

The following Photographer's Diary is part of the original Natoma Bay Logbook Project created in the 1970s and 1980s by John J. Sassano, historian and Bob Wall, editor. Robert Johnson's Photographer's Diary was transcribed in the 1980s by Glenn McWilliams. The current document attempts to recreate, in electronic form, that original LOGBOOK of the Natoma Bay Association.

The entire Natoma Bay Online Logbook Project can be found at:
<http://natomabaycve62.org/logbook/LBindex.html>

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July 2009
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DIARY OF EVENTS
USS NATOMA BAY (CVE 62)
AS RECORDED BY
ROBERT N. JOHNSON
CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER'S MATE
PART 3

1 January 1945: Left Kossol Passage at 0600 with 12 CVE, 4 BB, 1 CA, many DD, and APD (Commando transports). We are headed for Luzon for an amphibious operation. Our route will take us through the Sulu Sea again.

3 January: GQ at 0500. Entered Leyte Gulf. Our task force is enlarged to 12 CVE, 6 BB, 6 Cruisers, 3 Fleet Tankers, 33 Destroyers, plus DE and APD to make 75 ships. 1100 - In Mindanao Sea. Secured from GQ. 1900 - GQ. Air attack. Our AA scared the planes away. They must have just been looking.

4 January: GQ at 0345. Our AA display changed the minds of the Jap pilots. An Australian Cruiser got one. 0900 - Secured from GQ. 1715 - GQ. Under air attack. 1725 - OMMANEY BAY hit by suicide dive bomber making run out of the sun. After knocking the top of the island off, it hit the middle of her deck setting everything on fire. (Pix. p.20) 1735 - OMMANEY BAY abandoning ship with destroyers standing by. Ammunition is exploding all over the ship. 1800 - Her torpedoes exploded shaking everything within miles. 1930 - Secured from GQ. OMMANEY BAY is still burning. One of our destroyers is getting ready to sink her with a fish. 2000 - The destroyer put 2 torpedoes into the OMMANEY BAY sinking her with a very large explosion. About 800 men were picked up leaving about 100 dead. About 100 were burned and injured.

5 January: GQ at 0300 off Mindoro. Jap planes are dropping flares all around us, but our AA frightened them away. Secured at 0400.

0530 - GQ beginning a series of all day affairs. We are now entering the China Sea. Bogeys are all around us. Some are shot down by our planes.

1000 - 35 miles off Manila Bay. Bataan is visible.

1600 - Under heavy air attack. Our CAP shot down one plane very close to our formation. Three planes shot down by AA while making low level attack, one diving on a destroyer, but missing. The LOUISVILLE hit on bridge by suicide bomber. Admiral and Captain killed. She is burning. A number of planes (5) making low level attack from port side of formation. Everyone is throwing up much AA, but they are clever pilots and seem to get through. The MANILA BAY hit by two suicide bombers in middle of flight deck. All communications, radar, and lights out. Using emergency steering. They are controlling the fires. DD hit by suicide bomber; fire rooms and engine rooms flooded; she is abandoning ship. Suicide plane dove on SAVO ISLAND overshooting her, clipped her island and missed the ship. suicide attack on us, strafing while coming in; plane exploded 30 feet from fan tail; no one killed. AA shot down two more planes. We landed MANILA BAY's planes. They say she will be in operation in two days. (Pix. p.21)

1945 - Secured from GQ.

6 January: Off Lingayen Gulf. Heavy sea, ship rolling and pitching a lot.

0300 - GQ. Jap planes dropping flares around formation. Secured at 0330.

0500 - GQ. Dropping more flares. This GQ to continue all day.

0830 - Our fighters shot down five planes. One of our fighters (FM-2) collided with a Jap and went down. TBM gunners got a Zeke plus a probable. Our planes are softening up the beaches for landings with rockets, bombs and strafing.

1100 - One of our TBM was jumped by a Zeke. Our plane was shot up and the gunner killed. It made a water landing and the pilot and radioman got out OK.

1300 - We flew over Lingayen Gulf and mapped the area where the troops are to land. I also shot pictures of about 50 Jap transports, tankers, and landing craft

being sunk at San Fernando. We flew in a TBM and had two fighters for escort.

1400 - Fighters shot down 3 more planes. There is much activity on the ground. Many Jap trucks and tanks along the roads. Our planes are rocketing and strafing them. (Pix. p.21)

2000 - Secured from GQ.

NEW MEXICO, WEST VIRGINIA, CALIFORNIA, COLUMBIA, LOUISVILLE, AUSTRALIA, and 2 destroyers hit by suicide planes while in Lingayen Gulf shelling the shore. Eighty five planes were shot down by AA.

7 January: Off Lingayen Gulf. Heavy sea continues.

0500 - GQ, another all day affair.

0600 - Under air attack. Ships putting up much AA which is a beautiful display - like 4th of July - only this is for keeps. Enemy planes went into clouds and got away.

1300 - We flew over to map the beach again. We made one run then it got cloudy, so we went down and strafed trucks and tanks, setting a half dozen on fire.

1700- Fueled destroyer. Secured from GQ at 1930.

8 January: S-1 day.

0300 - Jap planes dropped flares around our formation. Some AA, but they got away.

0600 - Regular GQ for another all day session.

1300 - We flew over and mapped the beach again, then strafed trucks, tanks, a train, and 2 planes on the ground.

1700 - Fueled destroyer.

1800 - Convoy of transports, landing ships, etc., (about 400 ships) came in sight. They have 4 cruisers and 4 CVE with them. The KADASHAN BAY was hit by a suicide plane at the water line and was badly damaged. She is under tow. Secured from GQ at 1900.

9 January: S day on Luzon. KITKUN BAY hit by suicide bomber. All hands except salvage crew abandoned ship. She is under tow.

0600 - Another all day GQ.

0630 - All of our TBM and most of our fighters sent in to bomb, strafe, and rocket the beach.

1045 - Landings started at Lingayen and San Fabian. Both are successful. About 300,000 men will be ashore within a week.
1600 - Our fighter pilots shot down 4 more Japs.
1900 - Secured from GQ.

10 January: Still off Lingayen Gulf in the China Sea. Huge swells and 35 knots of wind, but still flight operations.

0600 - GQ for all day. STEAMER BAY joined us to replace the OMMANEY BAV.

1030 - Took 6 feet of green water over the flight deck.

1200 - Ship rolled 32 degrees to port and two fighters rolled over on their backs.

