

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.

KAMIKAZE
MENACE

after that attack, and it was well used, though we felt guilty that the fighters had to fly combat air patrol all the time. Ever since we had been in action the Kamikaze ~~menace~~ ^{menace} had been tremendous. Several carriers, including the Saratoga, the Franklin and even the Wasp in our task group had been hit and in the case of the first two nearly destroyed. The Wasp had had to leave us and had been replaced by another CVL, the San Jacinto. We had one very close call ourselves. A striking group of planes was all ready to take off with the engines even running when those of us in the planes suddenly became aware of the pud-pud-pud of the light A.A., and in no time a burning Jap plane, literally a ball of fire, passed just over our heads and fell into the water perhaps 100 feet off the port quarter. A few fragments fell on deck, and some of the people said they felt the heat of the fire, though I could not swear now that I did. Certainly it was one of my closest calls.

CLOSE
CALL

Well, when another Kamikaze attack ~~was~~ threatened, the "ship" decided to get rid of all the bombers on deck and send us aloft to circle at a safe distance, for five hours. As I remember, nothing hap-

OKI

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SNOR

pered all this time until we finally had to return to the ship because of low gas. Then all Hell broke loose, with Kamikaze planes appearing in numbers and hellcats chasing them all over the sky. We were already in the traffic circle and had to get out of the way, especially of our own ship's AA, in a hurry. Soon we were called in again only to have the performance repeated, but we finally all got in all right, though dangerously low on gas.

OKINAWA &
KIKAI STRIKES

Before returning to Ulithi again we got in several more strikes, in my case four, three on Okinawa and one on Kikai, but they were pretty much uneventful. Both islands were pretty well battered by this time, though there was still occasional anti-aircraft fire, and it was apt to be accurate in such places, where the gunners had had plenty of practice.

ULITHI
AGAIN

Ulithi was more enjoyable the third and last time than before. Ward Matthews and I found better ways of amusing ourselves there. For one thing we found that the swimming beach wasn't too terribly crowded, especially late in the afternoon when most of the enlisted men returned to their ships. Though we had no underwater goggles or face masks, we were occasionally able to borrow them and watch the multitudes of small, brilliantly-colored and

SNORKELING

often oddly-shaped coral reef fishes, one of the most fascinating pastimes. As a matter of fact we could see them pretty well while we waded in shallow water by putting our faces close to but not below the surface. There seemed to be spotted, striped and solid patterns of almost every color, and we were amazed. When we were not doing that, we were collecting worn shells along the beach or live ones, especially cowries, from coral reefs exposed by the low tide. In the very small area of woods not occupied by people or buildings or something we hunted for lizards, finding quite a variety beside the common blue-tailed skinks, but not collecting any. One of our better hunting grounds was on or in the vicinity of a pair-nest fig tree, where, in a hollow, we also located and tussled with a large bluish crab or crayfish.

We took turns going ashore, usually half the squadron going one day, half the next, etc. When remaining aboard we spend a time sunning ourselves on the deck, as we did also at sea whenever it was warm enough, but at Ulithi it was pretty hot for any game.

Well, by the time we headed north again it had been nearly two weeks since we had flown, so