

### Story # 52

Another story from Milt "Moose" Meehan from USS Teak AN-35.

When Milt thought of a Net Tender or Fireman story he immediately went to his typewriter, now computer and typed it up. Most of his civilian life working years were spent as a professional fire fighter in southern California.

We are grateful to have Milt share these stories with us

---

### **NO FLAGS, NO GLORY**

My logbook says it was November 11, 1944 and we were very close to the beach in Leyte Gulf, not too long after the initial invasion on October 20, 1944. The enemy was giving us a bad time, throwing all their available aircraft at us, regular high level bombers, dive bombers, torpedo planes and their new weapon, the Kamikaze. The suicide planes, known as the Kamikaze, were now recognized as such by the Navy, and censorship was put on any of our letters home, regarding this fact. The enemy's two armadas of ships was defeated on October 24-25, in their attempt to invade the Gulf and destroy us. Now it was their Air Force's turn to wipe us out.

Yes, it was a good feeling to be on a small ship, as we were not the bull's eye of their targets, targets, but as anyone well knows, sometimes targets are missed. The Gulf was full of support ships, their cargos vital for our army on the beach. These large ships were their main targets, especially the troop transports, and the bigger ships the better. Of course their number one target was the aircraft carrier, but the carriers always tried to keep out of the range of the enemy's land based aircraft, which was a prudent thing to do.

For the last couple of weeks we had added our feeble firepower to that of all the other ships in the gulf and many enemy aircraft had been splashed, but who could claim credit for the

kills? Some ships had so many enemy flags posted on their bridge wings, that you would have thought they had shot down the entire enemy airforce. That left me with one conclusion, when one enemy plane went down, many enemy flags went on many bridge wings of our ships, as no one was sure who made the lucky hit.

Captain Hollett did not like to play the game, so our bridge wings were still their normal color, dark gray. To some of us eager beavers it was a little embarrassing when some PT boat came by, with their bridge wing full of enemy flags, one for each of their victims and ours sported a big zero. Oh well, maybe that is all we deserved, after being a witness to our target practice before we left for the South Pacific, it was hard to imagine our gunners could hit anything. Captain Hollett also seemed to have an aversion to having gunnery practice for whatever reason, perhaps to conserve our ammunition for a real crisis.

As I recall it was evening, close to sundown, and a convoy of LST's (landing ship tanks) were about two miles off shore, headed for their landing area. We were between them and the beach, when suddenly what was left of a squadron of the enemy's dive bombers, came down out of the clouds and their target was this convoy. Our support aircraft destroyed most of these aircraft before they got to us, but some always made it through. One particular plane survived his dive and bomb release, avoiding all the flack thrown at him and pulled out of his dive, directly over us, which proved to be a costly mistake. We were at general quarters, guns manned, and there he was, headed for the low range of hills on the beach, trying to gain altitude, as he was about 500 feet altitude. The best part was he paid no attention to the good old USS Teak, with it's four 20MM and one 3 inch-fifty belching fire at him. How could we miss, we didn't, tracers from our 20s converged on the plane, parts fell off, and he left a trail of smoke as he disappeared over the low hills. Our radar was secured and being the operator, I had a grandstand seat to this whole episode, and when the plane headed our way I figured he would spray us with his guns, so I kept low and flat on the bridge wing. He did not fire and apparently his intentions were to get out of the Gulf as soon as possible.

As the enemy plane disappeared over the hills and jungle, he also trailed smoke which was a god sign of a fatal hit. Now for the good news, early the next morning, a landing craft came out from the beach, with some Army guys aboard, and they stopped and congratulated our crew for shooting down this plane. They had been watching the whole show from the beach and said the plane barely made it over the hill and suddenly headed straight down and crashed in flames in the jungle.

Did we get an enemy flag painted on our bridge wing, NO, Captain Hallett said we had to witness the plane crashing ourselves. Well, at least we knew we got one, and the gunners basked in their glory, and our bridge wing was still a dark gray when the war ended. It was just as well, why would anyone believe that a lowly Submarine Net Tender could down an enemy plane!

Milt Meehan (Moose) XRDM 2C USS Teak AN-35