

✻ EASTER SUNDAY, 1945—A TIME OF PRAYER AND HOPE in a world at war—was a shining day in the East China Sea. The ocean was calm, the weather cool, the visibility good, the sun strong; the escarpments of Okinawa—dim and distant island soon to become forever warp and woof of our traditions—were shadowy on the horizon.

The greatest naval armada in history—more than 40 carriers, 18 battleships, 200 destroyers, hundreds of transports, cruisers, supply ships, net layers, submarines, minesweepers, gunboats, landing craft, patrol vessels, salvage ships and repair vessels, some 1,321 ships transporting 183,000 assault troops—steamed deep into Japanese waters. The objective was “Operation Ice-Berg”—the seizure of Okinawa, in obedience to a directive from Adm Chester W. Nimitz that “forces of the Pacific Ocean Areas will establish and maintain control of the approaches to the East China Sea by the capture, occupation and defense of bases in the Nansei Shoto (Ryukyus Islands). . . .”

The start of the operation, after months of intensive preparation and weeks of hair-trigger tension that always precedes battle, was anti-climatic. The preliminary seizure of the Kerama Retto group—“Island Chain Between Happiness and Good”—was accomplished easily by the 77th Division, and on 31 March, the day before Easter, twenty-four 155mm guns were emplaced on the little islets of Keise, within easy artillery range of the Jap positions on Okinawa. And on Easter morning, 1945, the Army and Marine assault units landed with “almost incredible ease” on the west-central coast of Okinawa. Virtually no enemy and few defenses were encountered;

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Ed: *This is the story of “The Last Battle” of World War II, the gigantic struggle of Okinawa, which Winston Churchill placed among “the most intense and famous of military history.” The land phases of that campaign have been recounted in detail in Army and other histories, but the story of the “fleet that came to stay”—the three months struggle of our ships against the Japanese “kamikazes” and the resultant air combats that dwarfed those in the Battle of Britain—has never before been told in detail. Mr Baldwin has used official records and personal memoirs for his source material.*

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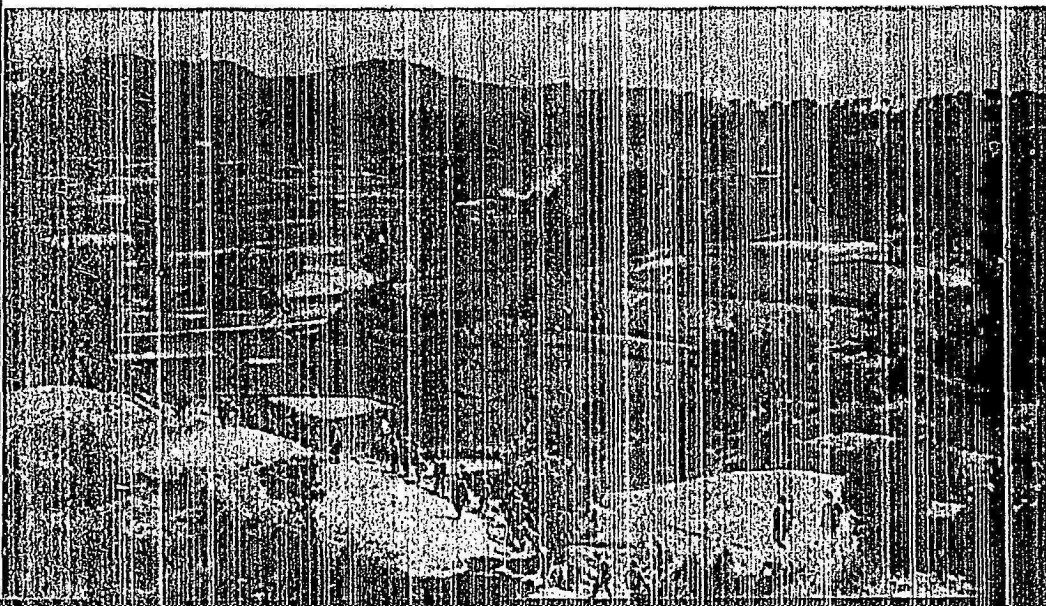
the “land was dry and green with conifers and the air bracing;” the invasion of Okinawa started with good omen.

Okinawa, largest of the Ryukyu Island chain extending southward from Kyushu, is a lizard-shaped land mass fringed by coral reefs, about 60 miles long, and from 2 to 18 miles wide. Its two-mile peninsula, just above the Yontan airfield, divides the northern two-thirds of the island—rugged, mountainous, and heavily forested—from the rolling hilly land of the south. It was in the southern sector, seamed by escarpments and ravines, dotted with ancient Okinawan tombs and limestone caves, and with every foot of arable ground planted in sugar cane, sweet potatoes, rice and soy beans, that the Japanese had erected their main defense lines.

