


U.S.S. HELENA

November 16, 1942.

MEMORANDUM TO ALL HANDS:

Rear Admiral Turner, our Force Commander for the task just completed, has asked that the following be published to all hands:

1. "IN DISSOLVING TASK FORCE SIXTY SEVEN I EXPRESS THE WISH THAT THE NUMBER "67" IN THE FUTURE BE RESERVED FOR GROUPS OF SHIPS READY FOR AS HIGH PATRIOTIC ENDEAVOR AS YOU HAVE BEEN. ALTHOUGH WELL AWARE OF THE ODDS WHICH MIGHT BE AGAINST YOU I FELT THAT YOUR CHANCE OF NIGHT ATTACKS ON NOVEMBER 12 WAS THE TIME WHEN FINE SHIPS AND BRAVE MEN SHOULD BE CALLED UPON TO THEIR UTMOST. FOR YOUR MAGNIFICENT SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT OF REINFORCING OUR BRAVE TROOPS ON GUADALCANAL AND YOUR DETERMINATION TO BE THE KEEN EDGE OF THE SWORD THAT IS CUTTING THE THROAT OF THE ENEMY, I THANK YOU. IN TAKING FROM THE ENEMY A TOLL OF STRENGTH FAR GREATER THAN THAT WHICH YOU HAVE EXPENDED, YOU HAVE MORE THAN JUSTIFIED ANY EXPECTATIONS. FOR OUR LOST SHIPS WHOSE NAMES WILL BE ENSHRINED IN HISTORY AND FOR LONG CHERISHED COMRADES WHO WILL BE WITH US NO MORE, I GRIEVE WITH YOU. NO MEDALS HOWEVER HIGH CAN EVER POSSIBLY GIVE THE REWARD YOU DESERVE. WITH ALL MY HEART I SAY, "GOD BLESS THE COURAGE OF OUR MEN, DEAD OR ALIVE, OF TASK FORCE SIXTY SEVEN."


G. D. LINKE,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Executive Officer.


U.S.S. HELENA

November 21, 1942.

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM ADMIRAL W.F. HALSEY, COMMANDER SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE, IS PUBLISHED FOR INFORMATION OF ALL HANDS.

"WITH A DEEP SENSE OF HUMILITY AND PRIDE I PASS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY ON TO YOU MEN, WHO DID THE REAL FIGHTING AND WHOM IT WAS MY PRIVILEGE TO COMMAND:

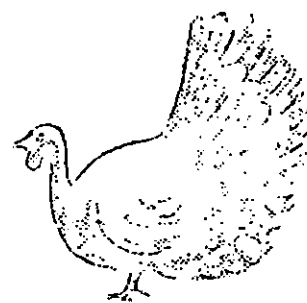
"THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IS INSPIRED AND THRILLED BY THE RESOLUTION AND GALLANTRY DISPLAYED BY YOU AND YOUR MEN, AND THE MEN IN THE ARMY AND MARINE CORPS. IN THE GREAT VICTORY WON OVER A RESOURCEFUL FOE, WHO OUTNUMBERED YOU IN BOTH SHIPS AND MEN. AS SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND SPEAKING FOR THE WHOLE NAVY I WANT TO EXPRESS TO YOU THE FEELING OF PRIDE AND SATISFACTION WE HAVE FOR YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THE STORY OF YOUR BRILLIANT EXPLOITS FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS HAS ENRICHED AMERICAN NAVAL ANNALS FOR ALL TIME. GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU. SIGNED, FRANK KNOX".


G.D. LINKE,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Executive Officer.



U.S.S. Helena

1942



Thanksgiving Menu

RICE TURKEY SOUP

ROAST TOM TURKEY

GIBLET GRAVY

SAGE DRESSING

MASHED POTATOES

BUTTERED ASPARAGUS TIPS

PICKLES

CRANBERRY SAUCE

BREAD AND BUTTER

FRESH FRUIT

LEMONADE

APPLE PIE A'LA MODE



Not rice -

U.S.S. HELENA
PLAN OF THE DAY
Thursday, January 7, 1943.

Sunrise - 0541
Sunset - 1828

0425 All Hands.

0440 Set Condition ONE.
Set Material Condition AFIRM.
(Gunnery Officer, Engineer Officer, Damage Control Officer
conduct drills and casualty exercises at discretion during
morning general quarters.)

----- Warm up aircraft and prepare to launch one plane.

0540 Secure from General Quarters:
Set Condition III Section ONE.
Set Material Condition as ordered by Captain.

0605 Turn to, clean sweep down, wash down all weather decks.

0700 Breakfast.

0800 Muster on stations.

1000 Pay Day for off Watch Section in compartment C-301-L.
Pay Nos. 1-910 Port side.
Pay Nos. 911-1480 Stbd. side.

1300 (about) Emergency drills (operations permitting).
Division Officers check Abandon Ship Raft Cards prior to
1300.

1400 Pay Day for sections that had 0800-1200 watch plus stragglers
Pay Nos. 1-910 Port side.
Pay Nos. 911-1480 Stbd. side.

1828 Sunset - Darken ship - Staking lamp out on weather decks.

NOTES: (1) Commander South Pacific has congratulated the Munda
Striking Group on the manner in which the assigned
task was accomplished exactly on schedule. This goes to show,
COMSOPAC states, that task force sixty seven is always ready for
any and everything.

(2) The following was received from ComTaskFor 67, to be
published to all crews: "O'BANNON attempted rescue of two Jap
aviators yesterday (5th) at 1810. Japs apparently shot down in
morning in air action. One believed to be air officer refused
rescue and attempted pistol fight on his would-be rescuers. He
was shot. Other was apparently enlisted man who died of wounds
at 2042."

4-2
(3) The following from HELENA was sent to COMTASKFOR 67:
"Report of fire on dive bombers at 0945 today (5th). Ammunition
expended mounts one and three 40 rounds each. Two "AICHI - 99"
dive bombers definitely shot down. Mount Two 38 rounds Mount
Four 28 rounds. No hits observed by these mounts."

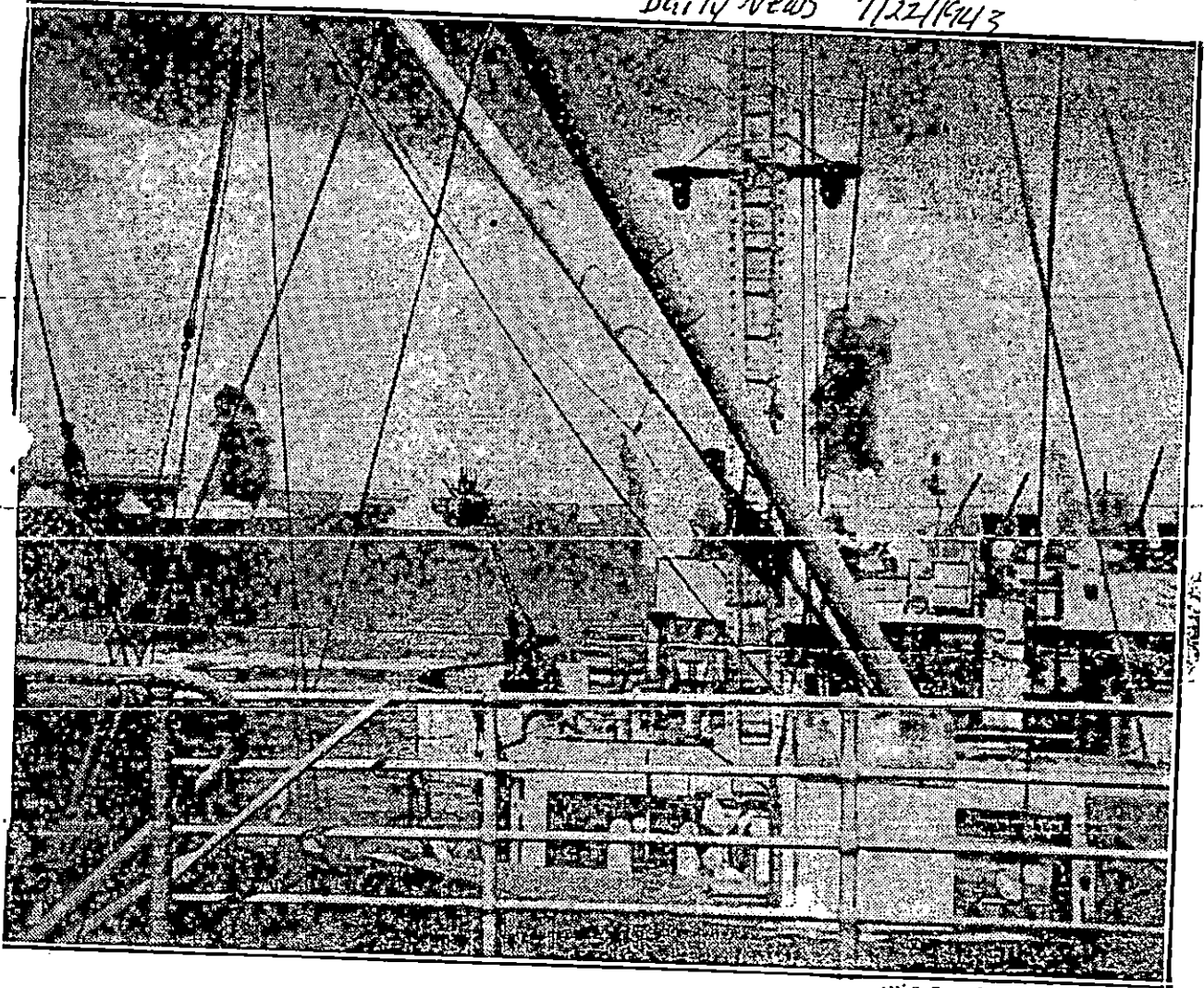
(4) Due to the low refrigerating capacity of the Officers
drinking fountain at frame 60, second deck, no further use will
be made of this fountain for filling water jugs. Use 3rd deck
scuttlebutt in "Marine Compartment".

E. C. Buerkle

E. C. BUERKLE,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Acting
Executive Officer.

DAY, JULY 22, 1943 :

Daily News 7/22/1943



(U. S. Coast Guard official photo via A.P. Wirephoto)

CLOSE ONES

Breaking through protective air umbrella, Axis planes drop bombs on Allied convoy as it nears the coast of Sicily. Bombs did no damage, but they were entirely too close for comfort. Note anti-aircraft guns pointed skyward to drive off the intruders.

