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From: The U. S. Naval Liaison Officer, Calcutta, India.

To: The Director of Naval Intelligence.

Via: The Senior U S Naval Liaison Officer, I-B Theater.

Subject: USS HOUSTON.

Reference: (a) Aluslo Calcutta Despatch 050804 to DNI.

Enclosures: (a) Summary submitted by Lt (jg) Harold S Hamlin USN, and Lt (jg) Leon W Rogers USN, with:-

1. Statement of Lt (jg) Harold S Hamlin USN P. 4
2. " " Lt (jg) Leon W Rogers USN P. 6
3. " " Comdr Wm A Epstein (MC) USN P. 7
4. " " Ens C D Smith USN P. 8
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9. Partial log as kept by survivors P. 14
10. Log of USS HOUSTON for February as reconstructed by surviving officers in Batavia, 1 June 1942. P. 19
11. Abridged copy of a battle account of the HOUSTON'S engagements on 27 and 28 February and 1 March 1942, as compiled by the group of surviving officers in Batavia, Java, about 1 June 1942. P. 23
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(b) Reconstructed Houston log (Notes of Coxswain Madson) P. 33

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(e) Statement of Pay Clerk K L Shaw, USMC P. 57

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- (q) Personnel transferred to Australian-American-British and Dutch working camp - NIKI (105 kilo) P. 78
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1. In compliance with instructions received from the United States Senior Naval Liaison Officer, New Delhi, Aluslo, Calcutta coordinated with the appointed officials of the U S Army, India-Burma Theater, in the interrogation of repatriates, ex USS HOUSTON, who have been in the hands of the Japanese since March 1, 1942.

2. Between the dates of 28 August and 7 September, 1945, a total of two hundred sixteen U S Naval and U S Marine Corps personnel arrived at Calcutta:

From	Date	U S Navy		U S Marine Corps		Total
		Officers	E M	Officers	E M	
Bangkok	28 Aug		1			1
"	29 "	2	44*		4	50
"	30 "	3	42		5	50
"	31 "	1				1
"	1 Sept		6			6
Saigon	5 "		14**		2	16
"	6 "	1	70			71
Singapore	6 "		3			3
Kumming	6 "				5	5
Singapore	7 "		9	1		10
Kumming	7 "	1	1		1	3
		8	190	1	17	216

3. All repatriates were transported on arrival to the 142nd U S Army General Hospital for routine medical examination and treatment when found necessary. Six officers and twenty-five men have since been released from the hospital and despatched to the United States by Air Transport Command planes, one lot leaving on evening of 7 September and another lot on morning of 8th September. The remaining repatriates will be similarly transported immediately following release from the hospital. All repatriates received an advance of US \$100.00 immediately on arrival. In some instances a second payment of \$100.00 has been made. Clothing from the supplies of the U S Naval Group, China, India Unit, was also promptly issued.

4. During hospital processing interrogations have been conducted. From the rough notes on varied types of paper, which had been hoarded and hidden by officers and men since 1 March 1942, the enclosures have been made by the U S Naval Liaison Office in Calcutta. Although h notes taken are incomplete and more data is expected soon from Bangkok, the enclosures are forwarded for proper assembling, copying, narration and distribution to other interested U S Naval activities. Due to limited stay of these repatriates at the 142nd U S Army General Hospital these notes have been hastily transcribed and in some instances photostated, in order to permit prompt despatch to the Director of Naval Intelligence.

5. Copies of questionnaires, prepared by the MIS-X

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Section of G-2, Hdqtrs of U S Army, I-B Theater, are now being copied and will be despatched to DNI with any data subsequently received from Bangkok or Saigon.

6. A certificate of incomplete interrogation has been given to each repatriate, and pay accounts, and service records have been reconstructed in each case.

7. A copy of enclosures (a) to (r) have been given to Lt. Don Chafey, USNR, and Lt Ralph J. Coursolle, USNR. of the Dependents Welfare Division of the Bureau of Personnel who are in this theater for the purpose of obtaining casualty information.

George C Miles
GEORGE C MILES

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STATEMENT BY LIEUT.(jg) HAROLD S. HAMLIN, USN

When the first order to abandon ship was given turret one, which was out of action due to a flooded magazine, was completely flooded and abandoned. All life rafts forward had by this time been launched. Ensign O.Sellers put out a fire in the life jacket locker after which life jackets were issued, and as the order to abandon ship was repeated, the men began to go over the side. I remained on the forecastle until the list had increased to about 30 degrees at which time Ingram, S2c, Clymen, BMlc, and I abandoned ship over the port bow. No one else was left on the forecastle. About two minutes later the ship was struck on the port side by either a shell or a small torpedo, and capsized to starboard, sinking shortly afterwards. I swam for an island in Bantam Bay reaching it at about 0300. I was unable to find any signs of habitation, but encountered Axelson, Slc, and Kocher, Slc.

About an hour later a landing boat approached and while Kocher and Axelson went inland, I attempted to escape to the sea but was captured while attempting to cross the beach. I was taken out to a Japanese Merchant transport, in which a regiment of Japanese sailors, commanded by a Captain was embarked. I arrived on board before sunrise.

I was questioned extensively but well treated, fed well and given clothing. Next day I was taken to H.I.J.M.S. NATORE, questioned further by an officer of the fleet staff, and sent back to the transport. The following day (March 3) I was transferred to the transport Samedong Maru, where I found 10 more survivors of the HOUSTON and about 200 other assorted English and Australian prisoners, mostly from the PERTH.

On March 9, 1941 we were transferred ashore and sent by motor truck to Serang and confined in the native jail.

HAROLD S. HAMLIN, Jr.
Lieutenant, (junior grade),
United States Navy.