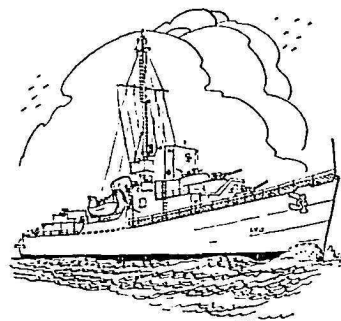
The assault upon Okinawa was a logical development of our Pacific strategy; it was “conceived within the framework of the general strategy of destroying by

# OKINAWA: VICTORY

Said an infantryman: “I’ve already lived longer than I thought I would.”



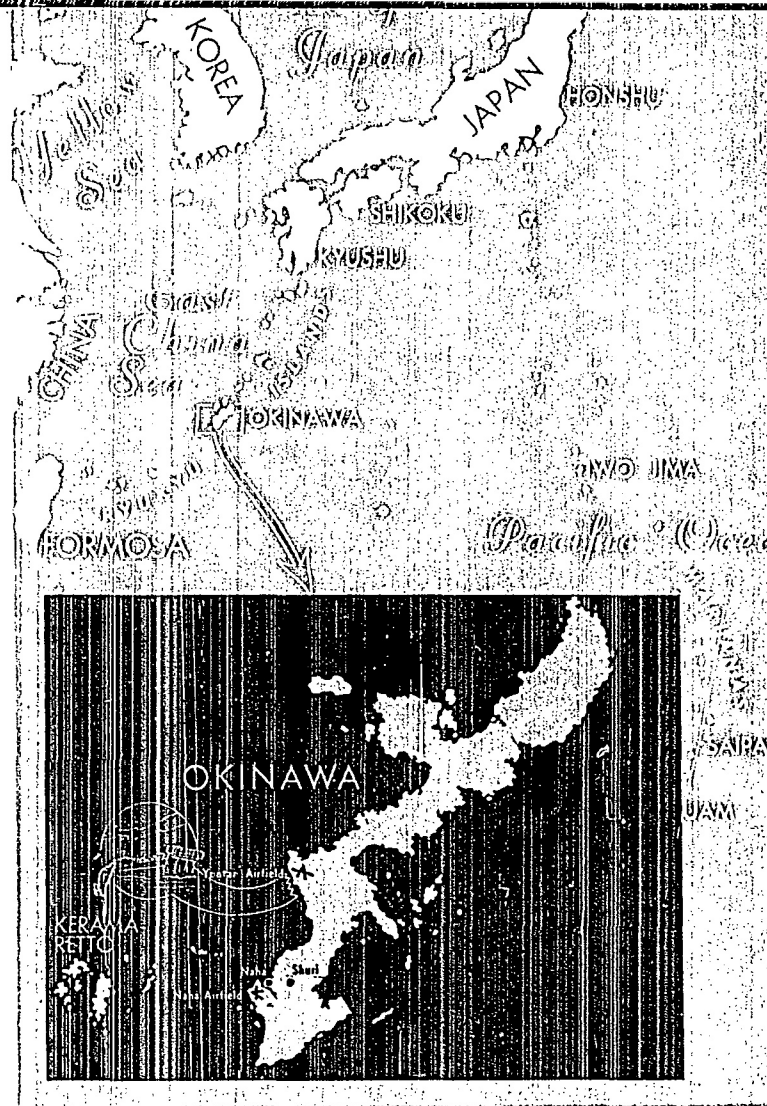
By Hanson W. Baldwin



blockade and bombardment the Japanese military forces or their will to resist." It was within medium-bomber range of Japan, and it was estimated 780 bombers could be based there to intensify the assault then being conducted by the B-29s from the Marianas. From Okinawa and its satellite islets of Kerama and Ie Shima (where "Ernie" Pyle was to be killed), planes and ships could tighten the sea blockade and could sever virtually all Japanese shipping routes. Okinawa was also wanted as a staging area and supporting position for what was intended to be one of the culminating operations of the Pacific War—"Operation Olympic,"—the invasion of the Japanese island of Kyushu, 350 miles away, which had been scheduled for 1 November, 1945.

In retrospect it may be argued that the assault upon Okinawa was not essential to final victory; less than two months after its capture the enemy was ready for peace. But at the time the predominant military opinion was that Japan would fight on for at least another year to 18 months. The Japanese defeat at Okinawa was, moreover, a major contributory cause for the enemy's quick surrender. The final desperate hope of the militarists—to stave off defeat by sinking our fleet from the air—was negated, and Japan's position, after Okinawa, was completely hopeless.

Well offshore cruises famed Task Force 59 under "Pete" Mitscher, the admiral with the gnome-like face framed in a peaked baseball cap. Southward, where the swells of the East China Sea break against the rocky pediments of Sakishima Gunto and Formosa, a British carrier task force, first to operate in the Pacific, rakes



## AT THE THRESHOLD

Japanese airfields. Off Blue Beach and Purple Beach, the transports and landing ships and cargo vessels are laced with the wakes of the small boats and landing craft racing back and forth to the beaches. The modern miracle of an amphibious landing—an army striding, giant-like, out of the sea complete with equipment, food, ammunition and supplies—transforms the Ryukyus into a kaleidoscope of movement. In the distance, the guns of the battleships and cruisers flame and thunder—but they are American guns; in the skies, the planes dip and wheel and bomb—but they are American planes; the enemy is strangely silent.

