1942

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Jan. 5 - 28
Jan 20 - $30.(6)
Feb 5 - $34.00
Feb. 20 - $17.00
March 5 - $18.00
March 20 - $17.00
Apr. 5 - $18.00
Apr. 20 - $17.00
May 5 - did not draw
May 20 did not draw
June 5 - 53.00
June 20 - $19.00
July 5 -
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Jan. 1 - Jan. 14 - We have been doing nothing out of the ordinary. Up to the last day we have been training troops. On the last day, we had the most thrilling practice landing of the year. We had 2 battleships, 4 tin cans, several sub chasers, dive bombers, and pursuit planes. Since I was in the first wave, I had a chance to see a good bit of the show. We lowered boats into the water at 7:30 A.M. At 9:50 A.M. the battleships started a barrage from about 8 miles off each end of the island. The barrage was fairly heavy. At about 11:00 A.M. The barrage of the battleships increased in intensity, and the destroyers closed in on the targets. As the battleships were firing overhead, and the destroyers were firing point blank into the beach, we were going into the beach. At 1000 yards off, the dive bombers came over, dropping bombs, followed by strafing from pursuit planes. At 400 yards, we opened up our machine guns. We hit the beach about the same time the planes quit strafing. This was at 11:30 A.M. For the rest of the day, it was quite the ordinary. We are supposed to pick them up Sunday, which means a couple of days of peace for ship's company (Marines)

Jan. 14 - Jan 31 We no sooner got back from maneuvers, than a storm hit San Diego. It was the worst in San Diego's history. On Friday night of January 21st at midnight, the glorious heap of junk by the name of J. P. Bell was blown up on the beach. By morning, she was off. Lt. Antink of the deck division came running through informing the crew that the ship had went aground. Chief MacNamee bellowed out, "Drive it 2 more feet up on the beach & call her the Port Bell. This ship is getting on my nerves & Hamlin isn't helping any. He put Carr on report for salting up the feed bottoms. Carr got 2 days restrictions. The skipper, as usual, didn't give Ed a chance to say anything in his behalf. For my money, they can have my share of the navy. We have a sheave a new chief engineer. He's a 3 stripper, & supposed to be a regular. (& There'll be some changes made)

JAN. 31 – Feb. 20 – We went into dry dock, & put on a new screw. Of course, I had to scrap the old screw on the port side. We left dry dock, and went out for a couple days of test runs & target practice. We came back into the Des. Base for a couple of days. Then, we left for Frisco, where we now are. On our way in, we passed the cruiser San Francisco, on her way out. She was in here getting repairs after her Solomons battle. Of the boys brother is the ship, & it was kind of hard to see her pull out. I hated to leave Maxine. I was getting warmed up. However, I want some good old sea life. We're supposed to be here 3 or 4 days & then set sail, destination, unknown.

Feb. 20 – April 23 – Since February 20, nothing too much has happened. We have trained troops, and we have seen a yard period in San Pedro. I am studying for the Naval academy prep. school. Yes, it has been pretty much routine. I've tried to call mom 3 times, but with no success. However, what has happened in the last week is a good preview of what's to come. We have been busy loading the ship. Right now it is loaded to capacity. I will not say where we are going, since I don't know, & wouldn't say if I did know. We are almost certain to see some action this unless I miss my guess very far. Since the ship is pretty well crowded, permission has been granted for men, wishing to do so, to move wherever they want. They sleep on cots. Since I've always been a little queer about where I sleep, I, along with two other boys, am moving down to the Evaps. It ought to be pretty good duty. I have a history of the U.S. in front of me right now. It seems funny that I may, in the future weeks, be helping to print the new issue of that same book. If we do see action, we may get a leave; I hope so.

April 23 – May 21, 1943 – Since I last wrote in this book, we have seen a good many thing, and done a good many things.

It was a fairly nice day, when we slipped out of the bay, heading out straight to the Farallon Islands, where we would either head toward the north or south. These Islands are 30 miles out of the bay. As it so happened, we headed in a due north direction. A day out we picked up three battlewagons, an aux carrier, & a tanker, along with the escort of destroyers. The entire trip was rough as all hell. It didn't take us long to realize we were going to attempt to take Attu. We finally pulled into Cold bay Alaska on one clear, sunny, cold day. That place was really named appropriately. The cold wind that comes down across that bay really is enough to

freeze your bows. There is nothing there except a coast guard station. It took about 3 hours to pass through the channel into the inner harbor, which was really a big affair. That's one thing common about Alaska. Their harbors are many & spacious. The surrounding country is typically rugged looking. We stayed here a few days, I suppose to get the attack organized to the last detail. Since it is located between Kodiak & Dutch Harbor, we should have been able to make the trip in three or four days. However, things were to be different. Somewhat was to be our last day, the convoy, which numbered about 30 ships, slowed down considerably. It was a bright sunny day, and would have been ideal for an air attack with the scattered clouds. However, no aircraft appeared.

