

On 2/28/1945, Air Group 47 reported aboard, and USS Bataan left Ulithi 3/14/45 as part of TG 58.2 to operate off Kyushu: Two large carriers, two light carriers, two battleships, two cruisers, and seventeen destroyers. See this link for the names of the ships in TG 58.2:

<http://www.bataancvl29.org/Oct '44-Mar '451.htm>

On 3/19/45 two bombs hit the USS Franklin killing over 700 crew. It temporarily goes out of control and nearly collides with USS Bataan.



Franklin survived to return under its own power to New York Harbor for repairs.

USS Bataan CVL-29 was operating in Task Group 58.1 with the USS Franklin CV-13 (and others) about 60 miles off the southeast coast of Japan when USS Franklin was hit by two bombs. Iron Mike Mikronis (formerly of the USS Bataan) was LSO on the USS Franklin. He was knocked down by the force of the explosions, and two others with him suffered broken ankles, so they decided to jump overboard to avoid further injury. USS Franklin temporarily went out of control, and headed for USS Bataan, some 3,000 yards away. Bataan had to do some quick maneuvering to get out of the way. Later CVL-29 was detached from TG 58.1 to provide air cover for USS Franklin as she retreated back to Okinawa.



14 to 17 March '45—Sortie from Ulithi and underway to attack the Japanese Home Islands.

18 March '45—Strikes against Kyushu airfields; Miyakonojo, Kagoshima, and Izumi were hit. Air Group 47, on its first rampage, destroyed 10 planes on the ground, damaged 29 others, burned hangars, strafed luggers, bridges, a railway train, barracks, a power plant, and otherwise harrassed the enemy. The action was not all one sided; VT-47 lost a plane at Kagoshima and another at Izumi; 2 pilots and 2 aircrewmen missing in action.

19 March '45—The enemy hits back, and with a vengeance. At 0707, a Jap Myrt drops 2 bombs on the FRANKLIN, 3100 yards to port of us; Lt. (jg) LOCKE TRIGG of VF-47, just launched by the BATAAN for a strike against Kobe, flies after the Myrt through the concentrated AA fire of the entire Task Group, chases it for 20 miles and shoots it down. But the damage is done; the FRANKLIN bursts into flame, and one of the epics of the war begins.

Later in the morning the strike returns from Kobe bearing good news; a CV, a CVE and a small merchant vessel bombed and set afire by VT-47. In the afternoon our CAP shoots down a Tojo.

20 March '45—The BATAAN with Task Group 58.2 furnishes air cover to the FRANKLIN on the retirement south from Kyushu. The enemy comes out in force with bombers and Kamikazes. One of them, a Jill, makes a suicide dive on the HANCOCK, is shot down by the BATAAN's batteries, crashes in flames on the HANCOCK'S starboard side, hitting the destroyer HALSEY POWELL which was alongside the CV. Two other Japs, both Judys, attack the BATAAN with bombs and are shot down by our gunners. A third Judy drops its bombs so close aboard that one of the BATAAN's gun mounts is slightly damaged by the explosion; the Judy is smoked by our batteries, and is finished off by ships of the screen. During the engagement the BATAAN takes a total of 8 enemy planes under fire, shooting down 3, and assisting in the splashing of from 3 to 5 more.

The Air Group has casualties. The Commander of Air Group 47, on CAP duty during the enemy air attacks, is missing in action. Lieutenant SAM HIBBARD of the CAP is forced to make a water landing after his plane is damaged by AA from the Task Force and by fire from a Judy which he chased and shot down. He is picked up uninjured by the destroyer NORMAN SCOTT.

The ship takes its first combat losses, too; one man is killed and eleven wounded.

Video of USS Franklin bombing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o82ASjYJDbw>

Google Maplink for USS Franklin incident on March 19, 1945: [N32.01, E133.57](#)

Ref: <http://pacific.valka.cz/forces/tf58.htm>

45/03/19 strike Kjusju airfields, Kure & Kobe:

at Kure:

destroying incomplete I-205 in drydock

damaging BB Yamato, Hyuga and Haruna; CV Ikoma, Katsuragi, Ryuho, Amagi, Hosho; CVE Kaiyo; CA Tone; CL Oyodo; SS I-400, RO-67; PC Cha-229;

at Osaka: damaging DE Kaki

58.2 kami - disabled Wasp (32-16N, 134-05E), Franklin (32-01N, 133-57E) -> departed for P.H.

58.2.9 created - cover Franklin's retreat

58.3 100 miles E of Kyushu (32-10 N 134-22 E) - Essex damaged by friendly fire (32-10N, 134-20E)

