

In a lighter vein tragedy was visited upon H.H. Ploetz, Photographer's Mate 2/c, who throughout the action filled 30 minutes prior to the order to abandon ship, had steadily shot pictures of the scene. Among the last to leave the ship, Ploetz, whose devotion to his job was mentioned to this reporter by Captain Pearson, was thrown into the water. His camera was ruined and the exposed film which he had stowed away on his person was destroyed by the drenching. Picked up by another ship, Ploetz eventually returned to the 884 and made the long journey to Ulithi with the salvage crew. At Ulithi he reported for duty fitted out in borrowed dungarees with a borrowed camera, ready and able to continue his front line coverage of the Coast Guard in action.

Poncho, a fox terrier pup, who is the 884's mascot, went over the side with the crew but returned with the salvage party and continued to Ulithi where, still aboard the battered ship, she continues her reign as the salty queen of a fighting ship.

Drinking water was salvaged from the emergency tins on the Marine vehicles, stores of K Ration and canned food were supplied from other ships and, working throughout the night despite numerous air alerts, welders sealed the 20-foot hole in the hull, made by the suicide plane, with a temporary patch.

Finally, on the morning of April 14, two weeks after the attack, the 884 was deemed sufficiently seaworthy and she was taken in tow to start on the long passage to Ulithi. Throughout the two weeks that had passed from the day of the assault, a great deal had been done to the ship. Various items of equipment had been salvaged and portions of the ship had been "cannibalized" for use aboard other vessels. Groups of the crew had been reporting back as they arrived in the area aboard rescue ships.

Forty enlisted men were transferred to a sister LST and a skeleton crew of seven officers and 30 men with their commanding officer, Lt. Pearson, set out on the long way to Ulithi. They cooked on an emergency pressure type stove, toilet facilities were an impromptu "Chic Salon" structure rigged up over the starboard quarter and washing was done in helmets. Nightfall brought bedtime for the ship was without interior lighting. Officers and men slept on deck, under the brilliant tropic stars and moon and morale ran high as the Coast Guardsmen nursed their battered ship back to port. Arrival at Ulithi brought reunion with all hands and as this is written these veterans of the hell of Okinawa are "sweatin' it out" at this advanced base, seeing a movie or two, getting more decent chow, drinking a can of beer or so and waiting to go back for another crack at the Japs.

Submitted by:  
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