'THEY GOT US

...But We Got Four of Them'

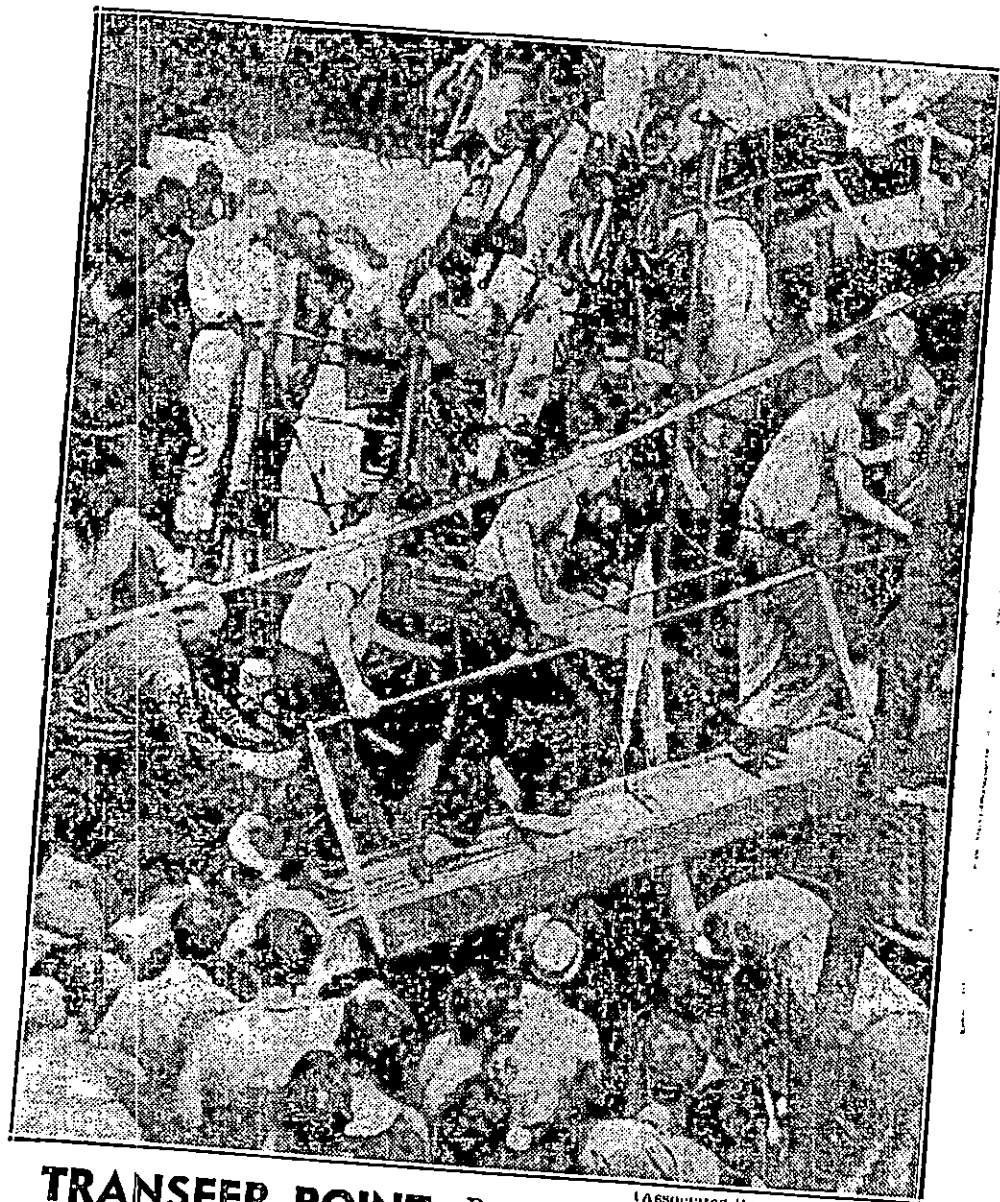


Daily News

7/22/43

(Associated Press Wirefoto)

SURVIVORS of the U.S.S. Helena, cruiser sunk July 6 in the Battle of Kula Gulf in the Central Solomons, smile for the cameraman aboard the American destroyer that has just plucked them out of the oily waters. See foto below—



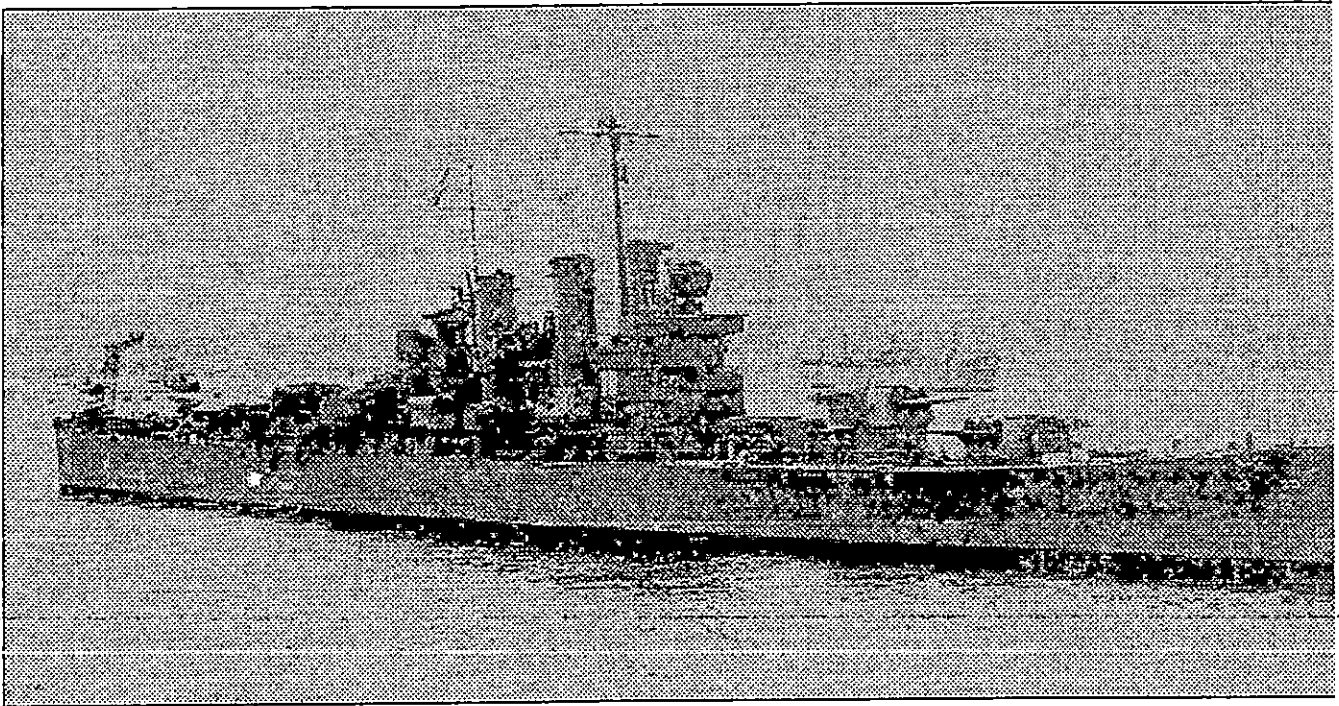
(Associated Press Wirefoto)

TRANSFER POINT. Rescued members of the Helena's crew are transferred to a cruiser from the destroyer that saved them. The 9,700-ton Helena put up a whale of a battle before she went down, sinking at least two Jap cruisers and two destroyers during the engagement.

Daily News

7/22/1943

USS Helena (CL-50)



USS Helena (CL-50) anchored in the South Pacific in the early summer of 1943, shortly before her loss.

USS Helena (CL-50) Facts :	
Ship Class:	St. Louis Class Light Cruiser (Modified Brooklyn Class)
Crew:	888 men
Length:	614'
Beam :	61'6"
Draft :	19'9"
Displacement:	10,000 tons (Standard per treaty mandates) 13,327 tons (full load)
Max Speed:	32.5 knots/
Propulsion:	(4) 618psi Boilers 4 Gear Turbines 4 shafts/screws 100,000 shp
Armor:	Teakwood Deck 3-5" Belt 2" Deck 1.25-6.5" Turrets 6" Barbettes 2.25-5" CT

Armament :	5 - Triple 6"/47 main battery 4 - Dual 5"/38 DP secondary 8 - .50 caliber AA 4 - Curtiss SOC-2 Seagulls (Aircraft) on 2 Aft catapults.
Builder :	New York Navy Yard
Keel Laid :	09 DEC 1936
Launched :	27 AUG 1939
Sponsor :	Miss E. C. Gudger, a granddaughter of Montana Senator Thomas J. Welch
Commissioned :	18 SEP 1939, Commanded by Capt. Max B. Demott
Awards :	Navy Unit Commendation (1st Awarded to a U.S. Naval Ship) 7 Battle Stars
Present Status:	06 JUL 1943, Sunk at 07-46' S., 157-11' E.

HELENA was in the berth normally occupied by the Pacific Fleet flagship Pennsylvania when the Japanese arrived on Sunday morning 7 December 1941. A single aerial torpedo passed under the minelayer "Oglala," which was moored alongside, and hit HELENA amidships on her starboard side. Watertight integrity was quickly achieved by the ship's crew, and her enthusiastic anti-aircraft fire discouraged enemy airmen from attacking the cruiser again at close range. Partially repaired at Pearl, HELENA steamed to San Francisco for permanent repair and overhaul.

Off Guadalcanal on 15 September 1942, HELENA's crew helped rescue survivors of carrier "Wasp" which was sunk by submarine torpedoes. Four weeks later the cruiser exacted vengeance for earlier wounds by pouring 6-inch shells into cruiser "Furutaka" and destroyer "Fubuki" (both were sunk in this action) and other enemy warships in the 11-12 October Battle of Cape Esperance (see "Salt Lake City" for details of battle). And four weeks after Cape Esperance, HELENA was one of 13 American warships that fought in the 13 November Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. She was one of four that was still operational the following day.

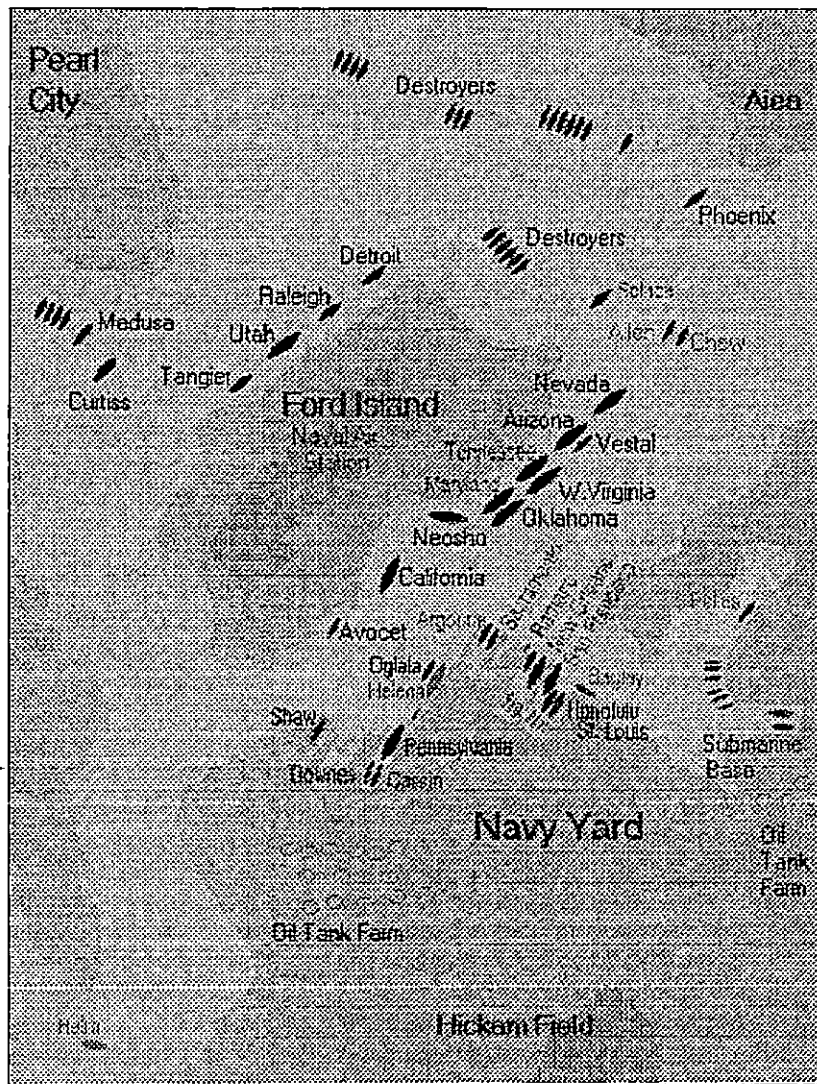
In the early months of 1943 the cruiser was primarily occupied with shore bombardments in the New Georgia area. On 5 July 1943 she began her last operation by escorting transports to landings on New Georgia and by providing covering fire. Challenged by the enemy on the night of 6 July in what history remembers as the Battle of Kula Gulf, HELENA turned her guns toward the 10 Japanese destroyers. Of the three cruisers and four destroyers in the American force, HELENA became the favorite target of aim for Japanese torpedoes because she lacked flashless powder. "Honolulu" and "St. Louis" did have flashless powder for their salvos and the American destroyers initially held fire trying to set up a torpedo launch. Believed by the Japanese to be firing 6-inch machine guns, HELENA blazed away and contributed to the sinking of enemy destroyer "Niizuki" before the first of three Japanese torpedoes exploded against her hull.

