

## Slaughter Among the Icebergs

By GUS

(Continued from Last Week.)

Over and over again the peals of wild uncontrollable laughter and sobs floated from No. 2 messing compartment like the spasmodic wheezing of a dying asthmatic sufferer. Chaos beckoned.

Now if it was any one thing which the crew of our ship prided itself above all else and for which they had received many compliments throughout the fleet it was their incessant ability in keeping level headed thru any and all emergencies. Yet flesh and blood can endure so much. Where human beings are concerned as they were in this case the slender thread that supports the prop of reasoning began to weaken at an alarmingly fast rate. There could be only one remedy. The cause must be removed so action was paramount.

A flying squad of corpsmen converged at last upon the hapless mess-cook and managed to lead him off to the sick bay where a straight jacket prevented him from further harming himself. This, however, did not hamper the style of his outcries. Something had to be done to effectively gag his almost inarticulate mouthings. The wise saying that necessity is the mother of invention was aptly proven when a capable yeoman brought one of his brain childs into play. Saying that a gas mask had more uses than a cat had lives he rapidly fitted a mask to the messcook. The pitiful cries were thus at last silenced and men breathed normally again.

(Continued on Page 2.)

Robert Harold Christenson

Robert Christenson of Salt Lake City was swept overboard on the night of 30 January. Each and everyone remembers well the heartbreaking task of trying to locate his body in the face of the hurricane-like winds and waves which were prevalent on that night.

It suffices to say that all hands felt his passing more keenly than could ever be imagined. He was a good shipmate. More words are unnecessary.

## First American Fleet

At the beginning of the hostilities, prior to the Revolutionary War, the Colonies carried on the war at sea by means of "privateers" or private vessels which were authorized to capture British merchant ships. This was a cheap method of waging war as the privateers were not paid salaries but given the entire proceeds from the sales of such ships as they captured. About 70,000 men in Massachusetts alone were engaged in privateering. In one year they captured over three hundred British ships.

These privateers had an indirect effect on the results of the war, as they undermined English commerce and increased our standing among the other nations. However the privateers had little effect upon the military operations as they preferred capturing richly laden and poorly armed merchant ships to engaging men-of-war in battle.

In order to protect their harbors, many of the Colonies established small navies of their own. This proved

(Continued on Page 4.)

## Impressions of Gonaives

Gonaives, Haiti, with a population of 8,000 negroes, is situated 65 miles north-northwest from Port-au-Prince, the capitol of the country. Its only manufacturing claim is the salt works although a mineral spring nearby is highly prized by its inhabitants.

Gonaives, as cities go, proved to be about as attractive to a sailor as a swarm of yellow jackets would be at a highland clan gathering. Although not possessing any of the desirable attributes of other towns and cities with which we are familiar nevertheless we found a few novel and interesting sights there.

Probably the erect bearing of the negro women as they carried huge baskets of clothes on their heads was watched with admiration. Our women back home should take a tip from them provided they desire that graceful swing in walking.

The dwellings, patched together with everything from brush to driftwood, are painted blue and white. The paint, if it is paint, resembles a white-wash mixture of rather mediocre grade. Its pastel tints resemble nothing found in our country.

Over the white graveled roads numerous small donkeys provide the chief means of transportation. To ride on one is a distinct experience one will never forget. Along these roads runs a long ditch which is used for everything from washing clothes to watering live stock.

One thing for certain, one will never forget Gonaives. No doubt all of us are a bit happy that it isn't our lot to live there.

## —: THE BLUE BONNET :—

A weekly publication of the ship's company of the U.S.S. Houston, Captain G. N. Barker, U.S.N., Commanding and Commander C. A. Bailey, U.S.N., Executive Officer.

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(Continued from Page 1.)

It must not be forgotten that during this trying ordeal the ship was forced to continue its course of 000° True. Stern hands kept the bow headed for the Polar regions. In spite of the black fog which shut out sight and rendered duties extremely difficult to perform the men stood their watches faithfully. What was accomplished was done by touch alone. But now to make matters much worse a violent electrical storm lashed out from the darkness. Its fury was uncomparable. The best attempt in describing the terrifying forces and the wrathful vengeance of nature would fall woefully short of the truth. However, it is sufficient to say that lightning sent its jagged piercing streamers in an almost never ending stream from sky to water. The electrical display was awe-inspiring. Later, many of the crew were heard to relate that it was the best durned Fourth of July Celebration they'd ever seen. No doubt, too, the danger lent zest and many thrills to spectators.