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ity NND 968133

NARA Date 5-9-02

ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 2

STATEMENT BY LEON W. ROGERS, LIEUT.(jg), USN

When the word was passed to abandon ship, I went over the side from the port side of the boat-deck. I was wearing a life jacket but had no life raft. I swam clear of the ship, which was still being fired upon, and started swimming toward an island a few miles away. I swam alone for about two hours, passing many men swimming with life jackets and several groups on life rafts. After about two hours in the water, I joined a group on a life raft with Lt. Hodge in charge. We held onto the raft and by swimming pulled it in the direction of the Java coast. The current was strong and progress very slow. By about 0300 there were no Japanese ships in our vicinity, but about an hour before sunrise more ships were sighted and it became apparent that they would pass very close to our raft. I left the raft because I thought I could reach the beach before the ships passed us. At dawn when I was about two hundred yards from the beach, it became apparent that the Japanese were landing at this point. I was afraid that I would be caught in the middle of a battle on the beach and so gave up trying to land. I drifted with the current through the anchored ships within fifty or one hundred yards of several ships, but was not molested by the Japanese nor was any attempt made to pick me up. When I had drifted clear of the ships I started to look for Mr. Hodge's raft but never saw it again. There were three other rafts in the vicinity, on the first there were about thirty men (enlisted) without life jackets. They said they had been picked up by a Japanese motor launch and forced to throw away their life jackets. They were treated very well but were subsequently put back on the raft without their jackets. This raft was crowded so I swam to the next one where I found Ensign Mallory and Pay Clerk Lafferty with about thirty enlisted men most of whom had life jackets. They had several wounded with them and were trying to puddle the raft with some bits of wreckage but were making very slow progress. I left this raft and tried to swim to another island (subsequently identified as Jappetang Island) but the current was too strong and I returned to Mallory's raft. Again I left the raft and tried to swim to another island (subsequently identified as Sangling Island) but again the current was too strong and I returned to Mallory's raft. I left this raft for the last time at about 1000 Sunday morning March first and tried to swim to the Java mainland. At about noon I joined another life raft which was not very crowded (19 men). In this raft the men had torn strips from the bottom of the raft for paddles and were making fair progress. When I joined them they were about four miles from the beach. We continued paddling all afternoon and finally reached the beach about thirteen miles south of Anjer Kidoel light just at sunset. We slept that night in a native village where we were well treated and given drinking water but no food nor dry clothing. Two or three of the men walked on with native guides toward Laboehan rather than sleep in wet clothing. The rest of us were too exhausted to walk any further. The next morning March second shortly after daybreak we started walking south heading for Laboehan. At Tjarita we met several more Houston survivors who had been with Lt. Dalton. They told me that Mr. Dalton had gone on ahead to Laboehan to arrange transportation to come after any survivors along the coast and to arrange for boats to go out looking for rafts and survivors in the water. I stayed in Tjarita all that morning resting. Pony carts came up from Laboehan and were taking people back four at a time. Australian survivors from the Perth began arriving about 1000. By about 1400 most all of the Americans had left so I took the next cart. We had hardly got started when we met a group of excited natives coming from the opposite direction who argued with our driver. The driver then made us get out and said he couldn't take us because "Japan was coming". We decided that he meant the Japanese were in Laboehan. The natives in Tjarita became very restless and excited and insisted that we leave. We walked about a mile south of the village and sat down at the side of the road to rest and decide what to do. There were about fifty of us the greater part Australians from the Perth. While we were here Manista, A., CGM, arrived from Laboehan where he had left Lt. Dalton. He said that the natives were rioting there; that we could get neither food, rest, nor shoes there. Lt. Dalton was leaving for Menes about twenty-five kilometers inland. At Menes he expected to get shoes, clothes, and directions for Pandeglang where the Dutch Army was making its stand. Our part started walking south intending to take a chance on going through Laboehan to strike the railroad which led to Menes. We arrived at Tjaringin at about dusk and decided to turn inland there as the natives said the road led to Menes. Progress was very slow as most of us had no shoes, and were in a weakened condition. The trees on both sides of the road had been felled across the road by the Dutch and we had to climb over them about every twenty yards. At about 0300 (March third) these of us with no shoes laid down in the road to sleep while those with shoes went on towards Menes. At daybreak we started out again. The party had kept together during the previous night but now began to straggle out. I was one of the slowest and finally walked into Menes about 1000 with two Perth seamen. I

STATEMENT BY LEON W. ROGERS, LIEUT.(jg), USN (CONT'D)

arrived at Menes just as Lt. Dalton was leaving with a party of about thirty men. The natives were looting the town and all of the Dutch had left, but we decided to get a couple of hours sleep in an abandoned hospital where Lt. Daltons' party had spent the night. Lt. Dalton and his party left for Pandeglang and I didn't see him again until we met in the Serang jail about ten days later. Two more Australians arrived at about this time and we slept until about noon. We got directions from natives and started walking towards Pandeglang where we expected to find the Dutch Army. We walked until dusk and then stopped in a native village where we found about ten stragglers from Lt. Dalton's party. The next morning we split up into groups of five or six as we had found out that a small group had better luck at begging food and water from the natives. We started on towards Pandeglang and about noon began to see signs of Japanese influence. A few scattered Japanese flags were seen. The natives insisted that we keep going towards Pandeglang and implied that they didn't want to be found with us. They were definitely hostile but didn't actually molest us. We decided that without shoes, weapons, or knowledge of the country, and with the natives hostile; it was hopeless to leave the main road and try to hide in the hills. We decided to go on towards Pandeglang and give ourselves up to the first Japanese that we saw. We straggled out again so that I reached the outskirts of Pandeglang with one Australian seaman. Natives put us in a horse cart and took us to the local jail. This was about 1800 and a few minutes later three more Houston survivors were brought in. There were no Japanese at the jail but a Japanese flag was flying over the front entrance. The five of us were put in one cell and spent the night there, the only inmates in the jail. The next morning (March fifth) Lt. R.R. Ross, U.S. Navy, was brought in with a party of about twenty-five men; part Houston survivors and part Perth survivors. I was kept in this jail for one week during which time Japanese soldiers brought in two or three prisoners almost every day. We were all given a thin straw mat to sleep on, one cotton shirt and a pair of cotton shorts. We had two meals a day consisting of a large helping of steamed unpolished rice and a small bowl of some kind of locally grown "greens".

A doctor and a nurse from the local hospital came each morning and held "sick call". Most of the men had cuts and blisters on their feet; some had minor shrapnel wounds; several had great raw places under each arm from swimming in life jackets without shirts. Two Australians had been badly cut up by natives with machetes. All were confined in bare cells with wooden sleeping platforms and a covered wooden tub for a toilet. The cells were designed for five native prisoners each and although there were as many as eight men in some cells none had to sleep on deck. Japanese soldiers made frequent inspections but did not stay at the jail. The native jailers continued to run the jail under Japanese supervision. With the exceptions of the meagre diet, hard sleeping spaces, and poor toilet facilities, treatment in general was not too bad. There was adequate cold water for washing and sufficient boiled water for drinking. We were permitted out of our cells in the prison yard (behind high stone walls) a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours in the afternoon.

We had plenty of rest and sleep once we became accustomed to sleeping on wooden boards, but it was difficult to gain strength on the prison diet.

On March eleventh, there were thirty-six Americans in the Pandeglang jail. I was taken to Serang on this date along with ten other Americans and a number of Australians. Here we were placed in the local jail where we found a large number of other survivors.

