

**LADY LUCK**  
**By R. V. Brodine**  
June 1945

This is another exciting experience I had during World War II as a member of Navy Patrol Bombing Squadron, VPB-108. The incident occurred on June 11, 1945, just two months after our rescue from a plane we ditched at sea on April 8, 1945. Again, our objective was to patrol the coastal area of Japan, targeting shipping and acquiring information on their electronic detection systems. This time the primary area of interest was Nagoya Bay, some 180 miles southwest of Tokyo, and an operational base for the Japanese Navy.

It was considered a "hot" area for reconnaissance. There were heavily fortified land installations, and attacks by enemy fighters could be expected. Consequently, our patrols involved two planes flying within sight of one another. Our partner was Lt. Hill, flying another PB4Y-2. Both planes maintained continuous sight and radio communication.

At this stage of the war, it was difficult to find suitable targets, most large Japanese ships had already been sunk or were being hidden for later use. Many of the smaller ships were made of wood; hence, would rarely sink completely, even by a close, subsea bomb explosion. Furthermore, small ships were difficult bombing targets from higher altitudes. Lacking a direct bomb hit, the most effective attack was strafing with our plane's twelve, 50 cal. turret guns and, particularly, the twin 20mm cannons controlled by the pilot. Subsequently, 500-lb Napalm cluster bombs were added to this arsenal to set the ships afire. To be most effective attacks were made at speeds over 200 mph and altitudes of 50 to 100 feet--an unusual tactic for a large, 4-engine bomber.

My two functions on these patrols were electronic countermeasures and radar operator, depending on the situation. During an actual attack on enemy targets, the plane's crew had specific assignments but my assigned functions were temporarily suspended. The frequent maneuvering of the plane precluded making any precise electronic observations. Therefore, I watched the action standing in the passageway to the cockpit area, between walls of armor plate, which were intended to protect the pilots. In essence I had "a ringside seat to the attack".

### **A SURPRISING REPERCUSSION**

As we approached the entry to Nagoya Bay several ships were detected on radar. After investigating, our pilot zeroed in on the largest of these and notified Lt. Hill of our plan to attack. Hill, being less than a mile away, would monitor our action and watch for any enemy interceptors as well as seek other potential targets in the area. We also were careful to maintain a safe distance from shore based gun batteries.

During a run when bombs are to be dropped one crewman is stationed in the belly of the plane to be certain that the bomb bay doors stay open and the bombs release properly. An important assignment! Our first bombing run was only partially effective. From an altitude of 75 feet the ship was heavily strafed and two, 250 lb. bombs were dropped--both near misses. The ship seemed disabled, but was still underway. It also had considerable firepower of its own for a cargo vessel. A second run was in order.

It again commenced with heavy strafing. Suddenly, just before we reached the ship, it exploded! Our sister plane saw us go through a wall of smoke, fire and debris. One needle on the pilot's instrument panel was turning rapidly. It was the altimeter. We were lifted to an altitude of 500 feet in a matter of a few seconds. I recall that the engines seemed to shut down momentarily, but their drone was probably overwhelmed by all the other noises caused by the explosion. There was dust, wood splinters and smoke throughout the plane and an odor of gunpowder (?). Apparently, this material had entered through the open bomb bay doors. It was on our clothes and in our hair.

The full extent of the damage to our plane was unknown. None of the crew was injured. However, the mechanic manning the bomb bay doors was blown onto the open bomb bay catwalk by the impact of the explosion. Luckily he didn't fall out of the plane. Our pilot, Lt. Hazlett, determined that the plane still had good flying characteristics, though No. 1 engine was leaking oil and No. 3 was vibrating. Upon turning back to the target ship we saw only the bow protruding from of the sea, the remainder had disappeared. There were no apparent survivors.

Attempts to establish VHF radio contact with Lt. Hill were unsuccessful, however, we could receive his communications. Normally we were expected to take photographs to document the results of our actions. In view of our condition, Lt. Hill volunteered for this task. A copy of his photo is included on the last page. It was taken a few minutes after the explosion. The plume of smoke is still evident in the center of the photo. The remainder of the ship's bow is the small dark speck immediately to the left, having been blown some distance away by the explosion. Above that, in the background, is the Japanese mainland.

