



Summer 2001

Kingfisher floatplane comes to the rescue... U.S.S. Santa Fe at Ulithi Atoll

(Excerpts from Mike Mair's upcoming book)

After the explosions started aboard the U.S.S. Mississinewa, AO-59 fire quickly spread. The oil floating on the water acted as a wick. Flames reached a hundred feet into the air and a hundred feet out away from the ship. Many men did not win the race against the flames while some had help from an unexpected source.

A small float plane played a dramatic role in the rescue of Mississinewa sailors in the 30 minutes after the ship exploded. The OS2U "Kingfisher" was produced

by the Vought-Sikorsky Division of the United Aircraft Corporation. The plane was accepted for production by the US Navy on March 22, 1937 and made its debut in 1938 incorporating a 450 hp Pratt & Whitney engine. The light observation float plane was a useful aircraft and widely used on battleships and cruisers in the fleet. The plane received small changes and an engine upgrade in early 1941 quickly followed by extra fuel tanks in the wings and better armor protection for the pilot and observer in the OS2U-3

(Continued on Page 3)

The Passing Of Our Crewman

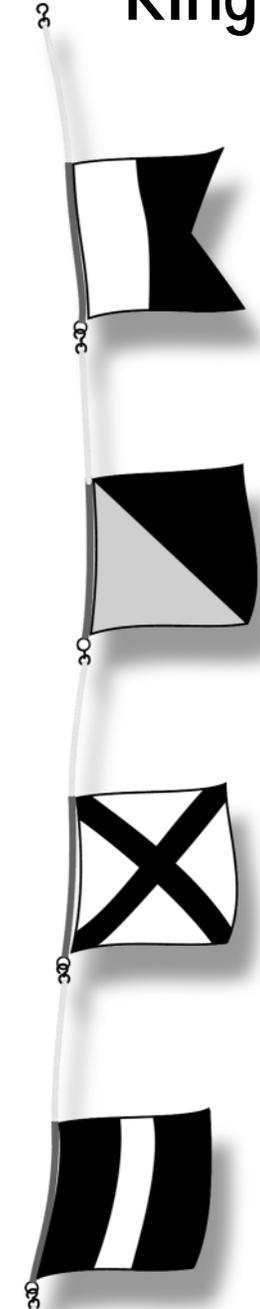
William F. Dennehy S2c 

William, "Bill" Dennehy Sr. age 73, died on November 22, 2000 after a lengthy illness. A native of Boston, Dennehy falsified his age and joined the US Navy at age 16-1/2. Dennehy shipped out to boot camp training at Sampson, NY and was released from the Navy after his real age was discovered after boot camp. Undeterred, Bill had his older brother, Tom, sign papers for him to re-enlist in the Navy at age 17. Bill's father had died when Bill was 3 years

old and Bill's mother passed way when he was 13.

The US Navy decided to put the Boston boy through boot camp one more time! Dennehy was a Mississinewa "plank owner". Dennehy, a Seaman second class deckhand, usually slept over the forward aviation gas tanks forward and escaped forward berthing under the bridge on November 20, 1944 as the AO-59 exploded. Dennehy jumped from the

(Continued on Page 3)



Kingfisher Pilot and Radio Operator from U.S.S. Santa Fe, CL-60 save U.S.S. Mississinewa sailors from flames.

November 20, 1944



Vought OS2U-1 Kingfisher: 35 ft. - 11 in. wingspan, 450 hp, with a maximum speed of 164 mph. A maximum ceiling of 19,500 ft. and a range of 805 miles. It was armed with two machine guns, and held a crew of two. These planes would be catapulted from the ship, later land on the sea and be lifted back onto the ship by the crane.



U. S. S. Santa Fe, CL-60

Information or Suggestions for future newsletters needed !!!

Please send them to: Bob Fulleman
551 N. Ocotillo Lane • Gilbert, AZ 85233 • e-mail: azfull@usa.net



(Left) Ensign B. C. Zamucen (Lt. j.g.) receiving his medal (left to right: Lt. Cmdr. Packer, Zamucen, Lt. N.R. Utecht and Rear Admiral Ainsworth)

(Below) Aviation Radioman Third Class R. Evinrude, together with Zamucen risked their lives to save crewmen of the Ao-59 from the fiery waters surrounding the sinking U.S.S. Mississippi, November 20, 1944.



