

POWELL POST

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS HALSEY POWELL



Points of Special Interest

- You'll really enjoy reading about some of your shipmates' favorite liberty ports. C.A. Smith's is in Formosa, Walt Meyer's was Tokyo, Red Belden's was Yokosuka (or could it be Sasebo?), Skee Lisle's was Newport Beach, and John Ewing's was Hwa-Do.
- Welcome Mat on page six has only two new members' names. We welcome them to the Halsey Powell family.
- Ed Collender's journal continues with the Battle off Samar, where several US ships were sunk. See pages 7 & 8.
- Another of Red's jokes is on page 8.

THE MOST MEMORABLE LIBERTY PORT

Editor's Note: An e-mail was sent out asking for stories about a place you visited on liberty that you remember the most—because of the different culture, the beauty or something memorable happened there. Here are the responses:

C. A. Smith, Lt. USN, Halsey Powell Dec 1961–May 1965:

I believe this story is in the early part of 1963 starting in Kaohsiung, Formosa. The Halsey Powell was assigned to patrol duty in the Straits of Formosa and our main port for fuel and stores was the port of Kaohsiung. Being in and out of this port over quite

some period of time some of us became friendly with a Chinese Police Officer that was assigned to the port area. He had meals aboard the Halsey Powell on several occasions and was very interested in teaching us about his country and expressing his gratitude to the US Navy and United States Marine Corps for the liberation of the people of Formosa from the Communist forces during the Quemoy-Matsu Campaign. He went by the name of Fred.

Fred was also an artist and gave me a scroll that he painted depicting cranes and other water birds. I gave this scroll to TECO LA when I was there

for the awarding of the BOH at the presentation ceremonies in 1998.

The liberty call that stands out in my mind involved Fred and my good friend John K. Hawes, Lt. USN, known to us as Jack. Jack was the Gunnery Officer. Jack and I wanted to see some more of the island of Formosa and talked to Fred about the possibilities of taking a trip to the highest point on the island. Fred accommodated our wish. He gave us very specific instructions, purchased the train tickets for us to the end of the line. From there we took a bus for which he had also purchased our tickets. We

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rode that bus to the end of the line as well. From there we walked up the mountain. It was a walk of over an hour and a half. It was steamy hot and we were both drenched with sweat. Fred had warned us, "You will be walking beside a stream. Under no circumstances should you drink that water." Our destination was a spa at the top of the mountain. The spa was really a place of naturally occurring hot mud baths along with small places to rent for overnighting. There were also natural gas deposits in that area and along the stream we would come to areas where there would be small pools with flames on top of the water. This was the burning of the gas that was percolating up through the rock and water.

We each wore a "coolie" hat and carried two large bottles of Asahi beer. When the beer ran out and I thought I was going to perish from thirst I told Jack that I was going to take just one sip of water from the stream, maybe just rinse my mouth out. It looked so cool and inviting. I was on all fours and just ready to take that water when upstream I could see some small movement. This turned out to be the ears of a water buffalo that was submerged in the stream just feet away. Needless to say my thirst left me.

At the top we got a place to stay and were soaking in these mud baths when we were engaged in conversation by a local man. He had been trained in medicine at the University of Southern California and was the head of the Family Planning Group for the government of Formosa. He invited Jack and me to have the evening meal with his family. It was the doctor, his wife, his wife's sister and their combined 11 children. So much for his profession.

On Sunday afternoon we made the trip in reverse to return to the ship in Kaohsiung. From a personal experience point of view the travel was the most interesting part of the weekend. The bus was the mode of travel for the local farmers so there were ducks, geese, pigs and vege-

tables piled all over the bus with the passengers. When we were on the train the same conditions existed but in addition the ROC Army also moved by train so there were lots and lots of soldiers on the same train. The same array of livestock and other marketable items were also on the train. At each seat there was a mug without a handle and two containers of tea leaves, one green and one black. You put the tea in your cup and a man came through the car with a 5 gallon jerry can of steaming hot water. You held out your mug, (an act of faith in a railroad car rolling from side to side) and he filled your mug with steaming hot water without spilling a drop on you or the floor. My memory does not recall the length of time we were on the train but to go from Kaohsiung to the top of the highest point on the island was quite a trip then.

