williamson her farewell said
And snatched us from their spell.

Our can hove to in a place called Dutch
In a harbor surrounded by many a peak.
We unloaded our gear, quick spurred by the touch
Of glacial winds which in chorus did shriek.

II

Behind the shrouds of the Aleutian fog
And riding the wake of a traitorous gale
Appeared the hoards of the Emperor Dog,
Who drove us to death with sword and flail.

Now the Zeros came and upon us fell,
And many a hero that day was born.
Their bombers also unleashed their hell
But our answer to this was naught but scorn.

The books never tell of the Navy men
Who gladly plunged to a watery grave.
Their fighting spirit the Japs couldn't ken
As we strove the Stars and Stripes to save.

In hail and sleet and rain and snow
We dogged them day and night;
And it was to the Japs-rats' woe
That he tried us that hour in our might.

On night patrols in icy black
The Catalina's martyred crews
Pursued the yellow rats sans slack
Till the Army heard the news.

Then led by Navy pilots bold
Our Army fighters fiercely flew,
And just as in the days of old
Our toothy foes in numbers slew.

And Kiska town and Chickagof
The both did suffer sad torment;
Till radio "Toyko" cried, "Enough!"
Our Liberators ruin sent.

III

Now Forty-One by Frosty's slopes
Their tents and huts have smartly set.
And ever new arise our hopes
The enemy will soon be met.

So cold a land did God create
By Isanotski's frigid strait
That breath to earth in chunks doth fall
To wonderment of one and all.

In summer is the mud so deep
As swallows up both man and jeep,
While winter's snows so deeply lie
That life itself doth seem to die.

And polar winds our shelters shake
Till each man in his bunk doth quake.
Yet PBY's will fly the main
Till Joe hath pulled the Aleutian Chain.

"Oh, able leaders, guide us on
Till Nippon's gory reign is done.
In this year of Forty-Three,
Great Lord of Hosts, bring victory."

Thus spake the noble A-V(S),
Whose medals swung from hero's breast.
Of yellow men in Zeros shot
No man in words anymore had wrought.

The crowd did gape and stand apace
On hearing tell such deeds of fame
And taken in were girls of grace
For they will always be the same.

- F.M. Sibley
28 December 1942

XXVII

REMEMBRANCES OF WAR

"Butch" Mason remembers one of his most memorable intruder missions:

"On July 21, 1944, after a night takeoff, we arrived at the target area alone, just as the sun was coming up. It was one of those rare days when there was not a cloud in the sky. Our orders were to never go over the target alone without clouds. However, it was just daylight and I could see the rotating beacon over the airfield on Shimushu. I figured that no one was up and flying and I had caught them before breakfast. I passed the word to the crew to keep their eyes open for fighters. We headed on in, and just as we got over the airfield, the turret gunner yelled, 'Fighters!' over the intercom. I will never forget that sight. I leaned forward and looked up. There was a formation of eight Tojos. The first one was peeling off to make a run on us. I must have used up a year's supply of adrenalin right there! We were directly over the field, and just out of instinct, I flew the PV through a split-S and wound up heading straight down at the field. I opened the bomb bay doors, pulled her up a little and pickled off the bombs. About that time, a whole bunch of tracers went by on my left. Several bursts of heavy AA exploded behind us. I remember thinking it strange that they would shoot at us while their fighters were making a pass. The fighters must have flown right through their own flak. I closed the bomb bay doors and headed for the deck. I had full allowable power on, and by the time we got to the water, we were indicating 310 knots (357 mph). I put the belly right down on the water, and at full speed, a fighter was just asking for it to make a run on a PV. Only one of the Tojos was able to follow us through the split-S, and sure enough, he tried a run, but the turret gunner, Richard McGee AOM2/c, opened up on him and he broke off his attack at that point. So now we were headed for Attu at 300 knots. I throttled back and everything calmed down."

Everyone on Attu remembers the Commodore's Cow:

"No story of the PV squadrons' exploits in the Aleutian area would be complete without the story of the Commodore's Cow. After the capture of Attu, the Commodore in command of Fleet Air Wing Four decided to move his headquarters from Adak to Attu. He had the SeaBees build a suitable headquarters for him and his staff adjacent to the airstrip at Murder Point. The ensuing structure was referred to as "The Palace" by the men of FAW-4. The Commodore soon decided that one of the comforts of home, missing in their drab existence, was fresh milk. He, and several thousand other World War II American servicemen, did not like the dried milk of the period. It would not stay in solution. Stir

as you would before you drank it, it would definitely settle to the bottom of the glass, where it looked and tasted like chalk. It was reasoned that real milk could only be obtained from a real, genuine, living cow. Cows were as scarce as humming birds' nests in the Aleutians. Native Aleuts had never even seen one! Two factors prevented their propagation on the treeless islands: the severe cold winter and lack of suitable forage. However, through the "can-do" ingenuity of the SeaBees, no obstacle was too difficult to overcome.

"The seaplane tender U.S.S. Avocet (AVP-4) was detached to Attu in support of the PBY squadrons in the area. The Commodore solicited contributions from the members of his staff. One of his aides went aboard the Avocet when she sailed for Seattle. The aide's qualification for this assignment was that he was originally a farm boy. The Commodore ordered him to purchase a good cow. The ship had been in the cursed cold area for some time and merriment reigned aboard. This was the answer to the crew's prayers -- the prospect of liberty in the United States and GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS! After what seemed like an eternity, the Avocet finally returned to Murder Point. It is doubtful if a stranger looking Man-of-War ever steamed up Puget Sound, and one wonders at the comments of those who saw her...with a cow tied on the fantail and the hangar full of hay.

"While the Avocet was on her supply mission to Seattle, the Commodore had the SeaBees build a barn, complete with barnyard but at a suitable distance from the "Palace," so that the odors would not permeate the immediate area. Unfortunately, the only suitable location was in close proximity to the quonset huts of the PV squadrons.

"The farmer-turned-sailor was well qualified for his assignment. The cow he purchased gave more milk than the Commodore and his staff could possibly use. He then prevailed upon the officers' mess to use the surplus. Needless to say, they complied. However, they had seen the sanitary conditions at the barn, and some of them had serious misgivings about the processor's ability to meet Grade A standards. One VB-135 pilot came up with the perfect solution. They would make "Alexanders" from the milk, reasoning that the alcohol would kill any germs present in the milk."

Marc Hermanson remembers the earliest flights to Dutch Harbor:

"Early in the summer of 1939, LCDR Delbert Conley, C.O. of VP-16 (renumbered later to VP-41) made the first Navy Patrol flight to Dutch Harbor in a PBY-3. In 1940, Lt. Paul Foley, then Operations Officer of the squadron, repeated the flight to Dutch.

"On 7 and 8 December 1941, I led a flight of two PBY-3s to Dutch Harbor from Kodiak. The pilots with me were Ensigns Bob Kirmse, Jim Breeding, Jack Litsey, and Elmer Anderson, all of VP-41. We established Patrol Wing Four Search and ASW Patrol unit and made scheduled patrols during the first few months without

having any shore-based navigational aids, crash boat, or a seaplane tender.

"We had some deep-seated concerns over the bad weather and the williwaws. One day, a plane taxied to the ramp for recovery. Just as a crew got a line on the inboard wing, a severe williwaw came down on the plane, pushing the outboard wingtip to the bottom and crushing it. The crewman on top of that wing was left swimming and drifting away from the shore. The pilot immediately cast off the port line and skillfully taxied out to rescue the wingman. With no boat available, this was a very fortunate rescue, for the man did not have on a life jacket and the water was freezing.

"This incident left us with only one plane in commission, as the wingtip float assembly was totalled and had to be replaced.

"We were relieved by Ens. Fran Grisko with a detachment from VP-42 in late March, 1942."

Jerry Best remembers the "Stable Sergeant" at Sand Point:

"Late in January, 1942, I met 'Kewpie' Goodsell, CAP, who was in charge of Wing Utility. He had developed a habit every time the phone rang of rattling off 'Ninth Artillery Stables, Stable Sergeant talking,' then he would pick up the phone. This one particular morning, the phone rang and he picked it up before going into his routine. Very quietly, he put the phone down and said, 'That was Commander Tatum. He said he had dialed a wrong number.' For a long time after, the only response was 'Wing Utility.'

"In late February or early March, 'Kewpie' had to accept a commission. He came up to the Photo Lab for a picture, and because I was a familiar face, he told me he had received a bar assessment. His complaint was that he hadn't even been in the bar. He checked up on traditions and learned he was the only officer on the base who could put his feet up on the wardroom table! Sometime during his twenty-six years in the Navy, he had been around the Horn."

Oden Sheppard remembers the first days of VP-43:

"I remember the day we left for Alaska and the War. We flew up the coast into the lowering ceiling off the coast of Washington. The Skipper led us up the valley from Westport in an echelon of about twelve planes. Finally, we turned back in a big circle at treetop heights and spent the night at Astoria instead of Sand Point. The second night we spent at NAS Sitka. The next morning we took off, following the Skipper across the Gulf of Alaska, with low clouds all the way. At Kodiak, we found that although most of us had never seen another plane all day, we had landed ahead of the Skipper. At Kodiak, everybody will remember, we landed in Womens Bay, and the landscape was dominated by

Barometer Mountain. Here, we were briefed on the bombings at Dutch Harbor, and everyone made out a new 'Will.'

"On our first departure from Dutch Harbor (I was flying with 'Cactus' Jack Raithel and 'Bill' Shanahan), we ran aground on a coral pinnacle while taxiing. No damage was done until a crash boat roared out with a tremendous wake, lifting and dropping us, again and again, each drop punching a hole in the bottom. The plane sank, almost completely, before it was pulled up on the ramp.

"Bombing Kiska and operations out of Nazan Bay on Atka were confusing, sleepless, and even terrifying. Nearly every time we came in for fuel, there was a new tender. Loading ammunition and bombs and patching holes seemed endless. Then, after the message, 'I will bomb Kiska to the last PBY,' was rescinded, we moved back to Chernofski Bay on Unalaska. We still had a new tender almost every day, because VP-43 could use up their fuel that fast, and crews returning from flying were usually bunked on the beach in Yakutat huts. There, we could eat in a messhall set up to serve the barges supplying Umnak.

"Moving over to Adak, we moved ashore, generally flying PBY-5A's from the field, covered with water or snow and Marston mats. Here, we moved into quonset huts and ate dried eggs and such with the Army mess. In our hut, we established 'The Blue Room of Hut 53,' where a little trading of Scotch got hot and cold water installed by the SeaBees. Members of this elite group included LCDR George O'Brien (of movie fame), Lt. Ken Newerf, Lt. M.R. Dahl, Lt.(jg)'s R.F. Calrow, H.K. Mantius, O.E. Sheppard, R.A. Glaspy, W.B. Garrison, W.H. Smith, and Ens. D.H. Orcutt.

"Moving then to Amchitka, we used to take off southeast over the dock and the ships and land, going in the opposite direction because of a hill at the other end of the strip. We lived in less than luxurious tents on the hilltop and enjoyed almost endless snow. In addition to the searches, we flew Dumbo for the P-40 and P-38 strikes on Kiska, only fifty or so miles away. Amchitka was the place where the water caused the coffee to turn purple and the tea to turn pink, and where the story went that a SeaBee became famous for finding gravel with which to build the big runway."

Willis L. "Bud" Stillmaker remembers bombing Kiska:

"I was in the original VP-43 that first went to the Aleutians. I flew First Radioman for Lt. Masterson. Norman Kerney was Second Radioman.

"From Nazan Bay, we bombed Kiska twice a day, sometimes, for about three days, when they called it off. Fog was too low to use the Norden Bomb sight. Some of our planes sank on landing in Nazan Bay from holes in the hull. On one occasion, the second mech had a piece of shrapnel which, after passing through the bottom of the plane, ripped the seat of his pants and came out of

the top without drawing blood. Boy, was he lucky!

"One time, we had so many holes that Monk Masterson skidded it on the beach at Nazan Bay so it wouldn't sink. The Japs came the next day and bombed it. Then we destroyed it by fire."

Rock Bannister remembers:

"I was flying co-pilot for Ens. Jules Raven, VP-41, on this patrol out of Dutch Harbor 1942 to Attu. We were told to be on lookout for a U.S. submarine SS-27, as it was reported lost and overdue.

"After a search and pictures of Attu and Kiska, which were occupied by Japanese, we came back via Amchitka to discover many men running from the beach. As we circled with manned, 50-calibre waist guns, the men returned to the beach with a U.S. flag, many white cloths, and cut a sign, 'U.S. SS 27,' in the sand. We landed in the bay and tied to an old buoy. An officer and men rowed out to the PBY in an old boat they had found.

"They reported that the submarine was making a beach search when it ran aground. The pig boat was not damaged, but unable to refloat. They had plenty of food, blankets, cigarettes, etc., so they were not hurting. We agreed to take fifteen men with us to Dutch. This, with our crew, made twenty-three men aboard the PBY with three in the bow pit.

"It was a long trip home with lousy weather and the most unstable plane I have flown. We made a night landing in open water at Dutch. After a couple of big bounces, the PBY stayed on the water. The submariners thanked us and said they would never get in another plane.

"A few days later, when the weather was satisfactory, VP-41 sent some PBY's to pick up the balance of the submarine crew and also deliver a demolition team to destroy the submarine.

"The sad ending to this story is that two weeks later, Ensign Raven and his crew were reported missing on a routine patrol. As I recall, some of the submariners who were returning to the States were reported aboard a missing R4D between Dutch and Kodiak."

Bob Ashcraft remembers:

"Three young, ensign navigators, just out of the Transition Training Unit at San Diego, were called together one afternoon and told that they were to leave the next morning to take three Yokers to Sand Point, Seattle to turn them over to Patrol Wing Four for transfer to the VP squadrons then operating in the Aleutians. They took toothbrushes, expecting to be back in Alameda in a few days.

"They met their PPC's at the planes, where someone had thoughtfully left some charts of the West Coast, including the Puget Sound. Lucky. The PPC's were Dave Parker, Joe Brant and Lester Geer. Their navigators (in order of their PPC's): Bob Ashcraft, Joe Buskirk and Ted Crockett.

