



"With the Help of GOD - and a few Marines, MacArthur returned to the Philippines" on 31 August 1944. simultaneous landings by Central and Southwest Pacific Forces on the islands of Palau and Morotai. The landings are supported by four carrier groups of Task Force 38, VADM Mark Mitscher Commanding.

Leyte is Next - On 10 Oct 1944 the opening blows of the battle for Leyte are carried by 17 carriers of Task Force 38. Japanese airfields are hit from the Ryukus south to occupied areas of the Philippines. 438 Japanese aircraft are shot down and 366 destroyed on the ground over a five day period. Three elements of the Japanese fleet converged on Leyte Gulf from as many directions. On 24 Oct 1944 USS Princeton, CVL-23 was severely damaged by aircraft bombs in the battle for Leyte Gulf. Internal explosions and fire rendered her uninhabitable and unable to make port for repairs. She was scuttled by USS Reno, CLAA-96, which fired 4 torpedoes into her. Weather crew: LT Norman Schuyler and Aerms 3/c John Henry Mislinski, William C. Nopper, William J. Graves and William H. Crane.

Earlier on the 24th fast carrier a/c attacked the central element of the attacking Japanese fleet in the Sibuyan Sea sinking the 63,000 ton battleship Musashi and a destroyer. The Japanese southern force was hit in the Sulu Sea.

Surigao Strait Donnybrook - Surface elements of the 7th Fleet turned back the Japanese southern force on the 25th in a brief but intense action before daylight in the battle of Surigao Strait sinking two battleships and three destroyers.

Escorts in the Battle off Samar - Also on the 25th the Japanese central force made a night passage thru the San Bernardino Strait and attacked six escort carriers and their screen of TG 77.4. In a three hour action Gambier Bay, CVE-73, two destroyers and a destroyer escort were sunk as the "small boys" placed themselves in harms way to protect the slow, under gunned escort carriers. Gambier Bay received 14 hits ranging from 4" to 14" rounds from an IJN battleship. No weathermen were lost. Crew list in prior paragraph. Kalinin Bay and Fanshaw Bay received 14" and

8" mostly 8" hits and St. Lo, White Plains and Kitkun Bay were straddled repeatedly but not hit. Carrier a/c sunk 3 heavy cruisers in this action. Later in the day Kamikaze pilots off Leyte made the first PLANNED suicide attacks of the war sinking St. Lo, CVE-63, and damaging escort carriers Sangamon, Suwanee, Santee, White Plains, Kalinin Bay and Kitkun Bay. St. Lo crew: LTJG Clarence Reynolds, Aerm 1/c Wesley R. Morris, Aerms 2/c James E. Dubois (WIA) and William F. Suerstedt, Aerm 3/c Arthur A. Seale (WIA), S 2/c Joseph Pisaro and S 2/c Clarence J. Offerman (WIA).

On the same day a/c of the fast carrier force met the Japanese northern force in the Battle off Cape Engano, sinking the heavy carrier Zuikaku, light carriers Chiyoda, Zuiho and Chitose with the assistance of cruiser gunfire. As remnants of the Japanese Fleet limped homeward thru the central Philippines carrier a/c sank a light cruiser and four destroyers to bring Japanese battle losses to 26 major combatants totaling over 300,000 tons. Kamikazes struck carriers Intrepid (29 Oct), Franklin and Belleau Wood (30 Oct), Lexington (5 Nov) and Essex, Intrepid and Cabot (25 Nov). Two CVs required shipyard repairs.

In the Eye of the Storm - On 18 Dec 1944 LCDR Bill Meyers passed uncomfortably close to and reported on a Pacific typhoon during an ASW reconnaissance in a Philippine Islands based PB4Y-1 "Privateer". The storm caused extensive damage to Third Fleet and Task Force 38 ships. This same Naval aviator later served as an Aerologist with VPW-1, Weather Squadron One, and as Commanding officer of VP-23, Patron 23, flying Atlantic hurricane reconnaissance.

Franklin Holocaust - USS Franklin, CVE-13, was hit by two 550 lb bombs off the coast of Japan on 18 March 1945. The bombs were well placed causing fires and internal explosions which decimate the crew. 832 are killed and 300 wounded. Franklin suffers the heaviest damage of any surviving American ship and her crew was likely the most decorated. She steamed to the U.S. under her own power.

CLARENCE MASCI & MURILTO KILBON
Upper Air Changes - Aerology Bulletin number 8 of 9
April 1945 instituted constant pressure vs constant level upper air analysis. Pensacola would be the first station to prepare such a chart.

Kamikazes Hit the Fleet - USS Bunker Hill, CV-17, is hit by two Japanese Kamikaze aircraft on 11 May 1945. Damage escalated when armed and fueled a/c on deck exploded and burned. 539 men were killed and 380 wounded. Aerm 3/c Scollan was a Bunker Hill crewman. On 14 May 1945 USS Enterprise, CV-6, is hit on the forward elevator by a Kamikaze and the "Big E" is knocked out of the war for the last time.

MAY 12 - FAY & DRY ON NEW MEXICO
WHEN HIT BY 2 KAMIKAZES:
62 DEAD 120 WOUNDED