Over the ensuing years I have had a drink of water out of a lot of streams. I can say that each and every time I look for the ears of the water buffalo.

Walt Myers:

Many years ago (1952), Red Belden, (?) Walters, and myself played the tourist part, and took a trip to Tokyo while our ship was in Yokosuka for R & R. This was not the normal way we spent our time on shore. We were more the "wine and relax" type of sailors. Red was normally our "leader" so he was our guide to bars, the cheapest stores, and other attractions.

On this occasion, we rode the train to Tokyo, a cab to the Imperial Palace, and took the grand tour. At that time, our government had control of the Palace, and the royal family was living in a special portion. It had never been damaged by the bombing, (I would imagine by design) and was really impressive. I personally was not a "Camera bug" but I do remember Walters took pictures. Red recently showed me a picture of the trio in front of the main gate. We were buttoned up with our Pea coats and hands pushed into

the pockets. I remember that we ended up on the Ginza, and went to a special Steak place that featured "Beer fed Steaks" that cost a lot more than the noodles and such that we normally tried. The train ride to and from Tokyo was an experience in itself, that made subway rides in New York seem like you were all alone in a railcar. The Japanese at that time were somewhat condescending to sailors, and many of them were not the types that regularly dealt with us. I think they were as much in awe of us as we were of them.

It is a shame that I didn't take advantage of more excursions while in the Powell, but I actually did later on while on other ships in Formosa, Australia, Pago Pago, New Zealand and New Guinea. The memories don't come to mind as easily as they used to, but camaraderie does refresh.

Along this line, Red and his wife Ardie, and I and my wife Gerry, over the Memorial weekend visited a private War museum not far from our homes here in the Sacramento Calif. area. It is called the Museum of Forgotten Warriors. It is the private collection of Dan Spears and his wife, and has over 65,000 artifacts. There are items dating from the revolution up to the present conflict. Everything has been donated to Dan by veterans or their families and each item has a personal story. There is no charge for a tour, and is normally open Thursdays and Saturdays. Any veteran or citizen will be amazed at what you can observe. He has a tank, a rocket launcher, several howitzers, a helicopter from Korea and a jeep. The collection of shrapnel from the many wars is awesome. He appreciates personal pictures with the veterans names (my father from WW1). Anyone interested can look at a guided tour by going to museumofforgottenwarriors.com. A tour took us over two hours, but we plan on returning as we didn't see it all. Red and I highly recommend this museum if you are traveling around Sacramento. It is located at 5865 A Rd. Marysville Ca. If you are from

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Northern Cal., it is on the main road to Beale Air Force Base.

Red Belden:

In 1953 or 1954, while in a Japanese port, (Yokosuka or Sasebo) a group of sailors off the Powell were allowed to spend some time at a R&R hotel on the slopes of Mt. Fujiyama. I remember Wilson Hawk was along with some others. As I recall, it was controlled by the Army or Air Force, but they grudgingly allowed small ship sailors to use it. We went by train to Tokyo and hired a cab to take us to the hotel. We were supposed to go by bus, but didn't like that plan. It was raining like heck, and we were soaked by the time we got there.

Our first stop was the bar. To our surprise, you could get 12 small screwdrivers for \$1 (360 yen). That sounded like a real good deal to us, so we each ordered a dollar's worth. The drinks must have softened our acceptance of the soldiers also there, as they were training for operations and were quite loud. They even offered to let us ride in a tank the next day, but we had already rented some scooters, so we said no. On the next day, again it was raining, but we went riding anyway. When we came back, we were muddy and wet, but had a good time. I remember the food was good, but that has always been a good thing for me. Wish I had some pictures, but I think Hawk took some.

Skee Lisle:

While on duty as a part of the pre-commission crew of the USS YMS 49 (1944) in Newport Beach, CA, a buddy shipmate and I went to a first class dinner place on Balboa Island called "Christin's Hut." We were sitting at the bar, both having a beer, when this hulk of a man stepped up to the bar, looked down at us, flipped my campaign ribbon and in a deep, recognizable, one-of-a-kind voice that could only be one person, said, "Glad to see someone in this joint that is doing something for the war effort." Then he took our two beers, passed them to the bartender and said, "As

long as these young men are here, give them the best scotch you have in the house and put it on my tab." Then he walked away with that famous swagger to return to the dining room. No names had to be asked for. That man was John Wayne.