Ensign Blase C. Zamucen (Lt. j.g.) and Aviation Radioman Third Class Russell Evinrude received citations for the Navy and Marine Corp Medal for Heroism.



model. Vought-Sikorsky delivered 1,006 "Kingfisher" OS2U-3 versions to the US Navy before production ended in 1942. Several USS Mississinewa sailors were grateful on the morning of November 20 that the "eyes of the fleet" was on patrol high above Ulithi.

Pilot Lt. jg Blase C. Zamucen and Aviation Radioman Third Class R. Evinrude launched their Kingfisher OS2U floatplane, number 01220, from the light cruiser Santa Fe CL-60 at 5:25AM for anti submarine patrol in Ulithi zone 2. The explosion was observed by Zamucen and Evinrude circling on their patrol above Ulithi harbor. Zamucen dived lower for a closer look and noticed the oil spreading out from the USS Mississinewa and quickly catching fire. Men began to jump from the blazing ship and both aviators saw that many of the men did not have a chance with the flames quickly closing in on the men in the water. Lt. jg Zamucen made a courageous decision to place his plane and Evinrude in danger in an effort to save lives. Zamucen landed the Kingfisher float plane on the water and taxied to the edge of the flames on the port side of the USS Mississinewa. The young pilot kicked in the rudder and spun the plane's tail towards the flaming oil and revved up the engine, thus fanning the flames away from several sailors struggling to stay afloat in the oily water. Disregarding his own safety, Russell Evinrude courageously climbed out of the rear seat of the Kingfisher and quickly secured a line to the plane. He straddled the plane's fuselage with his legs and tossed a long line out into the water urging the sailors in the water to grab on.

Lt. jg Zamucen and Evinrude would repeat their daring rescue four more times until they had rescued some 20 Mississinewa sailors. Captain Philip Beck would later credit the unknown heroes in an Associated Press story and accompanying photograph that ran in US newspapers on December 19, 1944.

**U. S. Navy Tanker Sunk in Pacific;
Navy Pilot Saves 20**

Flyer Tows Men to Safety With Line

Washington, D. C. Dec. 19, 1944 (AP)- Loss of the U.S.S. Mississinewa as a result of enemy action in the Central Pacific was announced by the Navy today.

The vessel, a 23,000 ton auxiliary oiler carried a normal complement of approximately 250 officers and men, of whom the navy said about 80 per cent were saved.

Capt. Philip G. Beck of Brooklyn, N.Y., skipper of the vessel, credited an unidentified pilot of a little navy float plane with saving many men.

The pilot of that plane, said Beck, had more nerve than I like to think of. He saw our plight and put his plane down on the water. Then he would taxi up to the rim of the flames, throw out a thin line with a floater attached to it for those struggling men to grab a hold on to, then tow them to safety. He kept on going back until he had rescued at least 20 men who otherwise probably would have burned to death. I wish I could find out who that pilot was...he just disappeared after his rescue work was done.

Blase Zamucen was raised in the San Francisco area and became the youngest Commander in the Navy in 1957. He was a staff member in the Admiral's Fleet during the Korean War and was a pilot for approximately 20 years. He was awarded 14 medals and ribbons during his naval career. Those heroes have since passed away, Russell Evinrude, ARM3c in 1970 and Lt. Blase C. Zamucen in 1989. We were fortunate to be able to contact Mrs. Bertha Evinrude and Blase Zamucen's son Steve. These two special men will certainly not be forgotten by the survivors and their families of the A0-59.

A0-59

William F. Dennehy S2c - Continued

rail and survived with minor burns as he swam under burning oil, surfacing to splash the surface of Ulithi lagoon with his hands, swimming clear of the floating flames.

Bill spent two years locating USS Mississinewa A0-59 crewmen via mail in the late 1980's and hosted the 1st Mississinewa reunion on June 23, 1989 in Dorchester, Massachusetts. A remarkable

achievement before the creation of the internet! The momentous event was attended by eleven A0-59 survivors and their spouses!

Dennehy owned Lagoon Concessionaires at City Point in South Boston until his retirement in 1979. Bill and his wife of 49 years, Lorraine, traveled all over the US with their beloved motor home after his retirement. Bill is survived by two sons, Bill Jr., Tom, and four grandchildren.

A0-59



Pat Scannon, Pam and Chip Lambert after discovering the location of the U.S.S. Mississinewa, AO-59 at Ulithi Atoll.

56 1/2 years after the sinking... the U.S.S. Mississinewa's exact location is discovered.

