

SC2c Frank M Hanzel Scrapbook

Plankowner, Ships Cook, Purple Heart Recipient



SC2c Frank M. Hanzel about 1944

DD724/

U. S. S. LAFFEY
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
San Francisco, Calif.

To Frank Michael HANZEL, Jr., 223 11 21, SC2c (T),
USNR V6:

Commended at meritorious mast for outstanding performance of duty aboard the U.S.S. LAFFEY during the air action of April 16, 1945, northwest of Okinawa Jima when the ship was attacked by twenty-two enemy planes, shooting down nine of the attackers. You were of great assistance to the medical personnel while treating and comforting many of the casualties during and following the action.

F. J. Becton
F. J. BECTON,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Commanding.



Serial No: 1449

U. S. NAVAL HOSPITAL

San Diego, 34, California

DO NOT ADDRESS THE SIGNER OF THIS LETTER
BUT ADDRESS YOUR REPLY TO
COMMANDING OFFICER
U. S. NAVAL HOSPITAL _____
AND REFER TO No.

2 October 1945

From: The Medical Officer in Command
To : Frank Michael Hanzel Jr., SC2c 223 11 21
U.S. Naval Reserve


Subj: Purple Heart Medal-award of.

Encl: (A) Purple Heart Medal.

1. In the name of the President of the United States, and by direction of the Secretary of the Navy, the Purple Heart Medal is awarded by the Medical Officer in Command, U.S. Naval Hospital, San Diego, California.

Frank Michael Hanzel, Jr., SC2c
U.S. Naval Reserve

for wounds received as a result of enemy action in the Asiatic-Pacific Area on 16 April 1945.


J.W. ALLEN
Captain (Medical Corps) USN
Commanding

Copy to:
SECNAV
BuPers (2)
SRB
JACKET

In reply address not the signer of this letter, but Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington 25, D. C.

Refer to No. Pers-10

NAVY DEPARTMENT
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



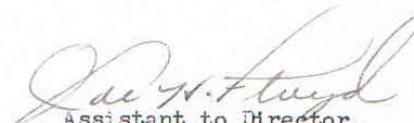
27 JAN 1947

To: Mr. Frank Michael Hanzel, Jr., 223 11 21, USNR, SC2, jlh
70-33 67th St.
Glendale, New York

Subject: Presidential Unit Citation awarded U.S.S. Laffey (DD-724).

1. Forwarded herewith is a facsimile of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the U.S.S. Laffey.
2. By virtue of your service in the LAFHEY during the period mentioned in the citation, you are hereby authorized to wear as part of your uniform the Presidential Unit Citation ribbon with star, one of which is transmitted herewith.

By direction of Chief of Naval Personnel:


Assistant to Director,
Medals and Awards.

Encl:

1. Facsimile of citation.
2. Insignia (ribbon bar and star).

Saga of the Laffey-- Great Yank Destroyer

Continued from Page 1

parties worked feverishly to control the flames as the battle continued above.

Then two enemy planes dived into the Laffey within a space of 30 seconds. The two planes sealed off openings to the repair parties fighting the fires below decks. Many died then from suffocation and burns.

The destroyer's gunners shot down a twin-engined Japanese plane with a five-inch shell that exploded in the nose of the enemy machine, disintegrating it.

As the action tapered off, another Japanese trying a suicide dive hit the yardarm and crashed into the Pacific. Another dropped a bomb that exploded in the wardroom, killing wounded men being treated at a battle dressing station there. The plane that dropped the final bomb was shot down by American planes.

NOT A GUN ABANDONED

Lieutenant Manson said Commander Becton escaped injury but "a seaman knocked him down once when he was in danger from a suicide plane." Lieutenant Manson said one sailor was wounded three times. The first two times he returned to the battle. He died from the third wound.

Not a single gun was abandoned, Lieutenant Manson said, despite the fury of the fighting and the winged death all around as enemy planes exploded, spraying flaming gasoline on the ship. He said it looked at one time as if it might be necessary to abandon ship. That was when Commander Becton declared: "I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire."