## **MORE ACTION**

In the course of checking out our damaged plane, the crew spotted three more vessels a few miles away. They consisted of a seagoing tug towing two long barges. Our pilot advised the crew to prepare for an attack. I was surprised by this decision. At the time, I concluded that he felt we were destined to go down, and we would do as much damage as possible beforehand. In retrospect, I doubt if this conclusion was valid -- although I never asked. The attack was oriented along the track of the vessels, starting with the last barge and ending at the tug. Attempts to drop the first bomb were unsuccessful, the mechanism had been damaged by the explosion. We also learned that three of the bombs were missing, again dislodged by the blast. The remainder of the attack was limited to several strafing runs in which we were joined by Lt. Hill's plane. All three vessels were set afire. By now our plane was shaking vigorously. It was time to head for home-- 600 miles away.

## **A TENUOUS JOURNEY**

Lt. Hill remained in the area for a short time to attack other vessels. Thereafter, he headed for Iwo along our projected course. After about 45 minutes he caught up with our plane, homing in by radar. By then we had slowly climbed to 4000 feet. He would shepherd us

to Iwo and provide communications for our landing. What a reassuring sight!

Sporadic VHF communication was established with Hill's plane during our return. Our plastic radar dome, housing the radar antenna on the underside of the plane, could not be retracted and would be crushed on landing. All remaining bombs and ammunition were jettisoned at sea. However, the remaining equipment would be retained for possible salvage unless we found the need to further reduce weight. No. 1 engine was still leaking oil and operating at reduced power. When No. 3 engine was feathered due to excessive vibration, we observed that six inches was sheared off one prop blade, another blade was bent. However, both engines were kept running--we needed the power. We still had a long way to go and may yet have to ditch again. It would be much more hazardous under these conditions.

We reached Iwo Jima at 4:30 PM, having been in the air for nine and one-half hours. Lt. Hill handled all radio communications for our emergency landing. As we approached the airstrip the plane was sluggish for lack of power and stalled over the runway but was still landed safely. Our pilot, Lt. Hazlett, received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions on this patrol. His citation emphasized the bravery shown by attacking the other vessels even though our plane was severely damaged. We, the crew, each received an Air Medal.

## **THE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT**

The land-based maintenance people had the task of making a thorough assessment of our plane's damage. Following are the most significant observations they made: the plane had more than 90 holes and bad dents in it; pieces of wooden plank, rope, spikes and wire cable were lodged in the fuselage and wings; all four engines were damaged and their bent cowlings contained bits of wood; several bullet holes were identified (some very near my "action observation post"); both wings near the fuselage had two-foot planks of wood lodged in large holes; all radio and countermeasures antennas were knocked off; both wings had their leading edges crushed in several places; the horizontal and vertical stabilizer had been hit with chunks torn out of the latter; plexiglass in forward turrets and the cockpit area were penetrated by pieces of wood; and, the fuselage was streaked and blackened by the pillar of fire, smoke, water and debris.

Having assessed the damage throughout the plane, it was miraculous that no one was injured or killed. We didn't realize how close the flying debris and bullets had come. The aircraft was promptly scrapped. Appropriately, this plane was named "**LADY LUCK**". Photos follow.

## **MY NAVY EXPERIENCE 1943-1945**

*By Robert V. Brodine*

### INTRODUCTION

I was born and raised in Galesburg, a town of 33,000 people. It is located in NW Illinois, 150 miles southwest of Chicago. Two major railroads, the Burlington and Santa Fe, pass through the town and were the chief source of good jobs in the city. However, farming was the most prevalent and productive in all the surrounding area. Much of the population was of Swedish descent. So was I, although a maternal grandmother was French Canadian. Many of the Swedish families migrated from Sweden, seeking a new life and religious freedom. Some even migrated again, from Illinois to Kansas, for the same reasons. They are good, hardworking and honest people and very independent.

Being born on September 21, 1925, I like most others in the town experienced a frugal but happy childhood during the depression years. By today's definition of material belongings, we would be considered very poor. So was everyone else. We just didn't know it! My father was an independent auto mechanic and my mother a department store clerk. Neither job was singly sufficient to support the family. Although my grandfather was a leading engineer on the Burlington railroad, I had never ridden on a train or an airplane prior to my service enlistment. By the time I was graduated from high school in June 1943, my two older brothers were already in the Army Air Corps. One, Wayne, was a pilot and Jack, a radio service technician. I couldn't wait to enlist, hoping to pursue meteorology since I liked math and science in school. My choice was the Navy, however, having been influenced by a flamboyant uncle who served in WW I.

