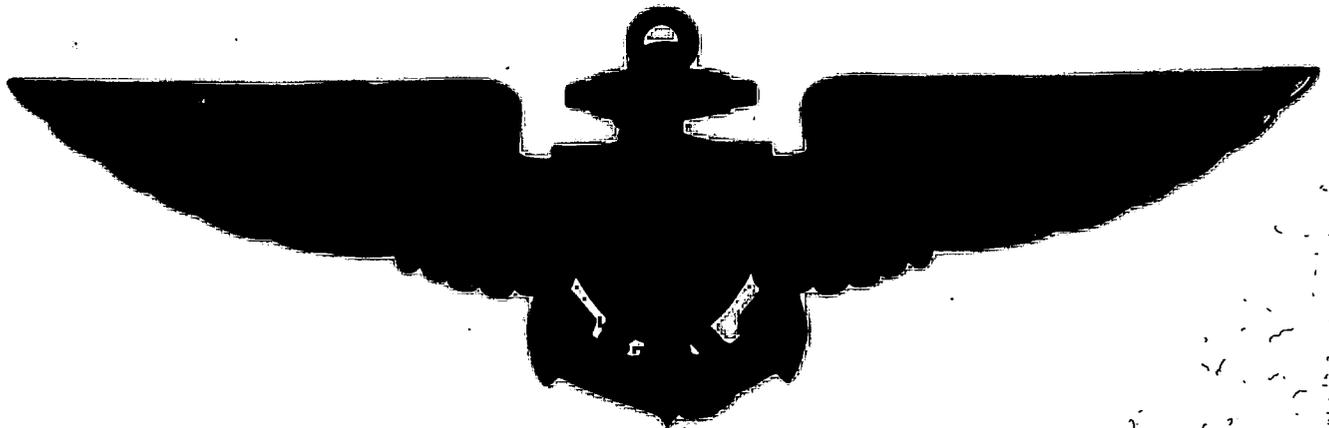


DOWN AT SEA

~~_____~~
VAN HAGEN and his flight 8/10/45
off HONSHU JAPEN.

This story is recounted through a series of recollections by George Van Hagen, Red Shirley and Swede Nelson, all members of Navy AirGroup 27, aboard the US Aircraft Carrier, INDEPENDENCE. Shirley was our flight leader and flew position 5/1. Van Hagen was his wingman and flew position 5/2. Nelson flew position 5/4, behind Van Hagen. His visual comments are first hand. Our call sign that day, was "HOSSIER" Base.

Wings-Pensacola, Inc.
1-800-642-9464



"DOWN AT SEA"

Hi Swede:

Good to hear from you and your recollections in newsletter about our flight together 8/10/45.

I am enclosing several pieces of history of that flight for your records.

1. Copy of Red Shirley's flight log for that day.
2. Copy of log of submarine, USS SCABBARDFISH, which picked me up.

As you remember, we started out that day on a SubCap and then targets of opportunity when the weather rolled in. One of our targets was a Jap ship, Red called it a Lugger, that we attacked. We carried rockets and let them go on our first pass. The second time over we came in low and racked her with machine gun fire. I was flying 2nd, as Red's wingman and took a hit in my engine, probably AA or small ground fire. My engine froze up and I couldn't hold altitude. The plane began to tare itself apart and shake like "hell". I knew I had only one choice, keep the nose down, maintain flying speed and prepare to ditch. I was too low to jump. At first I had some reference to the horizon, but then I hit a rain squall and I was lost in the soup. I did all the good things like, lock the canopy open, unload all rockets, machine gun loads, extra gas tanks, lower tail hook, lower flaps, close air vents, check altitude keep your wings level and then I hit the water. Would you believe, Tail Hook first. I floated an instant and then my nose came down and the starboard wing caught a wave and I

was home free. They told us, we had 60 seconds to get out of the F6F before it sank. I made it with time to spare, including parachute, survival gear, Mae West, Smith & Wesson with bandolier and 38mm ammo. I couldn't see you guys above me, the fog was too thick, but I could hear you. It was a long day. My gravest concern was the threat of Japanese fishing boats, who might mistake me for a piece of tuna, and they were looking, I could see their shadows in the fog. The submarine, USS Scabardfish moved in to rescue me that PM and we headed for Saipan.

