

Casey's Ringside Story: 'Ships Lay Smashed, Their Crews Dead'

(Continued from Page One)

we should close in to attack at dawn.

Even when in the sickly gray of the false dawn we were able to make out the black line of the island on the horizon, we could tell nothing about our future. We should have to wait here theoretically chewing our fingernails until our bomber and fighter planes should have come over to begin the festivities (providing always the impatient Japs didn't jump the gun) in about an hour.

Up on the searchlight platform—long out of use—above the bridge, a stiff wind was sweeping over the ship and for the tropics it was fairly chilly—it always seems chilly somehow before battles. From this point you could look down over nearly all the forepart of the ship and it was plain that everything was under control. There wasn't a sound from anywhere save the well deck where the airplanes were warming up.

You might not have known that several hundred men were draped about massive piles, turrets, lookout posts, the round steel verandahs of gun positions, signal stations and what not, if a trick of the moonlight had not given the glint of their blue steel helmets.

And Here's How

The ship, you judged was ready, whatever might happen to it. And this is the way it happened—

5 A. M.—The moon was still big, yellow and brilliant—too brilliant. Aft, the seaplanes began to gurgle and roar.

6:15—The guns of the after turret swung skyward. Suddenly unseen planes were catapulted out of the black in noisy sequence. They rose as gray blots against the gray sky with a ghastly blue halo of hot vapor clinging to them.

6:40—The sun seemed to be struggling up through lowlying clouds. Eight seaplanes came across the dim light and took off westward in formation. The land was plainly visible now off starboard. If the Japs had anything up the sleeve ready for delivery we would be finding it out presently.

6:45—The lookout called that

Losses Compared

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii, Feb. 13 (U. P.)—Comparative damage done by the American raid on the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor:

JAPANESE LOSSES

Sixteen ships destroyed, including five warships:
A 17,000-ton converted aircraft carrier.
One light cruiser.
One destroyer.
Two submarines.
Five cargo vessels.
Three large fleet tankers.
Three smaller ships.
Several ships badly damaged.

Forty-one planes destroyed: Two large seaplanes, 15 fighter planes, 11 scout bombers, 10 additional bombers, and three patrol planes.

Six hangars destroyed.
Two anti-aircraft batteries.
Five intermediate coastal guns.
One radio building.

Unspecified number of ammunition dumps, fuel storage tanks, warehouses, industrial buildings.

The American losses were 11 scout bombers and one cruiser damaged by a small bomb hit.

AMERICAN LOSSES AT PEARL HARBOR

Battleship Arizona and Destroyers Cassin, Shaw and Downes destroyed.

Target ship Utah destroyed.
Mine layer Oglala destroyed.
Battleship Oklahoma capsized, but being repaired.
"Intensive damage to the Army's land-based planes" and "some damage" to hangars.

(The Navy said Japanese losses at Pearl Harbor were three submarines and 41 aircraft.)

smoke was coming up from the island, dead ahead. It was plain to the naked eye, hanging low over the land though only a little different from the cloud formations in the smoky light of dawn.

"From Here in It's Ours"

The island is a typical coral atoll—a string of little palm covered islands circling a lagoon. It was low on the horizon notwithstanding the dim light and took off westward in formation. The land was plainly visible now off starboard. If the Japs had anything up the sleeve ready for delivery we would be finding it out presently.

6:45—The lookout called that

glistening pipes upward and swung about on the platform like the throne of a movie organist. But the lookout identified the planes as our own.

The strafing of the atoll was finished. The bombers were going back and the job from here in is ours.
7 a. m.—The ship swung farther in toward land. With terrible abruptness the big guns in the forward turrets broke loose with a train of concussions that seemed likely to wrench apart everybody and everything aboard.
Four shells lit in the lagoon and topped up high fountains. Other ships in the unit joined in the fire.

Other shells made odd patterns at the south end of the largest island of the atoll now lying off our starboard bow.

With field glasses it was easy to identify this island as our principal objective. Among the palms you could make out the wrecked towers of the radio station. Some of the buildings were afire behind the trees.

7:05—The lookout called "ship dead ahead, sir." There it was halfway between us and the horizon—a little thing like an ocean-going tug, but more likely a well-armed patrol boat. It had come blithely from the dawn to run squarely across the bows of a destroyer—a bit ironic. The tug and the destroyer began to shoot it out.

7:07—There came suddenly the smash of a time-fused shell almost atop the bridge of the ship ahead of us—land batteries! Where had they been?—three more shots came over. This time they struck without exploding. All seemed short. All our guns went on firing regularly, not to say brutally.

Throw Stuff Into Clouds

One of the enemy batteries made no attempt at concealment. You could see the yellow flashes where it fired from the beach. More crumps seemed to be floating over from the south end of the island and a couple of ack-ack batteries had begun to throw stuff into the clouds over the lagoon.

7:15—The light was getting better now and we had a chance to note the odd things that were uncovered as our shells palmstreaked tore this particular south sea island to bits.

There were wharves stretching out into the opalescent lagoon—dwelling places on the white beach mostly hidden by the north island—and things made of concrete that erupted large chunks and great pillars of gray smoke when dynamite exploded under the trees.

The land batteries, if you cared to watch them, were still at work. You could see flashes even if the shells by some odd chance passed you by.

