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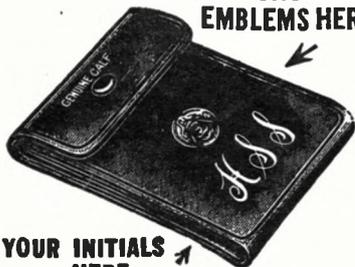


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# ARMY NAVY

# FLYING

## STORIES

VOL. I, NO. 3

EVERY STORY BRAND NEW

WINTER ISSUE



### A COMPLETE AIR ACTION NOVEL

## MALTA MASQUERADE

By **ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN**

*Lieutenants Stacey and Bell roar into cloud-busting battle when they set out to make reprisals of their own against the Axis!*

15

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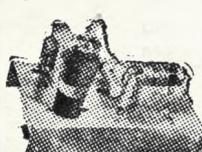
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# AMERICA'S SUPREME TASK

## *A Message to the Home Front*

By  
LT. GEN. BREHON  
SOMERVELL



**T**HIS WAR is going to be won by fighting men—by men on blazing deserts, on northern wastes; by men fighting in the air and on scattered seas. Wherever the enemy is, our fighting men will attack and attack until victory is won.

The supreme task of all behind the battle lines is to provide the guns, the tanks, the planes, the ships, the equipment to make our fighting men strong and irresistible. They can fight and win, if we are certain that no second is lost in producing and sending them the weapons and the supplies so urgently needed now and until the final shot is fired that destroys the Axis.

A long, hard struggle faces us. Some few still talk despairingly of the need for greater sacrifices, of the little things that we must forego, of changes in the everyday habits of life of the civilian population.

Those at home, in factories, in fields, in the thousands of jobs the national effort requires, are demonstrat-

ing every day through selfless service their willingness and determination to concentrate all energies on winning the war.

The spirit of America is one of our greatest assets. It stems from an abiding faith in our way of life which we shall preserve and expand. This spirit is an asset which the whip-driven Axis powers do not possess, and never can. Only free men and women can own such a precious treasure.

You on the home front and we in the Army are a team. Our goal is victory. Let us not delude ourselves. We haven't had too much success so far. Let us not indulge in the luxury of wishful thinking. Our foe is strong and resourceful. This is no Saturday afternoon football game. It is a grim and deadly business.

Sweat, fortitude, unfailing devotion to daily tasks, no matter how trivial they may seem—these are the ingredients of victory.

Our fighting men are on the march in far-flung regions of the world, striking with unexampled courage at the enemy. They won't fail you.

Give 'em firepower!



A stylized, cursive signature of Brehon Somervell.

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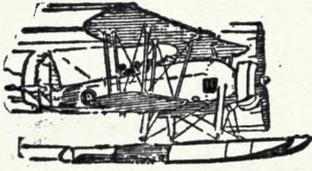
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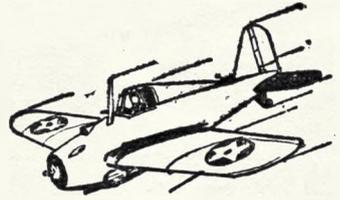
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# The TAKEOFF

A Department for Readers



**A**LTHOUGH the contestants in World War I signed off in 1918, United States Marines fought a small-scale but bitter struggle in Haiti for almost a decade thereafter. No one knew or knows much about it except the Haitians and the Marines.

However, it was a real war if a miniature one. While engaged in the thankless task of tracking a group of Haitians through dense island jungle, a Marine task force came up against a set-up that stopped them cold. The natives, well-armed and able to subsist virtually without lines of supply, had fortified themselves on the far side of a precipice whose walls were too sheer for any sort of field-gun or mortar shell to reach them.

The Marine commander sent back an SOS to his "air support"—consisting of a single antique biplane—told the flyers to "do something about it and do it blankety-blank quick" before his men were eaten alive by insects and bullets.

## *A Tough Nut to Crack*

The "air support" went into a huddle with itself after a tour over the combat area. It was a tough nut to crack, especially as the plane had not been designated nor intended for bombardment duty. It looked pretty hopeless, not to say impossible.

But the boys cooked up a plan. They rigged a single bomb to the bottom of their crate, arranged a release mechanism that worked with a prayer and three raps on a piece of wood.

The bomb supply was about as limited as the plane supply, so they had to be sure of hitting their difficult

target on the button the first time out. Bomb-sights had not yet been invented, so they were of little if any help.

"Tell you what," said the bombardier (he was an observer doubling in brass). "Aim this flying coffin at the target, and when you get so close we can't miss, I'll let this thing go."

## *The Only Solution*

The pilot was dubious. He didn't trust either his plane or the bomb release, had no desire to accompany an unreleased projectile to a sudden if dramatic extinction. But it offered the only solution, and the C. O. was red hot.

Somehow, they got the overloaded plane off the ground, got on top of their objective. The natives encamped below took a few pot shots at them, soon stopped to save ammunition. What they thought when the plane came roaring down at them will never be known.

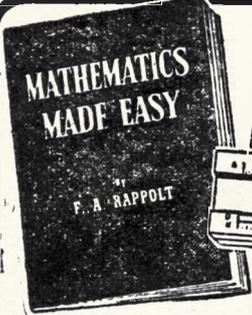
The release worked, the pilot pulled out of his dive before hitting the tree-tops and the bomb landed in the center of the enemy encampment. As soon as the sweating ground forces could get to it, they walked in unhampered by any opposition. There wasn't any left. "Air support" had functioned perfectly.

## *The Dive Bomber Was Born*

It is doubtful whether any of the men engaged in that little battle realized what they'd done amongst them. They were thinking of clean barracks and getting out of the jungle in one piece. But they'd just invented and proved the efficacy of the newest and

(Continued on page 10)





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## THE TAKEOFF

(Continued from page 8)

deadliest weapon of World War II. In short, in that tiny engagement, the dive bomber was born.

All of us know to what stature this impromptu weapon has grown, but not many of us know how she grew. Until German Stukas blasted Polish airfields and troops in 1939 and Dutch, Belgium, British and French defenses with such devastating effect the following year, most people weren't aware that such a thing as a dive bomber existed.

The Navy went right to work on the idea and, in 1929, developed the Curtiss Helldiver, which was immortalized in a movie the following year.

### Ernst Udet

Barnstorming around America and putting on dogfights at air shows with Buster Brown, the Canadian flyer who shot down von Richthofen, was an ex-member of the great baron's air circus, bluff, hearty Ernst Udet. Alert and imaginative, he watched Helldivers in action here and there, went back to Germany and sold Herman Goering on the idea.

The Germans, always a military rather than a naval power, got another brainstorm. They'd use the dive bomber to replace the costly and ungainly massed artillery barrage which spent so much metal with so little effect in the years between 1914 and 1918. They'd send whole waves of dive bombers at the enemy.

By doing this, they'd eliminate tedious and perilous assemblages of materiel required for large-scale artillery assaults. Such concentrations were always fair game for enemy intelligence and observation planes, and gave the foe time to get set.

Dive bombers could be flown from

(Continued on page 12)



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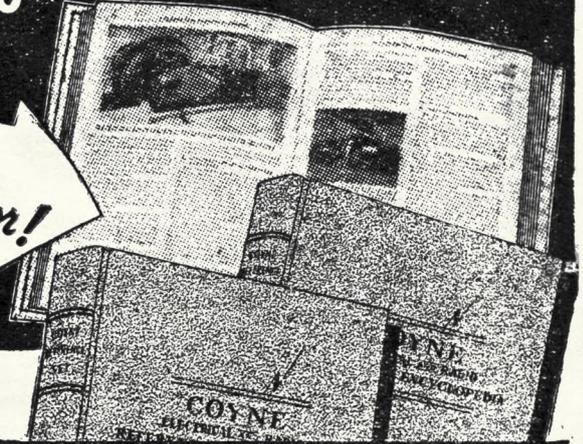
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## THE TAKEOFF

(Continued from page 10)

various points to a single focus, could there strike without warning. Furthermore, they offered the supreme advantage of accuracy. With better planes and bomb-sights, they couldn't miss. The result of Udet's observation was the Junkers 87, known generally as the Stuka.

Contrary to general opinion, the Stuka is not the greatest dive bomber ever built. Nor, as her detractors would have it, is she the worst. No plane which does the job it was designed for with the devastating effect of the Stuka can be tabbed as anything but a success.

### Newer, Better Bombers

However, the Navy, on a smaller scale, more than kept up her development of this peculiarly effective attack weapon. Helldivers were improved throughout the early and middle thirties, finally replaced by the Vought SB2U, whose latest model, the SB2U-3, is still in general use today and did a thorough job on the Japs in the Solomon attack.

This ship, which has been in use for almost five years, is well ahead of the Stukas that blitzed France. It can take a lot of pounding, has a speed of 260 miles per hour, has a range of 700 miles and carries a thousand-pounder in her belly.

But the type is already being replaced as fast as newer ships can be flown from the testing fields, for the Navy has done a lot better lately. The Douglas SBD was about ready to be put into mass production when Curtiss finally got the bugs out of its newest Helldiver, the SB2C-1, and the Army entered the picture, bleating belatedly for a good type of dive bomber.

The Navy, already decided in favor of the Curtiss because of its superiority under high-seas conditions, turned



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the Douglas over to the Army, who readapted it for military duties and renamed it the A-24. In mass production now, it won't be long before this death-dealing speed demon will be making the Nazis cry "Stuka".

The SB2C-1, however, is probably the world's best ship of this type. Built to work off either carriers or shore bases, it has a speed of 350 miles per hour, a mile a minute faster than the latest German models, carries cannon in its wings and a two-thousand-pound bomb in its tummy. Furthermore, it can lug this load a good 1,200 miles.

So those lonely Marines in Haiti really started something, as any survivor of the struggle in Europe will tell you, and the Marines, the Army and the Navy are going to carry it through to the finish. Ask Adolf next year if he's still around—or Hirohito.

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John Smith, American, took part in the historic raid on Dieppe. He was only one of many other John Smiths—whatever their names may be, who put everything they had into the courageous battle. But the thrilling story of this particular John Smith is told in **DEEP IN THE HELL OF DIEPPE**, a grand complete novel by Laurence Donovan featured in the next issue. It will hold you breathless.

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**THE EDITOR.**

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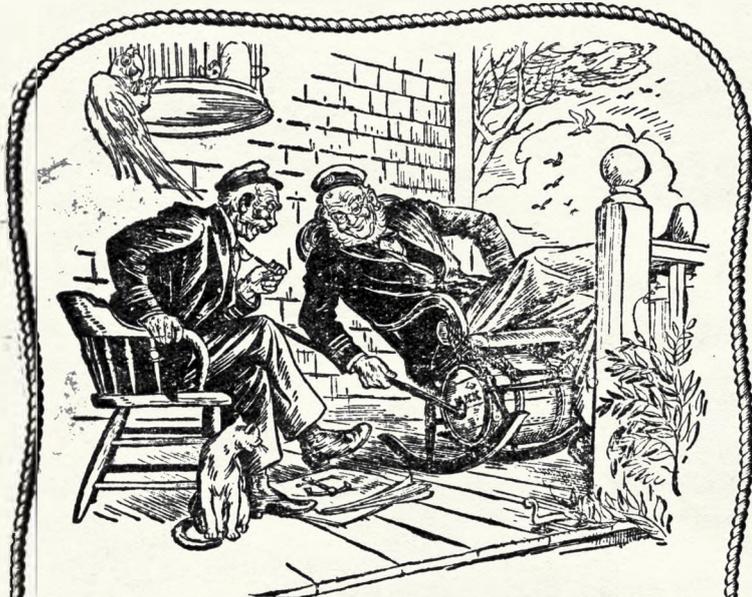
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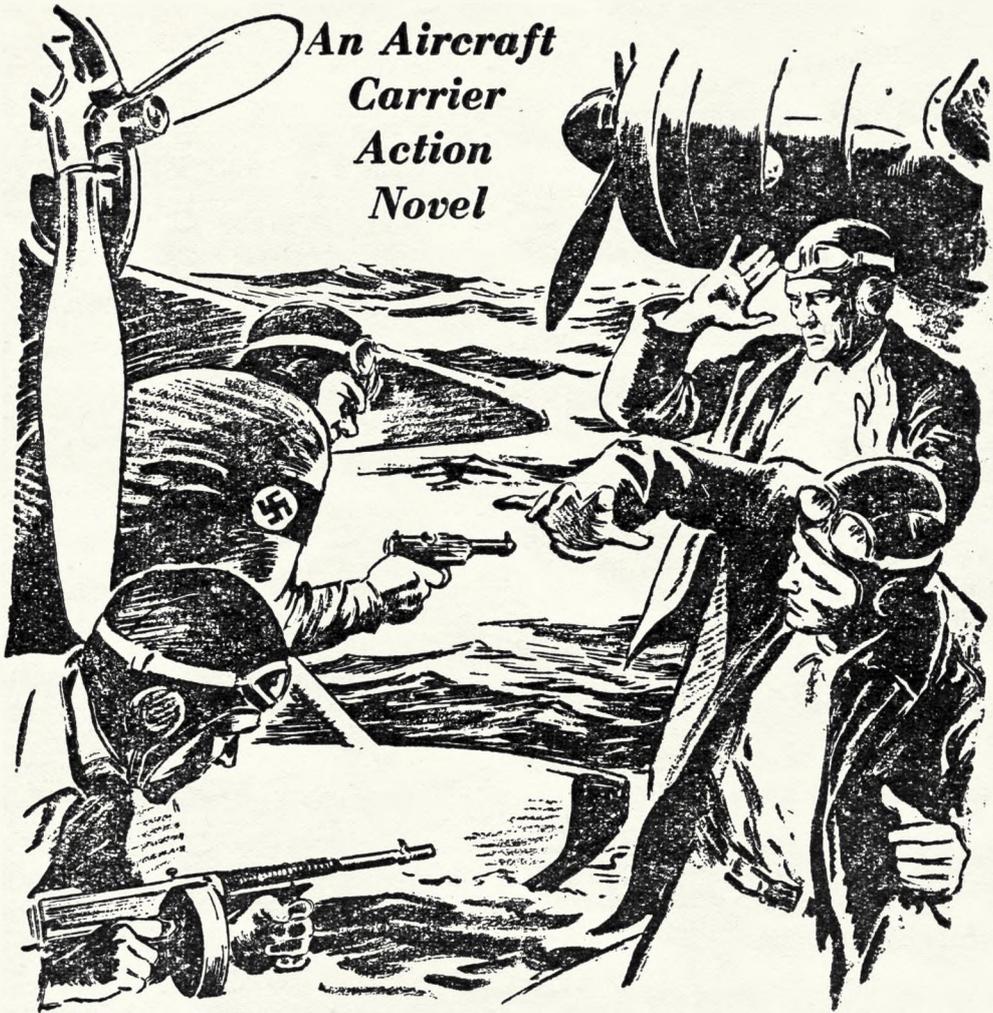
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# MALTA MASQUERADE

By **ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN**

*Lieutenants Stacey and Bell roar into cloud-busting battle when they set out to make reprisals of their own against the Axis!*

## CHAPTER I

### *Vanished Wings*

**T**HE sun was a fading ball of flame balanced on the western rim of the Mediterranean. The shadows of night were rushing up with all the speed and ominousness of an approaching hurricane as the

U. S. Aircraft Carrier *Bennington* slowly traced a huge circle in the sunset-tinted waters. To port and to starboard her destroyer escort trailed her like so many faithful watch dogs.

Aboard the *Bennington* there was not a single smile. From Admiral Porter down to the lowest rating, every officer and seaman went about

his job grim-faced, or stood raking the darkening heavens through binoculars.

One of those topside was Lieutenant "Stud" Stacey. He was a tall man, six-two, who had a pair of shoulders to go with his height. And he had earned the right to wear the Navy Cross under his wings that day in December when the treacherous sons of the Rising Sun slammed down on Pearl Harbor.

Four of those rats had not pulled out of their dive that day, and Stud Stacey was the reason.

With one arm hooked around a port crash net stanchion, Stacey searched the heavens until his eyes smarted. He slowly lowered the glasses, and groaned.

"It can't be navigation," he muttered. "Old Saunders is a homing pigeon if there ever was one."

"The best," grunted Lieutenant Jake Bell who stood at his side. "So they must have bumped into trouble."

"And they had orders to fly with radios dead," Stacey said. "Nobody's supposed to know we are here in the Mediterranean."

"No, nobody!" Bell snorted. "Except maybe half the Italian and Nazi Secret Service. Wonder how long the Old Man's going to stick here?"

"Until dark," Stacey said. "And that'll be in a few minutes. Six planes, and not a sign of one of them. Maybe, though, they'll catch us after dark, and come aboard under flares."

"Not a chance," Bell said, and shook his head. "I checked with the flight officer. They had fuel until seven-fifteen. It's seven-thirty now."

**A**T THAT moment, as though Admiral Porter suddenly realized that further waiting was a waste of time and a danger to the *Bennington*, the huge aircraft carrier suddenly went cutting due westward at increased speed. Stud Stacey took one final look at the shadow-blurred heavens, and slipped the binoculars into their case.

"Jake," he said, "all of those guys were pals of mine. I've got to find out, for sure. We can't just steam off and leave them to fall into the drink!"

"They're in the drink already," Bell said quietly.

"Look," Stacey said grimly, "we've got a twin-engined Grumman utility amphibian aboard. And she's got tanks for fourteen hours. If we took off just before dawn we could cover the whole area of their flight, and catch up with the *Bennington* by noon, easy. We might find some of the boys still floating."

"We, huh?" Bell murmured.

**T**HEY were your pals, too, weren't they?" Stacey shot at him. "Also, you're a good navigator. You don't want to come along?"

"Sure, I do," Bell said. "But there's the little matter of Admiral Porter, and some of his fourstrippers. Maybe they won't like the idea."

"That's what we'll find out, now," Stacey said and turned. "Come on."

Stacey's hands felt wet and clammy, and a cold lump tried to clog up his throat. He had seen buddies of his die in the air, and there had been a few other occasions when a plane or two had roared off the flight deck, never to be seen again. But this time, six planes had gone away. Six Curtiss SOC scouting jobs with a pilot and observer-gunner in each ship. They had apparently headed in the general direction of the British-fortified island of Malta.

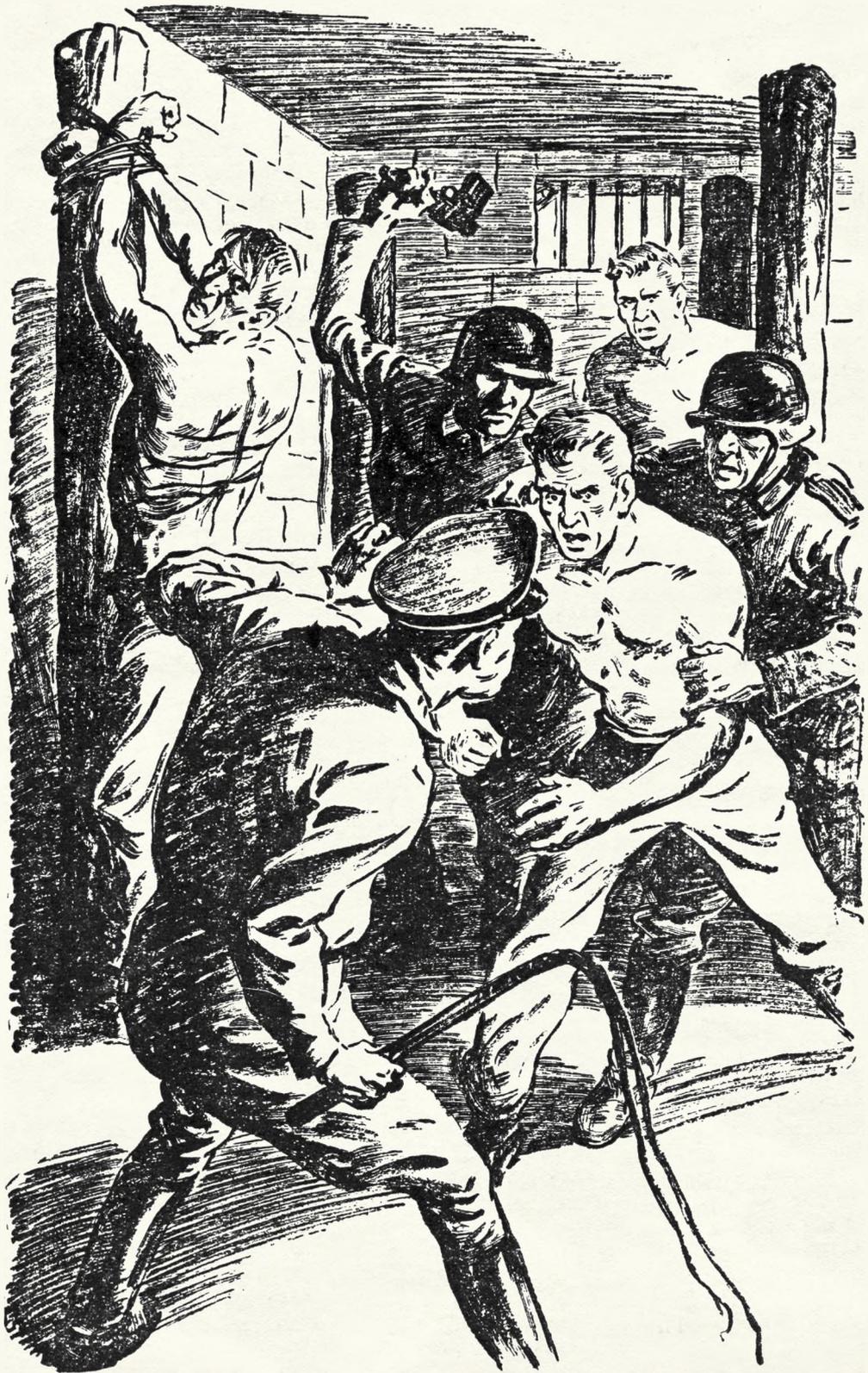
At a definite time the *Bennington* had reached the rendezvous point where the aircraft were to be met, but the patrol planes had not put in an appearance. No word from them had been received.

And now that the zero point for fuel had come and gone the *Bennington* was steaming away.

Presently Stacey and Bell were going through the routine of gaining an interview with the ship's commander. There was still a lot of flaming red on the western lip of the Mediterranean when they were ushered into the admiral's quarters. With the Old Man were Captain Drake, Flight Operations Officer, and Commander Jenkins, senior Section Leader.

The admiral returned their salute, and gave them a hard, quizzical stare.

"Yes, Lieutenants?" he grunted.



Stacey hurled himself blindly toward von Scholtz. "You beast!" he screamed

"Your request said 'urgent'. What's it all about?"

"The missing patrol, sir," Stacey said. "We have a Grumman amphibian aboard. Lieutenant Bell and I would like to make a search patrol and rendezvous with the *Bennington* around noon."

"What makes you think you can find those patrol planes?" the admiral asked in a heavy tone.

"Lieutenant Bell and I simply want permission to try," Stacey said. "We might find some of them floating in the water and could pick them up with the Grumman amphibian. I . . . Well, sir, every man in that patrol was a good friend of mine."

"Sit down, both of you," the admiral growled. "We were about to ask for a volunteer searching team. Sit down, and I'll give you as much of the picture, as I know."

**S**TACEY and Bell waited, and Admiral Porter was silent for a moment. He stared at the huge detailed chart fastened under the glass top of his desk, then suddenly jerked his head up, as though he had decided what to say.

"As you know," he began, "this Attack Force of which the *Bennington* is a member, is supposed to be a surprise in these waters. We are here to help the British Fleet units cut the Nazi supply lines from Sicily to Tunisia and Libya. Our real job, though, is to help in keeping Malta a workable base. The Nazis want to knock out Malta for keeps, and are throwing every unit of their *Luftwaffe* they can spare into that job. For that matter, perhaps more units than they really can spare.

"But they are going to go all-out for Malta, and the devil with the cost. They've got to have it or their North Africa aspirations are sunk. So that's our immediate job—to help cut the Axis supply lines in general, but to keep Malta's head above water in particular."

The admiral looked at his chart again.

"The Axis raid bases in Sicily," he went on presently, "are at Siracusa, Marsala, Palermo, and Messina. British raids have done some damage at

those bases, but not much. The British have been forced to remain at Malta, go up when Nazi raiders arrive, and knock the spots off them.

"That's where we are to enter the picture. Plans have been worked out to give the Nazis the works at both ends. While the British are giving them trouble over Malta, planes from this Attack Force will raid their bases in Sicily, and also catch the Nazi survivors on the way back. If it works out the way we hope Nazi air losses will be three times what they can stand, and—we also hope—they'll give up ideas about Malta."

The *Bennington's* commander scowled darkly into space. There was a glitter in his dark eyes and his lips were pressed tightly together in a thin grim line.

"That patrol this afternoon went out for scouting only!" he suddenly snapped. "Its leader had strict orders to avoid *all* contact with enemy aircraft. He was not even to get close to Sicily. The job was to scout for enemy surface ships in nearby waters. We wouldn't be pulling much of a surprise if Axis surface craft spotted our planes far out to sea. Before we start throwing punches, it is necessary for us to learn the exact location of *all* Axis surface units. Then we can know how best to maneuver to avoid them. Above all, we want to keep our presence a secret as long as we possibly can."

**T**HE admiral made a helpless gesture with one hand.

"What happened to that patrol, I haven't the faintest idea," he said. "Lieutenant Commander Saunders had orders to keep radios dead. However, in a real emergency he had permission to make contact with us. In code. We picked up absolutely no signals at all."

"Would you call meeting enemy planes, and being forced to engage them, an emergency, sir?" Bell asked.

"I would, and so would Saunders," the admiral replied instantly. "I have considered the possibility that they were surprised and perhaps shot down. Such a possibility doesn't make sense however. Dog-fights don't last long, but there would be plenty of

time for Saunders to get some word back to us. There is just one thing that might have happened. They lost their way, and sat down in the water rather than reveal their location, and ours, to enemy ears."

"Not a chance of that, sir!" Stacey spoke up quickly. "Old—I mean, Lieutenant Commander Saunders could find a rowboat without charts or instruments. He'd never miss a rendezvous through faulty navigation."

"You're probably right," the admiral said with a faint smile. "Navigators don't come any better. Now, your attention. Here's their flight chart for the patrol."

**B**OTH lieutenants gave their absolute attention to the chart and memorized every word the admiral spoke.

Eventually the senior officer leaned back and looked at them.

"I think I should remind you that you're taking on a very dangerous mission," he said quietly. "If you bump into enemy planes you won't stand a chance in that amphibian, even though she carries machine-guns. You, also, will fly with a dead radio. However, for you an air fight *cannot* be considered an emergency. An emergency for you will *only* be something that directly bears on the immediate safety of the *Bennington*. You will be strictly on your own. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly, sir," Stacey and Bell replied in the same breath.

"Very well, then," Admiral Porter said, with a nod. "I'm turning you over to Captain Drake for final instructions. Incidentally though, you will not be connected with the *Bennington* in any way, once you take off. Remove all *Bennington* insignia from your uniforms. Carry no papers, or other identification. And the *Bennington's* markings are to be removed from your plane. Leave only the usual Navy markings. The Axis probably suspects that U. S. Navy units are here in the Mediterranean, but we're not going to let them find out *which* units. Well, that's all. Good luck, Lieutenants. And God-speed there and back."

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## CHAPTER II

### *Nazi Technique*

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**A** HUNDRED times during the last five minutes Stud Stacey had opened his mouth to start a song, or to make a bit of conversation. Each time, though, something seemed to stick in his throat and not let anything out.

The Grumman had been in the air almost five hours now. During every minute of that time he, and Bell in the amphibian's co-seat, had kept their eyes glued on the rolling Mediterranean. Except that when the dawn sun brightened the sky they had taken a few glances at the surrounding heavens.

But below or above, they had seen nothing to make a pulse quiver.

"So help me!" Stacey finally burst out. "Even a look at a Musso destroyer would help. How we making it, Jake?"

"Right on course," Bell replied wearily. "We'll make landfall at the southern tip of Sicily in another five minutes. I'd like to go in close and high for a quick look."

"At what?" Stacey grunted.

"Don't know," Bell said. "Been getting hunches. Got a feeling something's going to pop. That sea and sky! Enough to make you figure anything!"

Stacey shot a quick side glance at his flying mate. He saw the taut, strained face, the tiny wrinkles at the corners of the eyes, and the way the lips were compressed. It was not hot in the amphibian's pilot compartment, yet Bell's forehead was dotted by tiny glistening beads of sweat.

Stacey raised one hand to his own forehead and felt sweat there. His own facial expression was probably much the same as Bell's.

"The way I feel I don't care a hoot what your hunch turns out to be," he finally growled. "Nix on holding this course after we make landfall, though. If we get too close to shore we might get spotted—and this job doesn't silhouette like any Axis crate. If they

should come tearing up . . . What's the matter?"

Bell had suddenly lunged forward and was peering narrow-eyed down off the port bow. Stacey leaned forward himself and took a look. He saw only the sun-bathed blue swells of the Mediterranean.

Bell shot out a stiff finger and pointed.

"There!" he said in a tight voice. "Sight your eye along my finger. Something in the water, like the tail of a plane. Wait till a swell moves it and it catches the sun. There! See it?"

Stacey suddenly caught the faint flash of color down in the water about a mile ahead, and a quarter of a mile or so to port. It wasn't exactly a flash of color. Rather it was a sort of half silverish and half golden glow that outlined itself against the blue of the water. But Stacey knew that it was the tail of a half-submerged plane. One of the missing scouting aircraft from the *Bennington*!

He couldn't say anything. The tail of that half-submerged plane, swaying slowly to and fro, was like a silent farewell from men he had known and loved. Just the tail of a half-submerged plane and nothing else. No floating parachutes, and no floating wreckage of other planes. The cockpits were under water, so if the pilot and observer were aboard they were dead there. And if they weren't in the cockpits they were dead some place else.

"I'm going down and land, Jake!" Stacey suddenly got out harshly. "I've got to find out why, if I can."

"Go on down," Bell muttered. "Just don't pile us up, that's all."

**S**TACEY throttled the twin Wasps and sent the Grumman amphibian circling downward. He landed as close to the floating plane as he dared, and then with Bell in the hull nose to fend off he water-taxied slowly toward the doomed craft.

When Bell made fast with his fend-hook, he killed the engines and came forward. They leaned far over the hull nose and peered down into the clear blue water. Then Stacey slowly let the air out of his lungs

"Both pits empty," he heard his voice say. "They aren't aboard."

"It's Saunders' ship," Bell said. "See that forward cockpit hatch? See that thing caught on it and swaying around? That's Saunders' scarf. That wild blue and red one he always wore. Must have got it yanked off as he bailed out."

Stacey let his eyes wander toward the tail section that was above water. It was peppered with bullet-holes. It looked as though it had been used for a target by a dozen planes.