When the fight was over the Laffey, battered but saved, returned to a safer area.

The Destroyer Laffey, Back Home From

Its Epic Battle With Japanese Suicide Planes

Destroyer Is In, Battered by Six Suicide Planes

The Laffey, Afire, Fought
Back at Air Fleet Off
Okinawa for Two Hours

SEATTLE, May 25 (UP).—The destroyer Laffey steamed into the Seattle harbor today—a ship that took six “death blows” from Japanese suicide planes and lived to fight again.

Her stand against a massed enemy air fleet off Okinawa last April will go down in naval annals alongside the feats of the historic aircraft carrier Franklin, the cruiser Marblehead and the battleship Oklahoma. She was another ship that couldn't be sunk.

Her rudder jammed, flaming gasoline burning gunners strapped to their seats, the Laffey punched back for two hours. Thirty-one officers and men were killed or missing. Sixty were wounded in action.

Commander Frederick J. Beaton, of Hot Springs, Ark., said: “I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire!”

He didn't—not even when the deck of the Laffey seemed one great mass of fire and the Japanese planes came ceaselessly on.

Japanese Lose 14 Planes

The Laffey's guns barked and American flyers came to her aid. When the smoke had cleared, the Americans had shot down eight of the Japanese planes and probably a ninth. Six more had dived into the destroyer—a toll of at least fourteen enemy planes. A little tug had to help the destroyer move from the battle zone to safer waters.

Today the 2,200-ton Laffey slid into harbor, riddled like a sieve above the waterline, her mast a shattered stump. Tomorrow the Laffey will move to the Todd shipyards to be repaired for action where the public will get a chance to see her. The Navy says she will be in for the final kill in the Pacific.

The story of the Laffey's trial by fire and bombs was told by one of the ship's communications officers, Lieutenant Frank Manson, of Tahlequah, Okla. Twenty enemy planes concentrated on the destroyer, Lieutenant Manson said. The first Japanese plane dropped its bombs, missed and got away.

For enemy dive-bombers came in. Every one of them was shot down. A suicide plane was felled before it could strike home. Another Japanese was hit so close to the ship that flying metal killed one of the sailors—the battle's first American casualty.

Bomb Hit Rudder

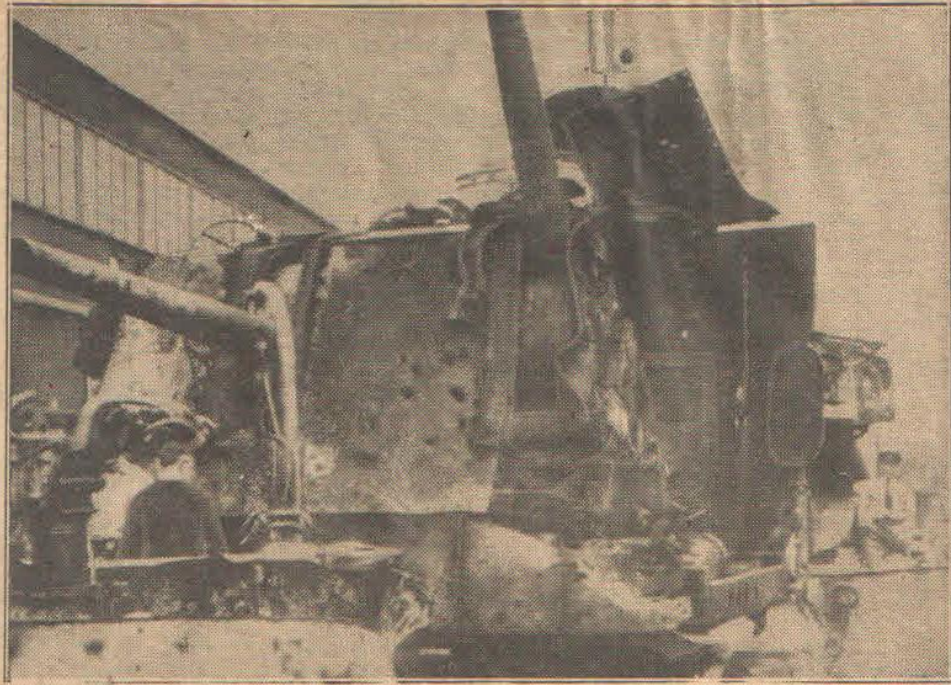
Then a bomb hit the rudder. For the remainder of the fight, the Laffey sped dizzily in a circle—her engineers judging the speed needed by the sound and intensity of the gunfire.