1210 - Hyster lift brought up to right the fighters turned over during a 39 degree roll.

1300 - Into the wind for flight operations. We are taking water over the flight deck continuously. The bow comes out of the water regularly. Much trouble. The KADASHAN BAY, hit previously on 1-8-45 hit again while being towed through Sulu Sea. Still afloat. Army P-47 shot down by FM-2 because the pilot didn't identify himself.

11 January: Off Lingayen. Heavy sea continues.

0600 - Routine GQ all day.

0800 - Battleships rejoined us after completing shelling of the beach.

0845 - Flew in and mapped area from 18,000 feet, also oblique shots of sunken sub. Army troops have moved in about 15 miles, meeting some opposition in the foothills. Secured from GQ at 1900.

12 January: Same place. Heavy sea, 35 knots of wind. (This China Sea sure is rough!)

0630 - GQ all day.

0730 - Tried to fuel. Hoses, lines, and everything broke as it was too rough. Tanker is under water most of the time.

1200 - Mapped area where the troops are running in to stiff resistance. Secured from GQ at 1930.

13 January: Heavy sea.

0630 - GQ. Jap fleet supposed to be around.

0700 - All previous flights cancelled. Nine TBM loaded with torpedoes, and the rest with AP bombs and rockets.
0845 - Flew over beach and did more mapping.
0900 - Carriers under attack.
0910 - SALAMAUA (CVE-96) hit in middle of flight deck. Plane went through the hangar deck and bomb continued down to the engine room. She is running on one engine. Destroyer also hit and burning.
1000 - Torpedoes unloaded. False alarm. Bombing support of ground troops continued. Last bombs used up. Secured from GQ at 1930.

14 January: Still in China Sea and still rough.

0600 - GQ for all day.

1100 - Started fueling. Also transferred OMMANEY BAY survivors to the tanker.

1430 - Completed fueling. Secured from GQ at 1930.

15-17 January: GQ, heavy sea and flying all day. Six carriers, 4 cruisers, and 20 destroyers (which includes us) are to remain here. Rest are leaving.

18 January: Uneventful. Same old thing. 50 Miles off Manila.

19 January: The SAVO ISLAND, us 2 cruisers, and 12 destroyers left the force to go to Mindoro to refuel and rearm. Crew worked all night taking on bombs, rockets, and ammunition. The Army Air Force is pretty well established here with P-38, P-61, P-47, A-20, and B-25. C-47's also doing a lot of flying.

20 January: Underway at 0500 to rejoin our force in the China Sea.

21 January: About 100 miles off Manila. Jap destroyer sneaked out of Manila last night. We sent up planes to search for it, but were unsuccessful.

22-24 January: Uneventful. Three Jap army officers spotted in small boat and were picked up by one of our cruisers. They had left Manila on January 2 on a small fishing trip and were blown out to sea. They were unaware of the landings on Luzon by our forces.

25-27 January: Same old China Sea.

28 January: Nothing unusual. Still 100 miles off Manila daring the Jap fleet to come out.

29 January: B Day. We are covering landings in Subic Bay today. The troops going ashore here are to join those coming down the valley from Lingayen Gulf. We have a heavy flight schedule with bombing, strafing, and rocketing all day.

30 January: One of our fighters spotted a Jap sub on the surface, but it crash dived before an attack could be made.

31 January: Still covering the army in Subic Bay area. 1700 - Relieved by the army at last and leaving the China Sea, by way of suicide alley (Sulu Sea) at full speed. Kind of getting tired of this place after 28 days. 2100 - Our destroyers dropping many depth charges on a sub 4 miles away. It was believed to be sunk as oil and debris covered the surface of the water. DE-442 with Lt. Cmdr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. skipper, given credit for sinking the sub although other DD helped.

1 February 1945: 0800 - In Sulu Sea off Panay and heading south fast.

2 February: 0800 - Passed through Surigao Straits into Leyte Gulf and out.

3 February: Fueled two of our destroyers.

5 February: Changed from 7th Fleet to the 5th Fleet and anchored in Ulithi, Caroline Islands at 0900. Most of the fleet is in here, CV, CVL, CA, CL, CAB, 16 CVE, and auxiliaries. Fueled and started taking on stores.

6 February: For the first time in about 5 months we have some fresh fruit and US meat; not that darn Australian "goat".

8 February: COMCARDIV 24, Admiral Stump transferred his flag to the MARCUS ISLAND. COMCARDIV 26, Admiral Sprague came aboard. Seems like we will always be a flagship.

10 February: Left Ulithi for Saipan with 5 other CVE. The whole fleet has pulled out.

The following dispatch was received from Admiral Stump.---
"I REGRET TO LEAVE THE NATOMA BAY WITH THE FINE FIGHTING SPIRIT AND COMBAT EFFICIENCY YOU HAVE SHOWN IN A LONG CAMPAIGN X THE AIR AND SHIP PERSONNEL HAVE DONE AN OUTSTANDING JOB OF ENEMY DESTRUCTION X ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS YOUR PLANES HAVE SHOT DOWN ENEMIES ATTEMPTING TO ATTACK X ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION THE AA GUNNERY SAVED THE SHIP FROM DAMAGE BY THEIR COOL CONDUCT AND ACCURATE FIRE X YOU HAVE A GREAT TEAM X WELL DONE X ADM STUMP"

12 FEBRUARY: Off Saipan. All carriers and cans fueled at sea. B-29's taking off regularly to bomb Tokyo and other parts of Japan.

13 February: Anchored at Saipan for about 6 hours and took on more bombs.

14 February: Headed for Iwo Jima (600 miles south of Tokyo) where the marines are going to land on 19 Feb. Iwo Jima, 2 1/2 by 4 1/2 miles wide, is one of the most fortified spots in the world, with all kinds of coastal guns, pillboxes, AA, etc. B-29's from Saipan and Guam have been bombing it regularly. The battleships and we are going in on V -3 (2-16-45) to shell, bomb, rocket, and strafe the island. The SARATOGA and the ALASKA (newest battle cruiser) will be along with us and 8 other CVE. Our big carriers and fleet are going to strike Japan proper and try to draw out what's left of the Jap fleet.

16 February: D-3 day. About 50 miles off Iwo Jima with bad weather. Very cold. Softening up of Iwo Jima started today with heavy flight schedule. We lost one fighter today as did one of the other carriers. Our planes sank a Jap tanker trying to get away. One of our cruisers was hit by shore batteries, but was not badly damaged.