"Shot down!" he muttered. "The whole ship's riddled like a sieve. So they did have an air scrap! But why didn't they get something out over the radio? You can't get six ships all in a flash!"

"Maybe you can," Bell got out. "But where are the other five? They—"

Bell cut it off short and he and Stacey stared skyward as they heard the drone of aircraft engines. The sun blinded them, but when they did see it they were too surprised and relieved to move. It was a Supermarine "Walrus" reconnaissance of the Royal Air Force, Fleet Air Arm. And it was coming down straight at them, with throttled engines.

"Did those guys just now spot us," Stacey muttered, "or have they been tagging us all along?"

"Don't know," Bell grunted. "And I also don't know what *they'd* be doing way out here in that flying chicken crate. They'd stand less chance against Axis planes than we would. But I sure hope they've got something to tell us."

For a brief second Stacey was startled. He glanced back toward his cockpit, then returned his gaze to the British amphibian sliding down. It landed with a lot of splashing some hundred yards or so to starboard. Then its pilot taxied slowly around and approached the U. S. Navy plane head-on.

It came to a stop a dozen feet away. A figure popped up out of the hull nose like a rabbit coming up out of its hole. In his hands he held a short-barreled, wicked-looking submachine-gun! And with it pointed at the two U. S. Navy flyers he barked out a command in a guttural accent.

"Don't move, or you will be dead men!"

As a million crazy thoughts exploded in Stud Stacey's head, he glared pop-eyed at the figure in flying garb in the British reconnaissance amphibian. He was unmistakably German, but for the first few moments Stacey was utterly unable to make that truth stick in his brain, though he knew that the German use of such British planes was a fairly recent variation of an old trick. It was the same with Jake Bell.

"Hey, what's the big idea?" Stacey finally blurted.

**T**HE German in the British amphibian smiled broadly and made a gesture with the submachine-gun. Another man appeared at his side. "You Americans should have remained at home until you learned how to play at war with real soldiers," this man said. "Place your hands above your heads, please. We are boarding you."

A film of red rage clouded Stacey's eyes. He had a mad desire to lash out and make a grab for the German's gun. The hulls of the amphibians were touching noses and the barrel of that submachine-gun was no more than a couple of feet away.

However, before Stacey could act on his crazy urge the second German quickly stepped aboard the American plane and went quickly to the hull door in front of the pilot's compartment. Stacey turned impulsively but a jab in the arm from the machine-gun stopped him cold. He turned back and glared into the smiling face.

"So it's true, huh?" he snapped.

"True?" the German echoed, with a puzzled look.

"That you Huns have been cleaned out of most of your own planes!" Stacey cracked.

The German's taunting smile disappeared for a moment, but quickly came back.

"We will talk of that at another time," he said in a flat voice. "You will now crawl back aft to where my comrade is waiting for you. Be foolish if you wish. It does not matter to me. Move, please."

The two U. S. Navy pilots eyed him

for a brief moment, then obeyed. They did so for two sound reasons. One, because their deaths would not explain this cock-eyed mystery to them, and the other, because the German with the submachine-gun acted as if he hoped they would not obey.

They ducked down into the hull and crawled back to the pilots' compartment and through it to the cabin amidships. There the other German awaited them, with a Luger in his hand. He frisked them for guns, found none, and shoved them down into seats. He took a seat across from them where he could drill either one at the drop of a hat.

The German with the machine-gun came back to the pilot's seat. He had left his machine-gun behind, but his holstered Luger was where he could grab it in nothing flat.

Through the compartment door opening Stacey could just see the British amphibian. Still another German had appeared in the hull nose and he pushed the two craft apart. Then the British amphibian taxied away and took the air.

The pilot at the controls of the U. S. Navy plane got his engine started, jitterbugged with them for a couple of minutes, then took off himself. As the hull left the water Stacey turned and looked at Bell. His flying pal was a picture of dumbfounded amazement and blazing anger. He caught Stacey's look and groaned through clenched teeth.

"What a big help we turned out to be," Stacey muttered. "I—"

He suddenly caught the faint smile on the face of the German who held the Luger on them. The smile meant that the man understood English, and was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Well," he grunted, "we can tell our grandchildrer. that we at least served with the British Fleet Air Arm, Jake."

Bell caught Stacey's quick half wink. He played up.

"Yeah," he growled. "And what a bright idea you had! Requesting that we be transferred for service with the British Fleet Air Arm. Nuts! I wish I'd told you to go alone, and stayed home."

Stacey glanced out the cabin win-

dow. The United States Navy amphibian was high in the air by now, and from the position of the sun Stacey could tell they were flying due west. And six other planes had suddenly appeared in the sky! All British, too. Six British Fairey "Fulmars" of the Fleet Air Arm.

Wild hope began to build up in Stacey but it died a sudden death as he glanced at their German guard. The man had also sighted the approaching planes, and didn't seem worried in the least. In fact, as he saw Stacey look at him he smiled and nodded.

Stacey scowled and returned his gaze to the Fulmars. They came sweeping in close and took up escort positions. Stacey could see part of the British Supermarine Walrus that was leading the aerial parade. He could also see the thin dark line on the horizon far ahead.

"Sicily!" he grunted to himself.

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### CHAPTER III

#### *Hovering Doom*

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**S**OME fifteen minutes later the thin dark line on the horizon had become a good big hunk of land. Italian-owned and Nazi-ruled Sicily.

Stacey had never seen the place in his life. But it was Sicily all right, because when Stacey looked toward the north he could see volcanic Mount Etna towering up into the blue heavens.

A moment or two later the German at the controls nosed the Grumman downward. Another few minutes and the amphibian was landing on the surface of an airfield that seemed to hold all the German and Italian planes in the world. There were hundreds of them, ranging from Messerschmitt 109s to giant troop-carrying transports.

Stacey guessed that it was the gigantic air base at Siracusa, and as he gazed at the mighty array of war aircraft a dull throbbing ache surged through him. What a target! What a perfect target for the British, if they

would only stop pecking around in Libya and concentrate all of their big stuff on this air base! It was the kind of target that couldn't be missed from any altitude.

No wonder Malta was being plastered night and day. There were enough planes here to keep up that pace with no plane going out more than once every fourth day.

"What a target!" Stacey muttered. "Why don't they smack it, but soon and plenty?"

"Don't forget, pal," Bell grunted. "Great plans for Nineteen Forty-four. It's been in all the papers. Well, here comes the reception committee. Maybe we'll get a hint or two now."

The "reception committee" consisted of six high-ranking officers of the German *Luftwaffe*. In their shiny boots, baggy pants, and dangling medals, they presented the usual ludicrous picture of what the well-dressed Hun officer should wear.

But there was the heart and the brain of a baby killer in every one of those uniforms, and so Stacey and Bell were in no humorous mood as the committee came to a halt and waited for them to be ushered out of the amphibian. Six pairs of piglike eyes started giving them the up and down. Then the senior officer came a step or two forward and poked a stiff finger at Stacey.

"Your name, section number, and ship?" he boomed in English.

"Al Smith," Stacey shot back at him. "Section Twenty. Macy's Basement."

The senior Nazi grunted and shot a keen look at the Grumman. When his eyes swiveled back to Stacey there was a sneer on his lips.

"So there is an American aircraft carrier in Mediterranean waters?" he growled.

"One?" Bell echoed before Stacey could speak. "There are six, and two more on the way. Anything else you want to know?"

The German ignored him and looked at the Nazi who had piloted the Grumman. He addressed him as Colonel von Scholtz, and asked what had happened.

"Leutnant Stivers and I were on high patrol over the area where we

met those six American-made planes yesterday, *Herr Kommandant*," von Scholtz told him. "Fortunately we were between them and the sun. They did not see us. We saw them land to inspect one of the destroyed planes that had not yet sunk. We landed and took them prisoners.

"Meuller flew our plane back. I believe, *Herr Kommandant*, that they are from the carrier base of those planes we destroyed yesterday. There are no markings on the aircraft, just as there were none on those planes yesterday. Nothing but the U. S. Navy insignia. But that is enough."

**T**HEY had spoken in German, and Stacey's three years of German in college was strained to the limit. He managed to get it, though he main-

The *Kommandant* turned on his heel and strode away, followed by his entourage. Stacey took that opportunity to impress von Scholtz with his ignorance of the German language.

"What's biting him?" he grunted. "What was he raving about?"

"Nothing," the German said. "He spoke about a matter that does not concern you. You will come with me, please."

The German pilot and a couple of bullet-headed, bull-necked field guards escorted Stacey and Bell across the air base and into a stone building. What Stacey saw on the short walk both excited and depressed him.

There seemed to be more planes than he had seen from the air. At least more troop transport planes.



*John Smith, American, Plunges into the raging turmoil of fast battle action*

## **DEEP IN THE HELL OF DIEPPE**

*in the exciting novel of that name*

**By LAURENCE DONOVAN**

COMING NEXT ISSUE

tained a blank expression as though he were quite ignorant of what was being said. But he was pleased by the look of anger and worry that skipped across the *Kommandant's* face. Then the Hun addressed as *Leutnant Stivers* spoke up.

"They talked with each other," he told the senior Nazi. "They were broken-hearted at being captured, but were glad they could tell their grandchildren that they had served a week with the British Fleet Air Arm. It is possible that they and a few of their planes have been loaned to the swine British."

The *Kommandant* glared at his prisoners.

"I must find out for certain!" he suddenly snarled. "Take them away, and search them to the skin. There are ways for us to find out the truth!"

And gathered about each transport were swarms of German paratroops. They were going through the exercises of piling into the planes, jumping to the ground, and racing toward mounds of machine-guns, hand grenades, ammunition, and such. It was a picture of Nazi thoroughness. Practice, practice, and more practice.

For what? Some months ago it had been Crete. Shortly it was meant to be Malta. Grimly Stacey realized that these Germans were preparing for an air invasion of the British island stronghold in the central Mediterranean.

The stone building which Stacey and Bell entered was to all intents a jail. There were barred windows and steel doors. The American prisoners were stripped to the skin, and each given a dirty pair of work pants, and

their own shoes. Then they were led to a darkened room, and the door was slammed savagely behind them.

"Well," Bell grunted as they both tried to adjust their eyes to the gloom, "the recruiting officer promised me I'd see the world, and the guy wasn't wrong."

"Yeah," Stacey grunted. "Only—"

He stopped short, seeing movement in one of the bunks. A man stood up and limped over toward them. By the shaft of pale light that filtered through the single window the Americans saw that he wore the uniform of a flight lieutenant of the Royal Air Force. But he looked more Russian with his beard of two months' growth at least. He peered at them and smiled.

"Yanks," he said. "I'm Flight Lieutenant Witherington. I say, you are Yanks, aren't you, though you have no uniforms."

**T**HE voice was as English as London Bridge, but caution shot through Stacey as he shook the proffered hand.

"That's right," he said, and introduced Bell and himself. "The Huns seemed to have a yen for our uniforms. They gave us these pants, instead."

"Oh, you'll get your uniforms back." Witherington said with a laugh. "Did the same thing to me when I was captured. Hope to find secret messages in the lining, and all that sort of rot. But, I say! What are you two Yanks doing here? Don't mean to pry into your private business, you know, but are there Yanks in this part of the world?"

"With the R.A.F.," Stacey replied cautiously. "What happened to you?"

"Oh, you're airmen?" the Englishman said. "Allah be praised. We speak the same language. If you'll pardon me I'll sit down. This leg of mine isn't up to snuff today. So Yanks are with the R.A.F. at last, eh? Splendid!"

As the Englishman eased himself into a chair, Bell and Stacey also sat down. They looked at the man questioningly.

"Oh, yes," he grunted. "Didn't answer your question, did I? Sorry. What happened to me? A victim of

the latest dirty Nazi trick, you might say. Out on patrol with two of my chaps. Ran across another British patrol. Four of the beggars. Then it happened so suddenly I didn't know what had happened until it was all over."

"What?" Bell probed.

"They were British planes," the Englishman said harshly. "But Jerry blighters were flying them. Caught me and my two chaps for fair. My two chaps died, but somehow I got thrown clear, and remained conscious just long enough to yank my rip-cord. I woke up in this beastly hole. One of the guards told me I came down on land. Mashed up my leg a bit, but it's on the mend, now. Near as I can figure it was a little over a month ago. They were pleased to inform me that my pals had gone down in flames. Didn't bail out."

"Tough!" Stacey murmured sympathetically, and tried to study the man in the bad light. "How-come the Nazis have British planes, though? Where'd they get them?"

"Lots of places, unfortunately," the Englishman replied. "We left a few in Greece. Crete, too, and of course, France. Also, a few of our chaps have been forced down here and there. The Libyan campaign, you know. Those that were damaged they patched up, and there you are."

"But with all the crates they've got, why would they want British planes?" Bell asked.

The Englishman leaned forward and peered at them intently.

"I say!" he murmured. "Just where did you say you were stationed? What R.A.F. unit?"

"Fleet Air Arm," Stacey said quickly. "I'm afraid you'll have to let it go at that."

"I was hoping," the Englishman said sadly, "that you were from the American Fleet Air Arm, or whatever they call it. We've heard rumors at Malta that some units of the American Navy were coming over to lend us a hand. An aircraft carrier, or two. But it's quite all right if you chaps wish to keep mum. Chap shouldn't even trust his brother these days. But, I say! If you were shot down, what about the markings on your planes?"

"No markings," Stacey said. "So you were at Malta, eh?"

"Quite," the Englishman said and laughed. "But that's no secret to the Nazis. There were markings on my plane. But you asked about the Nazis wanting British planes. Rather obvious, I'd say. Malta, of course. A chance to fool our ack-ack gunners and do a strict bit of reconnoitering. Jerry wants Malta. Did you notice all the transports and paratroops they've got out there? Malta is due for it bad most any day now, I'm afraid."

"And what are Malta's chances?" Stacey asked.

"Decidedly poor, unless we get a lot of help."

**T**HERE was a moment of silence, then Stacey asked the rather obvious question.

"Why hasn't the R.A.F. bombed the tar out of this place? Holy smoke! A good strafe of all they've got here would turn the place into a ten-alarm inferno! It's a perfect target!"

"Agreed." The Englishman nodded slowly. "If I were R.A.F. Middle East O.C. I'd order the raids, and the devil with anything else until we were through with this job. But I am only a squadron flight lieutenant. Of course, though, there are problems. There are not enough bombers at Malta. Much too small and risky for operation of the big fellows. A bit too far away for raids from Cirenaica and Egypt.

"Also, they need every bomber they have there to prevent Rommel from getting a sudden and disastrous jump on us. The real reason, though, is this place itself. They'd get the alert well in advance and put a hundred of their fighters in the air for every bomber we could send over. But, good Lord! I wish some kind of an attempt could be made before it's too late! Malta is doomed if we just sit back and wait. Or if American forces don't get over here quick and give us a hand."

The urge to tell the Englishman the truth zoomed up in Stacey, but he beat it down. He was certain the man was all that he pretended to be, but feeling certain didn't make something an absolute fact. There were other reasons,

too, for him to keep his mouth shut. The main one was that Nazis probably were listening in on this little chit-chat session. He and Bell had had that pot-bellied *Luftwaffe* big shot more than a little buffaloed. For the sake of all concerned, particularly the *Bennington* far out to sea, it was best to keep things that way.

At that moment the door was banged open and a couple of armed guards appeared. By grunts, and gestures with their Lugers, they indicated that Stacey and Bell were to accompany them.

"See you again, Witherington," Stacey said as he got to his feet. "Good luck, and keep punching."

"Quite," the man said and smiled. "And watch the blighters for tricks, chaps. They're cagey beggars."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Sealed Lips*

**T**HE base *Kommandant's* office could serve as a model for the administration office of any modern airport. As the guards pushed Stacey and Bell inside they could imagine passengers asking questions about transport take-off and arrival times.

A second look, however, revealed that the place was definitely a *Luftwaffe* establishment. There were pinpointed maps on all the walls. There were flight charts. There were three or four short-wave radio sets. Everything needed for the operation of military aircraft on a gigantic scale.

The *Kommandant* and *Leutnant* von Scholtz were the only two officers in the huge room. There were a few junior grades at the radio sets, but the polished boot flunkies of the *Kommandant* were missing.

The senior Nazi growled for the two guards to withdraw. Then he beamed at Stacey and Bell, waved them to chairs and offered them cigarettes.

"We know all about you, Lieutenants," he said in flawless English, "so you can relax. There is no need to be on your guard. And, oh, yes. Your

uniforms will be returned presently."

Stacey and Bell accepted cigarettes because they wanted a smoke, even if it was the brand of mildewy hay the Nazis call tobacco. They lighted up and smoked in silence while the *Kommandant* watched them. Presently he frowned slightly and leaned forward.

"You are not interested in what happened to your aircraft carrier?" he suddenly asked.

Stacey kept his expression blank. "What carrier?" he asked. "The British have several out here."

The *Kommandant* laughed softly, but there was no mirth in it.

"I mean your American carrier!" he said.

"American carriers in the Mediterranean?" Jake Bell echoed. "Hot dog! Now there *will* be some action in these parts!"

"I'm speaking of the American carrier you took off from early this morning," the German said coldly. "To search for six of her planes that did not return from a patrol yesterday afternoon. I might add that those six planes will never return."

"That's what you think!" Stacey snapped.

"That's what I know!" the German snarled. "All six planes were shot down. There were no survivors."

"And by your dirty rats flying captured British planes!" Stacey shouted, as his blood started to boil. "It would have been the other way around if they'd been flying under their own colors."

"War is war," the *Kommandant* grunted. "The only thing that concerns us is winning it. And we shall win it! Yes, we took care of your comrades in the manner that English prisoner described to you. They will never return to your carrier."

A cold wave rippled up and down Stacey's back, and he thanked his stars he had kept a strict check on his tongue while Bell and he had talked with Witherington, the R.A.F. flight lieutenant. So the Nazis *had* been listening in on that conversation. And now this pot-bellied Nazi thought he was leading them into a nice little trap. Stacey grinned, thin-lipped.

"My pal and I were searching for those planes, yes," he said. "But we

didn't take off from any American carrier. And neither did they. And if you think bunking us in with an Englishman, fake or otherwise, will get you anything, then just guess again."

"If there was an American carrier in these waters you wouldn't be sitting at that desk," Bell said. "You'd be down in a raid shelter. Maybe you will be there pretty soon, at that."

**T**HE base *Kommandant* listened with a half-smile. He sighed heavily and gestured with his hands, palms up.

"Very well, then, if that's the way it must be," he said. "You give me no choice. You possess information that I desire, and I intend to obtain it. For the last time! Are you from an American aircraft carrier?"

"What's an aircraft carrier?" Stacey asked blandly.

"All we fly is gliders," Bell said.

The *Kommandant* reached into a desk drawer, pulled out a handful of stuff and dumped it on the desk.

"Look at those things!" he barked.

There was a solid gold identification bracelet with Witherington's name and rank engraved on it. There was a handkerchief marked with the initial "W." There was a small snapshot of the R.A.F. pilot and a good-looking girl. There was also a much creased pocket-size Union Jack. There were also other items that proved that Witherington was English and a member of the R.A.F.

"So what?" Stacey grunted and looked up.

The German smiled, the kind of a smile that made little fingers of ice clutch at Stacey's heart.

"I just want you to be sure the swine is English," the Nazi said. "The dog has been our guest five weeks now. At first he was a fool, as you two are. I believe he will stop being a fool now. And that you will, also!"

The *Kommandant* turned to Colonel von Scholtz, and spoke in German.

"Have the English swine removed to the blockhouse," he ordered. "Have him made ready for a little questioning. You, Colonel, will do the questioning. I will be along with these two prisoners presently."

Colonel von Scholtz saluted and

stamped out of the place, leering at Stacey and Bell. As the door closed the *Kommandant* ignored the two Yanks and gave his attention to some papers on the desk.

Stacey pondered the chances of Bell and himself breaking out of the place and making a wild dash for one of the many planes out on the huge field. He stopped pondering, however, when he suddenly saw how closely a couple of the flunkies at the rear of the huge office were watching him. And they had Lugers in their hands.

Stacey's thoughts were bitter, heart-crushing. The mystery of Saunders and his patrol pals was a mystery no longer. No wonder no signals had been picked up by the *Bennington's* radio. Saunders, like Witherington, had come across a flight of British planes. Like Witherington, Saunders had probably thought nothing of their joining forces.

And then it had been too late. Each Nazi had picked his man, got in close, then fired with all guns. A blank-range, cold-meat blasting of the American pilot and observer. The bullet-holes in Saunders' half-submerged plane was proof of how close those masquerading killers had been. Saunders, and his boys probably had died before any one of them could so much as put his lips to the flap-mike, much less speak into it. Apparently none had been as lucky as Witherington and been hurled clear of his plane before death struck him down. They all probably were at the bottom of the Mediterranean now.

**A**ND today Jake Bell and he had been caught. Caught cold by a Nazi trick that was as simple as it was deadly. Their lives had been spared, however, for a good reason. The Nazi butchers of Siracusa were planning a gigantic blow against the British stronghold of Malta. But fear was holding the Nazis back.

Surprise and strength were their two best weapons. But suppose surprise and strength were suddenly sprung on them? That's what obviously worried the pot-bellied Nazi sitting there at his desk. He was not sure of Malta's strength. He was not sure, either, whether American Navy

units had arrived. Shooting down U. S. Navy-marked planes yesterday had given him much cause for suspicion. Capturing Stacey and Bell today had obviously added to that greatly.

Until he knew for certain just what he would be up against he did not dare strike his sledge-hammer blow at Malta. And in some manner the wounded Witherington seemed to have a big place in his plans.

The *Kommandant* suddenly grunted and pushed up from his desk. He nodded at his two prisoners, then toward the door.

"Everything must be ready and waiting by now," he said. "You will walk in front of me out the door."

When the two Yanks stepped through the door two German guards dropped into step at their sides. The parade marched across the field.

Again Stacey took in all the "sights" in the time allowed. And again his heart seemed to turn into a chunk of ice, though his blood boiled. What a mess a flock of American or British bombers could make of this whole place, if given half a chance! The entire base was like a gigantic powder-keg with wings.

The long lines of bombers carried enough bombs to flatten any fair-sized city, to say nothing of the ammo dumps, and fuel dumps located about the outer fringes of the base. True, raiding bombers might never return from this spot, but Stacey felt that any sacrifice would be repaid ten times over in destruction to such a vital Nazi base.

"If I get away," Stacey mumbled savagely, "I'm going to yell for a raid on this place, even if I have to yell all the way back to the White House!"

"If I get away?" A bitter laugh rose up in his throat. Sure! That should be a cinch! All he and Jake would have to do would be to knock about fifty thousand Nazis kicking, grab a ship and take it off between the solid showers of steel that would come up at them, and then maybe have to shake off four or five hundred planes that would most certainly give chase. Easy. In a story book!

The parade marched into a squat, one-story building that contained only one room. The windows were

high up and let in just enough light to see by. The walls were stone blocks, and the floor was of cement.

There was no furniture in the room. Just four posts sunk into the cement at the rear end. Dark stains, and bullet marks on the rear wall told what those posts were used for. Even the air smelled of torture and death.

Stacey walked into the room, then stopped dead. His brain swirled with sudden anger as he saw the Englishman.

**W**ITHERINGTON was stripped to the waist, and his wrists were lashed to one of the posts, above his head. His eyes were closed, and his lips were pressed together in a thin line as though to seal up groans and moans. But his jaw was set defiantly, and he was trying to hold his head high.

Beside him stood von Scholtz, without his tunic. In his hands he held a short, thick bull-whip. And two flaming red welts across Witherington's back were horrible evidence that von Scholtz had been getting in a little practice.

Stacey whirled on the *Kommandant*, only to be grabbed and pinned helpless by the two guards.

"You barbarian devil!" he shouted hoarsely. "You rotten, no good rat! A whipping post!"

The German seemed not to mind the cursing. He fixed his glittering piggy eyes on Stacey and smiled.

"An English practice, according to history," he said with a sneer. "And used extensively in your United States, too. And, of course, very effective. Colonel von Scholtz! Get the prisoner's attention! I wish to speak to him!"

Von Scholtz' arm swept down and the bull-whip made a sickening crack as it bit into the skin of Witherington's back and drew blood. The Englishman shuddered, but not a sound came from between his clamped lips. The *Kommandant* walked forward.

"The time has come for you to talk, swine!" he snarled. "You will tell me all you know of the Valletta defenses in Malta. Of course you won't reply at once. But you will eventually."

The *Kommandant* suddenly turned

and stabbed a fat finger toward Stacey and Bell.

"And when you are ready to spare him further agony, speak up!" he shouted. "Tell me about the American aircraft carrier, or see him die there at that post! And you two in a similar manner, later!"

"The devil with the dirty beggar, Yanks!" Witherington cried out. "Don't tell him a bloody thing!"

*Crack!*

The whip in von Scholtz' hands bit deep, and a gun seemed to go off in Stacey's brain. All became roaring red, and he hurled himself blindly toward von Scholtz.

"You beast!" he screamed wildly. "Let that man alone or I'll kill you with my bare hands!"

## CHAPTER V

### *British Courage*

**L**IEUTENANT STACEY'S outstretched hands were but a foot from the throat of von Scholtz when he was suddenly pulled up short and slammed down onto the floor. The two guards who had grabbed him fell on top of him, and through a whirling blur he saw the metal barrel of a Luger slicing down at his head.

He jerked his head to the side and lashed up with his free fist. He experienced the wild momentary satisfaction of feeling his fist crash against solid bone. Then the ceiling sort of dropped down on him.

For a long time he didn't have a clear idea of just what was taking place. He seemed to be floating in a world of utter darkness. Yet, at intervals the darkness would be banished by a sheet of red or orange or yellow that flared up in his brain. And on each of these occasions there would be a thunderous roar in his ears, and stabbing pains throughout his body.

Finally the roar and the lights faded away, and only the pains remained. He came to, to find himself sitting on the cement floor in a pool of water. And right at that moment a fair portion of the Mediterranean

hit him in the face. He let out a shout of anger and glared up at the guard who held an empty bucket.

"Take it easy, Stud," he heard Bell say. "He's got his gang with him."

Stacey looked at his pal who stood with a guard's Luger about an inch from the back of his neck. Slowly Stacey got to his feet. The guard dropped the bucket and closed in with his Luger.

"You should give your watch dogs a couple of medals," Stacey grated to the *Kommandant*. "They certainly saved your dirty hide that time."

"And I saved yours!" the Nazi snapped. "I could have given the order to kill you, but I spared you for the time being. I want you to be impressed. Colonel von Scholtz! Continue!"

Von Scholtz slapped the bull-whip against Witherington's bleeding back.

"Well, swine?" he shouted. "You will answer our question, yes?"

The Englishman was half-slumped against the whipping-post as though dead. Von Scholtz gave him another vicious lash with the whip, and Witherington's whole body quivered.

"Speak, you swine!" von Scholtz screamed.

But not so much as a groan slipped past Witherington's tightly clamped lips. As von Scholtz lifted the whip again Stacey let out a yell.

"Hold it!" he cried. "That man has something you can never lick! More nerve than your whole blasted German army! Let him alone. It's my turn, now!"

The *Kommandant* shot him an angry look.

"Your turn?" he growled.

"Right!" Stacey snapped and walked away from the guard's Luger, as though it was not there. "Tie me up, and see if you can get any better results."

"Thanks, old man," came the muffled voice of Witherington, "but I don't mind it. The dirty beggars must have their sport, you know."

Stacey looked at the *Kommandant* and grinned, tight-lipped.

"I guess you'll have to kill the three of us," he said evenly.

"We wouldn't tell you the time of day," Jake Bell snarled.

**T**HE *Kommandant* might never have seen other than cringing victims in his torture and execution chamber. At any rate he stood stock-still and stared at Stacey in angry bafflement. His face became beet-red and wild wrath flared up in his eyes.

He half-turned as though to scream an order at von Scholtz but checked himself. A cunning look took the place of the anger in his eyes. He seemed well pleased with some sudden and secret decision. He had opened his mouth to speak when the ungodly wail of the raid siren blotted out all other sound. The *Kommandant* stiffened, but regained control of himself in a flash.

"Perhaps you are right," he said to Stacey. "Perhaps all three of you dogs would die before you would speak. I will consider this matter, and see you again, later."

The *Kommandant* barked an order at von Scholtz, and the two guards, then all four raced away, leaving the prisoners alone. Stacey ran to Witherington and started fumbling with the ropes that bound the Englishman's wrist. With Bell's help he freed the British flier and lowered him gently to the floor.

The man smiled his thanks, then closed his eyes tight and clenched his fists to keep from fainting. Stacey and Bell could only stare helplessly at the man's bleeding back for there was nothing with which to cover the whip welts.

Witherington opened his eyes, took a deep breath, and a little color came back into his face.

"I only hope I catch up with that von Scholtz beggar some day," he said, with a crooked smile. "Lord! Hear those planes! False alarm, of course. We'd never bomb here in daylight. But it shows the blighters have got the wind up, no end!"

Stacey listened to the roar of German planes going off the base and stared in frank admiration at Witherington.

"You've certainly got what it takes," he said. "Frankly, I was scared stiff the rat would call my bluff. Don't know whether I could have taken a beating, or not."

"It's not a pleasant business," the R.A.F. pilot said. "I'd like to know, though, why he suddenly changed his mind. He's a tricky devil. And it wasn't because you convinced him that we wouldn't speak. Not the Nazi nature. They have absolute faith in the power of torture. No, the blighter has got something else up his sleeve. I . . . I say!"

The Englishman's face suddenly went deathly white.

"Think I'll lie down a bit," he mumbled. "Sorry to be like this. But watch the blighter, you Yanks. Full—of tricks. Try—to get you to—"

Stacey and Bell caught the man as he fainted and gently turned him over, to lie face-down on the floor. Bell ran over to the bucket the guard had left and found there was still an inch of water left in it. He came back and sprinkled the water on Witherington's back. Stacey cursed between his teeth.

"Jake," he muttered, "you and I are elected to get this guy away from here!"

"But how?" Bell grunted.

"I don't know!" Stacey grated. "But we've got to find a way. Witherington, there, rates out. And we could do with some of the same thing ourselves."

**W**ITH a savage nod Stacey started a tour of the block-house. The windows were too high for him to see out, and there was nothing in the place to stand on. There were two doors, one at the front and one at the side.

He tried the front door. It was locked and bolted. He glanced at the side door, shrugged and walked over to it just to make sure. He mechanically took hold of the knob, twisted—the side door was not locked!

He opened it an inch and found himself staring at the broad back of a guard and at the air base beyond. He caught a flash glimpse of Nazi Messerschmitt One-tens coming in to land, then he quickly shut the door and stood there trembling in wild excitement.

"Great Pete, Stud!" came Bell's whisper at his side. "The darned thing isn't locked!"

