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HUMAN BALLAST SAVES CARRIER IN TYPHOON

THEIR WEIGHT FOILED DEATH

By Rembert James
Associated Press Foreign Staff

ABOARD ADMIRAL HALSEY'S THIRD
FLEET FLAGSHIP IN WESTERN PACIFIC

Hundreds of men, using the weight of their bodies as ballast, tipped the scales of fortune to save a sturdy little escort carrier from capsizing when she was caught by the worst typhoon of 1944 in the Western Pacific.

Two civilians who were on the carrier told about it today during a visit aboard this flagship.

They were Charles P. Corry, Associated Press war photographer, of Hollis, Long Island, N.Y., and Philip Heisler, war correspondent of The Baltimore Sun.

Corry laid down his camera-- something a photographer rarely can persuade himself to do-- to join Heisler and 300 sailors on the hangar deck during the height of the storm to provide 45,000 pounds of shifting human ballast against the roll of the ship.

Slipping and skidding through sea water and gasoline inside the

half-dark hangar deck, the men ran back and forth for hours to place their weight where it would do the most good. Some of the men prayed, some of them swore. But all of them sweated as they fought the storm with the weight of their bodies.

"I Was One Who Prayed"

"I was one who prayed--and plenty hard," war correspondent Heisler said.

Photographer Corry said he couldn't remember about prayers. He was wondering if his camera and pictures he had already taken were dry and safe where he had left them.

Corry and Heisler were on their way to join the Third Fleet when they boarded the escort carrier, which was ferrying planes to the Fleet. Then out over hundreds of miles of the Western Pacific had come the great typhoon.

The first day of the storm was bad. The second was the kind of sailing weather even old hands rarely had seen. Not one of them would have chosen to face it on the little carrier, sturdy though she seemed. Certainly not with its top-heavy load of planes.

Six Inches of Water

"During the morning of that day, I took a lot of pictures," said
(cont'd on page 2)

HUMAN BALLAST (cont'd from page 1)

Gorry. "It was so rough you could not walk without holding on to something. Down in my room the water was six inches deep on the deck. My bunk had been torn loose from the wall.

"For a while I stuck it out on the navigation bridge, but the waves started pouring over it and I moved up to the captain's bridge."

The skipper was keeping her in the trough of the waves because the ship might break in two if he turned.

Roll of 40 Degrees

But the roll was getting too great--40 degrees, almost half-way between the horizon and the zenith. The skipper had already decided to order planes on the flight deck pushed overboard when the seas saved him that task by washing them away.

The captain looked at the anemometer. It showed a wind averaging 70 miles an hour.

The captain ordered all hands not on watch to the hangar deck--the great garage-like repair shop and storage place for planes just beneath the flight deck.

'Shifting Human Ballast'

Under the skipper's direction, the men took up positions weighting down that side from which the wind was coming. As the ship rolled, they rushed across to the other side. This was where Gorry and Heisler had their chance to help out.

"Heisler had been in one of the ready rooms with some of the pilots singing songs," Gorry recounted. "But he got chased out of there with the pilots about that time when the battering of the storm tore all the seats loose from the deck and piled the seats and the pilots and Heisler in the corner.

"He went down and added our weight on the hangar deck."

All through the afternoon and all that night the ship and its human complement fought the storm. Three

fires broke out when the storm tossed planes around and broke their gasoline lines. Two of them that were threatening to get out of control were extinguished by great waves.

Fire Danger Great

No one left his station all night. There were no lights inside. No one smoked. No one even made coffee because of the danger of starting new gasoline fires.

The supply officer broke out some stores of peanuts and candy bars.

The next morning the mixture of salt water, gasoline and oil still swished back and forth on the hangar deck, but much slower, and the anemometer cups turned much more leisurely. The storm was dying.

Forty-five thousand pounds of men, working in harmony as ballast, plus some good handling, had saved the ship.

"Those things, plus some luck, and God," said Gorry.

* * * * *

The following delayed dispatch which was filed by TIME Correspondent Robert Sherrod on Dec. 29, appears in the Jan. 22, 1945 edition of Time Magazine:

"The fast carrier task force of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet had retired to refuel. There had been reports of an approaching typhoon; however, most of the Fleet's aerologists had charted it considerably farther east. Then the storm began to veer toward the task force...we were in for a typhoon of savage ferocity.

"The wind rose to 54 knots at 11 a.m., and there were gusts of 75 knots. It was in the first climax of the storm just before noon that three brave ships capsize and died: The Spence, 24 survivors; The Hull, 54 saved; The Lonaghan, only six survived."

