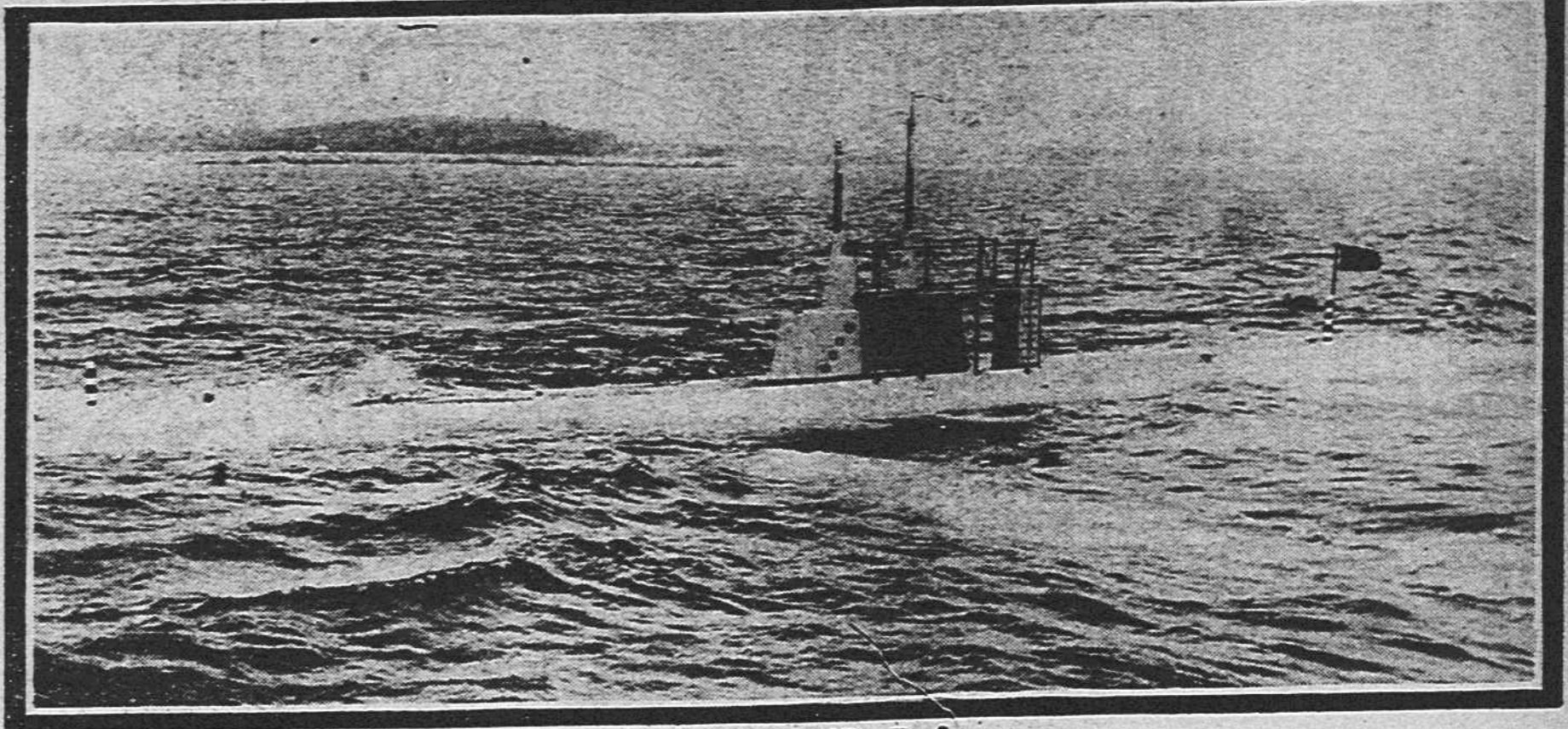


Magazine Feature Section

TALE OF TRAGEDY ON THE SUBMARINE F-4

How 21 Men Of Uncle Sam's Under-Sea Navy Met Death In Honolulu Harbor—Sunken Craft Had Every Known Safety Device And Distress Signal But No S. O. S. Reached the Surface After Her Fatal Plunge



U.S. SUBMARINE F-4

Evidences of the heroism with which the 21 members of the crew of the United States submarine F4 must have gone to their death when the boat plunged to the bottom of the sea in the harbor of Honolulu recently are accumulating in dispatches from the scene, quoting divers at work in an attempt to rescue the sunken vessel.