Falalop, Ulithi, Federated States of Micronesia. On April 6 in Ulithi Lagoon, an independent team of three divers from the San Francisco Bay Area located and were the first to dive on the wreck of the 553 foot USS Mississinewa AO-59, the only American naval ship sunk by a kaiten, a one-man Japanese suicide submarine. Since WWII, the ship's exact position has been in question, despite numerous prior attempts by both American and Japanese dive groups to find the wreck. James P. Delgado, Director of the Vancouver, B. C. Maritime Museum and Japanese midgeet submarine expert, has described the lost USS Mississinewa as the last great unsolved Pacific sinking.

The dive team, consisted of Lewis Chip Lambert, his wife, Pam Lambert, both of Fremont, CA and Pat Scannon, San Francisco, CA. Chip Lambert, the team leader, working with Mike Mair, the ship's historian and author of the USS Mississinewa story (in progress) obtained photographs, taken by Sid Harris, Cherry Hill, NJ, from the rescue tug ATF-107 Munsee at the time of the sinking on November 20, 1944. Using observations from the photographs, Chip Lambert narrowed the search area from almost 200 square miles to 5 square miles. After seven straight days of searching in a small dive boat using a portable sonar unit, the team, working with Ulithians, located the tanker on a sandy bottom in 120 feet of water. Chip Lambert, describing his first view of the ship, stated, While descending, we saw the sea reluctantly releasing the USS Mississinewa from its grasp. I was finally convinced we were no longer looking at a photograph, a chart plot, or a detector signal, but a grave for fifty war heroes, a memorial for the surviving crew members and families and a symbol of honor for the people of Ulithi.

The USS Mississinewa had been at berth at this key WWII US Navy installation, when the kaiten, probably released by Japanese mother sub I-36 just

News from the Quarterdeck:

Our prayers for a speedy recovery go out to Gus Li veakos' s wife, Ruth. She had open heart surgery, July 10th. Those of you who were able to attend the reunion in Corpus Christi had the pleasure to meet Ruth and Gus.

Robert A. Johnson, S.K. 3c's family is looking for anyone who might remember him. Please contact: Cathy Collier, 3726 Sheldon, Canton, MI 48188 or email: bnccollier_2000@yahoo.com.

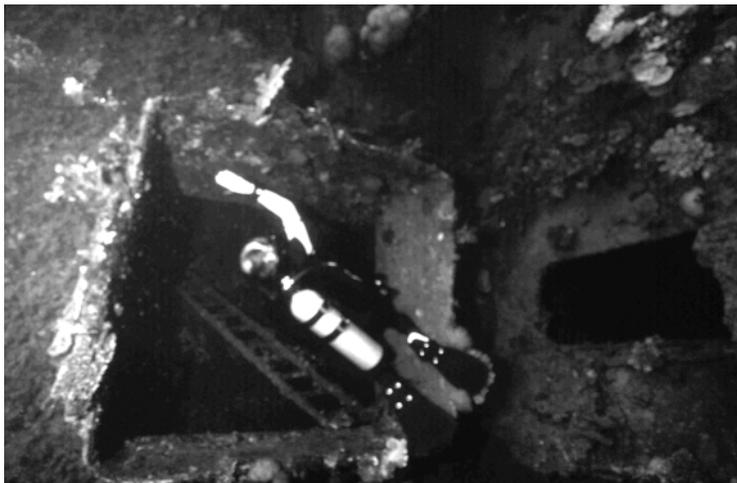
Frank Cybulski, S2c has been recently located.

The family of Andrew Girga, SC2c was located recently. Please contact Dave Girga if you have any information about his father. 3120 N. 87th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222, (414) 442-6828.

If anyone remembers or has any information about Peter Li upakka, Cox, who passed away 11-20-44 please contact Brian Haataja, P.O. Box 318, Cloquet, MN 55720.

AO-59

outside Ulithi Lagoon, crept into the harbor and struck the tanker on the starboard bow, taking the lives of 50 American officers and sailors. The bow section, with the forward crew berthing where it is believed the greatest loss of lives occurred, lies on its port side with hatches open. The submarine's site of impact, just aft of the bow and a secondary explosion created a huge opening in the hull. Today, this lifeless twisted metal is home for large schools of fish and other sea life. The remainder of the ship lies upside down with the twin screws and the rudder angled toward the surface. The bottom blends with the surrounding sand, making the ship difficult to see from the surface. Mr. Lambert took photographs of only the ship's exterior. The dive team, respecting the ship as a gravesite, elected not to enter the interior.