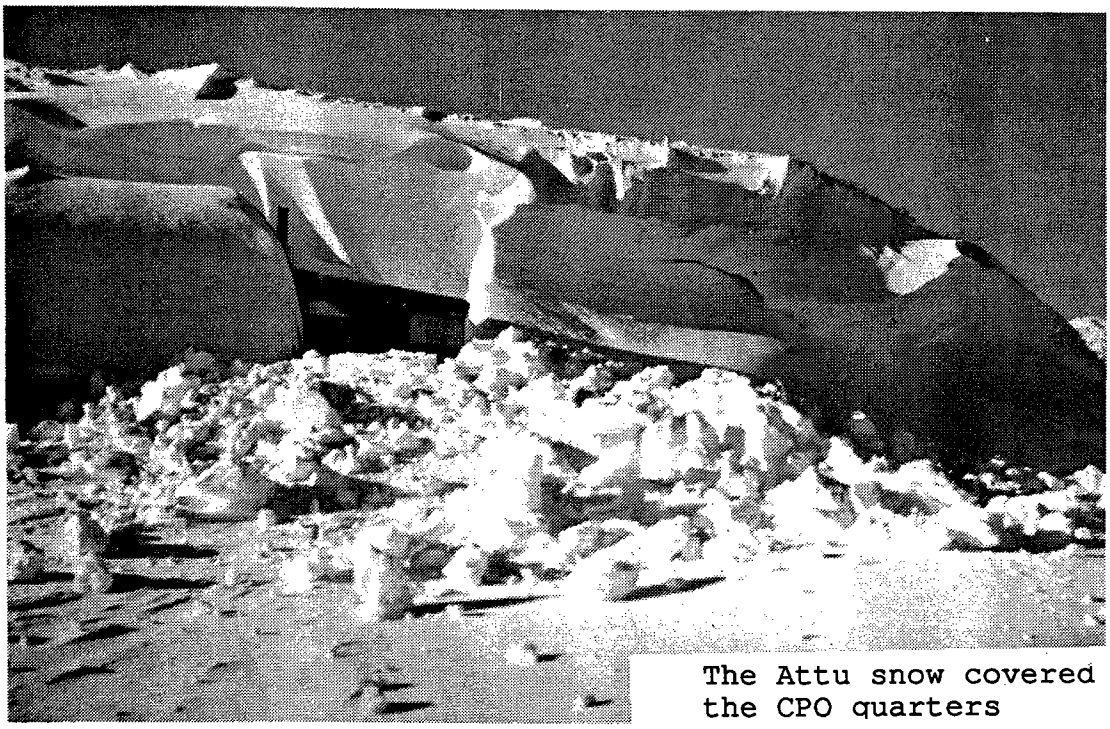
"They stayed at Sand Point long enough to get orders to take the planes to Sitka, where they were to turn them over to Pat Wing Four. Hell, Sitka didn't even know what Pat Wing Four looked like, let alone know where they were! So off the next day to Kodiak. By then, these navigators were amazed to find that they could get from one place to another across long expanses of ocean with only a compass, a clock and a lot of luck.

"But no one was at Kodiak to take the Yokers. They stayed there about a week and were at hand when a PBY from another squadron, trying to take off from the seaplane landing area next to Old Woman Mountain with a torpedo under the wing, encountered a williwaw, dug a float, cartwheeled and sent the torpedo under the stern of an ammunition ship tied up at the Air Station dock. It didn't explode -- either because it didn't arm or because it didn't work -- but it made Christians out of a bunch of young Naval aviators. The war was getting close!

"A few days later, they left to take the planes to VP-41 or 42 at Cold Bay, Lt. Cdr. James Russell commanding. It was an interesting flight, if only to observe the wild cattle in the Shumagin Islands.

"They were greeted with reserved enthusiasm and welcomed to the war, but the CO was not about to let the "ferry" crews go back to Alameda. He needed someone to help carry Leslie Gehres' torpedos to the Japanese fleet that was raising hell from Dutch Harbor on out the chain. The ferry crews hung around Cold Bay and Dutch for about three months until it was obvious that they were spare baggage that really belonged to VP-62, and if they didn't get back to Alameda, they might not get the whole squadron up later in the year to relieve the whole bunch of them. We were let go and sent back from Kodiak on the U.S.S. Harrington, a converted merchant vessel -- empty and bobbing around the North Pacific like a cork, rolling many degrees from side to side -- with a Norwegian skipper who took great glee in watching his landlubber passengers in Navy uniform turn green with every dip in the waves. In a storm one day, we went ten miles ahead and twenty sideways. Every time the ship jumped out of the water and then hit a big wave with a slap, we thought we had taken a Japanese torpedo.

"The three heroes got to Alameda long enough for one to get married on November 5 and leave with the squadron a few days later. With CO, LCDR Francis Jones, and XO Ralph Pray, both from the escape from the Philippines, VP-62 spent the winter operating out of Adak off the Marston-matted strip."



The Attu snow covered
the CPO quarters

the wind blew

and some crews had
to tunnel their way
out of their quonset

The airstrip at Casco Cove, Attu, didn't always look like this. Don Coe remembers skimming the water and dodging rocks one windy, foggy afternoon looking for it. Coe says he appeared over the end of the strip at the same time Seabees working on the tarmak discovered the plane which didn't appear to the workers to be going the right direction--the nose was about 90 degrees off line. The Seabees scattered and Coe landed in the middle of their construction, blowing a tire.

Sam Peck remembers:

"I was in VP-42 out of Kodiak as Second Radioman for then Commander Russell when Dutch Harbor was attacked. We progressed via one island and then another until we were the first Navy squadron to establish camp on Adak. Thanks to a small Army unit, we had tents for the first months, tundra grass for our Head and a pond of frozen-over water for our washing-up needs. Later, thanks to the SeaBees, quonset huts came along. After the first three or four months, a destroyer 'can' came into the harbor and invited us to come aboard for a shower and some small stores. The sailors on board looked startled to see us, and once we were in their Head, we could see why. The first mirror we had looked in for months revealed a sight for sore eyes. Not to mention our clothes, part of which were Army, part from the Sims Drake Clothing Warehouse that was bombed out at Dutch, and part from the natives we had encountered along the way. From then on, we were referred to not as Airdales, but rather, Pat Wing Four Sewer Pipe Sailors!

"When we left the destroyer a couple of hours later, we were clean-shaven, dressed in dungarees, blue denim shirts and black oxfords, plus clean skivvies. Of course, we took our old clothes with us, and within a day, we were back in them in an effort to keep reasonably comfortable and warm. We didn't mind the smell. It was, however, a great feeling to be back in the black-shoe Navy for a brief period.

"My health will not permit me to attend the reunion, but I will be there in spirit and wish all of you a wonderful time. My very kindest regards to Admiral Russell."

Ed Vance remembers:

"When VPB 131 was in training at Ault Field in the summer of 1944, and a crew was assigned to do a navigational hop of several hours duration, the flight kitchen packaged and delivered the in-flight meals in an electrically heated food container resembling a machinist's tool chest. Each member's hot meal was contained in a sliding drawer of the chest, and the napkins and service were contained in the top section of the chest. The whole thing was kept warm by plugging it into the service receptacle on the plane. This was great. On Attu, however, when we were scheduled for a mission, the flight rations consisted of a jug of soup and a 50-cal ammo box containing baloney (civilian term) sandwiches, fruit, and a Hershey candy bar for each member of the crew. The soup usually froze solid, and we had to put the sandwich and the candy bar under our flight jackets to thaw them out. What happened to the heated food chests we had at Whidbey? Even today, I'm asking!"

Donald Funk remembers:

"We of Bootcamp 362 trained in San Diego in July and

August of 1942, and for some unknown reason, I was put in charge of some 200 sailors and sent to NAS Sand Point at Seattle. Being only eighteen years old, I regarded it as my first command! We arrived at the main gate of the air station at 2000 hours a few days later. A lieutenant commander met me in the gate office, asked for my orders and the roster. Then he looked me in the eye and asked, 'Funk, how would you like to be in Naval Air?'

"Since I always was interested in flying, I answered promptly, 'Yes, Sir!!' Our orders specified that we were replacements for the Fleet out of Bremerton.

"'Funk, besides yourself, pick forty-nine good men to stay here at Sand Point,' the officer said. 'The rest will be sent to the Fleet.'

"So, I picked six of my buddies to help me choose the remaining forty-three, and we all got assigned to Pat Wing Four. I will have the Company's group photograph with me at the reunion."

Ed Vance remembers some more:

"The 1944 Christmas Season at Attu began for VPB 131 a week or so before the 25th with the arrival of small, real, live evergreen trees from the States. Our tree was placed on the top of a table and decorated with a roll of red and green crepe paper. I don't remember the songs we sang or if we had anything to fill our glasses with, but I do remember our two squadron dogs, Pee Vee and Skipper, jumping up on the table and "decorating" our tree. After all, there are no trees on Attu, and this was the first tree the dogs had been near since leaving the States. After the Christmas Season was over, the tree was removed to an outside corner of our hut and placed upright in the snow. Well, the message got around to nearly every dog on the island, and they appreciated our tree very much. I'm sure the dogs loved Santa for being so thoughtful."

Also, Vance remembers:

"On October 27, 1944, Crew Four of VPB 131 (Arnold, Peterson, Langston, Vance, Maddox and Hall), together with Pee Vee, our squadron mascot, left on an early morning patrol. About an hour into the flight, Pee Vee began to shiver. I removed my flight jacket and wrapped the dog in it. He had his own special parachute and harness, but he liked my jacket much better.

"Things progressed normally. The engines sounded great. Everything was shipshape. However, about five hundred miles from Attu, I was summoned from the radar station to the cockpit. We had a gas problem.

"The left and right drop tanks and the front and rear bomb bay tanks were being used in a normal manner, but something was

happening when the left cabin tank was selected for fuel transfer to the front mains. The large cabin tank began to empty like it had no bottom. By some strange deduction, we checked the condition of the bomb bay tanks, using a wooden dipstick. The rear bomb bay tank was empty, but, by George, the front bomb bay was practically full. Along with our other remaining tanks, this would be enough to get us back to Attu if we returned pronto.

"We found out later that our main control transfer valve had developed an internal problem, permitting the cabin tank gas to drain into the front bomb bay tank. Lt. Arnold could now switch to the bomb bay tank and use its well-needed contents. Talk about Alaskan gold, finding that missing gas was much better. What a happy ending to the six-and-one-half-hour flight. Hey, bob ba re ba."

Jim Williams remembers "The Sputtering Catalina:"

"During the winter months' tour of VP-43 to Attu in 1943, we were assigned, as much as possible, individual planes. My crew consisted of co-pilot Bill Clumpner, Vane Harrison, navigator, Don Jessey and George Behrend, radiomen, Larry Brunn and Harry Newman, mechanics, and Everett Talley, ordnanceman. I don't recall the number of our plane, but we became quite attached to it during those early months at Attu and Shemya.

"On three successive patrols during January and February of 1943, however, we encountered loss of manifold pressure on the starboard engine when flying through heavy snow squalls, even though we were direting alternate air to the carburetor. When we were out of the snow squalls, manifold pressure returned to normal. Each time, we requested permission to return to base because snow squalls were so numerous.

"On the third occasion, Pat Wing Four headquarters apparently concluded that we were 'chicken,' so Al Lorenger, who was flight officer at the time, was directed to board our plane after we landed, and we were ordered back out on patrol. About an hour out, we encountered a particularly severe snow squall, and the engine sputtered. Al lost no time in turning around and heading back to base!

"Inspection of the engine revealed no evidence of faulty carburetion, but maintenance decided to replace the carburetor anyway. After a few days, maintenance declared the plane ready for test. We took the Pratt & Whitney (PW) representative, a chubby, blond fellow, with us for a two-hour test flight to Agattu. We were to view and photograph the wreckage of a downed PV from VB-136. At run-up, the engine appeared to check out okay. On our takeoff run down the runway, however, we could get only about 46 inches of manifold pressure on the starboard engine. Just after we cleared the south end of the runway, the starboard engine quit cold. Bill Clumpner and I fought the controls, trying to make a 270-degree turn to bring her back to the East-West runway. We couldn't hold a steady heading to land,

though. With the wheels still down, we headed for the water in Casco Cove. On the way down, Larry Brunn, our mechanic, started to retract the wheels, and I remember looking back to see them sink into the wells just as we hit the water. The wingtip floats were not down when we landed, but the mechanics managed to drop them before we completed our landing run.

"Bill and I wilted, and as I looked back, I noticed that the PW man's color resembled that of his blond hair.

"The engine failure appeared to have resulted from a shattered impeller. I remember that the PW representative theorized that someone had dropped a wrench in the impeller while they were changing the carburetor. That theory I didn't agree with! Later, they found that alternate air controls were not closing completely. Maybe that was the cause of some of our operational losses during the tour."

"Ole" Haugen remembers a similar Sputtering Catalina:

"We had encountered problems with the port engine, which were similar to those described by Jim Williams. We first turned in a gripe on this port engine in mid-February. We flew the aircraft on patrol several days later and encountered the same erratic behavior on that engine. Another gripe was turned in, which led to a conference with the ground crew. Several days later, we took #49 on patrol again. The port engine was still a problem. This time, our gripe sheet called for a big conference. Two days later, we were told that the engine had been fixed and that we were to take #49 up for a test hop.

"Over Shemya, the port engine started to run rough, overheat and lose power, so we cut the engine and feathered it. Approaching the east-west runway at Attu on one engine with wheels down and the wind cutting back and forth and up and down in good williwaw fashion, the starboard engine started to fluctuate and lose power. With the williwaw whacking the aircraft back and forth, it took some great flying skill and a lot of luck to keep from dropping on Casco Point rather than on Casco Cove. We made it to the water with the wheels up and the floats down just in time for the first big bounce. After several more jarring bounces, the pilot, Art Fleet, finally got #49 settled on the water of Casco Cove. It was zero-degrees Fahrenheit that day. I sure remember that, because with all of the newly loosened rivets, we started taking on cold, cold Aleutian water a little faster than we could pump it out.

"We were busy as hell! The aircraft was now under tow by a PT boat, and we had been directed to secure the aircraft to a buoy and wait for an amphibious Duck to come out and tow us to the ramp. This we did while all other crewmen not engaged in this activity or on the radio were busy working a canvas bucket brigade to supplement the overwhelmed bilge pump. With the aircraft now secured to the buoy, we cast off from the PT boat, only to find that the buoy had come loose from its anchor cable

and was adrift. That meant we were adrift, but we knew we wouldn't be adrift for long, because if we didn't sink, the wind would beach the aircraft against the jagged rocks near the shore, bringing further damage and sure sinking. Finally, the amphibious Duck came out and took us under tow, and after we had manually pumped down and locked the landing gear, it pulled us out of the water onto the beach.