For a long minute the two Navy pilots stood staring at each other. Bell finally found his tongue.

"The dopes slipped a cog this time!" he whispered fiercely. "All we have to do is nail that fat slob out there, and we'll have our pick of the planes. Did you see them? Messerschmitt One-tens, practically within spitting distance. With all this air activity going on we could slip off, and they wouldn't know the difference!"

Stacey's heart was pounding wildly against his ribs, and the blood was surging through his veins. If they *could* get off in a One-ten, and were given half a chance, they could reach the *Bennington* in a couple of hours, easy. Yet, as those wild thoughts raced through his brain he felt uneasily that there was some obvious and important factor that he was missing completely. Some thought was in his brain, but he couldn't pin it down.

"Yeah," he finally grunted. "We nail the guard, then you and I carry Withering to that first One-ten. We park him in the radioman's seat, then we get going. But—"

"But what?" Bell demanded. Stacey shook his head.

"There's just something—I mean. . . . Oh nuts! There's part of the picture we're missing, Jake. Don't know how to put it in words exactly."

"Maybe you'll think of them when we're back on the *Bennington*," Bell said. "We've got to get going because it'll be dark soon. And we'd have enough trouble hunting the *Bennington* in daylight. Get Witherington up on your shoulder, Stud. I'll go out and take care of that Nazi baby. Boy! Am I going to love clouting him! Come on! Let's go!"

Stacey scowled darkly at the closed door, then heaved a sigh, and shrugged.

"Okay," he muttered. "Give me a hand getting Witherington up on my shoulders. Sure you can handle that Nazi alone?"

"Any six of them!" Bell snapped. "Don't wait to watch it. Keep going to the nearest plane and pile him aboard. I'll be right on your heels."

They picked up the unconscious British pilot and carried him to the side door. As they straightened him up so that Stacey could take him across one shoulder Witherington groaned, opened his eyes in a blank stare, and mumbled a few words.

"Watch beggars—full of tricks—all kinds—clever tricks."

**A**T THE mumbled words a great white light seemed to flare up in Stacey's brain. He stiffened, and looked wildly at Bell who looked back at him in alarm.

"What's the matter, Stud?" he asked sharply. "That going over they gave you? Look, I'll carry Witherington, and you—"

"Shut up!" Stacey whispered. "It just came to me. What Witherington just mumbled. This is the answer to that Nazi big slob's crazy actions. The old spider inviting the fly into his parlor."

"You gone screwy?" Bell demanded. "What are you raving about?"

"The *Bennington*, you chump!" Stacey barked. "Don't you get it? This door was left unlocked on purpose! That Nazi wants us to make a break. He's probably waiting some place to see us pile out of here and into one of those planes. Maybe he didn't figure we'd take Witherington along, but I don't think he'll mind much. Jake! We could crawl over to one of those planes, and nobody would stop us!"

"For Pete's sake, Stud!" Bell said hoarsely. "I don't get it!"

"They want us to bust out of here and take off because they figure we'll head straight for the *Bennington*!" Stacey said with forced patience. "They've got ships in the air now, waiting for us. That Nazi is no dope, Jake. He knows there's a Yank carrier or two somewhere in these waters. He doesn't dare make a move until he finds out where they are and sends his dive bombers to keep him occupied. Don't you see? He knows he'll get nothing out of us. So he's trying this gag. He's willing to pass us up, if we can only lead him to the *Bennington*!"

"Nuts to him!" Bell grunted. "We

take off and high-tail for Malta. He'll figure the *Bennington* is at Malta."

Stacey shook his head.

"No soap," he said. "I still say that dope is no dope, see? He'll have plenty of planes between here and Malta to cut us off if we head that way. The way he worked on Witherington proves plenty things he doesn't know about Malta, but it's a cinch he knows that there aren't any Yank naval units there."

"So what do we do?" Bell growled. "Give it up and have a good cry?"

"Shut up and let me think!" Stacey snarled. "I . . . Hold everything! I've got it! We'll go the lunkhead one better. You cart Witherington off in one plane and I'll grab a second plane. You head west and up as fast as you can. I saw some clouds when I had that quick look just now. Head for them, lose yourself, then work your way southward and around toward Malta. Maybe you'll pick up a British Navy boat on patrol. Land in the water and have them take you aboard. But make it to Malta, if you can. You're a good enough navigator even with German instruments."

"Thanks!" Bell grated, giving him a hard look. "And you? Why two planes?"

"I'll ride herd on you, of course," Stacey snapped. "And—well, if we smack into trouble, two ships will be better than one. Now, pipe down. Here, I'll hoist Witherington up on your shoulder. And I'll do the slugging act on that guard outside. Come on, Jake. Button your lip. This is the way we'll play it!"

## CHAPTER VI

### *Tornado With Wings*

**B**ELL gave Stacey a long suspicious look, then leaned forward and caught Witherington around the legs so that the Englishman slumped head-down across his shoulders. A lump rose up in Stacey's throat, and he came close to reaching out and grabbing Bell's hand. He refrained, however, because such a ge-

ture would reveal his own thoughts. And Bell was just stubborn enough to refuse to go through with *that* kind of a play.

So Stacey simply slid past Bell and closed his hand over the knob of the door. His heart was striving furiously to pound out through his ribs, but his decision was made, and that was that.

Yeah, he would ride herd on Jake and Witherington, but not the way he suggested. This was going to be the great big beautiful and final black-out for him. But he would give these cursed Nazis here at the Siracusa base so much to worry about that they wouldn't have time to pay any attention to Jake and Witherington. He'd—

Gingerly he eased the door open an inch. There was still all kinds of activity going on about the field, but when he saw that there were no Germans near the line of Messerschmitt One-tens, and that the guard had even backed a step or two closer to the door, he knew that his figuring had been correct.

The Nazi big slob had planned it to be this way. He figured he was going to pull a fast one. Nuts, he was, not if Stud Stacey could prevent it!

Easing the door open wider, Stacey paused just long enough to glance back over his shoulder at Bell and wink, then he went out the opening like a shot from a gun. He slugged the German guard behind the ear probably before the Nazi even heard anything, then was streaking head-down toward the line of Messerschmitt One-tens.

He had a crazy impression that every eye on the field was looking at him. He also had the impression that machine-guns would start snarling in the next split-second, and that his legs would be kicked out from under him, and he would sprawl flat in his own splashed blood.

Nothing happened, though. If there were shouts and cries he didn't hear them because of the pounding roar in his ears. And if any bullets did come his way he didn't hear them either. And then he was right alongside the nearest One-ten. He skidded to a halt and whirled around as Bell came charging up.

Grabbing Witherington, he savagely motioned Bell up into the pit. Then he hoisted Witherington up, and waited until Bell had the unconscious Englishman jammed down in the rear pit. Then Stacey ducked under the belly of the One-ten and leaped toward the next in line.

It was then that he saw the third ship, a One-ten refitted as a light bomber. There were eggs in the wing racks, and it seemed as though the One-ten was begging Stacey to take it. He was ducking under the belly of the second Messerschmitt in line when he heard Bell's engine's roar out their song of power and felt some of the vicious prop-wash slapping against him. Then he was under the second Messerschmitt and making a flying dive for the pit of the plane fitted with bombs.

As the seat of his pants hit the leather cushion he heard the savage snarl of machine-gun fire. But he did not waste even a precious split second to jerk up his head and take a look. If all his figuring had been cockeyed, it was too late to turn back now. Anyway, he had a personal job to do no matter what happened to Jake and Witherington. He had a few monkey wrenches to toss into the Nazis' well-laid plans for Malta. Yeah! a few monkey wrenches fitted to the racks under this Messerschmitt's wings!

**A**S THE thoughts raced through Stacey's brain he had juiced the Benz-Daimler engines into life, and kicked off the wheel brakes. As the One-ten lunged forward as though coiled steel springs had suddenly been released, he jerked up his head and took a look.

Not fifty yards in front of his on-rushing plane a Nazi Heinkel One-thirteen was settling down to earth! He jumped on right rudder, closed his eyes, and prayed. He felt his left wingtip brush something, then his plane was bouncing forward lightly on the wheels.

And there was the snarl and crackle of machine-gun fire all over the place; whether it was directed at him, he didn't know. Whether his ship was

being hit, he didn't care. He had the One-ten off, now, and it was going to take more bullets than the Nazis had to stop him.

When he was no more than a hundred feet up he leveled off, banked to the left, and stuck the nose down a hair. Out the corner of his eye he caught a flash glimpse of Jake's Messerschmitt climbing upward toward the west like a rocket with something mighty important on its mind. He choked out a sob of joy and gave all of his attention to the job at hand.

He was slicing down through the air straight for the line of giant troop transport planes. The paratroops gathered about them suddenly became as a nest of ants stepped on. They went washing off in all directions. And with a wild bellow Stacey jabbed the trigger trip of his guns and air cannon.

Nazi paratroops seemed suddenly to fill the air in front of him. But he wasn't particularly interested in them. His objective was the ammo and fuel dumps just behind them. Ammo and fuel waiting to be put aboard the transports.

He reached those dumps like so much speeding light, yanked the lever that sent a brace of his "eggs" hurtling downward, then hauled the Messerschmitt's nose straight up toward the sky. For what seemed like ages utter silence closed in about him. He knew that his engines were screaming with power, but he couldn't hear them.

His lips were working furiously, but he seemed unable to hear the shouts and mad curses that spilled out from between them. It was as though he were zooming straight up through a perfect vacuum. Nothing but silence, and more silence.

Then something let go. The earth seemed to split apart below his zooming plane. The very heavens seemed to split apart above it. All the wild savage forces in the world grabbed hold of his One-ten and sent it spinning and flip-flopping off through the air like a dried leaf in a tornado.

In a dull, abstract sort of way he knew that he had not got enough altitude before his brace of bombs exploded and touched off all that

steel-cased destruction down there. He wondered if the One-ten's wings had been ripped off. He wondered if he were just sitting in the fuselage alone, and sailing through the air like a rocket. Every square inch of his skin was drawn as tight as a drum-head, and a great crushing weight was trying to push the sides of his head together.

And then suddenly he was clear of the crushing invisible forces. It was as though he had been under water with air locked in his burning lungs, and had suddenly popped up to get his head above the surface.

For a few seconds there were only dancing red dots before his eyes. Then something brushed them away, and he realized that he was not zooming toward heaven any more. The One-ten was tearing earthward and spinning like a top. Before his brain could command his muscles to function, instinct took charge, and he mechanically eased back the throttles and pulled the One-ten out of the spin.

**I**T WAS then he saw the sea of red and swirling black clouds of smoke that marked the western border of the air base. There were no signs of the troop transport planes now. Nothing but fire, and black smoke. But the boiling sea of flame was lapping out in all directions. Lapping out toward other lines of Nazi aircraft. The Nazi planes were not all in line, though. Many had pilots in them, and they looked like so many cockeyed beetles as they scooted this way and that in a desperate effort to get up into the air. Nobody seemed to pay much attention to the other fellow, with the result that they were locking wings and piling up in all directions.

As Stacey laughed harshly and sent the One-ten rocketing down toward fuel stores on the south side of the base, and not far from the base administration buildings, a mighty thunderous clap seemed to drive his ear-drums straight into the middle of his head. And at the same time he saw scores and scores of tiny bullet-holes appear in the One-ten's wings and fuselage nose.

His greenhouse shattered to bits and seemed to melt away. A white-hot spear of flame cut across his left shoulder. Another one dug its way across his right hip. Just a touch of white fire, and no further pain. He suddenly felt numb all over, but he could still move his hands and feet.

"Try it, rats!" he shouted. "Just try and do it before I dump the rest of them!"

Hunching well forward over the controls, and trying to steel his half-numbed body against the next hail of death from above that would surely cut off his life, he sent the One-ten pile-driving earthward and straight at the fuel dumps. In the last split second allowed he flattened out, let all of his eggs go, and let the Messerschmitt rocket straight forward.

Blurred objects flew past underneath his wings. He thought he saw guns spitting fire at him. Something came hurtling down on fire so close to his right wingtip that he was sure he could feel the heat. He jerked his head around and made out the silhouette of a Heinkel One-thirteen just before the craft struck ground and disappeared in a cloud of blood-red smoke.

"Heinkel down in flames?" he mumbled dazedly. "What gives, anyway? Did I nail one of the rats, and didn't realize it? Nuts! It's getting dark. What goes on here! I can't see. I. . . . Yes, I can. That's water down there. I must be over the water. And Nazi planes all around. Jake! Did you make it, Jake? Boy! You should have seen the mess I made. It was beautiful, Jake. All reds and yellows, and. . . . What am I doing? Jake isn't here. He can't hear me. Maybe I'm going nuts. Maybe this is the way it feels. Sure, I'm going nuts, and passing out. I. . . . But they're not shooting Stud Stacey down. Nix! I'm landing. I'm going to sit down in that nice cool water—down. . . .!"

**B**UT how long, sir, will it be before he's up and around, and in good health?"

"Two weeks, I fancy. Three at the most. Got a body of iron, this Yank has. But why are you so anxious to have him all fit again? Can't wait to

get your flying mate back on the job, what?"

Words were coming to Stud Stacey from a long way off. Coming to him from down a long black tunnel. Two people talking. Something familiar about one of the voices. But it was so dark. Who was he? Where was he? And why was it so dark? It. . . .

Nuts, yes. He remembered now. He had been killed. He hadn't made that water landing. He had crashed in, and now he was dead. But why was it so confoundedly dark? And why couldn't he see the—

But suddenly he could see. Not exactly see, because the darkness had simply changed to a soft white glow. But hold it! It wasn't all white. There were shadows. No, objects.

He found himself staring up into the grinning face of Jake Bell. There was a lot of bandage wound about Jake's head, and his arm was in a sling. But he was grinning, and he certainly didn't look dead. And he started to talk as another man in medical white hovered near him.

"Three weeks, you've got, Stud, the doc says. Three weeks to get as good as new again. And then, pal, I'm going to pop you right on the button. Pull a fast one, would you? Try to be the big hero? Knew you had something like that in mind, so Witherington and I stuck around."

"Huh?" Stacey heard his lips mutter. "What do you mean, you stuck around? I saw you heading west, like I ordered."

"Like I ordered, he says!" Bell snorted. "Sure, we headed west, but when you dumped those first eggs we came back. Witherington came to and he was fit to be tied when he got wise to the picture. I didn't feel so happy, myself. So we beat it back.

"Only had the chance to shoot one Heinkel off your neck, though. You'd turned everything so haywire they weren't paying much attention to us. What a mess you made of that joint! Don't know whether you'll be court-martialed or not, but Admiral Porter was here yesterday, and I got the hunch he was kind of sore. He'll probably tie a medal around your neck for a weight, and toss you into the drink. Not a bad idea, when I

think of what you tried to pull on your old flying pal."

"Nuts!" Stacey growled. "Now talk sense. What happened, and where am I? And how did we get here, and where's Witherington?"

"Give me a chance!" Bell snapped. "This is a base hospital at Malta. Witherington's in the next room, and getting along swell. He and I came here by air. A British destroyer brought you. After you'd dumped the last of your eggs you went hightailing south over the water about two hundred feet up. Witherington and I hightailed after you. A couple of Nazis made a few passes, but their hearts weren't in it. They were all flocking back to the volcano you'd made of that place.

"Anyway, something went haywire with your ship. You made a hop, skip, and a jump landing. I guess Providence let Witherington and me see a British destroyer right then. We were about twenty miles off the

northern tip of Malta. The destroyer heaved a few at Witherington and me before they caught on that we were trying to lead them to you. They were cagey for a while but finally made for your floating wreck and picked you up. And here you are. I told them the story and they contacted the *Bennington*."

"And Admiral Porter seemed sore?" Stacey asked, with a frown.

"Well, call it disappointed," Bell said with a laugh. "Seems he had a raid on that base all doped out, and set to go. But you upped and grabbed all the fun for yourself."

"There's other bases up there," Stacey mumbled sleepily. "And he can have my share of fun with them. I've had enough to hold me for a while. So, shove off, Mister. I've got a date with sleep. Thanks for everything—though. Many—thanks."

"Nuts" Bell snorted, but he was grinning as the silence of sleep came to Stud Stacey again.

**Next Issue's Novel: DEEP IN THE HELL OF DIEPPE, by Laurence Donovan**

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**2. APPLY LATHER** or brushless shaving cream while face is wet. If lather is scant, work it in well with brush or fingers



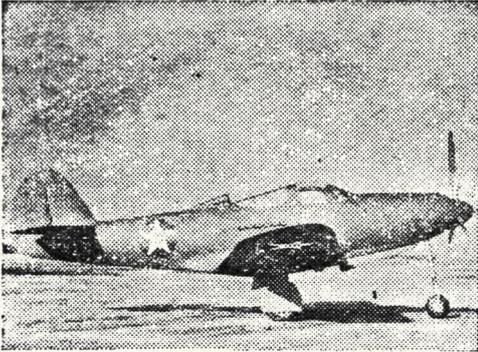
**3. TWO EDGES** double Made Safe. Marks indicated above identify edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves



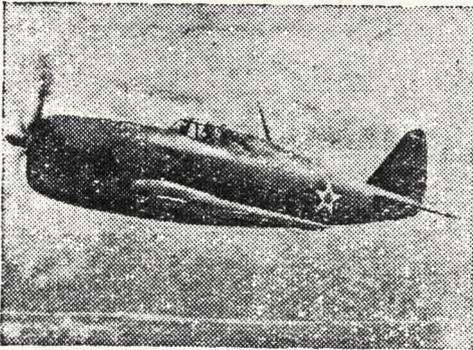
**4. CLEAN BLADE** in razor by loosening handle, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade is likely to damage the edges

## AMERICAN WAR PLANES

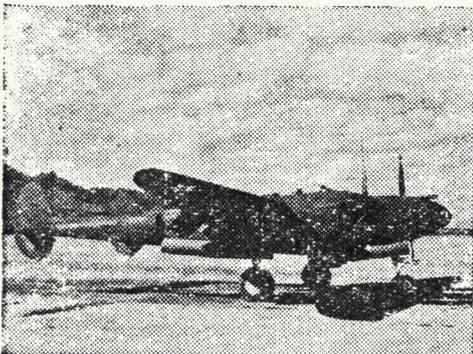
# THE TOOLS



The low-altitude fighter is the Bell P-39 Airacobra. Light, but heavily armed with a .37 millimeter cannon firing through the propeller shaft, six .50-caliber machine guns and, if the assignment demands, small bombs, this ship is a terror to troops on the ground or planes in the air up to 15,000 feet.



The new high-altitude Republic P-47 Thunderbolt is a heavily-armed flying engine built around a 2,000-horsepower air-cooled motor. Well gunned by .50-caliber machine guns in her wings, she is the lineal descendant of the Seversky P-35, is supercharged to zip at 400-plus while six miles in the air.



The Lockheed P-38 Lightning, our twin-engine, single-seater interceptor won her spurs last year in the Aleutians. Carrying a cannon and four machine guns, she almost matches the Thunderbolt in all-around high-altitude performance, has a far greater rate of climb to knock Axis bombers from the skies.

**T**HIS is it, all right, as the boys say. Almost one year from the date of the prelude to destruction that was Jimmy Doolittle's spectacular "sample" bombing of Tokyo, the United States Army Air Forces are ready for the long-promised all-out air offensive.

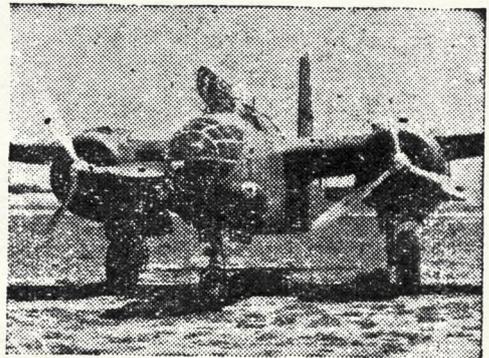
Pilots, bombardiers, gunners, navigators, radio operators and ground crews are trained and ready, many of them already tested in combat against the Axis. Replacement parts, bullets, cannon shells, bombs, high-octane fuel and planes have flowed and are flowing to vast advance bases on all of the far-flung battle fronts of the greatest of all conflicts.

Men and materiel have already proved themselves to be magnificent under fire. But, on the home front at any rate, there remains a lingering distrust of American planes that no amount of victories in the air seems able to eradicate.

Various propaganda groups have carefully fostered and nurtured this distrust since before the war began. When American flyers win a battle, there is a tendency to place the responsibility for victory on the superior abilities of the pilots rather than on the excellence of our planes.

This distrust in our designers, engineers and workers is both discreditable and unfounded. What basis it has lies chiefly in the reported inferiority of the early Curtiss P-40 as compared to the Spitfire, Messerschmitt or Zero. The amazing record the Flying Tigers compiled with these ships is charged off to General Chennault's brilliance as an aerial tactician.

As a matter of fact, the P-40 was a stop-gap ship. Hampered by the meager appropriations of a Congress niggardly to the point of miserliness, America lagged sadly in fighter plane development until war broke out in Europe and the Nazis overran France. Forced to concentrate



The Douglas A-20A, improved sister of the already famous Boston, is the best attack bomber in the world. This plane can hedge-hop more than 1,200 miles at a top speed of almost 400 miles per hour, is the perfect weapon for destroying enemy strong points, troop concentrations and supply lines.

# A T H A N D

By SAM  
MERWIN, JR.

what funds it had, the Army Air Corps focused its attention on the improvement of bombers able to span hemispheric reaches and let the little fellows more or less shift for themselves. It had to.

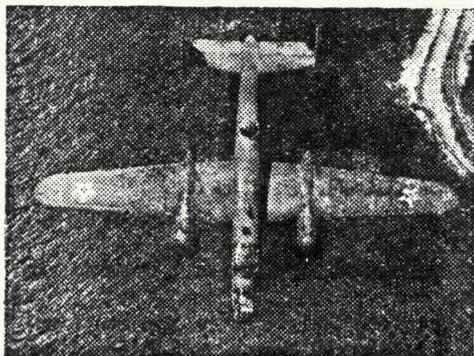
With no specific limited area like Great Britain to defend, our designers made no effort to match Britain or Germany's high-altitude fighters and interceptors. They gave what attention they could to low-altitude pursuit and attack ships intended to operate in close conjunction with ground forces.

So the wonder is that the P-40, which is, basically, the old Curtiss P-36 with heavier fire power and a liquid-cooled rather than an air-cooled engine, showed up as well as it did. And it did show well, proving itself a match for anything that flew at its own low levels. Later improved models have proved themselves to be as effective as the vaunted Hawker Hurricane.

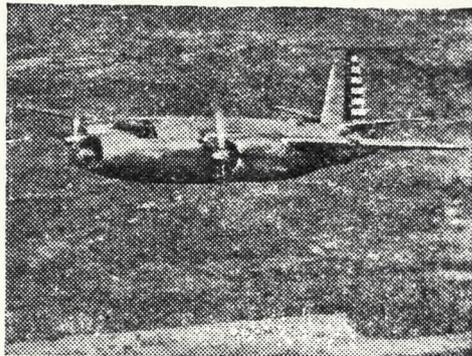
So let's leave the P-40, though she is now performing and will continue to perform creditably in many fields of the war. Our new ships, the eight basic types with which we are carrying destruction to the enemy, are ready and on the firing lines. They consist of a low-altitude fighter, a high-altitude fighter, a high-altitude interceptor, an attack bomber, two medium bombers and two heavy monsters of the air for long-range ruin.

Don't sell American warplanes short. These eight—the Airacobra, the Thunderbolt and the Lightning in fighter ships, the A-20, the B-25 and the B-26 in medium bombers, the Flying Fortress and the Liberator to carry the heavy mail—will become synonymous with utter destruction wherever the Axis leaders and their followers seek shelter in the retreat that lies ahead of them.

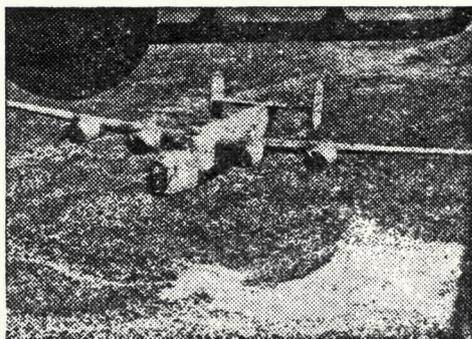
*Official photographs U. S.  
Army Air Forces*



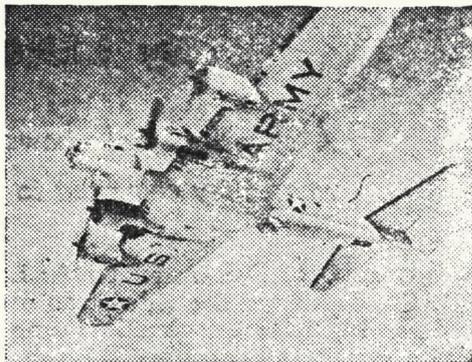
This is the North American B-25, the sturdy, bi-motored, double-ruddered job that was immortal fame when Jimmy Doolittle dropped in on Tokyo. Improved since that exploit, this fine medium bomber has a range of 2,500 miles, a speed of almost 300 m.p.h. and carries a heavy bomb load for her type.



Pride of the medium-bombing force is the Martin B-26, lethal successor to the Marylands and Baltimores of Libyan fame. The world's fastest bomber, she can carry three tons of high explosives more than 2,000 miles, and her speed tops 350 miles per hour, thanks to a pair of 1,850-horsepower radial engines.



This is the Consolidated B-24 Liberator, the huge heavy bomber type that Henry Ford is rolling off his River Rouge assembly lines. With a speed of more than 250 miles per hour and bristling with guns, she can take off from New York, bomb Barchinagada and return to England with plenty to spare.



The latest Boeing Flying Fortress, the B-17F, is the fastest and toughest of the famous series. Called a "Flying Target" by the British two years ago, her twenty machine guns, heavy armor, great altitude, range and accurate placement of bombs on Continental targets make her the world's best big bomber.

As the Martin climbed away, Randall looked down and saw the cruiser almost hidden in a cloud of livid red flame



# LET 'EM HAVE IT

By LENOX WHITE

*A shooting fool shows the Japs a thing or six when they come out to play over the Aleutians!*

**M**AJOR BILL RANDALL tightened the chin strap of his helmet, took a final drag on his cigarette and dropped it on the tarmac to grind it out under his heel. As he did that, he glanced up under his shaggy brows at the four crew members of his Martin B-26 bomber making ready for another crack at the

Jap occupied Aleutian island of Kiska.

There was Jack Banks, his bombardier, who could dump a full load of eggs right down a drain pipe if you'd just hold the ship steady. There was Deacon Willows, his navigator, who could plot your course right through the Holland Tunnel and never let you

scrape a wingtip. There was also Sergeant Allen, senior gunner, who could spot any Jap Zero pilot first blast and then shoot him right out of the sky with both eyes shut. And there was Corporal Delaney, who was to operate the "Stinger" turret in the tail of the Martin.

Randall gave Delaney an extra glance and chewed pensively on his lower lip. Delaney was new, the only untried member of his crew. He had arrived at Dutch Harbor only yesterday to take Corporal Yancey's place. Yancey was in Base Hospital with a sweet case of pneumonia, but the medicos said that he would pull through okay, and thank Heaven for that!

But what about Delaney? That was the point! What about him? He was a redheaded freckle-faced kid with a tongue that was hung in the middle. If he could shoot like he could talk, he'd be a big help in this man's war. But he was as cocky as they come, and it had been Randall's experience that you never can tell about the cocky ones. A burst of bullets past their ears and they can get lock-jaw, and other things, mighty fast.

"Well, so what?" Randall sighed softly. "One of those things I've got to find out, that's all. But, it would be nice to know I can depend on the lad in the Stinger."

**W**ITH another sigh and a shrug he walked over to where his crew stood waiting to board ship. He gave them a cheery grin and made a little gesture with one hand.

"Just for luck, fellows," he said, "we'll go over the details once more. We're Kiska bound to smack a Jap cruiser that showed up in the harbor early this morning. All of you, except Corporal Delaney, have taken the ride before.

"Soup all the way, and more of it when we get there. Also Jap Zeros. We're bound to meet at least a couple of them. We always do. There must be some kind of an agreement, or something. Anyway, don't bother reporting them to me, and asking for orders. If you see 'em, smack 'em! Particularly when Lieutenant Banks is dropping the load."

Randall paused for breath and noted the wild look that had leaped into Corporal Delaney's eyes. The non-com gunner's thumbs were twitching as though he were already jabbing the trigger buttons of his Stinger's guns.

"Smack 'em," Randall repeated, "but don't waste ammo. Be sure it's a Zero and not a shadow in the fog clouds. When we get close Lieutenant Willows will leave his charts and man the top blister. Sergeant Allen will man the belly guns.

"Of course, Corporal Delaney will stick in the Stinger all the time. And, don't fall asleep, Corporal. The Zeros like to come in on the tail. They still don't catch on about the Stinger. Well, I guess that's all. I'll do the flying, but it's up to all of you to see that I get back home safe and sound. Any questions?"

Three of them shook their heads, but Corporal Delaney hesitated, and frowned slightly.

"Better ask it, now, instead of later, Corporal," Randall said quietly. "I might be too busy to answer then."

"Any chance of us going down for a ground strafe?" the non-com asked. "I hear they've got a lot of tents set up on the beach. Swell chance to bust up a bunch of them, if you ask me. You fellows let them have it as we go down. Then I'll finish off the rest as you zoom us away. It would be a cinch."

Randall gave him a hard stare.

"That's what you think, Corporal!" he said. "A fighter might do it, or even a two-seater job. But not a bomber. We might hit a lot of Japs, but we might also hit a mountainside. There's soup there, Corporal, and plenty of it."

"Okay, okay, sir," Delaney said with a shrug. "I was only asking. I just wanted to be sure I'd nail something, that's all."

"You'll get your chance," Randall said dryly. "And you can bet on it, Corporal. All right, aboard with you. We're on our way."

Lieutenant Deacon Willows was the last member of the crew to crawl up into the ship. He turned his head and grinned at Randall.

"If things get hot, I'll keep an eye

on him, Bill," he said softly. "He's full of beans, but he'll probably turn out okay."

"Here's hoping!" Randall grunted. "But, I've got a funny feeling. I wish Yancey was with us. You watch him, Deacon. If he gets off the beam, stuff him in the flare locker and take over his guns. That Stinger turret is an important spot."

"Leave it to me," Willows smiled. "I'll watch him plenty!"

**T**EN minutes later Randall took the signal from the Operations Tower and sent the Martin rolling down the runway. He took his time about clearing his wheels, and then nosed up gently into the deep fluffy layer of fog. He went up through it to high altitude where it was cold and snappy. A drag on the oxygen tube now and then stopped the giddiness in his head, and stopped the instrument dials from blurring together.

