

November 4, 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

The following is my recollection of the events that occurred during the flight of Squadron VPB-139 on May 10, 1945.

On the tenth of May, 1945, two flights of four planes each made an anti-shipping sweep to the Kurile Islands, with Minamizaki as the secondary target. Crew Five was a part of the first flight under the command of LCDR Glenn A. David USNR, Commanding Officer of Squadron VPB-139.

On this flight, Crew Five was made up of the following personnel:

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK/RATE 1945</u>	<u>2003</u>
Pilot	A. Paul Stehley	Lt.	Deceased
Co-pilot	R. D. Switzer	Ens.	Deceased
Navigator	H. T. Janssen	Ens.	Deceased
Plane			
Captain	A. G. Molten	AMM 1/C	Deceased
Radioman	J. Baldeschi	ARM 2/C	Retired
Gunner	C. E. Silas	AOM 3/C	Retired

The mission was uneventful during the anti-shipping sweep. When the decision was made to drop our bombs and strafe Minamizaki, our plane was met with heavy A/A fire. During this phase of the mission, our plane was hit over thirty times by shrapnel. One or more of the hits caused an electrical fire in the radio compartment. ARM 2/C Joe Baldeschi was wounded in the right arm and right leg, but remained at his post. In the plane we were flying (PV-2 Harpoon), the Navigator's

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table was located on top of a fuel tank. The electrical fire in the radio compartment was very close to this fuel tank. ARM 2/C Baldeschi grabbed the wiring with both hands, pulling the wires free, thus stopping the fire from reaching the fuel tank. I believe that ARM 2/C Baldeschi's quick action resulted in the members of Crew 5 being able to live full, productive and happy lives. Yes, I truly believe that this action by Joe saved our lives.

If I can be of further service or provide more information to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Chester E. Silas
12/2/04
Chester E. Silas
LCDR USN, Retired
3487 Fairbanks Road
Jacksonville, FL 32223

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF DUVAL
Subscribed and Sworn to (or affirmed) before me
This 2 day of December, 2004.
By Chester E. Silas
Who produced a Uniformed Services Identification
Card's Identification
Dylka A. Kennedy
Notary Public
SK2 DYLKA A. KENNEDY

 DYLKA A. KENNEDY
MY COMMISSION # DD 33350
EXPIRES: June 28, 2008
Bonded True Notary Public Underwater

*This document was notarized and/or witnessed only.
It was NOT reviewed by this office or an attorney for
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Naval Legal Service Office Southeast*