

WIN NAVAL VICTORY

(Following is an eyewitness account of the landing on Kiriwana Island, when U.S. forces seized the Trobriand group near New Guinea last week.)

BY HAL O'FLAHERTY.
SPECIAL RADIO
The Chicago Daily News Foreign Service.
(Copr., 1943, The Chicago Daily News, Inc.)
Aboard a United States Warship in the Pacific, July 1.—(Delayed.)—Close co-ordination between sea, land and air forces resulted today in the occupation of two strategic islands between New Guinea and the Solomons. The one nearest New Guinea is Kiriwana; the other is Woodlark.

Heroes of Helena Blink, Wonder and Live Again

BY B. J. M'QUAID.

SPECIAL RADIO
The Chicago Daily News Foreign Service.
(Copr., 1943, The Chicago Daily News, Inc.)

Aboard a U.S. Cruiser in a Solomon Islands Port, July 6.—(Delayed.)—The flaming hell of the Battle of Kula Gulf had many dramatic moments, but none more terribly moving than the sight of the survivors of the U.S. cruiser Helena as they arrived in this harbor, after their ship had been shot from under them.

I was on the cruiser that received them from the destroyers which had picked them up after Jap shells had blasted the Helena. I listened while the sailors from our other vessels gave a cheer for the heroic, exhausted men, hundreds of them, all huddled topside in the rescuing vessel.

American fighting men love to cheer and I have heard them do it often. But this homage, almost but not quite a battle cry, was the most moving I have ever heard from the throats of our boys. It was spontaneous homage to a battle-tested, valorous fellow crew, which could not respond in kind.

Men Can Only Smile.

Jammed in tightly packed groups around the rescuing destroyers' superstructure, men of the U.S.S. Helena simply raised their eyes to our main deck and smiled wanly. That was all they could do.

They did not seem to care where they were or where they had been or what would happen next. Rimmed by black hollows,

to a raft loaded with others for four hours. The raft was so overloaded that it floated submerged.

"It was an effort to keep the head above the water," Barker said. "Oil choked us. Huge waves were breaking over the raft. It seemed we had been there for days. Finally, I did not care any more. I thought, 'What the heck,' and was trying to decide whether to fight any more. Then a boat came up and someone lifted me up bodily, and hauled me in."

"Those rescuing destroyers did a job probably unmatched in this war," he continued. "Three times, at half-hour intervals, they had to abandon their rescue work and steam off to fight off attacks by Jap warships.

Sink Two Other Ships.

"They sank an old Jap four-piper, probably a cruiser, a Jap destroyer or light cruiser, and damaged an enemy light cruiser so badly she was glad to limp off and go back home. But all this meant cruel prolongation of the agony and suspense endured by the men in the water."

Daylight broke before the rescuers departed from the scene. Before leaving they put over most of their whaleboats to complete the job of picking up survivors and to try to get them to shore.

I thought of the Helena's heroes and trembled with our own "black gang" as they trooped from below decks immediately after battle. The strain and tension of their experience showed in their worn, flushed, dripping faces. It is hot enough anywhere below decks in

YANKS INFLICT HEAVY DAMAGE IN SEA BATTLE

Destroyer Strong Lost as Enemy Is Routed in Gulf of Kula.

Washington, July 7. — (AP) — Straight-shooting United States naval forces, supporting the Solomons Islands front in the South Pacific offensive, apparently have scored a signal victory over Japanese fleet units in the battle of Kula Gulf, the Navy disclosed yesterday.

The triumph is expected to isolate still further the embattled Japanese garrisons in the Munda airbase area of the central Solomons, but there is no indication that the action was decisive in this respect and the Japanese may still get a few supplies through to such port villages as Vila, across Kula Gulf from Munda.

The American victory, however, reduced to some extent at least the number of ships which the enemy has immediately available for bombarding American shore positions or for intercepting American surface vessels assigned to bombard Japanese defenses.

Japs Suffer Heavy Damage.

The Navy did not give the exact extent of damage to either side, but made it entirely clear that the Japanese suffered much heavier losses than the well-equipped, hard-hitting squadrons of Adm. William F. Halsey's South Pacific command. Here is what the communique said:

"On July 6, in the early morning, a U.S. surface task force engaged Japanese surface units in Kula Gulf off New Georgia Island (between New Georgia and Kolombangara). Sufficient details have not been received to give the results of this engagement, but it is believed that, while some damage was suffered by the U.S. force, considerable damage was inflicted on the enemy."

The communique also announced the loss of the 2,100-ton U.S. destroyer Strong, a ship commissioned less than a year ago and having a normal complement of about 250 officers and men. Under the command of Cmdr. Joseph Harold Wellings of East Boston, Mass., the Strong was torpedoed and sunk Sunday night while engaged with other American ships in the bombardment of enemy positions on New Georgia Island. The fate of the skipper was not reported and, in fact, the Navy disclosed that next of kin of the casualties had not been notified but would be "as soon as possible."

Bombers Strike Islands.

On Monday evening, American Liberator bombers struck at Japanese installations on Ballale Island, in the Shortland Island area of the northwestern Solomons, and started five fires. Significantly the Navy reported that about 12 Zero fighters tried to intercept, but were driven off and no American planes were lost.

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Navy Wins Victory Over Japs in Gulf of Kula

(Continued from 1st page.)

The Japanese apparently were unwilling to press home the attack.