### NAVY INDOCTRINATION

I enlisted July 1, 1943. My six week boot camp tenure was at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, outside Chicago, IL. It entailed numerous rudimentary jobs emphasizing discipline, devotion to duty and physical fitness. Of the 100 or so trainees in my section, I was voted honor man. This was completely unexpected since the group was from various areas throughout the Midwest and South. However, our upbringing was strikingly similar.

In addition to basic military training we took aptitude tests for the purpose of determining an appropriate specialty for our Navy service. I chose meteorology but it was not available. I then selected the submarine service. Denied again. Finally they assigned me to radio technician's training. I knew nothing about radio and was not interested. It was not what I was led to believe when I enlisted. They won.

For the next year I attended the traditional radio/radar schools, training as a repair technician. Although technically interesting, the prospect of being assigned to a "repair shop" was not appealing, whether on or offshore. This phase of the training ended with six months of radar school in Corpus Christi, Texas. I graduated twelfth in my class of about 200.

Near the end of my technical training in Texas there was a solicitation for volunteers to join the Navy Air Corps and operate some new, highly secret, electronic countermeasures equipment. This sounded exciting. One requirement was to pass a physical exam for flight crew members. I almost flunked this because of high blood pressure (>140). Finally passed on the third try when I was tested while dozing off on a cot. I joined twelve others chosen to attend.

The downside of this assignment was two more months of specialized schooling. However, it was at an interesting location—San Clemente Island, 90 miles off the coast of San Diego, CA.

To my knowledge, the only inhabitants of this island were U.S. Marine guards and a local goat population. Security was very tight! We were given a few days' liberty onshore California every two weeks. Transit to San Diego was by destroyer on which I often got seasick. Embarrassing for a Navy man.

The school encompassed classroom theory and operating the airborne countermeasures equipment from small, specially equipped planes. Radio/radar jamming was a prime subject at the school. One student, located at the airport radar, would communicate the effectiveness of jamming by another student operating the special electronic equipment in an overflying plane. My first few flights caused airsickness. It was finally overcome with the help of a compassionate pilot who invited me to sit in the copilot's seat when I became queasy. One aspect of the school that sticks in my memory was the innovative ideas that Navy researchers developed to confuse or deceive the enemy's electronic detection systems. As I recall some of these researchers were civilians employed by RCA. (In discussions with servicemen similarly trained in the late 1970's, I discovered many of these techniques were still in use). I graduated first in my class of thirteen. Apparently this "entitled" me to the first combat assignment.

### ON TO THE COMBAT ZONE

I was sent to Treasure Island, CA., to join Pacific operations. Shortly thereafter I was transferred to Navy Patrol Bombing Squadron VPB 106 which was already training in Hawaii. My trip to Hawaii was by troopship. I will not dwell on my experiences with 7 days of seasickness. At least I was not the only one. It started at the time we passed under the Golden Gate Bridge into the open sea and ended with my first step onto dry land in Honolulu.

The squadron completed another month of training at Kaneohe Bay on Oahu. My job was simply to become familiar with the countermeasures equipment which only existed on a few of the squadrons' fifteen planes. In mid February, 1945, we arrived on Tinian Island (the primary base for the Army Air Corps B-29s) for war zone patrol duty. (See map of Western Pacific). My first patrol was to the Iwo Jima area, 600 miles north. After a few hours of flying we began to pick up sporadic radio transmissions from other Navy pilots. Many of the participants were shouting instructions and warnings to their fellow pilots. Four letter words were prevalent. Our pilot then informed us that our patrol route was to circle the Island of Iwo Jima where the initial invasion started two days earlier. Most of the U.S. troops had yet to penetrate beyond the beach of thick, black, volcanic sand. We were to maintain a distance of 50 miles from the island, looking for incoming enemy vessels or planes. We saw none, but were fascinated listening to the invasion over the radio. U.S. Navy warships seemed to be everywhere on the radar. My first encounter with enemy fire occurred from a small but radar-prominent Japanese island, Chi Chi Jima, located about 100 miles north of Iwo. They missed us.

Shortly after this patrol I was reassigned to another squadron (VPB-108) training in Hawaii. Most of its planes included the countermeasures instrumentation, but no one to operate it. In retrospect, the additional equipment was more appropriate for the planned assignments of VPB-108 i.e. coastal Japan. I later learned that Squadron 106 was transferred to patrol the Singapore and Southeast Asia areas. The flight sectors planned for Navy Patrol Bombers in the Pacific are shown on a subsequent map.