Then the first suicide plane hit—demolishing a gun mount and killing a number of men. Fires broke out and two more suicide planes crashed into the deck.

American carrier planes joined the battle. Three more suicide planes hit the destroyer. Then a bomb exploded in the wardroom, killing wounded men being treated at a battle dressing station.

One sailor was burned and wounded three times. He returned to deck twice. The third time he died of wounds. The commander escaped injury although a seaman knocked him down once when he was in danger from a suicide plane. The last enemy plane to drop its bombs was shot down, Lieutenant Manson said, and a strange quiet came over the ship.

The destroyer was the second U. S. S. Laffey. The first was sunk off Guadalcanal earlier in the war.



(Associated Press Wirefoto)

RESULT OF JAPANESE FANATICISM

Gun turret of the U. S. S. Laffey, 2,200-ton destroyer, is a torn and twisted wreck after being hit by one of six Japanese suicide planes which plummeted into ship off Okinawa. Vessel's in Seattle for repairs. She made a gallant stand against a massed enemy air fleet. Like the Franklin, the Laffey was another ship that couldn't be sunk.

—Story on page 4



(Associated Press Wirefoto)

Electricians Mate 1/c N. J. Decker of Boston examines damage below decks of the destroyer Laffey.

New S-5/26

Destroyer Joins Hero Ships in Flaming Battle

By WILLIAM D. EBERHART

Seattle, May 25 (U.P.).—The U. S. S. Laffey, a destroyer which took six "death blows" from Jap suicide planes off Okinawa and lived to fight again, steamed proudly into Seattle harbor today.

Her stand against a massed enemy air fleet off Okinawa last April will go down in naval annals alongside the feats of the aircraft carrier Franklin, the cruiser Marblehead and the battleship Oklahoma. She was another ship that couldn't be sunk.

Her rudder jammed, flaming gasoline burning gunners strapped to their seats, the Laffey punched back for two long hours. Thirty-one officers and men were killed or missing. Sixty were wounded in action.

Her commander, Frederick J. Becton, said:

"I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire!"

He didn't—not even when the deck of the Laffey seemed one great mass of fire.

American fliers came to the Laffey's aid. When the smoke had cleared, the Yanks had shot down eight Jap planes and probably a ninth. Six more had dived into the destroyer—a toll of at least 14 enemy planes.

A tug had to help the destroyer move to safer waters.

Today the 2,200-ton "can" slid into harbor, riddled above the waterline, her mast a shattered stump.

The story of the Laffey was told

by one of the ship's communications officers, Lieut. Frank Manson, Tahlequah, Okla.

During the third mass Jap suicide attack on American naval units off Okinawa, 20 enemy planes concentrated on the destroyer, Manson said. Four enemy dive bombers came in. Every one was shot down. A suicide plane was bagged before it could strike home. Another Jap was hit so close to the ship that flying metal killed one of the sailors—the battle's first American casualty.

Rudder Smashed.

Then a bomb hit the rudder. For the remainder of the fight, the Laffey turned dizzily in a circle.

Then the first suicide plane hit—demolishing a gun mount and killing a number of men. Then two more suicide planes crashed into the deck, followed by three more.

A bomb exploded in the wardroom, killing wounded men being treated at a battle dressing station.