"Once the aircraft had stopped and the wheels were chocked, the crew quickly evacuated the aircraft, disregarding the mess that had been created by the hard landing and by the bilging activity. We were standing near the aircraft, watching the water pour out of the hull and congratulating each other on our good luck in having come out of this mishap alive, when a well-bundled-up officer, displaying Lieutenant's bars on his fur-lined cap, approached us. He looked us over and then snapped, 'Where's the plane captain?' I said, 'Here, Sir.' He looked me over and brusquely ordered me to 'get back in the aircraft and clean it up!' Our pilot, Art Fleet, glared at the Lieutenant and asked, 'Who are you?' The Lieutenant replied, 'Hedron Engineering!' To shorten the story, we had to restrain Lt. Arthur J. Fleet from attempting to reduce the Engineering Department's roster by one. We didn't clean up the aircraft, either."

Bob Ashcraft also remembers:

"In the summer of '43, the three now-experienced pilots reported to Oak Harbor to join VP-45, LCDR Carl Amme commanding. They were given crews. Their names appeared on the flight schedules to conduct training flights to get prepared for another tour on patrol duty in the Aleutians. They flew around the Puget Sound for a couple of months having the waist gunners shoot at sea gulls, and they dropped water-filled bombs on some rocks; but more importantly, they had some of the finest picnics on the beaches of Coupeville and Whidbey Island that anyone could imagine! GI cans full of Dungeness crab in one and cold beer in another. Barbequed silver salmon cooked on a wood fire. War was not total hell, after all.

"By the fall of '43, VP-45 was established at Attu just as the last of the Japanese forces were rounded up. We operated out of what we called Casco Cove in honor of the U.S.S. Casco Bay, a new seaplane tender that provided support and a warm place to sleep and eat. The beach gave us quonset huts and beer, so all of us that could lived ashore. The SeaBees had caught up with us -- well, were really ahead -- with large quonsets that housed bars and movies. Not too bad a way to live if you have to fight a war!

"VP-45 was a charmed outfit. It missed the hoopla at Dutch and avoided the campaign against Kiska, but it was there for the famous invasion when our giant U.S. landing party found that all the Jap forces had escaped. VP-45 was at Whidbey when the Battle off the Komandorskis took place. VP-45, then, was a 'presence,' an occupant of the farthest portion of the North Pacific and thus

a guardian of the northern approach to the United States when the larger battles were being decided in the South.

"We had a few exciting moments in those last months of '43 -- like the day Joe Buskirk, Cleon Stitzel and Bob Ashcraft were sent out on an extended sector to the south to search for a reported Japanese ship or group or something we weren't too sure about. The weather guesser told us we would have winds from the south. We should have known better than to believe him, because how could he know what the weather was when all the data he needed to forecast was to the west, and we were already as far west as there were any friendly bases?

"The North Pacific was covered with sea smoke right down to the wavetops, so we had no way to keep constant check on the real wind. Even if we had scudded down through the stuff, we could not be sure that the wind on the water was going to be the same as the wind at altitude. So we drove out about 400 miles -- maybe four hours -- two on the cross leg and then, supposedly about three on the return leg back to Attu, if the wind had been from the south.

"Radar should have picked up something of the chain from fifty miles out, but nothing showed. Another hour or so of northward flying still showed no joy on the scope. Now, had we missed the whole chain and were we up in the Bering Sea? Somewhere a mistake had been made. Something was wrong, but what? Had the radar failed and we just plain missed the islands? Flown right over them? Was the wind forecast off? Or something else?

"There were no radio ranges nor LORAN. The sky was overcast, but even if J.C. Emory, the navigator, could have seen a star, there is a question about whether he would have known what it was. One thing we knew was that there was a radio range at Adak, and that was in a friendly direction. So we turned east to parallel the island chain and get to the radio range.

"Adak is 300 miles east, and by then, darkness of the darkest kind had fallen. We did pick up the radio range, but we could not be sure about whether we were north or south of the chain. We weren't too sharp with the old loop antenna, and 'nulls' weren't as easy to identify as they were later with the ADF, so running a 'time-and-distance' problem didn't work. Finally, at about 11 p.m., with about 200 gallons of gas left, we decided that we were on the southeast leg of the Adak range, that we were not going to get back to smooth water, and that we might as well put it down right there and wait until the Avocet could come out from Adak with gas the next day. Logical conclusion, even though it presumed that the practice instrument landings directed by Marshall Freerks in the training squadron at Oak Harbor would work in the open sea.

"It was one of those BLACK nights. No moon. No way to determine what, if any, wind there was on the water and how the sea was running. Pick a heading -- any would do. One was as

good as the other. Try to tell the crew how to prepare for what might happen. Send a message about where we might be. Best guess. Close some of the doors. At least one of the crew turned in to the bunk. Set up a landing attitude at 500 feet. Turn on the radar altimeter, which really read some accurate numbers almost down to the water. The radio operator ran out about ten feet of trailing antenna. He had instructions to yell a MARK when the bob carried away. The mark came about one minute before the altimeter read zero.

"All our training emphasized the maintenance of a stable attitude for landing on instruments. We knew there would be a tendency for the nose to want to rise on the first impact, so we were ready to hold the nose DOWN but not TOO FAR down -- just steady. There may have been three seconds between first and second impacts. Seemed like a week. The third was only a day or two. We were still in one piece. The fourth and later ones were running all together, and still we were all together. God bless Consolidated Aircraft Corp.!

"We didn't pop a rivet nor take on water. We fired up the putt-putt -- it may have been running before we landed. Radio locked the key down -- the hell with sending MOs. J.C. was supposed to take charge of the rations, because we had no idea about how long it would take for someone to come on out -- if we were where we said we were. We tossed over the sea anchor. Don't ask why -- just to have something to do, perhaps.

"It was a plane from Adak, VP-61 or 62, that showed up early the next day to guide the Avocet to us. It wasn't long before we were in tow, refueled and fed with some hot soup. The tender stood by while we took off.

"Now is when we all blessed Pratt & Whitney. We heard later that we took a lot of green water through the props and engines, but they didn't hesitate. We were airborne with the yoke all the way back in our chests, probably below stalling speed, drawing all the RPM and manifold pressure that the 1830s could produce. There was no art to this maneuver. It was all guts and good fortune. That beautiful airplane just took us all off the ocean like it was an everyday thing to do.

"We spent that night at the second strip at Adak -- at the Navy's own strip over by the lake on the north side of the island. It was then that we learned that all three of us, Joe, Stitz and I, had had about the same experience. No one got back to Attu the day before. We all ended up at Adak. Apparently, we had had northerly winds instead of the forecast wind from the south. We just never got back close enough to the chain to see them on the radar scope. Mother Henley, our non-flying administrative officer, had us mostly inventoried by the time we arrived at Adak.

"The Commodore came to see us that night. He wasn't too pleased and not too gently refused to join in the grapefruit juice concoctions we passed around."

Pete Maxwell remembers what Bob Ashcraft remembers:

Joe Buskirk - plane commander
Pete Maxwell - first pilot
Bill Everett - second pilot-navigator

"July 23, 1943: After being on patrol for some hours west of Attu, received message by 'key' to all planes out at the time: 'Return to base, closed in.' I thought that was a classic. Proceeded back to Attu -- tried several approaches and landing procedures, using the homing signal out at head of Massacre Bay, but could not establish any visual contact. Started working way along the islands toward Adak, trying to find an open bay or cove to set down in. No luck, and fog right on the water everywhere. Radar acting erratic and all the communication gear went out -- could not receive by voice or key, so didn't know if we were transmitting or not. Got all the way back to Adak and couldn't find any open spot to attempt a landing. Running low on gas, so backed off and headed west on north side of the chain. Made procedure-type instrument landing -- power on -- at 2330 hours in open water some miles north of Tanaga Island. Drifted balance of night with sea anchors out, and also bow anchor let out full length of cable to hopefully catch if we got into shallow area. Opened up some emergency rations -- no brandy in them, as shown on checklist. In early morning, started to taxi slowly toward Tanaga and broke into fairly clear visual when about a mile offshore. Spotted search plane from Adak overhead, signalled by light that we would attempt takeoff. Heavy swells, but made it off at 1030 hours and followed search plane into Adak harbor. Later called to appear before Commodore Gehres for a debriefing report. Complained about lack of brandy in emergency rations. He opened drawer and passed out some miniatures -- had a big supply. Duration of this flight from takeoff at Attu to landing at 2330 hours was 13 hours. I'll never forget that day and night.

"(On same night, Bob Ashcraft and his crew put down in open water south of the islands and were subsequently picked up -- forget if they were able to refuel the plane and take off or not.)"

Ted Crockett remembers:

"One day on Attu (after two days of being grounded with fog), the Captain, Bon Amme, called one of the PPC's to his office and ordered him to get his crew and fly to check activity toward Kiska. It was so foggy we couldn't even find our way from living quarters to the dining hall. Lt. Stitzel said, 'I can't do it, it's suicide to try to take off in this stuff.' Bon said, 'The high brass is getting real nervous with this long delay in flights. You're grounded for two weeks. Go tell Lt. Crockett to get his crew on stand-by and report to my office.'

"When Crockett got to the Command Post, Bon was pacing like a worried poodle. Crockett stepped in and said, 'Reporting for

duty, Sir.' Bon said, 'The pressure is sure great to find out what's going on around Kiska in this bad weather and the Commodore wants us to check it out. I surely need your help -- oh, hell, I'll do it myself. Will you take over this office while I fly out and check on Kiska?' Crockett said, 'Yes, Sir, I'll take care of it.' And Bon said, 'Order my crew to our plane immediately!' as he stomped out the door.

"Crockett made all necessary arrangements for the Captain's flight and waited by the radio. Forty-five minutes later, Bon returned, after floating in Massacre Bay trying to find a way to slip up through the fog, with no chance, and said, 'A man would be crazy to fly in that stuff. To hell with the Japs, send word to the Commodore, we can't fly.'"

[Editor's comment: Crockett has holes in his head. I never grounded anyone for any reason! Does he think I'm Santa Claus?]

Claude Privett remembers the torpedo that hit the Casco:

"The torpedo jammed a door, pinning a large, fat man who was trying to get out. We had to open a watertight hatch to get topside by another route. That torpedo, among other things, broke up a pretty good 4-5-6 game that Paul Ebertz was running.

"We were not able to retrieve our clothing from the Casco, and a radioman, Tex Havens, who wore a size 13 shoe, had to spend months wearing winter flight boots because neither the Army or the Navy could fit him out.

"I took a Bren gun from the Casco all over the hills at Atka after the attack, in anticipation of another attack on the ship while she was aground. A Jap float plane did come over once, but no bombs and no exchange of fire.

"I also remember the burning of the Village at Atka and the removal of the natives. Fortunately, a few buildings remained, which provided us shelter after the Casco went aground."

Hubert Henley remembers:

"One person that I recall particularly well was a chaplain who was from New York and used to visit us every Tuesday. He would come in and have a drink in the Officers' Mess, which gave him a chance to meet a number of the young men, and then he would hold a service. As we administered the Photo Lab, we thought it would be nice to take some pictures at his service of the men attending and then give them a print, which they could then send home if they elected to. The chaplain gave us a completely free hand, and a photographer took many pictures from many different angles and later passed them out to the crew members, all of whom were quite happy to get them. On hearing of this, another chaplain came and asked that we do the same thing at one of his

services. We agreed, but he then told us that he would tell the photographer exactly where to stand, when to shoot, how long to shoot, etc. Needless to say, no photos were ever taken at this service.

"While we are talking about chaplains, we had another incident where a crew was lost, and one chaplain was holding a memorial service for them and had a printed schedule listing the entire crew. A second chaplain then decided to have a memorial service, which we attended. We almost walked out when we discovered that the listing did not include those crew members who were not of his particular faith."

Ed Vance has a lot of memories:

"If you remember, not every day on the holiday resort island of Attu was a flying day. Certain weather factors, mechanical or gasoline-purity problems, could gun up a well-organized mission real quick. Perhaps you had "Stand-by," or you had to get in your required workout hours at the gym to keep you busy. Of course, there were days when you could spend your leisure hours doing real exciting things like making trips in the wind and snow to the barber, Ships Service, the mess hall, the laundry, the local beer hut (they had a pair of women's unmentionables tacked to the wall above the back -- you rascal, you don't remember?); or you could be busy writing letters, reading books, newspapers, magazines sent from home, listening to the Armed Forces radio station or Tokyo Rose, or going to the movies.

"One enterprising member of VPB 131, Fred Burton, elected to paint our "Flying Iron Fist" insignia (designed by Disney Studios) on one of the inside walls of our hangar. The diameter of Fred's rendition was about ten feet or so. Upon completion of that effort, Fred drew up and painted a design of his own with the central figure being a large ape somewhat resembling King Kong. Fred affectionately named the ape "SEDRO," perhaps after the town of Sedro Wooley, Washington, where many good souls of VPB 131 remember some very excellent 'liberties.' I know, you don't remember!"

Ted Crockett also remembers:

"Soon after we established a landing strip on Adak, the Army wanted to put some engineers on Amchitka to determine the chances of a landing strip on that island, a few miles from Kiska. Two of the VP-62 planes, with pilots Geer, Ashcraft, Grisko and Crockett, were ordered to fly them there, land in the bay, send them ashore in rubber rafts, then come back two days later and pick them up. All went well as we delivered them and returned to base.

"Two days later, at the exact set time, we cruised in to land in the bay as before. By the time we were floating close to the shore, the engineers were rowing their rafts as fast as possible

toward us. As soon as we were close enough, they said, 'Start up the engines and get out as fast as possible!'

"We did the best we could -- pulled them aboard and took off. They said, 'Get out fast! In exactly two minutes, Washing Machine Charley will be here in a Zero on floats to look things over.' We gave her full throttle and flew away for Adak at a breezing 120 knots. We got safely home, even without clouds for cover."

Micky Tappan remembers:

"...The time we were in the mess hall at Attu and Stan Rank, the gas king on the Casco, hollowed out a grenade, put a CO2 cartridge in it, and at the proper time, pulled the pin and rolled the grenade, hissing, along the floor of the mess hall, yelling, 'Grenade!' The jam to get out the door was something I'll never forget."

Pete Maxwell remembers:

"In early September, when the salmon started running, there was a small creek at the head of Casco Cove which had some pools separated by shallow riffles, and some of us fishing types would stand by these shallow spots and snag them, by hand or improvised gaff hooks, or whatever it took, as they worked their way up the creek. Our quonset hut was headquarters for salmon barbeques, grilled over old oak salvaged from shipping crates. Our hut had everything -- cabinets, running water, furniture, you name it -- from stuff scrounged from the SeaBee camp across the cove or the guys with the weather subs up on the bay.

"The skipper had us put on a barbeque in front of his quonset hut for Commodore Gehres one evening. Gehres wasn't told about it until the fire was just right, and then he witnessed us reaching down under the tundra, overhanging the bank alongside the stream, to snag a couple of seven- to ten-pound salmons with our hands."

