

Series C (Part II)

"Me and Tons"

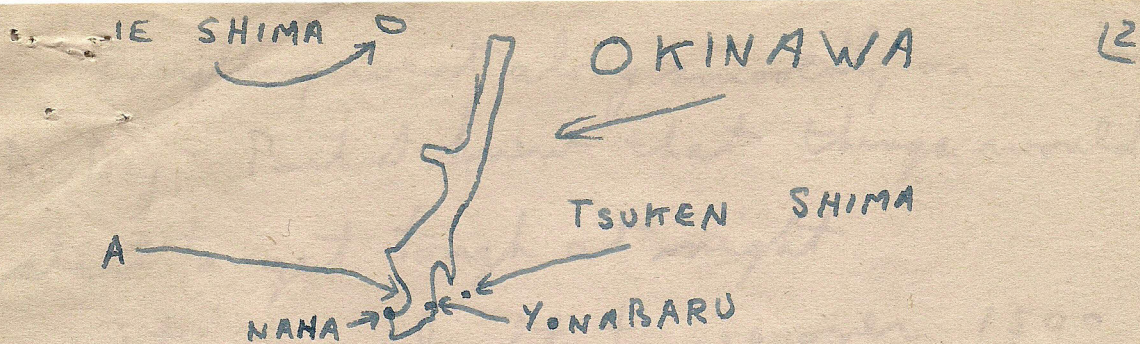
(continued)

The invasion of Okinawa surprised the Japanese. They thought that Formosa would be our objective.

Not only was it a surprise to them that Okinawa was invaded, but they were further tricked as to the place chosen to land.

It would take a detailed map to show you a picture of the set up. Hence, I will sketch, as best I can, the set up.

On the following page, this sketch appears



The Japs were expecting us to land at Yonabaru, once they realized that we would not invade Formosa. They concentrated their strength at Yonabaru. Instead, we landed at "A" which is near Yontan and Katena air strips.

On D-Day the landing area received a terrific pounding by ships and aircraft.

The LST 1006 was the first ship on the beach. One minute later the LST 557 and LST 558 were right beside her.

I saw Stanley's ship and we exchanged greetings by blinker light

Everything went along smoothly on 13
D-Day. But I knew that things would
start to get tough at night.

It was alright to see over 1500
of our planes during the day, but as
soon as it got dark, I knew the
fun would begin. We knew the
Japs.

Just as it was getting dark, it
happened. Five "Oscars" came
directly over us at 1000 feet.

The harbor of 1500 ships was
ablaze with anti-aircraft gun-
fire. I identified them and ordered
"commence firing"

The next 15 seconds was the
worst nightmare of all.

Each officer and man of the

3 LST's on the beach aged 10 14
years during those 15 seconds.

I say this without a smile. Several men were sent to hospitals due to a complete nervous collapse. For days afterward, we were still shaking nervously.

Each LST was carrying high explosive ammunition that had to be unloaded. If anything went wrong, the entire operation might be a failure for the allies. These supplies were vital!

The Japs knew it, and had as their object the destruction of all the three LST's. Here were 5 suicide planes to do the trick.

These are the first suicide planes that we had ever seen in action.

We had heard a good deal about them, ^{LS}
but never had seen them.

Four of the five planes peeled off
and dove into huge transport ships,
causing terrible casualties. The fifth
one circled and dove at us.

There were so many ships firing
at that plane that the tracers blind-
ed the pilot. It was the heaviest
damage of anti-aircraft I have ever
seen fired at a single plane. The
entire sky and harbor was lit
up like day. He came down and
missed our ship by 25 yards.
Had he hit any of the three LST's,
then the entire group on the beach
would have been wiped out when
the ammunition exploded.

He hit the water and exploded.
Every one shook nervously.

L6

It would be utter foolishness on my part to try and describe the happenings at Okinawa. This description will have to wait until a later date.

all I wish to say here is that the Navy lost tremendously. So many men died and so many ships were exploding and sinking due to Jap suicide planes. It was amazing to see.

The evening of April 5th, a message from Admiral Mitscher, who had his Task Force near Kyushu (Japan), came in:

"Expect mass air attack on April 6 XXX objective shipping."

Here was a massive suicide ^{raid} about to take place the next day.
Bumby.