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Leon W. Rogers
Lieut.(jg), U.S. Navy 6

Statement of William A. Epstein, Commander (MC) U. S. Navy

After sounding abandon ship on the night of February 28, 1942, at about 2400. I, Commander William A. Epstein, went over the port side of the ship on the quarter deck. The Chaplain was near me at that time. While still on the side of the ship I was hit on the head by the double pontoon float and had a severe laceration of the scalp. Upon going into the water I managed to get ahold on an aeroplane float, to which Felix Yeol/c, was holding. There were eventually seven men (Comdr. Epstein, Felix Yeol/c, Hedrick QM2/c, Cooper P3/c, O'Brien Pvt., Willerton Yeo2/c, Beeson Seal/c, a Chinese Mess Attendant, and Carter QM3/c) on the float trying to make Java, but the currents were too strong for us, and we could see a landing was being made. After about five hours in the water, we decided to try for the island with the light house on it, which was Topper's light house. After about four hours or 0900 on March 1, 1942, and with considerable difficulty we managed to get near the island and with help from Australian surviving sailors from the H.M.S. Perth got ashore. During the last hours Marsh Pvt, USMC. and one chinese boy name unknown* died in the water, and the Chinese Boy's body floated away. Marsh was buried on Topper's Island on March 1, 1942. On March 9, 1942, we were machine gunned by two destroyers. Seven men (Willerton Yeo2/c, Hedrick QM2/c, Abrams Yeo3/c, Beeson Seal/c, Cooper P3/c, Tiefel Seal/c, and Carter QM3/c) decided to leave for Sangiang Island via raft on March 12, 1942. Four remained on Toppers Island until March 24, 1942, when we surrendered to the Asst., Wedana, who came to the Island from Anjer. We left Toppers (Comdr. Epstein, Felix Yeol/c, Goodson Seal/c, O'Brien Pvt., USMC) on the morning of March 24, and arrived at Anjer later in the morning and arrived Serang at 1700 when we were put in the local prison.

Abrams Yeo3/c, Goodson Seal/c, Tiefel Seal/c, and Hedrick QM2/c, had made the island with difficulty, swimming.

Chaplain Rentz was unable to keep up and drowned sometime during the night.

*Chinese Mess Attendant was Dacy Tsao, OC2/c.

Wedana is "Chief of Police".

William A. Epstein
Commander (MC) U.S. Navy

STATEMENT OF C.D. SMITH, ENSIGN, USN

After leaving the ship about 0100 I swam rapidly away and had arrived at a point approximately five hundred yards on her starboard quarter when I felt the concussion of a torpedo which hit amidships to port. Turning my head I saw the "Houston" roll over on her starboard side and remain afloat. Most of the fires topside were extinguished by the aid of a brilliant full moon I was able to see the bulk still floating for as long as she remained inside my horizon (about one-half hour). I organized several small groups of swimmers but since I had no lifejacket I soon outdistanced them. The current was setting me westward at about two knots so I headed for a peak visible on Java to the south and swam across current arriving at a tiny island three hundred yards off the coast (later discovered to be Pt. Tamposi) after moonset about 0430. (Estimated distance swum from ship about ten miles.)

Two men, Huffman, J.W., Cox., and Bird, Flc, and I crawled ashore and slept till daylight. At that time we discovered five others who joined my party; Lusk Sgt., USMC, Beatty Slc, Wilkinson, S2c, Batchelor, Slc, and Johnson, W., S2c. At 0700 we swam to the mainland during a rain squall to avoid being spotted by patrolling aircraft and surface ships. When we reached high ground we could see the Japanese convoy unloading below us about five miles down the beach. A three stack light cruiser, three destroyers, and several patrol boats (about same size as our Coast Guard cutters) were on patrol duty along with several Japanese SOC's and flights of five or six Navy 96 (fixed undercarriage) fighters. Later that morning Bukowsky Pvt., USMC, joined us. We remained in the vicinity until nightfall Monday hoping to get a native boat but the presence of soldiers drove us off. We travelled eastward through the mountains until Tuesday noon when we entered a native village for food. The natives appeared friendly and fed us. However unknown to us they sent for Japanese soldiers who arrived about 1330. We heard them coming and attempted to escape back to the hills but the natives ran with us and disclosed our hiding places. Since we were weak from hunger and exposure we were forced to surrender. The Japanese took us back to the village headman's house and fed us. We remained here several hours tied up while the gospel was spread by a Malay-speaking Japanese. We were then marched about fifteen miles eastward down the coast road and spent the night in an occupied native village. The next morning Wednesday we continued our march till about 1300 when we arrived at a native market place where we rested for a couple of hours. Then we were placed in a truck and driven about ten miles to a small village at the intersection of two highways. We remained here about four hours tied up in an empty store. About 2100 we were placed in a truck which joined about one hundred others travelling east. About 2300 we arrived at Serang and were taken around to several private houses until 0100 when we were taken to the Bantam Park movie house. Sunday evening, I was moved to the jail along with the rest of the Allied officers present. At no time after reaching the shore and until I was taken to Serang, did I see any Americans other than those with me.

Men seen by me in the water: Capt. Ramsey, USMC, good shape swimming with life-jacket. Gary, CFC, in good shape swimming with life-jacket. Elliot, CFC, in good shape swimming with life-jacket. Radio Electrician Gillet, arm broken below shoulder on plank surrounded by about ten men. Roque, Slc, good shape swimming with life-jacket. Babnis, Slc, good shape swimming on plank. Smith, W12c, good shape swimming without life-jacket. Stewart, QMlc, good shape swimming with life-jacket.

Charles D. Smith
Ensign, U.S. Navy.

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NARA Date 5-9-02

ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 5

STATEMENT OF J. A. HARRELL, YEOMAN THIRD CLASS, U.S. NAVY

When word was passed to abandon ship, I went down a line into the water on the port side. I swam the rest of the night, all of the morning of the first and until about 1400 or 1500 in the afternoon when I was picked up by the raft upon which were Lieut. R. E. Ross and Lieut. (j.g.) Weiler with about thirty men. We had make-shift paddles from a wooden raft which we had broken up. The balance of the day we paddled to make shore but the tides and cross currents were too much, so that we did not make the beach till about 1800 or 1900 of the second of March. When we made the beach most of the men took a drink of coconut milk and went to sleep. However some of the men left to try and get some help and also to get food. Most of them did not come back.

The morning of the third of March, Lieut. Ross and Ah Chio, Mattl/e, left to see if they could get any help to come to the wounded.

Lieut. (j.g.) Weiler was wounded in two places. His left elbow had a wound about three inches in diameter and deep enough to see the elbow joint; the other wound looked as if it were a cut, it was about one inch wide and four inches long, in line with the floating ribs and about one-half inch from the spine. It was from one-half to three quarters of an inch deep.

The balance of the men with Lieut. Weiler in charge remained at the shack where we had made the beach until noon of the fourth of March at which time we left and walked for about four or five miles till dusk. We then went to the beach to spend the night. When we arrived at the beach there was a Dutch lock-out station (which was number fifty-four) with three houses, which the Dutch had abandoned, where we spent the night. During the fifth and sixth all of the men left in two's and threes so that at the night of the sixth there was only Lieut. Weiler, Jack Burge, Seal/e, E. A. Huebler, Bugl/e, and myself. There is an exception for we had picked up a wounded Australian from the H.M.S. Perth by the name of Gordon Webster. We remained at the lockout station till the afternoon of the eighth when we went to the Wedana's (the Chief of Police) in Laboehan. On the ninth two more wounded Australians came in, they were sub-Lieut. Gavin Campbell, whose left leg was broken, and Dennis Maher who had wounds on his left shoulder. We were all very well treated by the Wedana and given plenty to eat.

