

Op-16-B-5

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25 D C

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24 Feb 45

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SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS MARCUS DALY, U.S. Freighter, 7176 G.T., owned by War Shipping Administration, operated by Sudden & Christensen, Inc.

1. The MARCUS DALY was damaged by enemy aircraft at 0900 5 Dec 44 in area 09.34N - 127.35 E and at 0855 10 Dec in Tarragona Harbor, Leyte Gulf. Ship sailed from Hollandia 29 Nov in convoy for San Pedro Bay, Leyte, P.I. carrying 1,121 U.S. Army troops as passengers quartered in the 'tween decks of #1, #3, #4, and #5 holds and 2,369 tons of cargo consisting of troop's gear, vehicles and general Army equipment stowed in all lower holds. In addition, ship carried a partial deck cargo of rations and vehicles on top hatch covers #1 and #2, and in passageways abreast those hatches. An Army field kitchen was set up on the main deck on the port side of #4 hold. At time of second attack ship had nearly completed discharging; only a small amount of cargo (gasoline) remained in #4 hold and a small amount of damaged cargo in #1 hold. Vessel did not sink but returned to San Francisco under her own power, arriving 28 Jan 45.

2. At time of first attack ship was in convoy, crew at general quarters, speed approximately 8 knots. Weather during the day was generally described as clear, intense heat, large fleecy clouds altitude 8000'; sea smooth; no wind; visibility good about 8 miles. Other ships of convoy in sight. At time of second attack ship was drifting in the harbor of Tarragona, being unable to anchor due to damage incurred in the first attack. Ship was approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from shore with her bow toward the beach, cargo was being discharged, LCT alongside, crew at general quarters. Weather was overcast, with passing rain squalls; wind SW force 2, sea smooth; visibility fair about 6 miles; other ships in harbor in sight.

3. On 5 Dec convoy was under sporadic dive-bombing and torpedo bombing attacks throughout most of the day. At approximately 0900, a dive bomber approached the convoy from directly astern and dived directly for ship at an angle of approximately 70° from a height of about 8000'. Plane approached from the stern, and all guns took it under fire. Gun fire from ship shot the entire tail surfaces off the plane when it was about 200 yards astern. When tail surfaces dropped off, plane appeared to flatten out and pilot apparently lost control of the plane, but continued to strafe the ship. Plane flew directly over the stern and then down the port side of ship, passing approximately 4' over the #4 and #6 20 mm gun tubs and between tub #2 and the foremast. Its wing struck the port shrouds of the foremast, causing it to turn into the ship. Plane then crashed through the main deck to the left of and under the #1 tub, dropping through the main deck to the 'tween deck and into the forepeak area. Although no bomb was observed under the plane, survivors were of the opinion that plane was carrying at least a 500-pound bomb, as after the crash there was a terrific explosion and large holes were blown through both sides of the ship. Flames from the explosion shot upward blowing parts of plane and ship 100' into the air. A severe fire broke out in the forward section of the ship which was not completely brought under control until approximately 1600. Fire was fed by paint which was stowed in the forepeak locker and by troops's gear which was on deck. Ship was slowed down in order that the flames which were burning forward would not be further fanned by the wind. A large hole was torn in both sides

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6. Survivors made the following comments and suggestions regarding Japanese crash and dive bombing attacks:

Japanese planes appeared to pick out ships with numerous troops aboard for their crash dives.

When ship was cruising off Tarragona Harbor, Filipinos in small boats came out to the ship, some for trading purposes and others apparently from curiosity.

Japanese planes appeared to use sneak tactics, using cloud cover, rain squalls and any other means of attacking without giving warning. On several occasions planes dropped out of cloud cover, apparently having started their dives with motors off in order to give them a "jump" on gunners aboard ship. Japanese planes dived at steep angles, many at an angle of approximately 70°.

Numerous survivors advised that Liberty ships should be equipped with 40 mm guns in order to combat Japanese crash and dive bombing attacks.

The Japanese apparently used no tracers or tracer control in strafing attacks, none being visible when it was evident that the plane's guns were firing on strafing runs.

Live rounds of 18 mm Japanese ammunition with fuse settings on the projectiles were found on board the ship after attacks, which apparently were for time bursts during strafing attacks.

BARBARA CONARD
Lt. (jg) USNR

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