An interesting addition to this story, when we arrived at Saipan, 15 August 1945, every ship in the harbor was celebrating the Wars End, by blowing their whistles, shooting off fire works and playing music. At this point the Skipper of the SCABBARDFISH took me in tow and deposited me at the Sub-Mariner's Club on Saipan. "You're on your own," he said.

I had no orders, no money, just the clothes on my back and with the war over, nobody seemed to care. The people in the Submariners's were very friendly and bought me drinks, until I was almost ready to fall off my chair. At that point a large bevy of Hollywood beauties appeared on the scene. They were part of a USO troop, lead by funny man, Charlie Ruggles. When I told them my story, they invited me to join them, as they were going to Guam the next day and I could ride along. This was too good to pass up and

so, that is how I ment Tyrone Power, the movie actor who turned out to be the pilot for the USO group. You should have seen us cruising along in our private C47, surrounded with sacks of mail and beautiful show girls. I felt like a "Pasha, with his Harem, on the way to Heaven."

When we got to Guam, headquarters sent me to a rest camp, where you played poker, watched movies and slept, Orders for an orphan pilot at this point were slow in coming through. so I spent time at the docks, looking for a familiar face and a ride back to the 3rd Fleet. I lucked out and hitched a ride out on the CVE Munda plus several trips via breeches-bouy, I made it back to the INDEPENDENCE after some negotiations between the Skipper of the destroyer I was on and the Captain of the INDEPENDENCE. It had something to do with a "Hot" Movie and several barrels of Ice Cream, as ransom, for the return of the pilot.

Those were the days. Thanks Swede, for helping me recall.

"That away to go, Hossier Base." This is 5-2, to 5-4. Attached are Red Shirley's log records for the month of August 1945 and log records of the submarine, SCABBARDFISH for August 10 1945. Also copy of VF 27 newsletter dated 9/02, from Swede Nelson.



VF27, DIV.5 (L-R) NELSON, VAN HAGEN, SHIRLEY, HAUTOP

UNITED STATES SHIP

SCARAB FISH (SS397)

Friday 10

August 1945

(Day)

(Date)

(Month)

00 - 02 Underway in Patrol area on base course 270° (T), constant helming 30° either side; all ahead two thirds on one main engine (130 rpm), speed 9 knots. Charging batteries on one main engine. 0027 Shifted battery charge to auxiliary engine. 0130 Changed base course to 090° (T). 0230 Secured battery charge. 0250 Commenced carrying zero float on propulsion engine.

J. A. Butlak
J. A. BUTLAK, Lieut., USN.

02 - 04 Underway as before. 0330 Changed base course to 270° (T).

H. W. Palmer
H. W. PALMER, Lieut., USNR.

04 - 06 Underway as before. 0450 Changed base course to 000° (T).

J. H. Barnard
J. H. BARNARD, Lieut(jg)., USNR.

06 - 08 Underway as before. 0601 Changed base course to 090° (T). 0640 SD contact, in communication with our C.A.P. four F-6F's.

J. A. Butlak
J. A. BUTLAK, Lieut., USN.

08 - 12 Underway as before. 0840 New air cover arrived. Released old cover.

H. W. Palmer
H. W. PALMER, Lieut., USNR.

12 - 16 Underway as before. Changing base course 90° to the left every 15 minutes. 1245 Changed base course to 000° (T). 1337 In communication with cover of 3 F-6F's. 1339 Cover dispatched to search for downed plane. 1345 Changed base course to 270° (T), changing base course 90° to left every 15 minutes. 1247 Changed course to 247° (T); all ahead flank. 1452 Changed course to 254° (T); one plane of cover overhead. Heading for downed plane. 1551 Changed course to 265° (T). 1558 All ahead full. 1559 All ahead flank.

