

## **A COMBAT CORRESPONDENT DISPATCH-MARINE CORPS**

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By Technical Sergeant David Stick of Elizabeth City, N.C., a Marine

PALAU ISLANDS (Delayed)--A PBY Dumbo rescue plane landed less than 200 yards from shore and within easy range of the heaviest concentration of Japanese anti-aircraft fire in the Palau Islands to rescue a wounded Marine pilot who had bailed out of his burning Corsair.

While the Jap guns on Koror Islands "Battery Hill" threw round after round of high explosives at the Dumbo, a screen of 20 Corsairs flew low over the beach, strafing Jap troops who were firing at the rescue plane with machine guns and rifles.

The Corsairs formed a "Lufberry Circle" in the manner of attacking a wagon train in the days of the old west and made repeated runs against the Japs.

The downed Leatherneck pilot, First Lieutenant Walter F. Brown, 24, of Bradenton, Fla., was diving on his bombing target when a Jap shell exploded underneath his Corsair, spraying him with fragments and setting his plane on fire. Brown said he tried to pull out of the dive but the flames soon engulfed the cockpit, so he opened the hatch and bailed out.

"I got half way out of the cockpit," he said, "and my left leg—it'd been hit by fragments from the exploding shell--got caught inside. I was doing more than 300 knots, and the wind kept banging me against the side of the plane. When I finally pulled free I reached down for my 'chute ring' and yanked on it."

Brown was hurtling through space at such terrific speed when his parachute opened that his knees were thrown up under his chin and one knee was dislocated.

"I looked down and saw the target area just below me," he said. "Some of the Corsairs were just pulling out of their dives and I could see their bombs hit. I kept thinking 'I can't land there,' 'I can't land there,' and I tried to swing my chute out toward the open sea. But the wind was against me, and I didn't seem to be making any progress.

"When I got pretty low I reached down for my pistol. It wasn't there. And then I saw some water below me and I forgot about the Japs and got ready to loosen my harness. I hit the water very close to a long Jap pier and only a hundred yards or so from shore. My legs, especially the left one, were almost useless, but I started swimming as best I could, just using my hands."

Meanwhile, Navy Lieutenant Commander Fred Hopkins Mamer, 26, of 371 Washington Street, Benton Harbor, Mich., copilot of the rescue plane, saw Brown bail out and told Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) Maurice D. Landers, 26, of 842 South Burbin Street, Casper, Wyo., "there's one who's a goner, for sure."

By that time the Corsairs had completed their bombing runs, and Major Walter J. Myer, 27, of 2925 South Orange Street, Olympia, Wash., commanding officer of Brown's

squadron, told Mamer his fighters would form a "Lufberry Circle" if the Dumbo would land.

Mamer said he was "sure we wouldn't have a chance of getting in there and then getting out again, "but when the Corsairs began strafing the Japs on the beach, he went in for a landing.

A Jap shell burst under the Dumbo, and Mamer pulled up, thinking there were holes in the hull. But there were none, so he came in for another landing, made it that time, and came up close to the swimming pilot.

Twice the crew of the Dumbo threw a lifeline to Brown, and both times he was dragged under the tail of the plane and had to let go. On the third attempt he was pulled aboard by Landers and Chief Machinist's Mate Stanley Burrough, 24, of 1206 Oakland Street, Shreveport, La.

Throughout the rescue operation, the Japs had been firing at the plane. "One shell threw water over the starboard wing," said Mamer, "and another exploded so close that a sheet of water hit one of the engines, and for a moment I thought it would conk out."

The plane suffered no hits, however, and once Brown was aboard, Mamer revived his engines for the takeoff. Before the plane reached Peleliu, Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) Roy M. Kash, 26, of Simpson, W. Va., a flight surgeon, had administered first aid to the wounded pilot, and less than an hour after he bailed out, Brown was back at his base.

Other members of the Dumbo crew were: Ensign Philip E. Russell, 24, the Dumbo's Second Pilot, of 872 Jackson Avenue, Chicago, Ill., Seaman First Class Edward W. Hansen, 20, of Benson Station, Omaha, Neb., Aviation Ordnanceman Second Class Robert F. Meinken, of 191 East Walton Place, Chicago, Ill., Aviation Machinist's Mate Second Class Edward W. Heffner, 23, of 257 Milton Avenue, San Bruno, Calif., and Aviation Radioman Third Class Robert A. Garbles, 23, of 735 Cauldwell Avenue, Bronx, N. Y.