Bob Ashcraft remembers (and still came back for more):

"When VP-42 returned from Attu, Joe Buskirk went with the squadron to Belem. The medics got after Ted Crockett for a heart murmur that was no news to anyone, but we were doing pretty well in the war by then, so he was grounded. I was sent to San Diego for reassignment to a more exciting part of the war. I met some of my flight school roommates coming in yellow with atabrine and quinine. That told me that someone had to do the Aleutians, and I should know my way around all the rocks by then, so why not volunteer to keep on doing what I knew best. No one argued, but I'm surprised that my file didn't get some kind of a mentally deficient mark in it. I went back to Oak Harbor.

"My assignment was to VP-61, Joe Eastman commanding. By then, the ALNAV had made us all LT's. Took lots of talent -- to stay alive. But this time my bride and I had a nice place to stay: Don's Auto Court in Mount Vernon, which was a lot better than the cabin we had had before with only a wood cookstove to cook on and to heat water. Now we had a furnace and a hot water heater.

"VP-61 relieved the duty outfit at Attu in the summer of '44.

"It was on this deployment from Whidbey, I'm sure, that Frank Woody taxied off the runway at Annette, went down the embankment about 20 feet, and ended up on his nose with the Yoker's tail stuck straight up in the air.

"We were taxiing along the runway to the downwind end to get ready to go. There were three or four of us. Woody was at the tail end. The others were pulled off to the side, checking mags, when Frank went right on by us! He should have taken his place at the tail end. As he passed, I asked him where he was going, but all I saw was a pumping action of head and shoulders as he tried to get the emergency hydraulic pump to do its job. No brakes.

"A PBY makes a graceful swan as it dives off the end of a runway into the goop that surrounds the runway at Annette. As I remember it, we determined that no one was hurt, so we just left him there.

"The SeaBees had made fantastic improvements at Attu. I really made a good choice in San Diego. We had the jumbo quonsets with handball courts, gyms and steam baths. Now THIS was the way to fight a war!

"But there was still the sea smoke and the ever-present problem of finding a place to sit after a patrol. LORAN and improved radar were big helps, but we used the improvements to do more with the equipment, so the risks were still there. We usually lost one or two new crews in the first two or three weeks after a deployment. The searches for the planes that didn't come back were uniformly disappointing.

"My crew and I almost bought a large part of the Komandorskis one day when we all nearly went to sleep. It was a day of several mistakes.

"We had a southerly sector -- say about 230 degrees true. My navigator gave me a course which I accepted without question. He had done this before, and how could it go wrong? Navigation is not that hard. I learned on a fast hop over from Sitka to Kodiak.

"It was a gloppy day, fog down on the water, so we set up on a comfortable altitude of about 500 feet on the gauges. Not much doing. We were way out over the clear part of the North Pacific

-- couldn't possibly be anything in that part of the world. It was a good day for the crew to learn something about what the other guys do at their stations. Among other 'learning experiences,' we put the ordnance man on the radarscope for awhile and had one of the regular radarmen supposedly holding school.

"We often put the plane on the autopilot at times like that, but this day, I remember that I was flying manually. Good thing I was.

"The first unusual thing I saw was foam going under the plane. Like the surface of the ocean was being stirred up by some kind of huge monster. Then there was hard core in the foam! ROCKS! But we were way down south! How could there be land under us? Ellis Skidmore, the first pilot, and I saw it all at the same time. We were flying up a valley with hills to right, to the left, and straight ahead. And not too long to wait to have them in our laps.

"The hills on the left seemed to be covered with fog, and they were the same on the right. We were too low to apply power and climb straight out. We needed something done RIGHT NOW!

"Fortunately, Skid and I both stomped on the same rudder: to the left. We uttered what would have gone down as a most inappropriate exclamation for one's last words. We twisted that poor old lady around and hauled back on the yoke and pulled everyone down that was not sitting. We counted tundra patches and rocks as we did an approximate 180 -- maybe a little more for good measure -- and went right back into the goop, but with the props and throttles rammed to the windshield and the nose up as high as it would go without stalling. Helma, in the tower, could just put the mixtures up when he got to them.

"It didn't take long to get on top of the stuff. Looking back, guess what: there in all their green glory and desolation were all the Komandorski Islands, and we had been right in the middle of one of them. That should have been enough to call it quits and go home, but we didn't. As long as we were there, we took a little sightseeing trip around and left before we awakened the natives. I had to calm down before I went to see the navigator about this little matter.

"'Castleberry,' I asked. 'What on earth happened?'

"'Well,' he said, 'I added the variation instead of subtracting it.'

"'When did you know that?'

"'Oh, way back there, I guess,' he replied.

"'Why didn't you tell me?' I asked, trying to make some reason out of this near disaster.

"'Well, I was afraid you might be mad at me.'"

Leon Blair remembers:

"As it is in most military operations, first priority in establishing forward bases is given to heavy construction -- docks, airfields, warehouses -- and a lower priority to 'creature comforts,' such as barracks for the soldiers and sailors who make the base function. So it was when the Aleutian islands of Adak and Amchitka were occupied in preparation for the recapture from the Japanese of Kiska and Attu.

"The occupation of uninhabited Adak was prosaic. Army engineers and Navy SeaBees drained a large lake and built runways with Marston matting (interlocking steel panels), built a dock and warehouses, a control building, and other necessary infrastructures. Personnel, for the most part, were housed in tents, a precarious existence on this barren, windswept island, where the wind velocity in local storms (called 'williwaws') were frequently gale force.

"Adak was to be the staging base for the occupation of Amchitka, not fifty miles from Japanese-held Kiska. That occupation was more perilous than the Adak operation because of the proximity to Kiska, which possessed a fine harbor providing an operating base for Japanese submarines and seaplanes. Obviously, the U.S. Navy would play a major surveillance and anti-submarine role.

"As the Navy buildup at Adak continued, housing became critical. The mentality -- and expectations -- of a sailor has always been conditioned by the shipboard tradition: bunks, clean sheets, showers. There had to be a better way of living.

"Ensign Leon Blair, a pilot newly assigned to Patrol Squadron 43, had been in the construction business prior to his enlistment in the Navy. Assigned a work-party made up of transient personnel from the Headquarters Squadron, he and his Navy workers erected fifteen 24' x 48" quonset huts to house Navy flight crews and their support personnel. The half-round, prefabricated, corrugated buildings (with a floor) were luxurious in comparison to a tent.

"On the other hand, quonset huts were not available on Amchitka, where a few days after the landing there, Lieutenant Carl 'Bon' Amme arrived with a three-plane section of PBY-5A's to provide anti-submarine cover for the invasion armada. His arrival was a surprise to the U.S. Army General commanding the island, and no provision for housing the crews had been made, not even tents. Lieutenant Amme returned to Adak, leaving Ensign Blair to 'make arrangements.' 'Anything you need?' he asked on departure. 'Send me a couple crates of oranges,' Blair told him. The oranges arrived the next day, and were bartered for 'services' by Army personnel.

"Three days later, a Navy area had been delineated on the plateau overlooking the airfield, three tents had been erected on the sodden muskeg and twelve more delivered, together with Army cots, kerosene heaters, and sleeping bags for forty-five men.

"Tents pitched on the muskeg were a temporary expedient, and each flight crew, when not flying, proceeded to 'winterize' its tent by building a floor raised off the ground on 2" x 6" joists and framing the vertical side walls with lumber so the tent just fit over the whole structure. Lumber was plentiful (a freighter had dumped its cargo overboard to be floated to the beach), but the outgoing tide caught it and a hundred thousand board feet or so eddied around the end of the island and washed up on the beach on the east side in a massive tangle. The military had no intention of sorting and reclaiming.

"Gossip pervades any military operation, but the Navy flight crews on Amchitka seemed unusually well-informed. They should have been! The Navy mess hall was mistakenly hooked in to the island's command telephone, and the mess-cooks maintained a telephone watch."

Vernon Monckton remembers how it was to be in a boat crew:

"My first duty after joining VP-41 in Kodiak was as a member of the boat crew. Beaching PBY's was the COLDEST job I ever had. Standing ramp watch, I was probably as scared as I ever was, because it was so dark that I couldn't even see my hand in front of my face, and the sheet ice made just standing up an achievement.

"During the attack at Dutch Harbor, a couple of things stand out. Going out to Jack Litsey's plane to get the waist guns to use for anti-aircraft. Seeing one seaman on the ramp with his shoes on the wrong feet, and he didn't even know it. Looking up at the falling bombs and thinking that if I could see a side view of the bomb, I was safe. Watching the bomb fall from release until it hit the engine or cab of a truck. Hiding behind a rock, only to discover that it was another sailor who thought I was a rock.

"I remember the tense waiting as we arrived at Adak just as the war was coming to an end. I don't think I ever had a worse hangover than the one when the war ended. I believe we were stationed at Andrew's Lagoon at that time."

Jim Russell remembers the Russians in Kodiak:

"Late in September, 1941, we were informed that two Russian-built PBY's, the type airplane we were flying, would visit Kodiak and remain overnight with us while enroute to Seattle. The Germans had gone to war with Russia and were invading that country at that time. The two Russian PBY seaplanes were carrying a delegation to Seattle, from whence the delegation was

going on to Washington, D.C. to seek aid in their fight against the Germans.

"We were told that the two Russian seaplanes would arrive at five o'clock in the evening. Many people from the Air Station and from my squadron gathered on the seaplane ramp to greet the Russians. As five o'clock approached, no Russian seaplanes were in sight. Suddenly, and at exactly five o'clock, two Russian PBY's appeared over Woman's Bay. They had come directly over the mountains of Kodiak Island, rather than around over the sea, as was our usual route. The two planes made good landings on Woman's Bay and taxied up to the seaplane ramp in succession. Their beach approaches were like ours: one engine was stopped before the other, and a man walked out on the wing to keep the offshore wing down. The plane spun around tail to the beach, so that our beach crew, in waders, could attach a line to the tail. Our wheeled beaching gear fitted neatly into the receptacles on each side of the hull and under the tail, showing that the planes had been built to our identical drawings for these parts.

"Our tractors pulled each plane out of the water, tail first, and there they sat on the parking apron, dripping water, while we put ladders up for the crew and passengers to descend. Nothing happened for an appreciable interval. Finally, one passenger and an interpreter came down the ladder and asked for the commanding officer of the Air Station. We pointed out Captain Perry to him. He then introduced himself as General Gromov and said to Captain Perry, 'I request permission to land my passengers and crews.'

"'You are most welcome,' responded Captain Perry.

"Then the Russians started coming out of the two airplanes -- twenty-three from one and twenty-two from the other. (We flew our PBY's with a crew of seven or eight.)

"The Naval Air Station, Kodiak, was still building, and our officers' rooming facilities were very limited. We filled up what we had available, then partitioned off one wing of a beautiful, newly built enlisted men's barracks, where we had canvas cots laid out for the remainder of our visitors.

"The day was Wednesday, and Wednesday evening of each week, I set aside as 'school night.' One officer of our squadron would study a particular subject and lecture on it. Subjects assigned might be engine maintenance, radio operation, etc. I explained to General Gromov that it was school night and asked if he would speak before the gathering of my officers. He said he would.

"After supper, we gathered in a large lounge and I introduced General Gromov. He spoke through the interpreter.

"General Gromov had piloted an airplane over the North Pole from Russia to the United States in 1937. He was the second pilot to attempt this feat. The first was Igor Chkalov, who had landed his airplane, short of fuel, on the airfield at Vancouver

Barracks on the north shore of the Columbia River in Washington State. Gromov, who had made his flight a month or so later, landed in a cow pasture near San Jacinto, California, some distance inshore from Los Angeles, which was his objective but obscured by coastal fog. Gromov gave us the story of this flight and a fascinating history of aviation in Russia. He also told us the tactics the Russians hoped to use to stop the German invasion short of Stalingrad.

"At this point in his talk, and with no change in the manner of his delivery, he looked out the window and said, 'I don't understand you Americans. Why don't you put that hangar [pointing to our seaplane hangar] under that mountain [pointing to Old Woman's Mountain]?'

"Then he said, 'Where are the revetments alongside your runways?' (The runways were just building at that time.)

"He continued, 'And, above all, why do you mark this station with a steel water tower?'

"Then he sat down.

"You can imagine that this put me in an awkward position. What was I to say in response?

"Rising, I thanked General Gromov for his very interesting talk. Then I said, 'You are going to Washington, D.C.?' He answered, 'Yes.' I then told him that the Naval Air Station, Kodiak, had been designed in Washington, and it would be helpful if he would make his comment to the authorities there. He accepted the mission and seemed satisfied.

"Many stories were told of the Russians' overnight stay with us.

"We were not yet at war and the station officers had their families with them. Lieutenant and Mrs. Dawson lived in an apartment just across the street from my squadron officers' quarters, the BOQ Building. After supper, two of our Russian visitors accepted an invitation to visit with the Dawsons. One played the piano and the other danced the picturesque and energetic Russian dances in which one sits on his heels and kicks his feet alternatively out in front of him. A very gay and happy party was in progress, until a third Russian walked in on the scene. It was as if a curtain had been lowered on a stage. All the merriment stopped, and the party seemed to end in gloom, as the Russians went away to their assigned overnight sleeping accommodations. Some discreet questions later brought to light that the third Russian was a 'political officer' determined to end fraternization with freedom-loving Americans, which might lead to dissatisfaction with the Soviet system!

"I had just turned in -- that is, gone to bed -- that night, when there was a knock on my door. I got out of my bed and opened the door. There, standing in front of me, was the

interpreter, who had with him a tall, cadaverous-looking Russian, who was talking rapidly and waving his arms in the air excitedly.

"I said to the interpreter, 'What is wrong with our comrade here?'

"The interpreter said, 'Comrade X--- wants you to know that he is a commissioned officer. He has found that he is to sleep in a part of an enlisted man's barracks. He regards this as an insult and is here to protest.'

"I explained that every available room in the BOQ had been assigned to the visiting Russians; that one wing of a brand new building, clean, well-ventilated and warm, equipped with fresh bedding on new cots, and partitioned off from the remainder of the building, was assigned to those whom we could not accommodate in the BOQ. Comrade X---'s assignment there we had hoped would be comfortable and adequate. I added to the interpreter, 'I thought you had a classless society in the Soviet Union!'

"But Comrade X--- chose to argue further, whereupon I turned back my bed, got into a bathrobe, and said I would spend the night in Comrade X---'s bunk and he would have mine.

"With that, Comrade X--- exploded into more animated comment to the interpreter. He would have no part of that arrangement. He was deeply offended and he wanted me to know it. He finally walked off down the corridor, still gesticulating and jabbering to the interpreter.