J. H. Barnard
J. H. BARNARD, Lieut(jg)., USNR.

16 - 20 Underway as before. 1607 Changed course to 273° (T). 1611 All ahead standard. 1612 Sighted survivor in water. Using various courses and speed to pick survivor up. 1602 Picked up Ensign George E. Van HAGEN, (419713), (A-1), U.S.N.R., 1624 Changed course to 090° (T); all ahead full. 1630 All ahead standard, set course 090° (T), constant helming 30° either side. 1651 All ahead two thirds on one main engine. Changed base course to 070° (T). 1730 All ahead full. Changed base course to 165° (T).

J. A. Butlak
J. A. BUTLAK, Lieut., USN.

20 - 22 Underway as before.

H. W. Palmer
H. W. PALMER, Lieut., USNR.

22 - 24 Underway as before. 2210 Changed base course to 196° (T). 2310 Changed base course to 235° (T), all ahead standard. 2345 Changed base course to 220° (T).

J. H. Barnard
J. H. BARNARD, Lieut(jg)., USNR.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

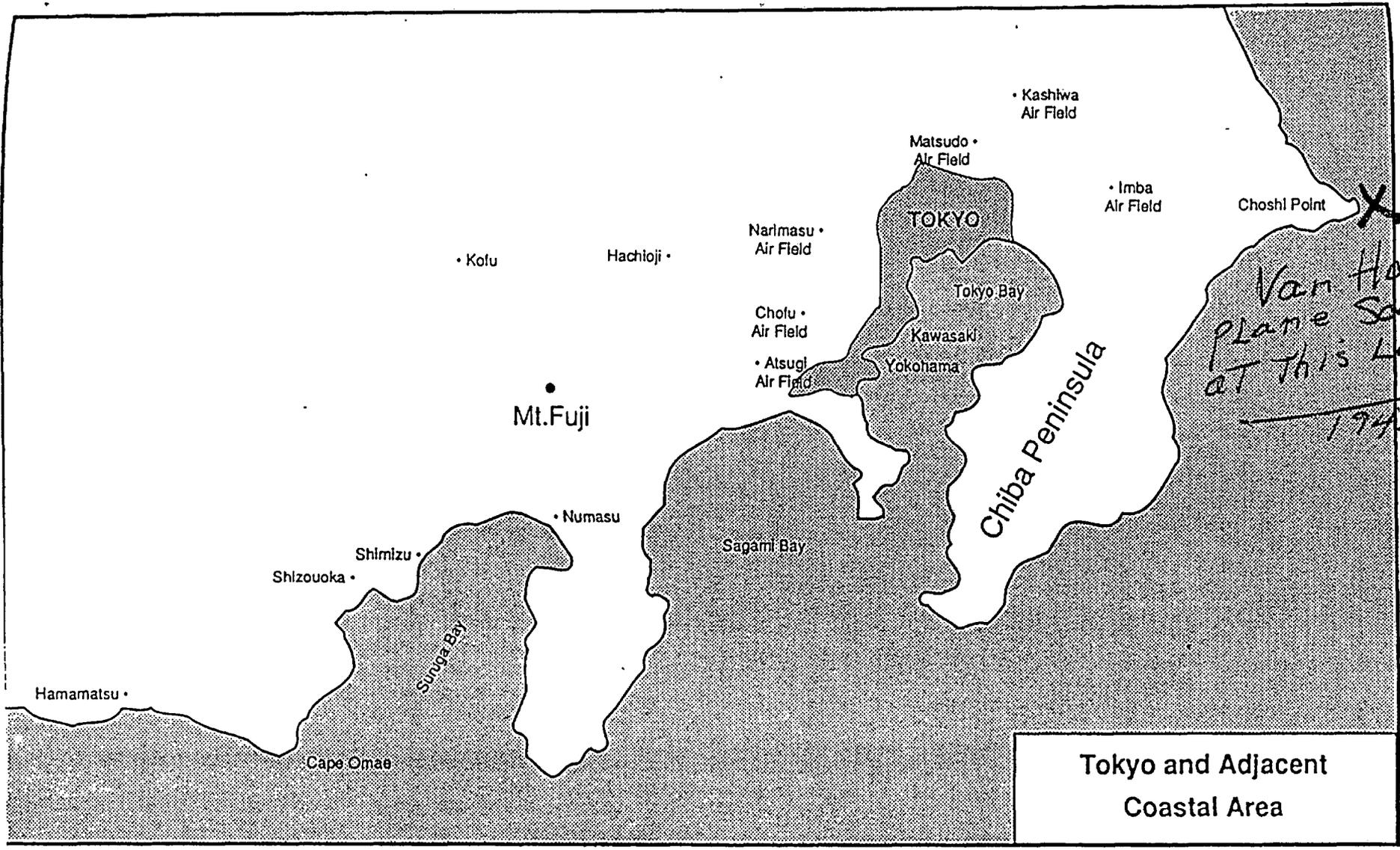
P. G.