45/03/20 CAP over Kjusju

sinking guardboat Kochi Maru #1 E of Hosnhu

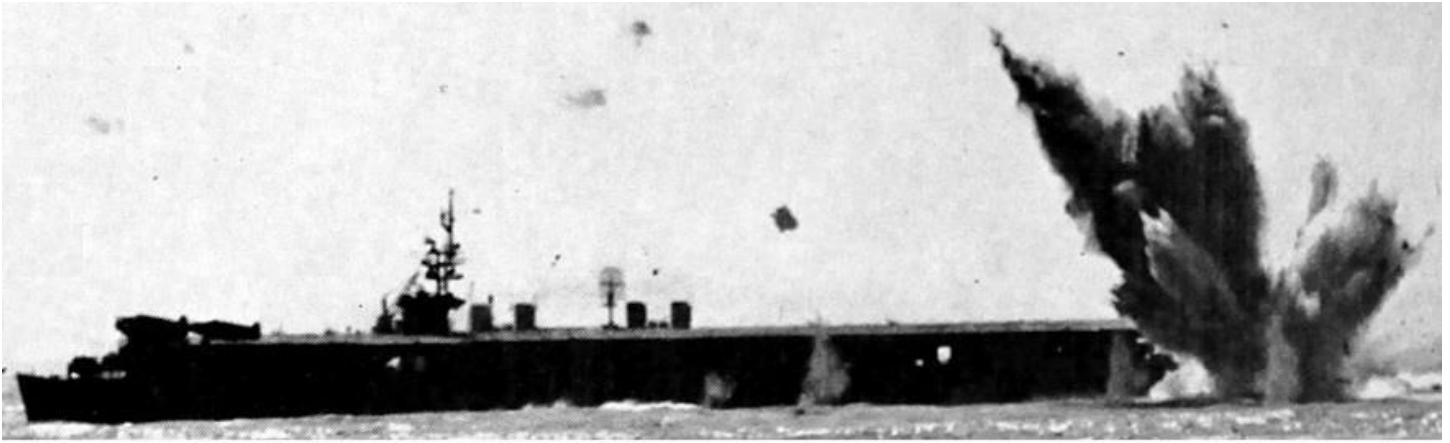
58.2 cover Franklin - kami.-damaged Halsey Powell (30-27N, 134-28E) - retired to Ulithi escorted by The Sullivans

58.2 DISJOINED

58.4 refuel - Enterprise damaged by friendly fire (30-01N, 134-30E)

Photo # 80-G-319232 Japanese aircraft passes near USS Bataan, off Japan, March 1945





MARCH 20, 1945: UNDER ATTACK OFF OKINAWA, THE U.S.S. BATAAN CVL-29 ESCAPES DAMAGE FROM A 500-LB. BOMB DROPPED BY A JAPANESE "JUDY", WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY SHOT DOWN.

More details will be found on the Reunion Association's website at:

<http://www.bataancvl29.org/Oct%20'44-Mar%20'451.htm>

Ill-Fated U. S. S. Franklin Survivors, Reach Safe Port

(The following story was written by Alvin S. McCoy of the Kansas City Star, only war correspondent aboard the aircraft carrier U. S. S. Franklin, when it was hit by Jap bombs March 19 off the Japanese coast.)

By ALVIN S. MCCOY

War Correspondent of the Kansas City Star, representing the combined American Press

SOMEWHERE IN THE WESTERN CAROLINES, March 24 (Delayed)—The battered carrier, the U. S. S. Franklin, steamed into an anchorage here late today after a sad, brief cruise, its colors flying and its fighting spirit undimmed by the tragedy off Japan.

In his first plan of the day two days after the bombing, Capt. L. E. Géhres had sounded the note, heading it: "A ship that won't be sunk can't be sunk."

The carrier arrived under its own power, having kept pace in the convoy at 21 knots. Engines and hull appeared almost intact. Paint had blistered off bulkheads and the hangar deck was a fire-blackened shell.

Bury Dead, Clean Up Ship

Remaining members of the crew worked prodigiously during the return trip, burying the dead, cleaning up the ship and making some emergency repairs. Charred bodies were found days after the catastrophe. Some living were found and rescued 24 hours after the bombing.

Seven men, who had sought safety in the bilges under the evaporators, almost at the keel of the ship, found their way out unharmed the next day. W. E. Kniss, seaman first class, was removed from a pile of wreckage the following day. Four toes had been severed, and he had placed a tourniquet on his ankle. As the beams were being taken off him, he greeted the doctor:

"Say, doc, will you please take this tourniquet off my leg?"

More than two and a half hours were spent in the Pacific by Lieut. C. E. Mikronis, Baton Rouge, La., an air officer handling landings signals who rejoined the carrier later.

Standing on the flight deck, he was knocked over by the first explosion. Two more followed. Lieuten-

ant Mikronis, holding two life jackets in his hand, gave one to a pilot.

"Then one big explosion came right under me," he said. "It broke the ankles of two pilots standing by me. I decided to jump, so over I went. The carrier went on until we must have been ten miles behind it. Quite a few of us were holding onto a floater net, including the two pilots with broken ankles.

Rescued from Water

"The U. S. S. Marshall, a destroyer, finally came along with a cargo net over the side. It picked up about fifteen or twenty of us after we'd been in the water two and a half hours. Believe me, it was plenty cold."

The harrowing escape of about 100 men from a below-decks compartment was related by R. A. Wood, Jr., signalman first class, Fresno, Calif.

"We shut the doors for water tight integrity," he said, "and then I saw two men through a glass port almost suffocating. We let them in and some smoke came in with them. Two men wearing breathers came in just before there was an explosion forward. They

went out three times, returning finally with a bucket of dirty water so we could dampen our handkerchiefs.

"They thought they had found a way out, if we could stand it without breathers. We crawled forward about four compartments. The smoke was terrible. One boy in front of me fell down, but we kept our heads and got him going. I realized we were in a mighty tough spot. All lights were out and the heat under the forward mess compartment was almost unbearable.

"I told the men for God's sake not to take a deep breath. We'd retch every time we did. By the grace of God we finally got out the officers' hatch on the hangar deck."

A. J. Russo, seaman first class, Brooklyn, N. Y., was in the chiefs' quarters with about 30 enlisted men. The nearby sick bay had been hit, he said, and was burning. He did not know how many sick were removed.

"We sent up three fellows," he said, "to find a way out. They went up to the hangar deck, saw a scuttle open, and came back. Then we formed a line. There were about six dead in the compartment. We prayed over their bodies, then started up. The 40-millimeter and 20-millimeter shells were going off, bursting around us, so about 20 jumped over the side."

The war isn't over yet; ask any Delaware man who today is fighting in the Pacific. Your bond buying must continue at least until V-J Day.

FINKEL'S