That every man remained a hero to the last is indicated by the report of Diver Agraz who descended far enough to peer into one of the portholes.

The dim light to the men dying of suffocation must have reminded them of the surface above where the sun was shining, and of that space three hundred feet above where there was fresh air, the lack of which they were slowly dying from. With the exception of this one glimpse into the interior of the F4 by this daring diver, the manner in which the entire crew met its death will never be known in detail.

How those brave men went to their death can only be surmised from their positions in the cramped interior of the submarine. All went to their deaths as heroes though there might have been the bark of an automatic pistol as some man, crazed by lack of air, his lungs burning and his blood almost bursting from his ear drums, took the shorter course to inevitable death.

The F4 was one of the modern submarines of the United States navy and had been pronounced in perfect order a month before. Less than a month ago with other sister vessels of a submarine fleet she skimmed over the water of the harbor of Honolulu with her periscope and just a part of her deck showing. Her crew were in their neat uniforms and her captain stood on the slippery deck as they sailed away from the cruiser that acts as their protector when they are above surface and at rest.

The F4 and her sisters were well equipped with gasoline for the engines and tanks of oxygen, provisions and water for the crew. It was known by previous test that she could remain under water a week on the air supply she contained although her provision stock would not last that long.

GOING TO THEIR DOOM.

At a command from the captain the men descended down a ladder to the dark interior and took their positions in the cramped quarters, each man at his post. The portholes were closed, the periscope arranged satisfactorily, and the captain took his place on the little narrow bridge. At his signal the gasoline engines turned, the propeller turned, all valves were tested and the engineer reported to the bridge through the speaking tube: "All O. K."

The captain gave the signal to descend. The compartments on the sides were opened, the sea poured in and the vessel slowly settled. When she was so far below the surface that only a half foot of the periscope was above water, the captain gave a signal to stop descending and full speed ahead. The F4 sped out into the harbor one of the most graceful of crafts that Uncle Sam possessed.

Sailors watching her from the decks of her cruiser saw her suddenly plunge and disappear. This was a part of the maneuvers in the Honolulu Bay that afternoon. When the F4 did not reappear no alarm was felt. It was believed she might be trying to break a record. It was known that she could remain beneath the sea for at least three days without the least discomfort to her crew.

When she did not appear the second day the crew of the cruiser became alarmed and sister submarines were sent to search for her.



STREET SCENE IN HONOLULU

Down into the depths they plunged but they gained no sight of her for two more days. At last a black hulk was seen lying on the bottom of the sea, three hundred feet from the surface. That ship gave no signs of life. As far as observers were concerned it might have been some old Spanish galleon, filled with gold and sent to the bottom many, many years before.

