

fore. She was there whenever he wanted someone to break his feelings of loneliness and despair. Every time Kraus moved, you could hear him breathe through the hole in his back where the shrapnel had entered.

Another nurse was just as popular in the hospital ward—but not with Kraus. A big, good-looking Dutch girl with dark hair, her name was Sister DeKraufre.

These two nurses, along with Dutch doctors and Javanese boys, helped these wounded men until Dr. Wassell, a mild-manner country doctor from Arkansas, arrived to take charge of them. He wore an elephant hat, and carried with him cigarettes, go-heads for those that could walk, and long Chinese cigarette holders for those whose lips were too badly burned to hold a cigarette.

Wassell visited them about twice a day, morning and afternoon, but his visits were not to last long. The Japs were moving South in a big hurry. They had taken Borneo and Celebes. When Singapore had fallen on February 15th, and the Japs invaded Sumatra, Wassell bundled up the wounded men and took them to Tjilatjap.

When they arrived there, everyone was in a hurry. Evacuation had started. Wassell scouted around for ships on which to take the men out of Java. He found a submarine commander who would take ten or twelve men who needed little or no medical treatment. He found places for five more on a Navy oiler and found a Dutch freighter that would take the other men who could walk. But he could not find any ship that would take the stretcher cases.

Dr. Wassell elected to stay with them. They were William Anderson, SM2c, of Byesville, Ohio, twenty-six; William A. McCurdy, S2c, of Marengo County, Alabama, twenty-two; Thomas Borghetti, Jr., FC1c, of Dequon, Illinois, forty-one; Benjamin G. Hopkins, S1c, of Plattsmouth, Nebraska, twenty; Melvin Francis, S2c, of Boise, Idaho, seventeen; Pao San Ho, a Chinese mess attendant, thirty-two; in addition to Whaley, Kraus, and Leinweber.

There were no hospital facilities at the swarming south coastal port, so Wassell took them back to the hospital in a box-car on the last train from Tjilatjap. When they reached the hospital, the routine included daily air raid alarms instead of pleasant visits by Dr. Wassell.

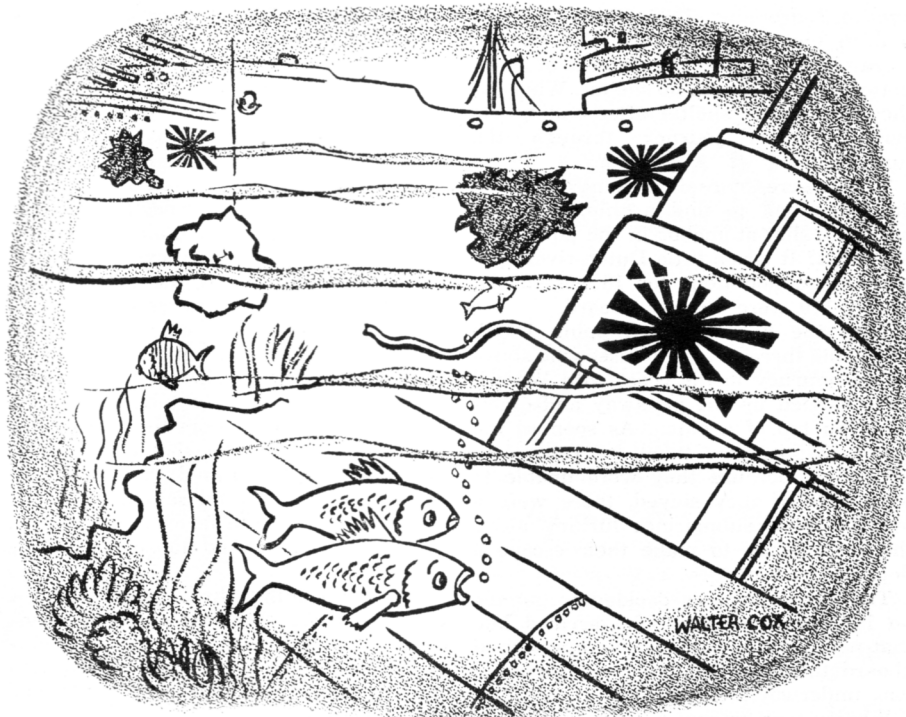
Every time the Jap Zeros came over the little hospital, the sailors were carted away to a shelter. Three were so badly wounded that they stayed on their hospital cots.