W. C. ...

*1 min. ...
10/1945*

11

11



*Van Hagen
plane sank
at this location
1945*

Tokyo and Adjacent Coastal Area

I was in condition "11", when this incident occurred.
That means on deck, in the cockpit of my Hellcat, My
plane is ready to launch and fixed to the catapult.
They could not launch, because friendly AA fire was so
low, they were afraid they might hit me. Instead I sat,
like a "bump on a log" and watched the whole scene unfold.
The Jap Kamikaze came through the fire and dived on the
carrier Wasp, hitting just off the starboard bow, July 1945.

Des

3 kuni only
"KAMIKAZE"
Wasp - during
USS Wasp - Oct 1945 -
I was sitting in my plane on the
deck of the ~~carrier~~ ^{USS} ~~carrier~~ ^{USS} ~~carrier~~
in condition 11. I saw the take
~~place~~ they could not launch ^{the} ^{low} AA fire.

United States Navy
Air Group
Twenty-Seven



TORPEDO 27

NEWSLETTER

Leo B. Ghastin Jr. , Editor
1543 Holbrook Dr.
Holt Michigan 48842

September 2002

Vol. 20 No. 9

There were no additional members of Air Group 27 located during the past month.

Bill Janes has moved. His new address is 4313 Rolling Stone Way Alexandria VA 22306. His phone number is (703) 768-4057.

The following members have paid their dues of \$20 during the past two months: Bill Janes and Tom Browne.

From Swede Nelson; (July/August newsletter)

Was particularly interested in the 10 August 1945 War Diary item. George flew wing on Red Shirley and Les Blythe and I made up the 2nd section. As I recall there was an overcast at about 8000 feet. a fog bank lay about a mile or so off the beach. We were able to get in and attack a train and some other targets.

I think we were on a 2nd or 3rd run when George pulled up and was streaming white smoke. I thought he had been hit. We closed in on him as he headed out to sea. However he reached the fog bank which extended up to about 300 feet. He had his tail hook down, had dropped his belly tank, flaps down and canopy open as he disappeared into the fog bank. We circled the area until relieved by another 4 plane division. It is my understanding that the Sub that picked him up backed through about 20 miles of a minefield to get to him and he was the last they could pick up. They then headed for Pearl Harbor."

Betty Quick writes; "Know this is a bit late, but I happened to see your May 2002 edition just recently and noticed the comments regarding Ensign Condon's receiving his dismembered tail hook. My husband, Jim is the gentleman seated in the picture. He was the LSO on the "I", but was NOT the person who landed that plane that day. He had sent me a copy of that picture also. He's not much on writing letters, but we have lived in Davis CA now for over 42 years. Jim worked for the University of CA and is now busier than ever in retirement."

I received the following from a Robert Martin; " I'm afraid my father is not the Mr. Martin you are looking for. Good luck in your search and thank you for your service to our country."