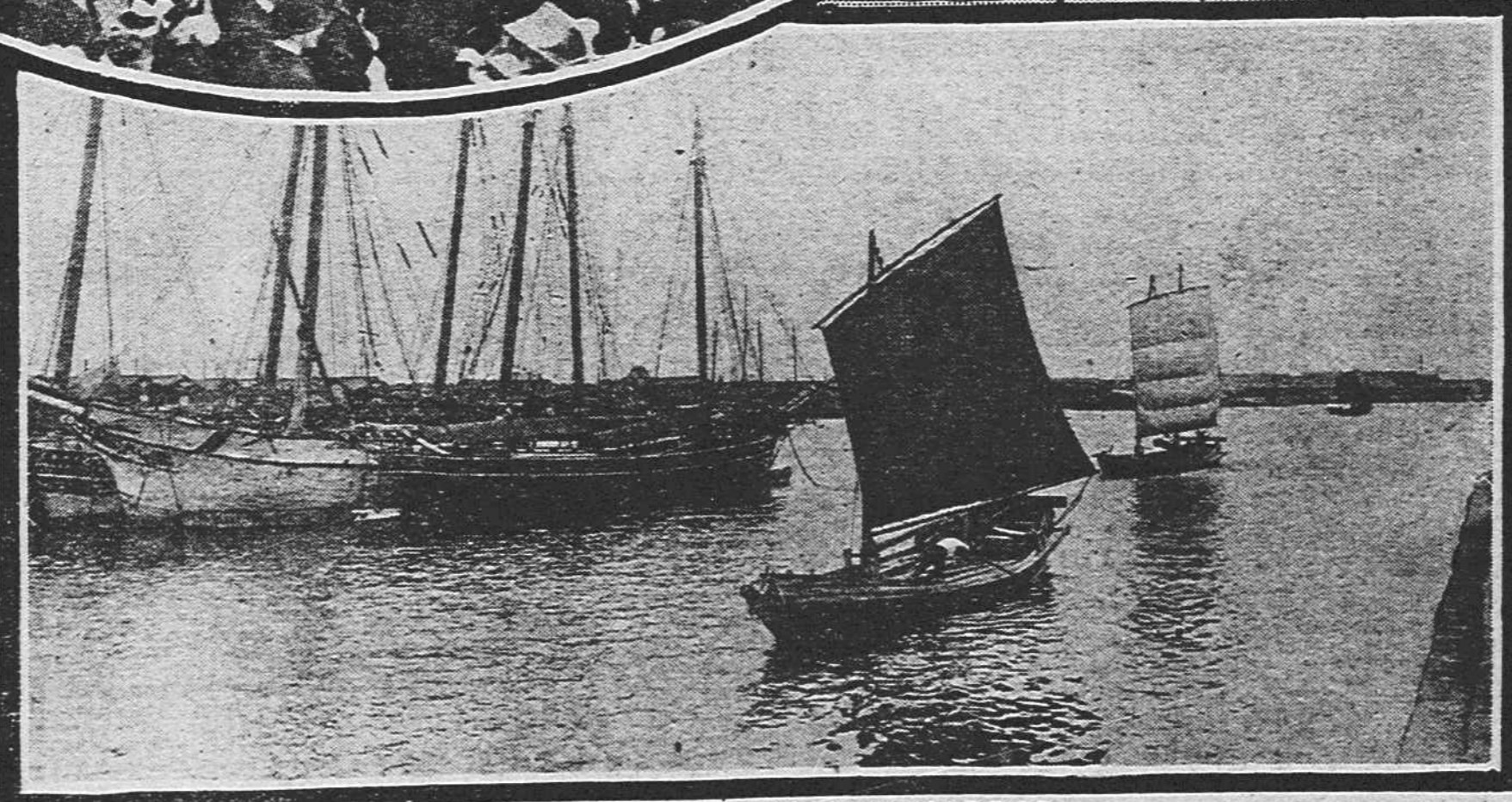
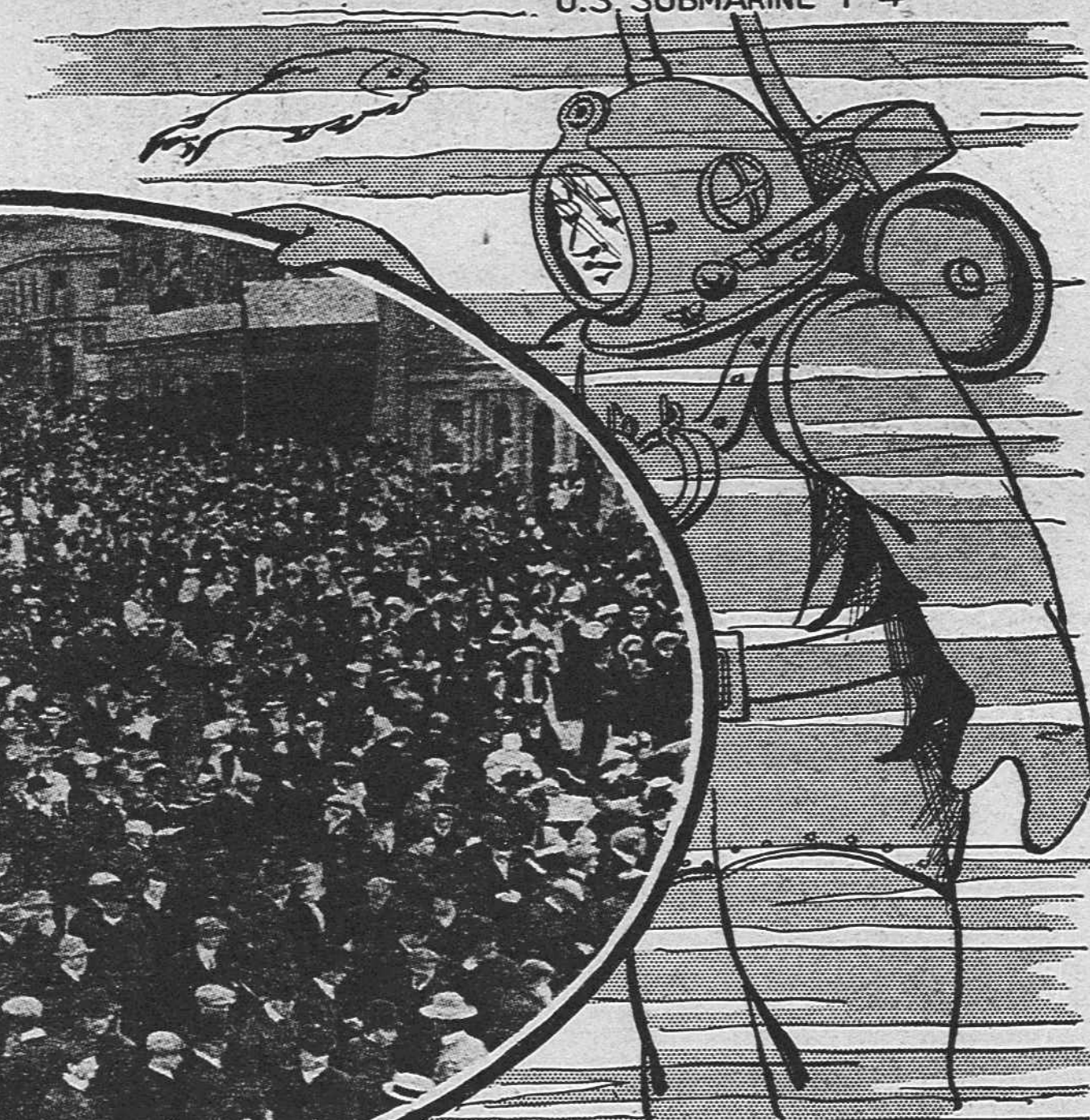
After several hours maneuvering a submarine came close enough that the captain through his periscope could observe the "F4" mark painted on her bow. The submarine quickly sped to the top and called for help. The captain of the cruiser wired the secretary of the navy for help and through the United States was flashed the information that a submarine of our navy had sunk and its crew of 21 brave souls was in peril.