"One final episode with the Russians. They took off from Woman's Bay in their two Russian-built PBY's the next morning. About halfway across the Gulf of Alaska to Sitka, they radioed that they had sighted a submarine. We checked carefully. It was not one of ours! Manning all five of our airplanes (the sixth was at gunnery school), we fanned out over the area of the reported sighting and found nothing. Once alerted by sighting an airplane, a submarine would take care not to be sighted again. Could this have been a Japanese submarine on a reconnaissance of Alaskan waters? We never found out."

Boyd Peer remembers flying over the Jap Fleet:

"We had just returned from San Francisco, where we spent a wonderful week while our plane was being equipped with radar. Cy Perkins, the Exec of VP-42, was our plane commander. Al Birchman was the plane captain, and I was the second mech. M.E. Johnson 'Johnny' was the aviation pilot, and 'Hoot Smith' the enlisted navigator. At Seattle, we picked up twelve naval personnel as passengers to Kodiak and took off for Sitka. Sitka weather was normal, socked in with 65 to 85 feet ceiling and about 150 yards visibility. As we skirted and dodged landmarks at 50 feet above the water, Cy Perkins, who was flying, kept reassuring us over the intercom, 'Don't worry. I know where I'm at, I know where I'm at.' He repeated this several times and then he said, 'NOW,

I know where I'm at!' That scared the socks off the crew, and rightfully so, for less than two minutes later, Johnny seized the control and dumped the left wing down in a 180-degree turn to the left and hauled out away from a cliff that loomed up on the right bow. When we finally landed and found the ramp to the Naval Air Station, the beach crew said that we had grass stains on the bottom of the hull!

"The first day the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor was our crew's 'rest day' for sleeping in. The bombing sent us scurrying for shelter in a slight dip in the ground, which left us pretty much exposed. The next morning (June 4) at 0330, we took off with two other planes to search for the Japanese carrier task force. One of the planes had a fuel leak and radioed he had to return to Dutch. We then communicted by blinker (Aldis lamp) with the Gillis and got orders to contact the Jap fleet about 240 miles SE of Dutch Harbor. At about 1100, we picked up the Japanese warships by radar about 25 miles dead ahead. We finally sighted the carrier through a break in the clouds. We were flying at about 1500 feet at the time. I was in the tower and called the plane commander on interphone. I asked him, 'Now that we have found the fleet, what are we going to do now, go home or what?'

"Perkins replied, 'Now we are going in for the ATTACK!' Just then, we broke out in the clear right over a cruiser who immediately started to fire on us. Johnny hit the throttles and I gave him 'Full Rich' on the mixture controls as we nosed up into the clouds. Many things happened in seconds: the port oil tank was hit, Johnny turned on the red light for full rich mixture and kept yelling to Cy Perkins to drop the two 500-lb. bombs and torpedo. Al Birchman was in the port blister hollering, 'We're hit!' Perkins ordered me to shut down the port engine. I asked Johnny, 'You need all the power you can get, don't you?'

"Perkins questioned me about the cylinder head temperature and the oil pressure. I reported that all was normal, which was not true. The temperature was rising. Once we were high enough and far enough away, Johnny leveled off and I cut off the fuel, and when the prop stopped turning, Johnny feathered the prop and pulled the idle cut off.

"Back in Dutch Harbor, we found that the engine had seized. Perkins said, 'Peer, you ruined a perfectly good aircraft engine.' I replied, 'Yeah, but I saved nine lives doing it!'"

Otis Hays remembers this News Bulletin from Tashkent. So does "Lover" Brown:

NYET PRAVDA

("No Truth")

Naval Internees Arrive at Tashkent.
The new arrivals are:

PPC	John Dingle	PPC	Jack Cowles	PPC	Carl Lindell
	Pete Petterborge		Allen Peniella		Jim Head
	Red Dulan		Millard Parker		Keith Richardson
	Hank Henry		Harold Tony		Harry Williamson
	Stoneface Pollard		Bob McDonald		Lover Brown
	Danny Leintz				Rusty Manthie

News Highlights:

1. Commander Gehres relieved of Wing Command, assigned as "Commander" to jeep carrier. Cow, pigs and chickens going to hell.

2. Navy expected shortly to discontinue PV-1 missions. Stahl's squadron sweating out stateside in November.

3. Carl Lindell and Rusty Manthie take on Simeon and Bee-bee eyes Pavlo the cook and give them the works as a parting gesture for the wrestling championship of Kamchatka.

4. Lt. George Mahrt -- a superb pilot and a man with a horseshoe up his ass -- forced to take back seat in good luck stories as details of Jack Cowles and crew's last hop began to unfold. Attacking 18 vessels in Paramushiru Straits, had one engine shot out and hydraulic system out. Single engine for 40 minutes while Jap fighters made about 30 runs. One sure kill and probables. Squeezed across Shimushu by minutes for crash landing on Lopatka, which all survived due solely to flak helmets and fact that plane split in two on landing, thus affording emergency exit. Plane exploded shortly after four-second escape. Entire crew sustained severe burns.

5. John Dingle and crew also crash on landing at Petro airstrip -- locked brakes -- after harrowing duel with oil tanker, which was left ablaze but not before it had discharged a 75mm shell into plane's nose. Lots of fresh air, erratic engines and a few fighters on the 150-mile hop to Petro.

6. Cowles and crew treated to ringside view of B-25 raid on Shimushu -- bombs whistling -- searchlights, flak, etc.

7. Cowles also reports Rumford's devastating night raids on Lopatka highly successful. Russians using his frags for ashtrays -- haven't yet decided what to do with 500#

craters.

8. Not much need be said about trip across except that the Petro-Khabarovsk hop was made by DC-3 around the Sea of Okhotsk. The rest was about the same with gallons of beer and vodka.

Jim Russell also remembers:

Dutch Harbor Revisited (June 4 and 5, 1982)

"Hostilities of World War II began in the Aleutian Islands with a Japanese aircraft carrier raid against Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4, 1942. The installation of a granite stone monument to mark the fortieth anniversary of that event was planned, organized and effected by Ted Spencer of Anchorage, President of the Alaska Historical Aircraft Society. He invited me to attend and asked me to help him assure the attendance of suitable representation from Japan. Okumiya, air operations officer on the staff of Admiral Kakuta, who commanded the two-carrier Japanese raiding force, was not available; however, Hiroichi Samejima, who led the "Kate" torpedo bombers from Ryujo, was. Samejima, then a commander, came to Washington, D.C. in 1955 as the first naval attache after World War II. Thereafter, Samejima rose to the top of their Navy, and went on to become Chairman of the Joint Staff Council, the number one military post in Japan. Upon receiving his invitation to Alaska, he telephoned me from Tokyo. Uncertain as to the attitude of the Aleuts toward the Japanese, he said to me, 'If you'll go, I'll go.' He did attend and brought along with him Colonel Zenji Abe, who commanded the 'Val' dive bomber squadron flying from Junyo.

"Samejima survived WWII because he was assigned test pilot duty during the latter part of the war; Abe, because he engaged in the Mariannas 'Turkey Shoot.' Without enough fuel to return to his carrier, he landed on Rota, a small island between Guam and Saipan, and eventually was taken prisoner.

"The highlight of the trip to Dutch Harbor was when Ted Spencer engaged Tom Madsen and his twin Beech airplane to fly us the sixty miles from Dutch Harbor to Otter Point on adjacent Umnak Island. Abe was still hurting from having lost four of his Vals to P-40's based at Otter Point, an airfield unknown to Japanese intelligence. We landed at that abandoned airbase, took a short walk, and were impressed with the size of the base and its presemt complete disuse. Along with us was B. Gen. Benjamin B. Talley, (CE) USA (retired), who, as colonel, was charged with the construction of our two secret airfields -- this one at Otter Point, another at Cold Bay near the end of the Alaskan Peninsula. Leaving Otter Point to fly back to Dutch Harbor and over the southwest tip of Unalaska Island, across the channel from Otter Point, we spotted one of the two P-40's shot down forty years ago, still lying on its back on the tundra! As we progressed over the terrain so familiar to me, I realized we were not going directly to Dutch Harbor. Sitting in the left front passenger

seat, I identified Beaver Inlet below us; then it became apparent that Samejima, flying from the co-pilot's seat, was taking us to the south shore of Unalaska Island. From there, he turned to take us over the route he flew early in the morning of June 3, 1942 to lead the attack on Dutch Harbor!

"The Japanese were regarded by the Aleuts with more curiosity than anything else. During the afternoon banquet in the Unalaska Village high school gymnasium, they were called upon, as were many of us, to make remarks. This they did very well in English. Mr. Philemon "Phil" Tutiakoff, an Aleut and Chairman of the Aleutian and Pribiloff Islands Association, was Master of Ceremonies. The religious part of the proceedings at the monument was conducted by Father Gromoff, the Russian Orthodox priest in Unalaska, and the service was conducted in Russian. At one point, Mr. Tutiakoff announced that a number would be sung by the choir. He then left his post as Master of Ceremonies and joined the choir. There were four in the choir and they sang in Russian. Six WWII pilots from Patrol Wing Four were present, among them four from my VP-42 squadron. A veteran of the 11th Army Air Force, a B-26 driver, Raiford Perry, was there. Represented also were the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard, the Alaska National Guard, and the Canadian Forces, by active duty personnel. It was truly an impressive occasion, even to the laying of a bottle of saki among the wreaths at the memorial stone by Colonel Abe so that the spirits of the departed might be refreshed."

Charlie Fitzpatrick remembers a dramatic ditching:

"March 17, 1945 brought a pleasant morning to the island of Attu. There was a slight breeze sweeping the runway, the ceiling was generous by Aleutian standards, and scattered patches of sunlight peeked through the overcast as 82V from VPB-136 lifted off the runway at 0950 hours with seven happy crewmen headed for home with scheduled stops at Umnak and Kodiak.

"Our trip to Umnak was uneventful, but the excitement of being homeward bound permeated 82V as we touched down just four hours and forty-five minutes after leaving Attu.

"We checked in, ate, fueled 82V, got an 'iffy' weather report, and with an affirmative vote of the crew, we took off for Kodiak at 1514 hours. As we flew on, the weather worsened. The wind became much stronger out of the northeast, creating a tough headwind, while the ceiling got lower and lower. (Forty-two years later, details come like the weather was then -- tough!)

"We crossed the Chirikof Island radio a little off schedule at about 500 feet, just below the overcast. Light was fast departing, as did our radio, which quit abruptly. If this wasn't enough, 82V's electrical system also started to malfunction. Now, with fuel problems caused by the strong headwind, our captain, Lt. Jim Moorehead, chose to ditch 82V at the only place that appeared to have habitation. That we were over a settlement


THE STINKY-DINKY
ZANDERY'S
ONLY HIGH CLASS JOINT

KANSAS CITY STAR.
JULY 12, 1944

"BAIT HOOK" FROM SKY

THE STAR'S AVIATION EDITOR ON "FISHING TRIP" IN PACIFIC.

Justin D. Bowersock Rides Twin-Engined Flying Boat That Prowls Sea for Japanese Submarines.

BY JUSTIN D. BOWERSOCK.
(The Star's Aviation Editor.)

An Advanced North Pacific Air Base, June 7.(Delayed).—A task force of Uncle Sam's fighting ships moved along on its course somewhere in the North Pacific headed for a contact with the Japs. Overhead a twin engine flying boat moaned along in the sky above doing its duty as the protective eyes, and lookout for enemy craft.

As a passenger on that plane, which for nine hours skimmed beneath the overcast at from 150 to 300-foot altitude above the water, there was a feeling of being on the strangest fishing trip in the world.

We were fishing for Jap subs and we had the right kind of tackle along to make a catch.

During the flight there were what you might call some nibbles and we investigated each one, but they must have been whales. What we were using for tackle can't be mentioned. The crew and ship didn't miss a thing and although it didn't catch anything either, it accomplished the mission of seeing that nothing got a pot shot at any of those fighting ships. It's a busy day for the men who fly those planes.

Leaning on a heavy caliber machine gun on the starboard side of the plane, we watched as Lieut. Don R. Coe, 28-year-old pilot from Humboldt, Kas., directed the movement of the plane down the metal mat runway. The young member of fleet air wing No. 4 was the plane commander on today's mission.

A JOB FOR EVERYONE.

Don's a sharp-looking and easy-going guy with reddish hair and mustache. He has been attached to this base since June, 1943, and was the pilot of one of the first PBY's to bomb Kiska. He likes the old PBY boats. And he likes his job, even though it lacks the sensational aspect of the jobs of other pilots in the wing who slip over and hit Paramushiro almost every night.

"This is a job that has to be done, somebody has to do it, and it's all right by me," he said as we climbed the ladder and entered the twin-engine flying boat.

Once at our station, we slipped on the intercom earphones and wondered what these boys would talk about as they started out to where anything might happen. The plane was moving out to position for take-off. Tall, 23-year-old Lieut. R. W. (Blondie) Briggs of Seattle, the pilot-navigator, was at his post and Lieut. J. T. (Johnny) Braithwaite of Cleveland, the co-pilot, was in his place in the right seat beside Don.

"Boy, I never saw a prettier day when I got up this morning," came the cheerful voice of Blondie. "Felt like singing 'Oh, What a Beautiful Morning.' Hope it's a beautiful morning where we're going." Then he opened the secret orders which would direct the plane to a point where it would intercept the task force. And that takes a lot of figuring.

"Hope it's nice when we get back so I can play some softball," chirped the voice of M. E. (Wag) Waguespack, 23-year-old radioman from Shreveport, La.

SPANISH CLASS AWAITS JOHNNY.

"You're lucky," cut in Johnny. "I got to go to a Spanish class tonight. Hope we don't get back in time."

"What in the world are you going to do with Spanish up in this neck of the woods?" piped Don. "If you're gonna learn a language why don't you start studying Aleutian? You may become a native, who knows."

That's the way it went. We pressed the button on the hand mouthpiece and said our 2 cents worth and felt like one of the family. Then the ship was racing down the runway and was into the air. We climbed up to "almost 300 feet" and there we stayed while Blondie was doing a lot of navigational work. There could be no guess work about this.

In less than a certain time, A. C. (Jinks) Albrecht, 18-year-old aircraft radioman third class from Indianapolis, who was busy at work, gave a report.

"Task force is twenty degrees off our starboard bow," came his voice over the intercom. In a few minutes the entire array of ships could be seen.

Now came the job, which would continue throughout the day, to follow the prescribed plan for protection of the fleet. It calls for keen navigation. The boys all admit it is somewhat more interesting to guard the fleet than go on routine patrols when the job of the day is just to search—and they seldom see a thing. At least on this day every so often we could see some activity in the form of ships headed for battle.