135-Mile Winds, Tempestuous Seas Tipped Destroyers

SURVIVORS TELL OF HOURS ADRIFT

By Rembert James

ULITHI LAGOON, Caroline Islands, Dec. 29--(AP)-- Whistling 135 mile winds and tempestuous seas flipped over and sank three U.S. destroyers tossing their hapless crews into the churning western Pacific sea, survivors said here today.

Visibility was zero and the flying spray felt like needles, a survivor said.

Rescuers, too, braved death. One man was carried under his own rescue vessel and bobbed up on the other side.

The ships lost were:

U.S.S. Spence, 2,500 tons, captained by Lt. Comdr. James P. Andrea of Alexandria, Va., missing.

U.S.S. Hull, 1300 tons, Lt. Comdr. James A. Marks, Chevy Chase, Md., rescued.

U.S.S. Monaghan, 1390 tons; Lt. Comdr. Floyd B. Garrett, jr., Little Rock, Ark., missing.

The Spence carried more than 300 officers and men of whom one officer and 22 men were saved; the Monaghan carried about 250 officers and men of whom six enlisted men were saved; the Hull carried about 250 men of whom 7 officers and 55 men were saved.

Of these 800 officers and men, only 91 have been rescued as of today, leaving 709 known dead or missing--the great loss on men suffered by Adm. William F. Halsey's Third Fleet since it began western operations months ago, including battle losses.

While the men in the sea were spun end over end like tumble weeds in a gale, the water filled with sharks which a rescue escort

destroyer machine-gunned. There were no accounts of a shark actually attacking anyone. One sailor had part of his foot torn off but survivors said they believed it was ripped by a sharp-toothed barracuda which strikes its prey hard and terrifically fast.

In the plain language of the sea, Chief Machinest's Mate Henry John Deeters, 28, of New Orleans said:

"There were several deep rolls and she (the Spence) went over on her port side. The stack was lying on the water. As she went down, I dove off. About a hundred got off, I guess.

"I saw a lot of my buddies floating around dead. I was in the water 50 hours before rescued."

A gunnery officer on an escort destroyer said that a chief radio-man happened to be rigging a new radio mast on the ship in the darkness--the other had been carried away in the storm--when he saw a tiny light twinkling in the rough water. After much difficulty, the D.E. got the survivor aboard and then circled the area and before daylight had saved 17.

The gunnery officer told how one man who had stuck it through 20 hours in the rough sea was slammed against the ship and killed. At the same time, he added, the storm drapped his boatswain's mate under the D.E. and rubbed him along the keel until he miraculously bobbed up on the other side, safe and sound.

The foresight of the Hull's skipper, Commander Marks, perhaps saved not only his own life but also that of 55 Hull men and six officers, when he ordered flashlights attached to lifejackets.

THE CRAZY CHINA SEA
or
REFUGEES FROM DAVY JONES' LOCKER

by
H.N. Miller, BM2c, USN, "Poet Laureate," CVE 88
* * *

You've heard some tales of violent gales, But this one is no legend,
And Storms on all seacoasts; From an ancient sailors' boast;
And some believe that all big storms, But a living account of a big typhoon,
Are wicked pirate ghosts. Far from the China coast.

The worst one ever seen by man in a hundred years or more,
It happened in December of Nineteen Forty Four;

'Twas on one Tuesday morning,
The sea was getting rough;
The sailors did not seem to mind,
For they were seasoned and tough.

And any had seen the hardships,
That sailormen must see;
But none had faced a hardship
 like the crazy China Sea.

Then later in the afternoon,
The sea was getting worse;
And some of the sailors began to growl,
And some of them to curse.

But very soon thereafter,
The boys had changed their mind;
And some of them were asking,
Would their savior please be kind.

For nothing else in all the world
Is even half so cruel;
As roaring into a big typhoon
And fighting a lopsided duel.

We were tossed jerked and twisted
And the seams began to break;
Trapped like rats by the crazy sea
With all our lives at stake.

With waves so high they must have reached
A hundred feet or more;
We knew that we were knocking,
On old Davy Jones's door.

There wasn't one man left on board
Who thought we'd last the trip;
But then a miracle happened along,
And saved the good old ship.

And now we stand in sad dismay,
For our shipmates who went down,
Who well deserved the title,
To their promised harp and crown.

So let us hope that old "St. Pete",
Was there to see them off;
And saw that they were all secure,
Before he went aloft.

And while the storm was at its worst,
The angry sea we fought;
A lot of things were on my mind,
But this was my prime thought:

Oh! Lady Luck please lend your ear,
To a frightened sailors' plea;
And deliver me from the evil hands,
Of the crazy China Sea.

For twice it is we just escaped,
The wicked old witches grasp;
And if I have been sinful,
Please listen to my last gasp.

Just take me back to my lady love,
Where no more storms I'll fear;
And then I'll sail in Central Park
Where land is always near.