

Four minutes later, with no warning, a Jap Judy came out of a low cloud in a shallow dive, at a range of less than 2000 yards from our ship. The few <sup>OF 2018</sup> guns which could train on him in time opened fire, but failed to stop him. The Jap then proceeded to complete a perfect run the entire length of the plane-packed flight deck at a height of only 300 feet, and then pulled out over the stern. No Bombing; no strafing! The excitement was high, and we had been expecting almost anything. The Jap was ~~sk~~ later shot down six miles from the ship by planes from another CAP. The only logical explanation for our luck was that the Jap's bomb release didn't work, or that he lost his nerve at the crucial moment. 1 April - Easter Sunday - the invasion of Okinawa - Love Day. As our amphibious forces stormed the beach, Bennington Planes, with others of the Task Force, went into high gear in the role of flying artillery. The landing areas were thoroughly bombed and strafed, and minutes before the first Marine wave hit the beach, the area was burned over with a devastating Napalm fire-bomb attack. While the actual ~~xxx~~ landings were taking place, our fighters were simultaneously beginning the job of flying combat air patrol over the island, intercepting and destroying Jap bombers flying down from Japan's home islands.

This began an air support operation that was to continue for seventy days; broken only once by a nine-day rest at Ulithi; In many respects, this long Okinawa operation was a period of monotony for the ship's company, being, in fact, a gigantic freight-hauling operation, the freight being mainly bombs - 500, 1000 and 2000 pounders. The period of monotony had many highlights however. 1st Lieutenant Junie Lohan of VMF 112 was shot down by Jap anti-aircraft fire over Kikai. He made a water landing, was picked up by a destroyer a few minutes later. Hours later the DD was itself hit and sunk by a Kamikaze, and Lohan was rescued a second time and returned to us.