They Were Expendable

By W. L. White

By W. L. WHITE
Sundowns Brings Resumption of Long Journey With One Boat Left Behind. Mrs. MacArthur at General's side Through Tense Hours as Rolling Sea. Admiral Finds MTB's Worst Bridge in the Navy to Ride Generals All Out for the Trip.

CHAPTER 15

"General MacArthur, Admiral Rockwell, and Lieutenant Bulkeley talked about the night's plans—the advisability of continuing with us tonight or going by submarine," went on Lieutenant Kelly. The Admiral was for staying with us, but the General was undecided. The afternoon trip had been rough, and Bulkeley had warned the night would be rougher. Yet as we lay there in the cove, the sea seemed calm enough, and the sky gave no hint of bad weather. So on the assurance of the Admiral that it would be good weather, the General decided they'd continue with us.

"Then as Bulkeley had said, there was no problem of what to do with the 32 boat, which had dumped much of her gasoline. She did not have enough left to make the fast run with us to the island of Mindanao, where the General's party would get the plane for Australia. So Bulkeley gave her different orders. Her Generals were to be transferred to my boat. She was to wait here in the rendezvous until tomorrow when the submarine arrived. She was to tell the submarine that everything had gone well, the General had gone on to Mindanao and would go to Australia by plane, as planned. Having delivered this message, the 32 boat was to go to Iloilo on the island Panay, only one hundred and twenty miles away. There she could get repairs and enough gas to bring her on down to Cagayan to join the rest of us in the other three boats, and we would finish the war together in the southern islands.

"What went wrong with this plan, we don't know to this day. The boat's commander, Lieutenant Schumacher, must have decided that it wasn't in condition to follow these orders. Anyway, when the submarine arrived, he had it shell the 32 boat, so it would not fall into Japanese hands, and boarded the submarine, which dropped his crew off at Corregedor, and took him safely to Australia.

"We found out much later that he had gotten to Australia. For some time their disappearance was a mystery and Bulkeley here spent several days flying out over all these islands trying to find some trace of the 32 boat. Some day, of course, there will be a full report on exactly what did happen which will explain everything.

"All we know is that we last saw them back there in the cove as we left the harbor—a hard right turn and then out to sea, at about 6:30. We were heading, so that the flagship just behind us, could search out the smoothest part of our wake, so that MacArthur's party could ride comfortably. We had been going about fifteen minutes when the port lookout called 'Sail ho!' and there she was—three points on our port bow, distance about five miles. 'Looks like an enemy cruiser,' said the lookout. I grabbed my binoculars, and so it was! Hull down, but masts and superstructure plain. On the course we were steering we would cross her bow. I gave the 34 full right rudder and full speed ahead—it was much faster than eighteen knots, because the carbon had burned out of our motors. I knew that type of Jap cruiser could make 35 knots with all steam up. But unless they were expecting something, they could only make twenty-seven! So we had a good chance of keeping away from them—it might be dark before they could close in on us.

"Meanwhile I was hoping they hadn't seen us and praying that the sun would hurry up and set, but it just pooped along—seemed to hang there above the horizon for weeks, and finally bobbed under at seven o'clock.

"If you've never been in the tropics you don't realize how fast it gets dark—almost no twilight at all."

"I think it was the whitecaps that saved us," said Bulkeley. "The Japs didn't notice our wake, even though we were foaming away at full throttle.

"During the excitement, the General was lying down in the cabin with his eyes closed, but Mrs. MacArthur, who was with him, heard everything that went on and she didn't miss a hair. She took it like a lady—went right on rubbing the General's hands to keep up his circulation, though she was seasick herself.

"I never went below, and all my men stayed at battle stations, so the people in the cabin took care of themselves—there was no one to wait on them. The General saw that I was supplied with cigars. They were pretty well provisioned. They'd brought from Corregidor, among other things, a few cases of Coca-Cola—the first I'd tasted in many weeks—and some of the tenderest ham I ever ate.

"It got dark faster after sunset, a wind sprang up, and ahead we could see lightning flashes. But these didn't help us find the narrow passage into the Mindanao Sea. We were going in the dark entirely by dead reckoning. At midnight we figured we'd be off the strait—so we turned into the pitch-blackness, holding our breath, but still we didn't hit anything. I had no charts, I'd never been there before, I could see absolutely nothing, but since we didn't crash into a beach, we kept going, and at last I knew we were through and safely into Mindanao Sea—our dead-reckoning navigation had been right."