The last enemy plane to drop its bombs was shot down, Manson said, and a strange quiet came over the ship. Not a single gun on the Laffey had been abandoned although men had died at their posts and other guns had been blown to pieces.

Tomorrow the ship will move to the Todd shipyards for repairs. The Navy says she will be in for the final kill in the Pacific.

(Other picture in center fold)



"UNSINKABLE" . . . The Japs hit her with six suicide planes in a two-hour attack . . . 31 members of her crew were killed and 60 others wounded . . . but the U. S. destroyer Laffey took all that was thrown at her and downed nine enemy attackers. Looking like a sieve," as her skipper described it, she is shown tied up to a berth in Seattle awaiting repairs—and a return to action. Wirephoto from AP.

American 5-26

HIT BY SIX JAP SUICIDE PLANES AND TWO BOMBS



Quartermaster 2/c Aristides Phoutrides inspects holes punched in deck of U.S.S. Laffey during battle off Jap coast.

(International SOUNDphoto)

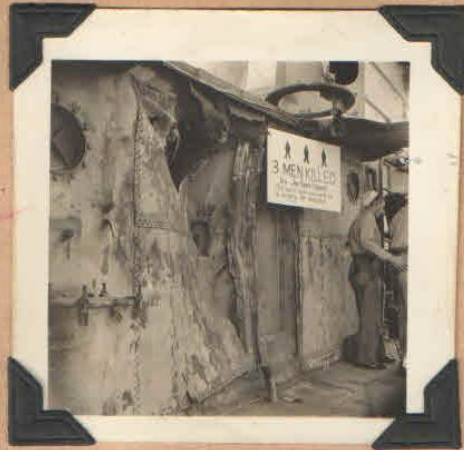
News
5-26





Crash Sinks Patrol Ship

SAN DIEGO, Cal., Sept. 12 (AP).
—A Navy patrol ship sank several miles beyond San Diego Harbor yesterday after colliding with the destroyer U. S. S. Laffey, the Navy reported. One crew member was missing.



**Suicide Plane Hit
Hanzel's Ship**

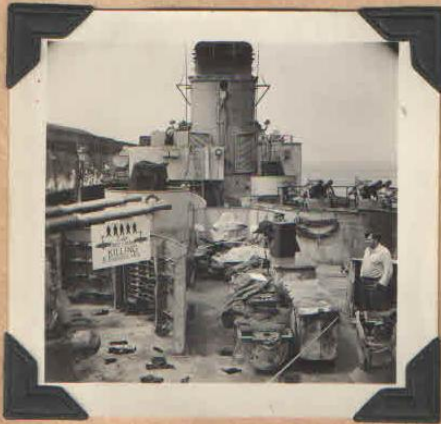
After seeing action on Leyte, Ormoc, Mindora, Luzon and Iwo Jima, Ship's Cook, Second Class Frank Hanzel of Glendale received shrapnel wounds when a suicide plane hit his ship, a destroyer, off Okinawa.

Before he was injured he was cited for helping the wounded during and following an attack on his ship by 22 Japanese planes near Okinawa.

