

SECRET

RESCUED PILOTS INTELLIGENCE:INTERVIEW WITH LT.H.J.MURPHY. USMCR.

37A

BACKGROUNDS : (I) ACTION WITH ENEMY.

At 1600 on February 4, 1943, 7 SBD's of VMSB-234 together with 12 TBF's, 16 F4F's, and 4 P-39's attacked 20 Jap DD's and DL's of the inbound Tokyo Express, 200 miles from Cactus in the middle of the channel off Kolombangara Island above the Northern entrance to Vella Gulf. The Express was covered by approximately 20 Nagoya Type I and Type 2 Zero fighters.

Ist.Lt.H.J.Murphy, USMCR, leading the second section of the 1st Division of SBD's dove from 9000 feet on the second Destroyer leader of the port column. On the way down, at about 4,000 feet a 20 MM shell hit his engine. Murphy continued his dive, released his 1,000 pound bomb at 3,000 feet and scored a probable direct hit judging from the appearance of the ship shortly afterwards.

(2) LANDING IN WATER.

Meanwhile the engine had cut out and was throwing black smoke and oil over the windshield. Murphy turned the plane to port as he levelled off, and coasted about three miles towards the South coast of Choiseul Island. He was able to set the plane down in the water, but in the process broke his goggles against the telescopic sight, getting a small piece of glass in his eye, since he was not equipped with a chest harness.

Murphy's rear gunner, Corporal G.W. Williamson, USMC, promptly cleared the rear cockpit, got out the life raft and had it inflated before the plane sank. The alacrity with which he performed this task was most commendable, but complications arose in that 5 Zero Fighters returned at about that time to cover the damaged enemy destroyer. Luckily, the life raft was not straffed, or otherwise annoyed by the Japs even though it was in sight of another Jap destroyer returning to assist the one now dead in the water.

Murphy and Williamson hung onto the raft, but did not attempt to climb in until the Jap DD's headed slowly toward Shortland Island. They had hit the water at 1607, and it was an hour before they were able to head towards Choiseul Island, bucking a headwind on the way.

As a result of the experience, Lt Murphy suggests that life rafts not be inflated immediately upon landing when enemy forces in the near vicinity. It is his opinion that it is possible to keep the uninflated raft afloat until such a time as it is practicable, or safe, to use it. For the same reason he suggests that the Airman's life jacket, and the zipper bag be painted blue to minimize the possibility of attracting the enemy's attention. The life raft itself should be painted blue on the bottom side, yellow on the top, so that the colour shown could be appropriate to the circumstances.

LANDING ON CHOISEUL.

At approximately 0330 the next morning, February 5th, Murphy and Williamson reached shore, and after briefly investigating a section of the coast, put into a swamp, and slept under a tree until daylight. Going a short way inland, they found a swift running mountain stream from which they replenished their water supply. Williamson, incidentally, did not have a canteen with him, and it is suggested that all flying personnel carry a full canteen on every flight. During their investigation of the terrain, Murphy found a cave in which both he and Williamson snatched a few hours sleep after cleaning their weapons.

At 1500 they returned to the shore, camouflaged the life raft as best they could, and started off along the coast to the Southeast.

In the distance they spotted a clump of coconuts trees situated on a small island off the coast. As they headed toward it, they passed a small point jutting out from the shore. Inside the point was located a small native village, later found to be Boeboe. Murphy continued towards the island since he wanted to observe the village for possible signs of the enemy. At the same time, both he and Williamson were becoming hungry since the emergency rations were missing from the plane. The two D ration bars carried by Lt. Murphy had not gone far and coconuts looked like fine eating. Upon landing, they concealed the life raft, very carefully so they thought, and proceeded to explore the island.

CONTACT WITH NATIVES.

Meanwhile they had been observed by natives in the village who promptly put off two men in a small canoe to spy on the new arrivals. This they did most successfully since neither Murphy nor Williamson saw them. The natives returned to the village with the report that they had seen Japs, and asked Lt. Hollandsworth, a TBF pilot who had landed there the night before, what they should do. Lt. Hollandsworth suggested that it was a good idea to eliminate any and all Japanese; so a war canoe full of natives put out to accomplish the mission. Some of the natives landed, found the camouflaged life raft; the rest paddled around the island searching for the two men. Finally they were discovered, and Murphy and Williamson were confronted by a group of natives, well supplied with hatchets and clubs eager for a moment's diversion. It was, to say the least, a slightly tense situation.

However, the natives quickly recognized the new arrivals as Americans, and embarked them with their life raft aboard the canoe, the party proceeded to the village, reaching there at 1500 where they were met by Lt. Hollandsworth and Adcock, his gunner who had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel. Murphy and Williamson were billeted in the house of Elaiza Ama a native teacher who spoke very good English, and were furnished with sarongs to replace the clothes which the natives helpfully put to dry. At the same time a feast of sweet potatoes, cooked in coconut oil, was set before them. The next meal also consisted of sweet potatoes and was eaten with somewhat less relish; and after four days the unrelieved diet began to pall. The moral of the experience, Lt. Murphy points out, is make quite sure that the emergency rations are not missing from your plane. It was not until later that they were supplied with fresh eggs, papaya, bananas, and sugar cane.

TRIP TO COAST WATCHERS STATION.