On the tenth we saw our first Japanese soldiers. About fifty of them and their officers came to Laboehan. They questioned us about how many ships there had been with us, and we told them two. On the twelfth the Japanese sent a doctor to look us over. He said that the wounded could be moved so on the morning of the thirteenth we left for Nones. We spent the nights of the thirteenth and fourteenth in Nones. On the fifteenth we went on to Pandeglang where the wounded were placed in the hospital and the rest of us were put in prison.

On the twenty-seventh we were told by the native from the hospital who came to dress out wounds that Lieut. (j.g.) Weiler had died on March twenty-sixth. This was later verified by the doctor, who also told us that he had given Lieut. Weiler's Glass Ring to the Japanese.

While I was in the water I also saw another raft with Lieut. Comdr. (SO) Chisholm on it, but during the night it became separated from us and we did not see them again.

There were only three Americans at Pandeglang after the death of Lieut. (j.g.) Weiler and they were Jack Burge, Seal/e, E.A. Huebler, Bugl/e, and myself. We remained at Pandeglang till the fourteenth of April, at which time we went to Serang, where we spent the night and on the fifteenth we left Serang for Batavia in a convoy of about twenty seven trucks. We arrived in Batavia the afternoon of the fifteenth of April and were put in "Bicycle Camp".

John Allison Harrell, Yeom/e, 407-25-73, (V-3), USNR

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NARA Date 5-9-02

ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 7

AN ACCOUNT OF MY EXPERIENCES AFTER THE BATTLE OF SUNDRA STRAITS.
 BY: P. R. CLARK, ENSIGN(PC), USN.

I went over the port side of the quarterdeck, down the net rigged there, shortly after the second abandon ship order was passed. At that time the ship was listed to starboard and moving slowly to port. I swam clear of the ship and then started for what seemed to me the nearest land, directly south. I met no life rafts from the ship and only a few people in the water. When I could make out the shoreline I became alarmed at the rate the current was carrying me westward so I discarded my gun and shoes. Approximately an hour after sunrise I made shore as did Lt. Fulton. We met Lt. Payne, Lt. Gallagher, and three men nearby and fashioned shoes from our lifejackets, (Lt. Payne was the only one who had retained his shoes.)

We suspected the Japanese had landed some troops to the westward so we went eastward until we found a native hut and obtained drinking water. We left continuing eastward in search of food, finding only green bananas and coconut palms we did not have the strength to climb. We sat down beside a rice paddy and decided to stay together and to make all possible haste toward Tjilatjap after getting some shoes. We climbed a hill and found a native hut the occupants of which gave us some fresh cucumbers. In the near distance there was a Japanese light cruiser and on the horizon several destroyers, presumably the force that accompanied the transports that we had seen while swimming to the beach.

While at the native hut Japanese observation planes kept flying about. We were all very tired and had a short nap in a hut at the top of the hill. At about 1500 we started down the hill toward the road we could see, Lt. Payne and Lt. Gallagher starting to go to a house on the road. The rest of us staying behind. Shortly a soldier was seen to our left on the road. The soldier looked like a Japanese from the distance and Lt. Fulton went toward him. However we soon saw the white flag with the red circle and many more (about 20) soldiers on the side of the hill we were on, on the road. These soldiers had a machine gun covering our descent of the hill and had us spotted long before we saw them. They had all seven of us sit in the grass in the shade, fed us biscuit, candy, and cigarettes until about 1630. Carpenter Biechlin and 6 others were captured at about this time.

The soldiers put a shoulder pack on each of us and we marched until almost dark with reasonable rest periods, eastward, to a small village. Except for cuts and bruises on our bare feet we were not too uncomfortable. We were fed rice and divided cans of some kind of meat among us. We were bedded down on palm fronds under an open tile roofed building under guard.

The next morning March 2, we were marched with no packs or any encumbrances to Bantam Bay over a road on which many trees had been felled crosswise and had not been cleared. We passed two or three 3inch antiaircraft guns set up on the road near the landing. We were halted at a small clearing on dry ground where a small supply center had been established, in sight of the beach. An armed merchantman was on its side and a black painted merchantman was sunk straight down with a red cross painted on boards hung over the side. We sat around most of the day doing very little work and were crowded together closely at night and allowed to sleep. The next day and the day after (March 3&4) we did a little work unloading trucks and landing boats, principally gasoline drums, whiskey, beer, rice and truck spare parts. During this time one of our sailors (Stewart) and a Dutch merchant captain arrived badly in need of medical attention but none was received.

About 2130 March 4, after we were bedded down as best we could, we were routed out and marched to a fair concentration of troops, past the local GHQ and transmitters. Then the party was divided and two white men and a native were put to pushing each coolie cart, heavily laden, over an almost impassable road. Rocks mires, ruts, etc., made it necessary for the Japanese soldiers to help us often. At about 0200 the other part of our group met us on a graded dirt road, they were pushing larger carts. It rained sometime during the night but luckily we kept on, else we all would have caught cold. Sometime after daybreak we came to a macadam road which bearing generally southeast all the time brought us to Serang at about 2100 March 5. On this trip our unshod feet suffered terribly, and the light diet of rice and a persimmon during the heat

of the day had very little in it to help our fatigue. Truly by the time we arrived in Serang we were going on nerves only. After wandering around town for about two hours we were herded into the Bantam Park theater, converted from a church, and allowed to sleep.

The next morning, March 6, natives were separated from whites, officers from men, and HOUSTON sailors from PERTH sailors.

For the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ days, until the officers and some men were taken to the jail we each had two small loaves of bread per day and water. During the day we had to sit up on the tiled floor which we could sweep but could not wash down and at night we slept on the bare floor. While I was at the theater there were no bathing facilities at all and the head was most primitive. During the second day the Japanese installed a machine gun in the balcony which could train train on any of us, and once during my stay in the theater a guard's gun was fired accidentally, hurting no one but scaring everyone.

P. R. CLARK

ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 6

STATEMENT OF ENSIGN JOHN B. NELSON, U.S. NAVY

When the word was passed to abandon ship, I went to my abandon ship station and assisted the men assigned to that station in unshipping, provisioning and launching our life raft. All men were cautioned to secure their life jackets properly and not to jump until we had launched the raft. As soon as we launched the raft I jumped overboard to starboard and swam clear of the ship, which still had about 4 knots way on. I then swam to my raft and found there Ensign J.M. Hamill and 2nd Lieut. E.M. Barrett and approximately fifty men. None of the men were wounded or injured except O'Brien, R.L., GMlc, who had injured his chest slightly jumping from the ship into the raft.

During this time the Japanese had continued shelling the "HOUSTON" and several of their salvos landed near by. We soon passed out of the line of fire and in company with several other rafts headed toward a small island later identified as Pandjangland. We soon realized that the current was against us and therefore changed course toward a high peak on the Java side of the straits.

About 0130 we sighted a submarine on the surface. Ensign Hamill, 2nd Lieut. Barrett and I kept the men quite until it disappeared. Soon thereafter two destroyers, several transports and at least one motor torpedo boat passed us close aboard. I am certain that we were sighted, because the soldiers on the transports were shouting and pointed at us. They made no move to molest us however. The transports soon anchored, off shore, and we could hear preparations being made for a landing force.