The next day was a different story. A thick fog set in. It was so thick that as far as I was concerned, we were the only ship out there. One could hardly see our own forecast. We were supposed to hit the beach the next morning, but because of the rough weather, we went around in circles, and around in circles we went for four more days. I don't believe we were ever more than eight hours from Attu. When we did finally attack, there was nothing dramatic about our landing. Instead of landing in the early dawn with the sun rising over the distant mountains, we landed in a dense fog about 10 o'clock on the morning of May 11, 1943. The Japs were taken completely by surprise. The scouts, of whom I was on our ship, encountered a few sentries, but they were quickly & silently taken care of. The plan of attack was for three transports to attack at Massacre Bay, and for us to attack on the northeastern tip, just off Holtz Bay. As it was proved later, ours was the harder task. We got to that area as torpedo junction. I don't know whether the Japs thought we were stupid or not, if so, they were certainly

coming. Every lunch, when chow was down, the torpedoes or I should say the submarines came. On our last day, we had two torpedoes shot at us. One of them missed by only 30 feet. With these interventions, it took us five days to unload. On the island, things weren't going all too good. The beachhead was gained easily, but advancing was difficult. At the end of the first day, they had advanced 1000 yds. The army made the mistake of firing their artillery from our beach. The Japs very quickly got the range, and from then, until we finished unloading, the beach was shelled regularly, although not too heavy. One of the navy beach party was killed from schrapnel, and a certain of one of our boats was wounded in the arm also from schrapnel. Aboard ship, a bm 2c was killed when a boat fell on top of him. From reports, 55% of the soldiers we landed were killed, but all in all casualties weren't very happy. That may, & may not be correct, but I do know one thing, and that is that we took away from there 85 wounded men. The Japs were so hard pressed that they used their A.A. guns on the soldiers instead of our aircraft. We had a young soldier aboard, who was a first sergeant. He looked to be about 21; I guess that's why I noticed him. I heard later that he was killed leading his men. It seems that one of those shells from a Jap A.A. gun, scored a bullseye on him & tore his upper half completely off. We had several shell schock cases aboard. They are without doubt the most pitiful. One of these was a member of a gun crew, probably a 37 mm. or 3 in. gun. The entire crew was killed outright; that is, all except him, & he had, in my estimation, a bad case of shell shock. The least little noise, such as bumping against something, would send him into a frenzy. He kept pleading to go back to his men. He was a sergeant. When they served him chow in the sick bay, he refused it saying "Give it to my men, I'll eat rations". Such cases as these made me see this war as I have never been able to see it before. There was no Jap airplanes. The airport, which the main objective was only 25% finished, but it was located in a bad place, & it was reported that the site of the airport was going to be changed, as soon as the airport was captured. We lost three aircraft, one P-38, which crashed in flames a few hundred yards from our ship & 2 Grumman "Wildcats".

One of the biggest offensive weapons used were the battleships and the destroyers, the Phelps, in particular. The Phelps dashed into Holtz Bay, which was alive with artillery, three times against orders to silence the batteries long enough for the troops to make a noticable advance. I saw her let go salvo after salvo just outside the Harbor & it really was a good sight. The battlewagons, while not so spectacular, were just as deadly. Some days, you'd hear a big salvo let go, but that's all. Just a big noise. Although the invasion was a success, it was a little tougher than the army looked forward to. The officers were telling the men that within forty-eight hours the island would be under control. One of the army officers hearing one of our seamen telling the men, when we were coming up here, what they were in for, stopped awhile & listened. Of course, the seaman was shuffling the bull, but the officer took it seriously, & proceeded to give the sailor a tongue lashing. He claimed it was bad for their morale, but I have a hunch the officer was more scared than the men.

As we sailed away from Attu, after 5 hectic days, everything was peaceful. With a calm sea, and clear sky, the rocky island of Attu faded over the horizon.