## ENEMY RESPONSE

After further training in Hawaii with VPB 108 the squadron was transferred to Peleliu in March, 1945. This island is part of the Palau group located southeast of the Philippines. To take the island 2850 U.S. Marines were killed and 9000 casualties. The Japanese figures were 13,600 killed with 400 casualties, reflecting their commitment to die rather than surrender. Peleliu's airstrip was considered necessary to help protect McArthur's subsequent return to the Philippines. It later proved to be unnecessary. Here, I also learned the military's definition of "secured". It means that "there may be enemy throughout the area but you can't see them". They're hiding in caves, jungle or wherever. Little enemy activity was detected on most of our patrols from Peleliu.

During a later stay at Tinian we were assigned a reconnaissance, picture-taking flight around the island of Truk, located some 600 hundred miles to the southeast. Truk was one of the "bypassed islands", and was a primary naval base for the Japanese in the southwestern Pacific. It was heavily fortified. Little activity was noted as we approached the island. Only a few small ships were observed. Like many other Pacific islands, it was surrounded by a barrier reef with an intervening, shallow water lagoon. In view of the inactivity, our pilot chose a low altitude flight path over the lagoon to acquire better photographs. After a few minutes along this trajectory, we were surprised by the sight of tracer bullets directed at our plane from both sides. We were caught in crossfire between the island and the surrounding reef. Our pilot took immediate evasive action. He zigzagged violently and finally evaded the crossfire by heading to the open sea. This was an unusual maneuver for a four-engine bomber. As I recall we had little or no damage to the plane. Several months later we used similar evasive tactics when attack by three Japanese Zeros off the coast of Japan. In that case, we again flew a few hundred feet above the water so they could not attack from our vulnerable underside. One Zero was downed by our crew's return fire. We suffered no apparent damage.

In order to patrol the area approaching the Japanese mainland the squadron was transferred to Tinian (also the B-29 base). Tokyo is about 1200 miles to the north. Our patrols designated for the coastal waters of Japan would operate temporarily from Iwo Jima, located about half way to Japan. Although the primary Iwo airstrip was considered secure at this time (early April) there were still many Japanese military hiding in caves. Occasionally some would come out to shoot at our planes during takeoff. American military stationed at Iwo would scour these caves for souvenirs. Not all returned from these ventures. Two of our most exciting air patrols, described in the following action reports ("Our Rescue at Sea" and "Lady Luck"), involved Iwo Jima.

Our living accommodations on Iwo consisted of tents near a mess hall. During the night the Japanese were known to come out of their caves to steal food, and occasionally they would attack our military. All Navy airmen carried personal pistols. Most kept them under their pillows while sleeping. Although there were passwords to be used at night in response to our American sentries, most of us were reluctant to rely on this sole means of identification. Hence, night trips to the head were very hazardous.

Most of our patrols between Iwo and the Japanese mainland encountered few favorable targets. U. S. submarines were having similar problems. They had already sunk most of the Jap merchant ships coming from Southeast Asia. Our patrols generally lasted 8 to 10 hours, flying along preplanned sector routes. The planes were equipped with 12 machine guns and could carry several types of bombs. When suitable targets were detected, active engagement lasted about 15 minutes, often with destructive and lethal force. We occasionally saw submerged submarines from the air, but were prohibited from attacking them. Most if not all were probably ours.

An automated radio interrogation system (IFF) was used to identify the origin of targeted vessels. Our plane would send out a coded radio signal. It should trigger a coded response from the system on the vessel of interest. The code was changed daily. An improper or no response would suggest it is an enemy vessel. The system was used with caution since some of our vessels neglected to maintain the proper codes.

Our final patrol was on the day in August that “cessation of hostilities” was announced. Upon reaching the coast of the Japanese mainland a vacant airstrip was sighted onshore. Our pilot decided to make a pass over the runway. While doing so he touched the wheels to the ground, the first for our squadron. Immediately we were under fire from enemy machine guns. Perhaps these guys had not received the message that the shooting was over. We didn’t wait to find out.

