

# Washburn During The War Years — The Boys At War—4 A

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In April 1942 Robert E. Neuman, related to the Times his experiences during a four month combat patrol in the Pacific, after the Pearl Harbor attack. He was a quartermaster on a cruiser and his station was an emergency navigation control station.

"On the morning of Sunday, December 7th, Neuman was off watch and was asleep in his bunk aboard ship when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor. His action station was below decks so he did not get up above to see what was going on until early afternoon. Then he helped carry the dead and wounded ashore. His ship was damaged but not lost and has since been repaired."

A few days later Neuman was transferred to another ship, a cruiser, and went to sea with a task force in search of the Japs. In the next four months he covered enough miles in the southwestern Pacific to girdle the globe twice. The squadron ranged in size from seven ships to 23 at one time.

One of the big jobs they accomplished was an air raid by carrier-borne bombers on Japanese shore installations in New Guinea. The task force was bound for a raid on Rabual when it was spotted by Jap planes and the famous O'Hare engagement followed.



**Lars Larson**  
Guest Columnist

"The sky was so full of anti-aircraft puffs that it was hard to tell what was going on, but we could see the Jap planes going down and we knew our boys were at work. Those Navy fliers really know their stuff. The next day we learned that O'Hare had downed six Japs by himself. The carrier had a pretty close call that day. It swerved just in time so that five bombs barely missed it. The spray rose up and we couldn't see the carrier and thought sure it was lost. It was a wonderful sight when it came steaming through that spray unharmed.' Life on a warship at sea in time of war is no snap, according to Neuman. The schedule is four hours on watch and eight hours off during the day and four hours on and four hours off at night. General quarters is sounded an hour

before sunrise every day and everybody keeps a close watch for enemy craft, particularly submarines, at that favorite time for submarine attack.

"The usual cruise is 16 days but we stayed out 55 days on one cruise. We got oil on the run but no provisions. After the first couple weeks, rations were cut to 75 per cent. Later they were cut to 50 per cent. Finally we were eating nothing but beans and rice and bread made without yeast. I never cared for rice before but I ate it and liked it. It was so hot that we weren't very hungry. Nobody kicked—we knew it couldn't be helped. We even ran out of rice before we made port. It was a wonderful feeling to surround some real grub again.'

Neuman's ship lost one of its scouting planes in a squall of rain, but that was the only loss sustained. A scouting plane from another ship was found after it had been lost seven days. It was out of gas but drifting and the pilot and radioman were steering it with the tail, navigating for Australia, 300 miles away. A number of Japanese submarines were accounted for by Neuman's task force, but he isn't saying just how many. That's not for publication. There isn't any doubt in Neuman's mind about the outcome of

the war.

"They took us by surprise at Pearl Harbor but they haven't done anything to us since worth talking about. We'll take them, all right. It looks to me as if we'll probably hit them right at home, where it hurts most, and not bother much about the territory they've taken.' When he leaves here at the end of his furlough, Neuman will go to the Atlantic coast to join the crew of a new ship, now being commissioned."

The O'Hare Neuman mentioned was Lieutenant Commander Edward H. "Butch" O'Hare, born on March 13 1914. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1937 and from naval aviation training in 1940. In February 1942, while on combat patrol from the carrier Lexington, in the Pacific, O'Hare destroyed five Japanese bombers in quick succession, for which he received the Medal of Honor. In later actions he was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He was shot down by a Japanese bomber on November 26 1943. He was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously. In January 1945 a Navy destroyer was named in his honor and in September 1945 the Chicago airport was named O'Hare International Airport.