The first torpedo hit below number one turret and sheared off the bow of the cruiser. The next two torpedoes hit under the second stack. In only a few minutes the cruiser jackknifed and sank. Most of the cruiser's survivors were picked up before morning, but many were not saved until 11 days later. Some of those not rescued on the 6th clustered around the slowly sinking bow, made land and were rescued the

following day. A larger group--considerably aided by lifeboats and lifejackets dropped from a Navy plane and by two coastwatchers and natives of Vella Lavella--was picked up by destroyers on 17 July after several harrowing days in the water and on the enemy-held island. One hundred and sixty-eight men of the great ship did not survive the battle or the abandonment. Many of the survivors, like those of cruisers lost earlier, were reassigned to new cruisers (over 400 of HELENA's crew went to the new "Houston" [CL-81]) and battleships--HELENA's fighting spirit lived on. Of the 10 American cruisers lost in World War II, HELENA was the last until "Indianapolis" was lost only days before the end of the war.

11 FEB 1943 - Naval aircraft from HELENA (CL-50) and FLETCHER (DD-445) sink Japanese submarine RO-102 in the Coral Sea (14-15' S., 161-59' E.)

NOTE: There is currently a lot of additional information on this ship that may be viewed in the DOCUMENT SOURCE, it will soon be HTML formatted for all to see...



Pearl Harbor ship locations at 7:55AM December 7, 1941



[Return to USS HELENA Home Page](#)



The following description of the naval battle of Guadalcanal was posted on the Usenet newsgroup soc.history.war.world-war-ii by its author John J. J. Attwood (graham@connected.com).

THE NAVAL BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL
13 November, 1942

Sources:

R/Adm S. E. Morison, THE STRUGGLE FOR GUADALCANAL
Eric Hammel, DECISION AT SEA
C. W. Kilpatrick, NIGHT BATTLES IN THE SOLOMONS
Richard B. Frank, GUADALCANAL
Robert D. Ballard, THE LOST SHIPS OF GUADALCANAL

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal took three days to fight to a decision; 13--15 Nov 1942. It came about because an American reinforcement effort coincided with a major Japanese one. The narrow American victory here was to decide the Guadalcanal Campaign, the first American counteroffensive of the Pacific War -- and from here on out, they would be rolling the Japanese back towards their own home Islands. There was a great deal at stake, fighting for this jungle airfield that nobody really wanted.

BACKGROUND:

On 1 Nov the Japanese made a call-sign change which made American radio-intelligence go dark. But on 8 Nov the cryptanalysts managed to recover much of Yamamoto's operations order for the November "decisive battle" -- an extraordinary feat. When Halsey returned to his headquarters at Noumea on 9 Nov, his staff could hand him the outline of forthcoming Japanese operations:

* The 8th Fleet preparing to escort a large troop convoy to land at Guadalcanal on Z-Day, 13 Nov -- this to consist of 11 transports and Destroyer Squadron TWO [12 destroyers] under R/Adm Tanaka;

* 11th Fleet aircraft massing at Buin with orders to begin attacks against Guadalcanal on Z Minus 3;

* A Japanese carrier group headed for a fuelling rendezvous just north of the equator to prepare for an air strike on Z minus 1;

* The Combined Fleet preparing to sail from Truk with carriers ZUIHO and JUNYO, four battleships, five heavy, six light cruisers, and thirty-three destroyers. What they did NOT know at first was that two of the battleships, one light cruiser, and fourteen of the destroyers were meant to repeat Kurita's devastating battleship bombardment of October.

On 10 Nov a Coastwatcher reported 61 masts at the Shortlands anchorage south of Bougainville -- including 6 cruisers, 33 destroyers -- and radio Intelligence could report to Halsey that Z-Day would be 13 Nov. Halsey immediately ordered his carrier force, TF 16 under R/Adm Thomas C. Kinkaid, to prepare to sail, which they did the next morning, 11 Nov.

11 - 13 NOVEMBER -- THE FORCES CONVERGE:

Although able to "read the enemy's mail," Admiral Halsey had a lot to be worried about. To begin with the naval odds were considerably against him. After the Santa Cruz battle he had only one carrier under his command, ENTERPRISE, under frantic repair and with her forward elevator still out of commission. Until it was repaired 21 Nov she would be at a serious handicap for conducting flight operations. Her battered air group was perhaps equivalent to those of the smaller ZUIHO and JUNYO, if it came to a stand-up fight between them. Halsey could also call on 2 modern fast battleships, 4 heavy and 4 light cruisers, plus about 22 destroyers.

Halsey had two separate groups of transports on the way to Guadalcanal at the same time, heavily escorted, carrying some 5,500 men. First to leave was R/Adm Norman Scott with AA cruiser ATLANTA and four destroyers, escorting three transports carrying the 1st Marine Aviation Engineer Battalion, replacements for ground and aviation units, and stocks of ammunition and food. Following a day later was R/Admiral Kelly Turner escorting four transports carrying two battalions of the 182nd Infantry Regiment, artillery, the 4th Marine Replacement Battalion, Navy and Marine casualties, and even more supplies. TG 67.4, Turner's hefty escort, counted heavy cruisers SAN FRANCISCO and PORTLAND, light cruiser HELENA, AA cruiser JUNEAU, and ten destroyers; Turner had [for reasons not at all clear today] detached heavy cruiser PENSACOLA and two further destroyers to reinforce TF 16: ENTERPRISE, battleships WASHINGTON and SOUTH DAKOTA, heavy cruiser NORTHAMPTON, AA cruiser SAN DIEGO, and six destroyers.

The Americans had 14 modern and 6 old submarines patrolling the Solomons; the Japanese about 14 I-boats. The WWI destroyer - mincraft SOUTHARD sank one of the latter, while cruising ahead with sister HOVEY to make sure that the Japanese had not laid mines in the Lunga Anchorage.

On 11 Nov Scott arrived and his transports, ZEILIN, LIBRA and BETELGEUSE, began unloading. They were chased from their anchorages twice, once by an attack by 9 VAL dive bombers on them -- which slightly damaged the ZEILIN and led to all 9 of the VALs being shot down -- and once by an attack on Henderson Field. At night the ZEILIN withdrew with the destroyer LARDNER, the transports went to join Turner, and Scott patrolled Ironbottom Sound with ATLANTA and the remaining destroyers -- but the Tokyo Express did not run that night.

Dawn the next day, 12 November, showed six US transports and their heavy escort off Lunga Point. A shore battery lobbed occasional salvos at the transports, and light cruiser HELENA and, later, destroyers, replied. The Japanese naval observer ashore, L/Cdr Mitzi, reported three battleships, three cruisers, eleven destroyers and five transports off Lunga. His report prompted Yamamoto's chief of Staff, Ugaki, to recommend ordering the cruisers of 8th Fleet and the detached DesDiv 27 to join Admiral Abe's bombardment group -- built around battleships HIEI and KIRISHIMA -- but the rest of the staff concluded that the Americans as usual would be gone with the sun. The only action taken was to order Abe to have Destroyer Squadron FOUR [5 destroyers] run in ahead of him to sweep for any lingering Americans. If V/Adm Mikawa saw fit to join forces with Abe that was up to him -- he was not so inspired, as it turned out.

The 11th Air Fleet at Rabaul also received Mitzi's report, and a strike of 16 BETTY bombers and 20 ZERO fighters was sent off against

Turner's force. Amply warned by coastwatchers and then radar, Turner got his ships under way and maneuvered to repel air attack, with 20 WILDCAT and 8 P39 fighters on CAP overhead. The Japanese were sighted at 1405 over Florida Island, dividing into two groups, and Turner was a past master at this sort of thing -- he presented his broadside to the group to the northeast and tempted them to attack first rather than wait for the southeasterly group to get into position. When they were committed to the attack, he turned his narrow sterns to them, making all their torpedoes miss. The southeasterly group, hit hard by the defending fighters and thoroughly shot up by ships' AA, attacked too late to combine with the other group. Such torpedoes as the survivors did get away Turner's ships avoided by independent maneuvering. No torpedo hits were made, and 11 of the 16 BETTYS were shot down, the other 5 shot up.

One of the lost bombers, set on fire by the transport McCAWLEY, crashed into the after superstructure of heavy cruiser SAN FRANCISCO, flagship of R/Adm Daniel J. Callaghan, Turner's surface escort commander. An officer and 23 men were killed; the executive officer and 44 others were wounded, mostly badly burned. Battle-2 and the after gun directors were badly damaged by the crash. SAN FRANCISCO transferred 28 men to the transports for evacuation; the XO, Commander Mark Crouter, insisted on staying on board, and was put in his bunk, heavily sedated -- a decision that was shortly to cost him his life. [His is but one name involved in the holocaust to come to be memorialized by a new destroyer or destroyer escort over the next few months.]

The transports headed back to the Lunga anchorage to resume unloading until sundown would force them to withdraw. The Americans now had search plane reports to confirm the Japanese timing and objective. Admiral Abe's battleship bombardment force had been seen, coming down from the north at 25 knots; so had R/Adm Takama's Destroyer Squadron FOUR, heading for a rendezvous with him. Another plane sighted Tanaka's transport convoy just as they cleared the Shortlands. The man on the spot was R/Adm Richmond Kelly Turner in Savo Sound, who made two decisions on how to meet the oncoming Japanese -- one of them bold and inspired, the other one conventional and unfortunate.