From then on, the trip was full of surprises, mostly pleasant. We were not ~~at~~ yet two hours out, when we learned we were going to Adak, which was very familiar to all Bell sailors. When I looked at that once isolated, unpopulated island, I almost fell down. Instead of taking supplies ashore in barges, there were three wooden docks, with the inner harbor, + outer harbor both protected by sub. nets. You could see army vehicles speeding across the island on dirt roads. In the harbor, there were at least fifty ships. To see all that has been accomplished in eight months one must think what a fool Hitler & his gang must be to think that Democracy isn't worth. There has been nothing slow in building this base, which in time to come without doubt will be the biggest military base in the north Pacific.

May 21, 1943 - We left Adak today, and headed our bow for the states. As in the last trip, the first couple of days out were pretty damp and cold. After we got away from the Alaskan Climate, the weather was almost as good as San Diego's. The only things that took a beating on the return trip were the sports gear, such as balls, bats, & footballs. We lost most of them over the side in the course of the trip. The day before we reached San Diego the Wildcats took off from the carrier to proceed to the North Island naval air station. They were probably on liberty in an hour or two. We arrived in San Diego on May 31, 1943, my 20th birthday, quite a present.

May 31, 1943 - June 28, 1943 - We spent a little over two weeks in the dis. base getting minor repairs. Right now, we are out in the stream practicing landings. Thursday & Friday the Julin & Bell went out for gunnery drill. Although the Julin has shot down 2 Jap zero's in combat, we outshot them both days. At the end of the ~~two~~ 2 days, we got a "well done" from the Commodore. Today, I have been in the navy 35 months, quite an old salt.

June 28, 1943 - August 23, 1943 - Coming to an unevent[illegible] end is one of the most mysterious campaigns of this war. Some people may not like it too much, since having expected a major battle, might ridicule the Army & Navy for not keeping a more efficient patrol. However, if we could conquer more land as cheaply, it would be a fairly peaceful world in which to fight.

It has been three weeks since we left a West coast port. We had several sub scares a couple of days out of Adak. That was the only eventful thing to happen, except to see some very seasick soldiers our first few days out, which were very rough. On our seventh day, one could faintly see Adak, surrounded by fog, which is quite the thing up here.

It always does the Bell Crew good to see this port. As one looks out over the bay, which I think is better than Kiska's, it is hard to believe that less than a year ago, the only sign of life were some fox. Now, there are many thousands of soldiers, a movie, & a canteen, where the strongest drink sold is grape juice, & that is strictly on the level.

We swung around the harbor until the 13th which happened to be a Friday. With the troops having been trained in the Aleutian terrain, we sailed out of the harbor with a natural fear, but a supreme confidence. The task force was divided into 2 parts, the first to land a day ahead of us. It later became clear that we were being used to make the Japs think

we were going to make our main landing around the main camp at Kiska village or Gertrude Cove. To accomplish this, we circled just off of these two two points, moving in as close as five miles. The navy went so far with the show, they sent in PT boats with facsimiles of soldiers along the side into Gertrude Cove, hoping to draw some Jap fire, which as yet was lacking. As before, they met with no success. It was there that the seeds of doubt were sewn. On the morning of August 15, at 6:20 the 1st task force landed her troops without meeting any enemy opposition. This fact was broadcast over the ship's loudspeaker. That night via the same route, the news came to us that several objectives had been taken, and still no enemy opposition. Although our doubts were gradually growing stronger, we figured they had consolidated their forces in the Vega Bay Area. The next morning, came the da[illegible] boats could be seen digging into the swells as they made their way toward the beach, which was located at West Kiska Lake.

After having landed the troops, it wasn't long before we realized that where only a few days before there had been an estimated 12,000 Japs, it was now uninhabited. There was just cause for thinking the Japs vacated in a hurry, since much equipment was left. Among other things, a set of tools made in L.A., and canned Salmon, put up in New York were found in the collection. Several Zero's were also found. Having unloaded our ship in a day & a half, we helped unload other ships. Feeling that Kiska Harbor was safe for ships, we got under way at 0800 on Aug. 18. We arrived the same morning around 0900.

It wasn't a very nice day to arrive in such a famous Harbor, what with a driving rain & heavier than usual fog. Again, we helped unload ships. By late afternoon, it had cleared up sufficiently to get a pretty good view of the harbor. The first thing we saw was the 4 ships sunk by our bombs, three are beached & one sunk.

The estimate on Japs on the Island was calculated by getting the the amount of floor space on the Island & taking into account the crowded conditions of the Japs.