17 February: D-2 day. Destroyer BAGLEY made contact with submarine at 0645 and dropped depth charges. 0700 - Three fish fired at us, two passing ahead and the third just missing our stern. Heavy flying all day. Fighters carrying rockets and napalms (fire bombs) hit the beach. Japs putting up terrific AA, shooting down one of our TBM and badly damaging 3 others. Destroyers picked up pilot and crew in water. None were lost. Eight fighters made rocket strike on Chichi Jima, 120 miles north. Two were hit by AA but all returned. One of our mine sweepers was sunk while clearing landing area.

18 February: D-1 day. Softening up continuing with maximum flying by all carriers. I flew on bombing, rocketing, and photo mission. Our targets were gun positions at the base of the volcano. Much AA behind us, in fact two of our fighter's were shot down following us in our dives. B-24's are bombing the island every hour during the night to see that the Jap don't get any sleep. Jap transport and sub sunk off the island.

19 February: D day on Iwo Jima. Marines successfully landed at 0900 and quickly gained a beachhead. Beaches were hit by 60 planes with napalm, and 48 fighters continually strafing. Support bombing is going on all day with heavy fighting starting immediately. (Pix, p.22)

20 February: D+1. Troops are in to the first airfield, having secured the southern quarter of the island - except for the volcano. The fighting is very heavy, the Japs using a lot of artillery and mortar fire.

21 February: D+2. Much flying with bombing, rocketing, and strafing all day in support of the Marines. Heavy ground fighting with many casualties.

1100 - GQ. SARATOGA hit by three suicide planes. Her parked planes were set afire. She sustained heavy damage and is headed back to Pearl Harbor. The ENTERPRISE is taking her place with night fighters. The BISMARCK SEA (CVE-95) was hit, capsized, and sank

with high casualties. LUNGA POINT was hit and lightly damaged.

22 February: Heavy fighting on Iwo continues. Tanker came out and fueled us. Other CVE force under attack at 1500.

23 February: We are still supporting marines on Iwo who are having a hard fight. Large group of bogies picked up coming from the north (Japan). GQ at 1700. Apparently they are headed for Iwo as one group of 24 passed within 7 miles, and another group of 18 within 4 miles circled and left. The marines on the island could be seen putting up much AA. "Betties" with radar snooping around all night with us as well as the Japs jamming each other's radar.

24 February: Much artillery fire seen on the island before dawn. Heavy support flying.

25 February: About 100 miles south of Iwo, and supposed to fuel. Spent all day looking for the tanker, no luck.

26 February: Fueled and headed back to Iwo.

27-28 February: Heavy bombing schedule.

1 March: Held Change of Command ceremony. Capt. Morehouse was relieved by Capt. Nichol. Fueled destroyer. Still bombing. (Pictures, p. 23)

2 March: Tanker fueled us. Bombing continues.

3 March: Six Jap transports and oilers sneaked into Chichi Jima (120 miles north). We sent 8 fighters with rockets to sink them. One of our planes was shot down and two damaged by AA. One of our fighters shot down a Frances (Jap 2 engine bomber).

2045 - GQ. Jap planes flew right over our formation, but apparently didn't see us. We could hear their engines.

4-8 March: Bombing and rocketing of Iwo continues. Fueled DD's and DE's. We are finally relieved at 1900 and are headed back to Ulithi.

9-11 March: On our way south. The climate is getting warmer. Off Guam. Some new planes, were flown aboard. AA practice in the afternoon.

12 March: Anchored in Ulithi. A number of large carriers and new battleships are here. 1930 - Two Jap suicide planes got by the radar, flew over us at 100 feet and into the brand new carrier RANDOLPH anchored 500 yards from us. Her fires lit up the whole sky but were put out in about 2 hours, after doing extensive damage. The other plane hit the beach, killing a few men but doing little damage.

13 March: Taking on stores and ammo. Our squadron (VC-81) was relieved by VC-9. They headed back for the states after the pilots received 6 Navy Crosses and a number of Distinguished Flying Crosses for their work in the Leyte battle.

20 March: Four British carriers with American planes and a number of their BB and CA entered Ulithi. It is reported that they are to take part in the next operation.

21 March: Pulled out of Ulithi with a number of CVE and escorts. We are headed for the Ryukyu Islands where our troops are to land on Okinawa Jima. This is only about 300 miles from Japan and is expected to be quite an operation. We have 17 battleships and cruisers, plus many destroyers with us to do the shelling. Ten divisions (3 marine, 7 army) are to land. This is about 100,000 men. Okinawa has about 60,000 Jap soldiers and 450,000 civilians. In the city of Naha there are 4,000 girls employed in prostitution, Geisha, and waitresses. Venereal disease, leprosy, and malaria are very prevalent. Most of the natives (Chinese mixture) have been drafted into labor units.

22-24 March: Local patrols. We are now about 300 miles from Okinawa. A Jap Betty was shot down 30 miles

away. A Frances was sighted 26 miles away but our fighters were unable to catch it. A 6F6 night fighter flew into our island and knocked the top of the island off while making a night landing. The pilot was not found.

25 March: L-7 day. Our planes are bombing, rocketing, and strafing Okinawa and surrounding islands all day. Two planes are to drop propaganda and 6 planes are to lay smoke screens. Marines are to land on Kerama group of islands which are about 10 miles off shore and are to establish a supply base. Some of our planes are returning badly shot up by AA.

1900 - Carrier force next to us is under attack by 4 Jap Frances. They got away and there was no damage to either side.

26 March: L-6 day. Planes from our force shot down 2 Tonys, 2 Vals, and 1 Nell just after dawn over the island. Two of our cruisers and one battleship were hit by suicide bombers while shelling, but sustained little damage. Our bombing continues. We have two groups of CVE consisting of 7 carriers and 14 destroyers each.

27 March: GQ at 0300. Jap snoopers out again. We are still laying smoke screens, bombing, rocketing, and strafing Okinawa and the surrounding islands. One of our IBM was shot down and 3 others damaged by Jap planes and AA. One destroyer was hit and a cruiser took a near miss from suicide planes. A number of Vals were shot down over bombarding ships.

28 March: Heavy flight schedule with much support flying. Our troops have taken 4 small islands and we are to take 5 more before L day. Many of our planes are returning with AA damage, one fighter with a two foot hole in the belly.