P.S. After WWII, John Wayne purchased the sister ship of my YMS at Bremerton, WA and moved it to Newport Beach, CA and converted it to his yacht. He called it the Wild Goose.

John Ewing:

Hwa-Do, 6 February, 1953

En route to Japan from Honolulu in 1953 I volunteered for the Halsey-Powell (DD 686) Ship's Landing Party. Navy regulations required that every ship had a Landing Party; this was something that was rooted back in the very early Navy experiences when a ship would pull into an unfamiliar setting far from home, and send an expedition forth to get fresh water, maybe some bananas, and perhaps a wild pig or two.

A few musket men would accompany the expedition as protection, in case the natives did not wish to part with their water or bananas or wild pigs. The musket men swung the ensuing negotiations in favor of the Navy, and soon became known as the Ship's Landing Party.

I fell for the glamour attached to the Landing Party. I had always wanted to wear a steel helmet on an occasion for which it was designed. In all honesty I must say I wasn't too concerned with whether the crew of the Halsey-Powell had enough wild pig, but I was aware of the figure a man could cut with a musket and a steel helmet. Besides, the way Navy cooks cook we wouldn't have known the difference between wild pig and Wheaties.

Ship's Landing Parties were very seldom ever used, I was told, the Navy's predilection for wild pig having diminished through the years. Maybe I could just play around with a musket and get my picture made wearing a steel helmet.

Since I had very recently become qualified as a coxswain of our motor whaleboat, I was given the assignment of handling the whaleboat in the Landing Party. I was expected to be ready anytime the boat was required, and tried to always appear occupied, especially when the bos'n made his rounds. I felt that in Poker and Pinochle the bos'n had enough on his mind without the added strain of finding tasks for me. I'm sure he would have appreciated my thoughtfulness in the matter if he had stopped to think it over.

But bos'ns are not given over-much to idle reflection.

We members of the Ship's Landing Party had a few cursory get-togethers to familiarize ourselves with our weaponry. The Carbine was a neat little thing that I loved, but of no more use than a fire-hose, except as an ornament. The heftier and more manly M1 was the generally preferred weapon.

Eventually the Landing Party was summoned to a meeting and told to prepare for a special assignment; according to our skipper there was a troublesome place known as Hwa-Do, off Hungnam Harbor, that warranted attention.

The Halsey-Powell hove to some several miles off the east coast of Korea. It was a beautiful day, weather-wise.

Our motor whaleboat, armed with a 75mm recoilless rifle borrowed from the army, chugged along northwards where the little village adjacent to Hwa-Do lay.

As we motored closer and closer we could see flimsy huts and small sheds that composed the village. Could these be the warehouses we had been alerted to watch for?

Our whaleboat was the only object moving or making any noise. There was no sign of the enemy anywhere as we moved in towards the shoreline.

Pomeroy and Flaherty made sure their prize weapon was ready to perform; they had their rounds of 75mm projectiles arranged neatly so they could grab them in a hurry.

I don't know how many of the

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lazy circuits we made in the little area in front of the village; time was very difficult to keep track of as we knocked over several of the "warehouses" with the recoilless rifle.

At Mr. Winnefeld's orders we broke off the destruction derby amongst the "warehouses" and turned south. I liked the new direction because the Halsey-Powell lay out to the south.

But, alas! all that really happened was that we had shifted from Plan A to Plan B. Ens. Winnefeld ordered me over towards a partially sunk and obviously derelict sampan nestling on a slight spit of land, and declared that we would tow it away with us.

I do not know in whose fertile but fatally fevered brain Plan B originated. I now know, forty-some years later, that someone, somewhere, considered it a good and useful thing at that time to capture North Korean sampans and deliver them over to the South Koreans. Please don't ask me why.

For the statistically minded, your average sampan in 1953 contained about \$4 worth of timber, possibly the tattered remains of a \$2 fish net, maybe thirty gallons of seawater sloshing around, and a dozen rotten fish of assorted sizes and species.

Now I happen to know first hand that there was no premium on seawater in 1953; I checked. There was plenty. And there were enough rotten fish available not to cause panic in the hearts of those who collect such things. As for the timber and the piece of fish net I estimate that on the open market they would have fetched \$1.79. Certainly no more than \$1.85.