Call it a freak of the storm or by any other name, yet a near miracle now came to pass. A peculiarly green colored bolt of lightning containing many volts of electrical energy struck No. 1 turret. The turret glowed like molten iron for a few moments then automatically trained itself around to 180°. As a result its guns tore through the bulkhead into the captain's cabin. No cognizance was then taken of this significant action mainly because attention was centered on the safety and integrity of the ship. We were to learn later of the amazing effect of the supercharged bolt.

During the rolling and pitching of the vessel many of the crew felt the rigors of the sea. Much of this effect

very unfortunately went to their stomachs. The pickles taken aboard while in port performed invaluable service. Some of the crew became quite attached to them and felt that most everything might have been lost (and well it might) if it hadn't been for their soothing influence. Later, I was told by most reliable sources that these unfortunates banded themselves in a society to further the popularity of the pickle. To this present day, it was also said, the society still carries out its convictions and aims.

Coincidentally when the last pickle was gone, the storm lifted as suddenly as it had appeared. Sunshine and good weather replaced the foul. A velvety sea replaced a seething cauldron. The only remaining trace of the rather unusual weather was a layer of soot which caked the entire ship from stem to stern. If we could have seen our ship and ourselves then from a distant station in a detached manner no doubt we would have laughed most heartily. Everyone looked like the colored messboys. The ship looked as if she'd been carrying coal for centuries. The occasion proved anything but humorous after considering it from the angle of labor involved. An emergency field day was held. Before long as a result of long and well planned work the ship emerged as from a chrysalis, spotless and shiny, the pride of the seas and a credit to our Navy.

After a few days of storm, daily routine was reestablished and normalcy flowed on as serenely as a mountain brook. Except for one thing, a quite weighty reminder, the storm with its events would have faded into the limbo of time. No. 1 turret could not or would not be budged from its reversed position. Although almost every mind aboard devised methods of returning the ailing turret to its normal position all efforts failed miserably. There was only one thing left to do. That was for everyone concerned to adopt the policy of "live and let live" of "what is must be". This was then hastily concurred in and all hands repaired to the sick bay where the ship's doctor prescribed ample proportions of medical alcohol.

Day followed day with amazing regularity. Except for the continued falling of the thermometer each day was

like the rest. Then finally there came that day, long thereafter remembered, when a single iceberg hove in sight. Blue-white and glistening like a million diamonds in the sunlight it presented truly a wonderful sight. Here then was one of the far flung frontiers of the polar regions. On the order for the day peacoats, double watch caps, and woolen socks were prescribed the uniform of the day.

Because of the fact that we were rapidly approaching the iceberg pack the landing force was mustered with full equipment. Under the leadership of the 2nd Lieutenant in the Marine Corps all units marched about the decks like they had never marched before. They pirouetted, parried, made feints toward an imaginary enemy, and otherwise performed with their various guns. Naturally they came in for a good share of rather caustic remarks and ribaldry from interested and amused spectators, but by setting their minds to the duty and the job before them no amount of outside horseplay could even as much as elicit one strained smile. Within the short period of two days the landing force was pronounced ready for any emergency or trial that could beset them in the frozen northland.

Finally, before us, as far as the eye could see loomed impenetrable bergs, floes, and ice fields. The grinding, churning roar of crushing restless ice filled the air with eerie sound. Men had to shout in order to be heard. Before us was our destination. Now to its successful completion.

Plans were now laid with infinite detail. It was decided that the logical first step would be to send the four planes out on a scouting mission. The discovery of the piece de resistance was, to say the least, of prime importance. Polar bears were necessary to successfully culminate our undertaking. Flight call brought the aviators to their stations on the double. In a few minutes each plane, fully equipped to withstand the terrific cold, was catapulted.

Meanwhile although the main engines had stopped it was found necessary to back down continually to avoid crashing full tilt into the icebergs. Still not the least bit of alarm was felt because of this rather unusual procedure. It was explained

away with the statement that in this part of the world no doubt an exceptionally strong southern current was prevalent. How absurdly wrong this belief was to be revealed later.

Where once we were looking only ahead and forward we realized with the operation of the first steps of the plans that we had at last arrived. Now it was either fight or be whipped and slink back to civilization much like beaten dogs who were found wanting when so much was required. I believe everyone aboard, then and there, appraised himself from his soul outward. And I must confess that a few of us were found to be distinctly wanting when all our points had been summarized. Those in this category resolved to meet the test with doubled up fists when the time came. The more fortunate said that their records would speak for themselves.