29 March: L-3 day. Fueled today. Continued heavy flight schedule. Fighters shot down 2 Betties 30 miles from our formation. We have had 16 GQs in the last 3 days, 8 during the night. (Pix, p.24)

30 March: Lots of flying. Our troops which landed on the small islands captured 200 small (20' long by 8' wide) suicide boats and it, is believed there are 700 more. One of our battleships was damaged by one. We ran into a storm at 1000 with high winds and heavy sea, but flying continued.

31 March: L-1 day. Today finishes up the last of our bombs and we are to rearm tomorrow at one of the small islands just taken. MILWAUKEE was hit by suicide plane and TEXAS by suicide boat - light damage.

1 April 1945: D day. We are going into the Kerama Islands to rearm. We sighted land at 0800. We anchored and started rearming at 0930. These islands look very much like the Southern California coast (Palos Verdes) and the temperature is similar. There are farms where they grow rice, sugar cane, and tea. Pretty country. Our troops started landing on Okinawa at 0830 and moved in with surprisingly little opposition. By evening they moved in three miles and captured two airfields. We finished loading bombs and rockets at sunset and got underway to join our group. While leaving we came under air attack. The WEST VIRGINIA was hit and another plane missed and crashed into the water. Much AA was put up and it was beautiful - the tracer's lighting up the whole sky.

2 April: D+1. Continuous support flying. Our troops have crossed the island in the middle, cutting Okinawa in two. One of our ships, the LUNGA POINT, shot down 2 Zeke during an air attack. Two of our screen destroyers were hit. An enemy sub fired two fish at us during the night. We made an emergency turn and they were seen to pass along the side. Our two marine observation planes flew off to operate from Okinawa.

3 April: D+3. Our troops on Okinawa are far ahead of schedule with light losses so far. Six of our ships were hit in Kerama by Kamikaze planes. A DE and APA were sunk. One of our DE hit by suicide plane. The DE exploded with few survivors. A Jap plane landed on one of our captured airfields. The pilot got out and

started to walk away, until the marines shot him. He was unaware that we had taken the field. Twelve Jap women dressed as soldiers tried to make an attack, were unsuccessful and committed suicide.

4 April: Still flying support missions. Our planes dropping parachute supplies to marines fighting in the mountains. WAKE ISLAND had a near miss from suicide plane - minor damage.

6 April: Okinawa and ships around it under air attack by about 100 suicide planes which came down from Japan. About 75% were shot down by CAP and AA before they could do any damage. Ten ships were hit, three destroyers sunk. One of our DD shot down a Jap plane making an attack at dusk.

7 April: The tanker CIMARRON fueled us today. Destroyer blew up a mine 300 yards from us causing a terrific explosion. Russia broke the peace treaty with Japan which is good news to us. Big carriers about 300 miles north of us sank 1 Jap battleship, 1 cruiser, and 3 or 4 destroyers. Scout planes are still looking for the rest of the Jap fleet.

8 April: More support missions. Submarine attack at 1530. Torpedo passed 40 yards astern.

9 April: Still bombing rocketing, and strafing. Two of our fighters collided and exploded on pre dawn take off. Both pilots lost.

10 April: Troops moving ahead on Okinawa. Thirty thousand civilians and 220 Jap soldiers taken prisoner. Still lots of flying.

11 April: Suicide boats and swimmers doing some damage. Our CAP and one of our destroyers each shot down a Betty.

12 April: Supposed to go into Kerama to rearm but it was cancelled because of many enemy planes in the vicinity. Still bombing Okinawa, mostly the southern end around Naha.

14 April: GQ at 0330. This was the first of 7 GQ's throughout the day. We went into Kerama to take on bombs, rockets, and ammunition. The last attack on us was at sunset when we were leaving. One plane made torpedo run, and missed. The AA seemed to scare him away. Everybody is laying smoke screen, but not before two ships in the harbor were hit.

15 April: Much bombing. A few suicide attacks made on ships around Okinawa.

17 April: Left the formation and headed for Guam for repairs to our main engines.

20 April: Entered Apra Harbor, Guam at 1600. DD-502 was in from Okinawa with her stern blown off. WAKE ISLAND is in dry dock being repaired from damages received by a suicide plane off Okinawa.

21 April: Repairs to engines began. Started taking on stores. Liberty for 150 men at Gab Gab Beach, Orote Rec. Cen. (2 beers).

22 April: I went to Agana Field on the other side of the Island to visit friends in VD-S and VJ-17. Passed through the town of Agana which was completely destroyed in the invasion of Guam. The CBs have built beautiful highways here.

25 April: Battleship IDAHO came in after taking a fish at Okinawa.

27 April: I visited the B29 base at North Field on Guam. About 300 B29's that bomb Tokyo and the rest of Japan are based here. I got a hop in one and flew around Guam, Saipan, Pagan, and Rota, the later two still held by the Japs.

2 May: CARDIV 25 - Admiral Henderson expected to move aboard tomorrow.

3 May: Still anchored in Apra Harbor. Repairs to engines nearly completed. COMCARDIV 25, with Admiral Henderson came aboard from the SAGINAW BAY which is going back to the states for repairs.

4 May: Underway at 0900 for Okinawa to continue support of troops who are engaged in heavy fighting around the capitol city of Naha. Gunnery practice on the way out which looked very good.

8 May: Joined our other 6 carriers 40 miles off Okinawa. Ran into a heavy storm with winds up to 70 knots. Germany surrendered to the U.S., G.B., and Russia today.

9-10 May: Support flying.

11 May: American fighters shot down 85 Jap planes and AA accounted for 33 more over Okinawa. We lost 5 planes (pilots recovered) and two destroyers.

12 May: More support flying. Heavy Jap raids on Okinawa continued.

13 May: Marines start big offensive on Southern Okinawa and we are doing much bombing to support them. Carriers dropped 144,000 pounds of bombs and about 525 rockets daily.

14-16 May: More bombing.

17 May: Three tankers came out and fueled our carrier force.

18 May: Still bombing southern Okinawa. Front lines are at Naha.

19 May: Went into Kerama Retto to take on bombs and rockets. Uneventful trip this time.

20-22 May: Bad weather with lots of rain, but bombing continues.

23 May: Two GQs during the day. A Dinah (two engine Jap bomber) came within 7 miles but escaped our fighters in the clouds. Celebrated the 6,000th landing on the NB.

24 May: I flew into Katena (Kadena) Field, Okinawa on an observation and photo hop. Our airfields

seem well developed with lots of planes, but are bombed regularly by the Japs.

25 May: A Jap plane landed on Yontan airfield. A suicide party got out and destroyed a number of our planes before they were stopped.

