

4 Flyers Float 6 Days On Pacific on Diet of 2 Fish and Rainwater

By the Associated Press.

WITH THE 7th AIR FORCE IN THE PACIFIC, Nov. 24 (Delayed).—Sharks which tore the fishhooks off their lines limited four airmen adrift in a rubber boat to a diet of two fish and rainwater for the six days they floated aimlessly about in the Pacific.

The story was told today by Lt. Paul Hardy of Huntington, W. Va., pilot of a naval land plane that crashed landed in the ocean, out of gas and lost. The crew of 10 escaped, but a Marine combat correspondent was lost.

Ensign James Welshorne of Keyser, W. Va., co-pilot, came out of the plane with a broken arm, his face covered with blood and bleeding badly and nearly unconscious.

The airmen could get only two life rafts out of the plane and one of these—capable of carrying four men—wouldn't inflate. Machinist Mate Paul Widdel of Rockford, Ill., and Aviation Ordnanceman Bob Strouse of Fort Lupton, Colo., blew it up with their own lung power. Six men climbed on one raft and four on the other.

"We had a couple of small sails

but no way to navigate and no idea of where we were, so we couldn't use them except as covers to keep the sun off," Lt. Hardy said.

"We had no water for 50 hours. Then a rain squall gave us all enough to drink and we saved enough water from it so we each had a couple of sips a day. We saved it by taking water into our mouths, then transferring it into a Mae West jacket."

"The other raft was roped to us for a while the first night, but the rope broke and we were unable to see them in the morning."

The two rafts were picked up 100 miles apart. "We had no food. We had some fish line and four hooks, but no bait and were unable to fish until two days later when an old wooden crate floated alongside. There were three fish in it, two little perch and one bloater. We were afraid to eat the bloater for fear it was poisonous. All of us ate some perch raw. It tasted swell."

"Sharks were with us from the first morning, usually five or ten of them right around the raft. When we baited the hooks to fish the sharks tore two of them loose right away."

"On the third hook we got a small shark and brought him into the boat. We thought maybe we would eat part of him, but he was about four feet long and after he had been in the boat a few seconds it was obvious that either he would have to leave or we would. We couldn't use our knives for fear of cutting through the rubber life raft and

drowning us all, so we pushed him over the side again. By then all of our bait was gone.

"We all tried to swim some every day except Welshorne. Every time the sharks came right up. But I am still not convinced they really would attack a man. A couple of times they rushed the swimmers but didn't turn over as if to bite and acted more like they were just curious and planned to touch the swimmers to see what would happen. But we never let them touch anybody. The fellows in the boat would haul the swimmer in and the shark would go on by."

Days and nights of hearing and seeing occasional planes were climaxed by an obviously searching plane they were afraid wouldn't see them.

"Finally he did," Lt. Hardy said, "and we all went crazy. The search plane started dropping canteens and stuff to us. The only trouble was they just about killed us with the dropping objects."

Among others who drifted on the rafts was Assistant Radioman Joseph Maret, Chelsea, Mass.

Lt. Hardy's boat was picked up by Ensign J. F. Myers, Americus, Ga., who directed the search, and E. F. Rutemeyer, Chattanooga, Tenn.

