

They Were Expendable

By W. L. White

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Instead of great American PT boats alone sink Jap cruisers and destroyers. Terrible barrage from escorting destroyers, glaring searchlights sweep sea in dead night off Cebu. Kelly's gunner wounded and radio mast—shot away. All guns out of action.

CHAPTER 15

"Why couldn't we have a great part in this great offensive which tomorrow will blast Jap shipping and warships between Mindanao, Cebu, and Bataan?" Lieutenant Kelly thought. "We could be helpful by going out tonight and knocking off one or two of those Jap destroyers which by midnight should be approaching the narrow channel between Cebu and Negros Islands. The cruiser—never mind her. American bombers would polish her off the morning after."

"Bulkeley came in at 8 o'clock that night and told me about it," said Kelly. "My boat had been in the water just four hours—she was supposed to soak for 24 before she should be exposed in any pounding but I asked him if we couldn't go out with him. I was hoping you'd like to," the skipper told me. "Think you can make it?" "I don't know," I said, "but we'll soon find out. This'll be as good a dock trial for her as any."

"To man the boats I called for volunteers," said Bulkeley. "I had no trouble about that. I guess they understood by now that any man who doesn't

volunteer won't be in the squadron long if I can get rid of him."

"They were all tickled to be in the big offensive," said Kelly. "It was apparently so well prepared that the Army had given us the radio frequency of the coordinating platform. The big American air umbrella which would be spread over us at dawn—in case we needed to make a dash for it—was to be in the island passage about 11:30 o'clock that night and sneaked in close to shore," said Bulkeley. "The moon wasn't due until 2:30 o'clock. I was riding in the 41 boat. Ensign Cox, commanding officer Kelly had his 34 boat. We'd worked out our strategy. If two destroyers showed up, my boat was to locate the leader one and Kelly the second. If only one arrived, my boat would attack her on the quarter, and Kelly on the bow."

"At five minutes to twelve O'clock, the quartermaster at the wheel, called 'Look—there she is!' A black object was coming around the point. Jumping starts," said Glover. "There she is"—because it was no little Jap destroyer, but a hulking big Kuma class cruiser sliding around that point—so clear we could almost make out her searchlights. "She was loading along at about ten knots."

"I gave our boat a hard right rudder, and started running toward her, where the cruiser couldn't see us. Apparently she was also. Now that we were out, into firing position, on her port beam, making

ing a little noise as we could, and as she passed, 500 yards away, Cox fired two torpedoes, but they straddled her."

"We fired two from our side," said Kelly, "but they also missed." "After that," said Ensign Cox, "we in the 41 boat made a wide arc and attacked again with our last two torpedoes—Bulkeley himself firing them and me firing the two of them hit, right under the bridge. They made no flash, but a good hum and a column of water. But even before that the cruiser had waked up—probably from the noise of our live torpedoes—anyway she speeded up to 20 knots and her searchlight came on and she waved it wildly around in the air, probably looking for torpedo planes."

"Our torpedoes were all gone in the 41 boat," said Bulkeley. "But I turned around and ran astern of the cruiser to draw her fire so Kelly could get in for his second attack. Then we saw the destroyers— but they were already gone, although I tried to create the illusion of a lot of boats by firing machine-gun tracers." "When the cruiser's searchlight came on," said Kelly, "I turned right to astern her wake and came in on her own quarter. She picked me up astern with her lights and began banging away at me with her secondary batteries—50-caliber and 40-millimeter guns—from about twelve hundred yards. The stuff was going right over our heads in a continuous stream of fire."

"But I was good and mad because our first torpedoes had missed," said Kelly, "so I decided to clear her. I told our machine-gunner to fire at her searchlight, which was blinding me, and the others to sweep her decks to get her gun crews."

"After a few minutes' chase, we had closed in to three hundred yards, so close that her searchlight seemed to be coming right down on us from an angle—about like the sun in mid-afternoon. Then I drew out onto her starboard quarter and fired our last two torpedoes—an overkill shot. They were the last two our squadron was to fire in the war."

"Then I gave the boat a hard right rudder and started running away—for we were defenseless now except for our machine guns. But the rain of Jap tracers kept right on, and suddenly another Jap ship showed up, fifteen hundred yards away. Both started firing their main batteries at me and we were trapped between—splashes all around us by machine-gun tracers."

By J. R. WILLIAMS

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C	L	N	A	E	S	W	N	A	R	D	3
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T	I	D	E	N	6	5	7	1	8	3	6
3	8	2	7	5	3	8	4	7	6	2	3
E	A	T	L	O	E	F	L	I	D	E	8
6	4	3	7	8	6	7	5	2	8	3	6
E	A	T	L	O	E	F	L	I	D	E	8
6	3	N	O	2	Y	S	O	E	C	R	O
1	2	6	7	8	3	5	2	6	7	3	6
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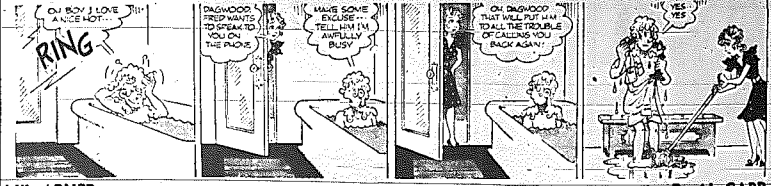
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