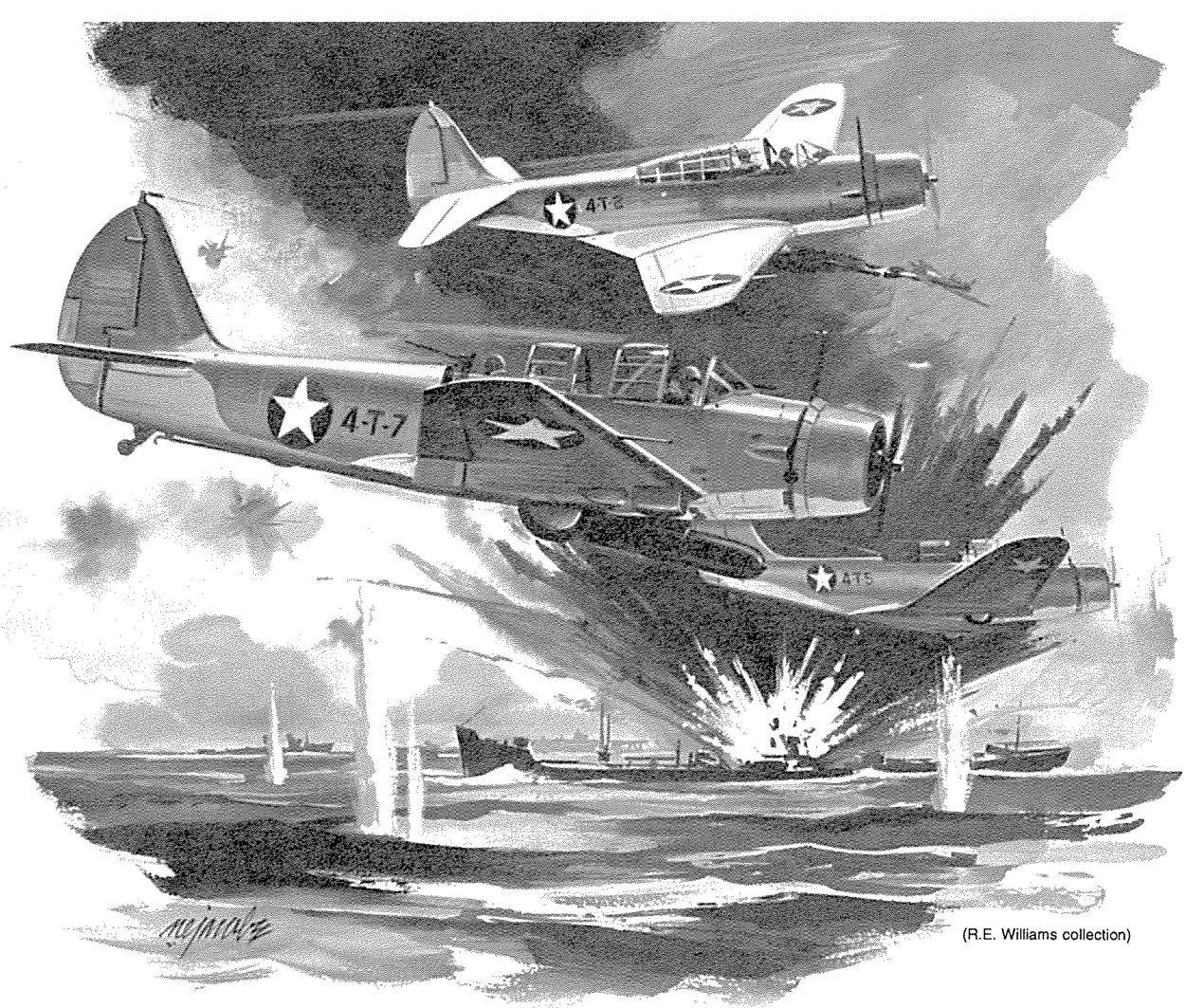




(R.E. Williams collection)

Detour in the Solomon Islands

Part I: Lost at Sea

by Lawrence P. Gunshol

On May 4, 1942, less than 5 months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, United States naval aircraft from the carrier Yorktown launched a series bomb and torpedo attacks on Japanese shipping that lay at anchor in Tulagi harbor. The small island of Tulagi is located off the coast of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

While returning from one of the final sorties flown that day, one torpedo bomber was unable to locate the Yorktown. After running out of fuel, the pilot and radioman/gunner ditched off the southern coast of Guadalcanal. Both men spent 3 days in a small raft, harassed by sharks, scrutinized by the crew of a Japanese destroyer, with no food and little water.

Then, by luck, they landed on Guadalcanal. There, they were greeted by friendly natives, spent time at several missions, and were finally taken under the wing of W. F. Martin Clemens. Clemens, the British District Officer on Guadalcanal, was also the leader of the famed Coastwatchers. Through Clemens, a trading schooner on San Cristobal Island was requisitioned for use by the Americans.

From San Cristobal, the aviators and native crew sailed to Efate in the New Hebrides islands where they were taken aboard a U.S. destroyer to Pearl Harbor. In spite of the unanticipated detour in the Solomon Islands, they were able to safely rejoin their squadron, albeit nearly 2 months after the attack on Tulagi.

“...Destroy Enemy Ships, Shipping and Aircraft at Favorable Opportunities...”

Lieutenant Junior Grade Lt. (j.g.) Thomas “Boots” Ellison of Torpedo Squadron Five (VT-5) observed the periscope of the submerging Japanese submarine as he made his final approach to his target. Several minutes earlier, Ellison’s section of three Douglas TBD-1 *Devastator* torpedo bombers flying at 1000 feet and carrying two Mark 17 depth bombs each had spotted the enemy running on the surface of the Coral Sea at a range of approximately 5000 feet.

Having sighted the submarine, Ellison had immediately put his section into open echelon and turned toward her. His wing planes now followed him in column astern. The makeup of the section this day, May 2, 1942, varied from the “normal” tactical organization. Ellison’s wingmen normally included Ensign George Bottjer and Naval Aviation Pilot (NAP) Sid W. Quick. Today, Gunner J. C. “Jack” Livezey flew instead of Quick.

Earlier in the day, at 1517 to be precise, a section of two Douglas SBD *Dauntless* scout bombers led by Lt. (j.g.) Stanley “Swede” Vejtasa had sighted a surfaced submarine 32 miles from the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* (CV-5). Following the end of World War II the Japanese vessel was positively identified as the I-21. The sighting had occurred more than 10 miles from their aircraft carrier, the *Yorktown* (CV-5). Following standard operating procedure, Vejtasa maintained radio silence, while he and his wingman Ens. H. N. Ervin returned to the *Yorktown*. Flying low over the deck of the carrier, Vejtasa’s radioman/gunner Leon Hall Aviation Radioman 2nd Class (ARM2c) literally dropped a message onto the deck. A bean bag served as the “envelope.”

Fearing that the submarine would report the approximate position of the *Yorktown* and the vessels accompanying her, Captain Elliot Buckmaster promptly ordered three TBDs armed with depth bombs to be readied and launched. Each plane included the full crew compliment of one bombardier flying in the second seat position, and one radioman/gunner in the third seat. Ellison’s group was already on alert, and was launched without incident at 1602. Shortly thereafter, at 1613, Ellison successfully located the enemy.

Now, during the final approach, Ellison closed on the stern of the submarine while flying at an altitude of 50 feet. The target began to line up nicely in the “gunsight” that was used by the TBD-1 bombardiers as they looked out of the bomb aiming window during low-level bombing runs. This device was certainly much less sophisticated than the Top Secret Norden bomb sight which was used for high-altitude precision bombing. At the proper moment, Ellison’s bombardier hit the switches that released the depth bombs.

Immediately after his bombs were released, Ellison pulled up in a sharp climbing turn to observe the results. It appeared that his first bomb exploded 40 to 50 feet astern of the submarine, and the second bomb exploded 10 to 20 feet ahead. Bombs from Livezey’s TBD were observed to explode just ahead of Ellison’s second bomb. Bottjer’s bombs hit and exploded just ahead of Livezey’s. Ellison visually instructed Bottjer and Livezey to remain in the vicinity of the submarine while he returned to the *Yorktown*, which was now positioned

approximately 25 miles away. There, he would report results and receive further instructions.

Upon landing, Ellison reported to the bridge, relaying his opinion that the submarine had been either sunk or badly damaged. However, lacking irrefutable proof of sinking or damage, Buckmaster ordered 11 SBDs carrying one 500-pound depth bomb each to be launched. Upon arrival at the area of the sighting, the SBDs “relieved” Bottjer and Livezey and continued to search for the submarine, or an oil slick, or other debris. However, they returned to the *Yorktown* approximately 2 hours later at 1825 without sighting any of the above items.

Captain Buckmaster now weighed all input. He concluded that Ellison’s initial report that the submarine had been either damaged or sunk was correct.

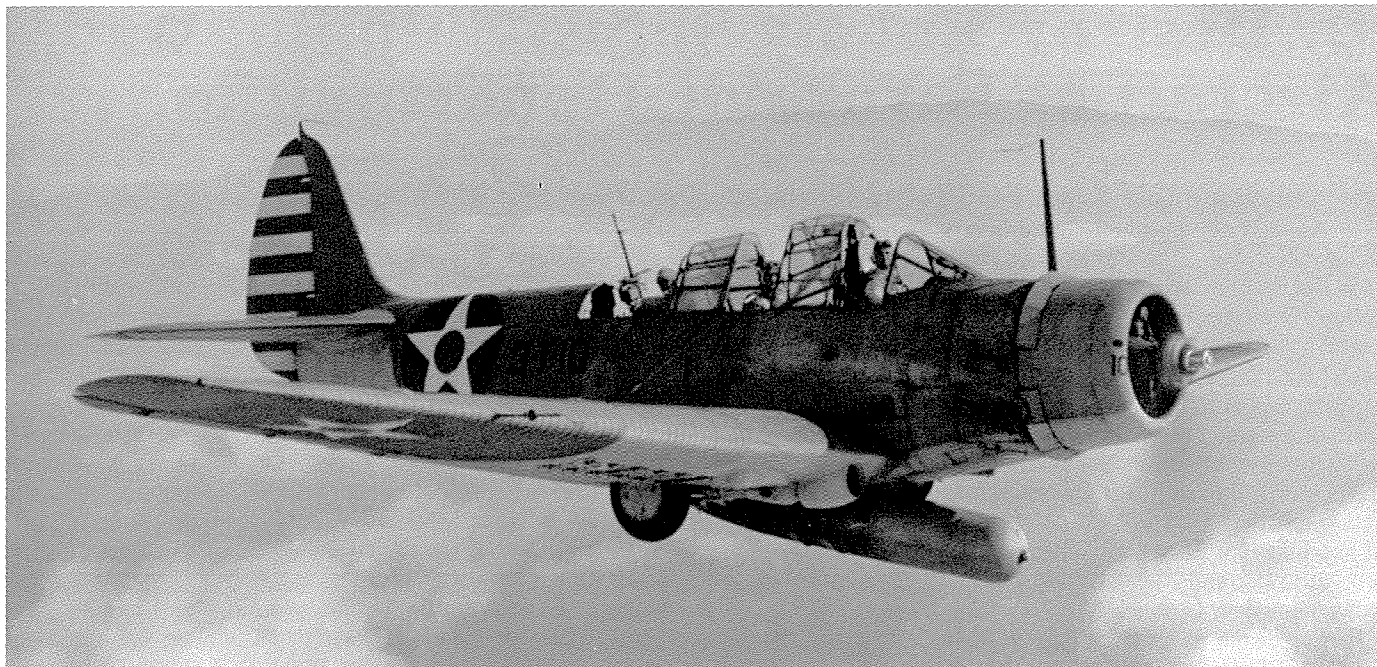
Approximately 600 miles northwest of the *Yorktown*, on the east coast of the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands chain, District Officer (DO) W.F. Martin Clemens gazed intently across Sealark Channel toward the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) patrol plane base on the island of Tanambogo.

Tanambogo was connected by a causeway to another small island Gavutu. Both islands lay approximately 1/2 mile east of Tulagi harbor. Earlier that day, Coastwatchers west of Guadalcanal had sighted a Japanese force sailing toward Tulagi. As a result, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) commandos had been busy all day destroying everything on Tanambogo that could be useful to the Japanese. Now, as night fell, many fires were visible against the night sky.

Clemens, an Australian citizen and a graduate of Cambridge, was the only British official remaining on Guadalcanal. Manning the Aola Government Station, Guadalcanal (also called The District Station) located at Aola, Clemens was an integral part of the far-reaching Coastwatching Service. The service had been instituted by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) at the end of the First World War with the goal of observing activities on the vast unguarded Australian coast in future wars. The perimeter to be watched lay off the Northeast coast of Australia. By 1941, the Coastwatch stations spanned a 2500 mile arc from New Guinea to the New Hebrides Islands. Guadalcanal was located roughly in the middle of this arc.