### HOMEWARD BOUND

My return to the States was by plane to Hawaii and aircraft carrier to San Diego. The carrier was like a floating island. I didn’t even get seasick. I was honorably discharged from the Navy in December, 1945. This was expedited by having received the Distinguished Flying Cross and four Air Medals in combat zones. In February, 1946, I entered Purdue University and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering in February, 1949. As with other military veterans my college attendance was funded by the G I Bill.

The environment and approach of most servicemen to World War II is best expressed by quotes from author William Manchester. “To fight World War II you had to have been tempered and strengthened in the 1930’s Depression by a struggle for survival—in 1940 two out of every five draftees had been rejected, most of them victims of malnutrition. “And you had to know that your whole generation, unlike the Vietnam generation was in this together, that no strings were being pulled for anybody. You also needed nationalism, the absolute conviction that the United States was the envy of all nations. And you needed to believe in certain core values. Debt was ignoble. Courage was a virtue. Mothers were beloved, fathers obeyed. Marriage was a sacrament. Divorce was disgraceful...and you assumed that if you came through this ordeal you would age with dignity, respected as well as adored by your children”.

“All this led you into battle, and sustained you as you fought, and comforted you if you fell, and, if it came to that, justified your death to all who loved you as you had loved them. Later the rules would change. But we didn’t know that then”.

Robert V. Brodine  
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**OUR RESCUE AT SEA**  
**By R. V. Brodine**  
April 1945

### **BACKGROUND**

I enlisted in the U. S. Navy Reserve at age 17, upon graduating from high school in Galesburg, IL. During the first eighteen months of my enlistment I attended various Navy electronics schools, finally specializing in airborne electronic countermeasures. My rank at discharge was First Class Petty Officer. Actual combat exposure totaled 9 months, all in the western Pacific.

The intensity and level of my Navy electronics training is reflected in the college credits I received upon application to Purdue University in 1946. A typical engineering curriculum requires 15-18 credit hours per semester. I was awarded 30 hours of credit, toward a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering.

My first war zone assignment was to a Navy Patrol Bombing squadron in the western Pacific. The squadron subsequently operated out of Iwo Jima, a pear-shaped, 3 X 5 mile volcanic island located some 600 miles due south of Tokyo. Our job was to fly reconnaissance missions to the coastal areas of Japan and associated islands. Primary bombing targets were often small cargo and naval ships plying the coastal waters. Due to the nature of these targets, our bombing was done at low levels—rarely more than 100 feet above the water.

Iwo was taken at great human cost in March 1945, to provide a emergency sanctuary for many crippled B-29s returning from high level bombing raids on the mainland. Their permanent base was in the Mariana islands, 600 miles farther south. For further protection, the B-29s were subsequently joined by the Army's P51 fighter planes while over mainland targets. The P51s were based on Iwo and equipped with extra gas tanks in order to reach the mainland, but could still only spend a few minutes over the target area.

Our Navy squadron was unique in that a few of its planes were equipped with newly-developed countermeasures equipment. My primary function was to operate these instruments when our patrols were assigned to mainland coastal areas. The equipment was highly secretive. Its purpose was to detect the location, and measure the electronic characteristics of Japanese radar installations. This information would then be used to jam or deceive enemy radars during the planned invasion of the Japanese homeland.

The squadron was composed of 15 PB4Y-2s, the Navy's version of the Air Force's four-engine, B-24 bomber. The Navy plane was 7 ft. longer with a tall, single vertical stabilizer rather than the twin tails of the B-24. The extra length was to accommodate the new countermeasures equipment. The plane had 12, turret mounted, 50 cal. machine guns. However, because of the nature of our low-level attack procedures, the standard bomb sight equipment below the nose turret was removed in favor of two, 20mm cannons controlled directly by the pilot. Patrols were normally 8-10 hours duration. The normal, twelve-man crew was composed of three officers; pilot, copilot and navigator, and nine enlisted men; gunners, radiomen and mechanics. When the countermeasures equipment was to be used, I was number 13!

## **THE DITCHING**

The morning of April 8, 1945 was dreary at our primary base on Tinian, one of the Mariana Islands. After a 4 AM takeoff we flew in virtually continuous "soup", with little opportunity for visual navigation. Radar signals are also attenuated in this type of environment. Our assigned patrol sector was to the North of Iwo toward Honshu, Japan. Some 100 miles north of Iwo is a group of small volcanic islands, the Bonins, occupied by the Japanese military. One, Chichi Jima, provided a distinct radar signature because of its sharp protrusion above the sea. After passing the Bonins we were uncertain of our location the remainder of the day. We were unable to detect Chichi Jima on the return leg of our patrol. Even under the poor weather conditions, I would have expected to see Chichi's radar signature within 50 miles of the island. As an aside, I have since learned that the Japanese general in charge of their forces on Chichi Jima, vowed to eat the liver of any U. S. airmen they captured. Fortunately we didn't land near there.

