

Mch Harry Corl
Torpedo Three

6/15/42

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STATEMENT BY H. L. CORL, LTJG, USN

I was the pilot of 3-T-3, my radioman and gunner was Childers, ^{Lt}ARM30.

Our squadron led by Lt-Cdr. Massey took off from the Yorktown at approximately 1045. Upon joining up the squadron proceeded in company with six F4F4's on a heading of 235 true.

At 1200 a large column of smoke was seen about 20° off our starboard bow, distance about 30 miles. The squadron immediately turned in that direction, As we drew closer to the enemy more smoke was observed over a wide area. We reached the outer screen of the enemy at about 1225 at 2500 ft., the outer screen being about 10 to 15 miles from the carriers themselves.

We were attacked by enemy fighters just before reaching the enemy's outer screen. The squadron immediately lost altitude to 100 ft. and below. At this time the squadron was in a 2 division stacked down formation with three planes to a section, six planes to a division. We were immediately subjected to heavy concentrated AA and fighter attacks. They were approximately six enemy fighters to every section of our torpedo planes. From what I could see Jap fighters disregarded our own fighters and concentrated on our torpedo planes. They definitely disregarded their own AA fire. It seemed that no matter how close we were to the water they still dove under us, Upon completion of their firing run. Our section, the lead section managed to get thru their protecting screen to a position where we could pick out a target to make a run on it.

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At this point my elevator controls were shot away, my plane immediately went into a steep glide. Upon seeing I was going to crash into the water I released my torpedo. After releasing the torpedo I was able to bring the nose of the plane up and keep it up by using the tab control. After getting control of the plane I stayed with the other ~~two~~ planes in the section. Hopin to aid them in fighting off the Jap fighters. The squadron commander was immediately hit and went down in flames with no hope of anybody surviving. No. 2 plane flown by CAP Esders was still intact. Upon seeing him head for a run on a carrier I turned North to get away from the enemy fleet. I was immediately set upon by two Jap fighters and under heavy AA fire. It took ten minutes to get thru the AA fire. I encountered CAP Esders ahead of me under attack by Jap fighters. We both flew in the general direction of North for 5 minutes under continuous attack by fighters before they stopped their attack. As soon as we were clear of everything we headed back to our own carrier.

After shaking the fighters off and proceeding on a heading to intercept the Yorktown, I took an inventory of the damage of my plane.

There was a very bad oil leak in the lower part of the engine. The cylinder head temperature gauge was not working. The engine would only one at 2100 RPM and with the mixture control set on Rich. There was no elevator control with the stick. The radio receiver and transmitter and also the ZB receiver were not working. The Aldis lamp was also shattered. The free gun had jammed during the fight. Childers, ARM3c, my

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gunner used his 45 automatic during the ^{last} ten minutes of the attack.

Childers was hit in the right ankle causing a compound fracture of same. He received two hits in his left leg above the knee, no bones broken in that leg.

I arrived at the Yorktown at about 1425, circled it twice and saw there was no chance of getting aboard. So I proceeded over the the Enterprise. I attempted to land aboard, but discovered I did not have enough tab control on the elevator to keep the nose up. The landing approach was started aft of the carrier at about 500 feet. There was not enough power left and with 10 pound oil pressure to make a stand and approach, so I ^{landed} ~~landed~~ in the water ahead and to the starboard of the carrier alongside the Destroyer U.S.S. Monaghan. The time of landing was 1510.

My gunner and myself were immediately picked up by the destroyer.

No torpedo hits were observed by myself. Things were happening to fast and ^{was} ~~were~~ not at sufficient altitude to get a clear picture of the Japanese fleet disposition. From what I observed from the side we made ^{an} ~~an~~ attack, ~~from~~ they appeared to have ^a ~~another~~ screen of destroyers about 15 miles radius from the carriers. Inside the destroyers screen were light cruisers, and then heavy cruisers. In what appeared to be an area of about five miles diameter in the center of which were Jap carriers and destroyers. There were four carriers in columns of two. It appeared that the carriers maneuvered at top speed inside the

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protecting screen while the protecting screens themselves appeared to have little ~~and~~ any way under.

The attack from the Jap fighters kept the torpedo planes from dodging the AA fire and picking out the quickest and safest approach to the enemy carriers.

Our planes were too slow and did not have enough fire power. Now^{ere} were there enough of our own fighters for protection.

Too much time is wasted and the torpedo plane is under fire to long a time in attempting to get in a position to come in on the bow of the target.

The enemy will keep turning so as to have his stern toward the torpedo plane at all times. I would suggest that the torpedo planes would ~~deploy~~ deploy at sufficient altitude (6000-8000ft) so as to have the squadron split up into two divisions each division in a single plane line. 90° on the enemy side bow or stern. When both divisions are in a position to cover 180° of the targets bow, side or stern, and the entire squadron in a single plane semi-circle. Each plane will turn ^{SIMULTANEOUSLY} ~~together~~ and go in at a steep glide with at least 100 knots above the torpedo dropping speed. The plane should level off, ~~xxx~~ close to the water just far enough from the target to enable the plane to slow down enough to reach the torpedo dropping speed at the dropping point.

From what I observed during the battle, I believe the following should be required to perform a successful torpedo attack.

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The essential requirement should be speed, and then sufficient fire power to repel a fighter attack. The enemy fleet should be approached at sufficient altitude to enable the torpedo pilot to get a clear picture of the Jap fleet disposition to enable him to take the best attack course. Also sufficient altitude will allow the torpedo plane to come in at a steep glide so as to enable the plane to have sufficient speed to carry him across the enemy protecting screen.

The torpedo itself should be of the high speed dropping type. It should arm itself within 200 feet after entering the water.

Above all, speed is required to get the torpedo plane thru the enemy protecting ~~see~~ screen, whether it be surface ships or fighters.