Setting the bomber on the course Willows gave him, he checked screw pitch, engine temperatures, and then relaxed a bit in the seat. At the end of half an hour he put his lips to the inter-com and checked with the members of the crew. He got a reply from everybody, save Corporal Delaney. He called the Stinger gunner every five seconds for half a minute, and swore softly.

"Now, what?" he groaned. "Asleep at the switch, or has he passed out from fright so soon? Delaney! Delaney! Can you—"

"Delaney reporting!" came the voice in his earphones. "Everything okay back here. Not a Zero in sight. Think there should be some soon, sir?"

"What happened to you, Delaney?" Randall thundered. "Did your inter-com go out?"

"Huh? No, sir. The darn thing was pinching my right ear, so I disconnected it to fix it. Okay, now. Did something happen?"

"Something will, if you don't keep hooked up!" Randall roared. "If it pinches your ear, then let it. But maintain connection at all times. I may have an order for you."

"Okay, okay!" came the reply. "Shoot it along. I'll be right back

here all the time. I . . . Hey!"

The last was broken off sharply, and before Randall had the chance to blink and ask questions he heard the savage yammer of heavy caliber machine-gun fire.

He knew instinctively that they came from his own bomber, but being well forward he couldn't tell who was doing the shooting.

"What's up?" he spoke into the inter-com. "Who sees what, and where?"

"Me!" came a fuzzy reply in the earphones. "I just spotted a couple of Zeros. They were trying to sneak up out of the fluffy stuff. I got one I think. But the other one ducked out of sight."

There was evidently something wrong with the inter-com system. The voices came through dimly.

"What about it, Allen?" he called to the sergeant-gunner. "Did you see them, too?"

"Not a thing, sir," Allen replied. "I guess it was a couple of sun shadows."

"Sun shadows, my eye!" yelled a voice that couldn't belong to anybody but Corporal Delaney. "You're nuts, Sergeant! I know a Zero when I see one! And there were two of them!"

"That's enough, Delaney!" Randall roared. "Watch that lip! You're not a veteran, yet! Pipe down, and relax, Delaney. I don't think that we're near enough for Zeros, yet."

"Okay, okay, sir!" came the reply more fuzzy than ever. "But there were two of them. And I'm betting I got one!"

Randall shrugged off a sudden burst of anger that exploded within him, and gave all of his attention to his flying. After all, it was Delaney's first active service flight, and you couldn't blame him for having a slight case of imagination jitters. Then, too, there was just an outside chance that he had seen something. If there was one thing about the Japs you could bank on, it was to see them pop up where you least expected them. But this area of sky was quite a distance from Kiska for Jap Zeros.

"Nuts to the Zeros!" Bill Randall growled to himself. "It's that cruiser in the harbor that we're interested in.

We get her first, and then we'll see what's what about Zeros."

**N**OTHING more happened to disturb the peace of the "joy ride." Then, as though by magic, the soupy stuff parted and Randall could spot the Kiska volcanic peak sticking up toward the sky. A tightness came over him, and he began darting sharp glances at the patches of fog and thicker clouds that hung in the air ahead and on both sides. This was where they usually met the Zeros. Whenever the Japs down below heard their engines, they would come up to do something about it.

But, as the Martin prop-clawed forward not a single gun-spitting Jap plane came darting out of nowhere to give them trouble. It was almost as though the dirty little sons of Nippon had decided to call it off for a day. Or else that they had taken such a terrific bomb blasting these last ten days, they had decided to evacuate the island and go on back home.

Both possibilities, Randall knew of course, weren't even close to the truth. He knew his Japs, and knew that they'd never give up anything until there wasn't anything left to give up. They were like the harvest locust, only not half so human. So where were the Zeros?

The fact that they weren't where they usually would be worried Randall more than a little. And for the next couple of moments he let the Martin fly itself while he scanned the surrounding air for his own satisfaction. He knew that everybody else was searching the sky, Deacon Willows having left his charts and gone to his gun post. But as the seconds dragged on there was not the sign of a Jap plane, let alone the sound of any brace of the Martin's guns.

Finally Randall shrugged and then called to Bombardier Jack Banks.

"I'm going down through this stuff for a look, Jack," he said. "If we don't run into too much trouble we'll do a low level job on them. You all set?"

"Set as can be," came the reply. "Drop her down. Maybe we'll see two cruisers, instead of one. Here's hopping!"

Randall grinned, feathered his props a bit and stuck the Martin's nose down through the fluffy stuff. He came out of the solid layers at about four thousand feet. There were still plenty of clouds floating around below him but they didn't shut off the entire view of the harbor. He spotted the cruiser close into shore at just about the time the anti-aircraft guns went into action.

In practically nothing flat the air about the bomber was black with archie smoke. Randall felt and heard hunks of shrapnel smack against the bomber's skin. He clamped down on himself, held the bomber steady as a rock, and glued his eyes to the little red lights that would tell him the instant he was off bomb sight course. From that moment on, he just held his breath, and prayed.

Five seconds maybe, but it seemed like five years before Banks' welcomed cry came over the inter-com.

"Bombs away!"

**A**T THE sound of the first word Randall fed maximum hop to the twin engines and hauled the Martin up and around in a steep climbing turn. Just as he pushed up into the layer stuff he took a quick glance back down. The cruiser was completely hidden in a mighty billowing cloud of livid red flame. Completely hidden save for the bow which was sticking up at a forty-five degree angle.

"That's one less of them!" he shouted gayly. "Jack, old pal, help yourself to a cigar! Everybody okay? Anybody hit?"

Willows, Sergeant Allen, and Delaney all reported over the inter-com that they were in the best of health. But the Stinger gunner had something to add.

"But where are the Zeros?" he shouted. "You said we'd see Zeros. And I haven't seen but two of them."

"On the way back, Corporal!" Randall said with a laugh. "On the way back. They always try to stop us from going home. You sure you're all right? Your voice sounds funny."

"I'm okay!" Delaney replied. "Must be this gadget. But, how soon? The Zeros, I mean!"

Randall didn't reply. As a matter of

fact he didn't even hear Delaney's question. The right outboard engine had suddenly started to kick up. Its revs fell off and picked up like a freight engine going up-grade. The oil pressure needle slid halfway around the dial before it stopped.

Randall swallowed hard and cast an anxious look out at the power plant. It looked all right. At least it wasn't throwing oil or smoke. But it was obvious, though, that a piece or two of Jap shrapnel had smacked it somewhere.

Just to play safe, Randall eased off the power plant's throttle, and adjusted the other engine's throttle to match. It cut down his speed to a low cruising rate, but there was the fog to hide in, in case there were Jap Zeros about. Better to limp back home nursing the power plant than to over-feed her and cause a fire and explosion.

"Keep your eyes skinned, everybody!" he warned into the inter-com. "We got nicked a little in the right engine, but I think she'll stay with us. We'll just be a little late for lunch, that's all."

And that was all for the next twenty minutes. Randall kept the Martin in the thick layers and flew on instruments. But at the end of twenty minutes it was as though the Jap weather gods had suddenly decided to play a hand. For no reason at all the fog layer suddenly broke off sharp and the Martin flew into air filled with floating gobs of the stuff. No sooner did the bomber come out of the thick, than seven Jap Zeros came gun spitting in on it from all directions.

Randall saw them and his heart looped over. At the same instant there flashed across his brain the truth that it had been at just this spot over the Aleutian string that Corporal Delaney had reported sighting two Zeros. So it must have been true and not the day dream of a Stinger gunner on his first active hop.

The two Zeros had come up to attack, but had been beaten off. Instead of continuing the attack, with the Martin easily able to lose itself in the thick stuff ahead, the Japs had retreated and tried to warn their base at Kiska. But the Yanks had been too

quick for them, so they had increased their numbers and waited for the Martin's return. And here they were!

Even as all that flashed across Randall's brain he heard his own guns start returning the enemy fire. Dead ahead a blood red painted Jap came tearing in, but Jack Banks wasn't bothering with bomb-sights. It was gun-sights now, and his first blast pinned the Zero against a wisp of cloud and broke it apart in small pieces.

Randall opened his lips to shout congratulations over the inter-com, but at that moment a Zero burst struck the already crippled right outboard engine. The power plant started to shudder and hammer, and little pin pricks of flame shot out from under the engine cowling. Randall cursed, and cut off the engine cold before a real blaze could get started.

**W**ITH only its left engine furnishing power the Martin tried to yaw out of Randall's control. He clamped on rudder in time, however, got as much more as he could from his rudder tab, and managed to hold the bomber on course. By now the Zeros were whirling and twisting about the bomber like mad metal hornets. Randall heard Allen's guns in the belly bay pound harshly, and out the corner of his eye he thought he caught the glimpse of a second Jap plane bursting into flames.

The loss of two of their number meant nothing to the remaining Japs, though. They came slashing in from all sides, and the twang of their bullets smacking off the bomber's skin was something like the continuous ringing of a gong.

Suddenly, Randall was conscious of the fact that the Martin's fire power had died away to almost nothing. The only gunner who seemed to be firing steadily was Jack Banks in the nose glasshouse. Hands of icy fear gripped Randall's heart as he put his lips to the inter-com.

"How's it go, Willows?" he called out. "You all right?"

There was only silence over the inter-com, but a couple of seconds later Randall thought he heard the yammer of guns somewhere in the

rear of the Martin. "Sergeant Allen!" he barked out. "You okay?"

More silence, and then a faint muffled voice came through the ear-phones.

"Hold this thing steady! I can't shoot around corners!"

As he heard the faint voice, Randall realized he was letting the bomber slide off and down. He strained his muscles against the stiff controls and slowly brought the craft back onto even keel. As he did, one of two Zeros streaking in from the left suddenly lost its right wing and broke into flames. It staggered off on the bad side and slammed straight into the other Zero. Both planes went spinning down all tangled up with each other.

"Who got those two?" Randall yelled impulsively into the inter-com. "Can anybody hear me, or has this thing gone haywire?"

"Getting your voice, but faint, Major!" he heard Banks speak from up forward.

"Anybody else?" Randall roared. "Anybody else?"

There was no reply from his crew. The only reply he got was more yammering of guns back aft. He was filled with the savage urge to twist around and try to sight back into the ship to see what was taking place back there. But he killed the urge instantly as it was born because he didn't dare take his attention away from his flying for even that short period of time. And so he stuck to his flying as beads of cold sweat rolled down his face, and the remaining Jap Zeros kept slashing in with terrific bursts of fire.

What was the matter aft? Who was hurt? And how many? Every now and then he could hear aft guns sounding off. But whether they were the belly guns, the top bay, or the Stinger in the tail, he couldn't tell.

But there were no sounds of multiple concentrated fire, and that fact caused more ice to cake about Randall's heart. On impulse he started calling over the inter-com again, but it got him nowhere.

There was a reply from no one save Banks in the nose.

Then suddenly Randall realized that the Zeros weren't coming in so

often. As a matter of fact he also realized that there weren't so many Zeros in the air to come in at the Martin.

From his pit he could see only two. And even as he saw them, guns aft of him barked once again, and one of the Zeros dropped out of the air like a dead hawk. The other one came sweeping up out of its dive and cut abruptly away to the west. And at that instant there was silence save for the pounding of the laboring left engine that was still dragging the Martin forward.

"That's all they wanted, Major!" he heard Banks call out. "It was too much. We gave them a sweet dusting off. I got two, but I think six in all went down. So that's four for the boys aft. Not bad."

**R**ANDALL simply grunted. He was too busy, now, trying to keep the Martin from folding up completely and calling it a day. The bomber was plastered with bullet-holes, and the controls became more wobbly by the minute. If Dutch Harbor Base was more than fifteen minutes flying away, it was going to be just too bad.

Randall thought he could make it, but he wasn't sure. Perhaps it would be best to get over one of the chain islands and give orders for the crew to jump. Heaven knew they had put up a perfect scrap against that swarm of Zeros, and it would be criminal to let them risk breaking their necks in a possible crash landing, or worse. Yes, it would be—

"Get some speed out of this baby, for Pete's sake!" came a sudden muffled voice over the inter-com. "Trouble back here! Come on, stop fooling around and open up!"

"Who's that talking?" Randall thundered. "That you, Deacon?"

No answer. It was just like yelling into a dead telephone line. Randall was about to tell Banks to crawl aft if he could, and have a look. But he checked the order even as it reached the tip of his tongue. He did because dead ahead the fog clouds parted a little and he saw the surface of the Dutch Harbor Base. Two minutes more. He still had some altitude. He

had to make it, and he would!

The nightmare finally ended. The Martin touched ground at last and stumbled to a full stop like a spent runner. The instant there was no danger of a ground loop, Randall killed the one functioning engine, tore out of his seat, and scrambled aft. His left leg gave way, and sent him flat.

Dumbfounded, he stared down at the cuff of his service slacks. It was soaked with his own blood. He gave it but a glance and scrambled back amidships.

When he reached the wide opening between the belly gun bay and the top blister, he pulled up short and swore in complete amazement.

**S**TRETCHED out on the catwalk boards were Deacon Willows, and Sergeant Allen. And fussing over them like a mother hen was Corporal Delaney. The Stinger gunner looked as if he had been passed through a meat chopper. He was spattered with blood, and his service shirt was in ribbons. And so was the silk envelope of a parachute. Delaney was winding the chute strips about Sergeant Allen's chest. There were some others already wound about Willow's head, and his upper left arm. Allen's eyes were closed, but Willow's were open, and he was grinning faintly, though his teeth were clenched in obvious pain.

"Well, I'll be!" Randall heard himself gasp.

Corporal Delaney looked up, saw him, and shouted.

"Get the ambulance! Allen's hurt badly, but the Lieutenant, here, is only scratched a little. Tough for

them. They both caught some when those Zeros took their first crack."

"What?" Randall yelled and gaped wide-eyed. "They were wounded right at the start? And you?"

"That's right, Bill," Deacon Willows spoke up in a weak voice. "It was all Delaney's party, right from the start. I said I'd keep an eye on him, but it should have been the other way around. He's not human, but he's a honey. Tore from turret to turret and picked the Zeros off like clay pigeons.

"You should have seen him! And in between nailing Zeros he did what he could for Allen and me. I heard you over the inter-com, but I was too weak to answer. And, Delaney? Well, he'd disconnected his, of course, so he could move around, and he was too busy to use mine. Ask me, and I'll tell you we've got a real Stinger gunner. But definitely!"

"Hey!" shouted Delaney. "You want Allen to die? How about that ambulance!"

The non-com gunner seemed suddenly to recognize who Randall was. He stopped short and clamped a hand to his blood-smearred mouth.

"Jeepers, I'm sorry, sir!" he gasped. "But when I get excited I kind of say things before I think of them. In the air in that scrap, I guess I said—"

"You didn't say a thing, Delaney," Randall said with a grin, and yanked open the emergency fuselage door. "You just did it, with bullets. And, how you did it!"

"So why not?" Delaney mumbled and slipped an arm under the unconscious Allen's shoulders. "You said: 'If you see 'em, let 'em have it!' So I did, that's all."

*They made a nuisance pilot of Lieutenant Mallen in Labrador, but  
Ensign Bill Preddy ribbed him once too often in*

## GRASSHOPPER PILOT

By STUART CAMPBELL

**AN EXCITING COMPLETE NOVELET COMING NEXT ISSUB**

# PATHWAYS BEYOND HORIZONS

By  
**BRIG. GEN.  
HAROLD L. GEORGE**

*Commanding General  
The Air Transport Command  
Army Air Forces*



*Official photo, U. S. Army Air Forces  
Brig. Gen. Harold L. George*



**M**EN of The Army Air Command are slashing trails over many uncharted areas of the earth. They

are flying battle planes, materiel, personnel and mail to the fighting fronts of both hemispheres.

Members of The Air Transport Command represent, in this Modern Age, the same pioneering spirit that enabled our ancestors to conquer the vast deserts and mountains of this continent in their determination to build a mighty nation.

The stern necessities of war have made them build a world network of airways, in months, that could not have been accomplished in years under normal peace-time operations.

They have done this because the planes that stream off American production lines must move swiftly to training centers, tactical units and fighting zones. Not only that, but vital cargoes must move to all military areas.

The Command utilizes its highly-trained personnel and the services of all civil air carriers. Its members are recruited from all flights of aviation life and from the best of civilian specialists.

There is room in this service for pilots who have more than 300 hours experience, as well as top ranking student navigators and mechanics.

They must be prepared to work hard, and be ready to go anywhere, anytime, because the wings of The Air Transport Command cover the world.

The Japs hurled themselves at Zane, with short-bladed knives



# CAPTAINS VENOMOUS

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

*Captains Croft and Zane each had his own way of fighting—but both were poison to the Japs!*

**C**APTAIN ROGERS CROFT, and Captain Lumford Zane, of the United States Army Air Corps, were young to be captains. They were twenty-four. The War Department, however, had had to commission them in their rank. They were aces, and aces deserved recognition.

Their careers were curiously par-

allel. Both were out of West Point, though they had scarcely noticed each other there. Both had succeeded through sheer merit. Nobody had given either of them a lift. Nor would either have accepted help.

Any similarity after that, however, ended. Rogers Croft was a fiery, impulsive sort of fellow who hated his enemies so fervently that he had just

one urge—to destroy them utterly. Then to kick the shards and remnants around, to get their blood on his otherwise stainless boots.

Every time he heard of a victory, large or small by the Germans or Japs, he took it as a personal affront, a deadly insult. And that's what made him a terror, working out of certain secret bases in Dutch New Guinea.

He went berserk, but he went berserk with precision. He had knocked down twenty-four Japanese planes in six days of fighting through the islands. He cursed himself daily because he had bagged so few.

He behaved as if he could knock down the whole Japanese air force, all by himself. Given the time and opportunity, he might have done just that.

Lumford Zane, on the other hand, was not a man anyone, even Croft, would call "Lum" without a vague feeling of uneasiness. It was hard to put your finger on the reason.

It would have been thought that Croft would be the man who wouldn't take anything from anybody, yet it was Croft who was called "Rog" by brother officers, even by juniors, and he was the man whom enlisted men, excited by his latest exploits, hammered on the back before they remembered that he was a superior officer.

That just was not done to Lumford Zane, for some reason, but nobody knew why. Zane had bagged seventeen Japanese planes. But his score was somewhat greater than that, for he had knocked off ten more while serving with the "Flying Tigers," who were not supposed to be officers at all.

Zane was one number senior to Croft, and Croft never forgot it, or overlooked the seniority. Though Zane never by word, look or deed indicated that it mattered to him in the least. Men slouched, but efficiently, around Croft. They jumped and did things for Zane, and none could have told why.

There was a kind of race between the two at the moment, though neither would have said so. Each was trying to get in all the flying time he could, each was trying, all-out, to win his share of the war.

**A**N ORDERLY approached Croft, who walked back and forth under the camouflage which hid the field from any chance Japanese reconnaissance planes. Croft walked as if he were about to explode.

Sitting calmly under a tree, in a chair from somewhere, which he leaned back against the bole, Lumford Zane watched Croft stride back and forth.

"An awful lot of energy to use up," he finally said. "You could down two Japs with it, Croft."

"I'll always have enough and to spare for the murdering Nips, Zane!" said Croft. "See what they did today? Shot down a passenger plane, filled with women and children, out of Australia. They knew it wasn't armed, must have seen who the passengers were!"

Croft's face was a thunder-cloud, and his eyes shot pencils of flame. A slow smile, a *gentle* smile, briefly touched the lips of Lumford Zane.

"Women and children, Croft," he said, "are in this war, too. We must expect them to get hurt!"

Croft whirled on his superior, his fist coming up, clenched, as if he would strike the other man. His teeth showed in a snarl.

"Are you excusing the Japs for killing women and kids?"

Croft strode up until he was within ten paces, when Zane, his smile fading, stopped him.

"Stand still, Croft," he said. "Here is a perfect example of what I mean! Don't move! You see, you are angry, wasting energy, and your alertness has disappeared. You are at this moment standing within striking distance, less about a foot, of one of the seven most deadly cobras in Dutch New Guinea. I've been watching the critter try to make up its mind to look me over. Stand still now, and learn a lesson. May you also, hereafter, remember that you should wear leather leggings on the ground, just in case other snakes get curious!"

Lumford Zane rose, with easy grace, seeming to flow from his chair. Croft stood like a statue, afraid even to look down, knowing just how lethally testy the cobras were, and wondering just how Zane, who didn't

have his gat on him at the moment, was going to dispose of the cobra.

Zane came close, within striking distance. Then he made a quick movement that attracted the snake's attention, causing it to strike—with a blinding whir of speed. As its head hit the ground, at the end of its fast-as-lightning stab, just two inches from the foot of Lumford Zane, Zane put his heel on the head and brought his weight on it.

It was done casually. At least, Croft thought, having seen it all, Zane had made it look casual. But Croft knew how nearly perfect every move of Zane's had been timed. A high-speed camera would have caught the striking of that reptile only as a blur. Yet Zane had been ready at the exact split second, before the snake could retract its head, to put his foot upon it.

And Croft had just a hint of why the man with the gentle smile was not a man one could, somehow, call "Lum."

"Captains Zane and Croft," said the orderly, "to scramble at once."

It was a small field. Only Zane and Croft could have taken the Bell Airacobras off it. There were many other fields just like it, too small to be of much use, to be worth wasting men to capture, yet large enough to make possible the savage work of men like Zane and Croft.

**T**HE two captains, pulling on their helmets, strode to their crates, which stood nose to tail. Zane's was ahead, in the narrow runway that *had* to be narrow—narrow enough for tree limbs to meet over it to be invisible from the air.

Zane stepped into his fighter, not even looking back to check on Croft. Then, all at once, he lowered his foot from the step, called to the orderly.

"Watch for a cobra," he said. "A snake, not a plane. I just killed one under the wishing tree. It'll have a mate on the prowl wondering what happened to it. Watch, and keep the mate from making any mistakes, see?"

Gently Zane smiled at the orderly. There was something in the smile that made the orderly step back.

Now both captains were in their crates, their motors turning over. In

a high tree, a high, thick, bushy tree, a lookout scanned the skies for Japanese planes. The Airacobras would not take off if there were any enemy planes visible anywhere. The secret fields must remain secret as long as possible. Zane's own ground crew were doubling as sentries, to guard against Japanese foot-troops—Tatori's, who were good in the jungle.

The orderly signaled, relaying a signal he took from the look-out. Lumford Zane, sure by the feel of his Bell Airacobra that she was perfect, gunned her. The toughest type fighter plane in the Far East began to roll, with another just behind it.

Behind Zane, and behind Croft, an Allison engine—ten hundred and forty horse power—roared savagely, pushing 'Cobra and pilot up into the air like a hand putting a shot. In a split second after the crate got into the air, it could be doing four hundred miles an hour, level flight. What it could do on a dive—well, the fact that Zane knew to a hair was what made a certain difference between him and Croft, between him and almost any other flyer in any of the United Nations' services.

The leading Bell 'Cobra shot up through the trees, banked left, away from the vent from the field. The second came out, banked right. Then both screamed up for altitude, while Zane looked at the signal below. Both knew what the signal was, but it could not be mentioned, even between them. It indicated direction, however, and distance.

Northwest, fifty miles, Jap fighter planes. And off-shore, barges, transports, destroyers, light cruisers, bringing death and destruction to the East Indies.

The two Airacobras headed in that direction, Allisons full out. Zane watched other planes, seemingly rising from the green sea of the jungles, sped to the rendezvous. He signaled Croft to the left, and a bit below. Four planes swung in behind Croft, four behind Zane.

There was a gentle, almost wistful smile on the face of Lumford Zane. On the face of Rogers Croft, however, was an expression of demoniac hatred—for the enemy.

What did they expect to accomplish, by attacking islands where only cannibals and head-hunters lived? Though of course Croft knew. He knew all about tin, and rubber, and oil. But it seemed to him so horrible that people who had never even heard of the Japanese should be slaughtered by them. Naturally tribal wars had been their right from time immemorial. The Japs had no right to compel them to die in any other way.

**B**Y THE time the Japanese were sighted, Croft had worked himself into his usual berserker rage. Behind him his four wingmates seemed to throb with his own fury.

Away to the right, Zane sensed all this, and smiled. If his men echoed his smile, it was because they envied a man who could smile like that, and wreak such havoc, not because they understood what made him smile.

More fighter planes were converging on the Japanese concentration. The Dutch, as usual, were doing a gorgeous job of coordination. The fighters arrived at just the right time to give the Jap fighters all they were looking for. And when they were all engaged, the B-26s and the Douglas DB-7s would swing into action, with a few TBD-1s, to give the transports and cruisers something to think about.

At Zane's signal, the fighter formations separated, each into its own flight unit. They hurtled straight into the thick of the Jap fighters who were forming a kind of sky-wall to keep them back.

Lumford Zane was calm. He was a great believer in self-control. You could do so much more if you bossed yourself first.

Zane led his wingmates straight into the thick of the Japs. The Nips, suicidal in their zeal for the Son of Heaven—goggle-eyed, bespectacled Hirohito—were aching for fight. Zane signaled his men to get after their own targets, and then, while calmly speeding a burst into a Jap who poured lead past the nose of his 'Cobra, he estimated the situation.

Croft did nothing of the sort. He simply went raging in, and effectively—for four Nakajimas were already

going down before the bullets of Croft and his fighters.

Zane smiled. He himself had got one plane. Now one of his wingmates exploded a Kawanishi. A burst into the middle of the fighter-bomber did the business.

On the face of things, Zane seemed to be behind in kills. He was undisturbed. First he must estimate, know, as surely as he had when he had put his foot on the head of the cobra. Though he never said it, every Jap was just such a cobra to him. You didn't let them bite you.

"Like *that* for instance," he told himself, as one of the pilots behind Croft, trying to get three Japs at once, got himself into a pocket and shot to pieces before he could pull out.

The American bailed out, his parachute flowering. A Jap started to follow him down, but thought better of it. The sharks in the blue waters below would take care of the American flyer, so the Jap saved his bullets.

Zane looked after that particular Jap with something like understanding. Then he dived on him and shot him down!

The skies above the Japanese naval armada were filled with planes—Japanese, British, Dutch, American—all mixed up together. The bombers and torpedo-carriers had not yet arrived. Zane looked around for them, somewhat concerned for a moment. The bombers and torpedo-carriers were necessary.

But he didn't see them. He signaled his four flyers, spread them out, dived through the Japanese interceptors. But they leveled off above the blue water, and streaked away for the nearest Japanese barges which were bearing soldiers ashore.

Zane smiled gently. He would leave the transports and the cruisers and destroyers for the time being. No use getting in the way of their guns. The Jap soldiers were the important objectives!

A barge, right in line!

**Z**ANE did not even stop to think whether to use his thirty or his fifty-caliber machine-guns, or his 36 mm. shell gun. Long ago he had fig-

ured out just what to use against an invasion barge. As a result, he nosed up before reaching the barge, brought his thirty-caliber machine-guns to bear on the crouched soldiers.

Then he nosed down. He was still smiling, though it was more of a mask-like grimace than a smile. The invasion barge changed direction crazily, continued to move erratically, as well it might. For after Zane had fired his brief burst, no Japanese soldier remained alive in that barge.

He zoomed, picking out another barge, glancing aloft to see whether he should get back into the sky-battle or whether Nakajimas were diving on *him*. Then he studied the work of his wingmates.

Two more invasion barges were erratic in movement and direction. A fourth barge had turned back. Fearful men, who had been sure they were willing to die for their emperor, frightened by these deadly Americans had dived into the sea. Too late they had forgotten that there were sharks in the sea that matched in ferocity the sharks in the sky.

On the crazily zigzagging destroyers anti-aircraft guns were soaring steadily. Larger guns on the cruisers were laying down a barrage on the shore, covering the landing of the soldiers.

Zane signaled to his men. They swung in widely to follow his lead. Zane zoomed, far above the cruiser guns that were laying down the barrage on the beach.

Then, he nosed over. To his right two planes nosed down, to his left two more.

Now Zane set his 50-caliber machine-guns to chattering. He let his 36 mm. shell gun have her head. He had no hopes of sinking or damaging a cruiser of the Kako class with such weapons, but there were men on the cruiser's decks, and in the rigging.

Harass the Japs! Irritate the Nips! And keep your self-control. That was the ticket.

The five 'Cobras gathered speed. Four hundred and fifty miles an hour, diving straight for the smoke that made a pall about the ships. And Zane smiled again as he saw short men moving to take up positions behind

machine-guns on the cruiser's decks.

The five planes, with their guns raging full out, hurtled straight into the guns of the Japs. Men began to fall on the decks of the cruiser, dropping behind machine-guns and anti-aircraft weapons.

And Lumford Zane smiled as his five 'Cobras flashed over the cruiser, knowing that a hundred dead, perhaps more, were the result of this battle. Moreover, rattled Jap gunners must have given Dutch defenders on shore a brief breathing space.

Zane had not lost a ship. His four flyers were still with him and he saw no bullet-holes in his own crate.

Zane led his men back into battle as the bombers and torpedo-carriers came out of the green jungle to help defend and protect the barges, transports, cruisers and destroyers of Dai Nippon dotting the blue sea. The bigger planes took over, the Nakajimas, roared out to clash in the sky with American, Dutch and British fighters.

**T**HIRTY American fighters, Zane estimated—and did not smile now. There had been fifty. But there was always the chance that the missing flyers were engaged elsewhere. It galled him to think that Japs could take any such toll of planes of the United Nations.

The pilots of the defenders' torpedo-carriers swung into action. The Nakajimas converged on the bombers that were attacking transports and barges, and the torpedo-carriers that were after the cruisers and destroyers.

Half a dozen Nakajimas hurtled at one torpedo-carrier, a TBD-1, and Zane swept down on them. The nose of his crate covered the nearest Nakajima. His guns spoke—all of them, even the shell gun.

Then the nose of his 'Cobra shifted, and two Nakajimas jumped as if they had been winged deer. And the next instant, as Zane's wingmates got into action the other four Nakajimas were cutting out of the fight, burning. Zane had taken two, his men one each—and the TBD-1 flew on, while the Kako class cruiser that Zane and his men had plastered, seemed to take a terrific blow in the port quarter. It

began to list. It started down.

Zane saw Rogers Croft in action then. His 'Cobra was riddled, Zane gathered from its behavior. And only two other 'Cobras rode with Croft. But in his own way, Croft was performing herculean labors in the battle, giving his fury free rein. Croft was everywhere. Even as Zane looked, Croft dived like a bullet on the back of a Kawanishi, smashed it out of the fight, nosed up and let go with all guns on a Nakajima, which also went down, trailing fans of smoke.

That was Croft, Zane thought. All out, everything—all guns working, going full force to his motor. Croft. The hammer-and-tongs fighter of the skies. His wingmates were like him, for such men naturally gravitated to Croft as the steadier type of men gravitated to Zane.