In addition to Clemens, two other Coastwatchers maintained stations on Guadalcanal. Lt. Donald MacFarland of the RAN was originally assigned as Liaison Officer to the British Resident Commissioner (BRC), Donald Sydney Marchant. He was later moved to Guadalcanal and subsequently operated a teleradio station at the Berande plantation near the north-central coast of the island. Tulagi and Florida Island were easily observed from this vantage point. F. Ashton “Snowy” Rhoades, operated the third teleradio station from his plantation at Lavoro, on the western coast of the island.

Prior to the war, the population of Aola ranged between 60 and 70 persons. This included: one District Officer, one or two cadets, two medical practitioners, four or five medical dressers, 14 Armed Constabulary, a Warden and up to 15 prisoners, an



Agricultural Officer, three maintenance men, and family members.

BRC Marchant had maintained his post on the southern end of Tulagi. With the impending arrival of the Japanese, Marchant moved the post to Auki on the island of Malaita, which lay approximately 30 to 40 miles to the east of Tulagi and Guadalcanal, respectively. Clemens retained responsibility and authority to direct all operations on Guadalcanal.

As the fires on Tanambogo burned relentlessly on, Clemens waited for a transmission that would indicate when the radio station on the narrow island was shutting down for good. At 11:30 P.M., the coded message arrived. The pre-arranged, barely audible message was "Steak and eggs," repeated in desperate tone for several agonizing minutes. And then, there was signoff. Clemens and the rest of his group at Aola spent a restless night not knowing if the Japanese had already arrived or if the RAAF personnel and the AIF commandos stationed there were safe.

An intricate sequence of events had brought Ellison, Buckmaster, and the *Yorktown* to the Coral Sea in the Southwest Pacific in early May of 1942. In late April U.S. Naval Intelligence learned that the Japanese were planning to occupy Port Moresby in New Guinea and portions of the Solomon Islands. Having accomplished these tasks, the enemy would then be in position to aggressively attack allied shipping in the Coral sea and allied air bases in Northern Australia.

Only two United States aircraft carriers were in position to defend the Coral sea at this time: the USS *Lexington* (CV-5) and the aforementioned USS *Yorktown*. The *Lexington*, two heavy cruisers, and six destroyers comprised Task Force 11 which was under the command of RADM Aubrey W. Fitch. The *Yorktown*, three heavy cruisers, and six destroyers comprised Task Force 17 under the command of Rear Admiral (RADM) Frank Jack Fletcher. Fletcher was the senior American task force commander.

On May 1, Task Force 17 met Task Force 11 at a point 350 miles north of New Caledonia, an island which is off the east

coast of Australia. Here, Fletcher introduced Operational Order Number 2-42 which was to go into effect at his command. The primary assignment of Operational Order Number 2-42 was to "*destroy enemy ships, shipping and aircraft at favorable opportunities in order to assist in checking further advance by enemy in the New Guinea-Solomon Area.*"

The sum and substance of the plan was reactive rather than proactive. Specifically, Fletcher wished to remain far enough outside the search range of the Japanese patrol planes in order to avoid detection.. At the same time, he wished to be close enough to respond promptly and effectively if and when the enemy made the first move.

Fletcher chose to combine Task Force 17, Task Force 11, and the ANZAC Task force 44 (consisting of two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and two destroyers) under the command of RADM John G. Crace, RAN. The new and larger Task Force 17 would be organized into five task groups.

Following the May 1 meeting with Fitch, Fletcher directed Fitch's warships to steam south to rendezvous with the heavy cruiser *Chicago* and one destroyer, and to be refueled by the fleet oiler *Tippecanoe*. Fletcher's fueling was completed early on May 2. However, when Fletcher rejoined with Fitch on that day, he learned that the *Lexington's* refueling operations would not be completed until May 4. Concerned about persistent intelligence reports from Australia citing large scale enemy ship movements into the Coral Sea from the northwest, Fletcher decided to steam in that direction with the *Yorktown* and its supporting cast of warships. Fitch was then to rendezvous with Fletcher and Crace on May 4 after being refueled. The location selected for the rendezvous was the Louisiade Archipelago, which lay south of the Solomon Islands and east of New Guinea.

The sighting of the Japanese submarine by the scout bombers on the afternoon of May 2 was cause for grave concern. Since the submarine had come within 32 miles of Fletcher's task force, it was likely that the enemy was now aware of the movement of the American fleet. Even if the sub-

VT-3 TBD-1, April 1942. Note that the small red circle within the white star of the U.S. insignia was removed from all combat aircraft prior to the Battle of Midway, June 6, 1942. (LCDR John R. Baker, USN Ret.)

Ens. Francis "Red" Sanborn's Flight Log for May 1942. Note that the "CL" in the remarks column denotes Carrier Landing. Note also that the entries for May 7 and 8 are for the Battle of the Coral Sea. On May 7, the Japanese light carrier Shoho was sunk when attacked by the Lexington and Yorktown torpedo squadrons. On May 8, the Japanese carrier Shokaku was damaged by bombs, but wasn't sunk. (Capt. Francis Sanborn, USN Ret.)

marine had been sunk there certainly had been sufficient time to transmit a report back to base. Fletcher was now worried that he rather than the Japanese had made the first move.

Information gleaned after the end of World War II indicates that the location of the American fleet had not been compromised. The captain of the I-21 did indeed make a contact report. However, his report mentioned airplanes without identifying the type of airplanes that were encountered. Lacking specifics, the Japanese command assumed with justification that the attacking aircraft were land-based.

As evening fell on May 2, Task Force 17 continued to steam northwest. The Yorktown zigzagged and reduced speed to a level that safely allowed the destroyers to top off with fuel from the fleet oiler Neosho.

May 3rd dawned and the Yorktown continued the slow movement to the northwest as the destroyers continued to top off. At 1900, Fletcher was at last appraised of the long awaited Japanese thrust. On the previous day, U.S. Army B-17 bombers had detected a Japanese force moving toward the island of Guadalcanal and the nearby island of Tulagi. Unfortunately, the information had been delayed by 26 hours before it reached Fletcher.

Fletcher now modified his rendezvous plan. The Yorktown along with three heavy cruisers and six destroyers would steam north toward Guadalcanal and make a dawn attack on Tulagi. The destroyer Sims and the Neosho were to continue on and rendezvous with Fitch and Crace at the previously-arranged location on May 4. Fitch and Crace were to be informed of Fletcher's planned attack on Tulagi, and to rendezvous with him at a new location South of Guadalcanal on May 5.

Onboard the Yorktown was Harrison S. Nobbs, Aviation Chief Radioman (ACRM). Chief Nobbs was a member of Torpedo Five. One squadron member recalls that he was a reserved, taciturn, competent Chief Petty Officer (CPO). Nobb's tour at sea was up and he was heading for a stateside assignment as an instructor. He had flown in combat during raids on the island of Jaluit in the Gilbert Islands chain on February 1, 1942, and the Japanese-held bases of Salamua and Lae, New Guinea on March 10, 1942. Now, he anxiously awaited transfer to the Neosho for ultimate delivery to the United States. He felt relatively safe now because he no longer would be placed in harms way while flying combat missions. His place as radioman/gunner in skipper Joe Taylor's plane (number T-1) would be taken by Angus M. Shirah, Aviation Radioman 1st Class (ARM1c).

Nobbs and other departing Yorktown shipmates were transferred one at a time to the Neosho by bosun's chair. Raymond (Ray) Machalinski, ARM2c and other members of Torpedo

Five gathered to observe the transfer of personnel. It was always interesting to watch such a transfer. At times the lines holding the bosun's chair would slacken as the ship rolled This would dunk the occupant into the sea. Fortunately, this day the Chief was transferred without incident. To a man, Nobbs' envious former squadron mates agreed: "What a lucky guy, going back to the States!"

The Sims and Neosho departed from Fletcher's contingent at 2030, and the Yorktown picked up speed to 27 knots in order to close the distance to Guadalcanal and Tulagi. The pilots from the squadrons comprising the Yorktown's Air Group soon learned that the target the next day was Tulagi, which lay off the Northern coast of Guadalcanal. A major problem soon surfaced. No one onboard knew much about either island!

Lt. (j.g) E. Scott McCuskey of Fighting Squadron 42 (VF - 2) hunted vigorously through the Yorktown's library and was able to find only a single volume that contained information on the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal. The book's title was *I Married Adventure*; the author was Osa Johnson. It described the lives and adventures of the author and her husband, Martin Johnson.

Inside the book's cover was a map showing the southern coast of Guadalcanal as a dashed line. The map's legend noted that the dashed line meant "unsurveyed or unexplored."

One section of the book stated that some of the inhabitants of the area supposedly "...wore large nose rings of tortoise shell and wild boar tusks", and all "...were adorned with ear rings." One individual wore "the handle of an old tea cup in his ear." Another was seen with "sardine can openers" in his ears, while yet another displayed the "shell of an alarm clock from the cartilage of his nose." "One reference to Guadalcanal noted that cannibalism was possibly still practiced in the interior.

McCuskey offered the book to the Yorktown's new Air Group Commander, Oscar Pederson. Pederson thanked him noting that he had already located a better source of information. A dated Admiralty navigation chart was already being photocopied for him by the attacking pilots. A course would be flown which took the attack group directly over Guadalcanal. When the planes broke over the Northern coast of Guadalcanal, nearby Tulagi and Florida Island would be clearly visible across the bay.

MAY 1942						MAY 1942					
Date	Time	Altitude	Distance	Remarks	Remarks	Date	Time	Altitude	Distance	Remarks	Remarks
2	1000	10,500	4.6	J	Self	Under	1	Patrol	10,000	10,000	10,000
3	"	10,700	3.4	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
4	"	"	3.3	H	"	Bunde	"	Torpedo attack on Tulagi	10,000	10,000	10,000
4	"	"	3.4	H	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
7	"	10,500	3.3	H	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
8	"	"	4.0	H	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
13	"	"	2.8	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
24	"	10,500	4.3	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
25	"	"	3.0	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
26	"	"	4.4	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
27	"	10,500	3.8	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
						VT SQUADRON 1, FIGHTING 5, YORKTOWN 500-2 525.1 2.7 527.8 40.3 565.4 2.7 568.1 IS CORRECT. APPROVED: [Signature] COMMANDING					

Twilight turned to darkness and May 3 drew to a close. At Aola on Guadalcanal, Martin Clemens was finding it difficult to sleep. During the day, Clemens had learned that the Royal Australian Air Force personnel stationed at Tulagi as well as the AIF commandos had safely escaped just as the Japanese warships sailed into the harbor on the previous night. The AIF commandos had already sailed to Marau, farther down the east coast of Guadalcanal from Aola.

Clemens had already completed the following entries into his diary:

"Balus" arrives with RAAF crowd ex Gavutu. About 40 of them. Have food ready for them. They look all in. Three Jap transports have arrived. Very, very busy with RAAF and stranded Catalina crew. I cannot leave the beach and Japs could be here in two hours..." Periodically during the day, Clemens climbed the ladder to the lookout post at the top of a large banyan tree for a view across the bay toward Tulagi. He easily observed activity on and near the large transports that had arrived. Unknown to him, one of these transports was named the *Azumasen Maru*.

The lookout post functioned effectively as an air raid center. The sentry would sound a large conch shell whenever enemy airplanes were sighted. During the day, two Japanese float planes had appeared and strafed the Berande plantation north and east Aola, causing MacFarland great concern. He now made plans to relocate approximately 15 miles inland to Gold Ridge, high up in the middle of the island, much safer, and with a better view of Sealark Channel, Tulagi, and Florida Island.

MacFarland and everyone else (including Clemens) was concerned about the possibility of enemy troops landing on Guadalcanal. During the day and into the evening, many reports of such landings had been received. However, all of them turned out to be false alarms. It was the accumulation of all such sources of tension that inhibited Clemens from getting any sleep.

Overnight and into the morning of May 3 the *Yorktown* steamed resolutely north toward Tulagi. By dawn she was approximately 100 miles away. Ensign Francis "Red" Sanborn of Torpedo Five noted in his log: *"We were so close that even a TBD-1 could get there and back."*

It was after 0600 (Zone -11.5 time) when the call "Pilots man your planes" sounded in the ready rooms. Torpedo Five pilots made the usual mad scramble in the darkness to their planes. Engines were started, and the checklists were reviewed. The *Yorktown* maneuvered cleanly into the wind and began launching the Combat Air Patrol (CAP) consisting of Six Grumman F4F *Wildcat* fighters at 0631.

Lieutenant Commander (Lt. CDR) Joe Taylor's 12 TBD-1 *Devastators* of Torpedo Five were next in line to be launched to be followed by Lt. CDR William O. Burch's 13 Douglas SBD-1 dive bombers of Scouting Five and Lt. Wallace C. Shorts 15 SBD-1s of Bombing Five. Taylor's wingman included Lt. (j.g.) Radford "Pete" Denniston in plane number T-2 and "Red" Sanborn in T-3. The remaining tactical organization shown in the figure below.

Sanborn now watched intently as the deck officer wagged his hands to communicate above the roar of the engines. The plane pushers pulled the chocks on T-3. Sanborn jockeyed into position behind Taylor and Denniston. The folded wings of his *Devastator* were spread wide, locked in place with locking pins as they finished spreading, and checked they were

locked by the plane handlers. He then taxied to the takeoff spot where he observed Taylor in T-1 being launched at 0730. When his turn came, he accelerated his engine, released the brakes and then rolled down the flight deck with a full load of fuel and a one-ton Mark 13 aerial torpedo.

