

## Coral Sea

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Intelligence reports coming in to Admiral Nimitz's headquarters at Pearl confirmed his belief that the Japanese intended to set up a base of command on the Coral Sea, and that the proposed site was Port Moresby. He accurately estimated the time as early May, and that within a month of this time that the Japanese would move on Midway.

To fight them every step of the way, Admiral Nimitz sent TF 17 and TF 11 to the Coral Sea, and combined them as TF 17 under Rear Admiral Frank J. Fletcher in the Yorktown.

With Rear Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch in Lexington and with a screen of 7 destroyers and 5 cruisers (including the Australian cruisers H.M.A.S. Australia and H.M.A.S. Hobart), TF arrived too late to prevent an unopposed landing by the Japanese on Tulagi. Immediate airborne searches were begun to locate the landing and support groups staging at Rabaul and Tulagi for the push on Port Moresby.

Meanwhile, Admiral Fletcher detached the tanker Neosho and destroyer Sims to proceed south to a replenishment rendezvous for the next day. They were sighted by Japanese search planes on the morning of 7 May and were reported as a carrier and a cruiser.

Knowing that the Pacific Fleet was in the Coral Sea and eager to dispose of it, the Japanese assumed this to be the main force and immediately sent 12 planes winging to the attack. Faced with such overwhelming and insurmountable odds, the Sims and Neosho gave a courageous showing for themselves before they became early victims of a new style of naval warfare.

While Neosho and Sims were under attack, YORKTOWN and LEXINGTON were launching strikes against the light carrier Shoho and her escorts, believed to be the main Japanese force. Within 25 minutes LCDR R.E. Dixon of the LEXINGTON radioed back to his ship "scratch one flattop". This was the first attack by

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## Fools And Boatswain's Mates

By Henderson Carroll

You can still hear them say it when the new man starts whistling up on the fo'c'le:

"Soa, only two kinds of sailors whistle aboard ship -- damn fools and Bosun's Mates -- and you ain't no Bosun's Mate Yet!"

In another day the 'no whistling' rule was as sensible as 'one hand for the ship and one for me'. It kept many a man from confusing the boatswain's tune with his mate's Amsterdam Maid and hauling when he should have veered.



The rule is no longer law in the Navy since the pipe doesn't have the life and death importance it had in the days of wind ships. It is now used primarily as an attention-getter in the modern fleet, though most sailors look upon it as more of an annoyance than a form of communication. Unless you are in the deck force yourself, chances are you couldn't name all of those ear-splitting calls that pour out of the IMC, much less explain them to an outsider.

In the first place the pipe you'd be talking about is not a pipe -- it is a 'call'. You can get by if you call it a pipe, however, since even Boatswain's Mates have been known to slip and use the term, but you never refer to the 'call' as a 'whistle'; not around a Boatswain's Mate you don't.

The call is a long sterling silver instrument consisting of a hollow bowl a little smaller than a jawbreaker and a curved tube, or reed, attached to the bowl by a flat strip of silver. The business end of the reed, called the pee, sits at the edge of a small hole in the top of the bowl. When you blow into the mouthpiece of the reed a stream of air passes through the pee and across the hole. The air is split on the far edge of the hole, forming a tone. This is the low or 'open' tone. The pitch of this tone is raised by closing the hand over the bowl to form the 'curved' and 'closed' tones. The high 'climbed' tone is made by pressing the call into the hand.

In its present form the pipe dates back to at least the 1500's, but its actual beginnings are as old as seafaring itself. The ancient Greek navies used a brass or bronze pipe in their war galleys to set a cadence for the oarsmen. If this was the original pipe we may say that it dates from 480 B.C. It is a matter of record that English crossbowmen, who made up the 'main battery' of the crusader's ships in 1214, were piped on deck for battle.

'Boats' himself showed up in the 16th Century British Navy, complete with call, lanyard, and a stout rattan cane. He was roaring, 'winding his call', and swinging his cane on the decks of the ships that made kindling of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Britain became ruler of the seas in that year and their Navy set the style for the rest of the world. The little silver pipe became a symbol of seagoing authority. Our early American Navy took it aboard with salt beef and flogging when they sailed out to cut their English apron strings and even today's Soviet Navy uses a sort of Bosun's pipe -- they may even have 'proof' that they invented it.

The pipe was found aboard merchant ships as well as men of war. It served as the sailing ship's PA system, allowing the Bosun to pass orders to all hands, on deck or aloft, at the same time. The shrill notes of 'haul', 'heave around', or 'veer' could be heard over the noise of a tompet, when a man's voice was as useful as it is now when the jets are turning up on the flight deck. When the

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