

To the families of the crew of U.S.S. Bonefish:

The information relative to the loss of the U.S.S. Bonefish, which I have been able to obtain, may be of interest to you since so many of you have requested the details which I have learned. It is pieced together from letters from Vice Admiral Chas. A. Lockwood, Jr., Commander Lawrence L. Edge, captain of the U.S.S. Bonefish, Commander Geo. Pierce, captain of the USS Tunny, and others who were on the raid in the Japan Sea in June of 1945.

The loss to all of us is indeed more regrettable and harder to understand since the war was all out over when the Bonefish was reported missing, for the public utterances of Adm. Nimitz say that the Japs were well defeated some weeks before the atom bomb was dropped on August 6. Comdr. Edge wrote in April while on patrol, "There is the feeling among all of us that we have been lucky enough to survive the war so far; it would be such a shame not to last for the remainder and thus live through the whole thing."

The Japan Sea had been secured (closed) to our subs for the past two years, after the loss of the USS Wahoo there, because it was decided by the Navy that the risks involved were too great for the gains received. It was known that during those two years the Japs had made their Sea a highly fortified and more dangerous area. Submarine high command had wished for sometime to send our subs back into that Sea, so a gear to contribute to the safety of our submarines was developed and pushed. From the fall of 1944 to May 1945, ten subs were equipped with this gear after their overhauls. These were the Skate, Tunny, Crevalle, Bowfin, Flying Fish, Tinosa, Sea Dog, Spadefish, Bonefish, and Sea Horse.

The Bonefish received her gear in Pearl Harbor in March, after she had completed her overhaul in San Francisco. From Pearl Harbor she went to Guam, where Adm. Lockwood made a couple of short practice runs on her to observe this equipment. In April he sent the Bonefish and the Sea Horse to clear a path through Broughton Strait, which is 65 miles long, so that the subs could enter the Japan Sea with relative safety as far as mines were concerned. The Sea Horse was so badly damaged by enemy escort vessels, that she was forced to return to base and was unable to join the Japan Sea raid. The Bonefish, however, was able to complete that part of her "special mission" in April with much glory and the Navy Cross was won for her work, though none aboard knew of their award when they left for their June raid.

I say "that part of her special mission", because after the Bonefish completed the work of preparing the Strait, she and the other subs with this equipment which were then out on patrol, were radioed to return to port earlier than their orders originally stated. The rest periods for those of the nine subs that were on patrol were cut short of their normal two weeks. Some had only six days. "The Bonefish had a short rest period (8 days) because she had to make the schedule with the rest of us." Comdr. Edge was much disappointed that his crew would not have their usual and much needed two weeks rest after their "most dangerous and exhausting patrol", during which he was continually concerned for the safety of the boat and crew.

The nine boats made a few practice runs and started out, some felt before they were ready. The Bonefish left Guam on May 28. The boats were divided into three groups of three each. The Bonefish was in the second group headed by the Tunny. The groups went through the Strait at the rate of one a day. The Tunny's group entered, therefore, on the second day, June 13. No subs opened fire on Jap shipping until June 15 when all boats were in their respective areas, different bays on the west coast of Honshu.

Soon after the operations had begun the Japs radioed to their ships and planes of our activity in the Sea. Our subs received this message almost as quickly as did the Japs. It was during

this raid that the Japs announced the sinking of six or seven subs.

The second group headed by the Tunny held a rendezvous out in the Japan Sea on June 16, patrolled together on the 17th. On the 18th, they met again 50 miles northwest of Noto Peninsula. On this night, another sub reported to the "pack commander, Geo. Pierce of the Tunny, that she had seen enemy ships entering Toyama Wan. "The Bonefish went in after them because that was her assigned patrol area." Another sub was assigned half of this Bay area for two days only and was near by until she had fired her last torpedo. At this time the Bonefish was known to be "afloat".

"Toyama Wan was no more hazardous than any other place except it was a bay and as such had only one direction to go to get out." The depth of this bay is 350 fathoms.