But Ens. Winnefeld was bound to have his way in the matter, so, letting the expression of terror on my face serve as my commentary on the subject, I steered for the sampan. Chorak and Flaherty had been designated as crew of our prize, and as I drew abreast of the foul smelling thing Chorak slid over into the sampan amongst the rotten fish. Flaherty, for reasons I still do not

fathom, jumped into the three-foot-deep water and splashed intrepidly ashore brandishing his BAR.

Later we all acknowledged that that must have been the moment the North Korean patience ran out. I can visualize the North Koreans laughing over cups of tea as they watched our previous antics on the shoreline, whooping and slapping their padded pajamas; but when Flaherty, for all intents and purposes, was going to single-handedly mete out his version of Sherman's Scorched Earth policy to them, they put down their cups of tea, looked at each other with raised eyebrows and indignantly reached for their rifles and some bullets.

Someone in the boat said, "Where th' hell is Flaherty going?" and Ens. Winnefeld, when he caught Flaherty's eye, motioned for him to return to the boat. A chagrined Flaherty jogged reluctantly back to join Chorak in the sampan.

Chorak had meanwhile taken my line and tried to tie on to the sampan's kingpost. This kingpost, for perverse Korean reasons, was slanted ridiculously forward, ensuring that when a strain was taken by the whaleboat as I pulled away, Chorak's hitches simply slipped over the end and splashed musically into the water. The sampan, having moved about ten feet, coasted smoothly to a stop.

By this time the North Koreans had found their rifles and some minnie-balls, and were beginning to fire at us. Waterspouts from the bullets leaped upwards ten feet in the air, some fairly close by, others further away.

This, of course, was something of a disappointment, and for Chorak and Flaherty, helpless in the drifting sampan, the disappointment could almost be said to amount to agitation.

I circled around for a second pass, hoping strongly that Chorak would make a better job of tying on to the forward-slanting post. I took a gradual strain with my whaleboat and Chorak squeezed the line tightly, desperately, around the kingpost with both hands.

But it was no use. The line was wet and slippery; Chorak's gloved hands were of no help, and again the line slipped over the head of the wretched kingpost and into the water. Chorak

and Flaherty's agitation ratcheted up another notch.

By now, as you will imagine, the North Koreans were warming to their task, probably elbowing each other gleefully in the ribs and pointing rudely at me, and the water spouts continued to make unwelcome appearances all around us.

I hope I will not be thought of as being critical, but I have to say the North Koreans were poor marksmen. Not that I am complaining, you understand; but I cannot imagine why they couldn't have killed us all in the length of time we were playing around with the sampan. My personal theory is that they were so happy to be rid at last of the stinking sampan and fish that their gratitude spoiled their aim.

But I could be wrong.

I pushed the tiller over to starboard and made my third lazy turn back towards the shoreline, this time having to go through the area of water spouts, something I found distasteful, and asked Ens. Winnefeld, in language as unambiguous, but respectful, as possible, "Sir, is that sampan worth us getting killed for?"

Ens. Winnefeld was also unambiguous. "No," he said, "Tell them," motioning to Chorak and Flaherty, "to get in the boat!"

Music to my ears. I motioned to Chorak and Flaherty, and the vigorous nodding of their heads showed that they understood perfectly, even in their state of advanced agitation. When I passed alongside they came scrambling into our boat with great enthusiasm. It is not known whether they might have had an urge to bring samples of the fish with them from the sampan (Navy guys love souvenirs), but if they did they resisted it.

I then headed the boat seawards at four bell, the signal for full ahead, and we departed the area as quickly as possible, not bothering about loss of dignity.

All, that is, save Flaherty. The Irish in him was repelled at the thought of leaving the area under any terms other than those of his

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own choosing, so he got into a good position up in the tiny bow of the boat and unlimbered his BAR towards where he thought the fire was coming from.

His was a nervy reaction, in keeping, as they say, with the highest traditions of the Navy. I don't know how much time was consumed thus, since I, too, had my hands full; I had moments earlier emptied my musket, er, M1, in the general direction of some gun flashes up on the hill behind the village.