The plane was out of sight of the task force now. The cold waters of the North Pacific were slipping by beneath us. There was a slight relaxation, since the first job of intercepting the task force had been accomplished. But every member of the crew was on alert.

INVESTIGATE ALL CLUES.

The radioman reported "something" six miles off the port beam and the big plane immediately changed course and headed for an investigation. It turned out to be a naval vessel. There was an exchange of signals and we put back to our regular course. It was in the afternoon that the plane's crew was busy for about an hour with continued "nibbles." Each one turned out to be nothing. But these boys take no chance on missing a bet and over we went to where that something might be.

The weather has pushed us down even closer to the water now. Another "nibble" dead ahead. Wham! Another plane whizzed by in the opposite direction on our port side.

That night, in fleet air wing No. 4s officer mess, J. W. Trout, 26 years old, of Girard, Kas., son of Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Trout, stepped up to Don Coe.

"Did you see me out there today?" Trout asked.

"See you? You just about took some of the paint off the tip of our port wing," came Don's reply.

Now as we continue the flight a message comes from the home base giving directions when relief will arrive. At the prescribed time we go up "on top" for the first sight of the sun as we reach the top of the overcast at 2,000 feet.

There's a broad smile on the faces of the crew members now as Don speaks into the intercom:

"Hold your hats boys, here we go for home port," and he shoves the throttles a bit forward. It's a long and straight course computed by Blondie and after so long a time the snow-capped mountains are visible above the top of the overcast.

We drop down to 200 feet above the water, snake our way in between peaks. Then Don brings the ship down on the strip in a perfect landing.

"Well, that's that. Let's get some chow," says Don. "We got those babies along their way."

was obvious, but what settlement and where?

"When Moorehead tried the landing lights for some aid in finding the shoreline and sea, one light shot up a few degrees higher than the nose of the aircraft, and the other beamed off at a downward angle. 82V appeared as weary as its seven occupants; later we believed that the old bird had had it and that it was ready to settle down.

"Moorehead's first attempt felt the tail slapping the waves. As we positioned for the ditching, he realized we were too far away from the beach, so he put a little power to the Pratt & Whitneys and 82V responded beautifully, bringing her closer to shore, where he put her down in five- to six-foot seas on one of the darkest, stormiest nights ever. It was 2145 hours. The fellows in the front office had their hands full. I could no longer assist them with an extra pair of eyes, so I went aft. I had passed the word to wedge open 82V's door and for all to brace themselves so we were ready for the impact. The plane hit, skipped, stopped, then settled -- it all seemed simultaneous. The door was ejected but no raft popped out of it. Shock hit us. The spare four-man raft was thrown out rapidly as Bill Glennon, Fred Beurskins, Ken Sherman (a non-crew member looking for a quick ride home), and Harry Moran exited the plane. I went out the astro hatch and onto the port wing. Moorehead and co-pilot Pat Tierney used the pilot's overhead escape hatches. Moorehead got out on the port wing and asked me where the life rafts were. He got a quick answer, then jumped into the turbulent water.

"Tierney went out the starboard overhead hatch and into the sea. In his attempt to clear the plane, he went off in a direction opposite from the rest as 82V settled nose first with a starboard list.

"Several crew members had the raft in tow. Sherman and Glenmore, I believe. They helped Beurskins and Moorehead aboard. I was still on the port wing, hollering for Moran, as was the rest of the crew. For some reason, the thought raced through my mind that Moran might still be in the aircraft. I ran back across the wing, pulled myself up onto the fuselage so I could get to the astro hatch and yell into the aircraft for Moran to get out. Since he was the last in line to go out the door, no one knew whether he had made it or not. By the time I yelled into the hatch, the four in the raft shouted that they had Moran alongside the raft.

"Now, 82V's attitude was as in a steep dive, and the tail was visibly out of the water. I hastily, but carefully, retraced my steps out onto the port wing and without hesitation or a look back, jumped into the frigid water. I was the last to reach the raft. Hands reached out for me, and I was pulled onto and across the raft, face down, as there was no other way to get aboard. With the raft now full of water and five crewmen already aboard, my added weight and size didn't help.

"Balancing, in high seas, a four-man raft full of water with

six men aboard created an intense situation to which we paid close attention. The raft was actually floating beneath the surface. I was having difficulty getting air, lying face down across the raft, head and face submerged. As the waves rose over the raft, I had to hold my breath. Moorehead immediately set up a system for my breathing. Lying down in this manner, I could not see the waves and as a wave approached, Moorehead would hit my back with his fist, which meant to hold my breath. As the wave washed past, he would hit me again, which meant that I could lift my head and take a breath. It worked.

"With the strong northeast wind, the raft drifted steadily, separating the six of us from where the plane disappeared and from where Tierney was last seen. We were down to our last water-soaked flare, and while changing positions to balance the raft, the flare accidentally fired. The flare flew beautifully in the dark and came down some forty yards from us, illuminating Tierney, alone in the water. The accidentally fired flare not only illuminated Tierney, it almost hit him. Seeing Tierney, they saved him.

"In the desperate effort to make a noticeable gain for shore, a paddle was broken. Now down to one paddle, the raft submerged, and with the cold embracing us, we heard the greatest thing ever -- unfamiliar voices calling to us out of the darkness. It was Missionary Steve Zdepski and four Aleutian boys from the tiny village of Karluk, whose lights we had seen from the air. This extremely brave group, without hesitation, had launched a 28-foot dory and had come out to rescue us in the darkness against high winds and heavy seas.

"Without this rescue effort by Missionary Zdepski, we wouldn't have made it, even though big Harry Moran had to pitch in. Moran had size and strength and when he took over the oars in those high seas, we could feel the dory pulling ahead against all the forces of the wind and sea. Certainly, God's grace had prevailed.

"Later that night, we understood that we had arrived at Karluk, Kodiak Island. This certainly was not how we had planned to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, especially since we were on the way back to the States.

"Repeated attempts to raise the Navy, or anyone, that eventful night by the local store's radio were to no avail. However, very early the next morning, the Navy was reached and advised of the rescue and that "all hands" had been saved. A return message later in the day said we would be advised, pending weather, of the date of pickup by a Navy ship. The bad weather prevailed, delaying the pickup at Karluk until March 21, 1945, five days later.

"At about 1100 hours on the 21st, Aleutian boys spotted Navy ship ATR68 with Captain Heddy and crew rounding the point. We, our rescuers, and some of the townspeople proceeded to the beach, watching the ship all the way. After many thank-yous, handshakes

and hugs, and those knowing, heartfelt eye gazes, one to another and some with tears, knowing in your own heart how grateful and appreciative you were for the heroics of those few and the heartwarming reception and openness of the town to each of us, we parted. A final look back with a wave or two as we were rowed out to Captain Heddy's ship seemed so inadequate. But then, so do words -- you rest with the hope that their hearts know, too, how you feel.

"We arrived at Kodiak that night at about 2140 hours, just five minutes short of our ditching hour five days before. From there on, it was a peaceful ride by NATS and ATC, leaving Kodiak on March 23 and arriving at Seattle at about 2200 hours on March 25, 1945.

"P.S. Last fall I visited Steve Zdepski at his New Jersey home. He is well and enjoying retirement. He remembers March 17, 1945 well. I called Steve in May (1987) to read him the rescue story. He mentioned a fact not remembered by all of the crew or me. He told how the dory swamped while trying to make shore and how those who had come down the rocky beach to see the excitement became a part of it. Several braved the sea, walked into it, grabbed a line thrown to them and, with others, pulled the dory through the breaking waves to shore and safety. I suppose the cold water and exposure had taken its toll. There were a number of things not fully recalled."

Ed Froelick remembers the Campbell Soup Bomb on Ballyhoo:

"It was the night of June 4, 1942, just after the second raid on Dutch Harbor. AMM 1/c (AP)-Ensign Hildebrand and I were sleeping in adjoining bunks with other crew members in a Quonset hut on the side of Ballyhoo Mountain. The sentry from the Command hut woke us at about 0300 to go on Patrol. Hildebrand was PPC then and had his own crew. I was plane captain on Crew "E," Lt. Bowers PPC. I had just gotten into my flying suit and, stooping over and holding my flashlight, was putting on my boots, when there was a hell of an explosion, shrapnel hitting me in the butt. I went down on my belly. Someone yelled, "They're here again!" and many feet thumped on the Quonset floor, evacuating at both ends hurriedly. Hildebrand asked, "What the hell was that, Ed?" I couldn't hear any aircraft engines, so I figured it wasn't an air raid. I swung my flashlight around and there, on top of the oil heater, was one remaining can of soup, swelled up about twice its normal size. Someone had set two cans of Campbell's soup to heat up but hadn't punched a hole in them, and one had blown up and the other looked like it was ready to go any minute. Hildebrand grabbed a dustpan and I the broom, which were nearby. Gingerly, I pushed the soup can onto the dustpan, and he threw it out the end door, but it still didn't explode. Enroute to our respective aircraft, we stopped, shook hands and wished each other good luck. I'll always remember Hildebrand's remark: "Ed, they are going to keep flying us till we're all dead." I never saw Hildebrand again. He and his crew disappeared on patrol that day, and as far as I know, no trace of them was ever found."

Garth Gilmore remembers:

"...the Army C-47 which, one dreary morning in late April, 1945, came from Shemya and made a perfect wheels-down landing on the hillside west of Casco Cove.

"On final approach to Casco Field, in zero visibility, the old Gooney Bird hit the hillside in full flight near the 800-foot level. The ceiling at the time was about 500 feet and sharply defined. The passengers and crew stepped out of the plane into deep snow and made their way down through the overcast, completing their trip to the Navy base on foot and by truck. In a manner of speaking, I was a witness, although I didn't see the C-47 in flight. It was around 0900 hours, and I was alone in the Wing Operations Office, which overlooked Casco Cove and the approach end of the instrument runway. The radios were on and tuned to the various air trafffic control frequencies, and I could hear all of the exchanges between the pilot and the controllers from the initial contact to the low cone.

"I had been timing each segment of the approach, and when the pilot reported inbound at the range station, I went to the window to watch for the plane to break out of the overcast. Minutes passed and no aircraft appeared. Then, from a direction-finder station came the word that bearings being taken on the IFF in the plane had ceased to change. Soon, a fix was obtained on the still-functioning IFF, and I knew where the flight had ended.

"Later, when the weather improved, I drove a Jeep around the cove and climbed up to the plane. Except for the sheared-off landing gear and bent props, there was no apparent damage. Wheel marks in the snow indicated that both wheels had touched at about the same time, lightly at first, then digging in after a short roll. Remarkably, at the point of contact, the plane had been in a right turn, banking 15 or 20 degrees, with the wings parallel to the slope of the hillside. Any other attitude at that moment would have spelled disaster. Had the hillside been a smooth, fast surface free of snow, the wheels could have touched and rolled without digging in. With power still on and no obstacles in its path, it is possible to speculate that the plane could have bounced into the air again, perhaps even completing its approach and landing at Casco Field. Of course, for those aboard, it was fortunate that trees do not grow on Attu."

Noel Hanson remembers how Commander Jim Russell managed to get his brothers, Melvin and Ray, transferred to VP-42. [Russell got Foy Taylor's brother, Uther, transferred too. He also got the Reed brothers together.]:

"I was a plane captain of three separate crews. It seemed that every time the second mech got qualified to take over the job, I was shifted to another crew. A close buddy named

Cunningham was the first to relieve me, and his first flight was his last. He flew with an eager plane commander who failed to have the ice removed from the wings before take-off at Dutch Harbor and hit the spit and broke into flames. There was only one survivor.

"The second crew loss was due to a careless mistake instead of being transferred, even though my second mech, named 'Rawls,' was about ready to become plane captain. A refueling launch from the seaplane tender U.S.S. Williamson tied alongside our plane to refuel it. Too much pressure had been applied to the launch fuel tank, so that when I opened the hose nozzle to fill our wing tank, the new type 'aromatic fuel' blew into my face and eyes. Since it was a new blend of high octane fuel with unknown physical effects, it was determined by the patrol plane commander that I should return with the refueling launch and check into the Williamson's sick bay. The fuel proved to be relatively harmless to me, but it saved my life, because my plane was shot down. Rawls, who took my place, was found in a life raft, where he had been strafed by Zeros from the same carrier that also strafed the Williamson the next day, while I was on the deck running from port to starboard each time one dropped below the overcast for a strafing run. The overcast prevented the Williamson gun crews from having enough time to train their guns on the Zeros long enough to be effective. One of the crew's radiomen was shot in one eye by a bullet that went through the radio shack bulkhead. It was a gruesome sight when I saw him crawl out on deck with so much blood on his face. Apparently, the only identifying item found on Rawls were the skivvies I had loaned him, so it was assumed that he was N.W. Hanson. My two brothers back at Kodiak had been told I was dead at Dutch Harbor, which caused a very emotional scene when I arrived back at Kodiak in another plane crew a few days later. Melvin was in the beach crew, and I kidded him from the port blister about being clumsy getting his side wheel attached to our plane. He began crying and swimming toward the ladder I had put over the side. I couldn't understand why he was so happy to see me, because I had not learned about the identity mistake. I have frequently shed a few tears myself when telling this story. Fortunately, the mistake was discovered before my parents were incorrectly advised.

"Another story, amusing and much happier, involved my brother Melvin when VP-42 was due to return to the States. We had very few planes left for crew transportation, so most of the squadron personnel were having to go back on a merchant ship. Just before my plane took off from Dutch Harbor for Kodiak, Melvin playfully hit me with a snowball through the open 'tower window' and complained that I would be in Seattle at least a week before him. Foul weather delayed our departure from Kodiak, and during the delay, it was decided that none of our planes would return to Seattle and the remainder of our personnel would return via another merchant ship. The ship's name eludes my memory, but it was luxury transportation compared to the Airdales' usual accommodations aboard a Navy seaplane tender. Shortly after departure, during noon mess in the 'luxury dining room,' a Chief named Gabriel came to my table and put his hat on me, then

invited me to finish eating at the 'Chief's Table.' Admiral Nimitz had ordered that all personnel in our squadron who were eligible to compete for the next higher rate would be promoted. I was just barely eligible and didn't expect to make Chief before another two years, and now, at age 24, I became the youngest ACMM in the Navy. One other AMM1c was promoted at the same time, but he had nine years in service compared to my sixty-four months.

"In the meantime, my brother Melvin got involved in a marathon crap game with the overpaid Merchant Marine crew on the ship he rode and won over $6,000. He and his buddies had been staying in the Bridal Suite at the Olympic Hotel for a week when I reached Seattle. He had become extremely popular.