The bold and inspired thing that Turner did was to strip his transports beyond the bounds of prudence of warships. The Japanese had two or more battleships, two to four heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 10 - 12 destroyers; in Turner's estimation they were either intending to bombard Henderson Field or attack his transports as they withdrew through Indispensable Strait. TF 16 had sailed too late to help -- Turner must face the onslaught alone. Turner bet that the Japanese were after Henderson Field -- this with no hint of Abe's planned bombardment from radio intelligence -- and he did not hedge that bet at all. He kept only the destroyer BUCHANAN, damaged by friendly fire in the afternoon's air-sea battle, SHAW and McALLA [low on fuel], and the elderly HOVEY and SOUTHARD. All five cruisers and the other eight available destroyers he peeled off to intercept any Japanese bombardment effort against Henderson Field, and here is where his brilliance stumbled, for by simple seniority he placed in command R/Adm Daniel J. Callaghan in the SAN FRANCISCO, rather than R/Adm Norman Scott, in the ATLANTA [or, better yet, the SG-equipped HELENA or JUNEAU].

Callaghan had been Chief of Staff to Halsey's predecessor Robert Ghormley and had only gone back to sea two weeks before, with no

battle experience at all. Scott had been at sea for six months and had a notable victory to his credit, the Battle of Cape Esperance 12 Oct. In the time since he had learned much more about the new SG search radars than he had known before his battle, and was arguably a much more fit Commander, especially had he been able to transfer to one of the SG-equipped ships, notably the cruiser HELENA. But Turner reflexively ordered Callaghan to be Officer in Tactical Command, because Callaghan's appointment to Flag Rank was exactly fifteen days before Scott's. It is this decision more than any other that led to the fierce blood-letting and side-scraping brawl to follow, rather than a better managed, more carefully fought meeting engagement using the advantage of the SG radar with its Plan Position Indicator, which displays like a map instead of a hyperthyroid oscilloscope.

What Callaghan seems to have intended was to cruise the Guadalcanal coast closely, and when the Japanese were detected, to turn athwart their course and "cross the T", so that only the lead guns of the lead ships could effectively reply to all of his, firing broadside. To minimize identification, command, and control problems, the thirteen ships would steam in a single column, arranged in three divisions: four destroyers, five cruisers, four destroyers.

In anticipation of a possible course reversal during the approach or during the battle, he had placed his senior destroyer officer, Captain Robert G. Tobin ComDesRon TWELVE, in the REAR division of destroyers, which were the AARON WARD, BARTON, MONSSEN and FLETCHER. Of these, only the latter had the new SG surface-search radar that could reliably make out targets and plot them at 25,000 - 30,000 yards, as the cruisers HELENA and BOISE had done at the Battle of Cape Esperance. Heading the lead division of destroyers was his other divisional commander, Cdr Murray Stokes ComDesDiv TEN; these were the CUSHING, LAFFEY, STERETT and FLETCHER, the latter again a brand new ship with SG radar. Callaghan may not have known it, but in L/Cdr Edwin E. "Butch" Parker of CUSHING, the leading one of his thirteen ships, he probably had his most single battle-aware and experienced destroyer captain, as Parker had fought in the Asiatic Fleet in the desperate months after Pearl Harbor.

Of the five cruisers, it has been argued that two should not have been there at all -- the ATLANTA and JUNEAU were AA cruisers with 16 5-in. guns, and only AA ammunition for them. They would have been better employed being sent to TF 16 instead of PENSACOLA. The JUNEAU at least had SG radar, but she was the last in the column of five. Of the three larger cruisers SAN FRANCISCO was the least well-equipped to be a flagship and had been damaged that afternoon by a bomber crash in her aft control; the older PORTLAND apparently, and the large light cruiser HELENA definitely, were equipped with the SG radar. It has been suggested that Callaghan's choice of SAN FRANCISCO was because he had been her captain in 1941 and she was named after his home town; but it may also have been because Scott had her as flagship at Cape Esperance, and relieving him meant moving into the flagship he had just vacated. To make matters worse SAN FRANCISCO's veteran captain, Charles MacMorris, had been promoted to Rear Admiral; his replacement, Cassin Young, had only taken command four days before! The ironic result, whatever the reasons, is that TG 67.4 had the less experienced and capable of the two admirals available in the least suitable flagship available.

At 2200 TG 67.4 turned back from seeing off their transports, and at midnight entered Lengo Channel on course 280< T., speed 18 knots; a change of speed to 15 knots was ordered. The sea was

smooth, sky partly cloudy and quite clear overhead. There was no moon; lightning flashes could be seen to the northwest over Florida Island and to the southwest over Guadalcanal. Taivu Point was reported bearing 240< T., distant 2 miles. Following the Guadalcanal coast, Callaghan ordered a change of course from 280 to 290< T at 0103, and signalled by TBS at 0114 to all ships: "Keep well closed up. Report any contacts immediately. Do not answer." Four minutes later they passed Lunga Point to port. Where were the Japanese? Were they coming at all?

The Japanese were coming, all right -- but they had been beset by difficulties having nothing to do with the Americans. Yamamoto had intended to have a Sweeping Unit precede Abe, six to nine miles ahead of him. If US warships were present they would attack with torpedoes and report to Admiral Abe. Abe would then the choice of preserving the battleships from damage by withdrawing, or of closing to fight on terms favourable to his ships. Given the Japanese caution with their heavy ships, I am inclined to believe Abe would have withdrawn without fighting Callaghan, or perhaps fought a brief and cautious action at an indecisively long range. Given the disposition of the Americans in a long single column, and their parlous command and control arrangements, however, the outcomes of other cruiser - vs. - destroyer combats like Tassafaronga, Kula Gulf and Kolombangara lead me to suspect that a torpedo attack by Admiral Takama's destroyers would have inflicted cruel losses on Callaghan, mostly among the van destroyers and the cruisers.

The intentions of both sides were overtaken by events -- and the result was an unplanned zero-range melee.

Abe's force became complete when Takama's five ships of DesRon FOUR rendezvoused and took up station over four miles ahead -- YUDACHI and HARUSAME in a column on the port bow, ASAGUMO [flag], MURASAME and SAMIDARE in column on the starboard bow. The light cruiser NAGARA was stationed 3,000 yards ahead of battleship HIEI, and battleship KIRISHIMA 2000 yards astern. R/Adm Masatomi Kumura in NAGARA, commander Destroyer Squadron TEN, was responsible for navigating the Bombardment Unit to the target area. He had three of his destroyers to port -- veteran YUKIKAZE and AMATSUKAZE, with the new large AA destroyer TERUTSUKI -- and three more to starboard, AKATSUKI, INADZUMA and IKAZUCHI.

At about 1700 the Bombardment Unit ran into rain squalls and visibility fell, though the navigators were able to spot Nudai and Malaita Islands during the occasional gaps, and soon after the force came into the north end of Indispensable Strait. The rain got worse as it got dark, and the wakes of the escorting destroyers could barely been seen 1 - 2 miles from HIEI. At 1900 hours Abe announced his plan for the bombardment, scheduled for 0150 - 0230, including the sweep by Takama's ships well ahead of the main body, as Yamamoto had ordered.

Poor weather was now threatening Abe's mission, wheatever the Americans might have in mind. At 2145 the R Area Air Force informed the Admiral that weather over Guadalcanal was so bad that aircraft spotting was "next to impossible." The weather in his area also was poor, and the Admiral decided to reverse course and slow to 12 knots, bide his time, and hope the weather would improve. At 0005/13th Abe's main body came about to port to a northeasterly heading, but Destroyer Squadron FOUR apparently reversed to a northerly one, and so drew farther and farther out of station.

Within half an hour, Guadalcanal had signaled him that the weather there had improved, and Abe decided a bombardment might be possible after all. At 0038 or so Abe's ships took up course 225 deg. T. At 0046 the Admiral ordered Takama to take Destroyer Squadron FOUR ahead on their planned sweep off Lunga Point, and Takama did turn onto course 180 deg. two minutes later and speed up to 18 knots at 0056 ... but DesRon FOUR was not four miles ahead of Abe at all, but somewhere on his starboard quarter! Two course changes masked by rain and cloud had completely deranged the formation. At 0059 Abe brought the main body to course 180 degrees T., due south, speed still 12 knots.

At 0100 Admiral Takama, at least, began to realize that he was out of station when he asked YUDACHI for her position, and at 0106 YUDACHI reported the astonishing news that she could see NAGARA broadside to port -- when she should be fine off his starboard quarter! I assume Takama could see wakes to his port and wondered if it was YUDACHI. Not long after this Takama led around to port and took ASAGUMO, MURASAME and SAMIDARE across the wakes of the main body -- which was the wrong way: his proper course, had he but known it, was to stay on the course he was on, but increase his speed. I am mystified as to why -- my best guess is that he thought he was seeing YUDACHI and HARUSAME and that both of them were off the formation's starboard bow, not off the quarter.

Admiral Abe thought Takama's ships were six miles ahead of him, moving out to nine miles as planned. At 0125 HIEI identified the signal lights on Cape Esperance, and brought his ships to course 140 deg. T., increasing speed to 18 knots. HIEI's floatplane had reported ten ships off Lunga at Sunset, and L/Cdr Mitzi had reported landing operations still taking place at 1900 -- but after that, visibility deteriorated and he could not be sure. Abe reluctantly concluded he might have to face American warships.

DesDiv 27 -- Captain Satoyama's SHIGURE, YUGURE and SHIRATSUYU -- had been sent to patrol between Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands against interference by US PT boats, and their report of arriving on station at 0130 without running into US forces was encouraging. This, and the silence from DesRon FOUR, led Abe to believe he had Savo Sound all to himself, and he now ordered "Gun battle. Target, airfield." HIEI and KIRISHIMA loaded the special Type 3 bombardment ammunition; by this time they were steering 105 deg. at 23 knots.

At 0142 Abe was thunderstruck to receive a message from the destroyer YUDACHI "Enemy sighted" bearing "toward Lunga." He had only time to yell at his Flag Signal Officer, "What is the range and bearing? And where is YUDACHI?" Within the minute HIEI's own lookouts were warning, "Four black objects ahead! Looks like warships. Five degrees to starboard, eight thousand metres. Unsure yet; visibility bad." And Abe flashed to the Bombardment Unit, "Probable enemy ships in sight, bearing 136 degrees." He ordered a formation turn left to a course of 080 degrees, which would be executed at 0145.

The Admiral also ordered his ships to prepare for surface action -- when they had ready racks and hoists loaded with the Type 3 special bombardment ammunition. This has given rise to the "HE shells piled all over the decks..." of the battleships' story, which seems to have originated with Hara in JAPANESE DESTROYER CAPTAIN, and which Frank dismisses as apocryphal in a footnote in GUADALCANAL --

correctly, I believe. The quickest way to get shells out of the ammunition hoists was to fire them, and that is what I believe they did.

As his ships began to turn, the Admiral had no idea that the Americans had been watching him for the past twenty minutes, and had been maneuvering to steam across his track for eight. Had Takama's destroyers been where they were supposed to be, the Americans would have been maneuvering to cross the "T" on *them*, which would have masked Abe's formation coming up behind. Takama would have reported, confused, delayed and punished Callaghan, and bought time for Admiral Abe to maneuver to advantage against him.

Admiral Callaghan was not getting what he intended, either.