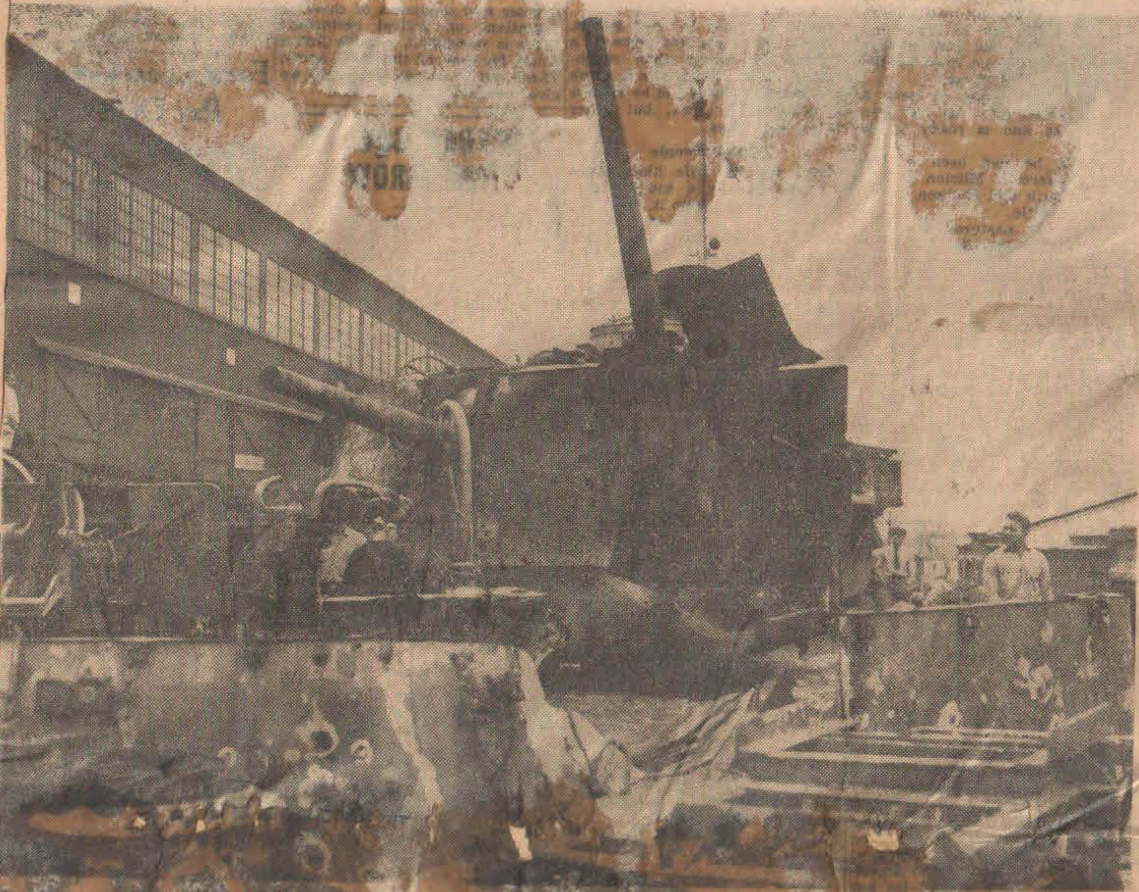
The 34-year-old sailor, with the 58th Task Force, also took part in the first and second raids over Tokyo.

While on Leyte Seaman Hanzel met his brother-in-law, Sergeant Rudolph G. Murker, also of Glendale, whom he had not seen for two years.

He is a graduate of Public School 91, Glendale, and Richmond Hill High School. Before he entered the service he was a pressman.



WRECKED TURRET ON HEROIC DESTROYER



Wrecked 5-inch gun turret aboard the heroic little destroyer, Laffey, which survived crashes by seven Jap suicide planes on her decks and an accidental hit by an eighth plane, 60 miles off the coast of Japan and made her way back across the Pacific to Seattle. The Laffey will be open to the public, beginning tomorrow afternoon, at Pier 66, foot of Main Street.—U. S. Navy Photo. (See Page 15 for other pictures.)

LAFFEY BAGS 9 AIRCRAFT OFF OKINAWA

By ROBERT MAHAFFAY

Under the eyes of Seattle in Elliott Bay today was the destroyer U. S. S. Laffey, heroine of one of Okinawa's most savage battles, still fire-blackened, still crippled and slashed from the death strikes of Japanese suicide planes.

After absorbing the most hideous punishment the Japanese could devise, the Laffey survived to come "home" to Seattle for repairs.

Deep and terrible are the wounds she carries from that fight, lasting little more than an hour, off Okinawa, April 15. Twenty-two of the suicidal kamikazi tried to kill her.

Seven of the kamikazi crashed on the Laffey's decks, ripping her thin steel until it looked like torn confetti; an eighth clipped her accidentally.