One by one the remaining TBD-1s were launched. Sanborn noted that the join up was fairly ragged ... "stringy" in his own words. However, all planes had joined up by the time Taylor had completed one counter-clockwise revolution around the *Yorktown*. The *Devastators* then headed north to the target area even as Scouting Five and Bombing Squadron Five were being launched. The entire attack group would then coordinate their efforts before they reached Tulagi and began their attacks.

Smudgy weather greeted Torpedo Five who had to dodge cloud banks and rain squalls as they flew at altitudes between 3,000 and 4,000 feet toward Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Finally the large island of Guadalcanal loomed ahead. Soon, they were flying over the southern end of the island. Sanborn observed that the landscape below didn't look very inviting.

Scouting Five flying over Guadalcanal at 20,000 feet was the first group to reach Tulagi followed shortly thereafter by Bombing Five and Torpedo Five. Burch surveyed the area and spotted what appeared to be three cargo ships in the harbor. One vessel was located off the northern coast of Tulagi, one off the small islands of Gavatu and Tanambogo to the east of Tulagi, and one to the south and east of Gavatu and Tanambogo.

Burch then assumed the function of coordinator of the *Yorktown* attack group. He divided his squadron into two divisions of six and seven SBDs, respective, and assigned each division one of the three cargo ships. He also allocated the third ship to Short and Bombing Five. As Taylor made his approach, he would be able to clearly identify the targets under attack by Scouting Five. He would then be in position to effectively judge which targets were suitable for torpedo attack and allocate them to his squadron accordingly.

Glancing down as Torpedo Five approached the northern end of Guadalcanal, Sanborn observed that plantations now dotted the landscape. Shortly thereafter Taylor's planes broke over the top of the mountains and were greeted with the view of Florida Island and Tulagi directly across Sealark Channel and to their left.

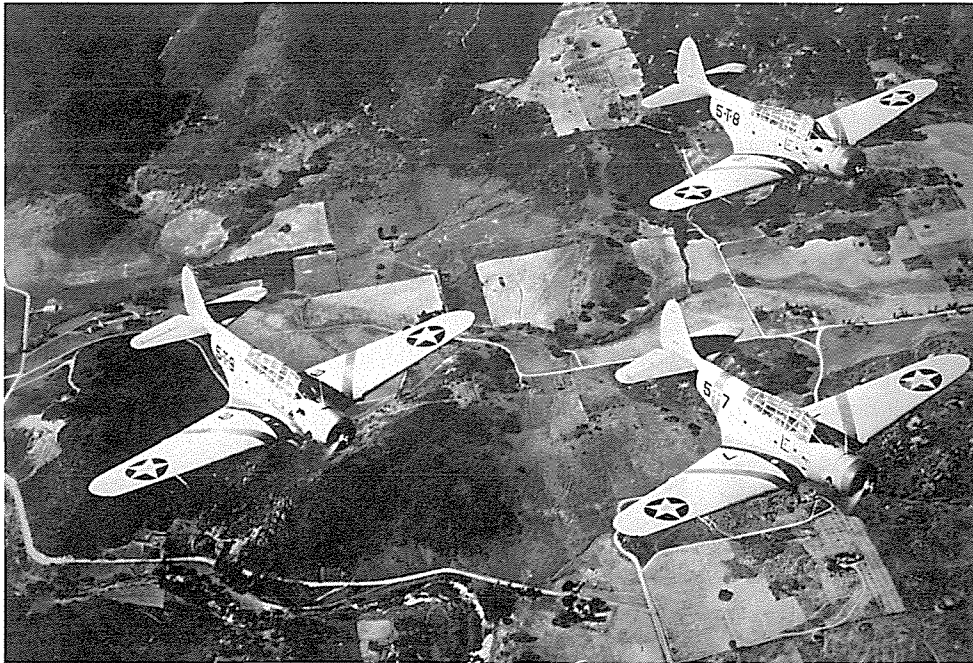
At the village of Aola on the northern coast of Guadalcanal,

TORPEDO SQUADRON FIVE, FIRST DIVISION

Section	Plane	Pilot	Radioman/Gunner
1	T-1	Lt. CDR Joe Taylor	Anguss M. Shira, ARM1c
1	T-2	Lt. (j.g.) Radford Denniston	J. Francis Chantiny, ARNM3c
1	T-3	Ens. Francis Sanborn	J.J. Burke, ARM3c
2	T-4	Lt. Albert B. Furer	Gerald G. Aulick, ARM2c
2	T-5	Ens. Anthony Schultheis	G.A. Sellers, ARM3c
2	T-6	NAP Edward Williamson	Joseph B. Crawford, ARM3c

TORPEDO SQUADRON FIVE, SECOND DIVISION

Section	Plane	Pilot	Radioman/Gunner
1	T-7	Lt. Edwin B. Parker, Jr.	J.J. Sullivan, ARM2c
1	T-8	Lt. (j.g.) Thomas Ellison	E.W. Jones, ARM3c
1	T-9	Gunner J. Livezey	D.D. Allen, ARM3c
2	T-10	Lt. Leonard E. Ewoldt	Raymond A. Machalinski, ARM2c
2	T-11	Ens. George Bottjer	Leo H. Kershaw, ARM3c
2	T-12	NAP Sid W. Quick	R.F. Egger, ARM3c



TBDs in flight over unknown land area January 6, 1941.

(McDonnell Douglas via R.E. Williams)

Martin Clemens heard the sound of the conch shell announce the approach of airplanes. This by itself was not unusual because the Japanese could appear several times on any given day. However, something was different today. Instead of the large round rising sun insignia, these airplanes bore a large white star insignia with a small red circle in the middle. These were American warplanes! (To avoid any possible confusion with the Japanese insignia, the small red circle was removed from the American insignia exactly one month later, for the Battle of Midway which spanned June 4-6, 1942.)

At 0845 Burch's SBDs pushed over and began their dives. As the aircraft hit moist, warm air during their descent, the windshields and bombsights fogged very heavily. At 3,000 feet Burch was able to see through the thin overcast and spotted what he thought was a large "heavy cruiser" and a "nest" consisting of a "light cruiser" and two destroyers moored nearby. The large heavy cruiser was actually the *Tama Maru*, the third cargo ship that had been allocated by Burch to Bombing Five. The light cruiser was actually the large minelayer *Okinoshima*, and the destroyers were the *Kikusaki* and the *Yuzuki*.

Burch abruptly changed his course and hoped that the rest of the squadron would follow him. His official action report notes that they did, scoring five hits and several near misses.

Postwar analysis by the Navy concluded that no hits were made. Most likely, this was a direct consequence of the problems encountered with the fogged bombsights.

At 0850 Taylor's division swung around to the South and West of Tulagi harbor, then headed North over Florida Island. After turning East and then South, the individual sections selected targets and initiated break out maneuvers for attack. Taylor and his section selected a large cargo ship (the transport *Azumasan Maru*) which appeared to lay at anchor cross-wise in the channel North of Tulagi.

The section then made their final approach to the target

from the East. Taylor, Denniston, and Sanborn steadied their aircraft at 50 feet above the water, fanned in toward the cargo ship, and dropped their torpedoes. Taylor banked and circled to the left, and began climbing while heading North over Florida Island and away from the pummeling anti-aircraft fire.

Sanborn was greatly surprised when he observed that the "anchored" target had gotten under way as the torpedoes began to drop! The *Azumasan Maru* then backed away from the menacing torpedo wakes. After he had released his torpedo, Sanborn banked T-3 to the left and began a circling maneuver away from Tulagi harbor. During this maneuver, he viewed what he believed to be his torpedo and one other fish pass in front of the bow of the vessel by approximately 20 feet. He also saw them subsequently explode in a towering mass of

sand on a stretch of Florida Island beach to the west of Tulagi.

After completing his circling maneuver, Sanborn then followed Taylor and Denniston north over Florida Island. He subsequently joined with his section and the rest of the attack group. Sanborn noted in his diary that this wasn't a text book rendezvous. Rather, it was "very ragged."

NAP Edward "Willy" Williamson flew in the second section of the first division. Prior to breakout, Williamson coordinated with section leader Lt. Albert B. Furer to make his attack on the aforementioned nest of warships including the large minelayer *Okinoshima* and the destroyers *Kikusuki* and *Yuzuki* that lay at anchor on the starboard side of the minelayer. This was the same group of vessels that was currently under attack by Scouting Five.

Williamson broke away from Furer's section, cut sharply to the East and flew over the Northern coast of Tulagi. He then turned slightly to the North and was able to line up the nose of his *Devastator* with the bows of the three vessels in the group. Flying at a altitude of 50 feet, he released his torpedo cleanly. The fish ran true, hitting the middle warship (the *Kikusuki* and then exploded. As Williamson banked away, his radioman/gunner Joseph Crawford, Aviation Radioman 3rd Class (ARM3c) strafed the enemy vessels with his .30-caliber flexible machine gun.

Six TBDs in addition to Williamson's attacked the same nest of warships. This included Furer and his radioman/gunner Gerald "Gene" Aulick, ARM2c. Aulick was awed by the intensity of the enemy anti-aircraft fire being thrown up at his plane as Furer lined up, pressed the torpedo release button, and retired from the scene.

While the first division was making their attack, Parker's second division had swung around slightly farther to the east over Florida Island. Parker's planes now turned south toward Tulagi and began to fan out to attack their targets. In plane

number T-10, radioman/gunner Ray Machalinski, ARM2c faced rearward ready to fire his flexible 0.30 caliber machine gun in case of attack by Japanese fighters. Off to his left, he saw a torpedo explode on a beach to the West of Tulagi. This may have been Sanborn's torpedo.

Ewoldt and one of his wingman Bottjer selected a cargo ship that appeared to be docked at a pier. The vessel of choice was actually the transport *Koei Maru*. It lay at anchor off the small islands of Gavatu and Tanambogo to the North and East of Tulagi.

Ewoldt continued to swing inland across Florida Island, then turned South to make a beam attack on the *Koei Maru*. Machalinski was beginning to realize that this torpedo run was unlike anything that had been practiced in peace time. He sensed that Ewoldt was making a "mad dash down the hill-side."

Ewoldt had no trouble coming around to the South and focusing on his target. Lowering his altitude to treetop level he bore in on the enemy. Soon he was within range to drop his torpedo, and happened to glance down over the side of his plane. To his surprise, he noted that he was still flying over trees!

Ewoldt continued on his course a bit longer. Looking over the side again, he observed that the trees were gone and the beach was visible, but the surf line had yet to be crossed. Glancing up, he ascertained that the target was now very close, because rust spots on the hull were readily visible. Making matters worse, Ewoldt appeared to be flying straight down the muzzle of a 3 or 4 inch gun that was slamming away at T-10 for all it was worth. He was so close that the Japanese could have knocked the TBD down with rocks. Fortunately, they continued to miss with their gunfire.

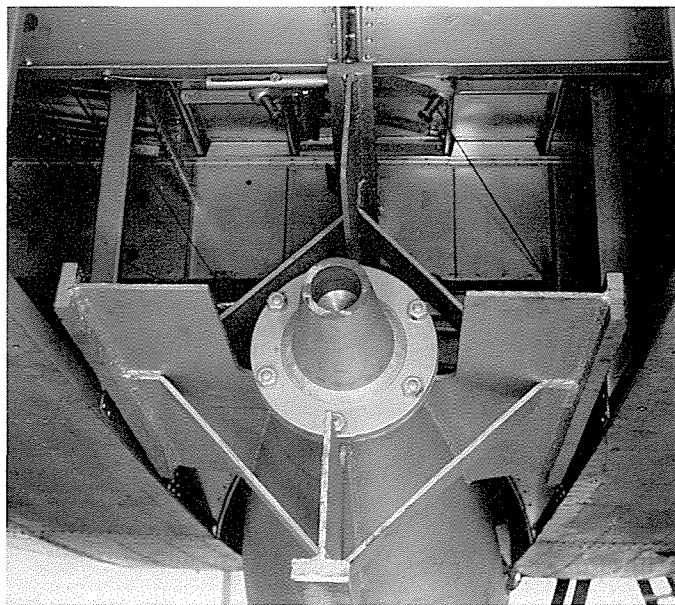
Certain that he was now flying over water, Ewoldt dropped his torpedo. In the intensify of the moment, he seriously doubted if the water was sufficiently deep for the Mark 13 to make the initial dive without hitting the bottom, or if there was sufficient distance for the warhead to arm before it struck home.

He now had no choice but to retire directly over the *Koei Maru* since he was too close to begin his turn. Ewoldt maneuvered T-10 safely out of the attack area, climbed to altitude, and joined up with the other members of the squadron and Air Group.

As the attack group continued to orbit the area away from Tulagi, other planes slowly joined up to swell the ranks. Ever vigilant, Furer suddenly noticed that one of the pilots in front was signaling him. It was Parker in T-7. Once he caught Furer's attention, "EB" effectively communicated by gesturing that Furer's torpedo was still attached! This was bad news indeed. Since the attack group had been launched at near-maximum range from the target, the fuel situation would be marginal under the best of circumstances. Given an extra ton of payload for the return trip, Furer's situation instantly became critical.