"And there we really caught hell," said Kelly. "Big foaming waves fifteen or twenty feet high thundering over the cockpit, drenching everybody topside. Also, because of the speed, water, and wind, it got damned cold. Our binoculars were full of water and our eyes so continually drenched with stinging salt that we couldn't see in addition to which it was pitch-black. We were making good speed through strange waters with islands all around us. We could see the outlines of the big ones—Negros and Mindanao—very dimly against the horizon through the storm. But there were dozens of small ones and probably hundreds of reefs.

"The sea was on our port bow, tending to drive us south. We expected to make a landfall forty miles dead ahead—a small island where we would turn—and let me tell this was an unpleasant situation for a navigator. The helmsman's eyes and ours were full of salt, you had to keep one hand in front of your eyes to avoid the slapping force of the water, and yet you needed both to hold on. The Admiral was pretty wrought up. 'I've sailed every type of ship in the navy except one of these MTB's,' he shouted at me above the wind, 'and this is the worst bridge I've ever been on. I wouldn't do duty on one of these for anything in the world—you can have them.'

"It was a real problem to keep astern lookout for the 41 boat so we wouldn't lose it. Three good waves in a row and we'd be out of sight, and in that weather we could pass within seven-five yards and never see each other. The 41 was now keeping about two hundred yards astern, hunting the smoothest part of our wake, to keep the General's party comfortable. The General had said that if his boat slowed, we who were ahead should also slow letting them set the pace. I know seasickness can be very unpleasant, but I wanted to get them safe in port by dawn, in case there were Jap planes about, so I kept pulling them on. It got rougher and rougher, and the Admiral kept remembering it had been he who had assured MacArthur that Bulkeley was was wrong about the weather—it would be calm.

"The General's going to give me hell for this in the morning, he said, uneasily. 'Damned if I thought Bulkeley knew what he was talking about—but he surely did.'

"The Admiral stayed with me upon the bridge the whole trip in spite of the weather. Every half-hour I would send a member of the crew over the boat for inspection, to see how its hull was standing the strain, for we were taking an awful licking.

"During one of these I noticed a figure by the machine-gun turret, sitting with his feet propped upon on a torpedo tube. His stomach was long ago empty, but he was leaning forward, retching between his knees. From this I guessed it might be one of our passengers, and sent a quartermaster to ask him if he wouldn't care to go below. The quartermaster returned and saluted: 'The General says he doesn't want to move, sir—he knows what's best for him.'

"It was now about three in the morning. I'd had no sleep for two days and two nights and could do with a little coffee, so I sent Lieutenant Brantingham below for the thermos jug, and also to take a look at any of our passengers who might care for a little refreshment.

"Brantingham returned with cups of coffee—stone-cold—but plenty strong, and it took the salt taste from our mouths—and reported none of the passengers had accepted his invitation.

"'Where are they?' I asked.

"'Two generals and a colonel are in the forward compartment lying on the deck. They seemed unhappy,' Brantingham reported.

"'But why doesn't someone offer them a bunk?' I asked.

"'Sir,' said my radio man, 'I offered one general my bunk after I'd stepped on him in the dark, but he said, "Son, just leave me be. I haven't got the strength to move." So I figured they knew what they wanted and left.'

"Four o'clock was the zero hour for all of us. I was terribly cold myself, and looking at the Admiral I could see his teeth were chattering. Yet he was a tough old sailor, and wouldn't think of leaving—here he was, in his fifties, taking a beating which would put under many men in their twenties. But I insisted he let me get him a sweater—it would be soaking in thirty seconds, and yet might do him some good. When I went down to hunt for it, I stepped on something soft and produced a groan: it turn out I had gone over my shoe tops into the soft abdomen of a general. But while I was getting my flashlight turned on to see what it was, I managed to step on another general, who was too weak even to groan. I don't think he cared if he lived or died. The only person enjoying the trip was an air corps captain. You can no more make one of them seasick than you can a sailor. He was snoring in his bunk, happy as a baby.

Next Chapter: End of Glorious Flight.