By February 8th it was decided that Murphy and Hollandsworth had to contact the coast-watcher on Choiseul to make arrangements for a plane pick-up. At sunset on that day, they started up the coast in a war canoe paddled by nine natives. Williamson was left behind with Adcock at Boeboe. By midnight the canoe party reached Sambi, where it was met by the head native named Levi, who is a leader of real ability; he is very intelligent and speaks good English.

Murphy and Hollandsworth transferred to a larger, 14 man war canoe, under the direction of Levi. At dawn the aviators went ashore to a house which had been readied for their arrival, a chicken prepared, and a boy servant assigned to care for their wants. Here they slept for an hour and a half, before resuming their journey on foot along a path bordered by a large cultivated hedges. After a 15 mile hike which took four hours, they reached Bambatana Mission at 1300. A Native teacher, named Stephen, who speaks excellent English, extended the usual hospitality, and Murphy and Hollandsworth rested all afternoon. Meanwhile the war canoe had been brought carefully along the coast by the native crew, so that at 2 o'clock in the morning the journey was resumed by water. The regular stop was made at sunrise, and a three mile walk along the coast trail ended at a small village.

It was necessary to wait for two hours while word was sent to the Coast Watcher, who then sent a safe conduct pass down by native runner so that the party could proceed along the trail to his hideway. This trail was found to be very narrow, very steep and tortuous, so much so that Murphy and Hollandsworth had to stop every twenty yards to rest. All along the way, were native guard posts obviously set to protect the Coast Watcher.

The Coast Watching personnel was found to consist of a tall, rugged Australian by the name of Waddell, whose name is a pass word in the region, since he was a district Government Officer before the war, he had ample opportunity to prepare himself for his present assignment. Waddell is assisted by another husky individual by the name of Seton, who was General Manager of all the coconut plantations in the area, those owned by the Solomon Islands Development Coompany, the Shortland Plantations Co., and others. They were all set to take care of their visitors, bunks had been prepared, a pig bought for a feast, but the meeting was necessarily very brief.

*No longer the neat
matty Waddell that I met.*

RENDEZVOUS WITH RESCUE PLANE.

When the fliers arrived at 1300, a message was radioed out to arrange for their rescue by plane. An hour and a half later the reply came through that the pick up would be scheduled for Friday morning. This seemed reasonable until it was discovered that the coast watcher had a 1942 calendar, and calculations showed that an immediate return to Boeboe was necessary. It was then requested that the pick up be made on Saturday morning, but the original instructions were repeated, that it had to be Friday morning, none other.

After a last meal with wadell and Seton, Murphy and Holandsworth left for the shore, reaching the canoe at 1830. All that night they paddled down the coast, stopping about midnight at one small village to change crews. Levi, the Chief, stayed with the fliers, showing really remarkable endurance. The usual daylight stop was made at dawn, Murphy and Hollandsworth breakfasted, then slept until the late afternoon. At sunset they started out again. Murphy by this time was running a high fever, and feeling none too chipper. He and Hollandsworth had divided their quinine tablets with the gunners before they left, ~~unfortunately~~ and had been taking one tablet a day themselves. Murphy's supply, unfortunately, had become wet and had melted into one mass, so Hollandsworth's supply had to be stretched considerably.

At 2 o'clock in the morning of Friday, February 12th, the party reached Boe-boe, where the fliers got a few hours sleep. Natives had re-inforced the usual night watch in order to spot the canoe, and later the PBY which came to pick up the fliers. The plane finally arrived at 0800, bringing in supplies for the Coast Watchers, and 50 rifles for the natives. Incidentally, on the way up the coast, at Sambu, the party picked up a Jap Lewis gun from the natives who had killed 7 of the enemy a few days previously. Mr. Waddell put the gun back in commission but did not have ammunition to go with it. It is suggested that the Jap ammunition recently captured on Guadalcanal and on the Russells can be put to very good use by Messrs. Waddell and Seton, and their developing army of natives.

After discharging supplies, the PBY with Murphy, Hollandsworth, Williamson and Adcock aboard, took off from Boeboe. On the way down the south coast of Santa Isabel, the rescue plane and its fighter escort thoroughly strafed and sank several Japanese supply barges, before making an otherwise uneventful return to Henderson Field.

NOTES ON CHOISEUL NATIVES.

Lt. Murphy had several interesting observations to make regarding the natives with whom he came in contact on Choiseul Island. First^{ly} all he noted that they seemed to expect nothing in return for the assistance they rendered, and that their helpfulness was based entirely on their friendliness ~~was based~~ toward whitemen, and their distaste for Japanese. It is suggested that with these particular natives, no payment or reward in the usual sense, be paid. If the natives start operationing on that basis, it would be logical to expect that the Japs might play the same game and raise the ante. As it was, Lt. Murphy left as gifts, his watch, which was broken in landing, his compass, whistle, reflector and pen knife.

All the women and children have left the coastal villages and have gone inland. During the day the men come down to the coast, and except for those who remain on coast watching posts during the night, return inland at sunset. Natives are on watch twenty four hours a day for pilots in distress, and to spot movements of the Japanese.

The natives, incidentally, are very religious as the result of missionary efforts, and at Boeboe the native teacher AMA holds church services twice a day. These meetings are called together by blowing on large conch shells, a signal which is also used to call the firewood detail when the communal fire needs replenishing.

Most natives understand English, and while the coast watchers speak to them in Pidgin English, Lt. Murphy was readily understood when he spoke slowly and naturally, using simple sentences.

(signed) H.G. Payne Jr.

Lt. U.S.N.R. NACI