An infantryman of the Seventh Division, the tightness gone from his chest, wipes his brow after climbing one of Okinawa's knob-like hills:

"I've already lived longer than I thought I would."

Vice Adm R. K. ("Kelly") Turner, commanding the Joint Expeditionary Force, radios Adm Chester W. Nimitz, back in Guam:

"I may be crazy but I think the Japs have quit the war."

Nimitz comes back:

"Your message number so and so, delete all after crazy."

Nimitz's hard-boiled realism is well-founded.

The invasion of Okinawa had been envisaged by many

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of the planners as a "quick" operation;<sup>1</sup> the Japs were to be overpowered in a month or less by weight of men and metal. Cave warfare, and the slow, slogging, bloody brutal infighting of Iwo, Tarawa, and the Palaus were to be avoided; Okinawa was big enough (it was thought) to cut the enemy defenders up into small groups, to outflank them and isolate them, to wage a war of maneuver. Intelligence estimated the Japs had about 55,000 to 65,000 troops on the island and 198 artillery pieces of major calibers. But intelligence was to be rudely surprised; hopes of a quick victory were soon to bog down in the cave-pocked hills of Okinawa; 110,000 of the enemy were to die, 7,400 were to surrender, 287 guns to be blasted before "The Last Battle" ended.

The hard truth of battle—the truth of blasted bodies and burning ships and scarred and bloody ground—is not long hidden. By 5 April, the toiling troops ashore commence to come upon the main Japanese defensive line, cleverly masked emplacements, caves, and fortified positions, wooded ridges, and the strong and ancient masonry of Okinawa castles and tombs. The Japs brace themselves for a stand to the death:

"Do your utmost," they are told: "The victory of the century lies in this battle."

Afloat, off the beaches, the great armada goes about its unending toil; the support forces thunder at shore targets; the transports and cargo vessels disgorge the supplies; hospital ships embark the wounded, sweepers plod their checkerboard course across the waters and occasionally the dull boom and the silver geyser of an exploded mine marks the reward of their labors. Out of sight beyond the horizon, the fast carrier task force launches its combat air patrols; the "jeeps" (small carriers) send out their pilots to hunt for submarines, and to give direct support to the "dough-fee" ashore.

The Jap reaction afloat is at first annoying—nothing more. The prior surprise attack on the Kerama islands has netted a rich haul—350 suicide boats, plywood "spit-kids" 18 feet long each armed with two 264 pound depth charges. Their commanders and crews, in a conference on Okinawa, are isolated when the invasion starts. The Jap plan to "blast to pieces" the American transports in the first hours of the assault with a "whirlwind" attack by suicide boats is frustrated, but gradually little speed-boats, hidden and camouflaged in coves of unconquered parts of Okinawa and in other nearby islands filter out at night to attack the great leviathans of the American fleet. "Flycatcher patrols" are established to cope with

them; radar screens turn throughout the night. "Bogeys"—Jap planes—begin to appear sporadically on the radar scopes; the Jap attacks gradually build up.

The Japanese plans for the defense of Okinawa were based upon destruction of the vast American armada that made the invasion of the island possible. In the somber words of the Army official history *Okinawa, The Last Battle*, the "Japanese high command was determined to hold Okinawa and planned to employ the major portion of the Empire's remaining air strength as well as a large portion of its (remaining) fleet in an attack on the American sea forces. The Japanese hoped to isolate and weaken the invading ground forces by destroying the American naval units and support shipping lying off Okinawa. To accomplish this, they relied chiefly on bomb-laden planes guided to their targets by suicide pilots, members of the Japanese Navy's Special Attack Corps known as the Kamikaze (Divine Word) Corps. . ."

The naval fliers (Kamikaze) were augmented for the defense of the Ryukyu archipelago by army pilots (Tokobetsu) and two air forces—the 6th Air Army and the 5th Air Fleet—acting under the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, Adm Toyoda, operated from bases in Kyushu, aided by smaller operations based on Formosa.