The large light cruiser HELENA [Captain Gilbert C. Hoover] had made the first radar contact at 0124, and reported contacts bearing 312 and 310, distant 27,000 and 32,000 yards. Three minutes later she added, "Enemy ships bearing 310< T., range 31,900 yards." At the same time, 0127, CTG 67.4 ordered course changed to 310< T. -- which put him onto a parallel but opposite course to Abe, who it will be remembered had just sighted Cape Esperance and come left to head for Lunga Point and Henderson Field.

At 0130 HELENA signaled all ships that the enemy disposition was 14,500 yards off the port bow, making 23 knots on course 105<. The two formations were those closing each other at a combined speed of about 40 knots, some 1300 yards a minute.

CTG 67.4 told all ships at 0132: "Guadalcanal reports an unidentified aircraft 000< T., 26 miles."

An unknown ship [HELENA?] reported, "Target at 312< T., range 26,000."

CTG 67.4 to van destroyers: "Any of you boys pick her up?"

Reply from unknown ship: "Negative."

At 0134 HELENA's radar plot reported the enemy course was 134< T., speed 20 knots.

A minute later CTG 67.4 broadcast to all ships: "Column right to 310< T., and van unit directly towards enemy."

Cdr Stokes, ComDesDiv 10 in CUSHING, advised CTG 67.4 by TBS radio: "Three unidentified ships 45< on our port bow. Be alert." In fact YUDACHI and HARUSAME would have been in that direction, but a good 5000 yards off. Had CUSHING somehow seen them? Hammel, having interviewed L/Cdr Parker of CUSHING, makes no mention of such an early sighting. It sounds to me like Parker had correctly plotted HELENA's reports and was warning the van destroyers, the Admiral, or both to keep their eyes skinned.

HELENA reported to CTG 67.4: "We have four [enemy targets] in a line."

At 0137 as TG 67.4 was changing course to north, CTG 67.4 ordered, "Change speed to 20 knots."

According to Hammel, at 0140 the O'BANNON had three contacts on

her radar and reports them at about this time: one 11000 yards at 287<, one at 8000 yards at 312<, and one at 6000 yards at 42<. I cannot make this clue fit with the ships of either side at 0140, although it DOES appear pretty accurate at 0145, with the 42< contact being HARUSAME and YUDACHI running off to the east after their 0142 sighting of CUSHING. Another possibility: the bearings may be relative, and the O'BANNON may not really be steering north.

CTG 62.4 to O'BANNON: "What is range?"

At 0141 HELENA replied to the Admiral: "Range is 2,300 yards."

CUSHING suddenly sighted what looked like three Japanese destroyers [in fact two, YUDACHI and HARUSAME] 2,000 - 3,000 yards off the port bow, crossing from left to right, and L/Cdr Parker brought her left at 0142 to 315< T. to unmask aft guns and torpedo batteries. The Division Commander reported the visual sighting immediately, but not the fact that CUSHING had hauled off the course set by the Admiral and stayed on it. Not knowing this, Callaghan was just signalling his ships, "Column right to 000< T." Only half, perhaps, of the column had made the turn north ordered at 0135. PORTLAND was just coming up to the turn point and logged, but does not seem to have reported by TBS, four ships in a line southwest to northeast, east of Savo.

HELENA reported, "Look like they're dead ahead on the port bow."

CTG 67.4 tried to get through to DesDiv 10, "What do you make of it now? Are you there?"

It was HELENA who replied, "We have a total of about ten targets. Own course 000< T., speed 18 knots." Her radar officer could apparently make out 14 ships now, course 120< T., speed 20 - 23 knots, but it is doubtful that this ever got through the babble on TBS to R/Adm Callaghan.

ComDesDiv 10, Cdr Murray Stokes in CUSHING, bulled through the crowded TBS circuit to ask Admiral Callaghan at 0143: "Shall I let them have a couple of fish?" LAFFEY and STERETT had just made the turn to port to follow CUSHING.

CTG 67.4 asked Stokes: "What is their course?"

Stokes replied, "There is a ship crossing bow from port to starboard, range 4000 yards MAX." In fact they were considerably closer, and moving off to the east at a speed of 25 - 30 knots.

O'BANNON now turned 45< left at 0144 to follow STERETT; it seems that the destroyers were jostled by the surprise of the turn and that O'BANNON had to turn more than 45 degrees and wound up on STERETT's port quarter instead of astern.

Admiral Callaghan came onto TBS at 0145 to give all ships the electrifying word, "Stand by to open fire." Callaghan was trying to 'Cross the T' -- but he was distracted after giving this prep order by a jumble up ahead, triggered by CUSHING's turn at 0142 to bring guns and torpedo tubes to bear on YUDACHI and HARUSAME. The destroyers had got around somehow, complicating life for Admiral Scott's flagship, the cruiser ATLANTA -- who had to turn hard left to avoid over-running O'BANNON, possibly so far that her bows are pointing west. Seeing her unexpectedly swing out of line ahead of

him, CTG 67.4 dropped what he was doing to ask Captain Jenkins: "What are you doing?"

Jenkins answered matter-of-factly, "Avoiding our own destroyers."

Admiral Callaghan answered him, "Come back to your course as soon as you can. You are throwing the whole column into disorder." Several ships had to maneuver radically to avoid collision and keep station; for example HELENA had gone to flank speed, stopped all engines, and gone to flank speed again, all within about ninety seconds at just about this time.

By this time most of Callighan's ships had radar contacts, though not all had reported them. As I mentioned earlier, O'BANNON's radar report of 0140 fits the clues better for 0145. At this time, however, she reported sighting a column of 5 ships 4000 yards off her port beam on parallel but opposite course, approaching slowly. AARON WARD, Captain Tobin's flagship leading the rear division of destroyers, had a large radar contact 12000 yards out at 315° relative; from this I deduce that AARON WARD was on a northerly course, and that her target was one of the two battleships to show up distinctly on an SC or FD radar at this kind of range. She was 5,300 yards behind CUSHING in the column.

CTG 67.4 admonished all ships at 0146: "All hands hold your course." SAN FRANCISCO must have turned to port to follow the ATLANTA northwestwards at about this time.

JUNEAU -- one of the 2 - 3 cruisers fitted with SG radar -- reported to CTG 67.4, "We have several ships on starboard." Either Captain Swenson mis-spoke himself, or JUNEAU was reporting HARUSAME and YUDACHI, who after removing themselves from the vicinity of CUSHING would have traveled a good three thousand yards east from where they were sighted, more if they went faster than 25 knots.

ATLANTA began turning right at about 0147, in obedience to the Admiral's order. At about this time she had a target on her SC radar 3,000 yards "ahead", which was most likely NAGARA, who had crossed the American's T and gone on into their starboard bow arcs. ATLANTA was probably swinging past north, in the middle of a series of turns to starboard; she had a destroyer 2000 yards off the port bow and another one 1600 yards to port. SAN FRANCISCO was now turning to port to follow her, but when ATLANTA cut around even harder right, SAN FRANCISCO steadied on course north.

0150 -- THE BATTLE BEGINS:

Time had run out. Callaghan's maneuvering had not brought about the 'crossing the T' he sought, but a headlong collision, and his formation was just about to interpenetrate Abe's. With strange ships about to steam right into their own formation, the veteran Japanese captains took action. First the destroyer AKATSUKI to port of the American column, then within the minute the battleship HIEI almost dead ahead, switched on searchlights. The first gunfire flashed out and torpedoes splashed the water within seconds. Eric Hammel posits the time this happened as being 0150; HELENA believed it to be 0148, and other ships varied a minute or two either way.

The Japanese were not alone in being ready to pounce when the word was given. Silence was no longer golden, and at least two of

the van destroyers and two of the cruisers opened fire as soon as the searchlight flashed on. Lead destroyer CUSHING opened fire on YUKIKAZE or perhaps AMATSUKAZE 2,200 yards off her starboard bow: no hits. LAFFEY and STERETT behind her did not fire right off the bat but O'BANNON did, range unknown -- probably at AKATSUKI to port.

In the ATLANTA, starkly bathed in searchlight glare, the order rapped out, "Commence firing! Counter-illuminate!" ATLANTA's searchlights snapped on, and her forward gun group erupted in continuous firing at a destroyer to the right of, and somewhat behind, AKATSUKI, at a range given as 1900 yards -- most likely INADZUMA but possibly IKAZUCHI. ATLANTA's port waist and after gun mounts whipped around and sent a stream of tracer from continuous firing right back down the searchlight beam at AKATSUKI just 1600 yards away. Cruiser HELENA opened fire with the first of 175 6", 20 5" shells on AKATSUKI, range 4,200 yards. HELENA also opened fire at a destroyer at 6200 yards somewhat "left" of AKATSUKI, with about 20 rounds from the secondary batteries, and thought she made hits; this

This series of articles was first posted to the World War II mailing list.
The articles appear here with the permission of their poster, Jack McKillop.

Subject: Guadalcanal Air War - Intro

From: mc killop <jem3@donuts0.bellcore.com>

Guadalcanal: Island in British Solomon Islands, West Pacific Ocean at 09-30S, 160-00E about 300 miles (483 km) SE of Bougainville Island, 100 miles (160 km) SE of New Georgia Island, and about 35 miles (56 km) SW of Malaita Island; 2,180 sq mi (5,648 sq km); 92 mi (148 km) long and 33 mi (53 km) wide at its widest part; has no good harbors and only a few at all usable; traversed lengthwise by Kavo Mountains; highest peak Popomanasiu 7,648 ft (2,331 m); many short streams are along the coast, the best known the Mataniko, Lunga and Tenaru rivers in the North.

Guadalcanal and Tulagi Islands were invaded by the 1st Marine Division, reinforced, on 7 Aug 42, the first U.S. offensive operation of World War II. For the first two months, the ground war was essentially a Marine show; the Army started landing troops in Oct 42. The air war was entirely different. From the beginning, the air war was fought by Army, Navy and Marine aircrews flying from Henderson Field.

During the war, the Office of Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Intelligence, Headquarters, US Army Air Forces (USAAF) published a 50+ page pamphlet entitled PACIFIC COUNTERBLOW, THE 11TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP AND THE 67TH FIGHTER SQUADRON IN THE BATTLE FOR GUADALCANAL. Although intended to relate the story of these two USAAF units, this pamphlet also tells of the miserable and hazardous conditions faced by all on Guadalcanal. I have scanned this document in and edited it by adding additional data to clarify locations, units, etc.

Because of it's size (>120K bytes), I have divided this material into six different posts. Remember, this was written during the war while a lot of material was classified; I am sure that much material has become available since then so don't be too critical. I hope you enjoy it and I am sure the list welcomes all comments.

Jack McKillop	Those who have long enjoyed such	
Bellcore	privileges as we enjoy forget in	
Piscataway, NJ USA	time that men have died to win	
jem3@donuts0.bellcore.com	them.	FDR

=====

Subject: Guadalcanal Air War 1/6

From: mc killop <jem3@donuts0.bellcore.com>

PACIFIC COUNTERBLOW

NOTE: The ranks of officers mentioned in this booklet are those which they held at the time of the events described herein.

