



Tug Tales #12 Jan 15, 2014

## One ST in the Pacific takes on the Japanese – and wins!

Dan Friend [dfriend001@cfl.rr.com](mailto:dfriend001@cfl.rr.com)

I'd love to claim this as a DeLand warboat, but it isn't. Yet the story points out exactly what one little tug with five .50 caliber machine guns can do. Here in its entirety is the report. This is just one more wonderful story that I have recently found. Another ST in the same unit, ST 18, shot down another plane as well...I will save that story for another day. *I really wish I had the ships logs on all of these boats...what incredible history has been lost!* DF

### S.T. 381 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, US Army The Pacific

APO 72

21 December 1944.

General William F. Heavey  
Headquarters, 2nd ESB  
APO 72

Using Cancabato Bay, 500 feet off the Tacloban Air Strip as our permanent mooring, we have found it to be a rather hot corner at times. You know of the numerous attempts to knock that strip out since our arrival here. With all fairness to the other men who are in the same game and trying their best to bring them down, I can say honestly that we gave one "Bogie" all that a single fifty could pump into him for a half a minute.

On November 17, approximately 17:00 hrs, as the day coverage was making their landings with running lights on, one of the Honorable Nips was making a sneak on it, to strafe the field, lights on, as though he was one of our planes. The searchlight on the point spotted him being so close and low that A-A. had little opportunity. Only a few shots were fired. This was our tip off and we gave it to him for at least 3/4 of the strip when he burst into flames and crashed on the west beach opposite the southern end of the strip. We were thankful when we found out later that we had not made a case of mistaken identity. This was our first plane.

Hunting being good and being informed we had a mission coming up, we applied strongly to the Brigade Ordnance Maintenance to give us more guns, and they complied. Before leaving on our mission we had five single fifties, two forward, two aft and one midship. Our ESB gunners were fit and ready for any Jap planes.

December 11, Monday, orders were to proceed to Dulag and rendezvous for the night. Tuesday, the 12th, 05:30 hrs. found us proceeding on orders from the Escort Commander to sea, destination unknown, towing a 2 ESB fuel barge full of distillate. There was no activity the first day out. We were swung into Cabalian Bay, in the lower Surigao Straits on account of some trouble which was not revealed to the ships of the convoy.

At 21:00 hrs, we made the Narrows entering Mindanao Sea. There was light A.A. from the tip of Mindanao, but we were under strict orders not to fire at night unless directly attacked. December 13th, at 15:00 hrs while in Lat. 9 degrees 19' N, Long. 124 degrees 18' E. one long "Bogie" at high level, coming from the southeast, dove and missed the LCT in stern position of our column by 500 feet with two anti-personnel bombs. We all cut loose but he proved too elusive and flew off to Northward. We were sorry we didn't get him.

On Thursday the 14th, while in Lat. 9' 04' N, Long. 122' 28' E, at 08:00 hrs, two Japs were coming into the convoy's stern from a Northeasterly direction, and another was meeting us dead on. We were grateful as we spotted them to see a Navy Corsair on the tail of the lower one astern. He had winged him but the Nip tried to keep himself up after his dive to reach and crash one of our escort destroyers. He failed to reach his mark by 200 yards. Still having his bomb load with him, he caused a large explosion when he struck the water.

His partner above him, at high level, did not want any part of the Corsair or us. This was also the case of the one ahead of us who turned and fled, dropping his load of four bombs one mile ahead of the convoy.

Friday morning the 15th at 06:00 hrs. heavy A.A. was going up astern of us from a large convoy on the horizon. At 11:00 hrs: in Lat. 10' 38' N, Long, 121' 22' E, a twin engine Jap bomber dove at the convoy from the Northeast, leveled off and picked on the second column, the next to our right, just the way we wanted him, For we had three fifties to greet him and they emptied what they had into him. The after gun hit him for 15 seconds, knocking one of his bombs off. The bomb missed the after barge in column 2. This was our second kill.

One of the escort destroyers was making the rear swing of his patrol and was very glad the Nip was not under control and crashed 300 feet off his starboard bow. The Commanding Officer and the crew of the DE acknowledged this by saying 'We were doing a splendid job', also by gesturing as grasping their hands in a warm hand shake. Later in the afternoon out towing cable parted which was probably an act or an event in our favor, relative to events to follow on the next day. The cable was repaired and we were underway in 30 minutes but the Commander's orders changed us to the rear of column I, the tanker Y-14 taking up our old position.

Saturday, the 16th, started as a quite and peaceful day. The sea had gone down and the southern end of Mindoro was in sight. Mindoro was our destination. At 09:20 hrs. a bomber came in from the Northwest on our side of the convoy and leveled off low, leaving the destroyers in a hard position for their heavy guns to be effective. After he crossed the bow of the outside destroyer our two forward and midship guns kept pumping him. He attempted a left bank, but was out of control, trying to crash the Y-14 tanker, who was now in our former position of the convoy. He could only give her a glancing blow off the port quarter while in a vertical bank and dive. He crashed immediately after, rounding the tanker's stern. At least 5 or 6 of the tanker's crew jumped overboard and were picked up by the two LCTs of our convoy. I believe some of her crew were lost, as the Escort Commander asked all ships if they had picked up any men. The tanker proceeded under her own power.

We arrived and anchored our barge at 22:00 hrs., 400 yards off the beach of designated anchorage. Sunday, the 17th, 02:00 hrs., Captain Harris, of the 532d Engr Boat & Shore Regt., contacted us with his Picket Boat. We moved the barge two miles North for him to have the barge under A.A. coverage.

The Escort Commander sent a destroyer in for us, at 04:00 hrs. for he had the convoy underway on it's return trip. By now the Navy was catering to its little "Mascot" and was seeing that we didn't get lost. That's the impression they gave us. The convoy departed at 05:00 hrs. Sunday, the 17th. The return trip was uneventful, that is, nothing came close to us. The Navy opened up on two occasions but they were 3 to 5 miles away.

We encountered two days of rough weather having to ride in the trough of the sea. It seems as though little "Betsy" was trying to make her two "Victory Rolls" on both those days. Sunday, December 17th at 18:00 hrs. the flags were half masted in the convoy for a burial at sea from the LST 605.

We moored in Cancabato Bay, 15:30 hrs., Tuesday the 19th. Quite a long story for a 72 foot Tug of 4 Civilians and 6 GIs, of old 2 ESB.

Respectfully yours,

R. E. CARPENTER,  
Master, ST 381, 2 ESB.

James Mahone-Chief Engineer  
Grant Shanahan-1st Asst. Engr,  
Pvt. H. Keeney-2nd Asst. Engr.  
Alpha Moore-1st Mate  
T/4 M.C. Papenfuss-2nd Mate  
Pvt. G. H. Hultburg-A.B.  
T/5 N. L. Dewar-A.B.  
Pvt. H. N. Clarke-A.B.  
Pvt. N. H. Weisner-Cook