26 May: Fueled. The Flag (CARDIV-25), Admiral Henderson and Staff, transferred to the TULAGI to go back to the states. Looks like we are stuck out here!

27 May: Bombing again but weather is still bad. Our front lines are still across the island from Naha. Not too much progress for the last month. We are doing a lot of bombing, the battleships much shelling, and our artillery is very active, but the Japs take it in their fortified caves and pillboxes. It seems like they ought to run out of food, ammunition, and men pretty soon.

28~29 May: Weather very bad with rain most of the time, but flying continues.

30 May: Went into Kerama Retto to rearm, and to take on food and supplies.

31 May: Rejoined carrier force. Support flying continued. Switched from the 5th Fleet to the 3rd. (From Admiral Spruance to Admiral Halsey)

1 June: COMESCARPAC Admiral Durgin came aboard from the MAKIN ISLAND which is going back for repairs. We are now flagship for all CVE in the Pacific.

2-3 June: Bombing.

4 June: Three oilers came out today and fueled our 7 carriers and our destroyers.

5 June: We were supposed to make a heavy strike on Sakishima today, but we ran into a terrific typhoon last night and today. The winds were 60 knots and the waves were running 40 feet high. The sea carried away our whale boats, paravanes, radio

antennas, etc. One of our destroyers reported a roll of 65 degrees. One destroyer escort was lost in the storm. (Pix, p.22)

6 June: Sea calm again. On our way back to Sakishima. We ended up about 400 miles from our target in the storm.

7 June: Fifty miles off Sakishima and 150 miles north of Formosa, and striking Sakishima.

0700 - Under attack by 3 suicide planes, one shot down by CAP, one missed us, and one went through our flight deck and in to the foc'sle (forecastle) where his bomb exploded. It made a 25' X 10' hole in our flight deck, demolished our anchor winch, and wrecked the foc'sle in general. The plane strafed with 20mm phosphorus shells, setting fire to one fighter plane on deck and tearing up the flight deck. Fires were brought under control quickly and temporary repairs were completed on the flight deck by 1600. Our flight schedule was uninterrupted with heavy flying continuing all day. One officer was killed, one seriously injured, and a number of men suffered minor wounds from the "Kamikaze", (See pictures and account in Volume I of logbook, Okinawa section pages 9-26.)

8 June: Back to bombing Okinawa. Burial services held for the officer that was killed yesterday. This is our first so far, and let's hope it is our last.

9 June: Heavy bombing scheduled for Okinawa.

10 June: We cannot anchor, and this prevents us from going into Kerama Retto to rearm. Our destroyers are going in and are bringing us bombs and rockets and transferring them to us at sea by breeches buoy. A plane caught fire on the hangar deck causing quite a bit of excitement, but the fire was extinguished with little damage.

12 June: COMCARDIV-27, Rear Admiral Ketcham came aboard to observe carrier operations prior to taking over his own carrier division. This is our 5th admiral. COMESCARPAC is still aboard.

13 June: Three oilers came out and fueled our carrier division.

14 June: Flying CAP for mine sweepers which are clearing a path to the China coast between Okinawa and Sakishima.

15 June: Back to bombing Okinawa. Still operating with a 7 carrier formation with 10 destroyers.

16 June: Bombing the southern tip of Okinawa where the remaining Japs are.

17 June: Back down to Sakishima with a very heavy bombing schedule.

18 June: Okinawa again, Lowell Thomas, NBC commentator flew aboard to visit Admiral Durgin and Captain Nichol.

19 June: GQ at 0700. Two Jap planes came within 10 miles, but when pursued by our CAP they ran away. They were doing well over 260 knots and had a good lead. Our planes were not able to catch them.

20 June: Our part (the CVEs) in the Okinawa operation was officially completed today and at 1900 we departed for Guam. Some of the ships went to Leyte.

21-23 June: Smooth sailing and gunnery practice.

24 June: Entered Apra Harbor, Guam at 0900 and tied up to a buoy. (Pix, p.24)

25 June: Repair work begun on ship. Took on stores. Liberty for 100 men in the afternoon at Gab Gab Beach consisting of a couple of beers and some baseball or basketball.

DISPATCH

29 JUNE, GUAM:- ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTER LIEF ERICKSON:- REAR ADMIRAL CALVIN DURGIN SAID TODAY THAT ESCORT CARRIERS PLANES FLEW 35,000 SORTIES IN SUPPORT OF OKINAWA CONQUEST - MORE THAN WERE FLOWN IN THE ENTIRE WAR BY THIS TYPE OF AIRCRAFT, UP TILL THAT

CAMPAIGN. DURGIN, COMMANDER OF ESCORT CARRIER FORCES SAID "IT WAS THE KIND OF JOB WE DIDN'T KNOW WE COULD DO". THE ADMIRAL ADMITTED THE DURABILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF PILOTS, SHIPS COMPANIES, AND SHIPS WAS FAR BEYOND WHAT THEY EXPECTED HIS FORCES WOULD BE CALLED UPON TO DELIVER WHEN THEY SET OUT FOR OKINAWA. FIFTY TWO YEAR OLD DURGIN HIMSELF STAYED AT SEA 95 DAYS WITH OCCASIONAL FLIGHTS ASHORE FOR CONFERENCES WITH ADMIRAL RICHMOND KELLEY TURNER, COMMANDER OF AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS IN THE PACIFIC.

ESCORT CARRIER FLIERS ALONE SHOT DOWN 279 JAPANESE PLANES; 63 OF THE CARRIERS PLANES WERE LOST IN COMBAT, ALL TO ANTI AIRCRAFT FIRE AND NONE WERE TO THE ACTION OF JAPANESE PLANES.

7 July: Entered dry dock at 0800. All hands over the side scraping and painting the bottom.

10 July: Left dry dock and shifted to a pier. Repair to the hole in our flight deck started.

20 July: Repair work on the flight deck and foc'sle completed. The ship was given an all dark gray paint job.

21 July: Pulled out of Apra Harbor for Pearl Harbor - and maybe the states - with 6 army P61s, 125 airplane engines, and 200 passengers. We have one old destroyer for an escort. Smooth sailing.

24 July: We passed about 15 miles from Eniwetok about 1200. Our "four stacker" left us and we are now on our own. Making 17 knots.