Forward starboard storage compartment examined by Pat Scannon.

The team coordinated its efforts with the people of Ulithi, first gaining permission to search for the ship from both Chief Pisente Talugyar, the hereditary owner of these waters and Senator Anthony M. Tareg, local representative for Ulithi in the Fifth Legislature of Yap State. The island's Chief Administrator John Rulmal, critiqued the team's observations and insured logistical support. At one point he ordered release of the atoll's remaining gasoline reserves to support the search efforts. Immediately after the search team radioed news of the find to shore, Mr. Rulmal also contacted Senator Tareg by radio in Yap, 100 miles to the southwest, as Ulithi has no other means of communication with the outside world. Others involved with the search and discovery included Ulithians, Faustino Yalomai, manager of Ulithi Divers dive shop, Kenneth Wur and Mario Suk and Trip-N-Tour representative, Lisa Wallner.

With the discovery of the exact location of the Mississinewa and in recognition that the ship is a gravesite, Ulithian leaders have met and closed the site to all sport diving pending discussions and coordination with the US Navy. The California team, working with key Ulithians, is in the process of notifying the US Department of Navy of their findings.

In the United States, forty-eight surviving crew members have stayed in close contact with each other through the USS Mississinewa AO-59 Reunion Group. The California team hopes to present documentation of the Mississinewa's final resting place at their next reunion meeting.

Lewis Chip Lambert, an owner of Pacific Offshore Divers, Inc. (PODI), is the Director of Medical Microbiology at XOMA, Ltd., Berkeley, CA. Pam Lambert, also an owner of PODI, is Director of Project Management at Affymetrix, Santa Clara, CA. Patrick J. Scannon, MD, PhD, is founder and Chief Scientific and Medical Officer of XOMA, Ltd, Berkeley, CA. All three are members of the Explorers Club and have researched, located and documented other ships and aircraft lost during WWII in Palau and other parts of Micronesia. In 1993, they were part of the dive team, which found the Japanese armed trawler sunk in July 1944 by then Ensign George Herbert Walker Bush in northern Palau.

Contacts and Background Information:

Chip Lambert, through PODI, 1188 Branham Lane, San Jose, CA 95118, 408-265-3484 or e-mail at chippamlam@aol.com.
Senator Anthony Tareg, PO Box 99, Colonia, Yap, FSM 96943, 691-350-2400/01 or e-mail at legisyap@home.fsm.
Mike Mair, 1525 Deborah Court, Platteville, WI 53818, 608-348-3255 or e-mail at vpaper@mhtc.net.

For further background on the USS Mississinewa AO-59, see www.usmississinewa.com.

For further information on some recent findings of the California team, see www.bentprop.org.

USS Lackawanna, AO-40 Reunion in Mobile, Alabama October 9th - 13th, 2001

We've got the details on the AO-40's reunion coming up in October and it sounds like a "great time" is a certainty.

Wednesday, October 10th will be a trip to the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida followed by lunch at the Officers Club. (\$37 per person)

Thursday, October 11th will be a visit to the USS Alabama Memorial Park with a memorial service held on the fantail then lunch in the ward room aboard the ship. (\$34 per person)

Friday, October 12th will be a tour of Mobile's Historic District with lunch at the "Spot of Tea". (\$34 per person)

Saturday, October 13th will be a get-together and a Banquet. (\$30 per person)

Those attending the reunion will receive a special rate at the Ramada Plaza Hotel of \$69.00 per day plus tax which includes a breakfast buffet for two every day during your stay. Contact Linus Hawkins by September 20, 2001 to sign up for the reunion.

Linus Hawkins
403 Alice St. * Jennings, LA 70546

More Photos To Come

Our next issue will contain more photos from not only the first dive team (Pat Scannon, Chip and Pam Lambert) to find the Mississinwa but also photos from another diver (Rick von Stein) to view the ship only two weeks later. The U. S. S. Mississinewa Reunion Group wishes to thank both groups of divers for their generosity in allowing us to publish their photos.



The bow of the U. S. S. Mississinewa, AO-59 resting on the ocean bottom. Photo by Rick von Stein.

AO-59 Ball Caps can be purchased by clicking on the "Merchandise" link on the website

!! Special Thanks !!

Our special thanks goes out to Dick Davies for giving us the chance to have our own website. Now our web address is easy to find at www.ussmississinewa.com Dick Davies has donated free website service for our reunion group.



Sorry, AO-59 Polo Shirts are no longer available for purchase