At about 0300 Lt. Comdr. W.J. Galbraith and Warrant Machinist E.V. May joined our party. We continued on toward our objective, hoping all the while that we could land before the Japanese and contact the Dutch.

When dawn came, we could see that the Japanese had already landed and we knew it was useless to attempt a landing in the vicinity. We therefore got upon the raft and let the current carry us southward.

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ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 8

STATEMENT BY C.L. THOMAS, S1c, USN

I was attached to the U.S.S. Stewart (224) when the war started. On February 7, 1942 I had an attack of acute appendicitis and on February 8 1942 I was transferred to the hospital ashore in Tjilatjap to be operated on. This operation never took place. On March third I was sent to the Hospital at Tjakchow where I remained overnight. The Dutch doctor here told me that the Japanese were only eighteen miles away and that there was a chance of being evacuated if I went back to Tjilatjap. I returned to Tjilatjap on March fifth where I found that three transports had left the day before and two had been sunk in the harbor. The docks were afire and there were Japanese ships, in the vicinity, so I was sent to the Australian hospital in Bandoeng. During this time I had spent three weeks on a liquid diet and the remainder of the time on a soft diet. Also I had had a second acute attack of appendicitis. I stayed in the Bandoeng hospital until March fifteenth and during this time recovered my strength to a great extent. During this time the allied forces had capitulated and the Japanese had occupied the town. On March fifteenth I was sent to the allied headquarters along with all of the other hospital patients who could be moved. On March sixteenth I joined the British "6th Heavy" and on March seventeenth marched about twelve miles to a railroad center near Tjebatee. Here I joined the 131st Field Artillery U.S.A. On March thirtieth we were taken to Batavia and put in a prison camp in the harbor district. On May fourteenth the "131st" was moved to Bicycle Camp and here I joined the Houston detachment.

Charley Laurence Thomas, S1c, USN

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ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 9

Feb Log

WittedeWit	De Ruyter (CL)	Electra
	Exeter (CA)	Jupiter
Kortenaar	Houston (CA)	Encounter
	Perth (CL)	
	Java (CL)	

J. P. Jones
 Edsel
 Edwards
 Ford

Feb. 27, 1942.

On Friday afternoon Feb. 27, 1942 the Allied Striking Force was returning to Soerabaya after making a sweep of the Java Sea N. of Madoera Is. the previous night in search of a Japanese force. The enemy fleet had not been discovered and the only contact with the Japanese had been a bombing attack in the morning with no damage to the Allied ships.

The Houston was in readiness condition II. Two of the Houston's planes had been damaged during previous bombings, and one had failed to rejoin the ship after the bombing on 16 Feb. The only serviceable plane had been left in Soerabaya the evening before as a night action was expected. Expended CO₂ in gasoline storage.

At about 1330 just outside the minefield the Houston fired on a plane with Japanese markings which resembled a "Lockheed Hudson". Only about 12 rounds fired, no hits observed and plane turned away without pressing home an attack.

About 1415 a PBV reported by radio a Japanese force of cruisers, destroyers and transports in the vicinity of Bawean Is. and heading S. (Contact report: 55 men of war 203 transports). By this time we were in the minefields. At 1515 the Allied Force turned and headed north to intercept the enemy.

About 1530 we went to AA Defense when 3 planes resembling "SOC's" were sighted. They did not come within range.

We went to G.Q. at 1535 when the masts of ships were sighted hull down bearing about 020° R. Our course was 350° T. speed 28 kts. The formation continued on this course for about 15 minutes closing before the action started.

At 1555 the Exeter opened fire and the Houston 3 or 4 min. later. The targets were Japanese light cruisers which were just coming in range ahead and about 2 pts. on stbd. bow. Our force made a column movement to the left about 60° and the head of the column came under fire from 2 other enemy ships bearing about 30° to the right of the light cruisers. These were apparently heavy cruisers and were thought to be Tone class.

The Exeter and Houston immediately shifted their fire to these new targets and each took one ship. The Houston had fired only 2 or 3 salvos before shifting and had apparently scored no hits.

The opening gun range on the Japanese heavy cruiser was about 32,000 yards. The courses of the two forces were almost parallel but converging slightly. The allied cruisers were in column distance about 600 yds., speed 28 kts., course about 280° T. or 290° T.

When the battle started the 3 British destroyers on the stbd. bow and beam of the column increased speed and changed course slightly to the left, crossing in front of cruiser column well ahead, and engaged Japanese light forces. They later rejoined column when "Exeter" was hit.

The two Dutch destroyers remained in relative position on port bow and beam of column and engaged Japanese destroyers at time of Exeter hit.

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The American destroyers astern had trouble keeping up until Exeter was hit then they laid smoke screen. Later they were ordered on separate mission to attack transports and never rejoined.

The Japanese forces were in three groups: two heavy cruisers bearing about 100° R.; two light cruisers with destroyers bearing about 070° R.; and two light cruisers with destroyers bearing about 030° R.

At the beginning of the action the enemy concentrated on head of column and the Houston was not under fire for about 15 minutes

The allied column of cruisers were zig-zagging without plan following motions of DeRuyter which was changing course without signal about 10° to either side of firing course every 10 or 15 minutes.

About 1620 the Houston began hitting her target consistently. One fwd turret blew up and large fires were started in the waist of the ship. She slowed turned away and ceased firing. At this time she was partially obscured behind her own smoke much of which was coming from the stack.

At this time there had been no apparent hits on Exeter's target so the Houston shifted her fire to that ship. After about 10 salvos our original target had come back into line and resumed fire; whereupon the Houston shifted back to her own target. The Houston apparently scored no hits on the Exeter's target and never established effective hitting gun range on her own target again. About the time we shifted back on own target, the firing became very erratic in deflection. Spot 1 thought his spots were not being applied but this was not the case. Plot thought they had a bad set up, and obtained a new one. Deflection was still erratic and control was shifted to Director II and Spot II, but Director II could not bear so control was shifted back to Spot I and Director I. Subsequently it was determined that an electrical lead to Director I in foremast was badly frayed or broken. This faulty transmission together with severe whip in mast due to high speed and continuous firing was apparently the cause of the erratic deflection. The Houston had fired about 60 salvos or 70 salvos up to this time.