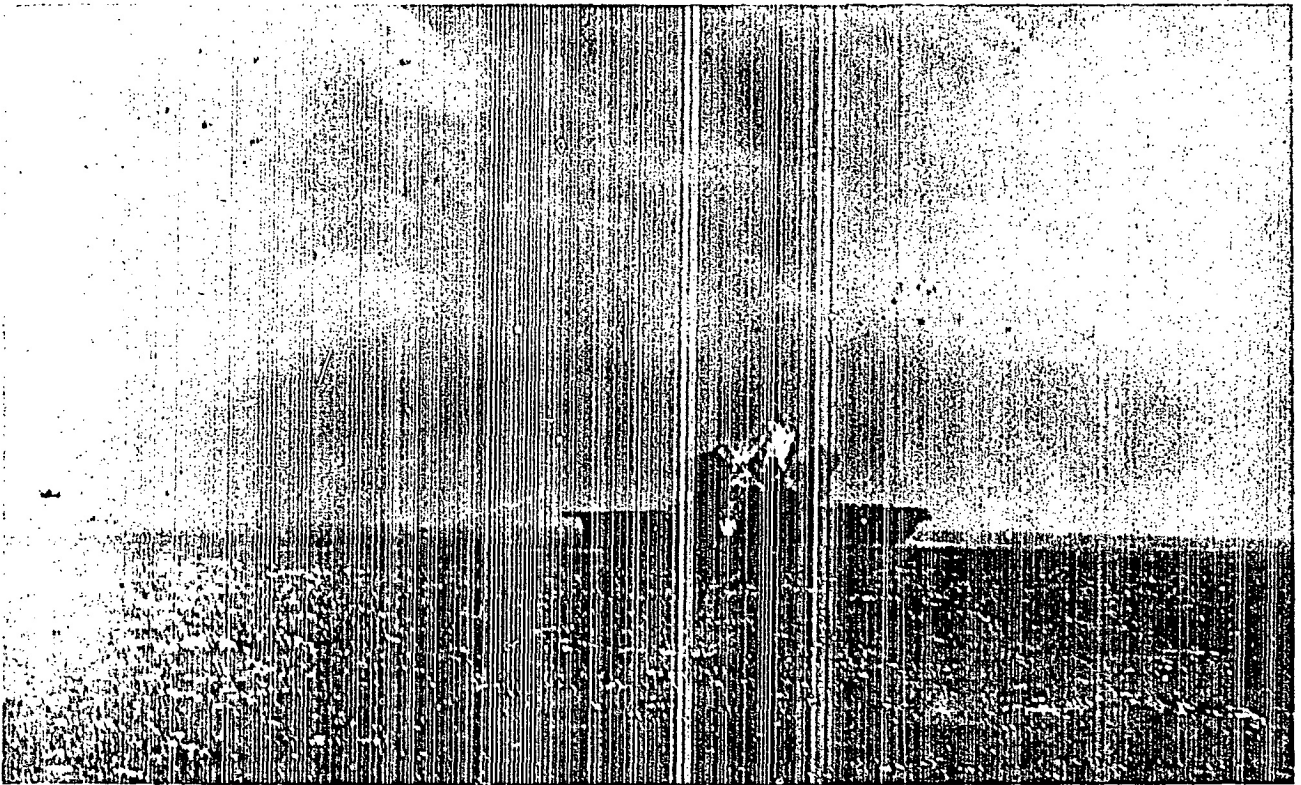
*This article first appeared in the New York TIMES in an abridged form. It is presented here in complete form.*

These desperate attacks by men who sought to die for the glory of the Emperor had had preliminary small-scale tryouts in the Philippine and Iwo Jima campaigns where the Kamikaze tactics had been so "highly effective" that, at the time of Okinawa, all Japanese air fleets "had either reorganized or were in the process of reorganization and training for suicide attack operations."<sup>2</sup>

At Okinawa, the long shadow of impending terror had touched the invasion fleet even before the first landings. *Indianapolis*, flagship of the whole great armada, wearing the four-starred flag of Adm R. A. Spruance, commanding Fifth Fleet, was hit on the port quarter by a bomb-carrying Kamikaze suicide plane on March 31; the *Murray* was damaged by a torpedo; the *Adams* took a suicide hit; the *Skylark*—strange lilting name for a plodding sweeper—was blown up by a mine. Submarine warnings were reported from all over the area; the "anti-skunk" patrol—established to search for unidentified surface vessels picked up on radar screens—was busy, and officers-of-the-deck and lookouts searched the seas for Jap "frogmen"—swimmers bent on sabotage. On 1 April—L-Day, the day of the landings, the "Wee Vee"

<sup>1</sup>There were some exceptions. After reconnaissance photographs of Okinawa, taken prior to invasion, had been interpreted Adm R. H. Spruance recorded in the War Diary of the Fifth Fleet: "CTF (Commander Task Force) 58 advised CTF 61 that the whole island seemed to be honeycombed with caves, tunnels and gun positions. . . . He predicted that the going would probably be tough."

<sup>2</sup>"Campaigns of the Pacific War."



Blazing fire dramatically illustrates damage wrought by a Kamikaze plane.

(the old battleship *West Virginia*) was lightly damaged in an air raid at dusk; on 2 April the *Henrico*, an assault transport with troops from the 77th division, took a suicider square in the commodore's cabin; sailors and soldiers died together in the blast and flame. By 3 April, the sheltered anchorages at Kerama Retto were beginning to clot with limping and crippled ships, and the Commander, Fifth Fleet, authorized the scuttling of the hopelessly damaged APD *Nickerson*. But on 5 April, as high creaming surf slowed the unloading of supplies, there was a welcome note in the after-action reports, Fifth Fleet—"There was no enemy air activity in the Okinawa area during daylight today."

April 6, 1945, is clear, with wind riffling the East China Sea. Ashore, around a hill called "The Pinnacle," where Matthew Perry had raised the American flag almost a century before a desperate battle raged—the first in a bruising terrible struggle to breach the enemy's fortified Shuri Line.