One obvious means of extracting himself from this predicament would have been to jettison the torpedo. However, this was not a valid choice. The Mark 13s were hard to come by in the Pacific at this time. This fish was too valuable to be simply wasted. Better to save it for another day, perhaps to sink a valuable Japanese capital ship. Furer would have to "bite the bullet," haul back to the *Yorktown*, and then land with a live torpedo.

Furer knew that landing on a moving aircraft carrier with a live fish could be done. In fact, the entire torpedo squadron of



Photograph of the underside of a TBD-1 with a mock Mark 13 aerial torpedo attached partly within the fuselage. This photograph was taken in June, 1937 at the Douglas Aircraft factory in California. After December 7, 1941, the Mark 13s were fitted with boxkite-like plywood stabilizers on the aft end of the torpedo and over the vertical and horizontal stabilizing fins. These devices were needed to dampen the torpedo's oscillation in pitch that occurred upon dropping and prior to water entry. Because of mechanical interference of the top of the plywood stabilizer assembly with the rear bomb rack, Bureau of Ordnance specifications required that a small saw cut be made in the plywood. (Harry S. Gann)

the USS *Enterprise* had done it once without mishap. That was the night of December 7, 1941, when Torpedo Six returned to the carrier after unsuccessfully attempting to locate and attack the Japanese fleet reported to be in the vicinity of Hawaii. However, no one in Torpedo Five had ever executed the maneuver in practice or "for real."

A neutral observer was present during the rendezvous. Commander (CDR) W. G. Schindler, Staff Gunnery Officer flew on the raid as an observer in one of the Scouting Five SBDs. As he would later note in a memorandum to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, he strongly emphasized the need for a quick rendezvous by the attack groups. This was "... imperative for mutual protection against enemy fighters." The clouds had been thick throughout the raid. Delays in completing the rendezvous increased the possibility of stragglers, and the potential loss of aircraft.

All stragglers finally joined up, and the attack group departed for the *Yorktown*. From this point on, Furer kept his eye on the fuel gauge and his fingers (figuratively) crossed. He now was tasked to maneuver an overloaded plane and also lean out the mixture to have enough fuel to get back to the *Yorktown*. This was nothing new to him or Aulick. Phrased another way, this was *deja vu*!

A little more than 3 months had passed since they were involved a similar predicament. On February 1, 1942, the *Yorktown* launched its Air Group against targets in Gilbert

Islands, including Jaluit and Makin. On this mission Torpedo Five carried 500-pound bombs rather than torpedoes. The target, the island of Jaluit, was at maximum range for the TBDs.

After finding Jaluit and dropping his bombs, Furer successfully locked onto the *Yorktown*'s electronic homing signal leaned out the mixture, and flew back to the carrier. If he was nervous, he certainly didn't let Aulick know. Rather, he continued to assure his radioman over the intercom that they were going to make it.

As they got closer to home, they flew near and over plane number T-8 which was down in the water. The pilot, Lt. (j.g.) Francis X. Maher had unfortunately run out of fuel. He and his crewmen, bombardier F.C. "Joe" Chitwood, Aviation Machinist's Mate, 1st Class (AMMlc)/NAP, and radioman/gunner R.L. "Roy" Ayers, ARM3c had broken out the three-man life raft. Aulick spotted the plane as he looked aft, and notified Furer.

Furer made a slow banking turn as Aulick threw down a "smoke pot" to mark the area for visual sighting by a rescue vessel. Aulick noted that two of the airmen were already in the raft, and the third was standing on the wing. They all waived as Furer completed his circling maneuver and then continued on to rendezvous with the *Yorktown*. In order to alert the *Yorktown* that a downed plane had been sighted without breaking strict radio silence, Aulick signaled the carrier in Morse Code, using his aldis lamp (blinker).

Furer landed safely aboard the *Yorktown* that day in February. He was followed shortly thereafter by Ellison, whose TBD was the last plane of the attack group to land. Ellison, like Furer, had overflown Maher and his crew. He had also seen a destroyer speeding back to the area to pick up the downed airmen.

Furer's skill enabled him to reach the *Yorktown* again this day in May. The attack group returned to the *Yorktown* and began to land aboard starting at 1001. All planes subsequently landed safely, including Furer's torpedo-laden T-4.

After landing, Bottjer and his radioman/gunner disembarked T-11, which was then pushed to the elevator and transported below to the hangar deck. Bottjer proceeded to head to the Torpedo Five ready room with the other pilots for debriefing and further instructions.

As it turned out, pilots and crewmen had very little time for lunch in their respective mess areas while their planes were checked, refueled, and rearmed with bombs (for the SBDs) and torpedoes (for the TBDs) for a second strike. Since Furer's T-4 was already armed with a torpedo, the fish was detached while the ground crew tested the torpedo release mechanism. It was found to function properly, leading to the conclusion that Furer had forgotten to turn on the electrical switch prior to attempting to release the torpedo at Tulagi. T-4 was re-armed with the Mark 13 and readied for the next strike.

The ground crew working on Bottjer's T-11 quickly observed that the plane had been hit by a small caliber bullet. This was comparable to a "shot in the dark" given the intensity of the heavier caliber flack that had been thrown up at the attack group. Furthermore, if Bottjer's experience in attacking the *Koei Maru* was anything like Ewoldt's, Bottjer might well have considered himself lucky that a well-placed rock hadn't landed in his cockpit as well.

The projectile had caused potential major damage, carrying away a bracket holding the aileron control cable sheave.

Fortunately there were redundant brackets, and Bottjer apparently experienced no problems controlling his plane in spite of the missing bracket. The ground crew began repairing T-11, hoping to have it ready for the upcoming second strike.

While at lunch, the subjects of the officer's and enlisted men's conversations included graphic descriptions of the intense Japanese AA fire. Pilot Sanborn would write in his diary, "...[we] gabbed about [the] terrific flak thrown up by the Js [Japanese]." Radioman/gunner Aulick would later block all details of the Tulagi experience from his mind except the very heavy and frightening AA fire that he observed all around him.

Meanwhile, on the hangar deck Machalinski was now wondering if he should have taken a break for lunch. This seemed to be the logical thing to do. However, if he stopped now, T-10 may not be ready for the upcoming strike on Tulagi. During the morning raid, the plane had developed generator problems. Fortunately Machalinski and Ewoldt had been able to return to the *Yorktown* safely.

Machalinski had tried to get the squadron's electrician, H. Earle, Electrician's Mate 1st Class (EMlc) to change the generator. Unfortunately, Earle was swamped with other problems. So, while other squadron members had gone to the mess to get something to eat, Machalinski decided that it was necessary for him to change the generator himself. This was proving to be a problem, since the engine was still very hot.

Never mind. The morning's breakfast of navy beans had not been particularly appetizing. He had not even taken the opportunity to go back for seconds.

Although he was now very busy with this very important electrical task, Machalinski had been able to get some feedback on the morning's raid. One of his squadron mates had stopped by to inform him that NAP Quick had been able to make a torpedo hit on a Japanese tender with several other ships along side. Much later, NAP Williamson would officially be credited with a hit on the same vessel.

Machalinski finished his very important repair task, but not with much time to spare. At 1106, a little more than one hour after the first planes of the morning attack group began to land, Short was leading 14 rearmed and refueled SBDs off the deck of the *Yorktown* for a second strike. He was followed 28 minutes later (at 1134) by Burch's 13 SBDs.

Evidently the repair of T-11 was not completed on time. (It is known from official records that the plane was eventually repaired.) Taylor was forced to go with 11 TBDs for the second strike. In a re-shuffling of personnel Taylor moved Ellison from Parker's wing position and replaced him with Ewoldt. Ellison then replaced Ewoldt as the leader of the second section in Parker's division, with Quick as his only wingman.

The 11 TBDs from Torpedo Five followed Burch. Taylor took off at 1150 took off and the squadron completed launching by 1215. All personnel joined up much more cleanly than earlier in the morning raid. Taylor guided his charges over the west end of Guadalcanal this time in search of Japanese warships, especially cruisers. What appeared to be a heavy cruiser was leaving Tulagi for Savo Island at a high rate of speed. The cruiser was in fact the minelayer *Okinoshima*, which was capable of making 20 knots.

Unknown to Taylor was the fact the Scouting Five had attacked the *Okinoshima* approximately one hour earlier. Two bomb hits were claimed, but the vessel in fact escaped any

damage. During their dives, the Scouting Five SBDs had been attacked by a Nakajima Type 95 reconnaissance floatplane (allied code name DAVE). The Nakajima was shot down by one of the Scouting Five SBDs before it was able to inflict any damage.

Now, an hour later, Taylor's six TBDs fanned out and then attacked in waves, dropping their torpedoes at a range from 2000 to 3000 yards while aiming for the port bow. Sanborn, one of Taylor's wingmen, bore in the closest to the Japanese before he dropped his torpedo. Unfortunately, the Japanese captain was very capable of maneuvering his vessel at high speed. As a result, the six torpedoes from the First Division were dropped abaft the beam of the *Okinoshima* as she turned away, and all six missed the mark.

While facing rearward in T-10 with his flexible .30-caliber machine gun at the ready, off to his left Machalinski had observed many splashes in the water as Taylor's attack continued in earnest. Because of the blue camouflage paint on the top of the TBD's wings and fuselage, he thought that the splashes meant that the squadron's planes were being shot down. In fact, he was observing the larger shells of the ships in the harbor hitting the water.

Parker's Second Division of five TBDs had no better success. The first four torpedoes that were launched the starboard bow and missed as a direct result of the *Okinoshima*'s adroit maneuvering. Ewoldt flew "tail-end Charlie" in Parker's group. With the rapid pace of events, Ewoldt wasn't concentrating on ship recognition. However, he was under the impression that the squadron was attacking a cruiser.

At a higher altitude and having already made his attack, Sanborn briefly surveyed the area from a safe distance as Parker's division made their attack. After "cruising around for a sight-see," he soon joined up with Taylor. Sanborn would later make the following entry into his log: *"The less said about this [second] attack the better, for I think we missed all shots. Although I do feel fine for having gone in farther than anyone in the wave."*

Taylor's group now began to climb over the center of Sealark Channel which separated Tulagi and Florida Island from Guadalcanal. The western end of this channel would be dubbed "Iron Bottom Sound" months later during the battle for Guadalcanal that began in August, 1942. The name was chosen because of the many warships, United States as well as Japanese, that were sunk there as a result of the numerous hard fought battles that were fought.

Hundreds of feet below, Ewoldt was finally in position to initiate his attack, as the swift maneuvering minelayer presented its port side rather than starboard. Ewoldt made his attack, hit the electrical release, but was uncomfortable because of the way in which T-10 responded. At this point, he notified Machalinski over the intercom to have a look around and see if the plane had suffered any damage.

Machalinski loosened his safety belt to enable him to stand up in the third cockpit. He scanned the wings and tail section and couldn't see any damage. Then, looking forward though the second cockpit, much to his surprise he saw that the torpedo was still attached. When he did not feel the plane rise as expected when a torpedo is released. Unfortunately, the electrical release mechanism had failed!

After learning what had actually happened, Ewoldt informed Machalinski that they were going to make a second

pass at which time the manual torpedo release would be used. Ewoldt put T-10 in a wide turn and began to attack again. This time he bore in much closer than before, through geysers of water from larger shells impacting the water. Machalinski began to wonder how close in they were going to fly. At the proper moment, Ewoldt pulled the manual torpedo release, and then retired from the scene.

As the torpedo raced away toward the port quarter of the minelayer, Machalinski was seated looking rearward. He noticed that the Japanese did not cooperate with the Americans. Rather, the enemy skipper simply paralleled the torpedoes course. Machalinski did not observe a torpedo hit or explosion.

Now, instead of joining up expeditiously with the attack group, Ewoldt and several SBDs chose to make strafing runs on a coastal schooner and other small craft. These vessels were under way between Tulagi and Savo Island. All of them employed the same characteristic defensive maneuver, going into and staying in tight circles. Machalinski was surprised that they were taking time to attack these small craft, since he thought the Air Group was only to attack the larger naval vessels. Looking back on the event, Ewoldt later concluded that making strafing runs on small craft with one forward-firing .30 caliber machine gun was a "pretty feeble way to fight a war." However, at the time, he felt that he might as well use whatever weapons he had.

Thousands of feet above the scene, Taylor had just turned his charges south toward the pre-designated attack group rendezvous area when he called in the clear with an airplane alert. All in the group were warned that an airplane was approaching. Suddenly, Sanborn saw a Japanese floatplane dead ahead and heading straight for him. This aircraft was the same type (Nakajima Type 95 "DAVE") that had attacked Scouting Five earlier in the afternoon.

Sanborn pressed the button to fire his forward-firing .30-caliber machine gun. Unfortunately, nothing happened! Realizing that he had forgotten to turn on the firing switch, he now completed the task. However, it was now too late to fire since the Japanese was almost on him. The Nakajima pulled out just in time to avoid a collision.