I had the very good fortune afterwards to hear from the lips of the leading aviator his picture of the epoch making flight. Highly interesting and depicting graphically the impressions of an aviator seeing for the first time the polar regions from aloft, his account, as I remember it, is quoted verbatim. "On the morning of our flight the weather was excellent both in regard to ceiling, wind, and visibility. Whereas we had not expected any difficulty in the search over the icebergs we did not take into account the electrical phenomena which seriously effected the directive forces of our magnetic compasses. As soon as we were catapulted into the air this was brought home to us by rapid unnatural swinging of the compass. In the vernacular of the streets 'they just wouldn't stay put nohow'. We were able, notwithstanding this difficulty, to search with painstaking care the surrounding territory. By stationing planes barely within visible distance of each other, the one closest to the ship being within sight of the parent vessel, we were able to rotate as spokes in a huge wheel. While this method did not readily lend itself to great distances it nevertheless permitted us to search most thoroughly the nearby area. The special Arctic flight clothing kept us from being uncomfortable although the cold icy winds ranged from forty degrees below zero to

sometimes one hundred and fifty degrees below. My impressions of the panorama which now lay spread out below me varied greatly. The aurora borealis stretching with its colorful fingers ever upward to lose themselves at last in the rare stratosphere impressed me. The icebergs, cold and blue with two-thirds of their height extending below water also impressed me. But outside of these, frankly, I was disappointed. (There being no need to explain the various shadings and ramifications of the temperament of the relater in this serial, and because as such it lies beyond the scope of this printed page, no further explanation concerning his disappointment will now be gone into.) Altho I scanned the country below quite efficiently I could not make out one little stir of life. I could not see that blob of white which meant a polar bear was below."

To be continued.

Don't miss the next Installment: will the aviators discover polar bears?

### Power and Pressure

In the days of the Civil War the weight of propelling machinery aboard war vessels for the horse power produced was vastly greater than it is today. Then it was not unheard of to have cylinders over 100 inches in diameter. The weight of the engines has diminished slowly through the years. It became less when the compound engine came into use, less again when the triple expansion engine with condensers were the rule. With the change from upright cylinder engines to the turbine there was a great reduction in weight to the amount of power produced.

The tendency now is to get greater and greater power out of the turbines by increasing the steam pressure up and up.

The Grace Line steamships have been running their ships successfully for years with steam pressure between three and four hundred pounds to the square inch. Many naval vessels exceed this pressure today and it has been predicted that in the near future a pressure of 1,000 pounds per square inch will come into use.

### Boxers and Wrestlers Leave Ship

The well wishes of all the crew went with our boxers and wrestlers when they were transferred last Saturday to the Northampton. This was necessary so that they could participate in the cruiser semi-finals that took place the next day ashore in Guantanamo.

We are in Norfolk out of touch with the doings of our boxers and wrestlers but all of us will be eagerly scanning the first news that comes through.

### Questions

(Answers on Page Four.)

What is the molded breadth of a ship?

What is "Camber"?

What is "Sheer"?

What is the difference between Dead-weight tonnage, Net tonnage, and Gross tonnage?

### I Don't Get It

Those who think these jokes are poor  
Would straitway change their views  
Could they compare the ones we print  
With those that we refuse.

He: "Darling, your waist is the smallest I have ever seen."

She: "Of corset is"

Sailor, very young sailor, meets beautiful, very beautiful blond.

"Say, how about a date tonite?"

She looked at his young face and scornfully:

"Sorry, but I can't go out with a baby."

"Pardon me, I didn't know."

A man from the cellar always comes up smiling.

Success is a fraud. By the time you are rich enough to sleep late, you are so old you wake up early.

You've got to pity the modern girl. Everything she wants to do is either illegal, immoral, or fattening.

## First American Fleet

(Continued from Page 1.)

unsatisfactory as the navy of one colony would remain peacefully at home while British ships were attacking the coast of its neighbor.

In 1775 Congress authorized the construction of an American Fleet and on December 22, 1775, Esek Hopkins was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Navy with a salary of \$125.00 per month. With the exception of the President of the United States, he was the only man in history to hold this title.