"Another amusing story involved Melvin and an ex-Fleet Boxing Champ named Santasouza. When VP-42 first arrived at Kodiak early in 1942, a construction contractor named Sims-Drake had been doing work on the Air Station for several months. Their employees were paid exorbitant salaries compared to Navy pay scale. The station sponsored a periodic 'Boxing Smoker' in the auditorium with Navy and Sims-Drake employees competing. One of their crew had gained such an 'undefeatable' reputation that his loyal associates were giving 20-1 odds in his favor. After observing only one of his performances and noting his weight to be less than fifteen pounds more than my 'Golden Glove Champ' brother, it was obvious to me that Melvin could easily beat him. A match was scheduled for the following month. The odds were still 20-1 and I only had $600 to bet, so I sent home for the $1600 that I had sent to my parents to save. I was convinced that it would all get covered by the high-paid construction crew. Melvin had not boxed for more than two years, so Santasouza, nicknamed 'Hotsy Totsy' due to his mania for dancing, offered to work out with Melvin and give him some of his professional expertise. The little Italian was a real extroverted show-off and carried it to the extreme during their first sparring session, so Melvin tried to slow him down. Santasouza was knocked out for about five minutes with 16-oz. gloves. When the Sims-Drake bettors heard about it, the 20-1 odds dropped to even money and only enough bettors for the Sims-Drake fighter to get $600 covered, even though I had it announced over the loud speaker system that more money on Melvin was still available. Our squadron photographer took several excellent shots with his speed-graphic camera and caught the knockout blow at the exact instant it happened. A left hook followed by a right uppercut ended the contest about one minute after it began. I still have one of the 8 x 10 prints he made for me. Each time I see it, I am reminded of the $16,000 that could have been won if my little 120-lb. brother had allowed 'Hotsy Totsy' to appear superior as a Fleet Champ compared to a Golden Glove Champ.

"We all know about the demise of the five Sullivan brothers aboard one ship. It could have easily happened to the three Hansons, because we were all in the same plane crew for a brief period after I had already lost three crews previously. We definitely got separated after that. Within seven months, Melvin was sent back to Alaska, Ray to the Admiralty Islands, and I to

U. S. BOMBS JAPS' BASE IN KURILES

By Associated Press.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4.—Flying out from the Aleutian Islands, two Navy bombers pounded the big Japanese naval base at Paramushiro in the North Pacific Kuriles, the Navy announced today.

The raid on the enemy's largest base in the North Pacific was the tenth caried out since late in December.

Results of the bombing were not observed, possibly due to the heavy weather which ordinarily shrouds that region.

The navy reported that no enemy planes were encountered by the two bombing craft and that both of our planes returned safely to their base.

The attack was aimed at the southeastern coast of Paramushiro which is just south of the Russian Kamchatka Peninsula and the northernmost of th- n of islands in which th- meland is situat-

JAPS HOLD FIRE ON CLEAR DAYS

When the sky is clear over Paramushiru, Jap island on the northern tip of the Japanese empire, it is safer for our planes to drop bombs there than when it is overcast. The Japs don't send up flak when it is clear.

Such was the revelation today of Lt. A. J. Fleet of San Francisco, skipper of one crew of a group of navy fliers who arrived at Sand Point naval air station from the Aleutians today, for rest.

"Apparently, they don't want to give away their gun positions, so don't fire," explained Lt. Fleet. "The one time, on our four missions there that it was absolutely clear, there wasn't a shot fired at us. On other trips, they fired flak up thru the overcast which came so close that it jarred our ship—but we weren't hurt."

Missions from Attu to the Jap base take from 12 to 13 hours, he said.

"Cold is the worst trouble. We can't use many electric heated suits, because it is too much strain on the generators. Hot coffee is frozen within an hour after we take off; food, taken from heated -tainers, freezes before we can

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 1944

Yank Drops Glove "Challenge"

WRITER TELLS OF RAID

Norman Bell, Associated Press war correspondent, who has been covering the Pacific war since its start, now has the distinction of being the first United Nations correspondent to fly with raiders over the Japanese homeland. His eye-witness account of the Paramushiro raid announced Sunday in Washington, follows:

By NORMAN BELL

AN ALEUTIAN BASE—(Delayed—(AP)—I became the first war correspondent of the United Nations to fly over Japanese soil Thursday as I watched bombs drop from American Navy planes on a mission that took them farther down the shortcut route to Tokyo than any raiding planes have yet flown.

The bombs—big 500-pounders, and scores of anti-personnel twenty-pounders—crashed onto Karabu Zaki (point) at the southern tip of Paramushiro island.

An American boy's glove also fell on Karabu Zaki, an accidental but none-the-less genuine challenge to the enemy land.

The glove was dropped by Wendell K. Heule, 21 years old, of Galesburg, Ill., radioman, who was sent to help toss out anti-personnel bombs.

"I'm afraid my hands are going to get cold at this," was his only comment when his glove went sailing down with the first bomb he tossed through the open bomb bay doors. It was 14 above zero.

We were over the target about 3:30 a. m., Aleutian time, or shortly after midnight Friday, Japanese time. In bright starlight, snow-covered Paramushiro sprawled below, its ragged coastline clearly visible against the dark sea.

I sat in the after station seat of a Catalina plane with communication phones clamped over my ears as we crossed the coastline.

"Now, five degrees starboard," I heard the plane's commander, Lt. Jack Pilgrim of Lee's Summit, Mo., instruct the first pilot, Lt. (jg) Norwood M. Cole, former South Carolina school teacher.

A few minutes later we were making our run over the Japanese installations. We started dropping our load.

"Now give me another bomb," I heard Pilgrim call to his ordnance man and bombardier, Dirl L. Berry of Defiance, Ohio.

I saw the 500-pounder released from the wing rack and plummet earthward.

Radioman Heule, Crew Capt. Ernest N. Laney of Mansfield and Baton Rouge, La., and his assistant, Vincent Ferraro of Watervliet, N. Y., were busy tossing out the anti-personnel bombs.

Ensign Edwin Herzog, Gary, Ind., the navigator who expertly charted the long flight across the North Pacific and back, reported:

"We haven't enough gas to spend too much time over here, Mr. Pilgrim."

The plane cor nander acknowledged this th a brisk, "O. K."

Radio Specialis Constantine Kicz of Grand pids, Mich., was assisting in ection of the plane. Photogr er Ben Goldstein, also of G d Rapids, was busy looking wn the tunnel hatch in the

"They're busting all around," he cried as he saw the bombs bursting on the target below.

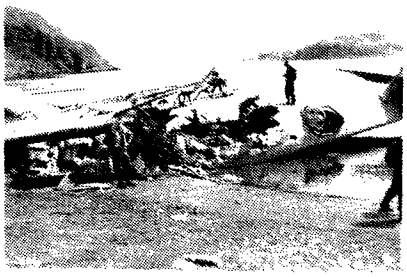
I could see the flashes of the Japanese anti-aircraft guns. They seemed to be firing more intensely at our wing plane commanded by Lt (jg) Lloyd W. Black Jr. of Philadelphia. There were no searchlights, however, and the enemy apparently was firing by sound or flash of our engine exhausts.

Ours was the first of two missions hitting Japan's Kurile chain the same night. Another force, fast Ventura bombers, struck at northern Paramushiro installations which were raided last by Navy planes of fleet air wing four on New Year's Day. The northern area previously had been raided by Navy planes Dec. 22, 1943, and before that four times by Army bombers of the Eleventh Air Force. Ours was the first blow at the southern area.

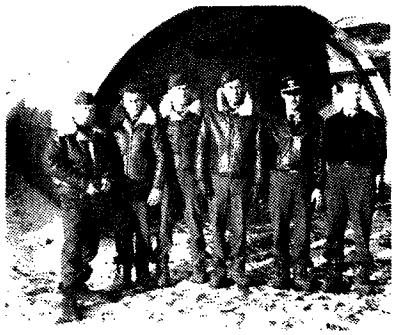
All of the raiding planes of both missions returned safely to this base.

The northern mission encountered both searchlight and anti-aircraft fire.

Like Heule, the boy who lost his glove, all of the bomber's crew were young. Pilgrim is only 24. He left Central Missouri State Teachers college in 1940 for his naval flying career. Cole is 28.



Remnants of Dutch Harbor attack

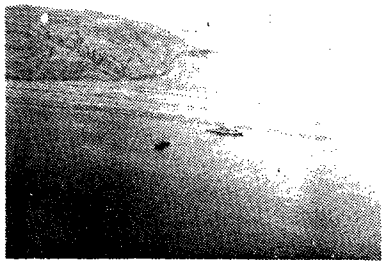


VP 43 Pilots--off duty

Atka Village before the bonfire

Bon

Stranded at Nikolski



The Casco going ashore

Tarawa along with the Second Marine Battalion, where more than 2,000 of them died taking a small piece of coral of less than one square mile. It was two years before I got back to the States again, about eighteen months for Ray. Melvin was back within six months and avoided going overseas again before the war ended. Ray remained in the Navy and retired after twenty years.

"I am so very thankful that we are all still together and will soon get to see many of the close friends we acquired in VP-42. Our fondest memories are of the times we were together in the same squadron."

Paul Carrigan remembers a funny one:

"It seemed we were in the air a few hours, outbound. First, the receiver crapped out. The radiomen reported to the pilot that he could no longer copy. The pilot asked if the transmitter was working. The radioman checked and reported this, too, was out. Fix it...he was told. The radioman worked for about an hour with back-off sets, checking wires, replacing tubes, etc. Finally, he told the pilot he could not get anything to work.

"I had taken an observation and come from blister to the navigation table to obtain position, airspeed, temp, drift, etc. to complete my report. The pilot handed a note to the navigator. The navigator read it. With a puzzled expression, he showed it to me before handing it to the radioman. The note read, X RETURNING TO BASE RADIOS INOPERATIVE X.

"Radioman to pilot: 'What am I supposed to do with this, Lieutenant?'

"Pilot: 'What do you think you're supposed to do with it? Encode the damn thing and send it. Now!'

"At this point, the navigator burst out laughing.

"Pilot (to no one in particular): 'Good Lord, what was I thinking?'

"The radioman and I join in the laughter. The pilot was embarrassed and curt.

"Pilot: 'Knock it off. It isn't that funny.'

"Navigator: 'The hell it isn't.'

"This brought more laughter. Teed off, the pilot threw the PBY into a banking turn so violent it almost threw me off my feet. We headed home. On many patrols, we experienced radio problems. This was the only time I recall returning to base for this reason."

Paul Carrigan also remembers:

"This was an exciting event and one witnessed by few, even at this late date. Near as I can recall, it was an April patrol to SW out of Adak.

"Through a break in the cloud cover, our co-pilot spotted a commotion on the sea. We dove to investigate. Leveling off at 100 feet, we flew over the spearhead of an endless line of migrating seals heading for the Aleutians. The line was on a reciprocal course, so we flew past for at least half an hour.

"Our navigator tried to determine the number of seals. He used an average length (seal) of six feet, a dozen abreast, and a line fifty miles in length. He came up with an estimate of a million and a quarter, rounded off to one million. With parallel rule, he put the seals' place of origin in the central Kuriles. If the herd continued on its present course, it would reach the Aleutians between Kanaga and Adak. At that point, they must have gone through a pass and headed for the Pribilofs. We ran across the herd on our outbound leg, not far from 90 degrees cross leg. We did not see the herd on the way back. At debriefing, we learned that no other aircrew had witnessed the migration. This held true, far as I know, on succeeding days. Then, and over the years, I've asked if anyone had ever witnessed this event. No response. Of course, it would be a one-shot deal coming and going. With weather being what it is, a line of seals could easily be missed. This points up the vastness of the area we patrolled. No wonder the occasional enemy vessel slipped through."

John Mumma remembers:

"...the time my PBY crew ferried some Congressmen from Dutch Harbor to Kodiak on their way home from a war zone inspection trip. The weather was beautiful for the three days they spent in the Aleutians. One of the Senators (a fellow by the name of Johnson from Texas) couldn't understand why everyone complained about the weather in the Aleutians. 'It looked mighty nice to me, suh,' he said. Thereafter, anytime an Airdale saw blue skies, he would refer to the climate as 'Senatorial Weather.'"

Jack Kassel remembers:

"In reviewing my old log book, either on September 4, 1942 or August 27, 1942, I was flying co-pilot with Ben Bingham, PPC, and operating off a tender in Adak Bay. An Army Colonel came aboard one evening to advise us that the Army was going to build a landing strip on Adak. He indicated on his chart the strip location being considered, but was unsure as to whether the surrounding hills would permit approach and departure to and from the strip. Since we were going out on patrol the next morning, he was requesting us to make several 'passes' across the proposed

area. 'Bing' agreed, so next morning, after takeoff from the bay, we made several 'approaches' from the north and 'departures' to the north (the only way in or out was north). On the last pass, we came in just over the water in the bay, dropped our gear (PBY-5A), swung around north over the beach, and 'Bing' let down on the beach, letting the side wheels run along on the sand beach several hundred feet. We were 'simulating' a takeoff from the proposed strip. We then 'poured on the coal' to the trusty PBY and took off through the saddle to the north. The proposed strip location was okay. This flight represented the FIRST airplane to ever touch down on Adak Island."

Bill Thies remembers when the Commodore gave him a box of cigars:

"We were flying in zero-zero weather and could see nothing. I was supposed to jettison my torpedo in the water, but for some reason I didn't. Too dumb, maybe.

"Anyway, the Commodore was so pleased with saving the torpedo -- a rather expensive piece of equipment -- that he said a box of cigars was a good bargain."

Lieutenant Thies had another adventure -- getting his plane blown 400 to 500 feet in the air by the explosion of one of his own bombs.

"We sighted a Jap 'sub' on the surface, probably charging batteries. The ceiling was about 200 feet and we carried the kind of bombs that are supposed to be dropped from a much higher elevation.

"So, we decided to machine-gun the 'sub.' We leveled down and a bomb dropped off our ship. It hit with a terrific force, blew the tail off our plane, caught one engine on fire and blew us into the clouds over the 'sub.'

"We didn't know whether we got the 'sub' or not. At first, I thought it had hit us with a three-incher. Our plane was full of holes and the instruments weren't working. But we got back to our base."

Micky Tappan remembers how the Skipper got his cheese:

"The Skipper was very fond of cheese and crackers. So he detailed one of the officers and the leading chief to see what they could scrounge from the SeaBees. The two visited the storekeeper and buttered him up by pretending to have served together with him on various ships in the Navy. The ruse worked, for it cast the storekeeper in the role of an 'old salt.' Everyone, of course, knew that the SeaBees came directly from civilian life. Nevertheless, a close friendship, pretended or real, developed and a constant supply of cheese was provided for the Skipper and the squadron."

