

HIT

5 ^{Shipper} ^{a big explosion}
 a crewman, reported after I dropped my 500's the second time, so it looks as if I got the already damaged ~~ship~~ ship I aimed for that time.

TRAGIC INCIDENT

On the way back to the ship one of our fighters came alongside obviously in trouble, and I being nearest to him accompanied him back, while the rest of the bombers circled to wait for everyone else. He didn't get very far before his port engine coughed out completely and forced him to make a water landing. He got in his own little life raft obviously all right, and we contacted "Bull Durham" (The Hornet), which answered that it would send a Kingfisher immediately. We also dropped our own two-man life-raft in case he wanted it, but the drop was poor, and he ignored it. By this time another Helldiver had joined me. The Kingfisher finally arrived, landed all right and picked our man up, but in trying to take off caught a wing on an extra large wave and rolled over on its back. The occupants (it turned out there were three) clambered to safety and sat on the overturned float. The only visible part of the plane, which, however, seemed to want to stay afloat indefinitely. In the meantime we had contacted the ship again, and this time they said they'd direct a trio of Kingfishers to the spot.

By then several fighters had joined the group, and since we two Helldivs were getting low on gas, we left them in charge. Just before we got back to the ship I heard one of the fighter pilots report that they couldn't see the survivors any more. The kingfishers apparently never did find them or even the circling fighters, and a search that went out the next day had no luck either. It was perhaps the worst tragedy that I saw all the time I was overseas.

MIYAKO JIMA

Another two happened the next day. We went down to Miyako to bomb the airfield, and damned if some sharp-shooter on the ground didn't shoot off our pitot tube and put a little hole in the fuselage. I was a little ticklish coming in for a landing back at the ship, not knowing our airspeed, but by trusting the C.S.O. we made it without even a wave-off. One fighter pilot from another ship had to make a water landing just off the shore of Miyako, and I doubt if he was ever rescued. One of our own ^{was} ~~was~~ so badly damaged that, while he could still fly, he didn't dare try and make either a carrier or a water landing, deciding to bail out near a destroyer. All they found was his parachute, and it looked as if he might have misjudged the distance above the

MORE
TRAGEDIES

water when he let go of it, or something. He had recently accounted for five Tap Bettor* all headed for our Task Group loaded with Baba bombs**, the first time they had been reported.

KIKAI-SHIMA

After an uneventful strike against airfield Kikai-Shima, near Amami-O-Shima, two days later, we got another call, on April 2, to go out after the "Tap fleet." This time it was reported to be

YAMATO

The new battleship Yamato and a group of escorting cruisers and destroyers, and the report was correct. Though the group was supposed to be on a suicide mission against our ships, we found them not very far off the southwest coast of Kyushu. The weather was absolutely foul, but radar finally picked them up, and shortly after that we could get glimpses of the ships. Radio communication was very poor, and after we had made about one wide circle and heard no orders to attack, the Skipper decided to lead us in. We didn't get very far before we went right into a cloud, and when we came out, I found myself quite alone except for Ives in the rear cockpit. There was our target to the left, perhaps two or three miles away, and there didn't seem to be anything to do but to go after it with

OUR
ATTACK

* LARGE BOMBERS ** FLYING BOMBS WITH SUICIDE PILOTS