They growled, "No, we don't want to go to the shelter," they'd tell the Dutch attendants when Jap planes roared over the hospital.

Once when Boilermaker came into their ward and asked why they didn't go to the shelter, the whole building shook. The sailors didn't argue with her. They jumped like they had been shot.

The shelter was not soundproof. There they could hear the bomb explosions in the distance out near the airport which our flyers had been using until two days before, and the sound of bombs grew louder and louder.

Most of the sailors—severely wounded



*"The Japs must have a huge navy. I see twenty of their ships to one of the Americans!"*

as they were—dreaded to be taken as prisoners of war. They had heard many stories about the treatment prisoners of war received, and they had seen a little of it in China at times before the war began. They began wondering where they would end up. The Dutch doctors left the hospital. Only the Arkansas medico and a few nurses were left with them to occupy the hospital.

"Just when our hopes had almost gone," Bob Whaley said, "Dr. Wassell walked in and told us to get ready as quickly as we could. 'We've another chance to get out of here,' he said, 'and it's our last chance.' I threw the stuff I needed and a few small souvenirs into a zipper bag and limped out of the hospital."

In half an hour, after bidding farewell to the nurses at the hospital, the nine wounded men and their doctor joined a British anti-aircraft convoy heading to the coast. "Don't worry," shouted one of the sailors to a nurse, "we'll be back. We're just taking an excursion to the beach."

Three of the worst cases—Anderson, Whaley, and McCurdy, who still had a catheter in him—rode with the Navy doctor in an abandoned Army car. The springs and cushions of the car were easier on their wounds than the floor of a truck would be. Commander Goggins, the MARBLEHEAD's exec officer who was also wounded in the battle of the Java sea, also rode with them.

Among the five sailors who squirmed on the floor of an Army truck was skinny, ruddy-faced Melvin Francis. His arms and back were burned and his left eye was injured while passing ammunition on the MARBLEHEAD during an aerial bombardment off Torres Straits. Only now, as he glowered disconsolately at the mangrove trees and bushes along the bumpy roadway, he tried to think about the clinic of a Chinese eye specialist where his bad eye was removed. But he

couldn't. The road was much too bumpy.

Whenever the convoy stopped to be inspected by Dutch sentries, the sailors heard conflicting reports about the number of ships at the coastal port. Some decided not to pay much attention to these reports, but others did. That sharpened their solitude. They rode on silently to Tjilatjap. It was like a roller coaster ride, only rougher and without the noise of joyriders.

At Tjilatjap, their silence was broken when they noticed that one of their number was missing. He was a black-haired youth named Ben Hopkins, who served as a signal striker on the MARBLEHEAD. He joined the Navy in September, 1940, when he was 20, to learn a trade. When he was wounded, he was taken to the inland hospital and soon became friendly with the nurses.

Hopkins felt that he would not have made the journey back to the coast. He did the first time, but it nearly killed him. He became so weak that he could not bear the pain of finishing the journey through the jungle in a truck. He and a British officer, who had given both his legs for his country, insisted on being left at a first aid station. The Japs later took them as prisoners of war.

Hopkins' sister said that he had a premonition of disaster because two months before war broke out he wrote her that "I'm going to write you right now, because I may never have a chance again. We're sitting on a powder keg that may go off any minute."

The veteran Borghetti, with a shattered elbow and leg, had the best luck of all. He rode with the commanding officer of the convoy, and arrived at the rickety Javan port ahead of schedule. And he left there for Australia a day before the other sailors arrived.

The ordeal these men faced was just as bad as sitting helpless on the deck of a battleship with a formation of bombers