Taylor's charges climbed to a higher altitude only to be attacked again by the same aircraft...this time from below. Sanborn dove to follow the Nakajima, and the pilot responded by pulling up into a climb. Sanborn and the Japanese passed each other wheel-to-wheel! Shaken by this experience, Sanborn had great difficulty pulling out of his dive. About this time bedlam had broken loose, with TBDs in the middle of the fray. During the ensuing scramble, better than 1300 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition were expended by the pilots from the forward-firing machine guns. This gunnery was complemented by 800 rounds fired by the Torpedo Five radiomen/gunners.

In the middle of this insanity Sanborn heard a voice over the radio yell "Hold your fire." He thought that the speaker was Taylor, "calling his chickens off." In fact, the voice belonged to "Pete" Denniston, Taylor's other wingman, who was talking to his radioman/gunner Francis Chantiny, ARM3c Denniston was in a position to see that the Nakajima had been chased back to the safety of Tulagi harbor.

Sanborn pulled away from the chase and climbed to steadily to join the TBD directly above him, thinking that it was the skipper, Taylor. When he finally joined up, he saw that he was

with T-6, piloted by Williamson.

Back aboard the *Yorktown* the radio traffic from Torpedo Five was being monitored with great interest. Based on the information that was gleaned, Captain Buckmaster ordered four F4Fs to be launched to Tulagi to neutralize the Japanese airborne threat. F4Fs were already on the flight deck. However, Buckmaster's order was not transmitted to the deck officer, who was otherwise busy preparing for the return of the attack planes from Tulagi. In order to clear the flight deck for the returning aircraft the officer directed that the fighters be moved to the forward elevator and then taken below to the hangar deck.

Fighter pilots were standing by in the VF-42 ready room. One of them was Lt. (j.g.) E. Scott McCuskey, temporarily relieving one of the pilots who was now eating lunch. The call for the pilots to man their planes sounded in the ready room. Without information to the contrary, all expected to serve merely as "taxi drivers" to get the aircraft down to the hangar deck. Hence, McCuskey did not bring either his navigational gear with him as he jumped into the cockpit of the first available F4F.

Much to McCuskey's surprise, he soon found his plane and three others being readied for launch. As the engines were started and began to roar, Lt. (j.g.) Roy M. Plott, the ready room duty officer for the day, unexpectedly appeared on deck holding a chalkboard. (Plot was not flying that day because he was ill.) Written on it were the orders to proceed to Tulagi, as well as the course and distance to their destination. After all four pilots copied the navigational information from the chalkboard, the first *Wildcat* was launched at 1311. The remaining three fighters followed quickly in order.

With time running out, Ewoldt was making progress in catching up with the group even after expending valuable time

on the ad hoc strafing runs. Ellison observed that he was approaching and signaled for him to join up. Instead, Ewoldt broke away and headed back toward the target area

Ewoldt and one other SBD had decided to make one more "quick" strafing run on the small vessels. When finished, the two aircraft retired to catch up with the retiring attack group. The SBD was successful; Ewoldt was not. Although he had the throttle to the firewall Torpedo Five and the other squadrons disappeared into the broken clouds that lay ahead over Guadalcanal before he could close. He never caught sight of the group again.

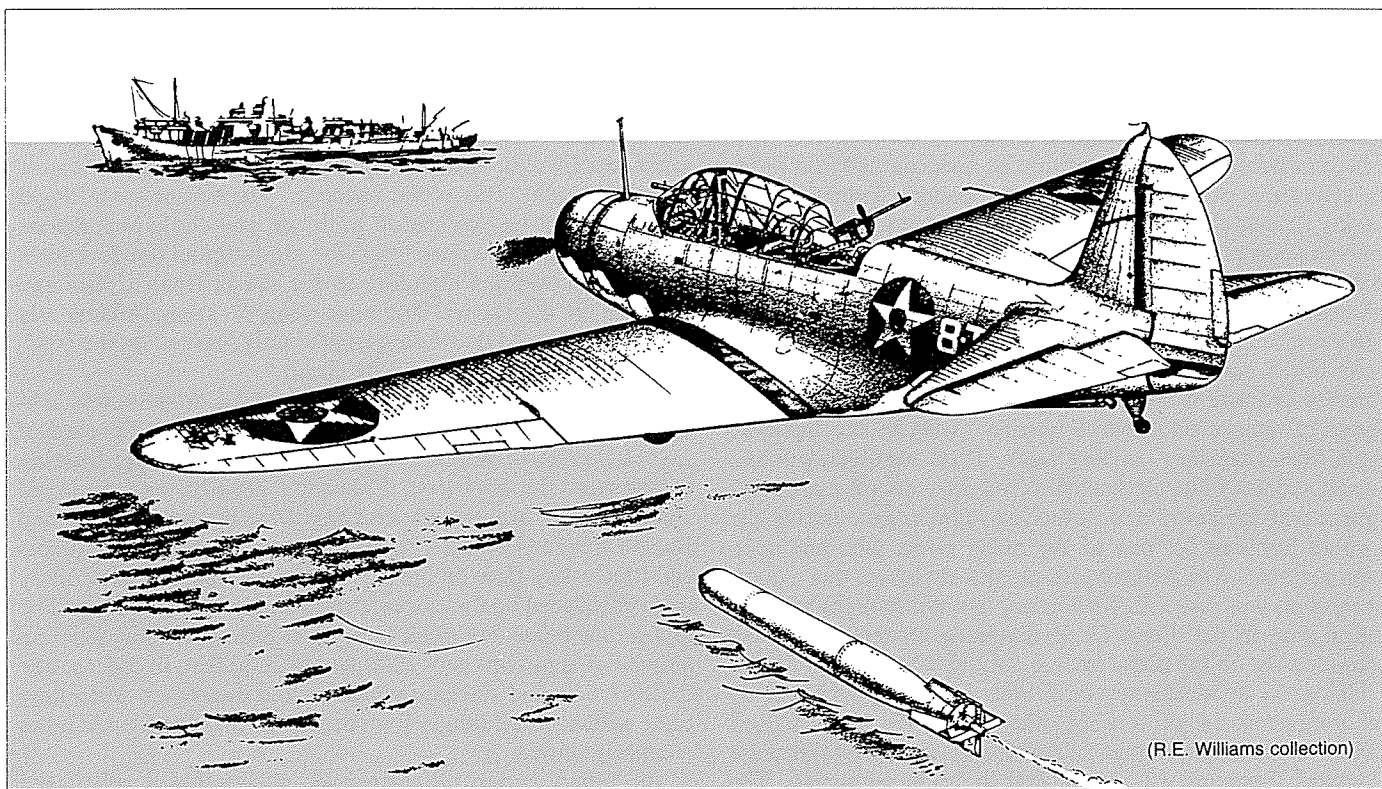
LOST AT SEA

Ewoldt was not dismayed. Once he cleared the high mountains of Guadalcanal he should be able to pick up the York Easy (YE) homing signal from the *Yorktown* on T-10's Zed Baker (ZB) receiver.

The ZB-YE was a simple-to-use radio aid to navigation and did not require an air crewman to assist in its use. Before a flight the pilot would be given a sheet with the ZB-YE information for that flight or for that day. It consisted of a circle divided into sectors of 15 degrees width. Each sector was marked with an arbitrarily assigned letter of the alphabet and a number that was the magnetic bearing of the center.

The ship at the center (in this particular case, the *Yorktown*) transmitted all the numbers continuously, each in its proper sector. When a pilot wished to use the ZB-YE, he would turn on his receiver, hear the letter of the alphabet on it, look on his ZB-YE sheet-of-the-day, determine which sector he was in, and then act accordingly.

This is not what happened. Ewoldt could not even hear the YE signal, even faintly, after T-10 crossed the mountains and



headed out to sea beyond the Southern coast of Guadalcanal. When Ewoldt alerted him of the problem over the intercom, Machalinski tried to "tune" the ZB receiver to home in on the signal. He too was puzzled, however, when he could not detect a signal.

Machalinski reported to Ewoldt over the intercom that the navigation signal was not present. At this point Ewoldt began to navigate by dead reckoning, using the plotting board. Unfortunately, when he arrived where the *Yorktown* was supposed to be, all he saw was the big, open ocean!

Shortly thereafter, the monotone drone of the engine was interrupted when Ewoldt requested over the intercom that Machalinski take a DF (direction finder) bearing to the *Yorktown*. This request was not technically possible to implement, since Torpedo Five had been ordered to remove the DF loop antenna and related gear on December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In response to Ewoldt's request, Machalinski communicated with the *Yorktown* electronically several times by transmitting the ZYSEN signal. This non-voice Z signal meant that T-10 was unable to receive the *Yorktown*'s YE homing signal. The hoped for electronic response from the *Yorktown* would have been a vector (heading) for T-10 to fly in order to intercept the carrier's position. Unfortunately, the *Yorktown* did not respond.

Without panic, Ewoldt began to perform an expanding square search for the carrier. This effort proved unsuccessful. With sufficient fuel remaining, Ewoldt now turned and headed North back to Guadalcanal to land on the beach.

Machalinski was scanning aft when he was suddenly startled to see several aircraft approaching from abaft the port beam. The intercom suddenly came to life as he informed Ewoldt "Fighters coming at us!". Having been alerted, Ewoldt now turned toward the oncoming aircraft in order to avoid a potential broadside from unfriendly guns.

Machalinski now quickly grabbed his aldis lamp (blinker) from the deck of the third seat cockpit (he always had this device plugged in electrically and ready for operation while airborne). Turning and facing the front of T-10. Over the number one or number two seat position he now counted four fighters streaming down in "follow the leader" formation. He quickly flashed the recognition signal F-Foxtrot. Even with the head-on approach, Machalinski thought that the aircraft might be Air Group 5 F4Fs, and hoped that his signal would be recognized as being friendly. He was relieved when the planes didn't fire.

As noted earlier, a small division of four F4Fs had been launched in haste from the *Yorktown* in response to the radio reports of attacks on Taylor's retiring TBDs by the Japanese single-float seaplanes. In this haste, Scott McCuskey found himself suddenly launched while acting as a taxi pilot after flying Combat Air Patrol and observing radio silence during the morning Subbing for one of the ready pilots who had been given permission to get some lunch, and not aware that a combat mission was possible, McCuskey had not brought his navigation gear to the Flight Deck. To make matters worse, the radio receiver on the plane he was taxiing was not operating!

Unknown to McCuskey until after launching and join up was completed, the pilots of the other three F4Fs were Lt. (j.g.) William N. Leonard, Ensign Edgar R. Bassett, and Ensign John P. Adams. Leonard was designated to be in command. The

group promptly agreed on a tactical organization with Bassett flying wing on Leonard and Adams flying wing on McCuskey. Leonard then vectored his group to Tulagi.

Leonard flew north until he crossed the southeast coast of Guadalcanal at Cape Henslow. He then flew west across Sealark Channel toward Tulagi. Soon, Leonard and Bassett encountered and attacked a group of three Japanese F1M2 Type 0 observation floatplanes. Leonard signalled to attack by rocking his wings. Bassett followed his leader down. Hampered by his inability to receive on his radio, and because he did not see the Japanese aircraft, McCuskey's section did not follow immediately.

In the ensuing melee, Leonard shot down two of the enemy aircraft, while Bassett dispatched the third. In the meantime, assured that no fighters were present to threaten the division from above, McCuskey and Adams descended to locate Leonard. They soon spotted the minesweeper *Tama Maru* steaming Northwest of Florida Island and heading North. Several strafing runs followed to finish off the work done earlier in the morning by Bombing Five. The *Tama Maru* was run aground on Florida Island and sank on May 6.

McCuskey next spotted the aging destroyer *Yuzuki* heading Northwest from Tulagi to Savo Island. He and Adams made several strafing runs and were soon joined by Leonard and Bassett. Leonard organized his division into strafing formation, and then executed four coordinated runs on the destroyer. The results were devastating; the captain and nine of the crew were killed, and 20 shipmates were wounded.

With the strafing attacks completed, Leonard retired across the western end of Guadalcanal and then headed southeast to reach the *Yorktown*. Leonard set a fast pace and McCuskey's section had difficulty keeping up with the leader. They approached and rendezvoused with Ewoldt soon after he abandoned his square search pattern.

As the *Wildcats* joined up, Ewoldt soon found Adams on his left (port) wing. Actually, Ewoldt thought that the pilot was McCuskey. Adams made what Ewoldt believed to be the signal "This heading." His opened hand was held vertically, edge to his face and moved quickly forward several times. This was great and Ewoldt smiled happily. He had interpreted Adams' signal to mean "This is the heading." He was now no longer alarmed about his navigation problem, and could concentrate on flying a straight course until the group found the *Yorktown*. He now focused his attention to the sea in front of him and scanned for the carrier. The next thing he knew, Adams was gone. He assumed that Adams had simply "turned on the coal" and disappeared in the distance ahead.

What actually happened is the following. Adams' was asking "Is this the correct heading?" After informing Leonard of Ewoldt's positive response that he was on the proper heading to intercept the *Yorktown*, Leonard's division had deployed symmetrically around the cruising *Devastator*. Leonard and Bassett flew on Ewoldt's right (starboard) beam, while Adams and McCuskey flew on his port beam. Bassett and McCuskey were positioned on the extreme right and left, respectively. The group flew below the thick layer of clouds, extending from an altitude of approximately 1000 feet to 2000 feet, in order to see the *Yorktown* and screening cruisers and destroyers when they were within visual range. Ewoldt was in front and leading the composite group.