There was an unspoken rivalry between the two top aces of the East Indies. Zane himself did not count the aircraft he had shot down. He mentioned them in his combat reports, officials added them up, he forgot the totals. His only interest was in whittling away at the Japanese who were whittling away at the Philippines, Singapore, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and at Australia. He didn't care where he found them—on the beaches, anywhere, everywhere—

Croft was different, for he had to keep his own score. And always, as now, he was a viking of the sky, smashing, diving, his guns all going. While Zane used his guns sparingly, he made every shot count. Croft raged, Zane smiled.

The fight now was not a conclusive one, however terrific. But a lull finally came when planes needed gasoline and men had to rest. Bombers and torpedo-carriers pulled out first, while the 'Cobras fought back the surviving Jap flyers to keep them from tracing the bombers and torpedo-carriers to their secret bases. Zane and his men downed four more Nakajimas.

So far, the United Nations had made a grand bag. Twenty Jap planes, a *Kako* class cruiser, two transports, a destroyer, fourteen barges. And in the sea sharks held high, bloody revelry.

**SOME** Americans, British and Dutch were down there too, among the sharks, Zane thought sadly, as he led his wingmates back into the jungles, and watched them scatter to their secret fields. Those fields were connected by telephones, so that the commander could keep in touch with his command, one that covered a vast area, many flights and squadrons.

Zane landed, slicing down into the narrow field. Down after him came Rogers Croft. The two 'Cobras rolled to the end of the carefully camouflaged field. There, at the end of the field, the planes were faced about, ready for the next take-off, which Zane knew would be right away.

The two captains found the squadron commander waiting for them.

"How many losses from your flight, Captain?" Major Jackson asked Zane.

"None, sir," said Zane.

"And you, Croft?"

"Two, sir."

"What were you doing, Zane?" snapped the major. "Having a picnic? How could five planes mix into the thick of the fight like the one you've just been through, and come back unharmed?"

"They may have taken a few bullet-holes, sir," said Zane, "but I saw no reason for risking their lives in wild—"

"Soldiers in wartime are supposed to risk their lives!" snapped the major. "I won't have commanders who think more of their men than they do of destroying the enemy!"

Zane said nothing. He stood quietly while Jackson complimented Croft on his zeal, his courage.

Then he waved both men aside, to write their combat reports.

When Zane handed in his, Major Jackson looked up at him, his mouth hanging slightly open. For the first time since his return from battle Zane smiled. "I don't believe you did as much damage as this report indicates?" snapped the major.

"I don't believe, sir," Zane said softly, "that regulations require that I permit my veracity to be questioned. Are you sure you doubt the truth of my report, which I have said is an estimate, only, of the damage?"

"I spoke hastily!" said Jackson,

flustered. The orderly came bustling into the tent.

"A flight of enemy planes, flying low, sir," he said to Jackson, "heading this way. Look-out thinks they're practically on the air route taken home by Captain Croft and Captain Zane."

Croft started to whirl, to dart out of the tent. Zane made no move. Jackson looked from one to the other.

"What do you make of it, Zane?" he asked.

"We may have been trailed, sir. Anyway, the Nips would like to rid themselves of certain pests—Croft and me, I imagine!"

"Well, why not get out and meet them?" snapped Jackson.

"Might I suggest, sir, that we wait for them to go past the field, or turn back? I like to hit Jap formations when they least expect it, when their backs are turned!"

**T**HE formation, six strong, of Nipponese, fled across the secret field without slowing down, or circling, or noting anything unusual about the jungle where the field was hidden.

Then Zane led the way out. His face was unconcerned. Croft was again the raging fury. The two crates took off, as soon as the look-out signaled. They had been serviced, were again ready for all-out action.

They shot up to ten thousand feet. The Japs were heading away.

Croft waited, with such patience as he could manage, for Zane to take the offensive. Then, when Zane started his slash down the sky, Croft was right on his port side. And the Japs did not even see them until one of their number had been savagely blasted, and was falling into the jungles below. Nothing down there, Zane knew, but head-hunters—and any Jap who bailed out over that jungle would have reason to be sorry.

Croft got another crate, diving down and coming up from below. Zane, so composed, he was hardly blinking, got his second crate on the way down. He zoomed, banked, cork-screwing into place as the Japanese formation, attacked from below and above, broke apart.

Croft was again the slashing, swash-buckling savage of the skies. Zane

was the cool, calm, sure—executioner!

Three Japs gone. Half the Jap force done for, two of whom had parachuted into the jungle to horrible death. But there was no mercy for them in the hearts of Zane and Croft.

Three planes left. They must not get back, to report about where they had encountered the two Airacobras. None must survive, to make trouble for the secret fields.

Savagely Croft slashed at the remaining planes, now swiftly and desperately scattering, as a convoy breaks up when attacked by sub-packs. Methodically, scientifically, Zane knocked down two more planes. Croft, the raging demon, accounted for the other. So fiercely swift had been the battle that parachutes were still visible above the green jungle when the two captains realized that the only ships aloft were their own.

They flew back to their secret field. Major Jackson told them that the Jap invasion force had been driven off temporarily. They could rest.

But again Jackson glared at Zane. "What you could do," he declared, "if you had some real *fighting* spirit! You're a machine. If you had the heart to go with it you would be one of the greatest—"

The orderly came in to make a breathless report.

"Look-out reports capture of two Japanese pilots, sir. They're being brought in now. Should be here in maybe an hour."

"You got your first ones that close?" asked Jackson.

Zane shrugged. Croft's face looked grim, black.

"How come the cannibals didn't get them?" Croft said. "Major, there are other Japs close—jungle troops! These flyers know their way around these jungles. How do we know these men who have been captured are even flyers? They couldn't be spotted this soon after we get back from miles away. It's a trick!"

Zane smiled.

"Japs who know the jungles would naturally be chosen for the job those Nips were sent to do," he said softly. "What's remarkable about it?"

"I suppose you've the answer to everything!" said Jackson.

Two hours later Jackson sent for Croft and Zane. The Nip pilots had been brought in.

"Which one of you," asked one of the Japs, before either captain could say a word, "flies the Airacobra with the slightly heavy left wing?"

Zane started. Nobody, he was sure, had ever noticed that his plane was slightly inclined to favor the left wing. This Jap hadn't missed that. Why?

Jackson read the amazement in Zane's face, the first real emotion he had ever seen there.

"I guess it can do no harm to tell, Nip," Zane said. "I fly that crate!"

The Japs were covered carefully by men with bayoneted rifles. Their side-arms had been taken from them. They had been thoroughly searched. Yet when Zane answered, the Jap who had asked the question in perfect English, spoke one word in Japanese. Instantly both Japs hurled themselves at Zane—while in their hands were short-bladed knives that must have come out of their sleeves.

Zane sidestepped. Croft jumped and swung a savage right to the chin of one Jap. The man went over on his back, his neck broken by the blow. An automatic barked, and the English-speaking Jap dropped to his face, rolled onto his back. Sweat beaded his

yellow face, but he forced himself to speak—to Lumford Zane.

"If you have the chance," he said to Zane, "will you get word to any Jap commander that Matadori—that's me—died trying to slay one of our greatest enemy airmen? You, sir! Your people call my people murderers, but you, you, with your precision, picking off soldiers—"

He writhed and died then, his eyes fixed on Zane to the last. And in those eyes was fear. Not fear of death, but of Lumford Zane and of what this American whom he had failed to kill could still do to his people.

"And I guess, Zane," Jackson said soberly, "that leaves me nothing to complain about. The enemy risks—and loses—his life to get his most important antagonist. That is recognition."

"Well," Zane said calmly, "we don't have to be bothered about prisoners. I really ought to have credit for that, since they died trying to get me."

And Zane smiled with great gentleness. But nobody else smiled.

"And I thought I had venom in me!" Croft said wonderingly. "Thank heaven, Zane, that you're not a Jap, heading this way, and me the only man to head you off!"

Zane smiled again, and went out to have a look at his Bell Airacobra.

## Getting Up Nights Makes Many Feel Old Too Soon

If you're feeling out o'sorts, Get Up Nights or suffer from Burning Passages, Backache, Swollen Ankles, Nervousness, Rheumatic Pains, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes and feel worn-out, the cause may be non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles.

Worry, Colds, working too hard, or overeating or drinking may create an excess of Acids and overload your Kidneys so that they need help to flush out poisonous wastes that might otherwise undermine your health.

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Nature provides the Kidneys to clean and purify your blood and to remove excess Acids. The Kidneys contain about nine million tiny tubes or filters through which the heart pumps blood about 200 times an hour, night and day, so it's easy to see that they may get tired and slow down when overloaded.

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wastes which may become poisonous if allowed to accumulate, thus aiding nature in stimulating an increase of energy, which may easily make you feel years younger.

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# ARMY'S NUMBER 1 FLYING MAN



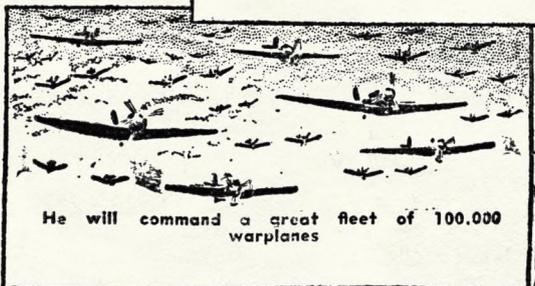
Young Arnold devoted himself to his studies, passed the entrance examination to West Point



Made his first flight in 1911



SHM pilots military planes more than 300 hours each year



He will command a great fleet of 100,000 warplanes

**Lieutenant General  
H. H. Arnold**  
*Chief of the U. S. Army Air Forces and the leading figure in North American military aviation*

**G**ENERAL ARNOLD got into the army by mistake. But it was no mistake when President Roosevelt last year appointed him chief of the United States Army Air Forces with the rank of Lieutenant General. Tall, white-haired Henry H. (Hap) Arnold stood out head and shoulders above every other possible candidate for the job.

His accidental army career came about in 1903, when his brother, already appointed to the Military Academy at West Point, changed his mind about the matter and decided he didn't want to be a soldier. There was the appointment—and there was Hap. So Hap went to West Point instead. He became a spare-time flyer a few

*(Continued on page 95)*

# NAVY'S NUMBER 1 FLYING MAN



Was a student of engineering



Like Arnold, first flew in 1911



Commanded U. S. S. Langley, America's first carrier



Directs the air arm of the U. S. Navy everywhere



Vice Admiral  
John H. Towers

*who will command an armada of  
27,000 naval planes operating  
in both oceans*

**T**HERE'S "a hell of a wreck from Georgia Tech" running the show for the Naval Air Force—that superbly-trained branch of the Navy whose efforts and willingness to launch bombs and torpedoes in the very teeth of the deadliest anti-aircraft fire did so much to win the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island and are continuing to write

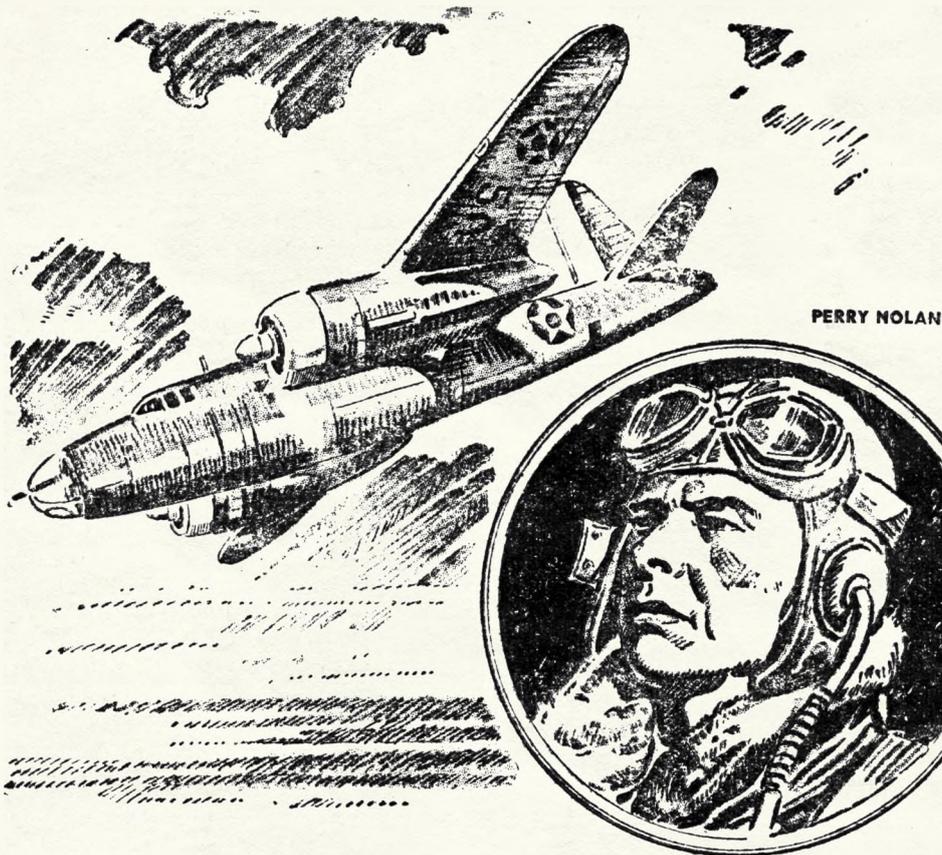
glorious new pages in American history in the great battle of the Pacific.

Seasoned, hard-bitten Admiral John Henry Towers, chief of the United States Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics, began life with the firm intention of becoming a civil engineer and building bridges all over South America. An appointment to Annapolis in 1902

*(Continued on page 96)*



Nolan cut straight across the sky at the unsuspecting Messerschmitt pilot



# WINGS OF THE NORTH

By JOHNSTON CARROLL

*Over the icy wastes of Greenland, the fire of war suddenly flares up—and Perry Nolan is catapulted into a welter of action!*

## CHAPTER I *Greenland Base*

**P**ERRY NOLAN took a last drag on his cigarette, then snapped it among the burning logs in the fireplace and gloomily watched it disappear in a tiny burst of flame.

"Sure, I know," he growled out the corner of his mouth, "orders is orders. And here we are all cozy—and cold as blue blazes—on the hind side of Greenland. Greenland, he says! If I should see something really green up here, I'd drop dead."

Major Jordon, C.O. of the Thirty-

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A COMPLETE AIR BATTLE NOVELET

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first Bomber Command Squadron, U.S. Army Air Corps, chuckled in his throat and gently tamped tobacco into the bowl of his ancient pipe.

"Just the time of year, old son," he explained. "They say it's very beautiful up here in the summer. Wait a few months and the three feet of snow out there will be gone. There'll be lovely flowers, and birds in the trees, and—"

"And we'll not see them or smell them!" Nolan snarled. "We'll all be six feet under—stiff from boredom. Joe Sucker, that's me! I should have joined the R.A.F. At least those lads see a Nazi plane now and then. But us? Nothing but snow and ice. Nuts!"

"Well, it can't last—I hope," Major Jordon sighed. "Maybe one of these days the *Luftwaffe* will come sailing by, and we'll get in our cracks."

"No luck," Nolan snorted. "That's been the tag line of my nightly prayers for weeks now. And nothing's happened. Nothing but that crash last week that took good old Johnnie Rucker and his crew."

Jordon nodded solemnly but said nothing. For six weeks, now, since five days before Pearl Harbor, the Thirty-one Bombers had been stationed on the southwest coast of Greenland at a point halfway between Julianehaab and Godthaab. Their job was to patrol the coast as far south as Cape Farewell, and to maintain a constant lookout for any signs of Axis infiltration by sea or air. And perhaps most important of all, to hunt out any secret Axis radio stations set up for meteorological or propaganda purposes, or both.

**T**HE idea had been good, but the execution had been enough to drive strong men stark, raving nuts. Which is to say that not one single thing of even a little interest had been sighted. Nothing but snow and ice, and more snow and ice. Then last week had come the only break in the freezing monotony, but a break that brought heart-ache, and not joy.

One of the planes with its pilot and crew of four had not returned from a routine patrol. Next day the plane had been found—what was left of it—a fire-blackened tangle of wreckage

at the bottom of a two-thousand-foot canyon. A black smudge high up on the mountain side marked where the plane had struck, and jagged black marks, like black crayon on white paper, showed the path of the crashed plane as it went hurtling in flames down into the canyon.

That all were dead was certain. If not killed by the crash, then by the sub-zero cold that night. To attempt to reach the wreck before summer was out of the question. It would take an experienced rescue party at least three weeks to reach that point from even the nearest settlement. And then they probably would not find the wreck under fresh blankets of snow.

And so the Thirty-one gang had returned to their base, downed a toast to pals lost, and continued with the monotonous, nerve-fraying grind.

Major Jordon finally shrugged aside the unhappy thoughts, and reached for a match.

"I'll still stick to it that one of these days the *Luftwaffe* will be coming along," he said. "I've got a feeling. Meantime, I've got something special for you, son."

Nolan sat up, bright-eyed.

"Yeah? Then let's have it quick!"

The C.O. stabbed his pipe stem at the clock hanging on the wall and grinned.

"You're due off in your sky chariot in twenty minutes," he said. "You can cut the patrol an hour short if you want to. How's that?"

The bomber pilot groaned and pushed his six feet-two up to a standing position.

"There's only two things that stop me from bobbing you right on the nose, for that crack!" he growled.

"Only two?" Jordon echoed with a chuckle. "What are they?"

"Well, one's because you've been my friend for close to fifteen years now," Nolan grunted.

"And the other reason, son?" Jordon wanted to know.

Nolan shrugged into his heavy service coat and scooped up his helmet, goggles, and radio-jack off the desk.

"Because there's an army rule against it," he growled and turned toward the door. "Of course I don't *hope* that fire goes out and you freeze

stiff. However . . . see you again, Sir Slave Driver!"

"Have a nice flight, Captain!" Jordon called after him.

The reply was not in words. It was just a long sound made with the lips and the tongue, and cut off as the door slammed shut. Jordon chuckled and reached for some papers on his desk. It was then he saw the frown of disapproval on the face of the young second lieutenant seated at the adjutant's desk in the far corner.

The lad's name was Peters, and he was all of six months out of West Point. But everything was so different from what he had been taught behind those gray stone walls up the Hudson a ways. It obviously distressed him a lot.

"Something bothering you, Peters?" Jordon asked casually.

"Why, no, sir," the youth gulped. "That is—well, Captain Nolan certainly doesn't show much respect for your rank, sir."

"He doesn't, does he?" Jordon chuckled. "But he flies like a fool, and spends twice as many hours in the air as any other pilot in my command. Also, about ten years ago he saved my life when a couple of ships we were flying tangled in the air. My 'chute fouled and I would have gone down with the wreck if it hadn't been for Nolan. He hauled me out, and hung onto me and took us both down in his 'chute. True, we each broke a leg, but we lived. Did you think he got that D.S.C. he wears from cutting off box tops and sending them in? Respect for my rank? Be patient, Peters. You're only six months away from the Point, you know."

"Yes, of course, sir," the youth mumbled and went beet-red in confusion.

**J**ORDON swore under his breath and sighed heavily.

"Forget it, Peters," he grunted. "No offense, son. It's this blasted frozen end of the world, and the continued inactivity. I'd give my right eye if the enemy would only come this far west just once. If they came in balloons it would be okay. We'd promise only to heave hunks of ice at them. We'd—oh, well, let it go. Where's

that report I'm supposed to sign? Or hasn't the ink melted yet?"

Outside, stamping across the hard-packed snow, Perry Nolan was savagely offering not one eye but two eyes for a touch of honest warfare. And in between prayers he was cursing himself for the ten millionth time for not having taken up that R.A.F. offer a year ago. He had been in Air Corps Reserve, then, and enlistment in the R.A.F. could have been wangled very easily. But with war creeping closer and closer to Uncle Sam's front yard he had decided to stay put and be ready to do his slugging for the Old Man with the Whiskers when the time came.

That time had come—just a week after he had volunteered for Bomber Command outpost duty in Greenland. A week later, December Seventh! Pearl Harbor!

It was a cinch that Thirty-one would be recalled for duty in the Pacific possessions, or at least on the West Coast. Sure, a certainty! But five weeks had dragged by, and five could get you ten that the Air Corps Command had completely forgotten all about Thirty-one up here where even brass monkeys couldn't take it.

Nolan kicked viciously at a clump of snow, but it was actually ice and he got pains in his foot. He cursed Greenland again and shoved open the mess lounge door and stuck his head inside.

"Good news, bums!" he shouted. "We're going for an airplane ride. Shift it, you guys!"

He pulled the door shut and walked over to the line of Pratt & Whitney-powered Martin B-26 long-range bombers. Number 8 was his baby, and the grease balls already had the engines turning over and were checking the one hundred and one little things before take-off. The sergeant in charge saw Nolan and hurried over, a hopeful grin on his face.

"You said yesterday, maybe today, Skipper," he said. "Any chance? Honestly, I'm going bats just stamping my feet on the ground. Lieutenant Bellows wouldn't mind if I took the tail gun for just one trip, would he, sir?"

"He'd love it," Nolan grunted. "I only wish you would fly one of these

things, Casey. Okay, climb aboard. I'll tell Bellows he can go back to his crap game."

**S**ERGEANT CASEY almost broke a leg scrambling up the belly door ladder. Nolan grinned and waited for his crew of four to come trudging over from the mess. There was Stacey, his co-pilot and navigator; Corporal Hicks, his bombardier; and Sergeant Yates and Lieutenant Bellows, his gunners. They arrived looking as happy as kids heading for the dentist, but when Nolan spoke to Bellows, the tail gunner let out a whoop of joy and tore back into the mess lounge before Nolan could take a second breath.

The bomber's commander gave the mess door an envious glance himself and then climbed inside and went forward to the controls. A five-minute instrument and engine check, and then he trundled the big craft around and to the head of the snow runway that was packed as hard as brick and just as level as a billiard table top. Another couple of minutes and the B-6 was in the air, the hydraulic gear pulling the nose and wing wheels up into their sockets.

At seven thousand Nolan leveled off and circled the field twice while he checked with radio operations on the ground. He got his "okay-check" and put the bomber on the first leg of its seven-hundred-mile "snow patrol." Presently, when he was sure that all was in tip-top shape, he swung the Dep wheel over to Stacey.

"Go ahead and earn some flying pay, my boy," he said. "Same course as usual. But watch those fog banks. They like to sit right on these damn mountains. And to think that guys sell their very souls to explore this kind of country!"

Nolan glanced down at the scenery below as he spoke the last, and shivered slightly. Actually, it was a beautiful sight, but in a heart-chilling, and breath-catching sort of way. As far as the eye could see there was range after range of snow-covered glacier mountains that stabbed their jagged peaks up toward the slate-gray sky.

Between the peaks were yawning green and black-streaked canyons

and crevasses into which whole cities could be dumped and never seen again. Bleak, icy desolation in all directions, save where here and there a tiny cluster of buildings and shacks marked where civilization waged its unending struggle for existence on this leftover of the Ice Age.

"A fat chance," Nolan grunted and slid out of his seat to go aft for some coffee. "The Nazis may be baby killers, but they *have* got some brains. They'll let us keep this ice-cube parking lot all to ourselves and welcome to it!"

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## CHAPTER II

### *Surprise Attack*

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**A** LITTLE over an hour and a half later Nolan was taking his spell at the controls. Increased patches of fog had forced the big bomber up to ten thousand feet, and Nolan was skirting the fringe of a bank that completely hid a mountain range which, when not shrouded by the misty stuff, seemed to rise right straight up out of Davis Strait like a wall that barred all possible approach from the sea.

It was in this tricky range Johnnie Rucker and the four members of his crew had lost their lives, and as Nolan stared flint-eyed in that direction the familiar ache returned to his heart. Johnnie had been a swell guy. Tops. They'd got along fine. And the same went for every member of his crew, too. Each lad a real man, ready for a fight or a frolic. What a tough deal from the gods that they should have—

Nolan never finished the rest. At that moment the surprise of surprises came blasting out of the gray air. It happened with such startling suddenness that for a couple of split-seconds Nolan could only sit frozen in the seat and gape wide-eyed at two all black Nazi Messerschmitt 109-Fs that came rocketing up at the big Martin like two jet-black comets in high gear.

Two split-seconds to gape and stare, and then he snapped into action.

"Gun stations!" he roared into the inter-com mike. "Enemy aircraft ap-

proaching to port. Give them the works!"

Even as he roared out his commands he heeled the Martin over and around on wing-tip, as though it were a P-40, and got into position so that he and Sergeant Yates in the nose could let fly with the forward guns.

They both missed. The two Messerschmitts arced out of the line of fire like greased lightning, darted earthward a short two hundred feet, and then came tearing up again for a belly blast.

Nolan felt the Martin shiver and shake as machine-gun bullets and air-cannon shells ripped into the metal covering. But he also heard his tail gunner blazing away. He grinned for an instant, then wiped it off with a groan as he remembered that Lieutenant Bellows wasn't riding the tail this trip. It was Flight Sergeant Casey back there on a joy ride. Fat chance Casey would be able to handle those guns.

Nolan swore loudly with joy and dumbfounded amazement as the miracle happened. Perhaps Sergeant Casey was shooting with both eyes closed, or perhaps one of the Messerschmitt pilots just didn't give a hang. At any rate, slugs from Casey's guns and the Messerschmitt met head-on. And the Nazi plane lost.

Out the corner of his eye Nolan saw the enemy plane come apart in a shower of blazing pieces that slithered out in all directions and fell earthward like red rain. First blood for the Yank Air Corps in Greenland! And it had certainly been just that. The Nazi pilot was a dead duck before he could even think of shoving open his greenhouse and bailing out.

The instant he saw the plane disappear in a shower of blazing embers Nolan hauled the Martin around to the left and dropped the nose for a power dive on the second Nazi ship. But this cagey German had cut off his zoom and was now spinning around and racing for dear life toward the blanket of fog that shrouded the mountains.

As the Messerschmitt seemed to stagger a bit in mid-air and lose speed, Nolan's heart leaped with savage joy. This made it possible for the Martin to overtake the faster ship. Another

few moments and the Yank skipper would have a perfect nose-on shot. But before those few moments ticked by, common sense, and a wild hunch suddenly took charge of Nolan's brain.

**J**UST before Johnnie Rucker's radio had gone off the air forever a jumble of signals had been heard back at Thirty-one Operations. Static, or something, had garbled the message, and then suddenly there had been absolute silence. Had Johnnie and his boys been attacked in just this same manner? Had two mystery Messerschmitts caught him off guard and sent him crashing into those mountains under that fog before he realized what had happened? And was this lone Messerschmitt waiting to lure Bomber Number Eight into that fog, and smack a mountain?

Nolan hesitated, held the Martin in its wild dive for a brief moment longer, then shook his head. He cursed through clenched teeth as he hauled the nose up toward the slate-gray sky and let the Messerschmitt go slip-sliding down out of sight into the fog. He heard an echo to his own cursing and turned his head to see Stacey staring at him in wide-eyed disbelief.

"He was crippled!" the co-pilot shouted. "If you'd followed him in a minute longer we could have let him have it!"

Nolan shook his head and leveled off the bomber on the top of the fog.

"Not in my book, Stacey," he replied. "That lad was pulling something funny. I don't think his plane had even been hit. He was trying to make us come into the fog after him—and smack into a mountain side."

"What about *him* smacking one?" Stacey demanded.

"He had it figured not to," Nolan said with a shrug. Then in a harsh tone, "Nuts! Do you think I'd have let him go if I'd thought there was half a chance of slugging him? Forget it, son. Check with the crew and find out if those rats did any damage worth worrying about. If not, then we'll do a little exploring in these parts. Ye gods! Two Messerschmitt planes up here! Maybe I've just been dreaming."

A check with the crew at their battle stations brought to light the in-

formation that the Messerschmitt pilots had shot a lot of holes in the Martin, but the bullets and air-cannon shells hadn't hit anything worth writing home about. Just to make sure, Nolan turned the controls over to Stacey, with orders just to circle, and went aft for a personal inspection.

The Martin was very much in tip-top flying condition, and there was only one "casualty." That casualty was Flight Sergeant Casey in the tail. He was so amazed and overjoyed that he had lost all power of speech. He could only gulp and bob his head when Nolan congratulated him and gave him an affectionate slap on the back.

Returning forward, Nolan took over, and for two solid hours he "strafed" all sides of the fog bank, save the underneath side. The stuff, however, was as thick as chilled pea soup and, in view of the fact the Martin wasn't the quickest of planes in the turns and zooms, he was forced to stick around the fringes and not try to grope his way down under on instruments.

At the end of two hours when the wall of fog continued to hold his curiosity in check, and there was no further sign of any Nazi planes, Nolan banked southward and went roaring home to Base on full throttles. He landed smoothly on the packed-snow runway with its strips of metal grating to allow tire traction, and finally wheeled up to the hangar line.

Thirty minutes after that he and each member of the crew had made an individual report of the flight and fight to Major Jordan. The C.O. listened in silence, then asked a couple of questions. He finally signaled all but Nolan to trot over to the mess and have a drink to the health of Flight Sergeant Casey.

**W**HEN they had left, the C.O. reached for his pipe, settled back more in his chair, and fixed quizzical eyes on his senior flight leader.

"Okay, Perry," he said. "You're just busting with words. Go ahead and spill them. You've got ideas. I can see them sticking out all over you. Go on, shoot."

Nolan grunted and jerked his head at the detailed topographical map of the west and south areas of Greenland

that covered the entire rear wall of the squadron office.

"Did some thinking on the way back," he said presently. "Among other things it suddenly occurred to me that during the six weeks we been up here I've only seen that particular mountain range without fog just once. That was the day we spotted Johnnie Rucker's crash. Maybe the gods decided to be kind to us that day. But, anyway, that was the only time I've ever seen those mountains without the fog. Strikes me that the pea-soup stuff is probably a permanent, year-around fog in that locality."

"So?" Major Jordan grunted, though a keen gleam had come into his eyes.

"Look at the map," Nolan said and jerked his head again. From the air those mountains *look* like they rise straight up from the shoreline. But the map says different. You can see there's a small bay there and quite a stretch of flat ground before the mountains start. There's also jottings on that map that say the prevailing wind is north to south. Up and down the coast. Begin to catch on a little?"

Jordan swiveled around in his chair and squinted at the map in silence for a couple of minutes. Then he swiveled back to face Perry Nolan.

"A little, I guess," he said. "You think the Nazis have established a flying field right under our noses?"

"What else?" Nolan murmured with an appropriate gesture. "Those two One-nines certainly didn't fly over from Occupied France just to have a crack at my ship. And, if you want my hunch, it was Nazi planes that caught Johnnie and his boys off balance. Johnnie was too darn good a pilot to barge right into fog on a routine patrol and end up against a mountain. And don't forget, we heard some garbled signals just before his radio went off the air. They've set up a field there, or I'm nuts!"