Mr. Kim, noting that my rifle was now empty, and eager to stamp a sense of proper procedure on the events, reloaded my M1 for me and handed it up from his position down in the aft compartment. Hey, pretty neat, since I had my hands full keeping the tiller in the right position, and we quickly got a nice little thing going: I straddled the tiller with my legs and steered by leaning one way or the other. Mr. Kim would hand me a fresh M1, I would tip it up to as near my shoulder as my lifejacket would allow, and rip off the whole clip. I then handed it back to Mr. Kim and he replaced it with another one. Division of Labor in a basic form.

It was during all this that a .50 cal. slug came through the port side of the boat, just under where Flaherty was kneeling, skimmed a 1/4" groove along the deck, hit the iron lifting stanchion and splintered upwards through Flaherty's foot, into his inner thigh, groin, and stomach.

I always thought that when people are shot they leap into the air, clutch their heart, even if they are shot in the toe, stagger around in circles, then flop to the ground. I've seen it in the movies.

But what did Flaherty do? He simply turned and lay back into the bay of the boat, more or less on top of Pomeroy and the recoilless rifle, and calmly said, "I'm hit!"

Well, it was not very dramatic, to say the least. I personally think Flaherty missed an opportunity to leave the rest of us positively spellbound. But I could be wrong.

(The reader has no doubt already

discerned that I am not totally immune to a certain amount of whimsy creeping into my writing now and then. I don't know how it gets there. I certainly don't put it there, because my dear old mother warned me when I was entering puberty about whimsy lapses, how they could cause eventual blindness if done to excess, etc., and I've tried to avoid whimsy lapses ever since.

It is true that I wear glasses nowadays, but only for close work; I can't account for this, exactly, but I emphatically deny it was from whimsy lapse.)

The effect of Flaherty's wound on the rest of us was sobering, not that we weren't already pretty serious just at that point, and he was made as comfortable as possible as we chug-chugged agonizingly slowly further and further from the village, with Mr. Kim and I continuing to do what we could to distract and annoy the North Koreans.

As the splashes danced back and forth in a line between my boat and the hills above the village I would find myself sinking lower and lower down towards the protection of the bottom of the boat. I didn't want that. I felt for some reason that it would be a good thing if the North Koreans could see me all the while. I wanted to stand up straight, convinced that God's Providence was just as efficacious whether I was curled up in the bottom of the boat or standing. I had previously turned the whole affair over to God because even I realized that this was not the sort of experience anyone should have without at least leaving Him a note.

Mr. Winnefeld had moments earlier radioed co-ordinates of the Korean's positions to Halsey Powell and within seconds the first rounds of 5".38s began dropping into the area where the riflemen were. Soon the little valley was filled with the smoke from a couple hundred rounds from HP.

Later, back on the Halsey-Powell, I counted the empty brass and reckoned that the U.S. Navy spent something on the order of \$75,000 to get us back safely. That was a lot

of money in those days. It worked out at \$5000 for each of us, but would have been less for the enlisted men after adjusting upwards for the price of the officers.

The firing stopped. No more splashes. Had HP knocked the enemy out? Hmmm. Perhaps. It could have been, yes, but a picture comes to my mind of the North Koreans, seen as dim silhouettes in thick white smoke, coughing and fanning their eyes like relatives at a backyard barbecue when the wind shifts. And while they were wiping their eyes we gained enough extra distance to get out of their reach.

As we approached HP lines were let down to us, Chorak secured the sea painter, a wire stretcher was lowered to us, and several dozen pairs of hands hoisted Flaherty aboard.

As we were being hoisted upwards we felt the shuddering of the deck and the rush of wind as HP cranked up, and she was steaming out to sea before we were halfway to the gunwales.

Standing watch that evening in Mount 52 was almost pleasant after such a day. I had been warmed and fed and comforted, allowed to tell my story, and felt pretty good.

I now realize how irrelevant the rest of civilization can become when your life is more or less on the line. It is of little import to you what shade of green the grass on the hillside is when a gun is being fired at you from the hillside; one pays little attention to the subtleties of color in such circumstances.

If I have seemed to be less than respectful of Flaherty and others in these pages, let me say this: Navy guys have a vast amount of flexibility in making comment on each other; Flaherty understands that as well as anyone. And no one has more respect and sympathy for Flaherty's bravery and subsequent torment than I. At a reunion of HP's crew members in San Francisco a few years ago Flaherty strolled the sidewalks of Sausalito with Jenny and I, his artificial leg bothering him not the slightest.