By late afternoon we concluded that we were hopelessly lost. After repeated attempts we finally



made radio contact with Iwo Jima through an Army Air Force flight controller. What a relief! He said he had us on his radar and directed us to follow a southwesterly course to the island. About a half an hour later, he radioed again to inform us that he had been mistakenly tracking a B-29. He was very apologetic, and had no idea where we might be. We then backtracked toward(?) Iwo until our pilot ordered us to prepare the plane for ditching at sea before nightfall. Furthermore, we had been airborne for more than 13 hours and were very low on fuel.

Our regular flight crew members had been trained in ditching procedures. I had not. They worked efficiently, first dropping all the 500lb. bombs into the sea, followed by all remaining materials that might break loose and become projectiles during impact. Various pieces of equipment were also discarded to reduce weight. Finally our pilot, Lt. Hazlett, ordered us to prepare for impact. Although very scared, I had confidence in his ability to land this plane at sea. He was a veteran pilot and had several years of experience flying sea planes. He landed flawlessly in rough seas at 5:45 PM. (A copy of the Navy's technical description of this ditching is attached).

There are two escape hatches on the top of the plane's fuselage, one in front and another in the rear. Life rafts and other emergency equipment were taken out through the hatches by the first few crew members. By the time all 13 people were out, the two life rafts had been inflated and some of the crew simply stepped from the plane onto the rafts. We quickly paddled the rafts away from the plane. It sunk about 20 minutes after landing. There was one casualty--a small dog named "Apache" whose owner was our radioman. He had been hit by a piece of steel armor plate during impact. Nightfall was approaching quickly and we paddled vigorously trying to keep the two rafts close together. Subsequently, the rafts were tied together with a rope. However, it had to be manned continuously to keep from breaking. There was always concern about our rafts losing one another.

A few hours after nightfall the weather had cleared somewhat. We heard a plane and could see its lights passing overhead, but we were unprepared for such an opportunity. By the time our men had located a flare gun, the plane was beyond us heading southward. Although our flares were finally fired into the sky only an alert crewman in the rear of the plane could have seen them. The plane was probably in transit from Iwo Jima to our base in Tinian for the crew's rest and relaxation. Reconnaissance patrols were not normally flown at night. Except for the pilots, most of the crew usually slept during these transits. We concluded that our position must be about due south of Iwo and along a well-traveled flight path. A good omen for our quick rescue.

## **BASKING AT SEA**

After a rainy, sleepless night morning brought renewed hope for rescue. I was terribly seasick. During the raft boarding I swallowed some gasoline-saturated seawater which further aggravated my condition. I guess the others were better sailors. We fixed a radar reflector to one of the rafts. It looks like an inverted umbrella, but provides an efficient reflecting surface for radar waves. Rubber rafts make poor radar reflectors. The day was uneventful. By means of a hand cranked transmitter we sent out SOS signals but no planes nor ships responded. We had a few gallons of fresh water and some leftover sandwiches from the previous day's lunch. Food was of no interest to me. We were also realizing that we should try to conserve our resources. It may be a long haul. Maybe we were not on a flight path after all.

After a second night of seeing phantom lights on the sea and in the air, our spirits were raised by improvement in the weather. The warming sun was welcome until mid afternoon when some of us became severely burned. I ate half a jelly sandwich and also tried some local "sushi" to benefit from the fresh water in a fish's flesh. It had virtually no taste. We were also visited by a shark circling our rafts that afternoon. He left after several pistol shots. Again, no planes or ships sighted.

By the next day we were getting very stiff from sitting closely bunched along the perimeter of each raft. Food was almost gone but we still had water--some of which was gathered during the rains. Our only exercise was taking our turn at holding the tie rope to keep the rafts together. We studied maps, speculating where we might be. What if we encountered a Japanese ship? We had little choice but to surrender. In retrospect, that would have been a death sentence.

