

the first strike against Tokyo and its adjacent airfields since the now famous crash of the old BOMBET with her Army bombers. The pilots and gun crews were given orders "When the word is passed, or when Tokyo or enemy aircraft are sighted, all assembly working parties will unload ammunition via the following routes - bomb bay doors and gun muzzles. All ammunition will be expeditiously delivered to the enemy sans invoice."

The weather, in the meantime had become extremely cold - so cold, in fact, that those men on topside battle stations had to be all bundled up in foul weather clothing, arctic boots, face masks (when the ship faced into the wind to launch aircraft), and all sorts of other gear to keep them warm. We were kept informed by the Chaplain over the bull horns just how the progress of the strike was going. Was certainly a thrill when he announced, "Radio Tokyo has just gone off the air!" For then we knew that our planes were at that moment over the City dropping their deadly loads of rockets, bombs, and lead bullets. Sometime during the forenoon we were told that our little game was at that moment being broadcast to the news offices in the States. This was the moment we had all been waiting for; we knew you at home would feel proud upon hearing that your loved ones were taking part in something really great - all our past pains of long hours of hard labor and training, beginning with the days the the HEMINGTON was first commissioned, were now rewarded.

And so our planes, along with the planes of other ships, kept taking off and landing all day long - hitting the Japs continuously - our ship came so close to Japan itself, that we could almost feel the reverberations of the deadly missiles as they found their mark. I often wondered just how the pilots and aircrews felt upon leaving the comparative safety of the ship, to go winging their way on toward the target. It must have been quite a wonderful sight as they looked ahead and saw a jagged Fujiama loom up over the horizon, to say nothing of the thrill of seeing the little ships scatter helter-skelter as they dove their planes on ships and airfields leaving complete devastation and utter confusion in their wake.

Even the Jap Fleet failed to come out to fight - we turned in that night very disappointed sailors - all the mental build-up, and then nothing. Slept undisturbed but fully clothed, and ready for that long awaited attack that we had been proud of.

The next morning we repeated the same operations, only this day the weather was even colder, and our misery was made worse by the aid of a pouring rain that beat against our faces with a lash and a sting when the ship was facing into the wind. All our meals were eaten on battle stations during those days, with the exception of breakfasts, for we stayed prepared on stations for what should have been a terrific pounding. These meals consisted of the sandwiches (one cheese and one ham) and hot soup for lunch, and the Army's "K" rations for supper. No further comment on the situation - it was the best that could be prepared under the circumstances. Tough war we were fighting! We gave the Japs a pretty good beating, and the only pain we suffered was from the elements. Pretty good odds, but at the same time, disappointing as hell.

So that night after all our planes were safely aboard, we bade goodbye to the Island of Japan - a most unpleasant visit - and steamed South to give the Japs an Iwo Jima 6 rub-down before the invasion. On the way, and just for practice, we hit a small island, the name of which, has slipped my memory, as have many other things later days. We stayed around Iwo for a few days giving constant and such appreciated air coverage to the Marines, who, as you all know, were having a pretty tough time. Those days were no more exciting for us who remained aboard ship, than the days in the Tokyo area.

Then it was back Northward again, traveling through a terrific storm on our way. The seas were so high, that waves were constantly breaking over our flight deck; sending this comparatively large vessel around like a cork. You can bet your dirty shirt that the crew in the fore and aft living compartments got very little sleep for those two nights.

And so for this second time in two weeks we hit the Japanese Empire; still they wouldn't come out and fight. The weather was still poor and was growing steadily worse, so we left the target area and returned to our anchorage - a very uneventful trip, but, nevertheless, historical, and one we won't forget in many years to come. And we are permitted, I'll continue with the story - one I'm sure you won't find so dull.

Sincerely,

\*NOT FOR PUBLICATION\*