At the time the Houston shifted fire back to her own target, the Exeter was hit by shell fire. The hit was somewhere in the firerooms reducing her speed to 12/15 kts. She slowed and turned left about 45° out of column. To avoid her the Houston turned about 90° left. The Perth passed astern and laid a smoke screen between the Exeter and the enemy. At this time the Kortenaar which had been 3000 yds on Houston's stbd bow was hit amidships stbd by a submarine torpedo. She rolled over on her port beam, broke in two, jack-knifed until only 10 ft. of her bow and stern out of water, and sunk in 3 or 4 minutes. The Exeter was smoking badly when the Japanese destroyers attacked. The Houston made another 90° turn to the left and emerged from the smoke screen to sight the incoming destroyers. The Main Battery fired one salvo, about 13,500 yds.; on in range but off in deflection, then we were covered by the smoke screen laid down by American destroyers. The Houston then commenced smoking for a short time. The Japanese destroyers apparently launched their torpedoes at max. range and turned away because several were seen to porpoise 100 or 200 yards short of the Houston, and one was reported to have hit us on port quarter without exploding. Another destroyer was hit by torpedo and sunk (Electra?). Simultaneous with the destroyer attack enemy submarines attacked from previously engaged side. No other ships were hit by torpedoes altho an amazing number were seen. During attack an Allied destroyer about 1500 yds. on stbd quarter fired a torpedo in our general direction. The torpedo travelled about 100 yards and hit a submarine. The destroyer then turned and passed astern tracking a torpedo wake about 2000 yds, dropped 3 depth charges which seemed to have sunk another submarine.

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The DeRuyter then ordered the Allied destroyers to attack the enemy battle line. They launched their torpedoes from extreme range and no hits were apparent, altho smoke prevented us from seeing much of the attack.

The Houston was hit once during the entire engagement by a shell which hit 9" inboard at frame 14 on port side of forecastle. It penetrated the forecastle deck, main deck, the second deck, and emerged thru stbd side of side about 3" below second deck. The shell did not explode but partially broke up before emerging. Considerable water was taken in while steaming at high speed throughout the evening and following morning. A fragment was found stamped with a "6" but the hole thru forecastle deck was 8" in diameter. The hole in the side was 18" X 32". We also received a near miss, portside aft, at frame 115 at water's edge. This dished in the side somewhat ruptured a bulkhead in fuel oil tank G-9 and contaminated the oil with salt water, flooded D-14A, and wrecked some machinery in the laundry.

The Admiral ordered the Exeter back to Soerabaia accompanied by the W.de.W. Exeter left Soerabaia at 1900 accompanied by Encounter and Neptune(?) - reported sunk by bombers south of Borneo.

WdeW sunk 1000 March 1 by near miss from bombing raid in Soerabaia harbour.

The Houston emerged from smoke screen just after destroyer attack on an easterly course and resumed fire on the two heavy cruisers now to port. We fired 30 to 40 salvos (range 20,000 yds) during this phase and the action ended at dusk. Our original target was no longer returning our fire and was burning and smoking as to be almost obscured (a tip of the bow with No. 1 turret and a tip of the stern with No. 5 turret was all that was visible). No heavy damage was apparent to the other heavy cruiser altho she is believed to have been under fire from our light cruisers.

During the action a Japanese spotting plane was overhead continuously flying up and down the column on the unengaged side never coming within range of our AA battery (shortest slant range observed 16,000yds.)

At least one enemy ship was sunk by Allied bombers believed to have been F.F. from Java. No Allied cruiser launched a plane.

De Ruyter
Houston
Perth
Java

Jupiter
Encounter

The Allied force then turned N. for a reported group of transports. We passed thru rafts of Kortenaar survivors (122) close aboard and the Encounter was ordered to pick them up and return to Soerabaia.

About 2045 two large shapes were sighted to port. Houston fired 10 or 12 star shells at maximum range (14,000 yards) and one salvo from turret II (Range 15000 yards). Star shells short of objects. Turret salvo very close. Perth and DeRuyter also fired one or two salvos - no hits apparent. Enemy ships fired 2 or 3 salvos at Houston with no illumination, close but no damage done. Action finished in very few minutes when enemy turned away. About this time enemy planes discovered us and continued to fly down our course line dropping flares. They were very tenacious in spite of much maneuvering. Some were usual aircraft magnesium flares, others seemed to be a float light with battery and bulb. We could not tell if latter lit on contact with water or by such action as agitation caused by wake.

About 2300 near Bawean Is. the Jupiter was torpedoed several miles astern, sending a message "Am Torpedoed". The flash could be seen from the Houston.

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Shortly after about 2315 the Java was torpedoed and about 5 minutes later the DeRuyter. We seemed to have run into a Japanese submarine nest. Orders from the Admiral were that cruisers should not stop for survivors so the Houston and Perth headed west for Batavia, speed about 28 kts., in column Perth leading, zigzagging without plan. The Java's fires lasted only a few minutes but the DeRuyter continued to burn fiercely and until we were over the horizon 9 distinct explosions could be counted. According to Dutch Naval Officers later the Java sunk in 8 minutes with one survivor and DeRuyter burned for 2 hours with about 90 survivors. Nothing more heard of Jupiter. There were no more enemy contacts that night.

- Secured from G.C. at dawn of Feb. 28 and set condition II in AA Battery. During morning several planes were sighted but no shots were fired as believed friendly. Some resembled P-40s others Dutch Twin float seaplanes.

Arrived off Tardjong Priok about 1200 and docked about 1300. About 1400 a Japanese 2 float seaplane dropped bombs over a Dutch patrol vessel at the channel entrance, no hits. Shifted ammunition from Turret II forward. Commenced fueling as soon as possible (about 1500); considerable delay was experienced because of damage ashore from bombings. Welded patch on hole forward. No repairs necessary aft. Temporary repairs had been effected on Director I deflection mechanism. The Captain left the ship for a conference. He requested reco. information about Sunda Str. from AVN Maltby. No British planes but Dutch reported straits clear. (Later discovered from D. Naval officers the enemy forces were sighted near S.S. at 1500 and their ship was ordered back to Batavia by radio. Also D. Army General Staff Officers reported they had info that Japanese commenced landings in Batam Bay at 2100 and at Merak at 2400.)

About 1815 a Japanese seaplane resembling our SOC flew in low over harbor and fire a few bursts of machine gun fire. The plane was fired on by shore battery, Perth and Dutch destroyer Evartsen - no hits apparent. About 1845 Lt. T. B. Payne, USN, flew in from Soerabaya and was fired on by shore battery and destroyer. No hits scored and having established identification landed and was recovered.

Got underway about 1930 in company with Perth, Evartsen to follow within an hour. Received a message saying the only enemy in vicinity was 60 miles to NE on easterly course. Perth's Radar picked up about 250 vessels to NW, N, NE, E,

Set Condition II Watch I in M.B. and in AA Battery. Turret I manned powder train filled. 5" battery divided - flight deck guns on fwd. director, boat deck guns on after director. Boat deck guns to be used for illumination and ready boxes contained star shells. Flight deck ready boxes filled with common shell. Speed about 22 knots. At 2315 Toppers Island Light plainly in view on stbd bow. Sighted ships, no identity, expected Dutch escort of patrol vessels. Perth leading challenged and Jap destroyer fired a red very star. Perth opened fire. CQ on Houston and Turret I opened fire on Jap destroyer about 500 yds and fired two or three salvos before Turret II joined. Spot I & Director I in control. Reversed course changing to right and commenced maneuvering behind Perth following on various courses at various speeds. The enemy seemed to have cruisers and destroyers close to shore covering landing and cruisers and destroyers outboard of transports as guards. No number of enemy ever accurately known but estimated about 2 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, 11 destroyers and about 35 transports. Fight developed into a melee - Houston guns engaged on all sides, range never greater than 5000 yards. No known record of enemy ships sunk but following day revealed 3 transports beached (one either seaplane tender or M.T.B. tender) Japanese destroyers illuminated with searchlights from all sides. Houston M.B. shifted to Director II once but crew there was blinded by our own 5" flashes. (See Comdr. Maher for report of Japanese questioning (4 transports, 2CA, 2CL, 9DD). Tried local Control in Turrets once but turning and twisting at high speed prevented picking up a target so fire was shifted back to Director I and Spot I.