I was also in touch with Com-

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mander, now Captain, Costagliola, Ret., and learned that it was he who wrote the All Hands article describing the whole affair. He hasn't as yet read this account, and I am suddenly nervous about it falling into his hands. On the one hand I want him to read it; it will give him a fresh point of view of the event under discussion. On the other hand he may find unsettling my cavalier use, or mis-use, of facts, especially facts that he himself authored.

But if I do decide to send him a copy I will be reassured by the fact that Captain Costagliola has demonstrated conclusively to me, in 1953 and recently, that his graciousness is quite adequate to cover whatever lapses occurred during the writing of my account of the Hwa-Do episode. I don't doubt for a moment that he will accept that what I have written is, as I hope you understand, intended to be a gentle and subjective amalgamation of fact and fancy, with the goal of having some fun with the events of that day.



WELCOME MAT

The USS HALSEY POWELL Association welcomes the following recently located crewmember. We hope to see you at our next reunion, and trust that you will become an active member of the Association. Welcome Aboard!

John (Jack) Ward
(1958-61) MR3
PO Box 1902
Tybee Island, GA 31328
912-596-8641
jacktybee@aol.com

Bill Reynolds
1318 Leland
Collinsville, IL 62234
618-345-9847



TAPS

The Post was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter. Not all members died recently, but we just learned of their deaths. The entire crew sends our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased. Please let ML&RS know if you learn of the death of a former shipmate so he can be recognized in here and on the Honor Roll at the reunion.

Sanford Whitehurst
(1952-55) MR3 R Div
Died March 19, 2010

John (Jack) Callow
!943-46)
Died February 13, 2010

Raymond L Parker
(1943-46) SF 2/c Deck
Died April 2, 2010

Alden Deal
(1952-53) SN 1st Div
Died June 2010

NEWS ON A SHIPMATE

Gary Mootry has moved to a studio apartment in Riverview Terrace, an assisted-living facility in Roseburg, OR. Here are his new address and phone number:

Gary Mootry
1970 W Harvard Ave Apt 301
Roseburg, OR 97471

Phone (541) 677-1368
Cell (541) 530-0695

The facility does not have board-band cable, so he doesn't have email any more.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ahoy Shipmates,

Hope you all made it through the spring in good shape. Looking at the news, most of the country has had weird weather. The weather here in Utah has been cool and wet. Not a great way to run a desert. It does seem to be drying out now though, and the garden is doing really well. We took a short trip to California and the high on the way there was 114 degrees. On our return it was in the forties here and rainy in Utah.

Summer is here with all of the fun and work. Fourth of July, gardens, family reunions. I hope that you all have a wonderful summer, try to remember what it was like when we were young and take advantage of all that we can only do in the hot weather. Speaking of reunions, we have the Halsey Powell reunion coming up at the end of summer. It will be in Seattle this year. For those who have not been there before, there is a lot to do. Check out the Seattle page on MLRSinc webpage or check out a guide book at the local library. We will be staying at a hotel very close to the airport, but there is a shuttle to take people to the local mall and the light rail goes from the airport to downtown.

Hope you are all planning on attending the reunion. I'm really looking forward to seeing you there. In order to save a little on the cost, the duty section decided not to have a disk jockey at the final banquet. The cost has been between \$600 and \$800 for one or two hours of music. Instead, we will bring a selection of music from the 40s, 50s and 60s along with the equipment necessary, and we will play our own music. If any of you have a request for a specific song you would like to hear or dance to., please let me know by email or calling me.

Till we meet in Seattle, I wish you all fair winds and following seas.

Jim Wyatt

**USS HALSEY
POWELL
2010 REUNION**

OCT. 13-17

SEATTLE, WA

HOLIDAY INN SEATTLE AIRPORT

“THE STORY OF MY LIFE” BY ED COLLENDER

Continued from March 2010

Battle off Samar

0657 Taffy 3's Clifton “Ziggy” Sprague began issuing orders—changed course to due east, make smoke, increase speed to 17 knots, all out, and to launch every operational plane.