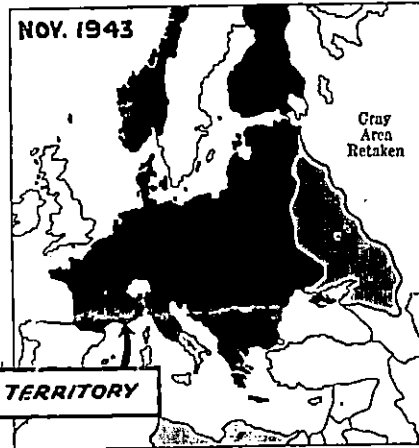
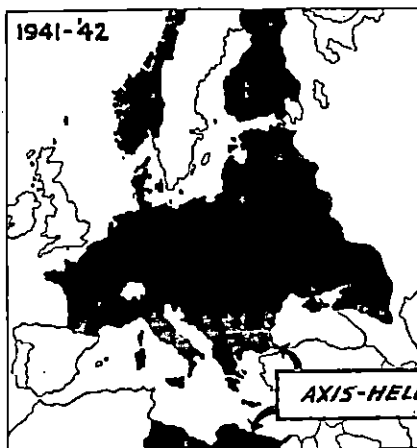
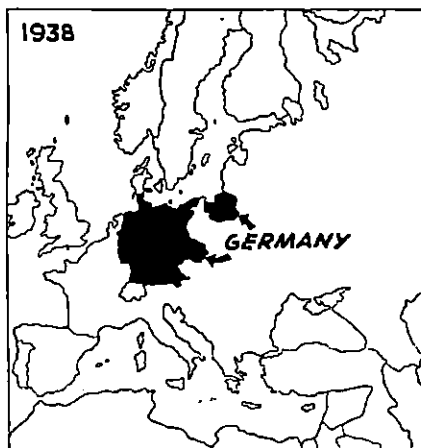
THE SOUTH PACIFIC, SUMMER 1942

Pearl Harbor secured for the Japanese the initiative in the Pacific. They chose first to strike southward. By March 1942 the Netherlands East Indies, and with them any opportunity of reinforcing the Philippines, had largely disappeared in the maw of Nippon's war machine. March and April a successful but less precipitate foe devoted to the initial digestion of his gains and the extension of his forces along the flanks of Australia. Already Australian security had thus become the first charge of U. S. forces in the South Pacific, and defense of Australia meant defense of the last remaining reinforcement route to the subcontinent-the 7,000 miles (11,265 km) of island-studded Pacific seas lying between San Francisco and Sydney.

Twice more the enemy moved offensively. A thrust in early May against either Port Moresby, New Guinea, or the Free French isle of New Caledonia, bastion of the supply route from the United States, was smashed in the Coral Sea. And after 6 Jun 42, with its ambitious two-pronged offensive against Midway Island and the Aleutian Islands crushed at Midway Island, the Japanese fleet retired westward to lick its wounds. For the first time in the Pacific war, America possessed the initiative - a limited, precarious initiative, demanding the earliest possible exploitation.

How this initiative was employed is the history of the operation against Guadalcanal and Tulagi Islands in the Solomon Islands. Primarily it was an operation to safeguard Australia's supply line, threatened first from Rabaul on New Britain Island, secured by the enemy in Jan 42; then from Tulagi Island, where by May 42 the Japanese were already well

War Reaches Length of First



Rise and Decline of German Aggression

one pitched sea battle of major proportions, the costly and much argued Battle of Jutland, 31 May 1916. Whether or not this battle was, in any way decisive has long been a favorite military argument. But there can be no doubt about the decisiveness of the Battle of Midway in the second World War.

By June 3, 1942, less than six months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had poured down the China coast and overrun the Philippines, Wake Island, Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, the Netherlands Indies, and the Solomons. To the north they had established garrisons in the Aleutians and threatened Alaska.

Thus the danger of an actual invasion of America was acute when the Jap task force was sighted steaming in the direction of Midway. Four days later this fleet was shattered and limping home (see "The Knockout at Midway, p. 32). From that point on Jap fortunes have dwindled in the Pacific. Two months after Midway the marines took Guadalcanal. A month after that the New Guinea campaign was launched, ultimately to drive the Japs to their current last Solomons stronghold at Rabaul.

Less than a year after these campaigns the last Japanese had been driven from the Aleutians, and our bases there were sending long range bombers to strike at the vital Kurile Island strongholds of the foe.

With American attention riveted to our own problems, another crucial struggle meanwhile was developing in Russia. Hitler had turned on Russia 22 June 1942, invading and stabbing deep into Russian territory with apparent ease. The first few months of the Russian campaign promised that this conflict would be a duplicate of other Nazi victory formulas.

The blitzkrieg previously had subjugated Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg

and France between September 1939 and June 1940. The British force had been driven into the sea at Dunkerque and the air blitz against London was, the Nazi had every right to hope, gradually tearing that nation apart.

The Axis had bitten off a large piece of North Africa and 1941 also had brought the conquest of Greece and Yugoslavia. The first months of the Russian campaign bid fair to outshine all these Axis gains. In November 1941 the Nazi armies were only 40 miles from Moscow.

Then, slowly, the tide turned. A Red Army counter attack recaptured Rostov. This action brought the first Nazi retreat in over two years of warfare. Winter played its part in the Red offensive as Nazi soldiers froze to the ground and Nazi oil froze in the panzer juggernaut. What had started as a rout was now transformed into one of the bitterest and bloodiest struggles in military history.

The key battle, and doubtless one of the crises of the entire war, turned on the epic defense of Stalingrad. From the original Nazi assault 26 August 1942 to the complete defeat on 4 February the Germans were reported to have lost 500,000 men. The city was and is a rubble, but it lives on as one of the most important victories in the history of the world.

The Red Army drives which followed Stalingrad already threaten Poland and Rumania. Today Hitler's main spur in whipping his people into unity and extra effort is the threat of the ever nearing Russian bear clawing its way toward the German borders.

Meanwhile, the Americans and the British were writing a victory outline on both land and sea. On 9 May 1943 all Axis resistance in North Africa ended. On 9 July Sicily was invaded and fell 35 days later. Italy proper was invaded 3 September and surren-

dered five days later. From Salerno the American and British armies started the long push up the Italian boot, a campaign which today has them less than 100 miles from Rome.

In comparison to World War I, the combined Russian and American-British offensives may, eventually, have the same importance and relation to ultimate victory as had the correlated American-French and British offensives along the Soissons front in July and August 1918.

A more ready comparison, however, has been the Battle of the Atlantic. Once against the aims and strategies of both sides have been identical. The Germans again have sought to disrupt supply lines from America to Britain. Still again the German submarine has been thrown desperately against Allied shipping.

In this battle, as in others, the foe's victories were predominantly at the beginning. And again as in the last war, new defensive measures have pulled the fangs of the wolf packs. Merchant shipping losses, however, testify to the scope of the Nazi campaign in the Atlantic.

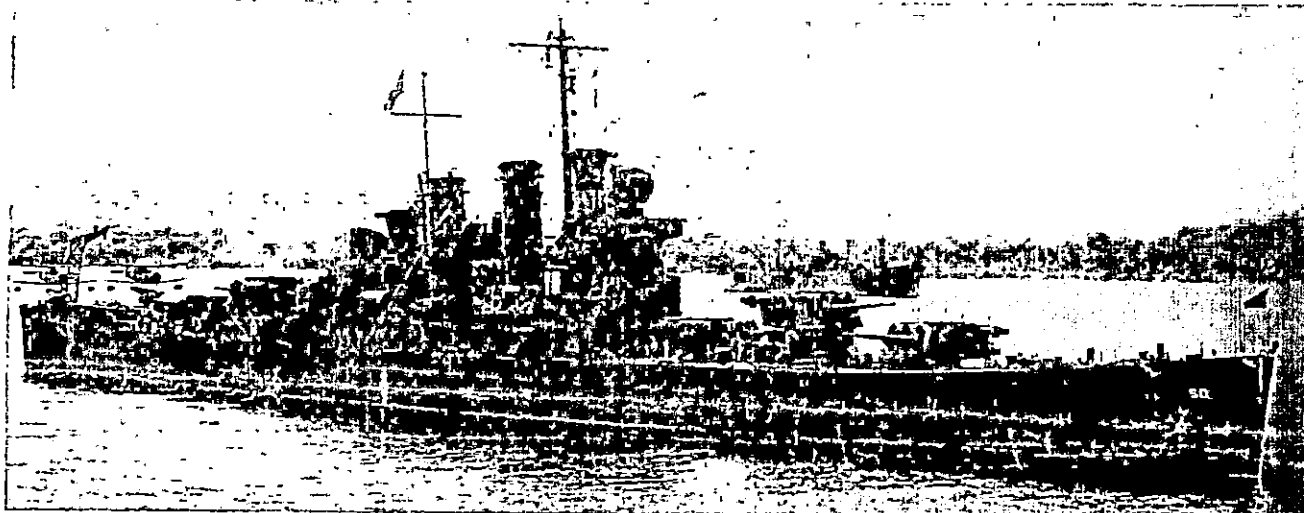
In the first World War, America lost 151 merchant ships and 409 lives. So far our merchant losses have been 617 ships and 4,772 lives in this sea war.

But the graph of these losses has steadily gone down (see p. 9) and the toll of submarines has been disconcerting for the foes. Last Summer the Allies were able to maintain shipping for a 90-day period without loss while sinking an average of one sub a day. Announced total of enemy subs sent to the bottom is now 150. The supply lines are still open and America is still able to function as "the arsenal of Democracy" as well as a fighting ally.

The past year, too, saw Germany on the receiving end of an air blitz. The incessant bombing of military targets

(Continued on Page 43)

1955 163
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The USS Helena at a South Pacific base between battles.

—Official U. S. Navy Photograph.

Light Cruiser With a Heavy Wallop

Helena Fought in 13 Engagements and Sank 9 Enemy Ships Before Japanese Torpedoes Put Her Down

When the naval history of World War II is written, one of the brightest chapters will recount the exploits of the USS *Helena*, one of the fightingest men-o'-war that ever scoured the seas to "seek out and destroy the enemy."

In her brief, hell-roaring life, she fought in 13 engagements in the Southwest Pacific, including two of the biggest naval battles.

Her heavy guns bombarded Lunga, Koli and Kokumbona Points on Guadalcanal island; and Vila, Munda, Kolombangara, Enogai Inlet and Bairoko harbor in the New Georgia group. She came through two of the most fiercely fought surface actions with minor material damage and the loss of one man. When she was not fighting, the *Helena* was escorting transports, supply ships and aircraft carriers.

Japanese propagandists unwittingly paid a high tribute to the *Helena's* gun crews following the bombardment of Kolombangara. The Tokyo radio announced that U. S. naval forces were employing "a new secret weapon—a 6-inch machine-gun." That shows how fast the cruiser pumped salvos!

Commissioned at the Navy Yard, New York, on 18 September 1939, the *Helena* was at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese struck. Her anti-aircraft batteries shot down six enemy planes during the raid. Damaged, she was soon repaired at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, and sent to the South Pacific. After making two runs to Guadalcanal, her next mission was to escort the USS *Hornet*. Later she joined the force with the USS *Wasp* and was present when the carrier was torpedoed 15 September 1942.

When the wet, oil-soaked survivors

of the *Wasp* were picked up and many of them transferred to the *Helena*, her crew broke out their seabags and distributed their clothing until many were left with but one pair of dungarees and a pair of shoes apiece.

