

WORD FROM WAKE: 'FIRE POINT-BLANK'

Seven Japanese Ships Went Down Because Marines Waited Till Jap Fleet Was Only 4700 Yards From Shore.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 9 (U. P.).—Time: 5 a. m. Date: Dec. 11. Place: Wake Island.

Maj. W. Bayler, U. S. Marine Corps, made another lead pencil notation in his battered notebook.

It said: "Landing attempt by 12 Jap ships, including light cruisers, destroyers, gunboats, two troop or supply ships. Jap casualties: One light cruiser, two destroyers, one gunboat, two bombers.

"Note: That Japs closed in to 4700 yards before five and three-inch guns opened up at point-blank range."

Today Maj. Bayler's prosaic words were incribed in the annals of American heroism beside the classic command of Col. William Prescott at Bunker Hill: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

The new account of the heroes of Wake Island was made public by the U. S. Navy with a revelation that seven Japanese warships—not five as previously announced—were sunk before Wake succumbed after 14 days fighting.

It was accompanied by President Roosevelt's official citation of the Wake Marines for "courageous conduct... gallantry and heroism... devotion to duty and splendid conduct."

Held Their Fire

The citation listed Maj. James P. S. Devereux, commander of the 1st Defense Battalion, U. S. Marine Corps, and Maj. Paul A. Putnam, commander of Marine Fighting Squadron 211 of Marine Aircraft Group 21.

The new information on the battle of Wake made clear for the first time the manner in which Wake's marines managed to take so heavy a toll of the Japanese attackers.

Their coolness in withholding fire by their small battery of six 5-inch guns and 12 3-inch guns was officially compared by the Navy to the feat of the men on Bunker Hill.

By standards of modern armament 4700 yards—a fraction more than two and a half miles—is as close or closer than "the whites of their eyes" was to Prescott's musket men. By holding back their fire the men of Wake literally blew a major portion of the Japanese attack force out of the water.

Two accounts were made public by the Navy of Wake's fight. One was Maj. Bayler's day-by-day record of the fight by the Marine garrison of 13 officers and 365 men—plus a seven-man medical detachment. The other was a brief report by Maj. Putnam.

The reports were flown out from Wake by a patrol plane. They cover action through Dec. 20—two days before the Wake garrison was overwhelmed. The Navy communiqué indicated, but did not state specifically, that Maj. Bayler left Wake with the reports.

5 Hours After Oahu

The Navy released this synopsis of Maj. Bayler's day-by-day account: "Dec. 8-7 a. m.—Received word bombing Oahu. General quarters station.

"Dec. 8-11:58 a. m.—24 Jap bombers on a northern course hit Wake in close column of division V's from 3000 feet 100 pounds fragmentation bombs and simultaneous strafing. Casualties, 25 dead. Seven wounded. Seven airplanes burned destroyed.

"Dec. 9-11:45 a. m.—27 Japs. Bombed hospital. Camp No. 2. Killed several patients. Three dead. Got one Jap plane.

"Dec. 10-10:45 a. m.—27 Jap bombers. No casualties.

"Dec. 11-5 a. m.—Landing attempted by 12 Jap ships, including light cruisers, destroyers, gunboats, two troop or supply ships. Jap casualties: One light cruiser, two destroyers, one gunboat, two bombers.

Note: That Japs closed into 4700 yards before five and three-inch guns opened up at point blank range.

"Dec. 12-27 Jap planes bombed Peale and Wake from 22,000 feet. No casualties.

"Dec. 13—All quiet.

"Dec. 14-32 Jap planes hit air-drome. Two killed. One plane down (down destroyed by bombs).

"Dec. 15-11 a. m.—Dawn raid by three four-engine seaplanes. 27 Jap bombers. Shot down two Japs.

"Dec. 16-3:45 p. m.—41 Jap bombers hit camp two and air-drome. Jap four-motor plane raid. One Jap shot down.

"Dec. 17-32 Jap bombers hit camp one, Peale Island, Diesel oil supply, mess hall, and pumps of evaporators.