As noted earlier, Machalinski was relieved when the

oncoming planes didn't fire. Instead, they sweep past to do "wing overs," and then joined up. Soon, he observed one pair of *Wildcats* was flying on each side of T-10. Machalinski did not recognize any of the pilots. However, he was elated to have their escort. In fact, he felt like the mayor of New York City riding down Broadway with an escort of police motor cycles!

If Machalinski (and Ewoldt) were glad to join with Leonard's division, McCuskey was likewise glad to join with the TBD. Specifically the size of the raft carried by the TBD was comforting. If all of the aircraft were forced to make a water landing, the F4F pilots could count on getting some room in the *Devastator's* raft. McCuskey had doubts if it was possible to retrieve his own raft following ditching. For starters, an electric gun sight had recently been installed on the F4Fs. This device had already proven to be a "head knocker" during rough landings. Additionally, the raft was stored directly behind the cockpit, and was accessible only when the pilot was out of the aircraft.

McCuskey was fully aware that Adams had made a water landing on April 1, a little more than one month prior to the Tulagi raids. Adams also remembered every detail of this near-fatal accident.

The occasion had been one of the very few squadron training flights aimed at staying acquainted with the F4F. They were practicing strafing on a smoke light target, making individual runs. When it was Adams' turn, everything in his plane went quiet as he pulled out of a dive at several G's. Even worse, they remained quiet. Since the squadron was on strict radio silence, he did not report his problem.

He now turned into the wind and tried to put his *Wildcat* down smoothly with flaps and tail hook down. Unfortunately he caught the top of a minor swell, and then hit the water rather hard. He had no shoulder straps, and without this constraint crashed into the metal electric gunsight. This instrument had recently been installed in place of the obsolete telescope sight.

Needless to say, the blow knocked him out, and he sunk below the surface of the water without having time to deploy his life raft. Fortunately, the rush of water allowed him to quickly gain consciousness and swim out of the cockpit with his parachute. The buoyancy of the parachute combined with his Mae West life jacket kept him from drowning.

Meanwhile above the waves, section leader McCuskey realized that Adams was not following him. Looking around, McCuskey saw the rudder of Adams' plane slipping under the waves. Turning his *Wildcat* around, he then started to make a run at it thinking that he had seen a submarine. Fortunately, he finally recognized Adams' white helmet bobbing in the water and didn't pull the trigger.

Lt. (j.g.) Richard G. Crommelin flew back to the *Yorktown*, which was approximately 30 miles away, and made a message drop. The destroyer USS *Hamman* was quickly dispatched to the scene. However, Adams was in the water for 45 minutes before it arrived. Bleeding quite freely over his right eye, he was very worried that sharks might reach him first.

His head injury required 18 stitches to close. The procedure was performed on the destroyer USS *Anderson*. Repair of some broken teeth had to wait until he resumed to the *Yorktown* 8 days later. One week later it was learned that Adams' problem was caused by a fuel tank liner failure, the first experienced by the squadron. The entire squadron was grounded until

the faulty liners were replaced

In T-10, Machalinski's elation over the arrival of Leonard's division was short lived. Since Ewoldt had not yet changed course, he correctly concluded that the F4Fs had joined up hoping to follow T-10 back to the *Yorktown*. He also assumed that Ewoldt had been throttling back in anticipation that the *Wildcat* commander would take over the lead of the entire group. This didn't happen, Machalinski realized all too well that he was participating in a classic exercise of the blind leading the blind!

Machalinski was now surprised to see what he assumed to be the lead plane's pilot (Leonard) occasionally pick up his microphone and apparently communicate with the rest of his formation. There was surprise indeed, since the *Yorktown's* radiomen were regularly impressed with the need for strict radio silence for obvious security reasons.

Machalinski was aware that the accompanying F4Fs were operating on an entirely different band of frequencies than the band assigned to the TBDs. Occasionally, he had helped "Red" Palmer, the Fighting squadron's radioman, set up their operating frequency. This involved the shifting of tuning units, both coils and tuning capacitors, to locate their frequency.

Ingeniously, Machalinski now removed his receiver tuning unit and replaced it with Fighting's possible operating frequency unit. He then dialed it to a setting, hoping to hear the flight leader (Leonard). Fortunately, the airborne RU receivers were of the TRF type, and not very selective. As soon as he heard Leonard, he cross-referenced the dial setting to a possible specific frequency using the dial and the frequency chart that was attached to the top of the RU receiver.

Machalinski had to perform several more tasks before full two-way voice communications with Leonard could be established. He had to set up his transmitter by replacing the existing tuning unit with one that covered Fighting's operating frequency. To set up he first had to turn on the LM (gear separate from the transmitter) and the frequency meter to get a crystal check point and a "zero beat" heterodyne with his master oscillator. Next, he had to tune the transmitter unit and then let out sufficient trailing antenna wire (the wire was reeled out and reeled in) to tune the antenna unit.

When all preliminary work had been completed, Machalinski knew instantly that he had selected the correct frequency when he successfully sent a message to Leonard. In plane language, he asked "What's the heading and distance to the ship?" Leonard never replied to T-10, but someone was heard over the airwaves saying "Did you hear that? They want to know the heading and distance to the ship."

Because Machalinski was busily occupied trying to maintain communications with Leonard, he did not observe that Adams now began to maneuver closer to T-10 to communicate visually with Ewoldt. Adams' action was precipitated when Machalinski's message confirmed Leonard's growing concern that the *Yorktown* had not yet been sighted. If Ewoldt had been heading in the proper direction, shouldn't the wide "eyes" of the dispersed scouting line have located the carrier by now? Since time (and fuel) was now running low, he directed Adams to query Ewoldt again about the heading.

Adams maneuvered closer to Ewoldt's port wing. Having attracted Ewoldt's attention, Adams now communicated in more precise terms than was the case during the earlier exchange. Both men used Morse code, tapping out dots and

dashes on their head with one of their hands. To his horror, Ewoldt now learned that Adams had initially wanted to know "Is this the correct heading?"

Adams relayed his findings to Leonard who quickly sized up the situation. The group had been flying below the cloud cover, assuming that Ewoldt was flying the correct heading. Now, since no one in the group knew the correct heading Leonard decided that it was necessary for the group to climb to sufficient altitude to pick up the YE homing signal as soon as possible.

Leonard communicated his plan to his pilots over the radio. He directed Adams to relay the plan to Ewoldt. For whatever reason, Adams did not receive Leonard's message. Unknown to Leonard, of course, McCuskey was unable to receive this message or any other message on his radio.

Meanwhile, on the far left side of the scouting line, McCuskey had continued to monitor his area of responsibility. Looking to his right to verify that he was maintaining station correctly with the other planes, he was very surprised when he saw Adams flying close wing on Ewoldt. He reacted by promptly beginning to join up.

For the reasons cited above, Adams and McCuskey both missed Leonard's initial message and follow-up signal to climb above the cloud cover. Adams was the first to notice that Leonard and Bassett had departed from the group. The three remaining planes in the scouting line then closed ranks and flew on for several minutes.

During this time, Adams and Ewoldt maintained their hand-tap method communications. Shortly thereafter wary of his low fuel situation, Ewoldt decided to turn and head north back to Guadalcanal and land near the beach. He "tapped out his decision to Adams and then proceeded to make the wide turn to the north.

The sea below was smooth but not glassy. Ewoldt saw no reason to make a powered landing with fuel remaining. Every minute in the air brought T-10 about one and a quarter miles closer to land.

McCuskey and Adams stayed with Ewoldt until they saw the *Devastator's* engine quit. Ewoldt then proceeded to make a good, smooth water landing.

Now, mindful of the criticality of his own fuel situation, McCuskey reversed course and led his section east toward Cape Henslow. Once he returned to this landmark he planned to take a course due south back to the *Yorktown*.

Acting on his own initiative, Machalinski began to get the life raft ready. On the TBD-1, the life raft was stored in the second seat position. The operational assumption was that the plane would always carry the full three-man crew. The task of readying the life raft would then be carried out by the second seatman.

There was no internal connection in the fuselage between the second and third seats of the TBD-1. The fixed portion of the canopy covered the top of the fuselage between the seats. Sliding canopy segments allowed the second seatman and the third seatman to enter and leave the aircraft separately. The narrow "tunnel" between the top of the fuselage and the fixed canopy provided the only inflight connection between seats.

Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a DF "loop" was mounted on the top of the fuselage between the seats. As noted earlier, the DFs had been removed on December 8, 1941. Otherwise, Machalinski would have been

required to remove the device himself (no easy task) before he could crawl across the top of the fuselage between the seats.

Leaving his parachute behind in the third seat, Machalinski crawled through the narrow opening and reached the second seat position. There, he struggled with the web belt that secured the life raft to the right side of the fuselage. Due to the delay, he did not have time to secure his seat before T-10 flared for the landing. The flare maneuver threw Machalinski into his seat, with the life raft resting in his lap. Shortly thereafter Ewoldt made a beautiful landing so smooth that Machalinski wasn't thrown out of the seat.

Ewoldt quickly unbuckled his seat belt. He jumped out of the aircraft and onto the starboard wing facing the aft end of the plane, pulling the toggle on one side of his Mae West, and began inflating the life jacket. Simultaneously, Machalinski leaped onto the port wing facing the front of the plane while holding the life raft and a bag of provisions. In the short span of several seconds, the aircraft nosed over due to the weight of the engine, and Ewoldt fell backward into the water. Machalinski bumped his rear end on the forward, leading edge of the port wing. With timeliness now very important, Machalinski had to let go of the provisions and give his full attention to inflating the life raft.

Ewoldt never considered himself to be very buoyant. Now, weighted down with a .45 automatic, ammunition, a holster and web belt, and a partially-inflated life jacket, he could do no better than float with the water at eye level. To make matters worse, his flying gloves became as manageable as boxing gloves as soon as he was thrown into the water. As a result he couldn't find the toggle to the other half of his life jacket.

Ewoldt did succeed in unbuckling and jettisoning his pistol belt. He spotted the retracted tail hook lying close along the underside of the fuselage of T-10. Grabbing hold with one hand and then the other, he was able to take several welcomed breaths of air, and get the second half of his life jacket inflated before the plane sank. Machalinski observed this and was concerned that his pilot was going to drown.

Machalinski had observed Ewoldt's initial difficulties in the water. Shortly after T-10 sank, Ewoldt himself sank several times and then surfaced spewing sea water from his mouth, fighting to stay afloat. Machalinski saw this and again worried that Ewoldt was going to drown. However, Machalinski had his own concerns because the life raft had inflated upside down. Nevertheless, he was thankful that the raft was fully inflated and that the CO₂ bottle had not torn a hole in the fabric. He had previously witnessed such an occurrence on the *Yorktown* hangar deck during an inspection. It appeared that the aviation mechanics had trouble storing the life rafts in their covers and would sometimes roll and pound them on the deck to make the roll tighter and compress the raft.

Fortunately, within 2 minutes from the time that T-10 landed Machalinski was able to hoist Ewoldt onto the raft. After exhaling salt water and then taking deep breaths, Ewoldt queried "What happened to the radio?", referring to the loss of the homing signal.

Machalinski reasoned that the co-axial cables used with the rather primitive VHF adapter ZB equipment of the time had shorted out. These cables were constructed using dielectric beads to insulate the inner wires from the outer wires. If cables were bent during installation of the ZB equipment in the aircraft, the beads could eventually separate and cause an electri-



Shown are two views of the cramped radioman/gunner's third seat position in the TBD-1 (National Archives)

cal short with the inner and outer wires. Machalinski learned the true cause of the loss of the *Yorktown's* homing signal (discussed at the end of this article) 50 years later during a meeting of the *Yorktown* (CV-5) club.

The taste of salt lingered in the mouths of both aviators as the necessary housekeeping tasks were set up. The only items on the three-man raft that remained were the oars, a hand pump, and a small square of rubberized fabric covered with "some vile stuff" as they found out later. The survival kit, which was tied to the life raft, had been lost. Ewoldt's small private kit which he carried in his pistol belt had sunk when the belt (and .45 automatic) had been jettisoned. The prognosis certainly was not good, to say the least.

To his surprise, Ewoldt found a short piece of fishing line in his pocket. Evidently, he had failed to place it in his private kit (now lost). Along with one of the oars, Ewoldt had the elements of a makeshift sea anchor. Hoping that the *Yorktown's* radar had noticed the position where T-10 ditched, Ewoldt reasoned that the raft should keep station in the vicinity where they landed.

Ewoldt tied the fishing line to one of the oars, and placed the oar in the water, hoping that the "sea anchor" would work. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that the experiment had failed. In retrospect, it was perhaps wishful thinking that

the *Yorktown's* radar could ever have tracked T-10's final trajectory accurately in the presence of significant sea clutter.