28 July: Captain's Inspection and awarding of commendation and purple heart medals.

30 July: Entered Pearl Harbor and tied up at Ford Island. Unloading began immediately.

1 August: Underway for Roi in the Marshall Islands with 50 passengers and 20 planes.

8 August: Arrived Roi at 0800. Another typical Pacific atoll. Men worked all day and night unloading.

9 August: Underway for San Diego non stop with no cargo or anything. Scheduled to arrive at 1600, 20 August 1945.

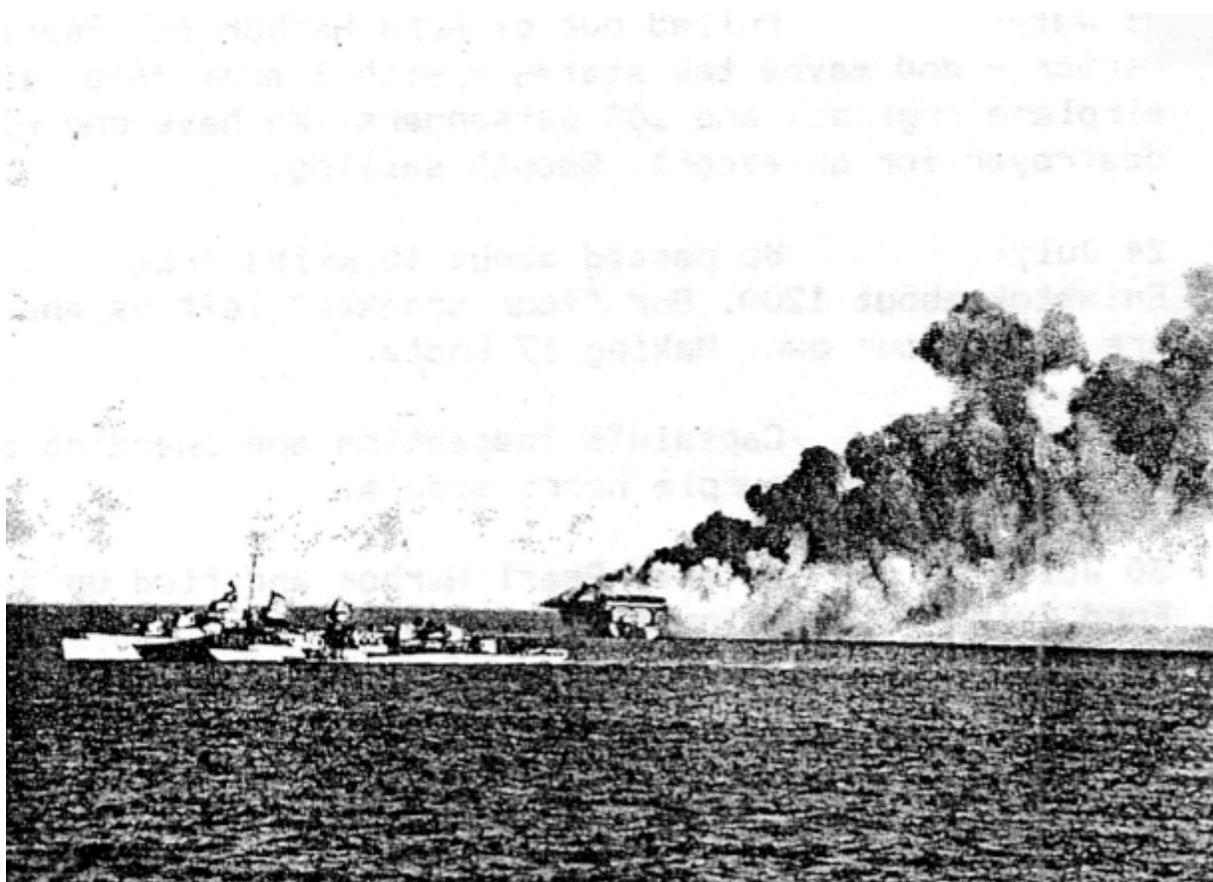
12 August: Japan is offering to surrender if she can keep her Emperor. We certainly hope this means peace.

13 August: Today we pass between Oahu and Molokai within 30 miles of Pearl Harbor. We certainly hope we don't stop. We didn't.

14 August: Still headed for San Diego now to arrive on 19 August. Japan surrendered to the U.S., G.B., China, and the U.S.S.R. ending the Pacific war at last.

15 August: Holiday routine today. All gun watches secured and running lights turned on. One of our boilers blew out and we are steaming on the remaining three.

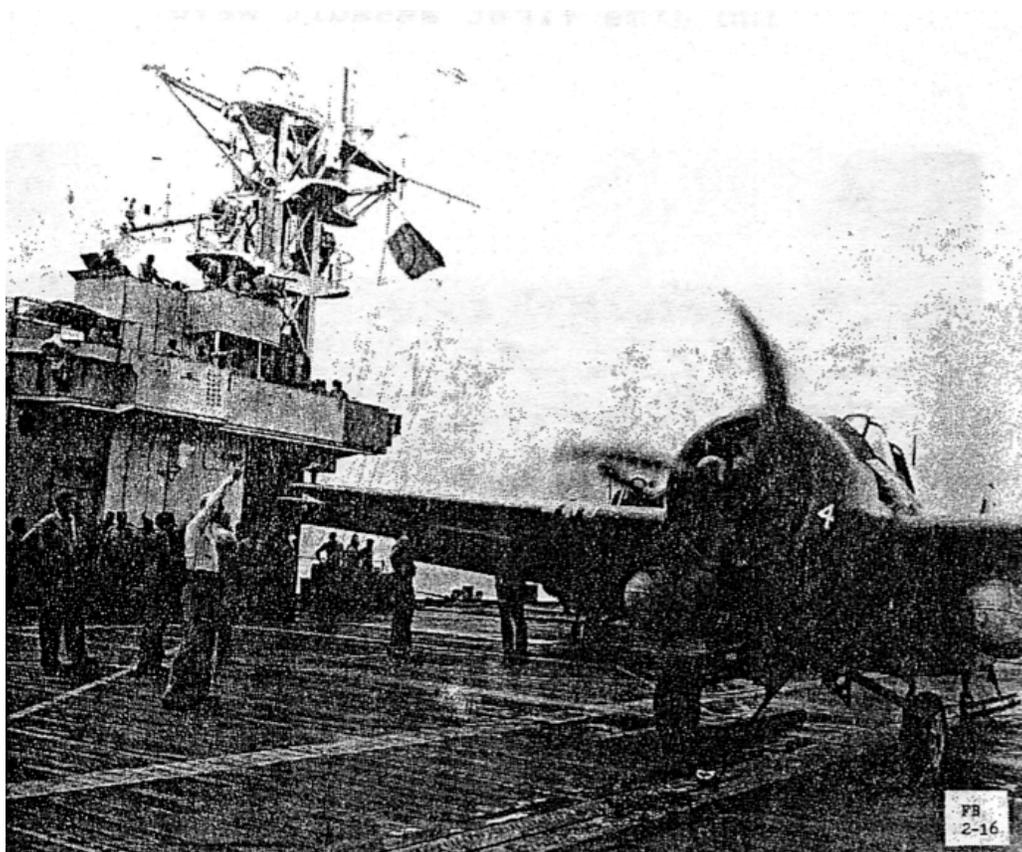
End of diary text.