"Could be, the nuts part," Jordan said with a grin. Then knitting his shaggy brows in a scowl, "But what about the fog? A fog-bound field certainly isn't the best of places to take off and land ships. You'd have more crack-ups than completed flights, I'd say."

Nolan shrugged and reached for a cigarette.

"If it is fog-bound," he said presently in grim significance. "There may be a certain ground wind that keeps part of it open at all times. I remember a field at which I spent a while during training days on the California Coast. Every morning the field was fog-bound save for half of the south side. When the take-off wind was right you could get off and on again without any trouble. Gave you the feeling of flying in and out of a circus tent. True, a few of the greenhorns did mess themselves up. But it was easy for a bird who knew his ailerons and tail flippers."

**MAJOR JORDAN** hunched forward in his chair and stared intently at Nolan, the frown deepening on his face.

"Maybe you're right about that, Perry," he said softly. "Maybe they do have a field there that they can slip in and out of. We'd never spot it in a thousand years of patrolling. But, answer me this. Why is there a field there? Also, why Messerschmitt Onesines? What do they hope it gets them?"

Nolan didn't answer at once. He had already asked those three questions of himself a hundred times since he'd last seen that remaining Messerschmitt cutting down into the fringes of the mountain range's obscuring fog bank. He had guesses, but that's all they were. Just guesses.

"I wonder, too," he murmured more to himself. "If the fog opening is big enough, perhaps they've got bombers based there. And maybe their fighter escorts are fitted with extra tanks for long-range work against convoys close to the North American coast. Maybe, they've only just arrived, and are getting set to pile down on us and blast us right into the Davis Strait. Who knows? But, there's one thing certain. At least, it seems certain to me."

"Such as?" Jordan prompted when Nolan paused and scowled at his folded hands.

"That Johnnie Rucker and I went just a little too close for their comfort," Nolan said. "We usually give that particular range a fairly wide

margin, but I was more than close to it today. I got surprise-jumped. I've a hunch that Johnnie was extra close to it the day he died."

"But what about the next day when we hunted Johnnie's ship from the air," Major Jordan said. "We were right down among the peaks then. But we didn't get jumped. We didn't see the sign of a Nazi plane, in fact."

"Too many of us," Nolan said. "And with very little fog there was no chance for ambush. Then, too, it's possible they wondered if Johnnie had got anything back by radio, so they were lying doggo and waiting to see if we'd start hunting for something else besides Johnnie's ship. Come to think of it, maybe Johnnie's last signals were garbled because they had jammed the air on him. Anyway, there are some of the rats nesting up in that locality. That's definite."

Major Jordan smashed one clenched fist against the palm of the other hand and shot up out of his chair.

"So we load up everything," he announced, "and go up there and blow that whole mountain range into the sea. Maybe they've got some nice pea-soup fog to hide under, but fog never stopped bombs."

"And maybe they would laugh themselves sick at our bombing attempts!" Nolan snapped. "And we'd get rid of them that way. Nuts!"

**HIS** commander gave him an angry stare.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

Nolan jerked his head at the map again.

"That mountain range covers an area of about three hundred square miles," he said. "And maybe their secret field, counting camouflaged hangars, and everything, covers an area of about four or five hundred square yards! You could bomb from now until doomsday and still not come close enough to sprinkle powdered snow on their field."

Jordan started to speak, but didn't. He scowled down at the floor and heaved a long sigh.

"Okay, let's have it!" he finally growled. "You're working up to something, aren't you?"

"It's a job that has to be done solo," Nolan said. "Done solo in a small ship. We've got a Grumman Navy carrier job here that's just the thing for poking around low down in fog. It has speed and all the rest of it, if I should run into trouble. In short, my idea is for me to nose around up there and see what I can see. Then report to you *where* the target is, exactly. And *what* it is. Then we can all go up and give them the works, right on the old noggin. Anything wrong with that?"

"There's one thing," Jordan grunted and gave him a meaningful look. "You doing the job. Now that you've got the scent of Nazi planes in this neck of the world, God only knows what you'd get into on your own. If we only had a two-seater here!"

"We haven't," Nolan said flatly. "And don't worry about me. As soon as I find out what's what up there I'll come back here on the run. After all, that shipboard Grumman can't stay out more than three hours. I'll have to come home."

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### CHAPTER III

#### *Hornets' Nest*

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JORDAN didn't say anything for a long time. He walked over to one of the windows and stared bleakly out at the Arctic wind-swept, snow-covered landscape. Eventually he turned and glowered at Nolan.

"I always was a sucker about a request from you," he snorted. "Okay, go ahead and see what you can find out. But I'll give you three hours and no more. If you're not back then, the whole lot of us will come looking for you, fog or no fog.

"And here's something you can do to let us keep track of you. Keep blipping your radio cut-off switch. When we cease to hear the clicks we'll know you're in trouble, and we'll come up there as fast as we can. Of course, if you can get signals to us, so much the better. But if they are jamming the air we wouldn't catch them clear enough for translation. So keep blipping your switch."

The squadron C.O. paused and leveled a stiff forefinger.

"And don't try to be a one-man air corps!" he snapped. "Or, so help me, I'll burn your hide right clean off when I do catch up with you. Okay. And all the luck in the world, son!"

"Thanks, and don't worry about a thing," Nolan said, reaching for his flying jacket and stuff. "I'll be back in practically nothing flat with all the dope we need to have fun in Greenland. See you later."

Nolan waved his hand and dived out the door. Jordan stared at the closed barrier for a long time then turned and shuffled over to his desk.

"Well, Peters," he growled at the ever-present, silent adjutant in the corner, "You should be able to easily spot a complete and utter fool the next time you meet one."

"Captain Nolan has courage to make that kind of a flight," the young adjutant said. "I certainly don't consider him a fool, sir."

"Huh? Who said anything about Captain Nolan?" Jordan growled and dropped heavily into his chair. "I was referring to his superior officer."

Scarcely an hour later some thirty pairs of anxious eyes watched Perry Nolan lift the Grumman carrier fighter off the snow-grid runway and send its prop charging up around to the north. Every pilot and mechanic standing on that well-nigh sub-zero tarmac breathed a silent prayer of hope as the Grumman quickly became a black speck against the gray sky and finally disappeared altogether. Then without a look or a word to his mates each man turned away and continued with his own particular task of the moment.

There was no anxiety glowing in Nolan's eyes, however. There was nothing there but grim purpose, plus a wild tingling that pricked his body like countless needles and pins. This was the real thing at last. This was a patrol against a lurking and hidden enemy. It was more than that, even.

In a way, it was a revenge patrol for Johnnie Rucker and his boys. That their death had been the result of a patrol accident was definitely out in Nolan's mind, now. He was as sure as he was of his own name that Nazi

planes had jumped Johnnie and slapped him up against the icy mountain side before anybody aboard the bomber knew what had happened.

"As a matter of fact, son," Nolan grunted aloud and leveled off at an even eight thousand," but for some darn good shooting by Casey, chances are you'd be a frozen mangled corpse in some canyon right now yourself."

With a nod for emphasis Nolan pressed his free hand hard against the already wide-open throttle, as though in so doing he might get added revs out of the powerful Pratt and Whitney. Then as the Grumman tore through a patch of cloud scud and came out into clear air again he sighted the fog-shrouded mountain range ahead and to his left.

It looked just the same as it had a few hours ago. Wind had not seemingly moved a single wisp of the murky gray stuff. It looked like a mile-high pile of dirty laundry hanging motionless in the sky. Rather, it looked as though the section of Greenland below had been consumed by a great fire and this was the pall of smoke hung waiting for tomorrow's winds to drift it away.

Nolan throttled a hair, and hunched forward to peer intently at the stuff. Not a mountain peak could he see. And the fog seemed to seep right down into the ground and go on through. As Nolan stared at it little fears and doubts began to form in his brain. It seemed impossible that there could be a secret flying field somewhere down under that stuff. Yet, there must be.

He had seen a Messerschmitt 109-F dive right into the fog bank. It was a cinch the pilot had his altimeter set accurately and knew just how far down in he could go without striking one of the hidden peaks. Yet, on the other hand, unless the Nazi had X-ray eyes, there was no way for him to tell if he was heading straight for a peak once he was below the danger altitude.

"So maybe he just went in a ways to lose himself," Nolan grunted and veered the Grumman across the top of the stuff toward the west where Davis Strait blends with the southern end of Baffin Bay. "Maybe he just carried on through and went down on the other

side. Yeah, maybe a lot of things. Maybe I'm striking out on three pitched balls!"

As a sudden hunch came to him he zoomed a bit for altitude, then whipped the Grumman over and down in a roaring power dive that must have been heard all the way back to Thirty-one's field. He did that five times without results. On the sixth dive the hunch became a reality. Two Messerschmitt single-seater fighters came booming up out of the fog like comets gone haywire. Their machine-guns and air cannon were barking savagely as they came up through, but a dime turn to the left and a zoom took Nolan well into the clear. He grinned, tight-lipped, blipped his radio cut-off switch again to continue signal contact with Operations at Thirty-one, and then slid his thumb down onto his own gun button.

"Thought the racket might make you curious!" he shouted into the roar of his engine. "But only two of you, huh? The guy's just a greenhorn, so we start off with insults, huh? That it? Okay! Stick around while I become a veteran!"

**A**S HE barked out the last, Nolan whirled on wing-tip, let the Grumman's nose drop like a rock, and went power-diving down and in at one of the Messerschmitts. He let fly with a one-second burst, but saw his tracers miss the mark by plenty. That didn't bother him, though. It was the way he planned it.

The Messerschmitt pilot started to rocket around up toward him, but Nolan didn't give him a chance to slam away with his guns. Quick as a flash the Yank hauled out of his dive and cut straight across the sky at the second and completely unsuspecting Messerschmitt pilot.

Maybe that Nazi let out a startled yell. Maybe he jumped clean out of his safety harness, he was so startled. At any rate he did little or nothing to get out from in front of Nolan's withering fire. He took the whole works broadside, and at the end of a couple of seconds the Messerschmitt was a ball of fire, and a dangling figure was dragging a half-opened parachute down into the fog.

"How's that for a greenhorn, tramp?" Nolan shouted and cut his fire. "Thought I'd forgotten all about you, huh? Yeah, me and the elephants, chump! And that's another one for you, Johnnie, old pal!"

Nolan whispered the last as though in prayer, rocketed upward in a power zoom that made the Grumman's wings virtually groan in protest, then half-rolled over and down for a go at the first Messerschmitt. But there wasn't any first Messerschmitt. That is to say, there wasn't one for Nolan to blaze away at. The German pilot had seemingly decided that the odds of a one-to-one scrap were too many for him. He had wheeled away and down and was heading for the eastern side of the fog bank with every ounce of speed his Benz-Daimler engine could dig up.

Kicking rudder slightly to veer westward, Nolan leaned hard against his safety-belt, and opened his mouth to relieve ear pressure caused by the power dive. He kept his thumb resting lightly against the electric gun-trigger button, but he did not press it, even though there was a slight chance that a lucky shot might catch the fleeing Messerschmitt and ground it for good.

To down it wouldn't help him any. It was his job, now, to spare the rat's life and tag him back to his hidden field. To find the opening in the fog so that he could return with Jordan and the others and lead them in to blow the hidden field clear out of Greenland.

"Yeah, but I can think of easier jobs!" he grunted as the Messerschmitt nosed down into the fog. "That lug knows where he's going, but I don't. If I lose him I've got to zoom the heck up into the clear. These Grumman babies are nice, but they're not built to go through mountains. So, I've got . . ."

He let the rest trail off, scooped air into his lungs and held it there for a moment or so. He was down in the fog himself, now. And the Messerschmitt was just a moving faint blurr up ahead of him.

The Nazi had leveled off from his dive and was streaking westward. But he was zigzagging to throw off Nolan's

aim in case the Yank opened fire. But Nolan continued to keep his guns silent and flew hand on throttle, eyes straining ahead.

**I**N THE next couple of minutes he thought he had lost the "ghost" Messerschmitt no less than a couple of hundred times. But on each occasion when the warning cried out within him to zoom up to safety he caught sight of the German ship again. It had not varied altitude an inch either way. But suddenly it went slanting down sharply by the nose. The warning cried out in Nolan and for a split-second he dared not drop his own nose. Perhaps the Nazi was bent on hurling himself against a mountainside rather than to let the Yank continue to tag him all the way back and down to the secret field—if any.

That thought, and countless other disagreeable ones, whipped through Nolan's brain as his hands froze briefly on the stick. Then he tossed all caution overboard with a savage curse, and poked the Grumman's nose down, too. For three seconds, or three years, or perhaps an eternity, he went rocketing down through thick, murky fog.

A thousand heart-stopping shapes and shadows leaped out at him, but his wings cut through nothing save fog-filled air. And then suddenly the stuff grew thinner and he could clearly see the Messerschmitt ahead and below him. The German was going down in a tight spiral that took him out into clear air on the western side.

Sight and action became one for Nolan. He threw the Grumman into a spiral right above the other plane. And around and around he went. For one-half of each turn he was in the fog. For the other half of the turn he was in clear air and could see the ice-clogged waters of Davis Strait some four thousand feet below.

Each time he came out into clear air he snapped another quick glance below. But for all he could see there was no opening in the fog on the water side. The fog seemed to wall upward from the very surface of the ice-choked strait.

When he was at two thousand feet, and the Nazi not more than five hundred feet below, it happened!

The base of the fog bank seemed virtually to explode Nazi Messerschmitts. At least a score of them came ripping out from under the fog and prop-screamed up at him with all guns blazing. He could only gulp and stare for a split-second or so. Then he let out a bellow of anger and alarm and started hurling the Grumman all over the sky.

He tried to duck back into the fringe of the fog, lose himself, and zoom upward toward higher altitude and safety. But the swift Messerschmitts came up like polished slivers of greased lightning and hung a wall of hissing bullets and air-cannon shells between his plane and the fog.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *Nazi Intentions*

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**T**O ATTEMPT to fly through that curtain of fire would be the same as asking for certain death. Nolan's only chance of escape was to out-manuever and out-climb the Messerschmitts in clear air and make his getaway to safety in that manner. But even as this knowledge came to him, hope died.

The Messerschmitts had caught him in a dive, and before he could begin to pull out they were all around him and over him like a tent. His mouth went bone-dry and there was a chunk of ice stuck in his throat. His heart. Cold sweat oozed out all over his face, and with each passing split-second, as he hurled the Grumman this way and that and fired blindly at every shadow of Nazi-marked wings that crossed his sights, he expected to feel the stinging bite of death in his flesh.

Death did not come, however. His plane was riddled from wing-tip to wing-tip, from prop to rudder post, but Lady Luck had seemingly flung her cloak of protection about him. Then suddenly his spinning brain grasped the fact that he was little more than three hundred feet above the ice-choked waters of Davis Strait. An instant later the mystery was no longer a mystery.

He saw that there was a three-hun-

dred-foot space of clear air under the towering clouds of fog. Unless you went down almost to the surface of the strait and risked plowing head-on into little hills of ice pushed up by the winds and the tides, you would never realize in a thousand years that there was a three-hundred-foot ceiling at that point.

No sooner did he realize that there was this ceiling than he stared inland and saw the stretch of level-packed snow that extended around all three sides of a small inlet. In that one sweeping glance allowed him he saw the cluster of snow-covered huts, painted white on the sides.

He saw, also, the double row of cleverly snow-camouflaged Nazi bombers of the Focke-Wulf type. They were huge things, every bit as big as the Yank Air Corps Flying Fortresses, and in between them, even parked under their broad wings, were Messerschmitt 109s that looked like little black beetles by comparison.

One sweeping glance at the strangest, weirdest sight he had ever viewed in his life, and then the Pratt and Whitney in the nose received a direct burst from a charging Messerschmitt, and gave up the ghost for good. Instinctively Nolan hauled back the throttle and then snapped off the ignition.

In practically the same instant he opened his mouth to yell what he could into his flap mike. But no sound passed his lips. He choked it back and swallowed hard instead, when his eyes fell on the radio panel. It was a mess of splintered glass and frayed wires. It looked as though it had been dropped from the top of a high building, and then stamped on by a couple of giants.

Nolan suddenly realized that for the last ten minutes, at least, he had not blipped his radio cut-off switch once. Had the sudden silence started things moving back at Thirty-one? If so, what good would it do? Jordan and the boys would never be able to find this particular spot.

He himself was going to crash down under the fog. His controls were all shot, and the only thing he could do was to keep the nose up a little. It was impossible to change his direction, and the bullet-riddled plane was

flip-flopping inshore beneath the fog bank.

"NICE work, sap!" he groaned aloud, and struggled to keep the nose from dropping down to the vertical. "You would try to do it all alone, wouldn't you! You got one Nazi and thought you were hot stuff. Yeah! You let that other tramp lead you right down into this mess with a capital M. Never dreamed others might be waiting for you to get low enough, did you? No! Nice going, sap. A lot of good you are to your country, I don't think!"

In an abstract sort of way he realized that the mess of Nazi planes had stopped slapping away at him. They were riding herd on him like a black cloud of doom silhouetted against the gray sky. Any one of them could have slipped down a bit lower and chopped off his head with a single burst. He was clay-pigeon pickings, but the Nazis either didn't want to waste more bullets, or else they knew that the crash would finish him off.

Or, then again, perhaps they didn't want to chance his plane veering around and crashing on the choked ice of the strait where the wreckage would be seen from the air. Yeah, perhaps a lot of things, but he didn't care a hoot about anything for the moment. His brain was too filled with rage at himself to bother concentrating on anything else.

"I deserve to get my darn neck broken in the crash!" he raved at himself. "Why didn't I do some low-level flying right off the bat? Why didn't I go down and look for the possible opening I was yapping to Jordon about? Oh, no! I had to be smart and raise a racket to get a couple of them to come up and *show* me the front door! Well, they did, and how! Nuts!"

A series of snow- and ice-bunkers came sweeping up toward him. He stared at them glassy-eyed for a moment. Then abruptly the true fighter in him took charge. His rage at himself vanished, and in its place was a savage determination to cheat death in spite of hell and and high water. He had made a mess of things, but he would not be the only one who had challenged failure in the very last mo-

ment and gone on fighting until there was no more strength left with which to fight.

"So long as I stay alive!" he mumbled through stiff lips, "so long I am not licked."

Further thoughts remained unspoken. The last few seconds had arrived. The white snow- and ice-covered inlet shoreline swept upward like so much frozen doom. He braced himself just long enough to pull the Grumman's nose toward the sky as much as he could. Then he let go of the controls, buried his face in his crossed arms, and let his whole body go limp.

He felt the tail wheel bump the ground and serve as a drag anchor to the rest of the craft mushing forward at a belly-up slant. Then the nose whipped down and all Greenland seemed to explode in a mad riot of sound and color inside his brain. Black hands reached into his head and crushed everything into utter silence.

A thousand or so years passed and then sound lapped at the edges of his brain again. It was harsh, unintelligible mumbo-jumbo sound that could mean anything, or nothing. It was like waves lapping against loose boards in a shore tunnel. It was like the rumble of cannon fire in the distance.

**H**IS aching brain suddenly stopped whirling around in a world of total darkness. The sound poured into his ears and made sense. Only in the nick of time did he check himself from opening his eyes. He sensed, rather than saw, the two figures who stood close to the bed. And he heard the two voices speaking German. Both harsh and rasping with anger, hatred hanging on every syllable.

"—may spoil all our plans, now!" one voice was saying. "Karl von Stultz was a fool to have attacked that American bomber a week ago. He should have let it go on by. The swine suspected nothing. We would be safe under this fog until March, at least. And today again. Twice! I am not sorry that he is somewhere in the mountains where he landed by parachute. Perhaps a few days in the snow will teach him that even a favorite of Goering cannot have everything."

"True, *Herr Kommandant*," the second voice spoke. "But I would be careful if I were you. Karl von Stultz has friends here in our little *Staffle*. They might overhear your words and tell him when he returns—if he ever does."

"Let them, the swine dogs!" the other snarled. "I am *Kommandant* here. It was not my wish that von Stultz be included in this little expedition. I have had enough of his insolence, and his fool actions. I do not care if he is *Herr Goering's* son! I have *Der Fuehrer's* ear, myself. We shall see about Karl von Stultz. When and if he returns, he is not to so much as get in a plane without my permission. He is no longer in charge of the escort planes. These are my orders. You will take command of the *Messerschmitts*, beginning now. You understand, *Meuller*?"

"Perfectly, *Herr Kommandant*. And Stebbins and Khole, who went aloft with von Stultz? I have your permission to ground them until Zero Hour?"

"You have!" the one addressed as *Herr Kommandant* snapped. "But, the Zero Hour. It was to be tomorrow at noon. *Gott!* Will we be lucky, I wonder? Von Stultz' foolishness today may change everything. The swine Americans must certainly know that something is amiss now. They fly bombers, yet this dog came nosing around in a fighter plane.

"It is obvious they suspect this fog hides something. Do they know what, and exactly where? And will we be able to remain hidden until we have left on our glorious flight tomorrow? Curse that fool von Stultz. I curse myself for not objecting to *Herr Goering's* demand that he be placed in command of the *Messerschmitts*. *Gott*, yes! I curse the fates that did not send him to the Russian Front. I—"

The man broke off short, cleared his throat with an angry sound, and then spoke again.

"Give this dog more brandy!" he snarled. "Either wake him up or drown him in it. I have things to ask him. And the swine will not live long if he does not tell me what I want to know. Give him stimulants, slap his face and hands—kick him, if you have to, but wake the dog up. He is not

even injured. Just a bump on the head."

As the words died away to the echo, Perry Nolan struggled silently to slow up his spinning brain, to beat back the white-hot pain that stabbed at his head like a heated needle. Then he felt himself lifted up. A glass was forced between his half-clenched teeth, and liquid fire went pouring down his throat. He choked and groaned aloud, and raised a hand as though to push away the cup with the burning liquid.

The hand propping up his body was suddenly removed, and he received a stinging blow on the left cheek that popped his eyes open in spite of his efforts to keep them shut.

"That will be enough sleep for you, swine dog!" a giant of a man in German gray-green thundered at him. "Sit up and listen to me. There are questions you will answer!"

**T**HE stinging blow cleared most of the fog from Nolan's brain. In fact, it seemed to act like a valve that released a reservoir of pent-up strength within him. His brain was suddenly crystal-clear, and warm, refreshing blood surged through his veins. His first impulse was to leap from the bed and smash both fists into the snarling face that seemed to hang in front of his own like a soured moon. But he checked the crazy impulse, shook his head and let his body sway from side to side.

"Hold everything, fellows," he muttered thickly and peered cautiously about through slitted eyes. "What happened, and where am I?"

A hairy hand grabbed his tunic front and jerked him up straight. The big moon face of *Herr Kommandant* was bent close to his.

"You were shot down, swine!" the man boomed in guttural English. "You are a prisoner. What were you doing in that American fighter plane? Where is your base? How much do your comrades know? Speak up, or you'll die this minute, like the dog you are!"

Nolan gaped glassily at the German and continued to act as though his brain was too befuddled to grasp the meaning of anything. On the contrary, though, he was completely alert,

And there was renewed strength flowing through his body, too. He didn't even feel the pains and aches caused by the crash any more. He stared foolishly, but he didn't miss a thing.

Behind the big German was a wall, and hanging on that wall was a huge map of the Western Hemisphere. It was covered with navigation notes and symbols. Although Nolan could not see all of them clearly, he saw enough to confirm what he had heard the Germans say, and to start his heart pounding like a trip-hammer against his ribs. The map on the wall was no more and no less than a preparation picture of a gigantic bombing raid to be made against the eastern seaboard of the United States.

The starting point was where he was right now—a fog-bound mountain range on Greenland's west coast just above Godthaab. The course of the raid flight, marked in red ink, was across Davis Strait, over Baffin Island, down Hudson Bay, and southward across the eastern neck of Canada, and into the United States through New England's back door for a perfect crack at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. A four-thousand-mile, round-trip flight that would be duck soup for Focke-Wulf long-range bombers.

A sneak raid at the U.S. eastern seaboard, and then on out to sea to shake off pursuers on the way home. A daring venture, and one which would perhaps cost the Nazis dearly in planes that failed to return.

But surprise would all be in their favor. Yank home defenses would be watching for attack from the sea, not through the back door. It could well be turned into a second Pearl Harbor affair with no telling how much damage done before the defending planes and guns could swing into action.

A suicide raid, perhaps. So what? That wouldn't spare Boston, New York, and Philadelphia from the thunder and doom of bombs dropped by fiends who had already resigned themselves to their fate.

And it was certain that the escorting Messerschmitts would never return. They didn't carry the gas. But they would blast a path for the bombers, then each pilot would bail out to

be taken prisoner for the duration of the war. It would cost the Nazis much, but since when had Adolph Hitler ever given a thought to the cost in German lives and blood?

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## CHAPTER V

### *Fun in Greenland*

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"**S**PEAK up, swine!" went on the Nazi commander. "Where is your Fighter Squadron based? What is its strength? What do you know about this place?"

Nolan's teeth clicked like castanets, and his eyes bugged as the German shook him as a dog would shake a rag doll.

"We know everything about you bums!" Nolan suddenly blurted out. "You don't stand a hope of pulling your dirty raid on the east coast of the U.S. Not a chance! Every single plane that takes off from here will be shot down like a ton of brick. You. . ."

Nolan let his voice trail off as though he was too weak to go on. He let his body sag. The German let go of his tunic front and he slumped down on the bed. This was just what he wanted.

By a miracle the crash had not smashed his wrist-watch. A glance at it had shown that the hands pointed to a time that was two hours after he had left Thirty-one. That meant, that *if* Jordon and the boys were coming, they must be well on their way by now.

It meant also that his only hope was to show them in some way the exact location of the hidden field. And there was a way. There was a way—if he could only live long enough.

From his position, half-slumped down on the cot, he could see a half-dozen submachine-guns in their wall racks to his left. They were the heavy-duty, but light-weight type that had proved so effective with British Commandos parties raiding Norway.

These, of course, were the German type of gun with half-moon-shaped cartridge clips that stuck up from the

top of the loading breech. The clip moved a notch downward, each time a bullet was fired, coming out the bottom in front of the trigger where it could be taken out and refilled when it was empty.

But it was more than just the sight of the guns that set his blood to racing. It was the fact that the clips contained more than the ordinary nickle-jacketed lead bullets. They were loaded as aerial machine-gun belts are loaded—with incendiary and explosive bullets as well. If he could get his hands on one of those guns, and dive through the window to his right, the target waited out there for him!

The big German's mouth opened wide to roar out again, and his big, hairy hands reached down to grab the supposedly weak prisoner. But that prisoner was not weak. That prisoner was doomed to death. He knew full well that he would never live to see tomorrow's dawn. But he didn't care. He had one last job to do—and Captain Perry Nolan was going to do it!

Even as Nolan coiled his muscles to strike out with every ounce of strength in his body, he heard the drone of many engines high up in the sky above the fog. So did both of the Germans, and the big one with hairy hands froze motionless as anger and fear flared up in his eyes.

"*Gott!* Those are engines of American planes!" he choked out. "Meuller! Issue orders that not one plane is to take off. They cannot find us under this fog, and we must not be fools enough to—"

The German commander never finished the last. Perry Nolan's driving feet caught him smack in the stomach and darn near drove his belt buckle out through his back-bone. The surprise attack had been sudden, swift, and deadly. And momentum carried Nolan right up on his feet as the big German went tumbling over backward like a felled ox.

The instant Nolan's toes touched the floor he pivoted like a spinning streak of light and caught the second German flush on the chin even as the Nazi's eyes went wide in dumb-founded alarm. The man buckled at

the knees and stumbled to the floor, weakly pawing at his holstered Luger pistol.

**B**Y THEN, though, the Yank had leaped over his prostrate body and wrenched one of the submachine-guns down off the rack. He slipped his finger over the trigger, clicked off the safety, and whirled.

"Stay just like that, or you get it in the belly, both of you!" he barked at them in their own tongue, and sidestepped quickly over to the window. "I'm leaving, and if I hear one peep I'll come back and blast you if it's the last thing I do. So hold it!"

The big German was too full of belly pains to hear, let alone pay attention. He lay huddled on the floor, hugging his mid-section and groaning like a stuck pig. The other German was still trying to get his dancing eyes to focus. He had forsaken his holstered Luger entirely to clap both hands to his swelling jaw.

Nolan gave them both one last glance, then half-turned, knocked out the window glass with the butt of his gun, and dived headlong out into the snow. He was up on one knee in a flash, and had the submachine-gun trained on a canvas-covered pile of fuel and oil barrels not thirty yards away.

He sighted for the middle of the pile and pressed the gun's trigger. The gun pounded out flame and sound, and the barrels in the middle of the pile seemed to melt away to so much gray and brownish liquid that poured down over the others. For a split-second, perhaps, and then it was as though the Devil himself had reached up and put a torch to that high-test gas and oil. A sheet of livid flame shot high up into the fog with a thunder-clap of sound, and clouds and clouds of swirling yellow and black smoke went belching up after it. The terrific heat seemed virtually to burn a path through the mountain of fog to the clear air several thousands of feet above.

"That'll tell you, Jordon, old sock!" Nolan cried hoarsely and cut his gunfire. "There's your target to drop the eggs on. And drop them, for God's sake, Jordon! Never mind if they

hit me. I don't count any more. Get these rats! *Get the whole works!*"

He choked up and sprang to his feet. The snow-blanketed, fog-hidden flying field had become a wild bedlam of sound and fear-crazed action. Pilots and mechanics seemed to pop up out of the snow like rabbits, cast horrified eyes at the blazing inferno that had two minutes ago been the squadron's fuel dump, and then started dashing madly about in circles.

A scream of rage cut the air in back of Nolan. He had just time to let his body drop, swing up his submachine-gun and pull the trigger as the hairy hand of the big German poked a Luger out at him. He saw it spit fire, and felt something white-hot kiss him on the side of the neck. Then *Herr Kommandant's* head and shoulders disappeared from view as Nolan's bullets slammed the dead man back into the room.

Cutting his fire, Nolan rolled over in the snow, scrambled onto his feet and floundered around the rear of the hut to the other side. He got just a flash glimpse of pilots and mechanics hauling white canvas covers off a row of Messerschmitts, and then the skies seemed to fall down on top of him and knock him flat. The roar of doomsday was in his ears as he saw one corner of the snow-packed strip of flying field belch flame and smoke high into the air.

**T**HE sight was terrifying, yet his heart sang with joy. The smoke from the blazing fuel dump had gone up through to the top of the fog and shown Jordon and the boys exactly where their target was. A "stick" had already come down to blast part of the place into nothing. There would be more sticks of bombs, and then some more.

"Drop them, gang! Slam them down! Blow the bums to Hades and back! Give them the old one, two, three!"