Although Ewoldt knew that they had landed south of Guadalcanal they were too far south to see the island when they were still airborne. He now found himself unable to observe anything that would yield useful information on the raft's direction. They had no compass and the sky was overcast, hence, they couldn't tell direction by the sun. (Ewoldt had included a pocket compass in his mini survival kit which had been lost when he jettisoned his .45 automatic while struggling in the water. The overcast sky was actually a blessing, since both men would have been 'fried' if the sun shown upon them in full strength.) They didn't even know which way was North, much less the direction of the wind. And even if they had precise knowledge of directions, there was no way to determine either the speed or direction of the current.

Based on his preflight briefing and previous study of charts, Ewoldt believed that both the current and prevailing winds were from the northeast. If so, the prevailing wind and current would tend to push the raft southwest. The nearest land in that direction lay approximately 1,500 miles away. Obviously, the raft was neither provisioned nor equipped for that kind of cruise.

There was no reason to row, either to Australia (which was too far) or toward Guadalcanal (which was against the wind and current). Without knowing which way was north, they might have rowed in circles and wouldn't have even known it. For the time being, Ewoldt decided to keep status quo. Without food or water, conversation was minimal. Machalinski recalled that he had earlier skipped lunch in order to change the generator on T-10 instead. If he had only known that his breakfast of navy beans would be his last meal of the day, he certainly would have gone back for seconds!

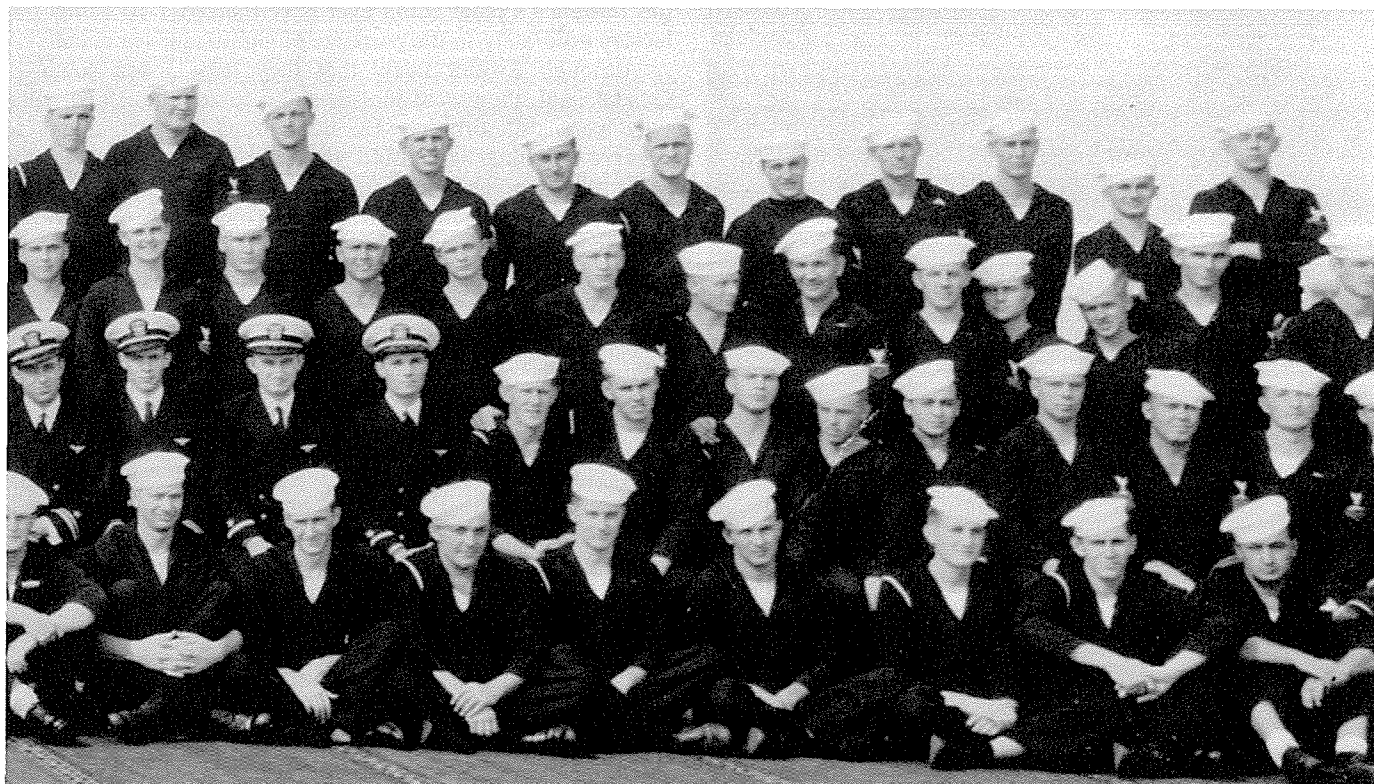
Excitement came that night. The sky became cloudy, the heavens opened up, and torrents of water rained on the lonely raft and occupants. Ewoldt and Machalinski eagerly cupped their hands and drank till they almost popped. They also took off their undershirts and attempted to soak up the rain water. Since the shirts were thoroughly impregnated with salt water, they soon stopped trying to suck the water.

Before the rain ceased, they also caught rainwater in the aforementioned square of fabric. However, when they tried to drink the liquid, they found that was had been contaminated with the "vile stuff" covering on the fabric. The water was undrinkable.

In spite of their precarious predicament, Ewoldt and Machalinski would have been buoyed at least a trifle if they could have read the entry for the day Martin Clemens' diary:

"We see at Aola that some sort of Allied attack is developing. Shipping in Tulagi in trouble. 12 bombers at 8:00. 12 dive bombers at 10:00. 4 Fighters at 12:30 - 2 Catalinas at 16:30. At least 4 raids, and probably more. Hurrah! Tulagi in flames. Excellent show, but how about some land forces. We count up to 14 ships driven out of Tulagi, some in poor shape. Their A.A. fire seems poor. Several sink between Tulagi and Savo. See the flash of glistering torpedoes launched from single-engined bombers."

Conversely, they would have been depressed if they knew what CDR Schindler was going to include in the aforementioned memorandum that he prepared and delivered to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet later in May. Schindler was



present to observe the afternoon's bombing and torpedo attacks as well as the morning's activity. The memorandum included the following salient points:

"... Dive bombing and torpedo accuracy was poor. Three attacks by each [bombing] squadron were required where one should have sufficed. This was the first time in a year that VT5 had dropped a torpedo..." ...No efforts should be spared to afford task forces at sea with daily gunnery practices of one form or another..." *"... I submit that had our bombing and torpedo accuracies been up to peacetime standards, the enemy losses would have been tripled. And had the task forces had opportunities for adequate gunnery training the peacetime standards would have been maintained if not surpassed even considering the hazard of combat..."*

As the night of May 4 turned to day, a surprise awaited the aviators. The overcast still hung over the ocean, keeping the intensity of the Sun's rays at a level that could be endured. The pair soon had uninvited guests—sharks. Machalinski recalls that there were many swimming in the area Ewoldt and Machalinski both recall one in particular, a 10-to-12-foot shark with a l-o-n-g dorsal fin that looked very sharp!

For a long time, the shark lay to with the raft, with its nose about a foot from the raft. It did nothing but look at the occupants, and kept on looking.

The initial reaction by Ewoldt and Machalinski was to ignore him (or her). Ewoldt sized up the situation and felt that they should not do anything that would or might stir the shark to action. He had no desire to play no-limit poker with THAT creature. The stakes were too high, and the shark held all of the cards. Whacking at or prodding him would have just caused him to back off a foot or two, just enough to be out of range. More likely this would have caused him to get aggressive, with potential fatal consequences.

The raft's occupants now spent protracted periods of time staring at the shark, eyeball to eyeball. Ewoldt had never before (or since) seen the look of such pure evil in the face of any creature on the face of the earth.

After some time, the oversized fish evidently decided either to use the raft as a back scratcher, or to capsize it. It submerged under the raft, then came up and gave the occupants a very good jolt. They soon surmised that if it continued to hit at the raft, or rubbed it with its' fin, it could very well rip the fragile craft apart.

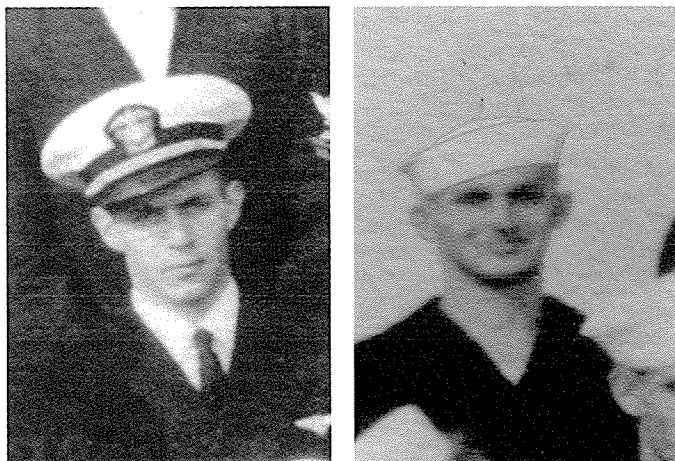
Now that the adversary now had taken the offensive, Ewoldt realized that they had to do something that would probably be a once and only act. The crew's passive strategy promptly turned proactive.

The aluminum oar was the closest thing available onboard that resembled a whaler's harpoon. By default, it became a harpoon. Considering the blade to be the business end of the weapon, Ewoldt assumed the best Nantucket whalers position that a flexible rubber life raft would permit. With the shark keeping station very close to the raft, he drew back his missile. With all of his strength he let it fly, landing in the creatures left eye. Simultaneously, Machalinski whacked with great force at the predator with his oar. Fortunately, neither oar was damaged.

This aggressive action surprised the shark. The shark's reaction surprised Ewoldt. He swapped ends with a vigor that churned up a flurry of water and spray that rocked the raft. He then withdrew to a safe distance of about two shark lengths, and appeared to ponder the situation.

After approximately one hour, the uninvited guest gave up and left the scene. The exhausted occupants of the raft now breathed a collective sigh of relief.

As the hours in the raft slowly passed, Machalinski would



(Opposite) Segment of official Torpedo Squadron Five photograph taken when the Yorktown was at Bermuda in July 1941. Lt. Edwoldt is in second row, second from the left. Raymond Machalinski is in the top row, second from the right. (Capt, Tom Ellison, USN Ret)

(Above left) Lt. Leonard E. "Spike" Edwoldt. (Above right) Raymond Machalinski. (section blowup from the squadron photo opposite)

(Aboveright) Raymond A. Machalinski (cropped from the squadron's Bermuda photograph)

think about earlier times. Born in Erie Pennsylvania, his father had tragically been killed in an industrial accident. Machalinski was 7 years old at that time.

His older brother, Al, was old enough to join the Navy. (He later retired after 30 years of service at the rank of Commander.) Ray, his sister Rose (13), and brother Max (10) were raised at Saint Joseph's Home in Erie.

After completing high school Rose and Max settled in the Chicago area. Ray joined them later, after his sister had completed training as a registered nurse, and Max had advanced to a grocery store manager's position with the National Tea Company.

Ray finished high school in Chicago, was then employed by the National Tea Company, and became a manager in 2 years time. Stores were small in those days. The manager's and clerk's apron served as shopping carts as the employees accompanied the customers around the store. Even though the store was small, Ray would have been glad to be back there on the job, rather than being imprisoned as he now was on the cramped, uncomfortable raft.

Later in the day, unknown to Edwoldt and Machalinski the prevailing winds shifted. Instead of coming from the northeast, they now shifted to the southeast. The equatorial current normally ran in a southwest direction. Even if Edwoldt could have somehow detected a change on the direction of the wind, he would not have been able to project what effect the change in the wind would have on the course of the raft. As noted earlier, he had no reference frame in which to measure direction either by wind or current, or to determine if the raft was moving at all.

During the second night, Edwoldt and Machalinski were very uncomfortable as the wet seas splashed against the raft. At times, Machalinski felt that he was "freezing". Otherwise, the

night was uneventful.

As the third day (Wednesday, May 6) dawned, the protective haze of Tuesday had not dissipated. The full strength of the sun was again not felt by the raft's occupants. Even so, since they were drifting within 10 degrees of the equator, they frequently had to douse themselves with sea water using their cloth flying helmets.

Early in the morning, excitement abounded as Machalinski sighted two vessels "lying to" in the distance. Machalinski immediately alerted Edwoldt of the sighting Machalinski promptly took the oars and began to row while Edwoldt waved his "Mae West" survival jacket.

Concluding that the raft wasn't making much headway and that he could row faster than Machalinski, Edwoldt soon took over the oars and instructed his partner to try and attract the ship's attention. With his back to the ship and with new-found adrenalin pumping in his veins, Edwoldt began rowing to the area in anticipation that the short-lived ordeal was now over.

Soon, one of the two vessels was observed steaming rapidly toward the raft. As the vessel closed range, with the starboard side facing the raft, Machalinski began to discern the features of the superstructure. Clearly, there was a single stack with a definite rake to the top.

Machalinski now had some practical concerns. The destroyer was of a smaller class of ship. He felt chagrin, since he would probably have to swing a hammock for berthing. Also, the rations were probably sparse, and the ride would likely be rough on the high seas. All in all, it would most likely be a long time before he could rejoin the squadron.

