

water when he let go of it, or something. He had recently accounted for five Jap Bettys\* 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 "Jap 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

nilly. All the ships had, of course, been aware of our presence for some time and were shooting like mad. By keeping more in the clouds than ~~out~~ we sneaked right into the middle of the group and more or less over the battleship. Not wasting any time when I caught a glimpse of it all of a sudden, I pushed over into a steep glide from somewhere around five thousand feet, which the weather had already forced us down to, and prayed for the best. We didn't get through the clouds until it was about time to pull out - around 2500 feet, and I saw that we were headed not for the battleship, which was off to our right and going away, but for a destroyer or something. Still determined to have a crack at the big boy I tried to whip the plane around in time to make a pass at it before getting too low, but that allowed for no real chance to aim and an almost level attack from perhaps <sup>without dive flaps</sup> 1500 feet. I might have been considerably less. I let the bombs go, set for not quite simultaneous release, and pulled sharply away, all the time expecting that these were my last seconds of life. I was dic-

"DIVE" ON  
YAMATO

heartening to look back and see a big splash\*  
 well off the port quarter of the ship, but we  
 were so anxious to get away that we didn't  
 worry too much at the time. Strangely enough  
 I was aware of terrific anti-aircraft fire all the  
 time, but I remember no close bursts at all.  
 A destroyer kept firing at us until we were  
 out of range but never even came close. We  
 joined first with some helldivers from another  
 ship and then with our own avengers. I had  
 an awful feeling all the way back that many  
 of our helldivers had been shot down, but it  
 turned out that they all got back except for  
 one, which came so nearly all the way back  
 that pilot and air crewman were picked up in  
 no time by a destroyer. One of our planes lan-  
 ded with a hole in one wing large enough for  
 several men to stand up in and not a small  
 one in the other wing. Altogether over three  
 hundred planes had gone out. Bombers got  
 several hits on both the battleship and the  
 smaller ones, but the torpedo planes really  
 accounted for the several ships, including the  
 Yamato, that were definitely sunk.

We bombers had more than a need's need

\* I LIKE TO THINK MY SECOND BOMB DID HIT. PICTURES SHOW ONLY ONE SPLASH.