

C O P Y

DD388/A16  
Serial 0195

U.S.S. HELM (DD388),  
6 August 1945.

CONFIDENTIAL

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To : The Commander Western Carolines Sub-Area  
(Commander Task Group 94.5).  
Subject: Search for Survivors, Period 4-5 August 1945 - Report of.  
Reference: (a) ComWesCarSubArea Secret Despatch 040720 August.  
Enclosure: (A) Track Chart of 4 August.  
(B) Track Chart of 5 August.

1. HELM was patrolling Radar Picket Station Able-6, when, at 1645 King, 3 August, received orders to proceed to Lat.  $11^{\circ}42'$  N, Long.  $133^{\circ}20'$  E and assist in the search for survivors of a sunken ship. Proceeded at 26 knots to the Reference Position arriving at 0710. Reported to the MADISON for duty. HELM was directed to conduct search in Area 2, the center of which was 35 miles distant, bearing  $045^{\circ}$ T from the Reference Position.

2. HELM arrived at center of Area 2 (Lat.  $12^{\circ}06'$  N, Long.  $133^{\circ}46'$  E) at 0840, 4 August, and started the search (covered in enclosure (A)) at speed of 12 knots. HELM was assisted by a search plane with call of "Playmate 2". Results were negative - no sign of wreckage, oil, bodies, or survivors or any other indication of a sunken ship. Gained underwater sound contact at 1955 in position Lat.  $12^{\circ}13'$  N, Long.  $133^{\circ}50'$  E, and proceeded to attack. One attack was made, dropping five depth charges. No further sonar contact was made after 40 minutes of A/S operations - resumed search for survivors. At 0230 on 5 August, received orders to proceed to Lat.  $11^{\circ}01'$  N, Long.  $132^{\circ}55'$  E to arrive at 0630 in accordance with reference (a). At that time all ships would form a scouting line (axis  $108^{\circ}$ T, interval 8 miles) and conduct a search on course  $018^{\circ}$ T, speed 14 knots for a distance of 90 miles, then reversing course to the left and returning on a track 4 miles west of the  $018^{\circ}$  track. HELM was assigned the station at Point of Origin, with MADISON OTC and guide.

3. Arrived at Point of Origin at 0630. However, by this time had lost radar contact with other search units, so proceeded to the eastward to close guide and take station-interval 8 miles from the AYLWIN (covered in enclosure (B)). At 0650 when 8 miles distant from AYLWIN, assumed search course  $018^{\circ}$ T. At 0845 an assisting search plane with call "Playmate 2", sighted wreckage and bodies in the water about 20 miles west of the HELM. Left the scouting line and proceeded at 25 knots to investigate search plane's report. Arrived at debris area at 0930. Sighted approximately 100 empty 40 MM boxes, two yellow deflated rubber life rafts (it would have been impossible to inflate these rafts as they were badly ripped), several kapok life jackets, streaks of oil, and flotsam resembling insulating material. The life rafts were taken aboard. At this time the search plane reported bodies in the water about four miles west of the HELM. Proceeded to this position, and sighted many bodies in this area: Lat.  $11^{\circ}28'$  N, Long.  $132^{\circ}47'$  E.

ENCLOSURE (H)

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4. All bodies were in extremely bad condition and had been dead for an estimated 4 or 5 days. Some had life jackets and life belts, most had nothing. Most of the bodies were completely naked, and the others had just drawers or dungaree trousers on - only three of the 28 bodies recovered had shirts on. Bodies were horribly bloated and decomposed - recognition of faces would have been impossible. About half of the bodies were shark-bitten, some to such a degree that they more nearly resembled skeletons. From one to four sharks were in the immediate area of the ship at all times. At one time, two sharks were attacking a body not more than fifty yards from the ship, and continued to do so until driven off by rifle fire. For the most part it was impossible to get finger prints from the bodies as the skin had come off the hands or the hands lacerated by sharks. Skin was removed from the hands of bodies containing no identification, when possible, and the Medical Officer will dehydrate the skin and attempt to make legible prints. All personal effects removed from the bodies for purposes of identification, and the Medical Officer's Reports are forwarded herewith to you in lieu of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and the Personal Effects Distribution Center, Farragut, Idaho, on the assumption that you will assemble such effects from all ships recovering them. After examination, all bodies were sunk, using two inch line and a weight of three 5"/38 cal. projectiles. There were still more bodies in the area when darkness brought a close to the gruesome operations for the day. In all, twenty-eight bodies were examined and sunk. The last bodies were picked up in position Lat. 11°26' N, Long. 132°37' E.

5. Information on the bodies now available is as follows, bodies being numbered in the order they were recovered:

- (1) BARKSDALE, T. Leon, [REDACTED]
- (2) ?
- (3) HICKEY, Henry Todd, [REDACTED] USNR.
- (4) STRIPE, William Stanley, [REDACTED]
- (5) MASSIER, George Racade, [REDACTED]
- (6) LATIMER, William S.
- (7) JENSEN.
- (8) E.W.N. (had perfect teeth).
- (9) HOV, Donald A.
- (10) GREEN, Robert U., [REDACTED]
- (11) KLEIN, R. J.
- (12) McD, F. G.
- (13) JONES, Kenneth M., [REDACTED]
- (14) GRINER, A. L.
- (15) ?
- (16) LEMENT, Dayle.
- (17) SHELTON, W.E. Jr., [REDACTED]
- (18) ?

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- (19) ? (tattoo on left upper arm - heart with an arrow through it and name "Vera" in center).
- (20) ?
- (21) LEWIS, Eugene Johnson, [REDACTED].
- (22) GRIMM, L.E., [REDACTED], U.S.M.C.R.
- (23) GARDNER.
- (24) G.S.A.-5.
- (25) C.C.E. ("E" could be any letter of last name because piece torn from clothing between second "C" and the "E").
- (26) ?
- (27) J.M.S.
- (28) MC HONE, O.

6. At 0530 on 6 August, received orders from OTC to proceed to Ulithi. Set course for Ulithi and left search area.

/s/ A. F. Hollingsworth.  
A. F. HOLLINGSWORTH.

cc:

CDD-10  
CTU 94.6.2

C O P Y