At about this time a new skipper, Capt. Gilbert C. Hoover, USN, of Bristol, R. I., came aboard. He had been commanding the destroyer squadron escorting the *Helena*, and he came aboard by the only available means—via a coal bag rigged to a line running from his destroyer flagship to the cruiser. Already the holder of the Navy Cross, Captain Hoover was to win two Gold Stars in lieu of second and third Navy Crosses while serving in the *Helena*.

Back at Guadalcanal, the *Helena* sailed into her first major engagement—the Battle of Cape Esperance. It was one of the few night surface engagements ever fought between rival forces of virtually equal strength. It resulted when a strong force of Japanese

cruisers, destroyers and transports attempting to reinforce Guadalcanal was intercepted by a task force under the late Rear Admiral Norman Scott, USN.

The enemy was engaged at 14 minutes before midnight; exactly 98 seconds later the *Helena's* guns paused momentarily as the destroyer on which she had them trained caught fire. Explosions rocked the Jap and she sank.

The *Helena's* gun crews then turned their attention to a cruiser. Four-and-one-half minutes later the cruiser, flaming from bow to stern, disintegrated.

A Jap cruiser and a U. S. cruiser were swapping punches nearby. The *Helena* turned her batteries on the enemy and the combined firepower of the two ships soon sank the enemy ship. A Jap destroyer sneaked in and fired a torpedo at the *Helena*, but her lookout spotted it and the cruiser swung sharply. The tin fish passed harmlessly 75 yards ahead.

As the Jap destroyer attempted to flee the scene, the *Helena* joined another U. S. ship which had it under fire. Their concentrated fire blasted the destroyer to bits.

In the battle the *Helena's* gun crews had fired at four ships and had either destroyed or helped to destroy four ships. She was not hit, nor did she suffer any casualties.

During the following month the *Helena* (1) avoided a submarine attack while escorting a convoy; (2) bombarded Koli Point; and (3) beat off an attack of Jap dive-bombers. Four out of nine bombers downed were credited to the *Helena*.

On the night of 12-13 November 1942, a large Japanese force made a

Third USS Helena Under Construction

A new light cruiser now under construction will be named the *Helena* to perpetuate the name of the famous cruiser lost in the Battle of Kula Gulf. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox announced last month. This will be the third *Helena*, the first one having been a 1,392-ton gunboat built in 1893. The new *Helena* is being built by the New York Shipbuilding Corp. at Camden, N. J.

desperate, all-out effort to regain control of the Solomons. The *Helena* was the first to sight the enemy force as it neared Savo island. She steamed between the enemy's two columns before the Japanese detected her presence. Finally an enemy cruiser stabbed the darkness with her searchlight, found the *Helena* and opened fire.

The *Helena's* main battery, meanwhile, had been trained on the same cruiser and had gotten the range. A full salvo from her guns struck home. The Jap cruiser, a heavy one with 8-inch guns, burst into flames. Rapid, continuous fire was maintained on the cruiser. Practically all the shots appeared to score hits. Flames raged forward and amidships. The cruiser began to sink.

The *Helena's* main battery subsided, but the secondary battery, which had selected a destroyer, pounded its target and hammered her into the sea.

Fifteen minutes later the *Helena* observed six enemy ships on her starboard, retreating northward from the battle. One of these, it was learned later, was a cruiser which had engaged the USS *San Francisco* on which Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan, USN, task force commander, had been killed. Fire from the *Helena's* main battery sank this cruiser. The *Helena's* secondary battery sank a destroyer from the six-ship formation. That gave the *Helena* four ships to her credit within a few minutes.

Remnants of the battered Japanese force fled northward, some actually firing at each other in the confusion.

Then followed an interlude of comparative calm when the *Helena* softened up airfields in the New Georgia islands, helping to pave the way for subsequent Allied landings; shelled shore positions at Munda, Vila, Kolombangara and Bairoko harbor; beat off daylight attacks of Japanese aircraft.

The *Helena's* final battle began at 0155 on 7 July, when a U. S. force caught the Japs landing troops to reinforce Munda. This was the battle of Kula Gulf which cost the Japs from 9 to 11 cruisers and destroyers, and the U. S. one vessel—the *Helena*.

Opening up her main battery on one of the larger enemy ships, the *Helena* sank her. The secondary battery fired on a destroyer, sank her, shifted immediately to another destroyer and sank her. Just as both batteries had shifted to new targets and had inflicted damage on two more ships, Japanese destroyers closed in and launched a torpedo attack. Torpedoes crashed into the *Helena's* hull. She went down 20 minutes later.

Capt. Charles P. Cecil, USN, who was then commanding officer, won a gold star in lieu of a second Navy Cross for his calm, efficient direction of the abandonment of his ship. He directed subsequent rescue work from a small life raft, and spent five hours

in the oil-covered water and ten more on the raft before reaching a beach. Shipmates say he refused to be rescued by a destroyer, preferring to stay in the water and see that men not rescued immediately would reach shore.

On the following morning, when rescue ships had departed with most of the survivors, 166 of the *Helena's* crew found themselves swimming alone or in small groups on a lonely, hostile sea. A B-24 flew over and dropped three rubber boats, two of which were salvaged. Two wounded men were placed in them and about 50 other survivors slowly gathered about their rims. Planes, enemy as well as friendly ones, frequently passed over the men, but they were not strafed.

Next day it was decided to attempt to reach Vella Lavella, which, although farther away than Kolombangara, was in the direction of the wind and current. With the help of an improvised sail and constant paddling, headway was made at about one and a half knots. The men were beginning to tire, and occasionally a man would lose his grip on the boat and not be seen again. Happily, a case of potatoes floated by, and the men found that chewing on them helped to lessen their thirst. The water was warm and there were no sharks.

On the following day the survivors landed on Vella Lavella, where friendly natives guided them to a picturesque Melanesian village. The men were filthy with oil, and some were nearly naked. Makeshift clothes were found, and those injured grew strong on the simple first-aid and nursing which their shipmates and the natives provided.

Since Japanese patrols and scouting parties were on the island, a guard of five marines and a few sailors was established. The natives produced seven old rifles, including one of Japanese make, and a shotgun. The natives assisted in protecting the camp by reporting Jap activities. It was reported on one occasion that "four

Japanese approached too closely and were disposed of by the natives."

Within a few days communication was established with naval forces at Tulagi, and a bold and difficult scheme was initiated to snatch the survivors from the Jap-held island. Capt. Francis X. McInerney, USN, commander of a destroyer squadron, was placed in charge of the rescue expedition. He ordered destroyer- transports (converted over-age destroyers) to handle the actual rescue work. They were to be covered by an inner escort screen of modern destroyers while taking off the survivors and by an outer screen of destroyers, operating independently.

Departing from Guadalcanal at noon on 15 July, the force approached Vella Lavella after midnight on a bright moonlight night. The ships inched their way cautiously toward land, taking frequent soundings. Although everything indicated that navigation had been correct, no signal came from shore. Precisely at 0200, however, the signal was seen and the transports moved shoreward.

Covered by marines, who watched for enemy patrols, the ragged survivors climbed in shore boats and were taken to the transports. A few had to be lifted over the side; some appeared as strong and hearty as they were before their arduous experience, but all were suffering from coral cuts suffered on the beach, for none had shoes.

Japanese reconnaissance planes had sighted the covering force and shadowed it throughout the night, but the enemy's preoccupation with this force led him to ignore completely the main group. The return voyage to Tulagi-Guadalcanal was uneventful except for the rescue of some enemy survivors of the second Battle of Kula Gulf, and the sighting of others who preferred suicide to being rescued.

Snatched from the sea and from the very center of a Jap stronghold, the gallant *Helena* crew—nearly 1,000 strong—is ready today to fight again.



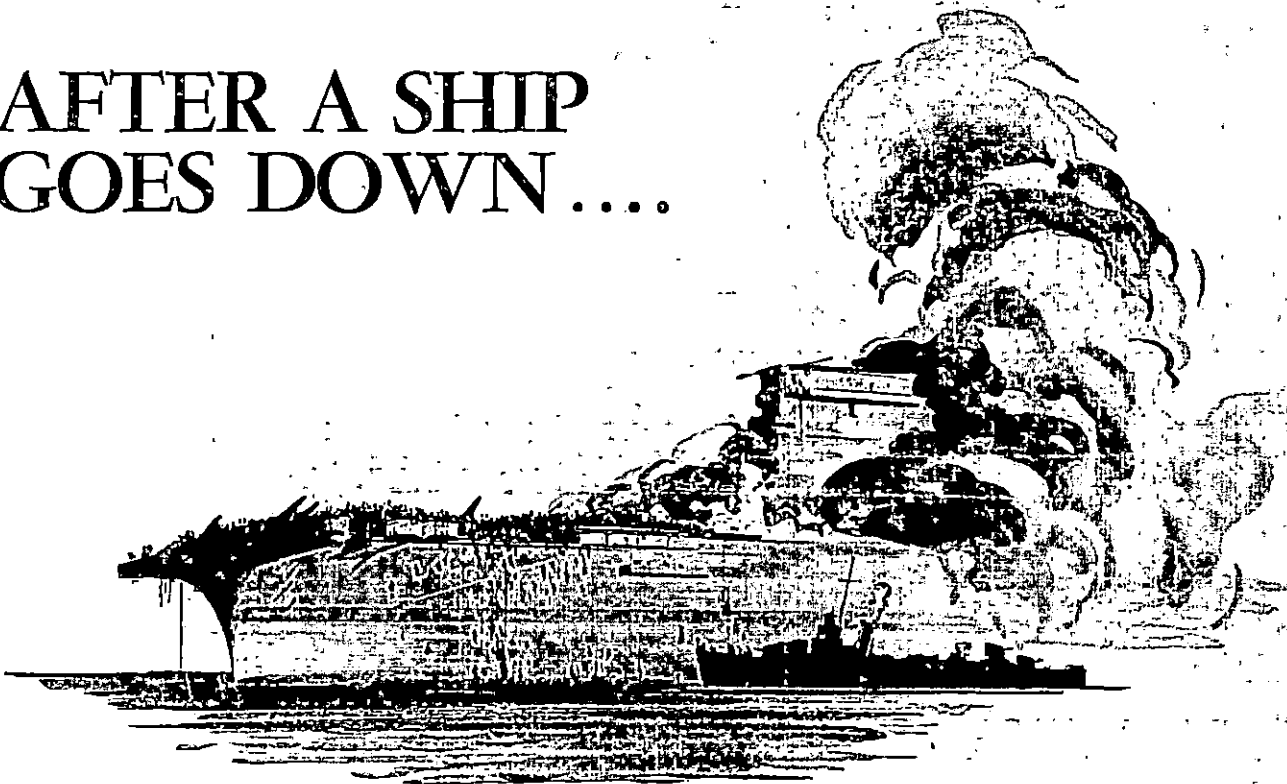
—Official U. S. Navy Photograph.

Helena survivors report on sister ship after Battle of Kula Gulf.

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AFTER A SHIP GOES DOWN....



What About Survivors, Losses, Records, Pay? What Are Duties of Officers? Here Are Procedures, Suggestions

NAVY DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES USS
NONESUCH SUNK AS RESULT OF AN
UNDERWATER EXPLOSION IN SOUTH
PACIFIC AREA ON THE MORNING OF

Your ship goes down. After floating about for some while, you and others from the ship are picked up. You're "survivors" now. What happens from there on?