Nolan was hardly conscious of the fact that he was yelling at the top of his voice, and even less conscious of the fact that he was racing headlong across the packed snow toward the line of Messerschmitts. Something had seemed to snap in his brain, and

all the world about him was bathed in a red mist.

He became a wild man who didn't care where he was headed, how he got there, or when. He just went charging that line of Messerschmitts with his submachine-gun thrown up and pounding out the last of the bullets in the clip.

So sudden, so startling, and so utterly mad was his one-man charge that the Nazi pilots and mechanics broke in terror and fled off in all directions as though a thousand devils were after them. True, three or four did hold their ground, did grab for their Lugers and attempt to stop the madman practically running them down.

But they might just as well have tried to stop a tank with snowballs. Nolan's shower of bullets cut their legs right out from under them almost before they could apply pressure to their trigger fingers. The third One-nine along the line took some incendiary bullets in the gas tank and the ship became a pillar of flame.

Then, as Nolan flung his empty gun away and vaulted into the pit of the nearest One-nine, three more sticks of American-made bombs came sailing down. For one brief instant Nolan had the impression of being torn apart in small pieces by blast. Then he realized that he had fed gas to the idling prop and was booting the plane out to the near end of the runway.

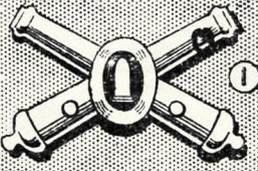
Behind, the hut where he had been held prisoner, and a few more huts close by, were nothing but a great, smoking black crater in the snow. He had time only for one quick look at the sea of flame that seemed to splash out in all directions, and then the Messerschmitt was rocketing forward at full revs.

The instant he picked up enough speed he lifted the plane clear, and went into a vertical bank that took him out over the ice-choked Davis Strait, through the three-hundred-foot "tunnel" and into clear air. There he hauled back the stick and pointed the nose toward the sky. Toward the sky and a squadron of Thirty-one bombers that were circling the point where the black smoke came up through the fog.

(Continued on page 93)

# ARMY, NAVY AND MARINE INSIGNIA

## *A Handy Guide for Identifying Our Nation's Defenders!*













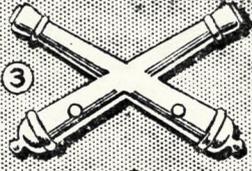

### THE ARMY

#### *Branch Insignia*

1. Coast Artillery
2. Engineers
3. Field Artillery
4. Cavalry
5. Infantry
6. Parachute
7. Signal Corps
8. Medical
9. Air Corps

#### *Rank Insignia*

10. General
11. Lieutenant General
12. Major General
13. Brigadier General
14. Colonel
15. Lieutenant Colonel (silver)
16. Major (gold)
17. Captain (silver)
18. First Lieutenant (silver)
19. Second Lieutenant (gold)
20. Master Sergeant
21. First Sergeant
22. Technical Sergeant
23. Staff Sergeant
24. Sergeant
25. Corporal
26. Private First Class
27. Service Stripe











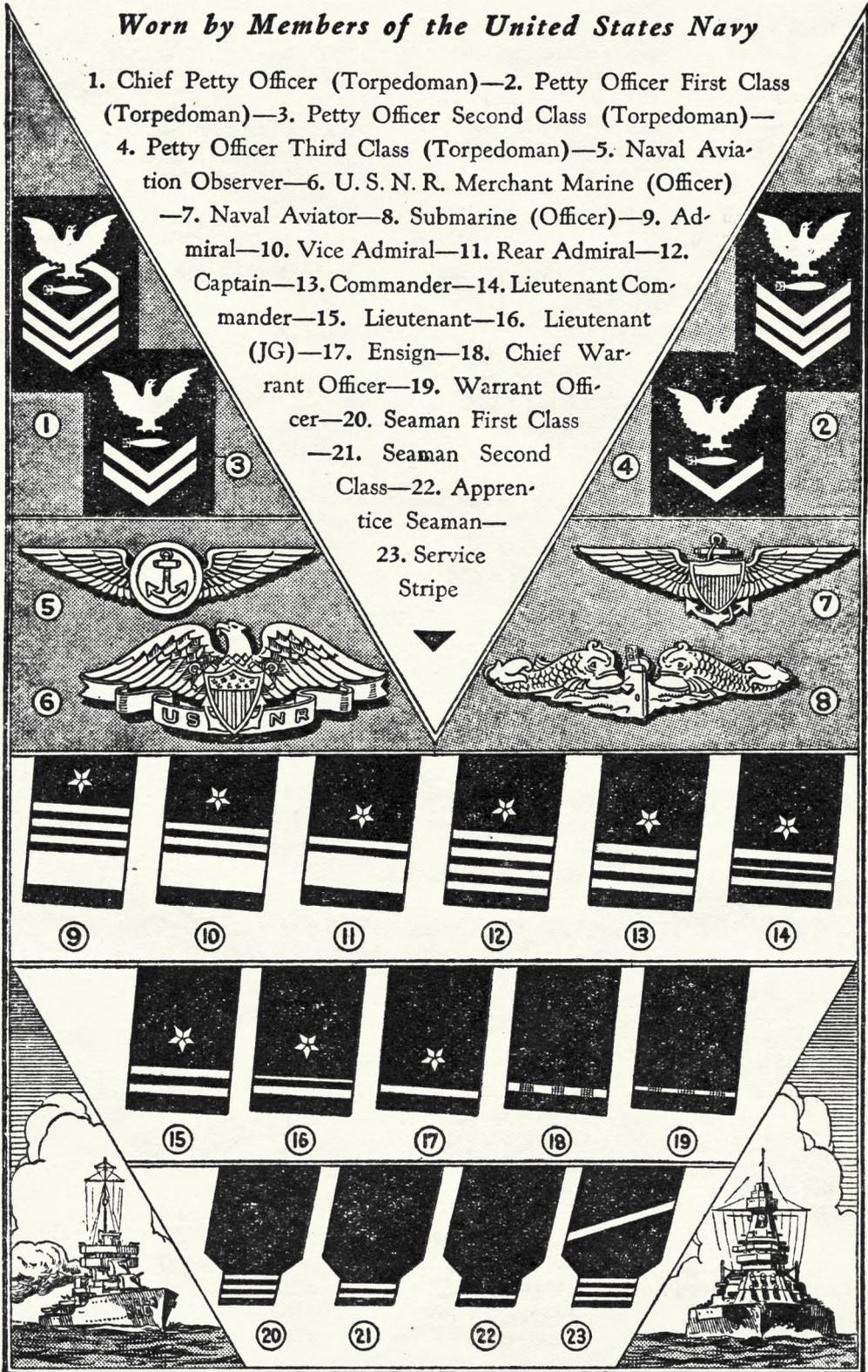



(Navy and Marine Insignia on following pages)

# INSIGNIA OF OUR FIGHTING FLEET

*Worn by Members of the United States Navy*

1. Chief Petty Officer (Torpedoman)—2. Petty Officer First Class (Torpedoman)—3. Petty Officer Second Class (Torpedoman)—
4. Petty Officer Third Class (Torpedoman)—5. Naval Aviation Observer—6. U. S. N. R. Merchant Marine (Officer)—
7. Naval Aviator—8. Submarine (Officer)—9. Admiral—10. Vice Admiral—11. Rear Admiral—12. Captain—13. Commander—14. Lieutenant Commander—15. Lieutenant—16. Lieutenant (JG)—17. Ensign—18. Chief Warrant Officer—19. Warrant Officer—20. Seaman First Class—21. Seaman Second Class—22. Apprentice Seaman—
23. Service Stripe



# UNITED STATES MARINE INSIGNIA

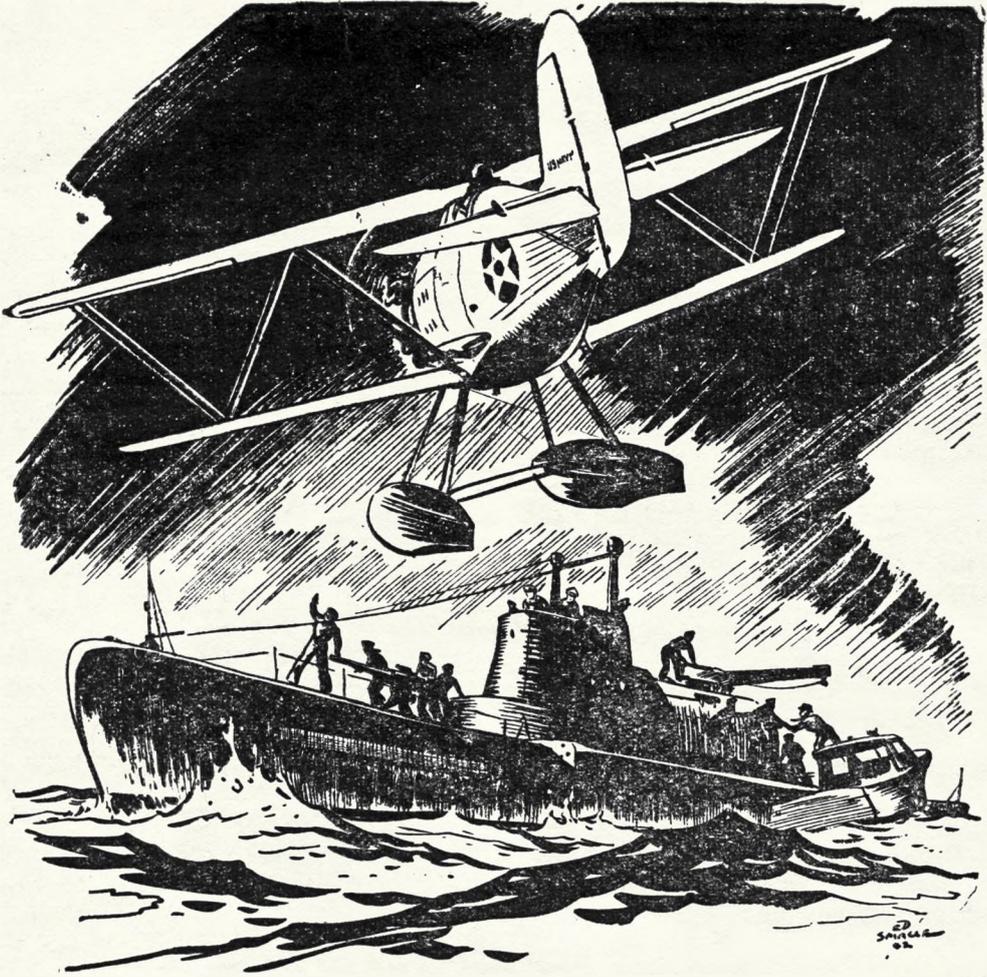
The image displays 24 numbered Marine insignia arranged in a grid-like fashion. 
 

- 1: A cap and hat device featuring an eagle with wings spread, perched atop a globe.
- 2: Naval Aviation Observer wings, consisting of a central anchor within a circle, flanked by wings.
- 3: Naval Aviator wings, featuring a central shield with a vertical stripe, flanked by wings.
- 4: Two five-pointed stars.
- 5: A single five-pointed star.
- 6: An eagle with wings spread, perched on a branch.
- 7: A four-lobed leaf-shaped insignia.
- 8: A four-lobed leaf-shaped insignia with a central stem.
- 9: A vertical bar with a central white stripe.
- 10: A vertical bar with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 11: A vertical bar with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 12: A vertical bar with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 13: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 14: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 15: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 16: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 17: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 18: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 19: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 20: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 21: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 22: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 23: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.
- 24: A chevron with a central white stripe and a diagonal line.

**SOLDIERS OF THE SEA**

AS the Marines are part of the United States Navy but operate similarly to the United States Army, their uniforms and markings resemble both those of the Army and the Navy.

1. Cap and hat device
2. Naval Aviation Observer
3. Naval Aviator
4. Major General
5. Brigadier General
6. Colonel
7. Lieutenant Colonel (silver)
8. Major (gold)
9. Captain (silver)
10. First Lieutenant (silver)
11. Second Lieutenant (gold)
12. Chief Marine Gunner
13. Band Musician
14. Second Leader of Band
15. Sergeant Major
16. Master Technical Sergeant
17. First Sergeant
18. Technical Sergeant
19. Platoon Sergeant
20. Staff Sergeant
21. Sergeant
22. Corporal
23. Private First Class
24. Service Stripe



When Corrigan's pontoons skimmed the submarine, Argal was being helped aboard

# SEALED ORDERS

By DANIEL PRESCOTT

*Corrigan, Yank Army flyer, does a hitch in the Navy with the submarine patrol—and comes up smiling!*

**C**ORRIGAN, in the Lockheed P-38, roared at three hundred and fifty miles an hour over the Java Sea. At sixteen thousand feet, he could see the island of Java sprawled out to the south. Corrigan's job was to keep a weather eye out for Jap raiders based on Celebes, unhealthy close by. There had been

raids on Java—serious ones, because the Japs could reach their objective in short flying time.

Corrigan liked it way up here. He was master of the sky. Upon him rested the responsibility of not allowing Java to be blitzed by an extremely strong force. Other pilots were roaring over the seas, too. And back on

Java, strong formations were ready to take to the air at the first radio warning from the patrols.

Corrigan stood on one wing for the sheer deviltry of it. The Lockheed was a brand-new, beautiful baby. There were too few of them in the South Seas. Handing one over to Lieutenant Corrigan had been the same as telling him point-blank that he was a trustworthy pilot.

Then Corrigan's eyes narrowed a bit. Miles away, he saw a number of tiny specks in the sky. Instantly, the nose of his plane shot upward as he strove for a good ceiling. At twenty thousand he darted into a cloud and waited. The radio was at his lips, and all he had to do was snap the switch. But until he was certain that his eyes had not been just hopefully seeing things, he had to wait.

He soared out of the cloud shortly after. Then he had a good glimpse of the force that was heading toward Java. At least thirty Jap planes! Corrigan snapped the radio switch and gave vent to a whoop of delight.

"Enemy formation coming in! Thirty or more. Here we go again!"

He darted down suddenly. The Jap armada was well ahead of him now and totally unaware of his presence. They were traveling at nearly top speed, intent on surprising the United Nations forces on Java and bombing as many grounded planes as possible.

Corrigan revved her up to three hundred and ninety m.p.h., near the top speed of this interceptor-fighter. Both motors purred smoothly as if they were also eager to get into the scrap. Not once did Corrigan think of the odds against him. The fact that thirty Japs were below him meant nothing more than additional prey. He had done his job of warning the base. Now he had to split up that formation if possible, hold them in check until the other boys could get upstairs and take part in the argument.

**T**HE Japs were flying at about eight thousand feet, apparently secure in the belief that their arrival would be a distinct surprise and shock. Corrigan dived at them, finger brushing lightly over the surface of his firing button.

The pilot of the last Jap plane never knew what happened. Shells from Corrigan's cannon smashed through the cowling. That pilot died long before his ship did.

Corrigan kept on diving. They knew of his presence, now, but that was all right with him. His course took him under one Jap plane which he smeared with a tracer. Then he came up to swoop at a third. This one took a burst of machine-gun bullets and let go with a thick stream of black smoke.

Corrigan did a fast rocket loop, came up under the belly of another and peppered him out of the fight. The formation was breaking up fast now. The Japs were trying to get away from this flashing, crazy Yank. Corrigan felt some slugs smash into the tail portions of his ship, but she only quivered a bit and kept going.

He spotted the Jap squadron leader, brazenly circling back to take on this lone Yank. Corrigan whooped again, rolled slightly to the starboard side and escaped the first of the Jap's tracer bullets. Then his cannon started to spit. Both planes were roaring straight at one another with a speed that was almost incredible.

One moment Corrigan saw the Jap there. The next he saw only a smudge of smoke. Later, a few pieces of lighter debris floated down.

There were two of them pouncing on him now. Corrigan looped again, passed through the concentrated fire of the pair and got above them. They scurried in opposite directions. Corrigan went after one of them. At four hundred m.p.h. he rapidly overtook the Jap, stayed about a hundred feet above him and held his fire. The two planes got so close that Corrigan could see the yellow face of the pilot looking over his shoulder. That pilot was worried plenty.

Corrigan knew the others would be upon him in a moment and he also saw that a score of the planes had resumed their formation and were streaking toward Java. He watched the cowling of the Jap plane come slowly into the cross-sights of his cannon, then he threw a dozen shells at the craft.

The cowling was ripped apart. The

Jap plane fluttered like a moth with singed wings. It turned over on its back for a moment or two, then started a long, slanting glide to earth. There was no living hand at the controls.

Corrigan came back fast. Jap fighter planes were trying to overtake him, but that Lockheed could show her heels to anything the Japs owned. He breezed after the score of bombers. They were the babies whose destruction really meant something.

Corrigan realized they were almost over Java now. The running fight had been toward land all the way. He darted down, straight into the middle of the pack. If he could hold them, harry them for five minutes longer, the interceptors would be in the sky to finish the job.

His guns lambasted one bomber, the aim shifted and another took a terrific amount of punishment. The rest hastily split up, formation being highly dangerous now. But during his maneuvers, Corrigan realized the fighter escort of Japs would have come into position. He twisted his head and gave a grunt of surprise. They were right over him. Two had already started to dive.

**H**E SQUIRMED to get out of their way, but a terrific explosion almost burst his eardrums. Things were blacked out for a few moments, then he realized that he was losing altitude at a dangerous rate. The cowling had been shattered. One engine was straining furiously. Jap fighter planes circled closer for the kill.

There was an interruption of those tactics a moment later though. Corrigan's rashness had paid dividends. Yank interceptors were roaring toward the battle. The Jap bombers wheeled away without having let go with a single egg. There was no time for them to do any bombing now. Their main worry was how to get away.

At full throttle, Corrigan climbed as high as he dared. There were still a pair of Japs trying to come in for the kill, but they were also wary of this crazy Yank. They had seen enough of their own ships go down to

know he was not a clay pigeon.

Just to keep them worried even more, Corrigan threw some steel their way. At twelve thousand he knew he had reached his ceiling with that sputtering engine. The plane was doomed. He knew that, but a moment later he got concrete evidence of it.

One of the Japs came rushing in, guns spitting. The Lockheed bucked and gave up the ghost. Corrigan saw part of one wing fly off and he didn't wait any longer. By using all his strength he managed to get the shattered cowling back, climbed out and dived into space. One hand clutched the ring, but he didn't pull it. The Jap was diving at him, waiting for the chute to check his decent to a mere drift and then those machine-guns would take care of him.

Corrigan kept turning over and over. Now and then he had a glimpse of the Jap and saw with satisfaction that he was getting smaller and smaller. Then he pulled the ring. The silk blossomed out, jerked his fall short and two seconds later he was on the ground.

He ran into the chute, trampled the air out of it and cut himself loose. The Jap roared down. But a Yank interceptor was on his tail. The dirt, only about fifty feet to the left of where Corrigan stood, seemed to be studded with thousands of geysers. He flung himself flat.

The Jap lost his head. With the Yank pounding away at his tail, he didn't come out of his dive until too late. A wing scraped the ground. A bolt of flame encompassed the Jap ship and with a great ripping of metal, she broke into pieces.

Corrigan wiped sweat off his face, got his bearings and trudged wearily toward Operations base. It was early evening when he stumbled into the commander's shack and saluted.

Colonel Drake looked him over. Drake was a tough man to work for. He usually considered only the faults of his men, rarely their successes.

"Corrigan," he snapped, "you wrecked a new Lockheed today. Not that it wasn't worth it, but those ships are difficult to obtain way out here. You should have broken off the engagement as soon as the interceptors

were in the air. I tried to tell you that by radio, but you either had the instrument shut off or you paid no attention."

"It was shut off, sir. I wanted to concentrate on my job. It was too late to break off, sir. The Nips were coming at me from all directions."

"All right," Drake said. "Stand at ease, man. You look so blasted uncomfortable. Sit down, if you wish. Have a cigarette . . . Corrigan, I've a request here from our Naval forces for a good man. I understand you are familiar with Navy planes."

"Yes, sir. Flew them for more than two years."

"Good. That means you automatically get this assignment. Being a lone fighter as you've proved more than once, you ought to like this job and it might take some of the gross recklessness out of you. At midnight, a Navy car will call for you. Further orders will come from your new commander. After making a report to Intelligence, you'd better get some rest."

**C**ORRIGAN snuffed out the cigarette. Was Colonel Drake punishing him because he had plunged head-first into that unequal fight so that Java would be saved from a bombing? That was the devil of a reward. He saluted, made no comment and walked out.

He kept stewing over the situation instead of sleeping. What kind of an assignment did the Navy have for him? With what ship? So far as he knew, all craft were in action far from Java. At least he hadn't spotted even a torpedo boat. The Dutch had a few ships laying about for protection, but even their fleet was at sea. . . .

Midnight found Corrigan climbing into a car. An ensign greeted him with a grin, but answered no questions, proclaiming that he only followed orders and didn't know why the devil the Navy had to call on the Army for even one man's help.

They stopped at the end of a dock where a motor launch was waiting. The ensign helped Corrigan into the swift little craft and it tore straight into the darkness of the Java Sea. Half an hour later, the ensign sig-

naled with a blinker light. It was answered, but although he strained his eyes, Corrigan couldn't see any ship.

Then he gave a gasp. It was a submarine! The biggest undersea craft he had ever laid eyes on. There were two guns aft, two forward. Big fellows. A square, roomlike structure was amidships. Corrigan had never seen a sub that looked just like this one.

He climbed onto the bridge and shook hands with Lieutenant Commander Kent. Kent was young, eager-eyed, but didn't look resplendent in his greasy uniform.

"Glad to have you aboard us, Lieutenant," he said to Corrigan earnestly. "Don't ask me why you were selected, or what you are to do. I don't know. There are sealed orders in my safe. Can't open them for a day or two."

Corrigan gasped. "A day or two? Say, how long am I supposed to stay cooped up aboard this death-trap? Listen—I'm a pilot. I'm used to space—millions of miles of space. I'm used to speed and fast action."

"Maybe you'll get it." Kent grinned. "Well, come below."

Corrigan followed the sub's commander into the narrow confines of the craft. Kent drew a sharp breath, squeezed himself through a narrow door and into one of the smallest rooms Corrigan had ever entered. One man crowded the place. Two absolutely jammed it.

Kent sat down on the edge of a bunk, which he pulled down from the wall. There was nowhere else to sit so Corrigan sat down beside him. He was aware that motors were humming smoothly and there was considerable activity in the control room.

"What the heck!" he said. "I lost a new plane and the colonel lands on me hard. But is this any kind of punishment for an aviator? Cooped up aboard a submarine? They might as well have thrown me into a dungeon. What am I supposed to do—grow wings on the sub and fly her?"

Kent laughed. "Growing the wings isn't necessary, Corrigan. We've got 'em. There's no point in grouching. Right now we're a hundred feet under the surface and moving into action."

Corrigan groaned. "I don't like being shut up like this. Why didn't you get a Navy flyer if you need an aviator? I can't see what good one is on a sub."

"There were no Naval flyers handy," Kent said. "I know that your colonel was asked to supply the craziest pilot in his group. A guy with icicles in his veins. You're it. Now I'll give you the lowdown, as far as I can without reading those sealed orders. We're on a raiding cruise. We head north toward the China Sea, skirting Borneo and coming right up against the Jap supply lines to Singapore and Sumatra."

"All right," Corrigan grunted. "But what do I do? Ride a torpedo or something?"

**K**ENT chuckled.

"No—the Japs can do that. Corrigan, there are few submarines like this one. In the first place it's big. And we have an airplane aboard."

"A plane? Aw—quit kidding." Corrigan waved the idea aside. "How can you carry a plane in this tub? It isn't wide enough to put a trainer into."

Kent arose and slid past the bunk. "You'll find out soon enough. By tomorrow night we'll be in position for some action. Until then, this cabin will be your quarters. If you like, I'll have somebody take you around to see what makes this tub tick."

"No thanks," Corrigan grunted. "I didn't ask for this assignment. I don't like it. This is a punishment detail, but you can depend on me. I'll see things through."

The hours aboard the sub were ghastly to Corrigan. He felt like trying to burst through the sides of the craft. He wanted to see the sun or the stars, to feel cold air whizzing around his neck, hear the roar of his engines. Instead, he was beneath the surface of the sea, cramped into a vessel hardly fit to live in. He knew now why they called them pig-boats.

Time was endless and without meaning. The monotonous humming of the battery-fed engines got on his nerves. Then, suddenly, they were checked. The floor of the sub slanted upward. Kent climbed up the conning tower ladder. The hatch opened and

Corrigan drew in fresh, soothing air. He climbed up on deck, too.

Kent indicated that odd-looking superstructure on the deck and led the way to it. From inside, somebody operated mechanisms and a water-tight door opened. No lights were turned on and men were on constant watch. This was decidedly the enemy's sea and no chances could be taken.

Corrigan edged into the water-tight compartment and saw his new ship. He closed both eyes and groaned. With her folded wings she was about the size of a kite compared to the planes he had been used to flying. She was pontoon-equipped, had a small engine and two machine-guns. There were no bombs, no depth charges, no torpedoes.

"What am I supposed to fight with?" Corrigan asked. "How do I roll that fliiver off the deck and how do I get back on? Or don't I?"

"You'd better go below and get into your flying togs," Kent said seriously. "We have information that an enemy squadron is coming this way. Convoying troopships. Your job, Corrigan, is to fly this fliiver, as you call it. You will spot the enemy formation from as great a height as possible and radio the location. We won't answer. Subs never use their radios on a job like this. After we attack, your map will indicate the rendezvous far away from the scene of action. We'll surface there and wait for you."

Corrigan, warmly dressed, squeezed into the narrow cockpit and wondered just what he would do if a Jap pursuit plane spotted him. A catapult was turned to port side. Kent stood by, one hand raised. Corrigan braced himself for the impact of the launching.

When it came it almost broke his neck. Then he was roaring away into the darkness and swearing in unison with the explosions of the motor. Next time, he vowed, he would handle his patrols differently.

Report the coming of enemy craft and then get out of their way, eh? Courage and heroism didn't pay off in this war. Not so long as Colonel Drake had anything to do with it.

The top speed of this minute crate seemed to be about a hundred and

seventy. Then Corrigan wondered what his rush was. He checked bearings and began to patrol. It was almost two hours later before he saw a faint light on the sea far below. Some sailor's carelessness had located the transport for him.

He didn't go down. That would give the whole game away. Instead he veered off and tuned in his radio. The sub, he knew, would be surfaced and listening. No confirmation came, as Kent had said would be the case.

He cruised up and down at a lazy speed and cursed this kind of warfare. Then, suddenly, the sea below was lit up by an inferno. The explosion of the torpedo made Corrigan's light plane surge upward. He saw the guns of armored vessels go into action. There were grim rumbles of depth charges, and Corrigan gulped. What was he supposed to do if the sub was sunk? He didn't have fuel enough to reach land and even if he did, any shore would be hostile in these parts.

Then another torpedo slammed home and a second transport went down in flames. Corrigan's hopes arose somewhat until the guns and depth charges banged once more.

He veered off, his duty finished. He would have liked nothing better than to strafe the decks, but in the glow he could see that destroyers and a light cruiser were with the enemy convoy. They would be armed with anti-aircraft and this Lizzie he flew could be knocked down with a pop-gun.

He flew straight out to sea, checked his bearings again and plotted the rendezvous. It wasn't far from the scene of action, but he came down on the water, shut off his motor and waited.

Hours went by. He realized the sub could not move without having the sound of her engines picked up, so he just sat there swearing at wars in general, and at Colonel Drake in particular.

It was not far from dawn when he gave a nervous jump. The sea was parting and the giant hull of the sub started to surface. Corrigan felt better then. He supervised the lifting of the plane onto the deck, helped to fold its wings and stayed at the conning tower until all was ship-shape.

Lieutenant Commander Kent whacked him on the shoulder.

"Nice going, Pilot. We'd never have spotted that convoy, but with your directions we waylaid those babies. Sunk three of 'em. That's not such a bad night's work. Keeps the Japs jittery. Now let's go below and open those sealed orders. I have an idea they'll spell action in nice big letters."

Kent opened the safe, took out a sealed envelope and slit it open. He read the two pages of fine typing, then thrust the whole business into a drawer.

"It's action, all right," he said. "Risky stuff, Corrigan. Here's the angle. We head for Tourane, on the east coast of French Indo-China. Seems espionage reports indicate that the Japs have assembled a huge ammunition and supply dump there. No surface craft could get within a hundred miles of it, no Allied aircraft are anywhere around so the Japs feel pretty secure. They use the supplies to replenish their armies all over the South Seas."

"And what do I do about it?" Corrigan asked.

"We'll reach Tourane in about four days. Right after dark you'll take off, spot the ammunition dump and drop a special flare right smack on top of it. We'll be surfaced and ready to let go with our guns. We've some pretty good ones, you know, and a few well-placed shells will destroy the dump. Your job is to furnish the target by a flare."

**C**ORRIGAN nodded. "I figured it would be something like that. I set the stage and you fellows do the business. Makes me quite a guy. How about letting me use bombs instead of flares?"

"No—that little plane wouldn't carry even a three-hundred-pounder, and she's not equipped with bomb racks. Sorry. I know just how you feel, but orders are orders. We'll keep traveling at full surface speed all night. Daytimes we have to lie low. That's why the trip will take so long. Anyway, you proved the worth of a scouting plane attached to a sub, Corrigan. I'm grateful."

**T**HE next several days were agonizing ones for Corrigan. By day, he flopped in a bunk or played pinochle with members of the crew. At night, he walked the tiny deck when the sub surfaced for air and to charge her batteries.

He thought of the patrols on which he had been, streaking through the sky. The whole world had been his kingdom then. Now he was packed into a tin can. Colonel Drake had no right to treat him that way.

When they reached a point well off Tourane, Corrigan felt a little better. At least he could fly again, smell the sweet air.

They were getting set to catapult the plane. Corrigan went below decks and summoned a junior officer.

"I'm to carry a submachine-gun, plenty of ammo and some time bombs. Can you furnish 'em?"

"Yes, sir. I'll see they're put aboard your plane."

"Good." Corrigan grinned. "You never can tell when things like that will come in handy."

The catapult hurtled him off the deck. He had fuel enough to reach the Jap base, fly around it for half an hour, then return to meet the sub well in toward land. It would be a risky business once the sub's guns started to fire, because land batteries were bound to open up on her and the Jap planes would take off with their bomb racks loaded.

Flying at a top ceiling for this plane, Corrigan had no trouble in spotting the ammunition dump. It was in a huge, sprawling wooden building. He could see horse-drawn carts pulling in and out of the gates around the place. No attempt had been made to black out the city. It was far away from Allied operations and apparently the Japs had not given a thought to a puny sub.

Corrigan seized a flare and cursed his luck. A flare! That was his part when a couple of thousand-pounders would reduce that dump to rubble. He held the flare overside, then hastily drew it back. Lights of a flying field were suddenly turned on and he saw medium bombers rolling across the runways. A whole squadron took off and headed out to sea.

