

PV-1 Ventura in action

While assigned to squadron VB-148 in the Pacific, aviation ordnanceman 1st class Owen Bateson participated in shooting down a Japanese G4m2 bomber also known as a "Betty". Here is his account of the incident in his own words.

Scratch a second Japanese bomber

On June 8, 1944 we had an early breakfast and headed for our plane #34834. A young Marine stood by our plane and asked if he could take a trip with us. We said "hop in". Little did he know that he would see a "Betty" shot from the sky.

Four planes took off together to search the Islands of Truk and Satawal 400 miles away. Each plane flew at about 200 feet at 200 miles an hour. Like four fingers we separated and disappeared from each other. One plane was to our left and two planes were to our right. We searched for subs, ships, life rafts and aircraft.

The Marine was moving around under my turret as I tested my guns. The left gun did not work. The right one was okay. As we traveled North for about two hours we could see Truk, a very strong Japanese island. This island was fortified so strongly that our armed forces did not go ashore to capture it.

I was constantly alert for anything in the air or on the sea. I noticed a spot moving toward Truk at about 8000 feet. I used my intercom phone to my pilot and told him there is an unidentifiable object at about 8000 feet at "ten o'clock". LT. Stanford said we'll go up and take a look at it. When we were at about 5000 feet he said it's a Jap bomber, a Betty, "Let's get him". We climbed above the Betty and we could see crewman in the tail firing at us. We dropped our extra gas tanks and came in above their right wing. I fired my one gun and LT. Stanford fired all 5 of his 50 caliber bow guns. Flames shot from their right wing tank next to their fuselage. We flew over their plane and I continued to fire my one gun as the Betty gradually lost power. I could see my bullets going through the Betty into the water. I could see the two crewmembers in their cockpit. Their plane continued to lose power and they crashed in a ball of fire and disappeared. No bodies could be seen.

Our radio antenna was on a single post in front of my turret guns. Two wires went to the twin tail on our plane. My bullets cut the radio wires and we had no radio. We circled the wreckage and turned for home.

Meanwhile the plane on our right spotted the ball of flame and smoke. They tried to contact us but we had no radio. They thought that we were shot down and radioed our base. Our radioman rigged another radio antenna wire about one half hour from our base in Emirau.

Our co-pilot was wounded in the leg. One bullet just missed our tail gunner by three inches. Another bullet shot out the unit that told when to shift gas to other tanks and to let us know if our wheels were down and locked.

Emergency trucks waited for us on the runway. We landed safely.

The Marine thanked us for the ride, but said "THAT WAS MY LAST RIDE".

-Owen Bateson-