For instance:

What are the duties of commanding officers and others?

What about clothing and effects lost by officers and enlisted men?

What happens to your pay account?

Whose jurisdiction are you under?

Where do you head for, and what happens when you get there?

What can you do to aid yourself in getting reestablished?

Whenever a ship goes down, dozens of questions like these come up.

The story of what actually happens from there on can be divided, roughly, into about four main sections. Under these fall most of the questions to which you, as a survivor, may want to know the answers. They are: (1) the command and organization of survivors, or who's supposed to do what? (2) your temporary rescue situation, (3) your arrival at a port, and (4)

these important R's: reconstruction (of your pay account, service and health records), replacement or reimbursement (for the loss of your personal effects) and reassignment.

Separate sections will cover such other phases as the variations that apply to Armed Guard personnel, crews aboard destroyers and smaller ships, and those landed on foreign shores; also, special procedures affecting notification of casualties, and a listing of helpful tips for survivors.

Command and Organization of Survivors

What happens to the organization of your ship if she goes down? While you are aboard, you and the others comprise the ship's company. If she goes down, you become "survivors". How does that change your status with regard to the ship and its command?

Actually, not at all. Even when your ship goes down, the organization of it still survives.

As Navy Regulations put it, "When the crew of any vessel of the United States are separated from their vessel by means of her wreck, loss or destruction, all the command and authority given to the officers of such vessel shall remain in full force until such ship's company shall be regularly

discharged from or ordered again into service, or until a court-martial or court of inquiry shall be held to inquire into the loss of said vessel" (Art 21).

So the officers and men remain members of their own ship's company, even when taken aboard another ship. At that time, of course, they come under the disciplinary jurisdiction of the new ship, but their organization remains intact until the ship's company is dissolved by SecNav, or is reassigned.

And how about the commanding officer of the ship—what are his duties? Briefly, they are:

1. In case of the loss of the ship, to remain by her with officers and crew as long as necessary and to save as much life and government property as possible.

2. If it becomes necessary to abandon the ship, to be the last person to leave her.

3. To make a report of the circumstances to the Secretary of the Navy as soon as possible, and if wrecked within waters adjacent to the United States, to repair to the nearest naval station with the crew.

4. If in a foreign country, to lose no time, after making all efforts to save property, in returning with his officers and crew to the fleet or squadron to which they belonged (or, if

FLEET RAINS SHELLS ON JAPS' KISKA BASE

By JOHN M. HIGHTOWER

Washington, D. C., July 7 (AP).—Warships of the North Pacific Force poured hundreds of shells into Japanese defenses on Kiska Island last night in an operation possibly preliminary to a drive to reconquer that Aleutians position.

A Navy communication announcing the attack this afternoon, gave no details except that enemy shore batteries failed to return the fire. It left no doubt that the bombardment was heavy and prolonged.

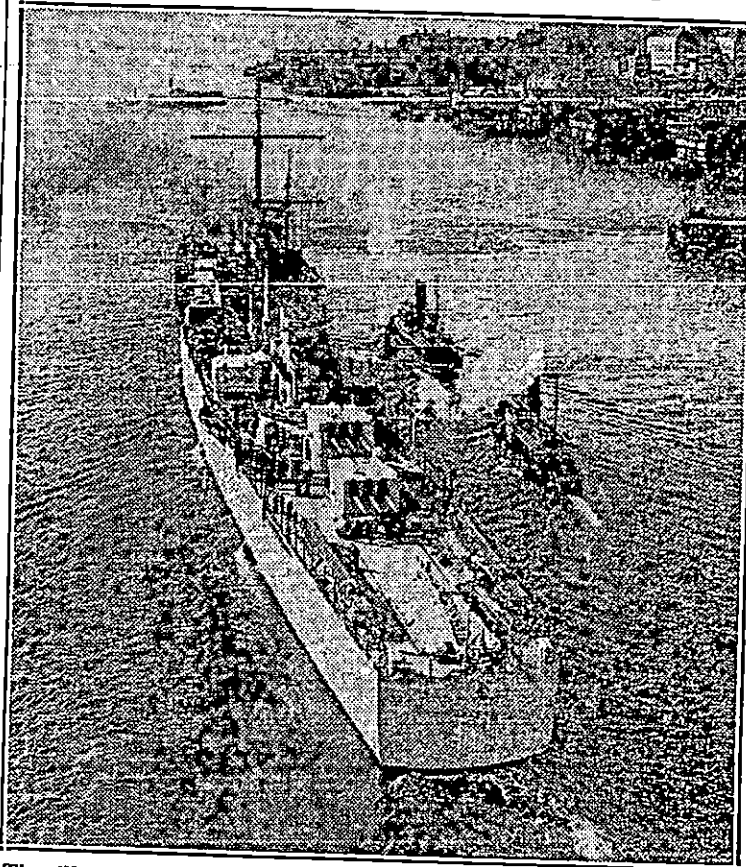
The assault came at a time when combined land, sea and air forces of the South and Southwest Pacific Commands are putting heavy pressure on enemy positions in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea areas. It thus put Tokio on notice that American offensive power is not limited to one sector of the Pacific.

Cruiser, Helena Lost.

The bulletin disclosed that the American ship lost in the battle of Kula Gulf in the central Solomons before dawn July 6 was the 700-ton light cruiser Helena, commanded by Capt. Charles Russell Cecil of Louisville, Ky. Loss of life on the Helena was not reported. Indications were that the Navy here did not yet have exact information.

Following the battle, in which the Japanese were reported to have had six ships "probably sunk" and "several" damaged, American planes continued heavy attacks on Japanese bases to the rear of the fighting front, in the Munda air-

She Went Down Fighting



The ill-starred U. S. S. Helena, reported lost in Solomons action yesterday, is shown here in the East River after being commissioned at the New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn September 18, 1939.



(By Acme)

Capt. Chas. P. Cecil
Commanded U. S. S. Helena.

base section of New Georgia Island.

The sinking of the Helena brought to 103 the total of American combatant ships lost so far in all areas of conflict. The probable destruction of six Japanese warships plus the damaging of four others put the total of enemy combatant vessels sunk, probably sunk and damaged at 315.

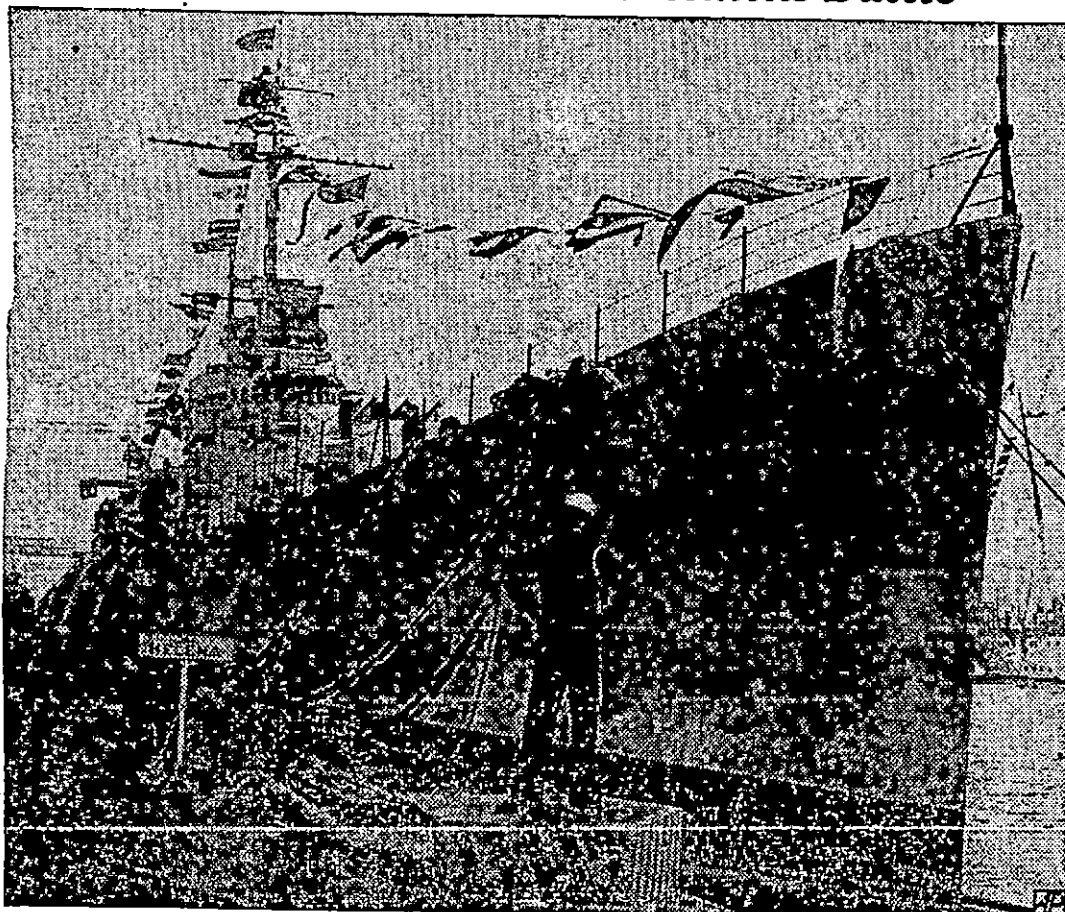
On Duty 4 Years.

The Helena had been in service since September, 1939, when she was commissioned at the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn. Equipped to carry four aircraft for scouting and gunnery control purposes, she was armed with 15 six-inch guns and eight five-inch anti-aircraft guns, in addition to lighter weapons. She was repaired and returned to sea duty after being damaged in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

While the fighting continued hot and heavy in the South Pacific, great interest was aroused in naval circles by the bombardment of Kiska. There was the possibility that battleships were among the attacking vessels.

Cruiser Helena Lost In Solomons Battle

10



Helena Skipper



Capt. Charles Purcell Cecil (above) of Louisville, Ky., was in command of the U. S. S. Helena when the light cruiser was lost in Kula Gulf in the Solomons in a battle with Japanese naval units.

The United States light cruiser Helena, (above) 9,700 tons, was lost in the battle with Japanese forces in Kula Gulf, July 6, the Navy department announced. Six Japanese warships were known to have been sunk in the encounter.

I am a soldier

I am a Soldier! In God's name I stand
Ever protecting America's land.
You probably don't know me and maybe don't care
But I take the job that others can't bear.
I fight for your freedom. I'm ready to die,
But do you really think that I never cry?
I have a daughter and I have a wife,
But I do not have a family life.
I'm giving my all and I shall not cease
So that my country has freedom and peace.
When you make a good living and go where you please
Do not forget the price of your ease.
I do not begrudge you the life that you've made,
The home that you own or the money you're paid.
I do not get angry when you can stand
With your wife and your children holding your hand;
But do not forget me here in this place—
Where I never can see my family's face,
For the weak I am strong and always will toil
To keep freedom alive on American soil.
I am a soldier in God's name I stand
Ever protecting America's land!
When you think of a soldier don't take it light,
If it were not for me, you'd have to fight.
Pvt. Richard F. Williams
B Company, 1/81 Armor