

When we first arrived we had to live on ships anchored in Casco Cove; a fairly sheltered bay at Attu. My crew arrived at Attu in May 1943. There were no facilities on shore. Later, tents were built and we moved ashore. I lived aboard the USS Gillis, which was an old four stacker destroyer, lord knows how old, converted into a two stacker, and then converted into a rather poor seaplane tender, we thought. But in those days you took what you could get.

We went on patrol whenever weather permitted. We had some beautiful sun shiny days but few and far between.

On one of our patrols we took off with a full crew of eight, four-500 pound bombs and a full load of gas – which I believe was 1430 gallons. We were told to look for Japanese ships which might be near Attu. I estimate we were about 400 miles off Attu when the radar man informed the pilot he had four blips on the radar which appeared to be ships. The pilot immediately told me to get on the radio and inform the base and ask for permission to attack the ships. The base informed us that in no way were we to attack the ships. We did confirm that the ships were Japanese.

Our orders were to keep the ships in site visually and on radar so we would not lose sight of them and base was sending out other planes to attack the ships. We were flying close enough to see all guns aboard the ships were firing at us and could see the shrapnel from the shells flying through the air at us but very glad that nothing came close, we thought. But the pilot told us later he had looked over the plane after landing and there were a few small scrapes on the skin of the plane from the shrapnel.

Another crew came out and sank two of the ships. We understood that the other two got away. We were in the air 14 and a half hours and I was told by Ski, the mech, when we landed back at base, that there were air bubbles in the gas gauges and he estimated we had three minutes of gas left. I said, “Why didn’t you tell the pilot we were that close to running out of fuel?” His laconic reply, “I didn’t want to scare him.”