First hit received on Houston was a salvo in Aft Engine Room which burst steam lines, believed killing all personnel within. Steam escaping up ventilators (filled mess hall and Midships Repair Party secured steam stops from #2 Mess Hall) forced 5" guns on boat deck, Director II and Aft AA Director personnel to abandon stations temporarily. Secured 3 & 4 firerooms when steam pressure dropped to 170# and lost water. Boat deck guns later resumed fire. Hit on forecastle steel deck set paint locker on fire which continued to burn. Received salvo completely thru wardroom. Turret II hit by dud in face plate just as powder was exposed for loading 28th salvo causing fire which caught

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powder train as far as Powder Circle. Central Station ordered turret magazines to be flooded which put Turret I out of action. Fire in Turret II extinguished. Received two (3) torpedo hits to starboard and one to port - one under No.1 1.1" mount fired by MTB from about 1000 yards and other below boat deck from destroyer - third believed under catapult starboard. First Abandon Ship passed but machine gun nests and some 5" crews continued to fire until all ammunition expended. Last rounds fired were starshells used as surface. As firing from Houston decreased Japanese destroyers became bolder and approached within 1500 to 2000 yards, increasing fire. Second Abandon Ship passed. Shells hit Communication Deck passageway behind Radio 1 demolishing #1 1.1" mount and fatally wounding Captain. Hits at frame #55 on main deck. Hits on Flight Deck set fire #25" ready box and pierced #2 stack - salvo hit boat deck inboard #3 - 1.1" mount. Hits at Frame 70, 78, 137. Japanese destroyers also machine-gunned quarterdeck and port hanger causing great loss of life. Final hit was delivered on portside by MTB which caused ship to roll on starboard beam and sink about 0030 March 1. Perth had sunk about 20 minutes previously. Last view of ship illuminated by Jap DD was American flag still waving defiance as she rolled on side.

EVARTSEN did not catch up, but believed sunk later the same night attempting to get through Sunda Strait.

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ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 10

9 1047

LOG FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY 1942 - U.S.S. HOUSTON

- Feb. 1 - Departed Surabaya about 1100 in company with Paul Jones and Whipple enroute Makassar Straits to act as covering party for Marblehead and destroyers due to attack enemy south of Balikpapan about midnight Feb. 2nd.
- Feb. 2 - Underway all day without event. Approximately midnight message received from Marblehead saying "Risk too great". Houston turned about and proceeded toward Madoera Strait.
- Feb. 3 - Arrived Madura Strait about 0800 already at anchor there were the Tromp, DeRuyter, 3 Dutch destroyers (Van Ghent, Piet Hein, Banckert) and nine 4-pipers (Bulmer, Edwards, Pope, Ford, Pecos, Pillsbury, Paul Jones, Stewart Whipple). Marblehead arrived shortly after. Admiral Purnell arrived via PBY for conference with Admiral Doorman (ComStriFor). Plane returning from first air raid of Surabaya came overhead, looked us over and continued on. Air defense stations manned.
- Feb. 4 - Underway sometime during morning, about 0300 - formation DeRuyter, Houston, Marblehead and Tromp. Air defense about 1020 while enroute to Makassar Strait. About 54 planes, Mitsubishi 97's participated. Struck by bomb about 1230 while going to assistance of Marblehead who had been hit by bomb which disabled her steering engines. After hit on Houston, proceeded south toward Alas Straits just as darkness was falling.
- Feb. 5 - Arrived in Tjilatjap about 1630 that afternoon. While en route from Alas Strait air defense as one plane (later identified as Dutch PBY) was seen. Wounded moved ashore. Began fueling from dock.
- Feb. 6 - Funeral services were held for 46 Houston dead. Lt. (jg) Hamlin in charge of military escort. Marblehead arrived Tjilatjap, tied up just forward of Houston.
- Feb. 7 - Funeral services were held for Marblehead dead. Military escort from Houston. Alongside dock all day. Inspection by Admiral Hart and Comdr. Bruner.
- Feb. 8 - Marblehead to drydock. DeRuyter moored forward of Houston. Admiral Glassford on board.

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- Feb. 9 - DeRuyter departed Tjilatjap for Bali Straits with Tromp, Piet Hein, Erikon, DesDiv 58 (5) Repairs completed to damage done by bomb hit.
- Feb. 10 - Holland and Blackhawk entered harbor Tjilatjap. Underway for Darwin about 1300. Met Otis in narrows. Trinity out in Bay.
- Feb. 11 - Underway for Darwin.
- Feb. 12 - Underway for Darwin.
- Feb. 13 - Headed north of Darwin.
- Feb. 14 - (Valentine's Day) Arrived Darwin. Fueled from dock.
- Feb. 15 - Departed Port Darwin about 0300 in company with Peary, Swan, Warrego, Mauna Loa, Meigs, Tulagi and Port Mar. (Enroute Koepang. Tailed by one 4-engine flying boat. Requested air support, one P-40 showed up, shots fired to indicate presence of flying boat. Run made by flying boat at about 10,000 feet, no bombs dropped. P-40 went off. Smoke seen on horizon, identity unknown.
- Feb. 16 - About 0845 exchange signals with Loch-Head Hudson to southward. About 0900 picked up flying boat again. Air defense 1100, 36 twin-engined Mitsubishi 97's, target Houston. Only on last run were bombs dropped on convoy. One near-miss on transport Mauna Loa, two wounded on board. Wounded men transferred to Houston about 1700. Convoy ordered return to Darwin. Koepang had been taken.
- Feb. 17 - Enroute Darwin.
- Feb. 18 - Arrived Darwin about (1300, 1600, 1100). Fueled from barge. Departed about 1730 for sea. Headed in vicinity of Broome for rendezvous with Lt. Lamade.
- Feb. 19 - Cruised in vicinity of Broome (island 300 miles from Broome) until 1800. CSWP ordered Houston to Tjilatjap.
- Feb. 20 - Enroute Tjilatjap.
- Feb. 21 - Arrived Tjilatjap at dusk. Snapper class sub leaving as we arrived. Sub scare on approaching roads to Tjilatjap. Fueled from dock.
- Feb. 22 - Departed Tjilatjap about 0800, course 180 then west.