Afloat, the great armada is spread wide around the island. About 100 miles to the east are the 82 ships of Mitcher's fast carrier task force—Task Force 58—operating in an area about 60 miles square. Due south, east of Northern Formosa, is a British carrier task force—four carriers, two battleships, four light cruisers, eleven destroyers. Southeast are 17 U. S. "jeep" carriers, their planes furnishing air support for the ground troops ashore and flying a combat air patrol (CAP) for the

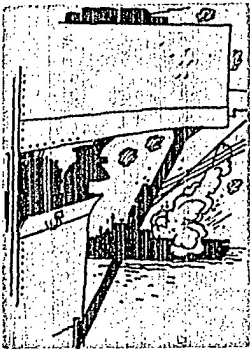
surface ships. Cruisers and battleships steam back and forth within easy gun range of Okinawa's high escarpments, shelling the Japanese positions in the Shuri Line. Huddled off the beaches are the landing ships, transports and cargo vessels which keep the stream of men and supplies moving over the coral reefs and through the surf to the fighting men ashore. And ringing the whole island and the amphibious force, in a great circle, some 50 miles out from the beaches, are the "tin cans," the "spitkids" and "the small boys" officially designated the "Fifth Amphibious Force Area Screen" but universally called the radar picket line.

The "small boys" clustered in 15 main picket stations detect the enemy first; the Kamikazes show up as points of light on the radar screens long before the diapason of their engines can be heard.

The mid-watch notes enemy snoopers and, before daylight, "heavy air attacks." Nine enemy planes are "splashed" in the transport area by AA fire. But the "Sons of Heaven,"—oaths of fealty to Emperor and to nation on their lips, sashes wound ceremoniously about their waists—are climbing into cockpits of "Oscars" and "Vals" at Jap airports all the way from Kyushu to Formosa. The day clouds up; by afternoon the sky is heavily overcast with clouds, and from all directions the "bandits" roar in. The fleet is the target; sink the bridge of ships and the battle is won.

"Flash Red—Sound General Quarters. . ."





The quick "bong, bong, bong" of the alarm gong; the wail of the bos'n' pipe—"All hands to General Quarters."

The radio-telephone "TBS" circuits chatter as the Japs bore in, and the "CIC" (Combat Information Centers) aboard the destroyers are a "Babel" of radioed reports as air raids are spotted

and defined and our combat air patrol vectored toward the enemy in the peculiar code-jargon of war:

"Pedantic, this is Riverside; I see bogey one eight zero. Do you concur—over." . . .

"This is Pedantic.

Affirmative. That makes raid three. . . out."

The great grey transports and cargo ships, lush with men and supplies, are the primary target of the raiders, but few "Sons of Heaven" reach the center of the great armada; fighters of the combat air patrols and the "sky" guns of the fleet claim a high toll. But the Nips do not die in vain. Between two and six p.m. of this gray and somber day 182 enemy planes in some 22 different attacks reach the Okinawa area. Many drop bombs or torpedoes, but more than a score of them crash into American ships in their suicide dives. The victims are mostly the "small boys"—the lowly sweepers, the destroyers and destroyer escorts and landing craft in the far-flung radar picket line, the thin line of "tin-clads" that warn the whole armada of the enemy's approach and direct our defending planes to the attack.

☛ USS RODMAN has her rendezvous with death and destiny at about seven bells in the afternoon watch.

The sea is smooth and *Rodman's* white wake scarcely roils the surface as she loafs along at eight knots screening—with her sister destroyer-sweeper, the *Emmons*—a group of sweepers. The crew is at general quarters, but there are no pips on the radar screen when three planes suddenly break out of the thick cloud rack close aboard and commence a coordinated attack. The guns speak but there is little time to pray; many of *Rodman's* young men, who are in the "full flush of being" at seven bells, are charred and inanimate dead a few seconds later, snuffed out in the bright flame of life. One Jap drops a bomb that explodes in a geyser of salt 150 feet off the starboard quarter. A bomb-carrying Val crashes into the port side of the main deck at frame 15 and a great sheet of flame burgeons over the super structure, to be followed seconds later, by a blinding spray of water from a near miss close aboard to starboard.

The whole bow of *Rodman* is opened to sea and sky; the skin of the hull is ruptured by the near miss on the

starboard side; the forward part of the ship is flooded, and the curling clouds of black smoke and the licking tongues of red flame are the somber vestments of requiem for the mangled dead.

The struggle for life commences; steering control is lost as *Rodman* backs into the wind to keep the fire forward, the bridge clear of flame and smoke. The ship settles deep; and the main deck's awash. Overhead go the topside weights; jettison the anchor; pump clear the ballast. Working near the licking flames seamen manhandle the ammunition out of the fire's path; one shell already has detonated in Number One handling room, but the rest is roused out and dumped overboard. Lighten the ship, lighten the ship; fight fires; plug leaks!