Yesterday's battle report from the Navy gave no clues as to the relative sizes of the forces involved in the Kula Gulf fight except that it stated specifically that the action occurred within the limits of the gulf. This body of water is only about five miles wide at its mouth and half a mile or so wide at its head and not more than 15 miles long. Thus, while it is very deep, it does not offer an area suitable for the maneuvering of large warships.

Speculation therefore was that the forces involved were relatively small, perhaps destroyer-cruiser groups and that the advantage lay with the side which got in the first licks with the most accurate shooting.

How the fight developed like-

wise was not indicated but speculation on that point was that either the Japanese were attempting to intercept an American bombardment of their shore positions or else the Americans were attempting to intercept a Japanese supply convoy moving to Vila on Kolombangara or to Bairoko opposite Vila on the shores of New Georgia. Bairoko is a landing place for supplies moving to Munda.

Both Vila and Bairoko were under bombardment by American surface forces Sunday night when the Strong was sunk. Prior to that, on Saturday night, a raiding Japanese surface force had shelled U.S. positions on Rendova Island southwest of Munda, but had retired when American ships replied to the attack. Thus both sides have been active in this kind of sea warfare, characteristic of inter-island fighting.

The advantage so far lies with the American forces, whose record of past actions in the Solomons shows a score of about two to one over Japanese naval units and a far greater margin of successes over enemy aerial units.

Since the time that the Solomon Islands were first invaded last August the United States Navy has lost about 40 ships of all types among the islands, while the Japanese have lost 65 to 77, the latter figure including about a dozen officially reported as "probably sunk."

next. Rimm... by black hollows in their sunken, sore and tired eyes were red from the salt sea and lack of sleep. Most were naked to the waist. Their bare feet were blackened and rust-stained

stretched out, too weak and tired to move. Some were leaning over the rail in paroxysms of vomiting from swallowing sea water and fuel oil. A few lay on stretchers, waiting to be carried over to the cruiser.

As soon as the first destroyer made fast, we put over the gangplank and they began to shuffle and help each other across.

As they felt under their bare feet the firm steel of their own dead cruiser's sister, many seemed for the first time to brighten up. There were backslappings, hand-claps and affectionate greetings as the men of the two cruisers recognized old comrades and shipmates. Survivors were sent over the starboard side of our main decks. They flopped down listlessly to the deck, not even bothering to seek out the shade of turrets and guns. There was little our lads could do for them. Above everything else, they needed rest, baths, changes of clothing, all of which they would get in due course.

Two Destroyers Full.

There were two destroyers full of them and they came alongside the cruiser as we lay to in the stream. One executive officer directed preparations to receive them.

He was Chauncey Moore, Monticello, Ind., Annapolis '22, plump, white-haired, apple-cheeked and fiftyish. He looked like a prosperous small-town merchant. What with this dawn's battle, yesterday's bombardment and the prowling mission this ship had made the night before that, none of her personnel had had more than a couple of hours' sleep in four days. I doubt if Moore had changed his clothes in that length of time. Yet, we noticed, at breakfast, that he seemed the freshest and the least fatigued of us all.

Now, as the small vessel broached us to port, Moore was briskly moving up and down the deck, seeing that all was in readiness. Our gun crews and other topside crews were lining the port side to watch the scent.

Our own lads were more than merely curious. Sympathy shone in their faces which were a miracle of unconscious intensity.

When the destroyer was no more than 100 feet off, Chauncey Moore called for three cheers for the survivors. They came resounding over the water.

Torpedoes Got Helena.

In the wardroom later, as I listened to the Helena officers talking with ours, I began for the first time to get a comprehensive picture of the Helena's loss. She had been hit by torpedoes. Unquestionably the Helena avenged her own death by the destruction she wrought upon the enemy. She had been in more actions than any other cruiser down here, and it was a tough, hard-hitting, straight-shooting ship.

Lt. George N. Barker, 25, Ta-

enough anywhere below decks in these tropical seas. But the fire rooms are a literal hell.

At breakfast I talked with our chief engineer, Cmdr. Guy D. Helmich, St. Louis, Annapolis '26

... all men who emerge from below decks after a long watch.

Voice, Spirit Strong.

The only thing around him that did not seem limp were his voice and his spirit as he spoke undramatically of his sensations during battle.

In the bowels of a ship the sound of your own guns is muffled and toneless, but audible enough. You get eyewitness reports of what is going on from your telephone talkers and smoke watchers posted at topside stations. You can hear the thud of underwater detonations as enemy shells land near the ship.

My friend, Charles Donahue, Norwood, Mass., reserve lieutenant, who headed the damage control part on the second deck (a year or so ago he was a young lawyer just starting out in his profession) looked fresh and youthful when I had seen him at the dinner table last night. Now he said that the battle had aged him 10 years and, temporarily, he looked it.

Looking at the survivors, remembering the appearances below decks of people after battle, there came with overwhelming force the appreciation of how impossible a task it is to give the folks at home a full picture of the hardships and sacrifices these frontline combatants of ours undergo and the boundless extent of their magnificent devotion to duty and willingness to fulfill their responsibility.

They are just ordinary Americans. Take Seaman Edward Johnsen, Sheffield, Ill. He is 42 years old and looks like a hard-boiled, salt-encrusted veteran chief petty officer. Actually, he is a sightsetter on guns and less than a year ago was a linotyper in a Chicago publishing house.

People at home, on the farms, and in shops, factories, offices and government bureaus basically are not a bit different. They would react the same way to the same stimuli. If only there were some artificial means of providing those stimuli. But Eddie Johnsen does not think you can understand this business unless you experience it and I am afraid he is probably right.