Maj. Devereux

"Dec. 18-11:40 a. m.—One Jap high reconnaissance plane.

"Dec. 19-10:30 a. m.—Jap bombers hit airport and camp.

"Dec. 20—All quiet—first day of bad weather.

"Total casualties: 28 dead, six wounded as of Dec. 20 from VMF-211.

"Notes: (1) Jap bombers of Dornier type, two engine, twin tail, 160 knots.

"(2) Attack formations always in form of line of division V's in close formation. Excellent air discipline.

"(3) Nine sure Jap bombers shot down; three more possibly. One four-engine patrol (flying boat. One CL (light cruiser), two DD (destroyers), one gunboat."

Maj. Putnam's report dealt largely with the efforts of the Americans to keep what planes they had left after the first attack. Of the original force of 12 officers and 49 enlisted men, eight officers and 19 enlisted men still were on duty Dec. 20.

Four enlisted men and two of the officers were on duty despite wounds.

One officer and six enlisted men were in the hospital and "doing nicely" on Dec. 20. The remaining three officers and 24 enlisted men were dead.

Four of the planes were in the air against the Japs at the time of the first raid, and the other eight were on the ground being serviced. Seven of the eight on the ground were destroyed, and the other was damaged.

One of those in the air taxied into debris on the field and bent its propeller, leaving just three planes ready for service after the first raid.

By Dec. 14 the Marines had but two planes, and one of those was in poor condition. Mechanics and ground crews relieved the situation somewhat by making at least one serviceable craft, and perhaps others, out of the wreckage. Maj. Putnam paid particular tribute to the ground crews, saying:

"Parts and assemblies have been traded back and forth so that no airplane can be identified. Engines have been traded from plane to plane, have been junked, stripped, rebuilt, and all but created."

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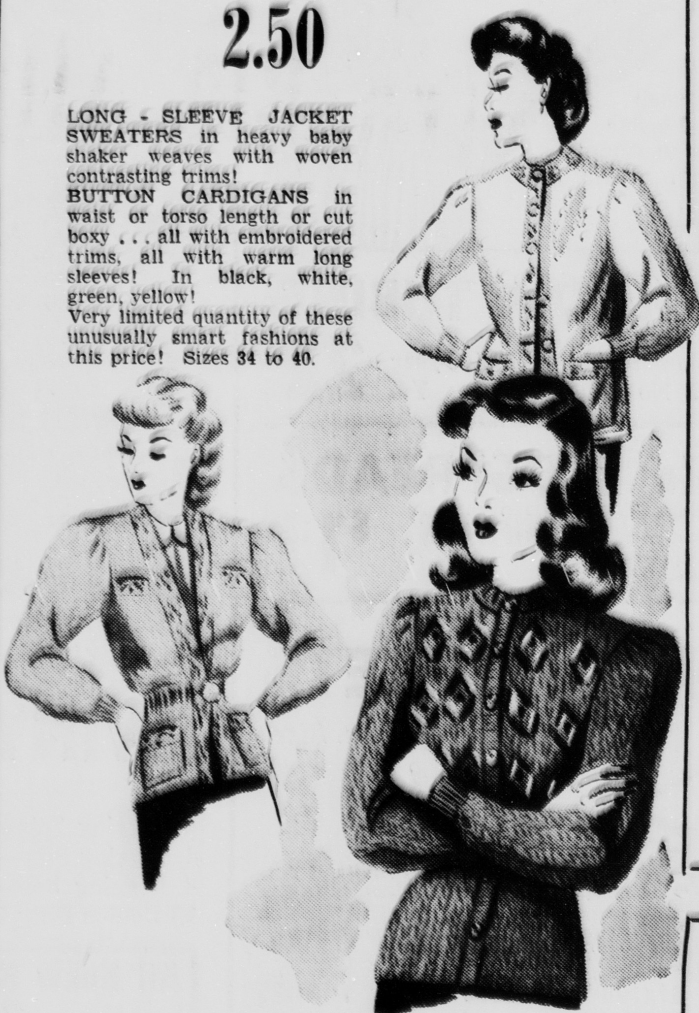
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