By eight bells (in half an hour—so brief a time!—the young men of *Rodman*, those still alive, have looked upon the face of violent death and the memory of it shall never leave them), by eight bells the fire is under control, but the Japs come again, vulture-like to hover over the dying.

They come in swarms and coveys; all over the Okinawa area violent air battles rage; Jap planes are falling—brief comets cross the seascape—flaming into the waters. *Rodman* gets her No Three gun and automatic weapons into action; the tracers are into the skies—and not without effect; the wounded ship "splashed" a certain two, a possible five, of the enemy. Perhaps 30 planes attack *Rodman*, or *Emmons* or the nearby "spitkids," but the mad melee in the skies between our "CAP" and the enemy, the low-flying cloud rack, and the frenetic speed of attack and riposte defy accurate count, or precise history.

They come from all directions—the young men of Japan who would die for their Emperor—and their wishes are fulfilled, as their blazing planes flame, like meteors, across the skies. Many of the dying Japs, shot down by the "CAP," crash close aboard *Rodman*, with results—in the calm understatement of the official report—"harrowing to personnel." One is "splashed" off the fantail; its landing gear caroms off the water to within 30 feet of the stricken ship's side. A suicider, coming in low off the starboard bow, swoops too low; it grazes the water and cartwheels and somersaults into oblivion. Another, trying to crash *Rodman* aft, nicks the loud-speaker and halyards on the mainmast and snips off the trainer's sight from the starboard 40mm gunmount before diving into the sea.

But some succeed. One Kamikaze almost cuts her in two; it scores a bullseye on the port side waterline, and ruptures the tinclad *Rodman* from waterline almost to keel. Four five-inch powder charges detonate; most of the rest of them in the forward magazine are tumbled and torn, but—miraculously—the magazine does not "blow." A 100 kilogram bomb holes the ship on the starboard side, but the bomb does not detonate; it slices

through the wardroom and galley ripping the partitions like a can opener and comes to rest in the port passageway. Another suicider smacks into the captain's cabin; the flames completely gut the superstructures and force "conn" to shift from the bridge aft. Some of the crew are blown overboard, some jump. By 6 p.m. *Rodman* is a shambles; with rudder jammed full left, the ship steams in circles at five knots speed; a new fire—caused by short circuits in her degaussing cable—breaks out in No. 1 fireroom and forces its abandonment.

But by 6:30 of that day, that none who are there will ever forget, the wounded are being transferred to an EMS alongside. Fifty-eight of *Rodman's* crew remain aboard as salvage crew; the rest of them—those that still live—shift to rescue vessels. Before seven, as the dusk commences to settle down over the calm waters that have quietly closed now over the graves of seamen and airmen, the fires aboard *Rodman* are out, the rudder is cleared, the ship is worked up to a speed of six knots, and at 3:25 A. M. the next morning, April 7, the torn ship limps into Kerama Retto, the bodies of her dead, singed and battered, still aboard. *Rodman* has won; she is of the "fleet that came to stay."

But *Emmons*, *Rodman's* sister, was not so lucky; she "got her's" that day. The score card was ominous; *Emmons* had foundered; two destroyers were sunk; an LST was burned "end to end"; the *Logan Victory*, an ammunition ship, staged an awesome pyrotechnic end after being crashed by two suicide "Zekes"; another ammunition ship was sunk and nine escort types were heavily damaged, one of them by depth charges which had been attached to floating planks. The cripples filed into Kerama Retto; when dawn came they buried their dead.

But the blanks in the radar picket screen were filled in; the unloading continued, and the Jap losses were huge—almost 400 planes on April 6 and the early morning of the 7th; 300 of these were stopped at the picket line at the cost of only two U. S. planes. And this day—the 7th of April there died in sudden convulsive shudder and pyramid of spiralling smoke the largest ship in the world, the last pride of the Japanese Navy, the 18 inch-gunned *Yamato*. Planes of Task Force 58 got her far to the north, as she steamed toward Okinawa accompanied by one cruiser and eight destroyers in a gallant but desperate effort to drive the brash invaders far from the Emperor's realm. *Yamato* was attacked by 386 of our carrier-based aircraft; she shuddered and reeled to 10 torpedo hits and five bomb hits, and after hours of agony, the water of the East China Sea closed over the wreckage of a Japanese light cruiser, four destroyers, and the greatest battleship ever built. The cost to us was 10 planes.

But on this day, too, "large topside fires" swept the *Hancock*, a carrier, struck by a Kamikaze, and a suicider, coming out of the soft dusk, roared into Turret Three of the *USS Maryland* and in mast-high clouds of fire and

smoke snuffed out instantly the lives of 16 Americans. The battleship's dead were identified—(no easy task, with disfiguring wounds and flamed-scarred tissues), tagged and placed in canvas sacks, and an entry in the log book read:

"Light rain, overcast; sea moderate."

