

VP-60 in Guadalcanal 1943

05-21-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach

Flew BPY, with five pilots. Only three were assigned flight crew positions, Plane Commander, Co-Pilot, Navigator.

Pilots all well trained at Corpus Christi, and beyond in other assignments.. It would be unusual unusual to find a Navy an aviator not fully comfortable in any flight duty on that slow flying boat.

Pilots could not choose their assignments generally. They were blameless, for those who had graduated earlier, held seniority and and thus command, positions. These too were thought to have unquestionable ability, skill, and well, maybe not tack.

Ensigns and Lt(jg)s did not choose the one who would command. And most of these, early in WWII has skill, talent, wisdom that had never been tested in a genuine emergency.

We had one pilot who practically refused to fly in any position of responsibility from Guadalcanal for eight the months VP 60 was there. And all flights at night against Japanese aircraft and ships.

His was not outright disobedience. But armed with a secret medical book he had hidden from everyone, he

created a one medical impediment after another, until the Squadron Medical Doc penetrated that hoax. Then as that excuse was voided, another complex illness would be revealed

He was a constant challenge to our Medical Officer Dr. King. Each time King would have to delve into the available Journals. Hone his skill up to the level of the backslider. This proved challenging much of the time, for this shrewd self-taught-medical pilot proved brilliant in those narrow disability fields he worked diligently.

At times, Dr. King had to beseech the Squadron boss, CDR Schowenweiss for issuance of an edict.

“There will be no pilots excused from scheduled lights, period, without approval in writing by Dr King and myself.”

Another edict from the Skipper. Under no circumstance will multiple circumcisions be performed again on and personnel while VP-60 is in Guadalcanal. This after the malingerer demanded a fourth circumcision, saying the earlier ones were incomplete.

Pilots not flying regularly with their crews, were not eligible for Rest and Recovery trips to the back areas. Exception was made for this Officer, just to get him off the Island. At end of tour, this pilot returned with the Squadron, was never seen again.