Today's News Today
Why Wait 'Til Tomorrow?
The Charlotte News

WISHING WELL

Registered U. S. Patent Office.

6	4	7	3	5	2	6	7	3	8	5	6	3
H	B	N	Y	D	L	A	A	E	O	D	O	P	N
3	5	2	7	6	3	6	5	2	3	6	4	6
O	V	L	W	P	I	O	T	Y	E	L	W	T
4	3	6	8	5	7	8	2	6	3	7	5	2
G	O	H	O	D	N	R	W	O	R	E	O	I
5	7	2	6	8	3	7	4	2	5	3	6	
R	N	I	L	U	S	Y	G	P	L	E	O	G
2	6	3	5	4	8	2	6	3	7	6	5	6
B	H	V	I	A	O	E	T	E	H	S	S	P
6	3	2	7	5	6	3	7	5	4	2	6	3
F	R	P	B	F	O	B	O	I	V	I	R	I
3	6	5	8	6	5	7	8	3	2	7	6	
L	Y	N	E	N	L	O	E	R	N	S	E	U

HERE is a pleasant little game that will give you a message every day. It is a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is six or more, subtract four. If the number is less than six, add three. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner of the rectangle and check every one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

OUT OUR WAY

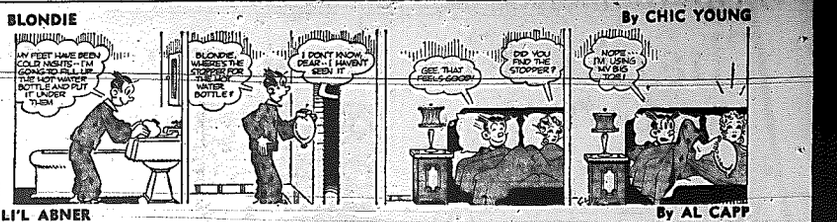
By J. R. WILLIAMS

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With MAJOR HOOPLE

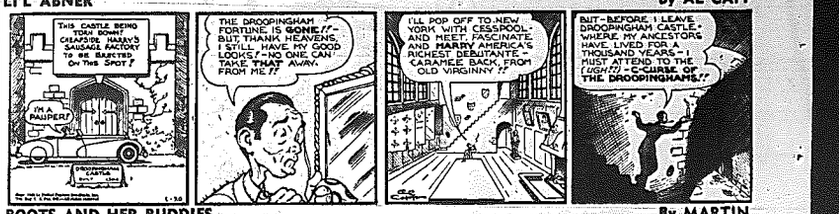
BLONDIE

By CHIC YOUNG



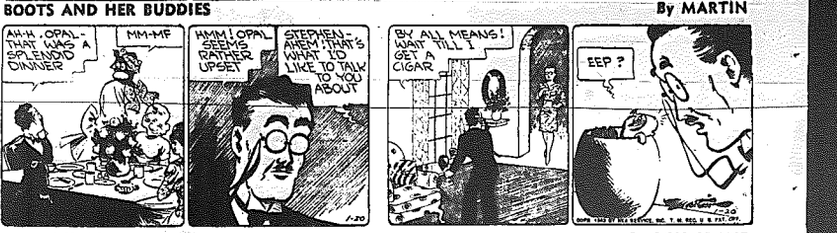
LI'L ABNER

By AL CAPP



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By MARTIN



WASH TUBBS

By ROY CRANE

THIMBLE THEATER

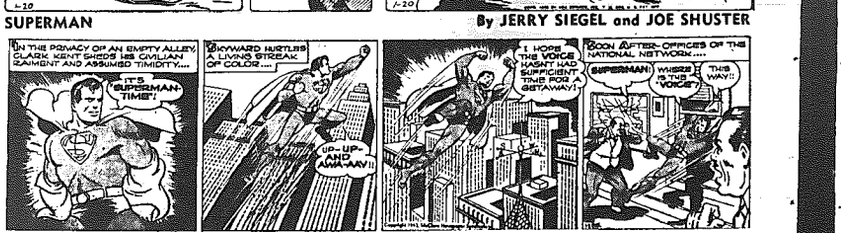
STARRING POPEYE

RED RYDER

By FRED HARMAN

SUPERMAN

By JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER



GASOLINE ALLEY

By FRANK KING

TERRY AND THE PIRATES

By MILTON CANIFF