As the destroyer continued inbound, Machalinski carefully stood and began to wave his Mae West vigorously until the stern of the vessel became visible. Then, he abruptly stopped. Instead of the Stars and Stripes, he saw the Rising Sun rippling in the breeze!

Noticing that Machalinski was being strangely quiet, Edwoldt asked "What's the matter? Machalinski responded "I don't believe it's one of ours." Stopping his rowing and turning around to look. The raft was now nearly aligned on the starboard beam of the destroyer, close enough such that the features of the vessel could be seen clearly.

The destroyer had the unmistakable S-shaped bow, a characteristic of many Japanese warships. Out loud, Edwoldt positively identified it as Japanese. He was as sure as he would be if he had first saw her flying the Japanese Rising Sun ensign or had seen the face and eyes of the skipper on the bridge.

Up to this point in time, no formal prayer meetings had been conducted on the raft. All things being considered, this was certainly a time for personal meditation on what might have been, and what might lie ahead. Edwoldt's thoughts were brief and specific: "This is the end of the war for us, Chum. A prison camp—if they see fit to take the trouble to send us to one.

Unfamiliar with the Geneva Convention and now expecting to be picked up and interrogated, Machalinski asked Edwoldt what they could say. He didn't get a response. Sitting down, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his pocket knife. Attached to the knife was a memento of a past liberty day. That particular day, a pleasant one, had been spent at an amusement park in Virginia Beach, Virginia. For two bits (a quarter) he was able to fashion an aluminum trinket giving his name, ship (USS Yorktown), and squadron (VT-5). It was circular in shape, with a five-pointed star in the middle.

He was afraid that this information was classified, and he didn't wish to compromise the carrier and the Navy. He slipped the pocket knife over the side of the raft as the destroyer was approximately 100 yards away with her port side facing them.

The vessel now made a turn to the starboard, putting the raft on her port beam. Keeping her distance, she came by slowly at which time Machalinski observed many of the crew topside, leaning on the lifeline. The image of the Americans in the raft must have been pitiful. A thought flashed through his mind that this couldn't happen on a United States warship. If it did, the bosun would have the crew members put on report for leaning on the lifeline!

The destroyer suddenly stopped. Machalinski began to con-jure up and dread a steady diet of fish heads and rice for many years to come. No sooner had he begun to worry about that issue when the vessel unpredictably started to move again.

It soon became very clear that the destroyer was going to bypass by the stranded aviators without picking them up. At this point, a new thought flashed through Machalinski's mind. A diet of fish heads and rice was better than nothing wasn't it? After all there were no rations or water on the raft. No one could blame the Japanese skipper for not stopping. Everyone knew that a ship dead in the water was a sitting duck for a salvo of torpedoes from the ever-present submarine that potentially was lurking in the area.

As the destroyer continued to cruise by slowly, Machalinski noticed her rear gun turret swing to and fro. Now, the thought that the Japanese were going to use the raft and occupants for target practice entered his mind! Why not break up the monotony of a long cruise with some much-needed target practice? The alternative would be to wait until she returned to home port, and then go through the chain of command to request a fleet tug to pull a target for gunnery exercise.

Ewoldt too fully expected that the Japanese were going to machine gun the raft as they departed. In the back of his mind, though, he hoped that the Japanese Navy was a cut above the Army, which committed major atrocities in Asia and the Philippines.

Neither occupant of the raft spoke a word. Then, suddenly,

the Japanese got under way in a hurry. The destroyer was soon doing about 35 knots, kicking up a wake higher than her fan-tail heading back to a rendezvous with the other ship on the horizon. Both vessels then disappeared into the partial haze. This did not mitigate Machalinski's apprehension. (Later on in the war, Ewoldt heard from an unsubstantiated source that a Japanese destroyer in the area had been sunk by U.S. aircraft that day. If true, the destroyer may have detected the approach of aircraft and promptly fled the scene.)

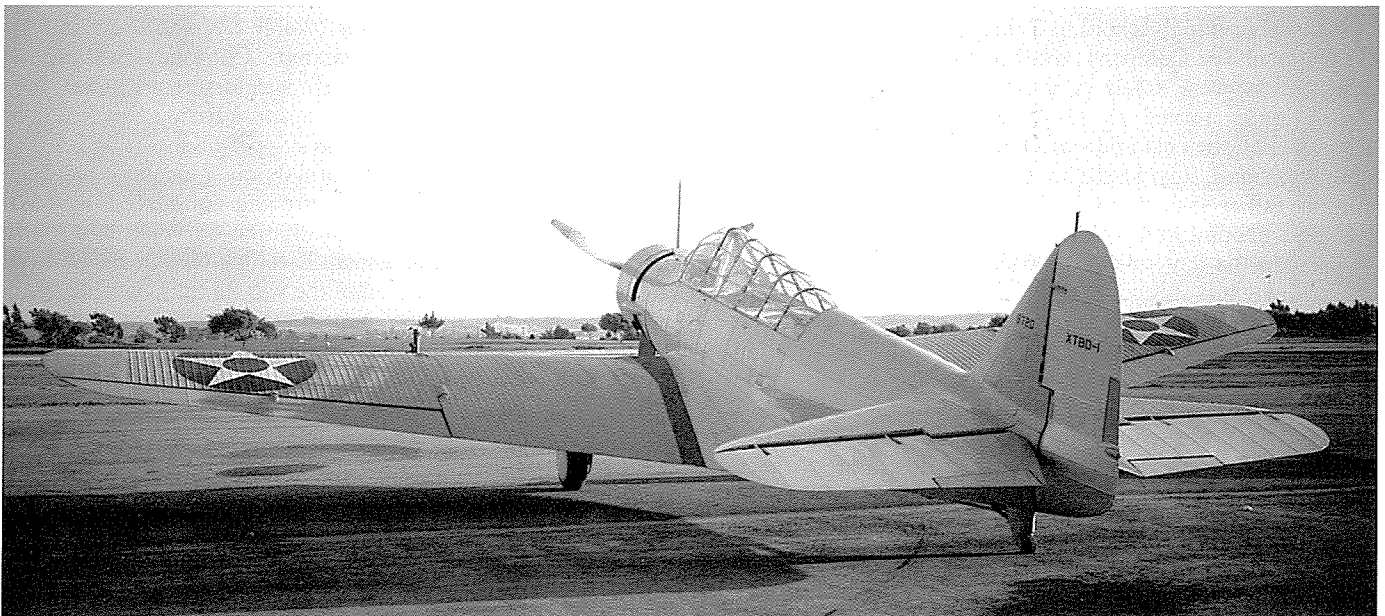
Now Machalinski feared that the Japanese would play hide and seek, with both ships having a chance to shoot. Fortunately, his fears were unfounded, since the ships never reappeared. For many years after this incident, Machalinski wondered about the United States' policy regarding enemy survivors at sea. He liked to think that the United States picked up all survivors, rather than leaving them stranded or gunning them down in cold blood.

A cat supposedly has nine lives. At this point, Ewoldt and Machalinski were not sure how many lives in a cat's budget that had already used. They soon observed that some of the residual haze had burned off. The Sun's rays now bathed them with greater intensity. The reluctant voyagers were soon blistering hot. Even the occasional swells that rolled over the sides and into the bottom of the raft provided little relief from the heat.

As noted earlier, both men had managed to save their flying helmets during the chaos of the post-ditching ordeal. This headgear was now used to bail out the water in the raft. Early on they feared that the bakelite cases around the earphones would crack, and that the pieces might puncture the raft. For this reason, the earphones had been extracted and ditched over the side.

The inflatable raft would lose air slowly. Machalinski was

The Douglas TBD-1 was the U.S. Navy's first monoplane torpedo plane. Ordered in 1934, it was obsolete by the start of World War II but served well until more advanced models were available. (McDonnell Douglas via R.E. Williams)



conscious of the need to keep it inflated as necessary.

Keep the raft inflated! This was easier said than done. A hand pump was available on the raft to be used to augment the initial CO₂ inflation. Machalinski observed that it was more like a toy used to inflate a volley ball or some small objects. The collar at the top was made of wood. It soon swelled making it impossible to pump air into the raft or move the handle.

The pump lay swishing around in the water at the bottom of the raft. Neither Ewoldt nor Machalinski could detach the device from the valve in the raft. Before long, the metal rusted, and they became fearful that they might pull the valve stem from the valve if they continued their efforts to detach it. In addition to the pump, there were plastic-encapsulated instructions and a patch kit for the raft. Machalinski could never forget the irony in the following instruction: "Dry surface thoroughly before applying patch."

Looking skyward, Machalinski's thoughts drifted to one of his greatest interests—flying. While still in Chicago, he pursued that interest in earnest. One was able to solo with as little as 8 hours of instruction those days. Even though flying was expensive, he had saved enough money to get several hours of solo time.

In December, 1937, the American gunboat USS *Panay* moored in the Yangtze River near Shanghai was sunk by Japanese dive bombers. Following the broad publicity of this incident, Machalinski began thinking seriously about joining the Navy and hopefully having a career in flying. In May of 1940, at age 21, he did indeed join the Navy. After completing boot camp at Great Lakes, he was assigned as a student to Aviation Radio School at NAS San Diego.

With his schooling completed, he then received orders to report to the USS *Yorktown* in January, 1941, and was ultimately assigned to Torpedo Five. And now 16 months later, instead of flying free in the vast reaches of the sky, he found himself bobbing aimlessly like a cork in a very large ocean.

By this time, there were more clouds about than earlier in the morning. Suddenly, out of the blue, Ewoldt pointed up in the sky in the general direction of north, remarking "Look! Land!" Looking in the direction that Ewoldt was pointing, Machalinski discerned a darker area at the top of the clouds. However, he didn't see anything that looked like land.

Machalinski thought to himself "Oh no! He's starting to flip!" When Ewoldt suggested that they start to row, Machalinski readily agreed figuring that the exertion would be good for his leader. Perhaps this would make him snap back to reality. However, as Ewoldt broke out the oars and they both began rowing, Machalinski began to make out the lines of an elevation. He now recalled that it is typical at sea to find clouds about an island.

The landfall had to be Guadalcanal. Perhaps an eddy in the current moving southwest between Guadalcanal and San Cristobal Island had swept the raft north toward Guadalcanal. Or perhaps a favorable wind combined with the eddy had done the job. At this point, Ewoldt and Machalinski didn't care what caused their good fortune. They now had to focus their energy on reaching land.

They rowed for the remainder of the day. As night fell they could see that progress had been made. They now agreed to row in shifts, with Machalinski taking the first shift.

Having exerted himself throughout most of the day, Ewoldt fortunately had no trouble sleeping soundly in the cramped

confines of the raft. He did so in spite of the discomfort from the cold sea water that regularly spilled over the top of the raft and into the bilges. Since Machalinski was occupied full time with the rowing, and Ewoldt was asleep, the bilges continued to fill. On the previous nights, when neither occupant could sleep soundly, the bilges were regularly bailed out using the cloth flying helmets as pails.

Ewoldt was awakened by Machalinski at approximately 4:00 AM on Thursday, May 7. Estimating the time of day by observing the position of the stars, Ewoldt deduced that his radioman had been rowing for a long time. Upon questioning, Machalinski admitted that he had wanted to surprise his pilot/captain by finishing the job during his shift. He had not intended to awaken Ewoldt until he hit the beach. However, the distance to be rowed was farther than he had initially estimated. He now had his fill of rowing, and needed relief.

Ewoldt rowed until dawn, getting close enough, they thought, to select a spot to land. They chose what appeared to be a flat delta, overgrown with tall weeds. It was likely the mouth of a valley at the bottom of the mountain.

Ewoldt was now joined by Machalinski in rowing. They rowed and rowed until they were close enough to see that the "weeds" were actually full-grown palm trees! This was just another example of how deceiving apparent distances at sea can be.

As the noon hour approached, it was possible to see the surf breaking on the beach. There was little wind at this time. However, Ewoldt knew that the strength of the surf when viewed from seaward could be deceptive. Hence, they approached the beach with respect and caution.

Ewoldt moved to the stern of the raft and rowed while Machalinski manned the bow. As soon as the raft was in the surf, Ewoldt planned to go over the stern, try to get his feet on the bottom, and then steer and push. At times, he oared back toward the sea. Finally, they were able to ride a breaker over the reef and into a lagoon of green water.

The raft remained upright when it landed on the leeward side of the reef, and the occupants were not spilled into the water. As soon as the raft stabilized, Ewoldt went over the side as planned. However, as his feet hit bottom, they were about as helpful as two rubber bands!

Fortunately, the swells and eddies in the lagoon were very mild, and Ewoldt did serve as an effective drogue. Still manning the bow, Machalinski was able to spot a stream of water emptying into the sea. Over the side he went, as his feet hit sand, not water. He started to sprint toward the stream, but collapsed after only a few steps. Undaunted, he remained determined to get to the stream to get a drink of water. Literally dragging himself, he reached his objective and sucked in a mouthful of water.

Suddenly, he heard Ewoldt cry out a warning about malaria. Machalinski didn't know anything about malaria. However, he promptly spat out the water. Having done so, at least his mouth now felt refreshed. All was not perfect. However, at last the lonely ordeal at sea was over! □

To be concluded in the Summer Journal
