



DIARY OF A MARINE FIGHTER SQUADRON

MARINE CORPS REPORT

MONDAY—SOUTH PACIFIC

2305—Two divisions took off to patrol X area

0110—Made contact at 20,000 feet

0250—Returned. See attached statements

DIVISION LEADER A:

DIVISIONS were separated by five miles at first sighting of enemy planes. *Zeros* were closing from 2 o'clock and slightly below. Nine *Vals* were seen below at approximately 15,000 feet. My wingman immediately reported it to the base—air was jammed at the time, and no response was heard.

The *Zeros* continued on course toward the north, passed underneath and apparently did not see us. Flying three planes abreast so as not to lose each other, I made a turn towards the bogey.

They saw us. Two of them split and began to gain altitude advantage. As they rolled and dived on us, we pulled our noses up into them, doing about 170 knots. The *Zeros* then pulled their noses up and started to climb.

I looked over my left shoulder and saw the other division coming in, and assumed they were above the *Zeros* on top of us—so I made a sharp turn to the right and ran into some *Zeros*.

I fired at the leader of a four-plane division. Tracers passed over his left wing. He did a split **S** and went down hard. His number three and four plane followed. Number two plane continued to the right, climbing slightly ahead of me. I closed from five o'clock above

and, on the longest burst, fired from 200 yards. My tracers passed ahead of his cockpit and through his left wing. Pieces scattered in the air.

At this time I received a burst in my cockpit and right wing. I pulled out, did a split **S** to the right, rolled to the left and then right. A 7.7 mm came through the fuselage, breaking the *tr* box and oxygen regulator, causing the oxygen pressure to be reduced to 0. I went down to 8,000 feet.

Indicating better than 300 knots in the dive, I noticed an F4U over each shoulder and thought them to be the other two planes of my division. A few minutes later Lt. W. joined up on me.

I leveled off, examined my plane and myself, then joined up with the other division. At this time I saw two planes in flames, heading west and northwest, diving toward the open ocean. They were out ten miles from our orbit, and I was unable to determine whether they were friendly or Japs. I then notified the other division leader I was returning to base and Lt. W. accompanied me. After passing X island, my plane started to smoke and run very roughly, so I landed there.

When I inspected the ship, I found a 20 mm shell had gone through my

right wing root, oil cooler return line, ricocheting off engine cowl flaps, putting one hole near the end of two propeller blades. There was other damage to the plane of a less serious nature. I had received some slight scalp and thigh wounds from shattered glass and 7.7 mm bullet jackets. Otherwise, no injuries were received by any of them.

DIVISION LEADER B:

WE WERE FLYING at 19,500 feet about five miles off shore when we heard the report of a bogey at six o'clock. As we turned away from shore, we noticed nine *Vals* below coming in towards the Cape. We began a high side towards the *Vals*, which turned away. Four flights of *Zeros* and one flight of *Hamps* were above us, so we did not complete our run on the *Vals*.

We spotted the other division mixing up with *Zeros*, so we proceeded in their direction. Three *Zeros* above us at four o'clock were over our right shoulders. We began a right-hand turn and saw one F4U 2,000 feet below with three *Zekes* on his tail. We made a sharp left turn, losing the *Zekes* that were firing on our tail. We then made a sharp



right turn and saw four *Zeros* in column 1,500 feet below and climbing parallel to our course. We then rolled over and made a high side attack. Major H. picked the lead plane and Lt. H. the number two. We started firing from 1,000 feet and saw tracers in front of their noses. At the same time, off to our right, four *Zeros* were making a high side on us. Our target turned slightly towards us, increased their climb and Lt. H. saw his tracers enter the cowl and move along the cockpit and fuselage. Pieces of cowl flew.

We had then closed so much, it was necessary to pull up to prevent running into them. Lt. H. estimated that he passed by the *Zero* with approximately a 20-foot clearance!

We then turned to the left and noted four *Zeros* below and climbing in column, so we made a right-hand turn to prevent their getting on our tail, and prepared to make a head-on attack. Lt. H. fired one burst and they did a split **S** out. We then made a sharp turn to the left and dove out of the fight with eight *Zeros* following directly behind, but we lost them. I contacted the base and requested permission to pancake, as our fuel supply was running low. We landed just ahead of a violent storm.

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