"No one knows just what happened to the Bonefish. We thought that some information might come from the Japanese after the war was over through claims made by their anti-submarine vessels. There is one third of a chance that they struck a mine. There is no way to tell just where the boat might have been sunk."

On June 18, four days before the Bonefish was assumed missing, she reported having sunk a large cargo vessel and a transport. "She could easily have sunk more."

The nine subs were scheduled to hold a rendezvous on or about the night of June 21 to decide their exit through La Perouse Strait, whether surfaced or submerged. The Bonefish did not appear, but it seems the foggy weather which existed, made the other subs think nothing of her absence. The Tunny and the other subs went on out of the Japan Sea and then, seeing the continued absence of the Bonefish, Comdr. Pierce waited there for two days and tried to contact her by radio. I have heard that the Bonefish had radio and radar trouble all during the patrol. Commander Submarine Pacific Fleet, Adm. Lockwood, sent a message to the eight subs as they went out of La Perouse Strait, saying that disturbances in Japan Sea indicated that the Bonefish was still in the Sea and that he had tried to send a message to her telling how the others had left the Sea. No one went back to look for her or to see if she needed help.

All nine subs received the Navy Cross for this raid, including the Bonefish which probably sunk several ships besides the two which she reported at the rendezvous on June 18th. The Tunny, leader of group two, was the only one of the nine to sink not one enemy ship. A total of forty-six ships were destroyed.

A conference of all officers from the eight returning boats was held with Adm. Lockwood in Guam. Success within the Sea was reported as far as damage done to the enemy was concerned. As

for the gear, it was not infallible. The greatest success was that only one sub, U.S.S. Bonefish, was lost, whereas, I am told that "at least" half of those entering the raid were not expected to return. Several have written me or told me the equivalent of the following quotation from one Comdr.: "You are correct about the patrol being dangerous. I felt that I would not get back. I did not tell anyone about it but it is the case."

Comdr. Pierce wrote me that the "whole affair was on a volunteer basis." In other more accurate words, the subs with the above equipment were called into port to participate and none dared refuse. As for the Bonefish, Comdr. Edge was told by the Submarine Force Personnel Officer the day he arrived in Pearl Harbor in March, that he would be sent to a staff job as electronics officer immediately after his April patrol. Despite this, on reaching Guam before that patrol began, Adm. Lockwood told him personally that he would have to take the Bonefish on this one more patrol, and ordered her on the raid. This is the "volunteer basis" on which

Comdr. Edge took the Bonefish on the raid into the Japan Sea. He wrote me of his disappointment on learning that he had another patrol yet to make. From another source: "We were ordered to make the June raid the same as we were ordered to make any other patrol except we had all the special charts and gear to make the run. I was not asked particularly whether I wanted to make the run or not. It has always been the policy for any skipper who wanted to give up command to merely say so and he would be relieved. However, I was not asked directly whether I wanted to make the patrol."

The U.S.S. Bonefish made a brilliant record on her eight war patrols deep in the enemy's territory. Her two commanders had won for her six Navy Cross Medals, a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and a Navy Unit Citation. For Comdr. Edge's first patrol on her, June 25 to August 13, 1944, the Bronze Star was awarded for the sinking of enemy ships totalling 20,000 tons, and for damaging 7,500 tons. For his second patrol which took place in the Sulu Sea and around the Philippines, September 15, to October 27, 1944, his first Navy Cross was awarded for the sinking of enemy ships totalling 22,000 tons, and for damaging additional vessels totalling 7,000 tons. The danger involved in the areas of this patrol and the fact that two of our own fliers were rescued by the Bonefish, were considered in this award. It was during this patrol that General MacArthur first landed in the Philippines on Leyte Island. Comdr. Edge's third and fourth patrols on the Bonefish are discussed above and each won additional Navy Cross Medals. According to Adm. Lockwood, the Bonefish, under the command of Comdr. Edge, is known to have sunk four tankers, five freighters, two transports, and five small craft, also with the damaging of a mine layer and a large tanker.

Mrs. Lawrence L. Edge.