0703 Taffy 2 Stump, launched all available planes. VAdm Thomas Kincaid's Seventh Fleet Attack Force Washach, in San Pedro Bay, pulled planes from other missions to assist. Thus within ten minutes of the time that the enemy opened fire, every available aircraft was flying to help. The resulting carrier disposition was a simple 2500 yard circle while their destroyer screen patrolled sectors 6,000 yards from the center. Skipper of Kitkun Bay Air Group, Cdr RL Fowler, stayed aloft for 8 hours directing strikes at the ships.

0716 Sprague ordered first destroyer counter attack (2100 ton *Hoel*, *Heerman* and *Johnston*) on the heavies just as the jeep carriers entered a rain squall. *Johnston* led off firing ten fish and hitting CA Flagship *Cumano*; *Johnston* hit by 3 14” and 3 6”, lost after engine room and fireroom, lost power to aft 3, 5” guns, steering engine, and gyro compass; speed reduced to 17 knots. The air search “bedspring” antenna snapped off, falling on the bridge and killing three officers as they entered a 10 minute rain storm. *Hoel* approached *BB Kong*, opening fire at 14,000 yards.

0727 Launched a half salvo of fish. More hits on after fireroom and after turbine with loss of power to aft three inch guns and steering engine. Rudder jammed hard right.

0750 Launched half salvo on manual control at leading cruiser. Hits observed. *Heerman* joined *Hoel* and fired seven fish at *CA Headgear* who responded with 15 gun salvos. Both sides missed.

0800 Launched remaining three at *BB Varuna*, chasing splashes as he retired. All spaces flooded and number one magazine on fire. *Hoel* tried to retire but was hemmed in by *Kong* on port beam and heavy cruisers to starboard and could only make 17 knots. She took 40 hits in the next 65 minutes—5”, 6” and 16.” All of the major caliber were armor piercing and did not explode, but would pass right through.

0830 An 8” shell put the remaining engine and generator out of commission and she was dead in the water, all spaces flooded and number one magazine on fire.

0835 Abandon ship (*USS Hoel*)

0855 She rolled over and sank.

The Destroyer Escorts, DEs, known as Little Wolves, formed up and at **0750** went in, followed by *Johnston* who would provide fire support.

0756 *Raymond* launched three at *Hagurao*.

0759 *Dennis* launched at either *Chokai* or *Tone*, but missed.

0826 Adm Sprague ordered DEs to interpose between carriers and approaching Jap cruiser, probably *Tone*. At that moment, the ominous messages received by the carriers from ComScreen, “all torpedoes expended.” *Butler* did have three fish left, but could not get them in firing position and, with *Dennis*, they exchanged fire with the cruiser. *Raymond*, ahead of them, closed to 5900 yards and *Tone* briefly shifted fire to her from *Gambier Bay*, but made no hits.

0850 *Dennis* received a direct hit which passed through the main deck and out the starboard side above the waterline without exploding.

0900 More hits, 5” guns 1 and 2 knocked out and other damage, so retired, making smoke to screen carriers.

0850 *Roberts* received first hit, holed below the waterline and knocked out the forward fireroom, then more hits in rapid succession followed by a huge explosion which tore a hole at the waterline, 30 to 40 feet long and 7 to 10 feet high.

0910 Abandon ship, wounded given first aid and placed on rafts. *Roberts* laid over to 80 degrees, then slowly sank by the stern at **1105**.

1105 *Heerman*, exchanging gunfire with *CA Chikuma*, took a series of 8” hits. One near the waterline flooded the forward magazines, pulling her down by the head, so that the anchors were dragging in the bow wave. Power plant was not affected and four of the five guns were operable.

0902 *Chikuma*, under attack, turned away and was replaced by *Tone*, continuing to **0920**.

0845 *CL Yahagi* plus four DDs formed to make torpedo attacks on carriers. *Johnston* took on the five, opening fire on *Yahagi*. *Johnston* took many 5” hits and made 12 on the cruiser. When the cruiser broke off, *Johnston* shifted fire to the first DD. Suddenly all retired having launched torpedoes at carriers. Adm Kurita reported one cruiser and three carriers sunk. Not True! Cdr Evans had bluffed Kurita into a premature torpedo attack. He had launched at 10,000 yards while the carriers were going away at 17 knots. By the time his fish got close, they were going too slow. A TBF exploded one by strafing it, another was hit by 5” gunfire. Thus, this one damaged destroyer, as seen from *Heerman*, with her mast shot away and on fire amidsthips, was almost done for.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

0945 Abandon ship and sunk at **1010**

Meanwhile, Taffy 3 escort carriers had been under fire from **0658-0925**

0750 *Kalinin Bay* received the first hit as she was launching the last of her planes and she responded with her single 5" 38.