32 Dead or Missing

The Laffey shot down nine planes. Thirty-two of her men were killed or missing; 60 were wounded, 32 seriously. Her decks were a maze of wreckage. The after gun mount was destroyed. Her stern was a sieve above the water line.

She was reeling helplessly, out of control. Fires raged amidships and along the stern. But she lived to come back, and will fight again.

The story of that fight is told by Comdr. Frederick Julian Becton, 37 years old, of Hot Springs, Ark., the Laffey's skipper.

"Four of the 22 came on ahead," Becton said. "We shot down three of them, and another ship got the fourth. Then another one came in from away to hell-and-gone out. They try to hit the bridge if they can, and that's what he was after."

Gun Mount Hit

"The rat kept turning in on me, and I kept the ship turning in on him to spoil his angle, and finally he must have said, 'Oh, the hell with it,' because he came down on us and hit the top of the after gun mount, killing one man, and then went on to splash overside.

"After that, two dive-bombers came in from opposite beams, and our machine gunners got them all right. But the next kamikazi, the eighth one, crashed into us amidships—flaming gasoline splashed everywhere."

Commander Becton ran a hand through brown hair pulling back at his temples. The lines on his

lean face were deep, his brown eyes reminiscent.

"After that they came thick and fast. They like to find a smokescreen. They'll go after one that's smoking."

"Everywhere you looked you saw dive-bombers or fighters converging on you. All you could do was hope your gunners would get them. They got plenty—or we wouldn't be here—but nobody could have got them all."

Stern Hit Again

"The next one hit our deck edge at the stern, crashing into the gun mount. It had a bomb aboard, and the gun mount was blown up. The whole stern of the ship was under a coil of smoke.

"Number 4 also came in at the stern on the starboard side. It dropped a bomb and smacked the same gun mount. The next morning we found one Jap engine in the gun mount and another right beside it. Numbers 5 and 6 came in across the stern on the port side and smashed into the after deck house—we pulled two more Jap engines out of the deck house the next morning."

One of the planes diving into the after gun mount, Commander Becton said, had dropped a bomb just above the Laffey's port propeller. The bomb penetrated the side of the ship and exploded in the machine-gun ammunition magazine, disabling the steering gear. The rudder was jammed hard left, and the destroyer could steam only in circles.

Corsair Hit Arm, Too

"No 7 didn't do much damage," the skipper continued. "Only took off a yard arm. The rat was a fighter, I think. One of our Corsairs was right on top of him—chased him across us and into the water. The Corsair hit the yard arm, too, but managed to get a little altitude and bail out."

"Another dive-bomber coming in fast on the port beam was nailed by a Corsair, but the resultant explosion threw huge fragments into the Laffey, knocking out all power to one of her two remaining five-inch mounts.

"Then a Jap fighter headed in on our starboard bow was stopped by a direct hit from our five-inch mount which had no electric power and was being operated manually."

Direct Hit; No Plane

"I'd never seen a plane take a direct hit from a five-inch shell. It was a pleasure to see it poised in space a few feet above the water and then just disintegrate into nothingness."

"The last one came in from the stern, planted a bomb on us, knocked over the other yard arm, and splashed off our bow."

The skipper looked up, a light kindling in his eyes.

"That was it," he said. "The action was over. We were in bad shape aft with fires and flooding still not under control. The Navy and marine flyers really were looking out for us now."

"Our whole top-side was strewn with plane wreckage from bow to stern—engines, landing gear, wings, the remains of Jap pilots. What a mess!"

Rescue tugs arrived to take the Laffey in tow. She later was repaired sufficiently to permit her to make the run to Seattle under her own power.

Veteran of Normandy

A veteran of wars in two oceans, the Laffey took part in the Normandy invasion and the bombardment of Cherbourg. Proceeding to the Pacific in September, she fought at Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Lingayen Gulf, Iwo Jima and, finally, Okinawa.