## **DISCOVERY**

On the morning of our third day at sea we were becoming more apprehensive. We had seen no hopeful signs since the overflight on the night of our ditching. As a general rule we could expect the Navy to deliberately search for us for up to three days. Thereafter it would be done in conjunction with normal operations. They had no idea where we were nor if we were even alive.

Suddenly in the distant sky appeared a plane heading our direction. All hands waved frantically to attract their attention. They acknowledged by circling our position. It was a patrol bomber from another Navy squadron. Shortly thereafter they passed directly overhead to drop food and water attached to an inflated life jacket. They also took our picture from a low altitude (copy attached). A note from the pilot gave our position, 250 miles northwest of Iwo Jima, and assurance that he had radioed for a rescue seaplane. We felt secure as he continued circling our position until the seaplane arrived in mid afternoon.

In the interim, the weather worsened. Rain clouds were forming, the winds increasing and the sky becoming overcast. On arrival the seaplane made several passes at landing but the sea was too rough and it started to rain. They decided to wait for conditions to moderate. It never happened. The plane then left for Iwo, presumably planning to return when the weather improved. At least they knew where we were and spirits improved dramatically. Significantly, even under the adverse conditions of the past several days, our people never got into any serious arguments or confrontations. We were all in the same boat(s)!

## **RRESCUE!**

The rain continued into the night and the seas were still rough. No stars were visible. However, we had food, water and the expectation of being picked out of the sea tomorrow. Things were looking up in spite of the weather! Later that night one of the crewmen thought he saw a red light blinking on the northern horizon. Others thought so too, but it quickly disappeared. Our men had fired several flares and pistol shots skyward to attract the attention of whatever might be out there. It was unlikely that they could see us otherwise. An hour or so passed with no further sightings nor response to our actions. It must have been an illusion.

We relaxed again, thinking of tomorrow's activities. Suddenly we were in the beam of a huge, very bright spotlight from the south. There was no engine sound--only the action of the waves beating against the hull of what looked like a large ship. But we were virtually blinded by the light. We were no more than 30 yards from the ship yet hadn't even noticed it in the darkness. Was this a Japanese vessel? We were relieved when we heard the shouts of the crewmen on the ship. It was an American submarine!

All the paddles came out and we hurried to the sub. They were adamant about getting aboard quickly so that they could submerge. We were in enemy territory. Several of the men were lifted off the rafts on the starboard side of the sub. They asked those remaining to paddle around to the port side of the vessel where there was a ladder to climb up to the deck. I was one of those. As

we passed around the bow of the ship a wave heaved it up and it punctured both rafts when it came down. Needless to say we hurried to the other side, climbed the ladder and crawled onto the deck. We hadn't stood up for more than three days, and were very weak. They destroyed the life rafts and took us below. Bells rang and we dove. It was 2:20 AM, April 12, 1945.

All of us were checked out by the sub's medical technician. Everyone was OK considering the circumstances. We were given clean, dry clothes and the cook offered to prepare us anything we wanted to eat. Submarines are reputed to have the best food in the Navy. I and several others had steak and eggs. We also ate lots of freshly baked bread which tasted like cake after our ordeal. Their reputation for good food is well-deserved. By 4 AM we all retired to bed in bunks given up by the crewmen. What hospitality!

## **SOME IMPORTANT REVELATIONS**

After a good night's sleep and more food we started to regain strength quickly. We also noticed that the sub had a Japanese survivor from the ship they had sunk, the AWA MARU. He was confined to a "jail cell" about the size of a coat closet. This clue led to the unusual story of how the submarine, the USS QUEENFISH, was in a position to rescue our plane crew.

The US had several submarines patrolling the shipping lanes between the Japanese mainland and the South China Sea. It was the source area for their raw materials to prosecute the war. For the last several months the subs had been sinking most of these supply ships, causing severe shortages in the homeland. It also explains why we rarely encountered Japanese planes in our patrols--a shortage of fuel. They were stockpiling it for our invasion.

Because of these shortages it was long suspected that some of Japan's numerous, well marked "Hospital" ships were carrying something other than casualties and medical supplies. On April 1, in dense fog, the QUEENFISH had mistakenly sunk one of these ships in the Formosa Straits. Its radar signature was misinterpreted as that of a destroyer. The ship was carrying thousands of bales of rubber and other strategic materials and some 1700 passengers; Japanese seamen, engineers and government officials; not casualties. Most of the passengers perished in the sinking. In order to augment their case the sub's crew picked up samples of the cargo and one of the few survivors for evidence. Initially the survivor, rescued from the sea, indicated he did not understand English. However, when they threatened to throw him back into the sea and retrieve another man, he became very fluent in English. He had lived in San Francisco for several years.