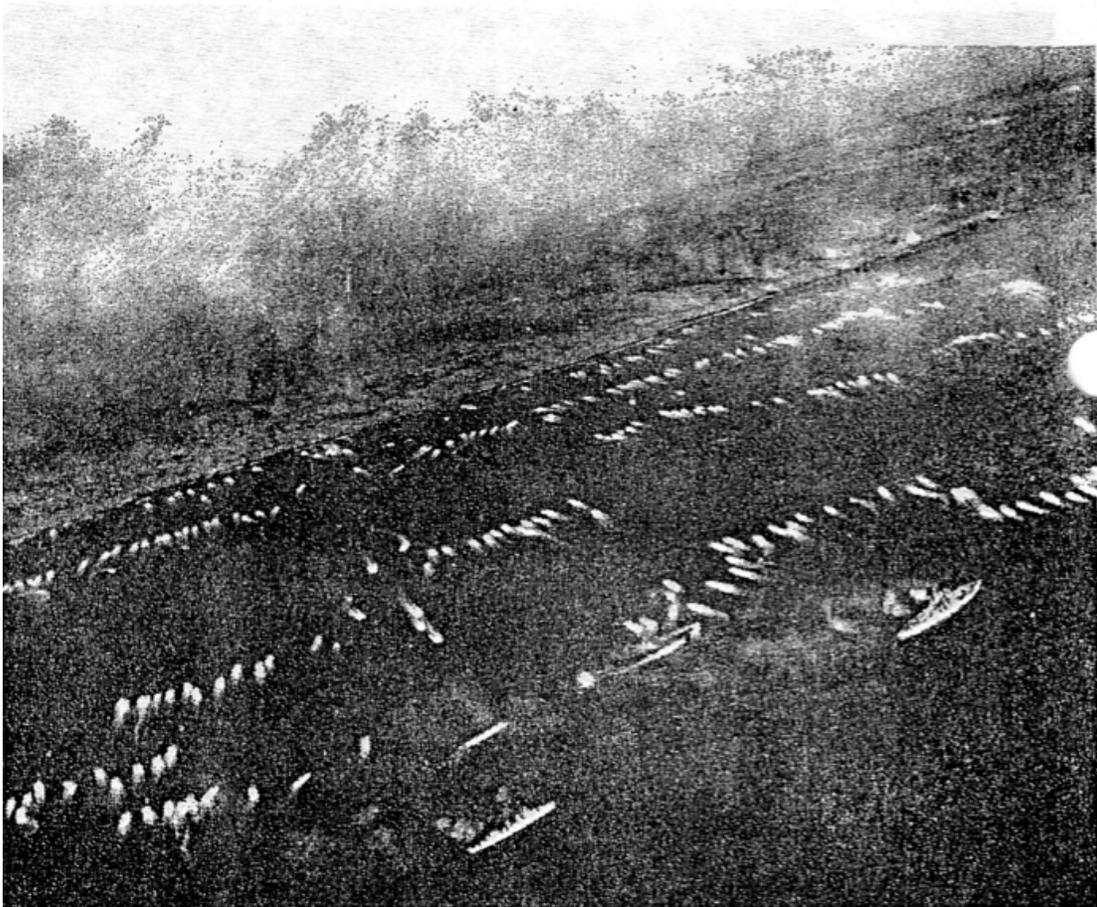
OMMANEY BAY burning; Mortally damaged.



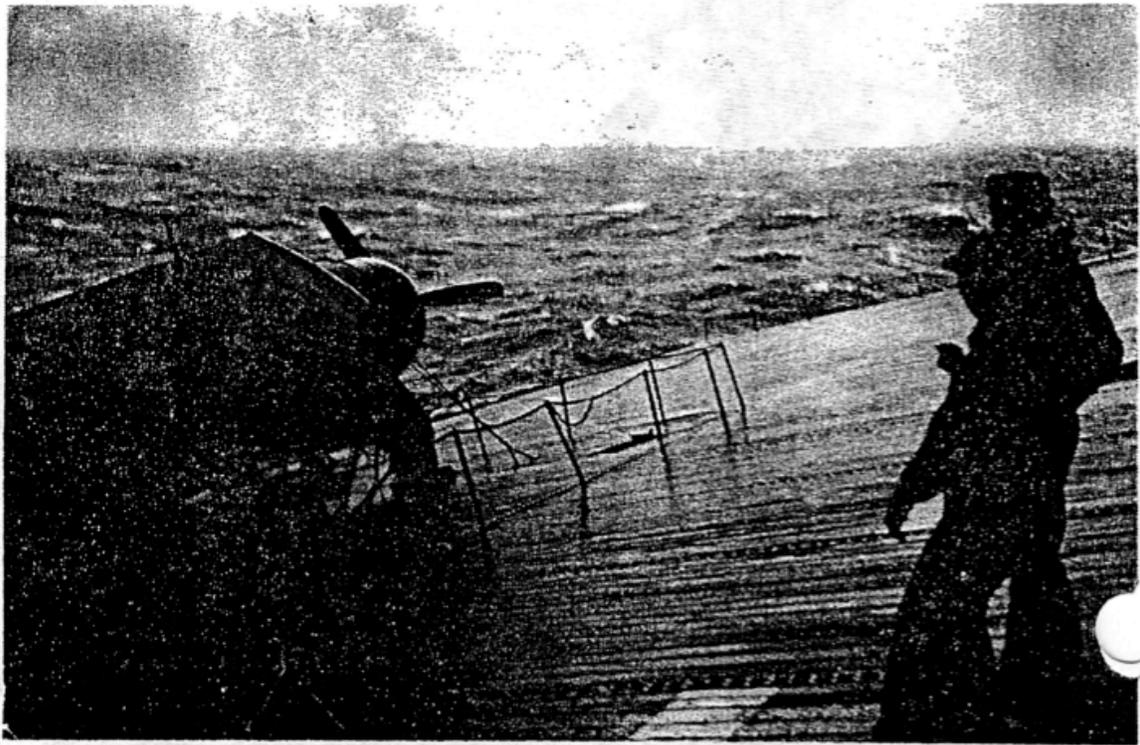
MANILA BAY hit by kamikazes.



