

Kamikaze Attacks April 12th and July 30th, 1945

USS CASSIN YOUNG ORAL HISTORY SERIES No. 2

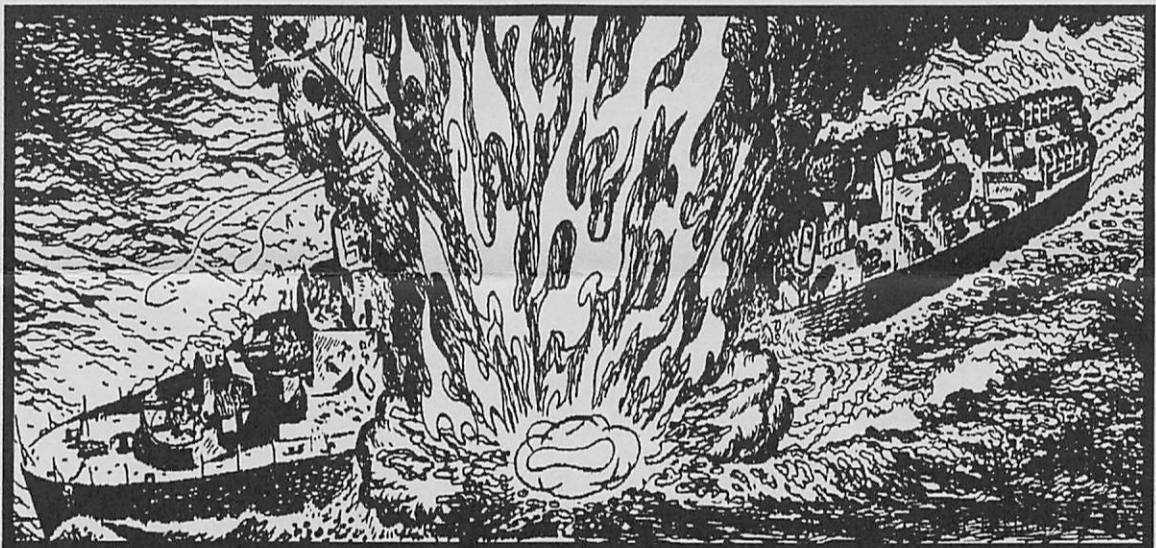
In October 1944 the Japanese High Command announced the formation of a special suicide unit of the air force called kamikazes. Their mission was to use airplanes as guided weapons to destroy enemy naval aircraft carriers and battleships. The idea of dying for the Emperor was popular with the Japanese as evidenced by the high

turn out of volunteers. Believing the fate of Japan rested upon their shoulders, kamikaze pilots welcomed the chance to die fending off an invasion of their homeland.

Operating in the Pacific, CASSIN YOUNG provided Task Group 54's first line of defense as a radar picket

ship. On April 12, 1945, off the coast of Okinawa, CASSIN YOUNG's mast was struck by one of seven kamikaze planes. One sailor died and 59 were wounded.

The following words are from interviews with men who were on board the CASSIN YOUNG during both attacks.



Charles Tripi,
Electricians Mate

"When the fleet went to Okinawa, they set up picket stations all the way around the island. I think there were 16 different picket stations around Okinawa. When we started out, I think we were in position 3, which was north between Japan and Okinawa. We had three or four very calm days where things looked like they were going to be a snap. Then, all of a sudden, came the kamikazes. And it was four days of hell"

George T. Finnegan,
Navigator

"Everybody aboard the ship was scared silly, I mean from the captain down. There was no joke. We fought it well, the ship fought it well, but there was no question, everybody was scared. And I think because of that, of course, I think that they did fight so well"

Heath Haggerty,
Gunner's Mate

"So this plane, somebody had hit him and he had gone into a spin, a flat spin like, and we switched to another plane . . . all of a sudden this guy was right there, just coming right at us off the starboard bow . . . I was the gun captain, I had the phones on and I figured, Well I've gotta stay here . . . and at the last split second, I shut my eyes and tried to crawl into my helmet . . . I opened my eyes, and nothing. I'm fine. What he did, he pulled up a little, and he took off the top of the mast"



Once repairs were made, CASSIN YOUNG returned to the waters off Okinawa. At 3:26 am, July 30th, a lone kamikaze struck the ship on its starboard (right) side near the forward smoke stack. Power was completely knocked out for 20 minutes until the reserve engine was activated. Twenty-two sailors died, 45 were wounded.

George T. Finnegan,
Navigator

"I remember the crew joking at the time . They were very relieved that they were not going to go right back on the picket station. And they were talking about hunting the phantom submarines in Buckner Bay, and everybody was pretty lighthearted about it. But that night, I remember the General Quarters gong sounded, and of course, the General Quarters gong would be with you the rest of your life."

Charles Tripi,
Electricians Mate

"We had developed a vacuum leak. We couldn't maintain proper speed, so they said, well, instead of putting them out on picket, we'll let them patrol the harbor. Just outside the harbor, so no subs can come in. And this is where we sustained our second hit, right there outside the harbor. So when the ship was hit, I believe within 20 minutes they had the fires out and had us underway. All we had to do is go right back into port.

Heath Haggerty,
Gunner's Mate

"My battle station was on this forty millimeter, it was about 3 or 3:30 am, there was somewhat of a moon . . . they picked up a bogey quite a few thousand yards out. You know we weren't too impressed because it was quite a ways out. . . . We turned everything on and just seconds later, they told us, 'Action starboard, commence firing.' . . . and I thought 'What the hell happened here?' First they say he was 12,000 yards away, and now he's right here"

James Marrs,
Quartermaster

"That plane came in and hit the starboard whaleboat while it was rigged out. You always had one lifeboat when you are at sea that was rigged out on davits, so you could get it over the side quick. And he flew into it. So all the force was out there If he had hit us, I think we would have probably sunk. And that's where the force went. And that's where we were lucky, in that respect"

Brendon Doyle,
Machinist Mate

"The ship was dead in the water. It had lost its propulsion, but it had emergency lights, we had that going . . . we were there for—oh I'd say 20 minutes or better. We'd hear noises and all that and we didn't know what was going on, we lost contact with the bridge"

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