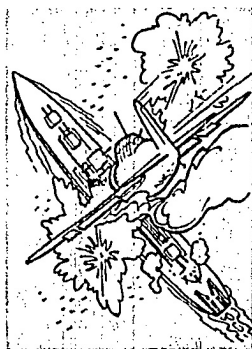
Ashore, as ships and planes slug it out in no-quarter combat which will decide the outcome of the land fighting, the Marines clean up the northern part of the island against limited resistance, but the doughboys—driving south, meet the enemy's "iron defense." Shore air strips are operative, and by 8 April, a tactical air force command takes over all shore-based planes.

9 April, the weather is blessedly thick, and high winds pile up pounding surf on the reefs and beaches. The air attacks are light, but *Monssen*, in the screen, depth charges an enemy submarine, and "wooden debris, cork and light diesel oil" come to the surface. More than a dozen suicide boats sneak out of Naha in the darkness of the midwatch and speed toward the transports; a cargo ship is saved when a boat rams a landing ship moored alongside. The suicide boats damage a destroyer, but the "fly-catcher" patrol picks off five of the splinter fleet, and 15 Jap swimmers—some with hand grenades—are killed in the water.

The "Sons of Heaven," dedicated to "death for the Emperor," come again in great numbers out of the clouds on the eleventh, and the twelfth. The Okinawa area is only harried on the eleventh; the Japs concentrate on Task Force 58, far to the east. *Enterprise*—"The Big E."—one of the "fighting-est" carriers of the Pacific war, takes "considerable damage" from two near suicide misses; *Essex* is damaged; destroyers and DEs get theirs. Well into the night, the enemy wings toward death and glory; the flash and smoke of AA bursts against the sky mark his path of brief climactic fame. A red glow, and then a flaming comet arcs across the night sky and he plunges deep into the dark waters—a burst of sudden flame his sole mark upon history.

The twelfth—the day of Roosevelt's death—was a great day of great attack. At home, a nation mourned; at Okinawa, the news spread suddenly from foxhole to flight deck to gun turret, but there was no time to mourn, scarce time to pray—for death rode the skies. That day many an American died with the President.

In the clear bright afternoon perhaps 175 enemy planes in 17 different raids reached the Okinawa area. They were met by a strong "CAP"; and the blasting guns of the most powerful fleet in history, but they ex-





Japanese Kamikaze plane dives into the USS ENTERPRISE off Okinawa, May 14, 1945. Despite the heavy anti-aircraft fire thrown up by Navy ships, the Japanese suicide planes managed to score numerous hits, many of them disastrous.

acted their grim and savage toll. The picket line took the brunt of it; but the "small boys" stood and died.

At one-fifty-eight p.m. *Cassin Young* splashed four "Vals," but took a suicider in the forward engine room—one killed; 54 wounded. At two p.m. *Jeffers*, in Picket Station No. 12 was lashed by fire from a near miss. At two p.m. the new destroyer, *M. L. Abolo* had her back broken and sank "immediately"—in two distinct parts—when a suicider carrying a bomb drove into the after engine room and ruptured her keel. Six killed. 34 wounded; 74 missing. The battleship *Tennessee* was hit; blisters on the *Idaho* were flooded by a near miss; the *New Mexico* was holed by a five-inch shell from a shore battery; the destroyer *Fellars* was badly damaged by a suicider; the *Oakland*, a light cruiser; nine escort types; and various other vessels of the miscellaneous argosy that comprised the invasion fleet hosed off their blood-drenched decks and buried their dead.

It was not long before, in the foxholes in front of the still unbreached Shuri Line, Japanese propaganda leaflet proclaimed:

"We must express our deep regret over the death of

President Roosevelt. The 'American Tragedy' is now raised here at Okinawa with his death. You must have seen 70 per cent of your CVs (carriers) and 73 per cent of your Bs (BBs—battleships) sink or be damaged, causing 150,000 casualties. Not only the late President but anyone else would die in the excess of worry to hear such an annihilative damage. The dreadful loss that led your late leader to death will make you orphans on this island. The Japanese special attack corps will sink your vessels to the last destroyer. You will witness it realized in the near future. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