Jack Brooks remembers some good Army chow:

"One of the guys in my hut on Attu kept talking about a half-brother he had, and thought he was with the A-A Army Company near Alexie Point. So, one day a few of us (Mumford, Alford, Winfrey) went with him to visit his brother. The half-brother was the Army outfit's cook. They were exceptionally good to us. They were most all 'Asiatic' and would do most anything they could think of to make us stay as long as possible. The half-brother cook wore Navy whites right up to the white hat. He would fix us anything to eat they had, including steak and the trimmings on occasion. All the regular soldiers would stand back until the cook filled our plates.

"When we went to leave, the cook would load us down with canned juices and other goodies. We visited them a few more times, and one night, the cook brought to our hut pies, cookies, and some very good pastry.

"As time went by, the cook's brother was in a plane forced down at Petropavlovsk, the Russian Kamchatka base.

"Still, I continued to visit the cook.

"One time, the cook and I went to the Army theatre. Officers were allowed to enter first and had the best seats. Cook gave me an Army raincoat and had me roll up my pants where they wouldn't show. I wore Army or Marine shoes anyway. I went in with the Army officers. All went well until some of my 'buddies' started saying things to me in a loud voice, such as: 'Hey, Jack, what are you doing sitting there with the Army officers?' Fortunately, the lights were turned off in a few minutes. It was tough to sit there with a straight face."

Paul Carrigan remembers when the Weather/ACI Tent burned down:

"During mid-October, 1942, there was a stretch of the best weather I'd experienced in the Aleutians. Many days were cloudless. On clear nights, shooting stars streaked across the heavens. The fogs and drizzles of summer and early fall had ended. Our stormy winter season was still some weeks away.

"The frequency and intensity of Army bombing and strafing missions over Kiska was stepped up to take advantage of the current weather conditions.

"Our PBY patrol flights were less hazardous because of the good weather, except on the sectors immediately to the north and south of Kiska. On these two sectors, there was always the possibility that our Yoke-boats might be jumped by one or more enemy float fighters. When that happened, cloud cover or a convenient fog bank were sorely missed.

"When clouds did appear during this period of good weather,

they were usually a scattered to broken deck of altocumulus at an altitude of 8,000 to 12,000 feet. These cloud bands were dissipating remnants of overriding warm air from occluded fronts. Low-pressure systems were sliding eastward across the North Pacific, far to the south of the Aleutians. The semi-permanent North Pacific high was split into two cells. One cell was moving southward with the retreating sun. Within a few weeks, the other cell would assume its normal winter position to feed and force storms directly down the Aleutian chain from west to east. We did not know that the severest winter ever recorded in the Aleutians was fast approaching.

"On this particular October day, the weather was fair but there was crispness in the air, with temperatures hovering near freezing. Tatom was waiting for me to enter the last few signals on the latest weather map. LCDR 'Cy' Perkins, Executive Officer of VP-42, had entered the tent earlier and was discussing matters in low tones with the ACI lieutenant. In his Southern drawl, Perkins asked Tatom to join them for a moment.

"'And, Carrigan,' he added, 'turn that damned stove up and let's get some heat in this tent. Then step outside out of earshot for a spell.'

"For six weeks, I'd been sharing a small office tent with an intelligence officer. There was little I had not been privy to. For Perkins to imply that I was not trustworthy caused me to turn towards him and hesitate. Tatom silently jerked his head sideways, indicating I should comply quickly.

"'Yes, Sir,' I answered, striding to the stove, where I turned it up full blast. Burning with resentment and frustration, I left the tent and walked fifty feet away. I had signals to enter, a weather schedule to decipher, and I had to begin taking a synoptic observation in a few moments.

"I'd been standing with my back to the tent for about five minutes.

"'Goddamnit, Carrigan,' Perkins' voice bellowed. 'What the hell are you trying to do?'

"I whirled around to see the tent on fire. Like a Roman candle, red-hot sparks were showering out of the chimney stovepipe. Numerous burning holes in the canvas roof were spreading.

"Clutching an armload of top secret papers and photographs, the ACI lieutenant came running out of the tent. Tatom came through the flap as I reached the tent. With one hand, he held a stack of analyzed maps. With his other hand, he was beating at embers that had burned through the topmost map I'd almost finished entering. From inside, someone threw a bucketful of water upward toward the roof. When this cascaded back down, it brought with it soot and charred fabric. With jackets, the four of us flailed at flames and embers until the tent roof was in

tatters but the fires were extinguished.

"'Goddamnit,' Perkins gasped as he tried to catch his breath, 'I didn't tell you to burn the _____ tent down!'

"It was best to keep silent, but I felt like telling him he'd demanded heat and gotten it.

"The tent was ruined beyond repair. Upon Perkins' emergency call, SeaBees arrived on the scene. After tearing down what remained of the tent, they dug up the tundra and beach grass clumps, and leveled off the area for a new tent. Carpenters speedily built a stout plywood deck and installed four-foot-high plywood sides. Within several hours, the new, winterized tent was up and everything had been moved back inside. A raised wooden deck instead of mud and tundra made the difference between comfort and misery. None of the enlisted mens' living quarters tents were winterized. I wondered if a little arson on my mind would result in similar improvement. This idea never progressed beyond an idle thought. The main deterrent was visions of Perkins' temper explosion if I were involved in burning down a second tent.

"Perkins came back that afternoon to inspect the new Weather/ACI tent, then visited with Tatom for a few minutes.

"'John,' Perkins said to Tatom, 'I sometimes get the feeling we have three dangerous adversaries up here: the weather, the Japs, and Carrigan.'

"Tatom chuckled.

"Perkins came into the tent the following morning while I was out taking a weather observation. When I came inside, he and Tatom were discussing the weather. Perkins glanced at me but said nothing.

"'Hello, Commander,' I said. 'Are you warm enough today?'

"'Just fine, Carrigan. For God's sake, don't touch the stove.'

"It was either just prior to the tent's burning or shortly thereafter that LCDR Charles E. 'Cy' Perkins assumed command of VP-42, relieving Commander James S. Russell. Russell culminated an illustrious Naval career as a four-star admiral."

Foy Taylor, ADRC, remembers his brother Uther, who died a few years ago:

"Uther and I served together in VP-42. It was the best outfit I ever served in. One of my saddest days was when they transferred me to Pearl Harbor in March, 1941.

"Uther was on patrol one day in real poor visibility. He

was bow lookout and saw a sheer cliff loom dead ahead. He yelled to the pilot, who reacted instantly by kicking the plane to the left so sharply in a bank that he lost airspeed. He then nosed down steeply and was able to pull out by just missing two waves.

"When the plane landed at the base, the pilot turned in his wings. Then he got a fifth of whiskey and went to his crew's quarters. They started drinking and discussing the close call and congratulated the pilot for saving their lives. They pressured him to keep his wings and he did. If he is at the reunion, I'd like to shake his hand.

"On another patrol, Uther told me that they spotted a Japanese merchant ship. Ensign Nuss was the pilot. Nuss left it up to the crew as to whether they would attack with depth charges. The vote was unanimous to attack. The PBY dove on the ship, exceeding the top speed limit, and dropped the depth charges. As the plane pulled out, my brother sprayed a long burst of 50-cal. bullets on the bridge. I bet he was thinking of me at Pearl Harbor that day.

"Now, on the lighter side...

"When the crew moved into a quonset hut on one of the islands, there were no electric lights. So the crew scrounged some wire and sockets and bulbs. When they were ready to hook up to the hot wires, they had to have the electricity off. So Uther borrowed an officer's hat and went to the power plant. He walked in and took a look around. Then he criticized the dirty place and ordered the operator to shut down the power and hold a field day. As soon as the power was off, he stepped outside and waved to his buddies to 'hook up.' When the hook-up was made, Uther received the O.K. signal and went back to the powerhouse and complimented the operator and told him to keep it that way.

"This is known as cutting red tape. They took a page from the SeaBees' manual."

John Mumma has some strange remembrances:

"There was this radioman who was busily typing away on the circuit, when the PBY hit a williwaw. The plane dropped and the radioman and his typewriter went up and back down and the radioman didn't miss a word in his typing.

"Then there was the mech at Adak who had one too many 'Sneaky Petes' and grapefruit juice. He left the quonset hut and went wandering, looking for a girl on the island. He spent the whole night in an Army warehouse. He couldn't spell.

"I recall the compartment in the tail of the PBY that held the 30-caliber gun -- also the urinal, funnel, and a hose to the outside. The trick was to wait until someone used the urinal and suddenly open the door to the compartment, which would cause a sudden reverse pressure with somewhat embarrassing results."

Hubert Henley remembers:

"...when a young ship's officer of the Casco claimed the best bunk in preference of a more senior flying officer. So one day, the aviator put a ping pong ball under the tightly covered sheets and blankets. (The messman always made the bunks up tightly, so you had to slide in from the top.)

"When the ship's officer wriggled into the bunk that night, the weight of his buttocks was enough to start the ping pong ball rolling up the inside of his leg very slowly. His screams and efforts to get out of his bunk were hilarious, and we kept teasing him about it late into the night."

Johnny Chittenden, Skipper of VP-43 after "Doc" Jones left, writes:

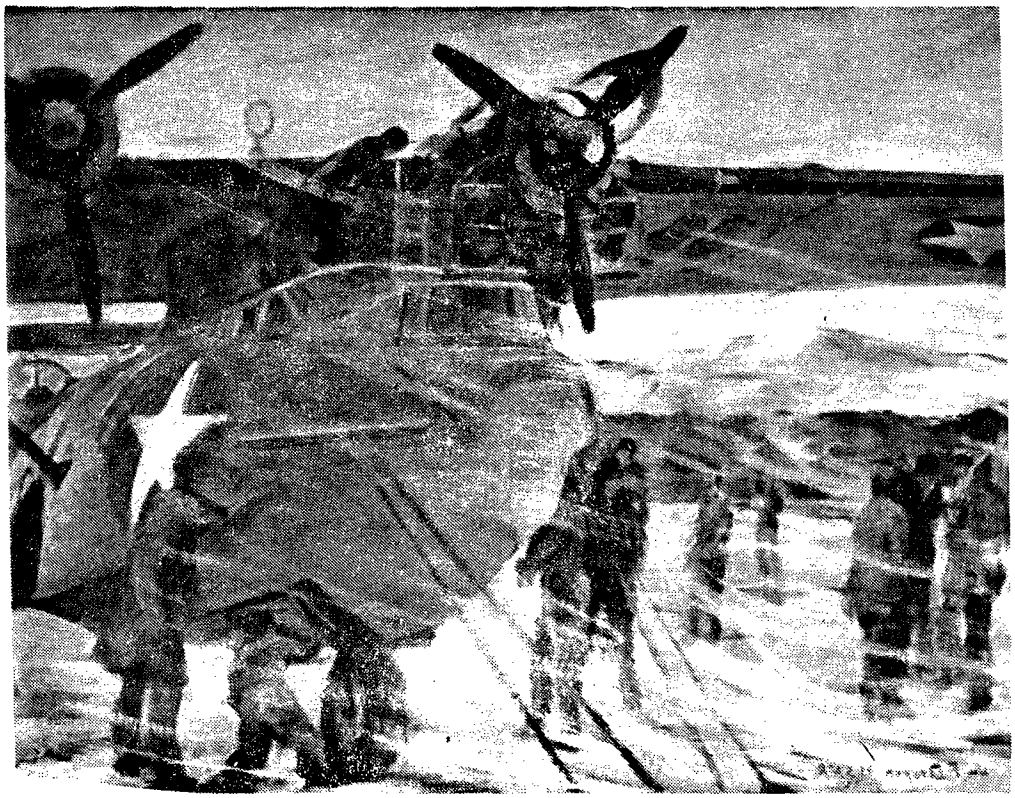
"One of my best-remembered stories is the 'social' visits of Jig Easy Clark and his 'forty-three' thieves to the Army Supply Depot near Dutch Harbor. They did a little bit of trading and socializing with the Army sergeant in charge. The jeep returned filled with parkas, cheeses, crackers, etc. It made the evening social hour so much better."

[Editor's note: This was after my time. I recall Ensign J.E. Clark's arrival in Dutch Harbor from Seattle minus operational training of any kind. The first flight scheduled out after his arrival was Lieutenant George Smith's mission on August 13, 1942 to pick up some Army flyers who had parachuted into Semisoposhnoi after bombing Kiska. As Executive Officer, I sent Jig Easy to ride with Smith to get some experience. So when the PBY returned with the rescued Army flyers, Brig. General Butler lined up the whole crew and gave out medals to all -- even Jig Easy got an Air Medal from the Army! Sic Transit Gloria.]

Jack Kassel thanks us all for the memories:

"After the Dutch Harbor bombing, our main food supply was turkey -- prepared in every way that man could dream up...The 'thrill' of watching them load a torpedo on the wing of your PBY...The gut-tightening experience of breaking out of the clouds and seeing the Jap task force...the roller coaster ride with the williwaws...what beautiful sunshine and clear skies (once or twice a month)...tent-living in Cold Bay with the mud and the cold (I didn't take my flight suit off for a week!)...getting lost in the pre-dawn fog between your tent and the flight line...watching Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour's first overseas show (Umnak?)...the line crews working all night (outside) in the cold and the rain...getting our planes ready and equipped to fly the next day...the warm rooms and clean sheets (and GOOD food) at BOQ Kodiak...landing in Woman's Bay, Kodiak, during the salmon run...your first patrol as PPC...how green and immature this

Kansas boy was when he joined VP-42...the unpredictable radar (and the rumor that it would make us sterile!)...the BOQ bar at Sitka!!...the sweaty palms as the radioman reeled out about 75 feet of weighted antenna prior to shooting an instrument water landing...torpedo juice...my one and only crash landing (PV-1, Amchitka)...serving under one of the finest gentlemen I ever met in my four and a half years in the Navy, then-Captain Russell...the first awesome sight of the mountaintop at Kiska sticking up above the clouds...on a northern patrol sector, watching the sun go down and come up about the same time...Profilof Islands and the seals...sitting at the end of the runway, Amchitka, prior to the VP-135 squadron bombing run over Kiska, and watching a friend of mine take off, then crash and burn at the end of the runway...the mystery of how the Japs completely evacuated Kiska overnight...circling a Jap convoy after sending a contact report, and watching an Army squadron of B-25's arrive and drop their TORPEDOES from 2,000 feet!!...'tight buns' as co-pilot with a new PPC on his first patrol...well, this could go on and on. Thanks to a lot of effort and work by many people, some I never met or knew, I made it back. Thank you all...and thanks for the memories. Have a great reunion. God Bless."



Merry Christmas!

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for use of his cartoons