The Japs were not trusting entirely to good luck. They were patrolling the coast. If the sub surfaced, they would blast it to the bottom.

Corrigan started to sweat. He realized now that he liked Lieutenant Commander Kent and the whole dog-gone crew aboard that tin can. He even liked the sub. Kent gained more altitude and talked into his radio transmitter.

"Corrigan calling Operations Base," he said. "Nothing doing here. Better duck your head under the covers and get some sleep. Music a little too hot for comfort. Will return as scheduled. Stand by under cover."

He hoped that Kent would understand what he meant. There was a chance that his message would be picked up.

He had to act fast. Putting the plane into a slow dive, he streaked across the settled portions of the mainland and finally started hedge-hopping a lot of trees while he looked for a suitable landing place. It meant wrecking the plane, but that didn't matter so long as he could reach that ammunition dump.

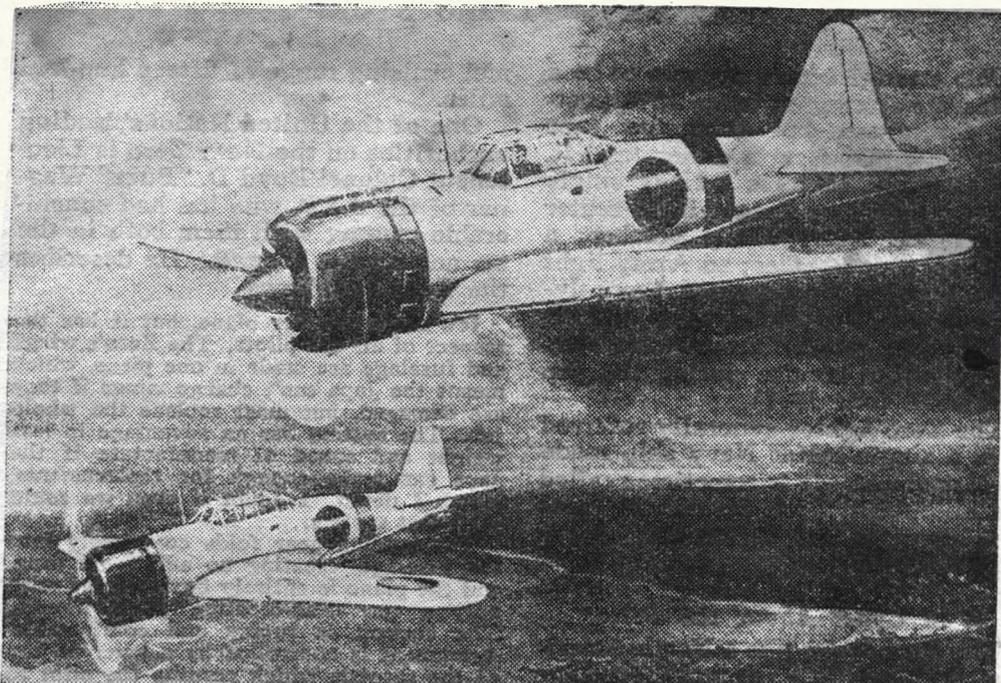
About ten miles inland he saw a glimmering surface below. A lake. He howled his glee, circled it once, and came down to a smooth landing. He taxied close in toward shore, grabbed the submachine-gun, lashed the time bombs around his middle and waded to land.

A minute later he was headed back toward the town. Just what he could do wasn't clear, but if the sub couldn't shell that ammo dump, it was his job to destroy it somehow.

**H**E SAW a lighted farmhouse and wondered if the natives around these parts were for the Japs or the Allies. A lot of them would be French, but Vichy had turned the whole area over to the Japs. Perhaps the people were pro-Jap, too. Corrigan crept up to the farmhouse.

He stepped from behind a barn and a horse whinnied nervously. At the same instant a voice called out a low-voiced command to halt. Corrigan froze, but his submachine-gun was ready for action.

*(Continued on page 86)*



*International News Photo*

This drawing has been made by Artist Herman R. Bolling from official photos of wrecked Jap "Zero" fighters and is the first accurate conception of the Mitsubishi 00s ever published in this country. The Mitsubishi carries two 20mm guns, one in each wing, plus two machine guns mounted on the engine cowl, which fire between the propeller blades

# THE GREAT ZERO MYSTERY

By **LIEUT. JOHN M. JENKS**

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY AIR FORCES

**J**APAN'S "How to Fool the Enemy" Department must have stayed up nights working on its wacky system of aircraft designation. But once you have the key, the great Zero mystery folds up like a parachute.

The so-called Zero is generally described as a fast, highly maneuverable fighter plane. Its chief claim to fame was gained in action against Allied aircraft in the Southwest Pacific.

Matter of fact, it is one of the best operational fighters in the world. But actually, there is no single Japanese plane with the exclusive designation of the Zero. Every Jap plane of every type placed in service during 1940

is a Zero. To make it more complicated, this includes both Army and Navy ships.

## *A Bit of Nip Arithmetic*

The Japanese designate their military aircraft with two numerals, representing the year the plane went into service. To start with, the Jap calendar begins at 660 B. C. As a result, our year 1940 becomes 2600 (according to the Son of Heaven).

Only the last two numerals are applied to plane designation. Consequently, 1940 models are designated by "00," or just plain "Zero." The letter **T** which precedes the numerical designation stands for "type."

**These Jap Fighters Are NOT Wonder Planes!**

This strange set-up appears to be a deliberate attempt to baffle unsuspecting foreigners, but even the Japs must stew and fret to understand it. For example, there is a Navy single seater fighter; an Army single seater fighter; an Army heavy bomber; a Navy torpedo bomber; an Army light bomber and a four-engined Navy flying boat—all designated as T-97. This designation merely means that they all went into service during the Jap year 2597 (our 1937).

The Zero fighter generally referred to is a single-seater Navy ship made by Mitsubishi. It is sometimes called the Mitsubishi Zero. Its official Japanese name is the "Mitsubishi Navy Fighter T. O."

#### *Who Cares About the Pilot?*

The Zero looks like a North American AT-6 with a slimmer fuselage and wing guns. It retains its raw metal silver color and is often identified by the sun flashing on its duralumin stressed skin. It carries one twenty mm. cannon and a thirty-caliber machine-gun in each wing, and a pair of thirty-caliber machine-guns mounted to fire through the propeller.

Early models of the Zero lacked pilot armor and were extremely vulnerable to machine-gun fire. Later Zeros carry some pilot armor but offer much less protection for the pilot than standard American pursuits. It carries a jettisonable auxiliary fuel tank slung under the fuselage which adds about five hundred miles to its nor-

mal cruising range of fifteen hundred miles.

One of the United Nations' leading authorities on the Navy Zero is Lieutenant Colonel Boyd D. "Buzz" Wagner of the AAF, who has had considerable contact with them both in the air and on the ground. He describes the Zero as follows

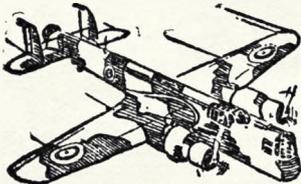
It's not a wonder plane, but it has the respect of all our pilots. The Zero's wings and fuselage are made in one piece, which means the Japs can't change wings if they are damaged, but must replace the whole job. The system has an advantage in less weight and speed of manufacture if the Japs can make enough for replacements, which I doubt. I doubt if even we could with that system.

The landing gear folds completely into the fuselage, creating no additional drag, and the plane is entirely flush riveted with only a few drag-creating protuberances. The cockpit is roomy and comfortable. Armament is controlled by a lever on top of the throttle which permits the pilot to fire either cannon or machine-gun or both.

The Zero is credited with a top speed of well over three hundred m.p.h. and does pretty well up to thirty thousand feet. It can dive as steeply as AAF fighters but has trouble pulling out as rapidly. It has outclimbed AAF pursuits, however, and a favorite maneuver in the early days of the war was for a Zero to allow an enemy pursuit to get on its tail and then go into a steep climb, flip over in a sharp loop and come out on the tail of its opponent.

The Zero's cannon have not proved effective against other fighters, but have caused considerable damage to heavy bombers.

AAF fighters have an advantage over Zeros in their sturdier construction, pilot armor, leak-proof tanks and heavier armament, fifty-caliber machine-guns and thirty-seven mm. cannon.



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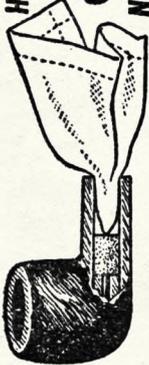
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(Continued from page 82)

He saw a man step out of the gloom, rifle in hand. He was not a Jap soldier. In a moment, Corrigan realized his captor was white and certainly French because he spoke that language only. Corrigan knew a little of it.

The two men stood about ten feet apart, weapons menacing each other. The Frenchman squinted through the darkness.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Corrigan took a long chance. "American! Yank!"

Instantly, the Frenchman dropped his gun and rushed forward to plant a kiss on Corrigan's cheek. Corrigan pushed the man away, but grinned at him. It was nice to meet a friend in an alien land.

"I speak English," the man said. "Pretty good. *Oui!* I learned to speak it from American soldiers in Paris during the last war. *Eh bien*, it is well that I and not some yellow dog found you."

"That," Corrigan answered, "is no lie. You live way out here?"

"Since the yellow pigs came. Before that I had a big house in town. A friend of mine who got away left me his papers. I used them to prove I am but a poor peasant, and the yellow ogres only force me to carry supplies to town. They pay me with kicks and curses, but if they knew who I was, I would be shot on sight."

"So you have free run of the town?" Corrigan asked. "Don't any of the people there like Vichy well enough to expose you?"

"*Non!* I am their friend. They did not wish this to happen. They watch the yellow dogs pile up supplies. Their ships come to load and they go away with bullets and shells to reduce this part of the world to ashes, as that pig Hitler has done in Europe. I know, because I furnish hay with which they pack their cursed shells and bombs."

Corrigan whistled. "Say—maybe you and I could do some business. Those Japs have no idea I'm around. As I landed, a patrol was taking off

and their motors drowned out mine. How'd you like to blast that ammo dump to smithereens, Frenchy?"

The Frenchman coupled both hands together and raised them toward the sky.

"*Mon Dieu*, nothing would do my heart more good. But how?"

"When do you take the next load of straw to town?"

"Any time that I have it. I could bring two loads now, if I wished. I often bring it at night because the dogs say I must work in the fields by day."

Corrigan asked him a score of further questions and an idea dawned on him. He talked to the Frenchman, whose name was Argal, and Argal was enthusiastic about the idea.

"It's an old American Indian trick," Corrigan explained, "but I'll bet the Japs never heard of it."

In short order a hay wagon was hitched up. The horse was sleek, well-fed and fast. Corrigan stowed his submachine-gun and time bombs beneath a huge coat which Argal provided.

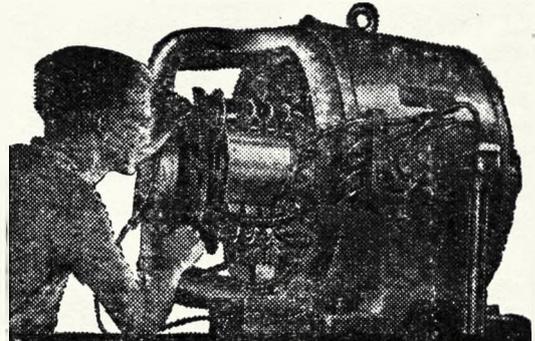
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**A**N HOUR after Corrigan had landed his ship, he was hidden under the load of straw. Argal, driving the wagon, kept singing at the top of his lungs.

Corrigan stuck his head out from beneath the straw.

"Hey—do you want to draw the Jap patrols on our necks?"

Argal waved both hands. "But, *oui*, if they hear my voice, they know I do not try to hide. It is difficult to reach town now. The patrols are spread out and cover all areas. More than one man has been shot by nervous sentries."

Corrigan groaned, ducked under the straw and made sure those time bombs were dry and intact. The wagon creaked to a halt and Argal hissed a signal. Corrigan slid off the wagon to the ground. Without wasting a moment, he hurried up to the horse and worked on the harness. When he had finished, he told Argal just what to do.

"It's pretty dark," he explained "When you get about a hundred yards from the barrier, get your horse going fast. Slam on the wagon brakes and the harness will give way. I'll be on the horse and if those Japs see me, it's Hollywood's fault for showing so many Western pictures in Tokyo."

Argal didn't quite know what it was all about, but he shrugged and followed orders. There was a barrier across the narrow road and Jap soldiers stood guard there. Argal swallowed with some difficulty, flicked his whip and the horse started running. Argal estimated the distance, jammed on the brake and watched Corrigan who was astride the horse. Horse and wagon parted company.

Corrigan slid off the side. By what seemed to be a miracle so far as Argal was concerned, Corrigan became invisible against the dark skin of the horse. He was guiding the animal too because Argal saw the horse veer to the left of the barrier, go around it and keep running.

Argal was running also, shrieking commands for the horse to stop. Sentries, with level rifles, saw nothing of Corrigan who was on the off side of the horse. They guessed that the

horse had merely broken loose and they began laughing at Argal's chagrin.

Corrigan let go of the horse as soon as he was fairly well blended with the darkness. He fell into a ditch, rolled over several times and crawled behind a bush.

He waited there until Argal came along, accompanied by two soldiers. The horse was grazing contentedly. Argal called it profane names, led the animal back to the barrier, and hooked him up to the wagon. Soldiers had already searched the straw and passed Argal through the barrier.

Corrigan leaped aboard as the wagon rolled slowly past his hiding place, buried himself under the straw and breathed normally for the first time in what seemed to be many hours. Being caught here, wearing a civilian coat over his uniform, meant a firing squad.

Argal bumped into town, proceeded down several narrow streets and finally turned into the gates of the munitions dump. Guards here made no attempt to search him. They knew that wagons were carefully gone over by sentries on the outskirts and that

[Turn page]

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ARGAL knew what to do. He turned the horse loose, jabbed it with an elbow and the startled animal ran away for the second time. Argal started yelling imprecations and pursued his horse. Corrigan joined in the chase. As they came abreast of one another, Argal spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"May the *bon Dieu* confine the soul of that horse to a pasture where there is nothing but cactus. He is slow—so slow as syrup. The time bombs are set. In a few minutes they will go off. Then, *mon ami*, we must work fast because all whites will be arrested immediately. It will not take the yellow dogs long to see through our trick."

"You head for the docks," Corrigan said. "I have the submachine-gun under my coat. Do you need it?"

"Non. It is better that you handle the gun. When we reach the docks, what then?"

"Not we—just you. Get into a speed-boat. Use that knife on Jap guards if necessary. Head out to sea. I'm going back to the plane and take off. Show a light when you hear my motor and I'll convoy you to where a submarine will pick both of us up."

The Frenchman had a gleam in his eyes and he turned toward Corrigan quickly. Corrigan put up both hands and gestured him away.

"You can kiss me when we're inside that sub," he whispered. "The fuses were set for ten minutes."

"Then, *mon ami*, it is time to part. Good luck."

Corrigan veered to the left at the next street intersection and slowed down to a brisk walk. Argal was still chasing his horse and at the same time herding it toward the docks with skillfully thrown pebbles.

Corrigan was half through the town when those bombs let go. They were

big and plenty powerful. They exploded in five distinct blasts. There was a second or two of complete silence, then the earth rumbled under his feet as tons upon tons of explosives let go. Flames lit up the sky for miles.

Corrigan started running. Jap soldiers poured out of the buildings, but no one paid any attention to him. The upturned collar of the greatcoat shielded his features. He reached the outskirts and unlimbered that tommy gun. If he could skirt the barrier set up across the road, so much the better. If he couldn't, the gun would clear a path.

Someone shouted a challenge and Corrigan ducked. Three soldiers, with guns ready, came toward him. He let them get close enough so he couldn't miss and with one burst mowed the trio down. He quickly shifted the gun toward that shack. As the lieutenant and more men came out, Corrigan greeted them with steel.

The Japs didn't fire a shot, but he knew that racket would be heard back in town. He started running madly, but skidded to a halt, remembering that two motorcycles were parked behind the shack. Within a minute, Corrigan was bouncing over the winding road on one of them.

Pursuit came in a matter of seconds, but he reached the plane and was skimming across the lake when the first contingent of motorized soldiers appeared. Corrigan climbed to a thou-

[Turn page]



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sand feet, circled and came back to strafe them with his machine-guns. They were light, but did splended work.

HE HEADED out to sea then, flying around the city. A beautiful fire was roaring and every few seconds another part of the building would blow up. Corrigan swung back after he raced well out to sea. He worried about the Jap patrol which had taken off. Seconds were precious now, yet he was determined to save Argal at any cost.

He saw a light show briefly and dived toward it. Argal had a flash and turned it on his face for a second or two. Then he pointed. Corrigan saw a fast boat racing to overtake Argal. He swept down on it, guns pounding away. The boat began to weave a crazy course. Corrigan emptied his guns at the boat to make doubly certain of no further pursuit, then he flew above Argal and kept doubling back so the Frenchman could maintain the proper course.

A glance at his watch indicated the sub would be coming up to look for him.

He dropped a flare. Blinker lights answered. When Corrigan's pontoons skidded across the water, Argal was already being helped aboard the sub. Corrigan pulled up beside it, the small crane was hooked to the plane, and it was raised to deck. The moment the water-tight doors closed on it, gun crews sprang to the guns and began blasting away at the town.

Corrigan watched the sky intently. The glow from the ammo dump brought the Jap patrols into view. At his signal, the gun crews rushed below. Corrigan dropped through the conning tower and as Lieutenant Commander Kent came down the ladder, the sub was crash diving.

Kent looked glum. "Look here, Corrigan," he said, "that was the McCoy about those patrols? You didn't just radio that to get a hand in on the job yourself?"

"You saw 'em," Corrigan protested. "Ask Argal if you don't believe me. It was a break—just what I needed for my own personal morale. Now I'll

ride this tin can until doomsday if you wish. Believe me, I hope Colonel Drake hears about this. Imagine the guy—punishing me because I tackled a couple of dozen Japs, smashed plenty of their planes and lost mine.”

“Punished you?” Kent exclaimed. “Corrigan, you didn’t read those sealed orders. Listen—they were pretty explicit. They said you were probably the nerviest pilot in the South Seas, that this job called for the very best man and you were it, that you’d proved it in that dog-fight over Java. Colonel Drake wasn’t punishing you. He was handing you a chance to get a raise in rank and a medal—right on a silver platter. And, brother, I guess you rate it.”

Argal made a dive for Corrigan then. The pilot just stood there, grinning like an ape. Drake wasn’t such a bad guy after all. Neither was Argal, even if he insisted on decorating him with cheek kisses. Lieutenant Commander Kent was all right, too, and the submarine—why there wasn’t anything like it in the world.

An undersea aviator! That was something!

## WINGS OF THE NORTH

(Continued from page 72)

“Okay, it’s me, pals!” he shouted crazily and waved one hand wildly out the opened glass hatch. “I’m out from under, so really let ‘em have it!”

ONE of the bombers broke out of the circle and came piling down. Nolan recognized Major Jordon’s personal markings, and just in case no mistakes would be made he let go of the Messerschmitt’s controls and stood up so that from the hips up he was clearly visible to those aboard the bomber. Instantly the bomber’s wings were waggled, and the big plane went curving up to rejoin the others. Nolan gulped with relief and dropped back into the seat, and wiped beads of nervous sweat from his face.

“Praise to Allah they recognized me!” he breathed and leveled off from his climb. “The way I went tearing up they might have thought that I was—”

[Turn page]

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He shrugged the rest away unspoken, curved around and fixed hopeful eyes on the point where the fog met the ice-choked strait. But he didn't get his hope. Not a single German plane came rocketing out from under that mountain of fog. And the reason that none appeared was only too obvious.

There wasn't any mountain of fog any more. Rather, there was a mountain of glowing red flame. It was as though all of Greenland was on fire. With a chance at last to take a crack at war, Jordon and his boys were doing it up brown—or red. They sent ton after ton of earth-blasting doom hurtling down on the red flame and black smoke-marked target.

Nolan didn't even try to picture in his mind the horrible sight that secret field under the fog must be. It was something one couldn't even imagine. It was doubtful if anything was left down there. Nothing but a huge fire-belching crater on the west coast of Greenland. And the way Jordon's bombs continued to rain down it was probable that even the mountain of

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fog would be blasted away so that tomorrow the entire Axis world could see the smoking results of their latest attempt to sneak one over on the winged warriors of Uncle Sam.

"But it was close!" Nolan breathed and shivered slightly. "If that bird they called von Stultz hadn't taken a crack at poor Johnnie and at me, they might have pulled it off. But they *didn't*. And I guess that in this nasty mess it's what *doesn't* happen that counts most. Happy landings, Johnnie, old kid. Today is only the beginning. We'll go right on paying up for you, kid, until there aren't any of the rats left—anyplace!"

Bowing his head in silent prayer to his lost pals, Perry Nolan then climbed his stolen Messerschmitt 109 up toward altitude where Major Jordan and the others were waiting to escort him back to Thirty-one's Field. There would be countless questions, of course, but a good old-fashioned Army Air Corps celebration would get underway, and last through the night, at least!

## ARMY'S NO. 1 FLYING MAN

(Continued from page 54)

weeks after the Wright brothers completed their first successful flights with motor-driven gliders at Kitty Hawk, South Carolina, was friendly with Bleriot immediately after his epoch-making channel flight in 1909, and had his full share of thrills and hair-breadth escapes in the kite-like crates that passed as planes in those days.

When, after Glenn Curtiss flew successfully from Albany to Governor's Island in New York harbor, in the army's first plane, Arnold announced his intention of flying for the Signal Corps as soon as a transfer from the Infantry could be arranged, his superior officer stabbed him with a glare.

"I didn't know you were unhappy, Arnold," he said, "but if you're really looking for a good way to commit suicide, the airplane is an excellent instrument for it."

Arnold didn't discourage easily. He was able to use his native ability and early experience to become an outstanding pioneer military flyer. Early in 1912, he established an altitude record of 1962 meters (about 6000 feet) and was the first aviator to use the radio to transmit observation of artillery fire.

Late in November of that year, during maneuvers on the Potomac, he won a sham battle by spotting a detachment of "enemy"

[Turn page]

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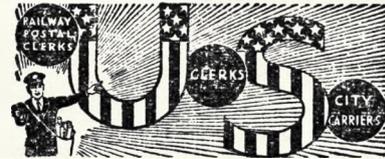
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cavalry concealed in dense woods. He also acquired a case of multiple frostbite, as he'd done his observing in close to zero weather from the wing. In the hospital, he gave up flying, was re-encouraged when he learned that his earlier feats had won him the Mackay trophy for the year (a trophy he won again in 1924 for leading a flight of ten Martin bombers from Washington to Alaska and back without mishap).

Arnold is a charter member of that international group of early birdmen whose exploits made airplane history and whose survivors are performing so brilliantly in the present conflict. Others of this close-knit group included Air Marshal Bishop, England's greatest ace in World War 1 and present boss of Canadian flyers; Jimmy Doolittle, about whom enough said, and Ernst Udet, who made the *Luftwaffe* what it is and was shot for his pains by the Nazis.

Their God was Billy Mitchell, and when the brass-hats broke him, Arnold took the rap too. He was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas, to command a squadron of five planes. This was expected to lead to his resignation. But Arnold doesn't break that easily. He kept smiling and flying, and pretty soon they found they needed him in more important posts.

Author of numerous technical and children's books on flying, Hap Arnold is the man who is creating America's Air Forces. A genial soul ordinarily, he can be hell on wheels when the going is tough. Right now the going is plenty tough. So the Axis had better look out.

## NAVY'S NO. 1 FLYING MAN

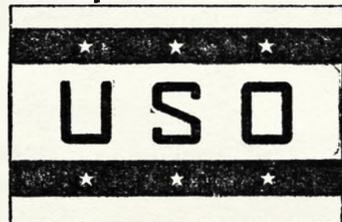
(Continued from page 55)

caused him to abandon his studies at Georgia Tech, however, and launched him on his navy career.

Graduated with honors from the Naval Academy, he was assigned as fire control officer (something new in those days) aboard the U. S. S. *Michigan*, the first dreadnought, or all-big-gun battleship, in the navy. And it was there and then that he first realized the potential value of the airplane in war at sea.

He discovered that no fire control tower could be built high enough to spot accurately the results of long-range big-gun

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fire, that if it could, visibility would seldom be good enough to permit accurate observation. The only alternative he could think of was the newly-invented airplane.

His superiors couldn't see it, pooh-pooed the whole idea as ridiculous. But a year later, in 1911, Glenn Curtiss, that amazing pioneer, passed a successful test in which he landed a seaplane beside a battleship and was safely hoisted aboard, plane and all. Towers and his wild scheme were in.

In 1912, Towers was a commander, one of the youngest men ever to win this rank in time of peace. A year later, he was in command of the first aviation unit ever to operate during maneuvers with any fleet anywhere. His group spotted the opposing forces, permitting his side to win a sensational "victory."

That same year, he had a narrow brush with death when a plane in which he was flying with two other officers was caught in a downdraft and sent spinning into the sea. The crash was caused by the fact that the pilot had been hurled from his cockpit at the start of the spin, leaving the plane entirely out of control.

Clinging to the wreckage, Towers decided that such an accident should never have happened, that the pilot should never have been lost. After his rescue, he continued to ponder it, finally arrived at a solution. His solution was the safety belt, which has been an international staple in aviation since he had the first one fashioned.

Since then, his career has lived up to its early promise. Admiral Towers was assistant director of Naval Aviation during World War I, commanded the Navy's epic trans-Atlantic flight in 1919. He was commander of the U. S. S. *Langley*, America's first carrier, served as assistant chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics until elevation to his present command.

Quiet, weathered, not over-communicative, Admiral Towers packs plenty of personal authority, has vast knowledge and experience to back up his words.

"Give aviation its due!" is his war cry. And from the way in which he and the superbly-trained force he commands have handled themselves thus far in this greatest of all wars, it looks as if they're going to get it.

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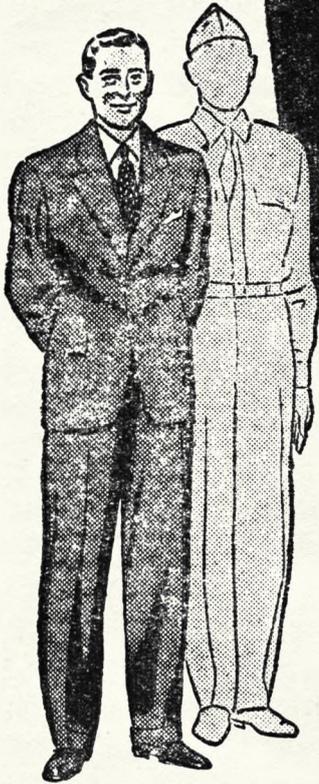
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Yes, I *was*—a miserable 97-pound bag of skin and bones! But you'd never believe it to look at me now, would you? Through my discovery of "Dynamic Tension" I changed myself into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." I'm LIVING PROOF of the miracles "Dynamic Tension" can perform—right in the privacy of your own home! NOW—will you give my method 15 minutes a day to get the kind of HE-MAN build you have always longed to have?

## My FREE Book "Everlasting Health and Strength" Tells How!

Just a postage stamp will bring you your copy of my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," absolutely free. No wonder nearly 2,000,000 men have sent for this big 48-page story of "Dynamic Tension"—illustrated with action photos of myself and some of my pupils. You'll not only read about my secret of "Dynamic Tension"—but you SEE PROOF of it! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 771, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.



**Charles Atlas**  
An actual untouched photo of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

### Here's PROOF Right Here!

"Feel like million dollars; have a 44" normal chest!"

—L.A.S., Illinois

"My doctor thinks your course is fine. In 15 days have put 2" on my chest and 1/2" on my neck."

—B.L., Oregon

"My muscles are bulging, I feel like a new man. Chest measures 38", an increase of 5", my neck increased 2"."

—G.M., Ohio

"Your book opened my eyes . . . 1/4" gain on biceps and 1" more on chest in two weeks!"

—J.F., Penna.

**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 771,  
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**

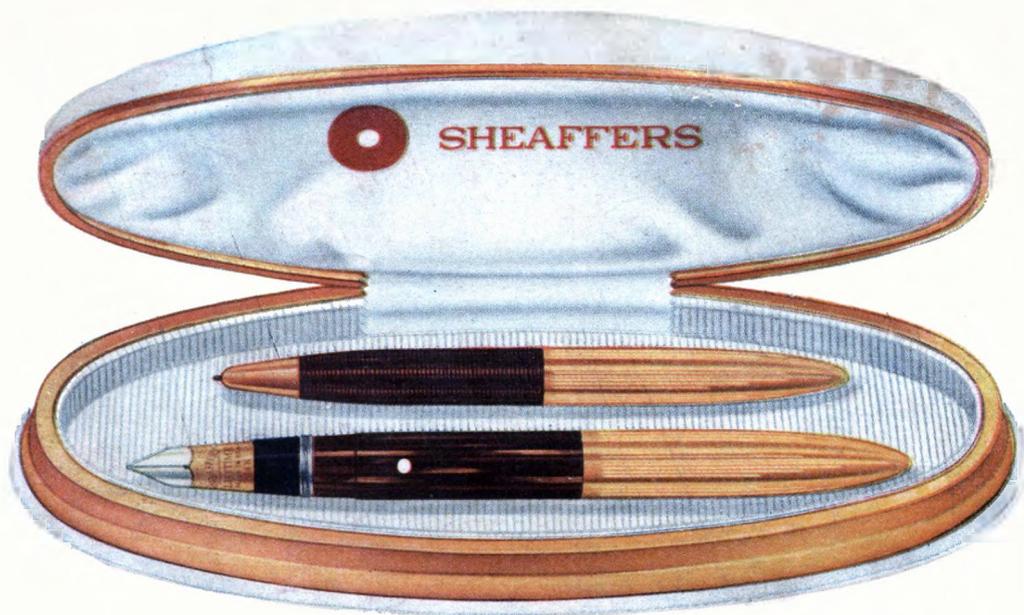
I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....

(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State.....



# This is the time to *Write!*

Now is the time for all good men and women to come to the aid of their country—with frequent letters to those we know in the U. S. Services at home and afar. You'll be well repaid, too, for you'll get letters back. W. A. Sheaffer Pen Co., Fort Madison, Iowa; Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

★ ★ ★

Above: Sheaffer's newest *Lifeline*\*, CREST "TRIUMPH" TUCKAWAY, for men or women, carries safely in all positions in pocket or purse, \$18.75 for the set. Other Sheaffer pens, all colors, \$2.75 and up.

\*All *Lifeline* pens are unconditionally guaranteed for the life of the first user except against loss and willful damage—when serviced, if complete pen is returned, subject only to insurance, postage, handling charge—35c

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