

But please read to Ned please return to me of Davis

January 19, '42

Dear Skipper,

It was a great relief, to put it mildly, to hear from Mother last week that you were O.K. Naturally, I am completely in the dark as to where you are but I had an idea things must be pretty hot.

I was on board for the fireworks, the 7th, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

G.Q. sounded at about 0755 just as I was contemplating getting out of my bunk. It didn't take but a few seconds to realize that this was the real thing for we took fish #1 on board to port as I was scrambling down the ladder to central station which of course was my battle station as Asst. Navigator. Almost instantly water started pouring through the coaming I had just passed through and was entering central in about a two inch stream through the only open watertight door to that compartment. Nevertheless the door couldn't be closed since personnel were manning their stations in central and had no other access. I must have really made tracks on the way down for I was the first one in the place. In the absence of the Bos'n mate I managed to pass the word over the speaker system to "close all water tight doors" (which, unfortunately had been opened just a few minutes before in accordance with port routine), followed this after some hesitation with "set condition Zed". Much to my relief the D.C.O. entered and took over several moments later. Along about this time, fish number 2 hit us to port and in the proximity of central, for the water really started pouring over the coaming. This made it necessary to close the door in the face of several men who were evacuating radio central which had apparently been bilged along with God only knows how many other compartments to port. Suffice it to say that we were rapidly taking a heavy list to port. At this point fish #3 hit us amidships and almost immediately, all lights dimmed and went out and all battle circuits went out with the exception of our one sound-powered job to the repair parties. By the grace of God this circuit enabled us to counterflood, at first conservatively, then as the ship heeled over violently putting the inclinometer two inches off the scale, we counterflooded 'all available'. With great relief we noticed that this action had taken effect and the needle was moving slowing back on the scale. At this point there was a lull in the attack which must have lasted about fifteen minutes. At any rate we had time to look around in the dark with our one flashlight and take stock on how central was doing. Central was filled with men who had escaped from damaged compartments. Many of them were covered from head to foot with fuel oil and were continually slipping on the deck down to the low side of the compartment which by this time was well flooded with water and fuel oil. The water was bad enough in hampering operations, but the fuel oil made it impossible to stand on the tilted deck. Water was flooding thru ventilators, buckled seams, and the bottom of one of the water tight doors. It was extremely difficult to

dog this one down as the two bottom dogs were inverted before the door was closed, also three men trapped on the other side were exerting almost superhuman strength in trying to get in. Believe me it wasn't pleasant to have to keep this door closed under these circumstances. Fortunately, the trunk on the opposite side filled rapidly.

Since there were at least forty men by this time in central, we decided to start sending them up the escape tube leading to the conning tower. This operation was like pulling teeth, for it took several minutes per man to climb the ladder and many were in a weakened condition from the effects of the oil and fumes from the exploded charges. Also water was rising in central with increasing rapidity. By the time the D.C.O. and I left, the compartment was flooded to shoulder level and filling rapidly. When we were about half way up the oil soaked ladder, Vic Delano hollered down from the top of the tube and told the 1st looney that he was in command of the ship. This was the first time we knew how things were fairing topsides. The first thing I saw upon leaving the conning tower was the skipper lying on the starboard side of the bridge. He was still alive at this time and had already given the order abandon ship. The ship was burning at the base of the foremast and on the quarterdeck. Also oil in the water astern of the ship was blazing twenty or thirty feet high and blowing down on our ~~port~~ starboard quarter from the Arizona which was burning fiercely. The D.C.O. went aft to fight the fire aft and sent Vic forward. This was no mean pigeon since there was absolutely no pressure on the fire main and hoses had to be rigged to the ship alongside. All of this was done between intermittent strafing attacks, light bombs and heavy 1000 lb. bombs. We would run under the overhang of Tur. IV during strafings and then run out and fight the fire. With dead and wounded lying all around the few of us who had not yet abandoned ship felt mighty lucky, especially those of us on the quarterdeck who witnessed a 1000 lb. bomb penetrate Turret III without exploding. Immediately after this occurrence we pulled the only three men in the turret out. All three were badly burned from flaming aviation gasoline from the catapult above, one was visivly dead and one had lost his arm. By this time sights like these were commonplace and I was surprised at how little it affected me.

In the face of the likelihood that the forward magazines would go off at any minute, the D.C.O. ordered all remaining personnel to abandon ship. J.T. Hine and I were picked up in the water close to the quarterdeck by a Solace motorlaunch. This must have been about 1400, tho' we had no conception of time. Jack and I spent the rest of the afternoon cruising up and down the line of ships picking up survivors and taking them to the Officer's Club landing. We were both barefooted and covered from head to foot with oil and salt water in our white service, but otherwise we were absolutely O.K.

Aside from the fact that I might have had some leave and have been able to see you and Mother this winter I am delighted to be here. I have a very good job now and aside from the fact that I'd rather be at sea I am very much satisfied with the way things are going. I am a little shy of uniforms and equipment present but the government is going to reimburse us for most of our gear. I salvaged my class ring and the

remains of my sword, which will be quite a keepsake.

I hope Mother won't be too worried about us. I am going to try to write to her several times a week. That may help. Patty has writted me several letters since the war, and it never ceases to surprise me the way she is growing up. I visited the Boynton's about a week ago and was treated to my first drink of Oke. You can't get the real Oke out here anymore, you know. In fact, you can't get anything now, except "white zombies" (plain milk).

Six more years out here and I'll be a kamaaina, but I certainly hope I can hit the mainland now and then.

Love and Good Luck,

Archie

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