WIRELESS FLASHES S. O. S.

The wireless was put in use and all of the vessels in that part of the world were sent to aid. Submarines are provided with rings on the side so that in an emergency such as the one the F4 experienced, other vessels might lower grappling hooks and raise her to the surface. The rescue work was started with that dispatch that any member of the United States army or navy uses in going to the assistance of one of their number in danger. It needed no playing of "The Star Spangled Banner" to urge these men to work fast in their efforts to raise the sunken submarine before her crew should die of suffocation. But their efforts were in vain. Several times it is believed the grappling hooks of cruisers on the surface caught in the deck rings of the sunken submarine but always an accident prevented the lifting of the vessel. Several times the prongs of the grappling hooks broke for the F4 was in a position at the bottom of the sea with a water pressure of approximately 18,000 pounds to the square inch and she could not be budged. More powerful craft with electric hoisting apparatus, heavy

cable and grappling hooks were sent to the rescue. They succeeded in drawing her several hundred feet nearer the shore but not in raising her.

W. C. Parks, a civil engineer, started the construction of an immense diving bell. It is doubtful if any such bell, unless of the heaviest metal obtainable, can possible resist the water pressure at the depth at which the F4 rested on the bottom of the sea. It was feared that the bell would be crushed in by the pressure. Before the bell was occupied by its builder in his attempt to rescue the sunken ship, it was lowered to the bottom and then raised again to see what effect the water pressure had on it. At that depth even the fishes have to have great protection against the pressure. It is a known fact that when fish from such a depth are brought to the surface they burst because the great pressure to which they are accustomed and for the resistance of which their bodies were particularly provided, has been reduced. While the pressure of air on the surface is 16 pounds to the square inch, water pressure in-



BOATS IN HONOLULU HARBOR

creases at the rate of 60 pounds per inch for each foot descended. ALWAYS A MYSTERY. Whether the engines of the F4 refused to work when she got to the bottom of the sea, whether her sides caved in under terrific pressure, or the exact nature of the incident that left her helpless at such a depth can only be surmised. When a week passed without any chance of lifting the vessel all hope for her crew was given up. In fact there had been grave doubts as to anyone being alive within for no

sound had been heard from any of her apparatus for communicating with other vessels.

Perhaps her iron sides were crushed in on some shelving rock or corral on which she struck, the water rushed in and her crew was subjected to death by drowning, far more painless and merciful at the time than the slow, agonizing death by suffocation. However, it is feared that death by the latter means resulted. The F4 rested on the bottom of the sea. Her engineer struggled valiantly with all power on, but the whirring propeller

with all the force of the powerful gasoline engines, failed to move her. Imagine that silent crew huddled about, each man so near the other that their shoulders touched, yet each man with the certain knowledge death faced him, pretending all was well and even trying to cheer up the man beside him. Thoughts of the mother or sister, or perhaps the sweetheart at home, must have passed through their minds as they sat huddled there in the dim light of the deep sea. Fishes flashing by the portholes must have been the most serious reminders of their fate for those fishes meant life—free life in the open—the principle that every man recognizes as his greatest boon. To the human under such circumstances the approach of death is by far more agonizing than to an animal in such circumstances, even than to the proverbial rat in the trap as it slowly drowns. To the beasts it is but a question of preservation of life—that instinct that makes it struggle until the last gasp. To the man and especially to a member of the United States navy, trained to bravery in emergencies and taught to expect possible death as his possible reward for the defence of his country in times of war, death—death by such a means—brings a great mental agony.

Above him, he knows, are other United States ships, with their happy care-free crews. Far away on shore or hundreds of Americans enjoying themselves in freedom.

THE END.

But there at the bottom of the sea were 21 stalwart sons of Uncle Sam doomed to a terrible death and destined to face death like the iron men the United States navy produces. If it had been on shipboard with national airs playing and a foe in sight these men would have rushed into a thousand dangers and gladly gone to death for the defense of their country. But here they were prisoners with not even a glimpse of the sun to lighten them, to cheer them in their last hours. If they had been in battle line ashore or behind the big gun aboard ship they would have been contented for a whistling steel shell, a death scream and all would be over.

But now hours of agony faced them. For several days they had lived on scanty rations in the hopes they would not starve and that they might be rescued at any time. If they were still alive what joy must have possessed them when they heard the grappling hooks pass over the deck of their vessel. That sharp pronged hook was as if the whole United States were lifting out its hand to aid them in their rescue. What disappointment must have possessed them when the hook fell to the sea, having failed to catch their deck rings.

By this time the air in the oxygen containers must have been quite exhausted. Breathing would be difficult. The air laden with no nitrogen and carbonic acid must have pressed heavily on their lungs. Imagine them tearing open the bosom of their shirts as if to relieve the great pressure. Seated about with swollen lips, distended eyes and lungs paining as if a knife had been thrust through, these men must have sat about praying for the end. The captain can be imagined still at the bridge, standing as an officer must stand while on duty, yet with his head bent on his chest, his breath coming heavily and his mind a blank.

On him had rested the responsibility of the lives of those 21 men. While they sat helpless in their places beside the shafts of the propellers, he thought of all the ways ever employed by mechanics in such circumstances. The engineer backed him up in an effort to raise the vessel. But there came a time when orders ceased to come from the bridge and when the engineer was not prepared to heed them. The latter long since had sunk into a coma and was dreaming happily despite the heavy pressure of his lungs. Death was showing mercy. The tired captain, his head sunk on his breast, still stood half unconscious and also in a coma. His work was over when the hand of death took charge of the wheel of that vessel, but death was slow, although it had kindly given him the anesthesia of unconsciousness.

Thus the crew of F4 went to its death. Historians may add another chapter to the history of the United States when that hulk is raised and the bodies recovered.