0825 She scored a direct hit on #2 turret of a heavy cruiser. *Fanshaw Bay* took four 8" hits and *White Plains* received part of a 6" salvo. During this time, Commander Support Group in Washach, Capt Whitehead, ordered all aircraft around Leyte not engaged in strikes, to attack the Japanese Center Force. Six TBFs and 20 F4Fs went in for the first coordinated attack the TBFs went in with 100 lb bombs. The fighters were staffing. Both types continued to make dummy runs when out of ammo to drive them from their course and throw off their gunfire. They were very aggressive, skillful and the coordination was impressive.

As Taffy 3 had been retreating downwind since **0730**, the planes could not be recovered and had to make temporary landings on Tacloban field or on a Taffy 2 carrier. Eleven F4Fs from *Kitkun Bay*, who had been on dawn patrol, stopped at Tacloban and picked up some 500 lb bombs heading to join the fray at **0833**. At 0745 *CL Yahagi* and several DDs closed to 6900 yards for a torpedo run on *Gambier Bay* but were driven off by *DD Johnston*, then closed to 17,000 yards to begin firing at one minute intervals. *Gambier Bay* responded with their single 5", taking evasive action with speed and course changes.

After 25 minutes, *GB* received first hit at 0810 and then thereafter was hit incessantly. The ship slowed to eleven knots and dropped out of the formation. *Heerman* dropped back alongside the

last four ships concentrated fire on *Heerman*.

0845 *Heerman* took a hit on the pilot house.

0902 *Tone* class CA turned to port and retired to the east with fantail on fire. Concentrated short range fire on *GB*. Knocked out steering controls and power by **0837** and radar at **0840**.

0845 Dead in the water and sinking

0850 Abandon ship, 750 of 854 went over the side and sank. Survivors lashed rafts and floater nets together, but had to wait two days for rescue.

At this point, *Fowler*, with five fighters following BBs *Varuna* and *Kong*, just out of AA range. They were steaming at 27 knots right for Taffy 2. The news was passed at 0910 and shortly thereafter, 14" shells were falling, just short of the Taffy 2 screen.

0905 30 miles east of Asgard Point, Samar, enemy ships were closed to 11,000 yards firing on *White Plains*. *WP* responding with 5" on fantail made six hits on *CA Chokai*, decommissioning forward turret and killing her engines. *Fowler's* planes continued the attack, as four TBFs completed all dives within 35 seconds, scoring five hits amidships, 3 on the bow and one on the stern. This last hit caused a sharp turn to port about 500 yards then blew up, and sank within 5 minutes at 0939.

Taffy 2 was running west to its day operating area when the action started.

0657 Radm Stump ordered all TMBs to be debombed and reloaded with torpedoes, but delayed in lending a hand by the fact that so many planes had already departed on routine missions. Only two TMBs could take part in the counterattack. Taffy 3 planes landed on the Marcus Island and borrowed her torpedoes so that when the others returned, all they had left was two

bombs. Even so, Taffy 2 launched three strikes totaling 39 fighters and 43 torpedo-bombers within an hour and a half. 49 bombs dropped by them resulted in 6 to 11 hits, all but one on BBs and CAs. Fighter planes dropped 133, 500 lb bombs and hundreds of 100 pounders, plus 276 rockets.

0853 *CA Chicuma* knocked out by a single torpedo. At 0920 *CA Tone* broke off. The main action was over!

As Taffy 3's Commander, RAdm Clifton Sprague summarized, "The failure of the enemy main body and encircling light forces to completely wipe out all vessels of this task unit, can be attributed to our successful smoke screen, our torpedo counterattacks, continuous harassment of the enemy by bomb, torpedo and strafing air attacks, timely maneuvers, and the definite partiality of Almighty God."

Next: BATTLE OFF CAPE ENGANO

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