Commander Becton, who was graduated from Annapolis in 1931, served initially on a destroyer in the Atlantic. Assigned to a destroyer in the Pacific early in 1942, he fought at Guadalcanal, where his ship, the destroyer Aaron Ward, was sunk during a raid by 98 Jap planes.

Commander Becton, a cousin of Mrs. J. L. Meares, Jr., 616 Boylston Ave. N., holds the Silver Star award and a Presidential Unit Citation.

Seattleite Aboard

Serving aboard the Laffey was Aristides Phourides, quartermaster, second class, son of the Rev. and Mrs. Stephanos D. Phourides of Seattle. Father Phourides is pastor of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption here.

Action of the Navy in permitting the battle-damaged Laffey to be visited by the public is unprecedented, and is expected to drive home the desperate need for workers in the ship-repair yards. Approximately 10,000 workers are needed now for the Puget Sound ship-repair program. The Laffey will be moved within a few days to the Todd-Pacific yards on Harbor Island.

See Your Tydol
-Hell See
for all motor
lubricants,
of 18 what

**At B-29 Plant
Seek Accord**

CHICAGO, May 29 (NS) — Efforts were made today to end a recurrent strike at the Dodge Corp., where engines for B-29 Superfortresses now are manufactured. Chrysler Corp. workers quit following May 5 under a B-29 Japan strike.

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'79 Min. of Hell' Told by Sailor

By JAMES D. HOBAN
Continued from First Page

Steve Waite," he said, "that the Laffey came home. The captain, officers and crew, they just wouldn't stop fighting. That 'tin can' took everything the Japs had but they couldn't sink her."

The first member of the USS Laffey to reach New York, he was talking about that gallant little destroyer that wouldn't die.

Her stand off Okinawa, where she took six "death blows" from a massed Jap suicide attack, will go down in naval annals alongside the legends of the Franklin, the cruiser Marblehead and the battleship Oklahoma. The Japs just couldn't sink her.

And while the noisy street sounds drifted into the hotel room, Machinist Mate Herold today relived those 79 minutes of hell in the gray dawn off Okinawa.

"It was just about 0730 hours," he said, "with half the crew gone to chow. I had just finished when the word was passed for all hands to man their battle stations. I was with repair three in the after deckhouse. With me was Steve Waite—that's the guy I just told you about—when our 20's (20 mm. guns) started hammering. Steve looks at me and says:

"Here they are."
"First it was one plane just looking us over. Then a little while later another Jap plane dove over starboard, low and strafing. Four men were hit. I helped them down to the wardroom. One kid was dying as we laid him on the table. Then Doc Dranell took over. I returned to my station. That's when Steve and another buddy of mine went down to check leaks and fires. I saw Steve again, but not my other buddy. He was dead."

HEROIC SAGA



MM 2/c ERNEST HEROLD
Tells Story of Laffey.

Journal-American Photo.

quits. She was just a mess of holes with big ugly rips all about her topside. Two planes' engines were bent in a mess of twisted steel in the afterdeckhouse . . . the yardarm was splintered on deck . . . the wardroom on the starboard side was just one big hole . . . 20mm guns were bent like some giant had brushed his hand down the deck . . . the fantail was gone . . . we were listing to port with the whole aft section just a foot above the waterline.

"We first picked up our wounded and our dead."

He looked out the window. A sign was blinking something about buying war bonds.

The street noises were dying away. It was raining now.

"It's quiet here, isn't it," he said. A second later he asked thoughtfully:

"The Laffey gave them a hell of a fight for their money don't you think so?"

And somewhere, Capt. Lawrence, who also refused to give up the ship and John Paul Jones

Survivor Describes:

'79 Min. of Hell On the Laffey'

Here is an exclusive interview with one of the survivors of the indomitable destroyer, USS Laffey, which was attacked last month off Okinawa by 14 Jap planes, six of which made suicide dives onto her decks. The Laffey limped into Seattle harbor four days ago—31 of her officers and men killed, and 60 wounded in action.