7:26—There was an open spot between two of the islands in the chain where you could see across the reef into the lagoon. As we looked the ship turned up in this frame. She looked to be a freighter of about 6000 tons and apparently had been blasted out of the shelter of the north island by unexpected long shots.

Nobody Minds Shelling

We shifted fire—two shots over, two shots short. What looked to be a tidal wave came up the lagoon. The ship heeled over on the beam ends. That, you figured, was the end of that. But no. By the time the curtain of water had come down she was on an even keel again and on her way. She slipped behind the southerly island.

About this time the destroyer finished polishing off the patrol boat and started back to the main attack.

7:28—Two shells went over us. They seemed to be considerably off in deflection. No one seemed to notice. We continued our sweep up and down the battered island.

7:40—Two more ships came into the opening between the islands. One seemed to be hunting for shelter as waterspouts broke out between them. The other was heading straight for the beach as if nothing could stop it. Nothing did. It went aground, lifted its prow from the water and with dense smoke pouring from its funnel listed far over to starboard.

Shreds of Black Smoke

7:45—The front of the island was getting hazy under shreds of black smoke.

8:15—Two six-inch batteries or maybe three over there in the smoke were tossing out shell with no thought of economy. The sea between us and the island was tufted with them. And now and then in the fashion of another well-remembered war, one of them would throw a chunk of time-shell at us for adjustment. Our five-inch batteries which had been working on the ship now beached, shifted to shore objectives—all the starboard batteries were working and the din was close to the limit of human endurance.

The puffs of the first five-inch salvo and the flashes of a battery in the middle of the island seemed almost simultaneous. The second salvo fell in the same place and another cloud of black smoke went up to join the gathering murk.

Down Goes Another Vessel

8:17—A new ship moved lazily into sight on the lagoon. Our guns straddled it on the third salvo with a tremendous uprush of white water. The ship which had been firing steadily from the guns fore and aft struck her prow down under the swell, shivered, leaned to port and went out of sight. Whoever was aboard went with her.

8:25—After a brief lull and a change of position we were firing everything we had except pom-poms. The results were almost immediate. There was a burst of red flame and a tremendous black cloud rolled skyward—oil would be my guess, and a big tank of it.

8:30—We shifted our fire to the north end of the island and most

of it went over the crest toward targets that only our air observers could see. It was not so spectacular now that we could trace it only by little whirls of debris over the palm tops but we had heard that three or four auxiliaries besides the ones we had smoked out were anchored there.

Five-Inch Guns Bark

Meanwhile, shells from shore batteries were falling nearer. One batch lit about 200 yards off port.

8:35—Four shells tossed white water to starboard. There wasn't any doubt what that meant. We were bracketed—the preserving had finally got us dead in their range.

Our turrets were working faster now but apparently not on the battery which was working on us. The continuous detonation caved in your stomach. The five-inch guns had a continuous bark that jarred something inside your head. Cotton in your ears was small comfort now.

8:41—Another string of geysers flashed ahead of us—just the same sort of geysers we tossed up around the Jap ship in the lagoon before she fell apart. The land battery was slow but working well. The range was now about right—deflection not far off. Four white plumes rose from the island. Somebody had apparently just smashed a large wooden building.

Shell Just Misses Stern

8:45—Three shells just smashed in front of us; one almost scraped our stern. From our platform you can see the widening circle of green, spreading over the deep blue water like ooze on a swamp. Our fantail

had a segment cut off it on one side—just shows how close it came.

About then the bridge decided to stop this nonsense. We could hear telephone men relaying the order already transmitted by other routes to the engine room—"30 knots." We swung about almost on a pivot. Our coop on the foremast rolled over until we were looking almost straight down into the blue water and we came up with a jerk at angles to our original course.

Four shells fell in a pattering astern and to port. It was excellent shooting as we now could admit for we had come out of the bracket.

Sort of Adagio Dance

8:50—Our guns lifted a few salvos from the stern. Shells began to pile up on the island where the battery was flashing at us. We were doing a sort of adagio dance—the sort of movement one might expect of an elephant doing a bayonet drill.

Our wake, a broad path of light blue with fringes of white over the calm surface of cobalt, was like a glittering corkscrew—like the "rolling English road" that the "rolling English drunkard" built.

8:52—Numerous geysers rose about another of our warships. Apparently the second battery was working and he had no intention of quitting. The ship squirmed through a barrage that might have been murderous. Our firing went on.

8:53—Another black fire started about a mile north of the earlier pillar of smoke. Almost immediately two more sizable blazes arose to the north of that. Inflammable stuff

rose that looked like beautiful little white birds or butterflies in the sun. We took time to admire them. We had come well out of range of the remaining cannoners on shore.

8:54—A third fire of first magnitude erupted at the north end of the island. The smoke column was now hundreds of feet high and spreading out in a dense mass over the atoll and along the horizon to the south. We dumped a couple of salvos on top of the flashing battery south of the fire. Then there was no more sign of life on the island.

8:55—One of our airplanes deliv-

ered a message. "This base, an important part of Japan's easternmost menace to the United States is now in irreparable bits—and so are the sea forts to southward where other ships and planes of the fleet have spent a busy and profitable couple of hours. Cease firing."

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