The Japanese publicized this "hospital ship sinking" worldwide. The US Navy offered their rebuttal; lack of communications and poor visibility due to weather, but to no avail. Their only recourse then was to recall the submarine commander, Charles E. Loughlin, to "face court-martial proceedings". Most thought the trial never would be carried out.

On the previous day, when the seaplane had been unable to rescue us, we assumed they immediately notified their Iwo base. The communications trail beyond that point is unknown. The base for submarine operations in the western Pacific was the island of Guam, some 800 miles to the south of Iwo. Apparently someone on Guam was notified of our predicament. Knowing that the QUEENFISH was passing through the vicinity, they directed the submarine to seek us out. Presumably these various communications and plans for sub recovery had to occur within a period of about six hours. There must be several people who are due credit for our rescue. It was remarkable that the sub could even find us given the weather conditions and their navigation capabilities at the time. Furthermore, we never met the crew of the plane that initially found us! I guess all their actions were considered part of their day's work.

We also learned that the red light seen sporadically by the raft crew belonged to the submarine.

They had a fix on us from the raft's radar reflector. However, when they saw all the flares and shooting of tracer bullets, they immediately doused the lights and submerged. They were unsure what this target was and whether it might be a Jap destroyer with much larger guns. That is why they circled and approached us undetected from the south. The rescue of downed airmen by submarines was not uncommon. They saved the lives of hundreds of U. S. airmen—both Air Force and Navy.

## **HOMeward BOUND**

The trip to the submarine base on Guam was a pleasure cruise for our plane crew. Good food and relaxation. We arrived around noon on April, 14th, fully recovered from our ordeal. During the course of the trip we could observe many of the sub's unique operational procedures. It is truly the "Silent Service" when submerged.

The sub was greeted by a large welcoming committee on the dock at Guam. All hands were on deck to acknowledge this reception. Whistles were blowing, a band was playing and Navy brass came on board to greet everyone. Next came gallons of ice cream and other refreshments. Was this the prelude to a court martial for the captain? We didn't think so, and were relieved. Shortly thereafter, we bid our thanks and goodbyes and were hustled off to the airport for our plane trip to Tinian for further assignment.

At Tinian we were purportedly offered the option of going to Australia for a month of Rest and Relaxation; or resume our patrol duties and be the first crew relieved on a rotational schedule. We all felt well physically and the war seemed to be going in our favor so we chose to resume our duties. We were soon on our way back to Iwo. (Later experiences caused us to rethink this selection). On April 22, 1945, we sunk two small ships off the coast of Japan,.

## **POST WAR INFORMATION**

Based on various post WWII books and other publications, I have gathered the following, related information:

(a) The submarine commander, Charles Loughlin, was court-martialed, and relieved of his command. During the trial he never revealed that his communications officer failed to inform him of a radio message directing all subs to allow this particular "hospital" ship safe passage to Japan. Loughlin was found guilty of negligence, but received a lighter sentence than most expected. The fact that the ship was carrying "illegal" cargo was not an issue.

Loughlin graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1933, where he was an All American basketball player. He was credited with having sunk 8 Japanese vessels, and had a superior war record. He retired in 1983, after advancing to the level of Rear Admiral. At that time he became the subject of a full page story in the Pittsburgh Press. This was unusual since he had no ties to Pittsburgh whatsoever. Their focus was on the sinking of the "hospital" ship. The article never mentioned his saving the lives of 13 airmen

(b) The attached map depicts the geographic area in which all these events took place. Note the names and locations of 38 US submarines throughout the region on April 6, 1945, six days before our rescue. The QUEENFISH is located near the east coast of China, immediately north of Formosa. By this time there were fewer shipping targets for the subs. Whether intended or not many were in strategic locations to recover downed airmen. I have added my best estimate of our April 8th patrol route from Tinian in the Mariana Islands to the vicinity of northern Japan; and the return attempt to land at Iwo Jima. An "X" indicates our ditching location and an "R" the rescue position. The track totals approximately 2000 miles and a flight time of 14 hours.

APRIL 11, 1945, LOCATION: 27-00 N, 137-30 E





THE PRIVATEER