

## Friendly Persuasion

by Harry Zirkelbach November 14, 2018  
Stars and Sun date 35233

The Old Man was one of the **really** older Plane Commanders in the B-24 Squadron in the Pacific. We had arrived from training in various "safe" havens west of San Diego where the Squadron had assembled and first trained. Skipper was storm, demanding, likable, skilled, on his second combat tour. He promised each of his crew of ten personally, he would bring them home, safe. Was not easily believed for he was fearless to the point of seeming reckless. That ,and he made us practice constantly,,know our specific duty in any event, for all returned, or none.

After a few missions we also became comfortable with one another. Always tense on the flying time to Station, then on edge as the Old Man sought Japanese targets in the area assigned. Usually on station two hours, the, five hours to get there, five to return boring, less tense on return iwhen nothing was sighted, a rarity.

On this beautiful day (most days began in the dark of night, we flew sway from the following sunrise seeing nothing but Ocean At target, Skipper looked to fly at 50 feet elevation, can't be attacked from below, hard to see on the vast blue-green sea.

On this day, we always flew alone, with our escort were confronted by a Japanese bomber. The Captain then flew at him, forward guns blazing before the Jap can begin firing, for their fire-power was weak. Never the less, just after his aircraft began burning, some of his bullets struck the right two engines; the Old Man had to order the Plane Captain to shut down #3 and #4.

Then this realization, we could not return to base. The Captain had earlier identified a reef near our location, above water at low tide, headed there. We throw overboard all guns, ammo, supplies no longer valuable, lighted the plane for the destination, Speed at which we would crash is reduced. Reach that plot, no time to survey, head straight down, lower flaps to land at an unreasonably low speed, but crash none the less. No ones injured.

Another Squadron Commander had heard our emergency announcement, came by, providing coverers a brief time.

A FlyingBoat from Manila also heard the emergency. appeared on=scene came low to check out the problem. After assessing the scene, announced, the Sea was too rough for his to land; he would return to Manila.

Over our radio we hear the B-24 from our Sqquadron announce, "I'm coming along side of you. You will land and pick up that crew, or I will shoot you down." Calm was restored

No tother words were her from either, and the Flying Boat made a near perfect sea landing , taxied to the shore, Skippers led his crew aboard. Take off was uneventful. The crews exchanged greetings and Thanks.

Flying to Manilathe group landed in Manila bay, still cluttered with remnants of Japanese ships destroyed there on the invasion a few months earlier. Suddenly before the Flying Boat settled fully into the water, the hull struck a submerged log, puncturing it. The craft began to sink, but that crew had plenty of mattresses, baggage to slow the incoming waster until a ship from the base came alongside and took all but three crew members, towing the Flying Boat to a safe anchorage.

For his performance, flowery words accompanied the Skipper's **Silver Star** for those moments when once again he brought everyone safely home, as he would continue to do for the next four months, including another crash inside China.

#### Followup.

On receiving the Silver Star, Skipper returned it to Admiral XXXXX, with a note which sid; it was not deserving for he hd lost a B-24.

The reply equally firm. "I do not casually award Medals. Your will keeping wear this or I'll deliver it with a Marine detachment and they'll rivet it to your chest."