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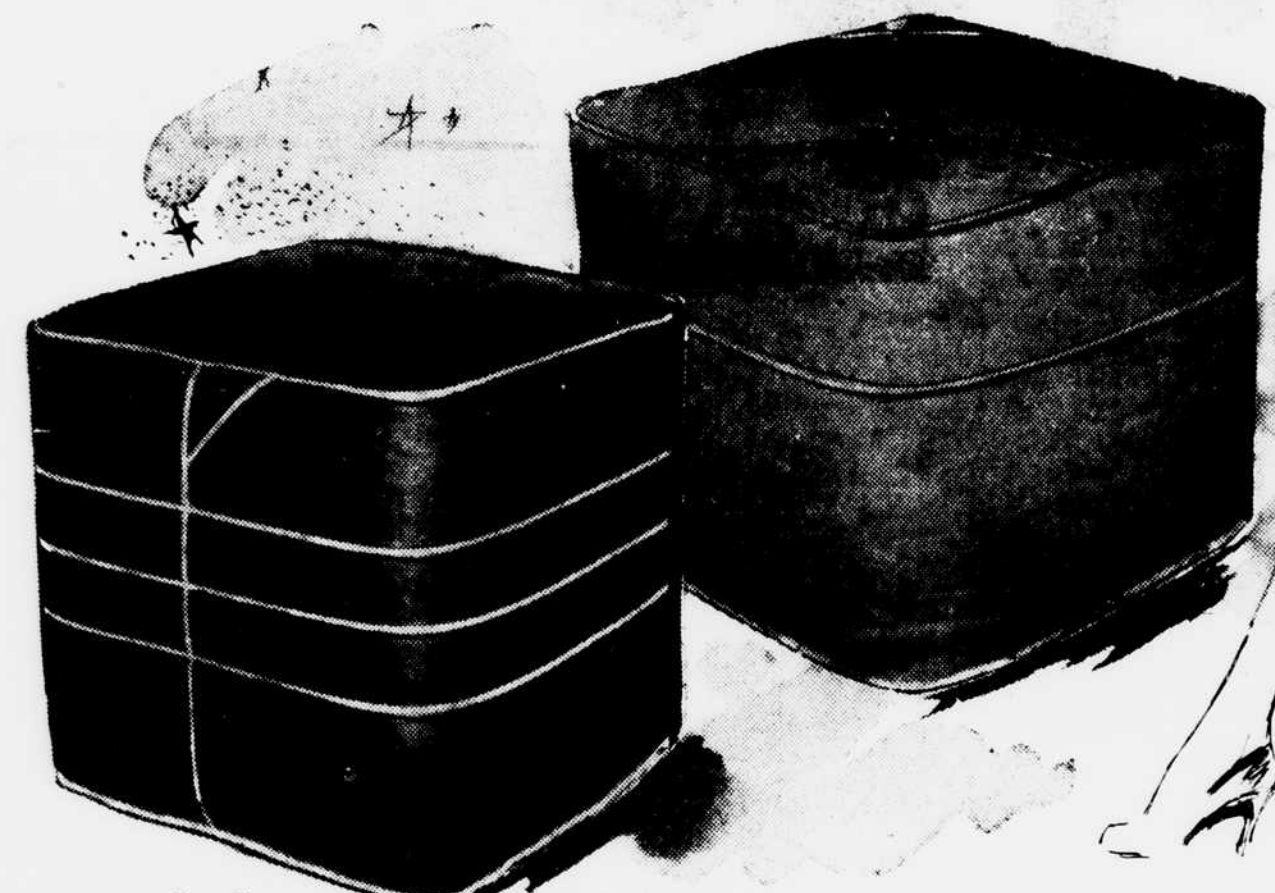


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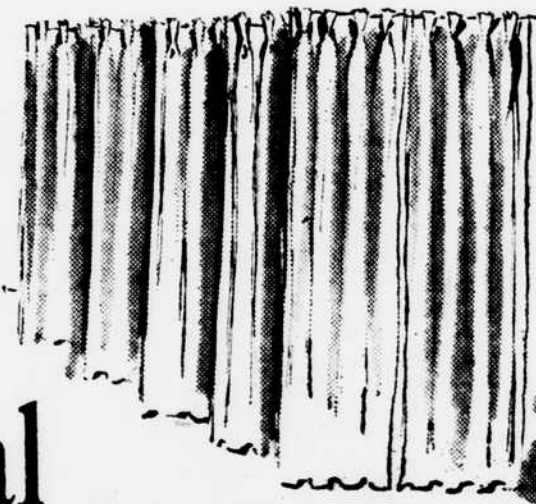
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