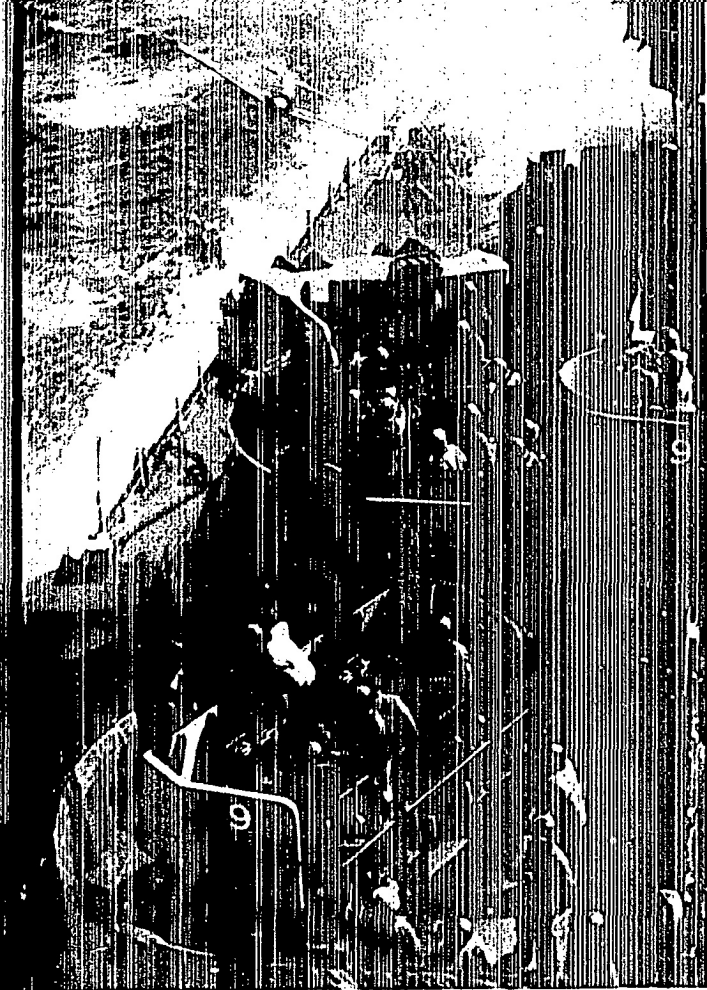
"... a grand 'U. S. Sea Bottom Fleet' numbering 500 has been brought into existence around this little island.

Once you have seen a 'lizard' twitching about with its tail cut off, we suppose this state of lizard is likened to you. Even a drop of blood can be never expected from its own heart. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

The 17th April is another bad day; the carrier *Intrepid* is hit, a destroyer sunk, many of the "smallboys" dam-

<sup>3</sup>"Okinawa—The Last Battle."

<sup>4</sup>"The Marines War."



The USS MISSOURI receives a Kamikaze plane during her stay at Okinawa as a gunfire support ship.

aged. The "hot corners" of the radar picket line—Stations One, Two, Three, and Fourteen—are given a standing "CAP" of two planes each and each station is "double-banked" with two destroyers, instead of one to provide greater anti-aircraft fire power. But Spruance reports to "CINPAC" (Nimitz) that "the skill and effectiveness of enemy suicide air attacks and the rate of loss and damage to ships are such that all available means should be employed to prevent further attacks. Recommend all available attacks with all available planes, including 20th Air Force on Kyushu and Formosa fields."

The attacks are made; the Nip fields are raked and pounded relentlessly by bombs and rockets, but the Emperor's Special Attack Corps is well dispersed and carefully camouflaged; the suicide raids continue. The

Mr Baldwin concludes his story of the "Fleet That Came to Stay" in the January Gazette.

damaged ships clog the anchorages at Kerama Retto; there is a trail of limping cripples all the way across the Pacific. The floating docks at Ulithi, the repair facilities at Guam, the dockyard at Pearl; the West Coast shipyards work three shifts the clock around; the fire-gutted Franklin, damaged in Task Force 58's preliminary strike against Japan even transits the Canal for repairs at New York. The riveting gun and the welding torch mend the twisted steel and patch the broken bodies of the ships; the human bodies are more difficult to repair.

Day after day, night after night, the melancholy notes of taps float briefly above the East China Sea, as canvas-shrouded bodies—bluejackets and their officers—lead-weighted, sink into the peaceful depths of the ocean, or are buried in temporary graves on alien soil.

. . . "the silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken. We therefore, commend the soul of our brother departed unto Almighty God and we commit his body to the deep."

The agony of the wounded—horribly burned and terribly torn—is eased by doctors, corpsmen, nurses working overtime; the hospital ships, and planes move the casualties out of the zone of war. But not without hazard; the *Comfort*, fully lighted and plainly marked with the cross and green bands of a hospital ship, is crashed by a suicider 50 miles south of Okinawa; some of the wounded she is succoring and those who give them aid die in the shambles of her decks. Day after day, night after night the terrible medical routine continues—"patient with a mass of facial tissue hanging by a shred"; "patient with his head fairly cooked"—morphine sulphate, plasma, saline solution, whole blood, splints, open wounds, sprinkled with sulfanilamide powder, burns treated with petrolatum or boric acid ointment and sterile dressings, the smell of blood and vomit, ether, brandy,—morphine, morphine, morphine, blessed relief from pain. A medical report notes that "ship casualties occur quickly and heavily; human bodies and steel ships fall apart. Wounds are frequently destructive, mutilating and fearfully mortal." The ratio of Navy dead to Navy wounded is about one to one, far higher than the ratio of dead to wounded in the land fighting; for the first time in any combined operation, the Navy's dead outnumber the dead of the Marines or of the Army, almost equal both combined.

The AA gunners afloat and ashore are "trigger-happy" and jumpy; the drone of a plane is enough to start a stream of tracers arcing skyward. Some of our own planes are shot down; many of our own men wounded by splinters of mis-directed shells; Kelly Turner puts out a brusque, terse order:

"The . . . situation where ships were firing at nothing is scandalous. No ships will fire now except on personal orders of captains. Captains enforce this order."

To be concluded next month