Eight of these ships were completed by January, 1776. With green crews and a fleet whose total armament was only one hundred and ten guns, Hopkins was ordered to attack the British forces in Chesapeake Bay, off the Carolinas, and off Rhode Island. Failing to find the British forces off the mouth of the Chesapeake, Hopkins proceeded to capture some munitions of war at Nassau, Bahamas. These munitions would have been gladly welcomed by the Colonies who were always short of powder; but, unfortunately, on the return to Rhode Island, Hopkins' fleet was attacked by the British ship Glasgow, of twenty guns, which inflicted appreciable damage and escaped.

During the Revolutionary War other ships were added to the Navy, but as England had eighty-five men-of-war in American waters, this Colonial Navy accomplished little until the arrival of the French Fleet, when the two fleets combined obtained command of the sea, and forced the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. When peace was signed, the navy ships were sold or given away and by 1785 there was no navy.

In 1796 Washington urged the maintenance of a Naval Force, saying, "To secure respect to a neutral flag requires a Naval Force, organized and ready to vindicate it from insults and aggression. This may even prevent the necessity of going to war by discouraging belligerent powers from committing such violations of the rights of the neutral party, as may, first or last, leave no other option".

## How To Play Bridge

Pick up your cards as dealt. You will be ready to bid ahead of the others.

If your hand is rotten, mention it. It will guide your partner in his bid and play.

If your partner bids first, don't hesitate to raise—he has to play it.

Never hurry. Try several cards on a trick until you are sure which one you prefer.

Occasionally ask what are trumps. It will show you are interested.

Don't show lack of interest while you are dummy. Help your partner out with suggestions.

Talk about other subjects during the game. It makes for good-fellowship.

Feel free to criticize your partner. He will do much better as a result.

Always trump your partner's best tricks. Never take a chance.

If it is a money game, always quit when you are ahead. The folks will remember you.

Always explain your plays, particularly when set. It shows your card knowledge.

Disagree with established rules and conventions. You will be known for a person of independent mind.

Eat chocolate creams or other adhesive candy to keep cards from skidding.

## Answers

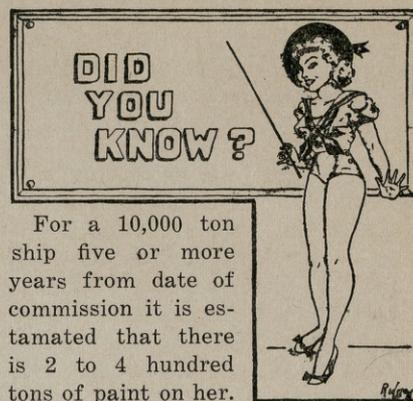
(Continued from Page 3.)

The molded breadth of a ship is the breadth of the ship at its widest point measured to the outside surface of the frames.

Camber is the curvature given to the weather decks to help drainage and give more added strength.

Sheer is the excess of freeboard forward or aft over that amidships.

Deadweight tonnage is the number of tons of stores, fuel, and cargo a ship can carry without exceeding her designed draft: Gross tonnage is the volume of a ship below the main deck in cubic feet divided by a hundred: Net tonnage is the volume of the cargo space in cubic feet divided by a hundred.



For a 10,000 ton ship five or more years from date of commission it is estimated that there is 2 to 4 hundred tons of paint on her.

\* \* \* \*

The first U. S. warship of iron, using steam was the MICHIGAN, built at Erie, Pa., in 1844. On June 17, 1905 the ship was reconditioned as a steam vessel. She was finally stricken from the Navy List on March 12, 1927 after 85 years of service.

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The first Navy Yard acquired, after the establishment of the Navy Department, was the Portsmouth Navy Yard, Portsmouth, N. H. on April 30, 1798. The Government purchased 58 acres at that time, for which it paid \$5,500.

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A nautical mile or "Knot" is 6080 feet. Three nautical or marine miles equal one marine league.

\* \* \* \*

The first U. S. warship to circumnavigate the globe was the U.S.S. Vincennes, commanded by Captain William Finch. She left New York September 3, 1826 and returned via the Cape of Good Hope on June 8, 1830.

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The anchors of the battleship U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA (of which she carries three) each weight ten tons.

\* \* \* \*

The Navy today is operating 478 engineering plants in vessels. These range from the 180,000 horse-power turbo-electric drive plants in the large aircraft carriers to a 240 horsepower diesel plant in some of the smaller district craft.

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Naval tugs are classified as ocean-going tugs and harbor tugs. Ocean-going tugs are named after Indian Tribes, and harbor tugs are assigned names of Indian Chiefs and words of Indian language.