By JAMES D. HORAN.

"... we're trapped... this is Steve... we can't see... fire and smoke bad... we're going to try for the shaft alley... break through engine bulkhead... must have air... choking... goodbye..."

Slowly groping his way through the thick, billowing gray smoke and flames, Machinist Mate 3/c Steve Waite made his way to the nearest ladder. Then down another. Through hatchways and passageways he crawled clinging to his half-conscious buddy.

Finally deep in the bowels of the ship he hit the bulkhead with his fist. He waited. There was silence. Again and again he pounded. The smoke pulled the air from his lungs. Choking and sobbing he kept rapping weakly.

THEY'RE HERE.

This time there was a faint answer. Someone was tapping with a hammer. He grabbed his buddy.

"They're here... they'll get us out..."

A few minutes later a small drill punctured the tough steel. A tiny hose was pushed through the hole. There was hissing noise.

Waite lifted his buddy. Both men sucked in the trickle of air. Minutes passed. Suddenly an electric torch tore off one of the topside plates over head. Ready hands hauled them through the hole into the clean fresh air.

"I'm okay," Waite said... "I gotta go back to my station. I gotta..."

In the quiet of a room in the Hotel Pennsylvania, husky young Machinist Mate 2/c Ernest Herold, of 8053 90th rd., Woodhaven, Queens, shook his head.

"It was because of guys like USS Continued on Page 4, Column 2

THE Journal-American Will Not Be Published Tomorrow, May 30 (Memorial Day)

drifted into the hotel room, Machinist Mate Herold today relived those 79 minutes of hell in the gray dawn off Okinawa.

"It was just about 0730 hours," he said, "with half the crew gone to chow. I had just finished when the word was passed for all hands to man their battle stations. I was with repair three in the after deckhouse. With me was Steve Waite—that's the guy I just told you about—when our 20's (20 mm. guns) started hammering. Steve looks at me and says:

"Here they are." "First it was one plane just looking us over. Then a little while later another Jap plane dove over starboard, low and strafing. Four men were hit. I helped them down to the wardroom. One kid was dying as we laid him on the table. Then Doc Dranell took over. I returned to my station. That's when Steve and another buddy of mine went down to check leaks and fires. I saw Steve again, but not my other buddy. He was dead."

SUICIDE DIVES.

He paused, then continued: "Another bomb hit us. The concussion threw me to the deck. Another Jap dove. A sheet of flame and burning gas leaped up.

"I jumped through a hatchway. I thought I was on fire. Then, while we were fighting the fires, our 40's (40mm. shells) went off. They banged around like fireworks.

"Overhead a VA1—a medium Jap bomber—started to suicide dive. But a Corsair got on his tail. They chased each other right into us. The Jap tore away half our yardarm. The Corsair ripped away the rest. The Jap crashed with one big explosion off our side. Our pilot bailed out, and was later picked up. Both were only about 20 feet over our director.

"The minutes seemed to move like days. Planes diving... bombs crashing... the ship moving like a dog with his hind-quarters broken

He inhaled deeply. Perspiration was rolling off his forehead.

"The Laffey was hurt bad. Finally we made them call V



MM 2/c ERNEST HEROLD Tells Story of Laffey.

Journal-American Photo.

quits. She was just a mess of holes with big ugly rips all about her topside. Two planes' engines were bent in a mess of twisted steel in the afterdeckhouse... the yardarm was splintered on deck... the wardroom on the starboard side was just one big hole... 20mm guns were bent like some giant had brushed his hand down the deck... the fantail was gone... we were listing to port with the whole aft section just a foot above the waterline.

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"The Laffey gave them a hell of a fight for their money don't you think so?"

And somewhere, Capt. Lawrence, who also refused to give up his ship, and John Paul Jones and Cindr. Gilmore who cited "Take her down" together with all the rest of honored Navy dead, must have nodded in agreement.

For info on this scrapbook, contact president@laffey.org