Fighter on catapult ready for take off.



Iwo Jima first assault wave.



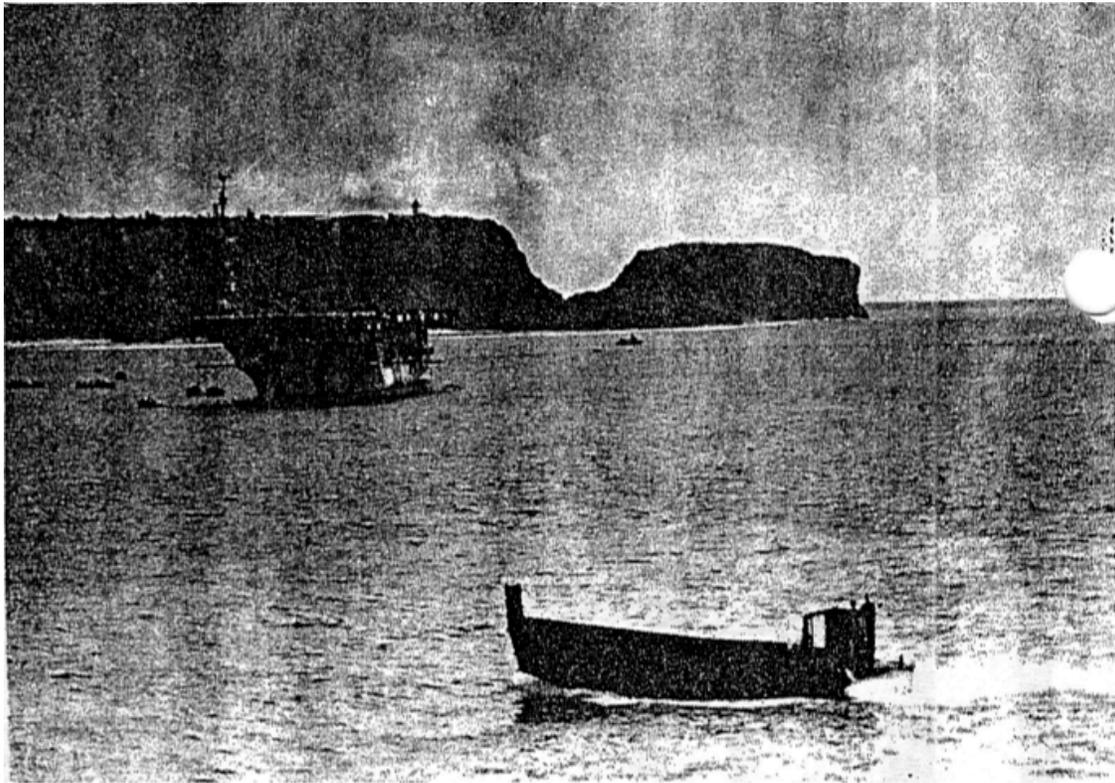
NATOMA BAY rolls during typhoon.



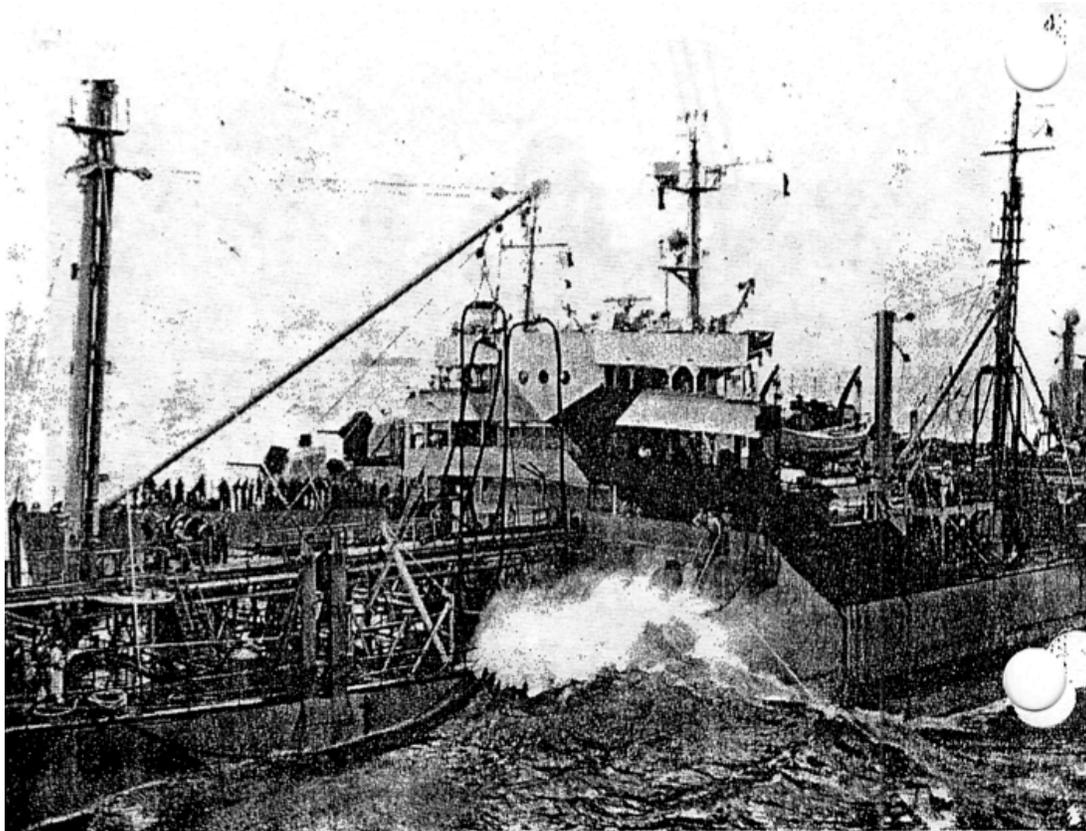
Capt. Morehouse being relieved by Capt. Nichol



Three captains of NATOMA BAY.



NATOMA BAY at anchor, Apra Guam.



Refueling during heavy sea.