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- Feb. 23 - Steered northerly course. Entered Sunda Strait at dusk. Passed thru during the night.
- Feb. 24 - Arrived Sourabaya Roads about 1530, air defense as fighter planes were seen overhead. No attack. Identity unknown. Tied up at Rotterdam Pier. Shifted berth to Navy Yard Dock about 2330. Fueled. Java passed, leaving Sourabaya.
- Feb. 25 - Tied alongside dock other side of DeRuyter. Bombed. No hits. Shortly after sunset underway with DeRuyter and Java. Course approximately 090.
- Feb. 26 - Underway. Course change to 270. Returned to Sourabaya 0900. Anchored in stream. Bombed. No hits. About 1600 entered Exeter, Perth, Encounter, Electra and Jupiter. 1730 alongside Dutch tanker for fuel. Also Electra, Jupiter. Departed Sourabaya at about 1930 in company with above ships and Java, DeRuyter, Paul Jones, Edsall, Ford, Edwards, Dutch destroyers W. D. Witte, Kortenaer. Course 090 underway DeRuyter, Exeter, Houston, Perth, Java. Dutch destroyers leading American destroyers bringing up the rear.
- Feb. 27 - Underway, course changed to 270 about 0100. Search for enemy force continued. Air defense about 1330, one plane resembling L/H began dive bomb approach. Fired on by Houston. Turned and went off. Return to Surabaya. Submarine discovered in entrance minefields. Identified herself as American. Ordered to turn back to sea at 1430.
- Feb. 27 - (continued) Air defense sounded. Three enemy SOC's overhead about 1615. Enemy force sighted by planes making for Boivian Island. Striking force to intercept. First salvo fired from Exeter 1630 at enemy battle line. Battle continued all day and night and early morning of --
- Feb. 28 - Houston in company of Perth, only survivors of Allied Battle line enroute to Batavia. Arrived Batavia about 1430, fueled. Enemy SOC's - Lt. Payne followed close behind. Departed Batavia for unknown destination via Sunda Straits about 2000. 2300 General Quarters. Houston and Perth engaged by enemy surface craft in or near Sunda Strait. Perth sunk about 2345.

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Mar. 1 - On or about 0040, while engaged with numerically superior enemy
Naval force, the U.S.S. HOUSTON was sunk by gunfire approximately
8 miles N.E. of Saint Nicholas Point Light.

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ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 11

ENGAGEMENT OFF SOERABAJA

9 1047

February 27, 1942

On Friday afternoon February 27, 1942, the Allied striking force was returning to Soerabaja after making a sweep of the Java Sea north of Madoera Island the previous night in search of a Japanese force. The enemy fleet had not been found and the only contact with the Japanese had been a bombing attack in the morning with no damage to the Allied ships.

The HOUSTON was in readiness, "condition II".

Two of the HOUSTON'S planes had been damaged during previous bombings, and one had failed to rejoin the ship after the bombing on 16 February. The only remaining serviceable plane had been left in Soerabaja the evening before as a night action was expected.

The striking force consisted of five cruisers and nine destroyers as listed below:

DE RUYTER (SOP Admiral Doorman)	Dutch	light cruiser
EXETER	British	heavy cruiser
HOUSTON	American	heavy cruiser
PERTH	Australian	light cruiser
JAVA	Dutch	light cruiser
ELECTRA	British	destroyer
JUPITER	British	destroyer
ENCOUNTER	British	destroyer
WITTE DE WITTE	Dutch	destroyer
KORTENAAR	Dutch	destroyer
PAUL JONES	American	destroyer
EDSEL	American	destroyer
EDWARDS	American	destroyer
FORD	American	destroyer

At about 1330 just outside of Soerabaja the HOUSTON fired on a plane with Japanese markings, which resembled a "Lockheed Hudson." Only about a dozen rounds were fired; no hits were observed and the plane turned away without pressing home the attack. About 1415 a PBV reported by radio a Japanese force of cruisers, destroyers, and transports, in the vicinity of Bawean Island and heading south. By this time we were in the mine fields of the Soerbaja approaches. At about 1515 the Allied Force

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turned and headed north to intercept the enemy.

At about 1530 we went to A.A. defence when three planes resembling our SOC's were sighted. These planes were not fired on, as they did not come within range.

We went to general quarters at about 1535 when the masts of some ships were sighted hull down bearing about 020 degrees relative. The formation of the Allied cruisers was column 180 degrees in this order: DERUYTER, EXETER, HOUSTON, PERTH, JAVA. Course was about 350, speed about 28 knots.

The formation continued on its course closing the enemy for about fifteen minutes before the action started. At about 1555 the EXETER opened fire and the HOUSTON about three or four minutes later. The targets were Japanese light cruisers which were just ~~xxx~~ coming in range ahead and about 2 points on the starboard bow. Our force made a column movement to the left about 60 degrees and the head of the column came under fire from two more enemy ships bearing about 30 degrees to the right of the light cruisers. These were apparently heavy cruisers and were thought to be of the TONE class.

The EXETER and HOUSTON immediately shifted their fire to these new targets and each took one ship. The HOUSTON had fired only two or three salvos before this shift and apparently scored no hits.

The opening gun range on the Japanese heavy cruiser was about 32,000 yds. The courses of the two forces were almost parallel but converging slightly. The Allied cruisers were in column, distance 600 yds., speed about 28 knots, course about 280 T or 290 T. When the battle started the destroyers on either side of the column changed position; one or two going ahead of the column and the others going astern.

The Japanese forces were in three groups: two heavy cruisers bearing about 070 R, two light cruisers with their destroyers bearing about 030 R.

At the beginning of the firing the enemy concentrated their fire at the head of our column and the HOUSTON was not under fire for about the first fifteen minutes.

The Allied column of cruisers was zig-zagging but with no plan. All ships followed the motions of the DE RUYTER, which was changing course without signal about 10 degrees to either side of the firing course about every ten or fifteen minutes.

About 1620 the HOUSTON began hitting her target. One of the forward turrets blew up and large fires were started in the waist of the ship. She slowed, turned away, and ceased firing. At this time she was partially obscured behind her own smoke, much of which was coming from her stack.

At this time there had been no hits apparent on the EXETER's target, so the HOUSTON shifted her fire to that ship. After about ten salvos our original target had

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come back into line and resumed fire; whereupon the HOUSTON shifted back to her own target. The HOUSTON apparently scored no hits on the EXETER's target and never established the hitting range on her own target again. At about the time that we shifted targets, the firing became very erratic in deflection. Spot 1 thought at first that his spots were'nt being applied, but this was not the case. Plot thought that they had a bad set-up and obtained a new one. Deflection was still erratic and control was shifted to director II and spot II; but director II could not bear. Control was returned to spot I and director I. Subsequently it was determined that an electrical lead to director I in the foremast was badly frayed or broken. This faulty transmission together with severe whip in the mast due to high speed and continuous firing was apparently the cause of erratic deflection.

At about the time the HOUSTON shifted fire back to her original target, the EXETER was hit by shell fire. At this time the HOUSTON had fired about 70 salvos. The EXETER was hit somewhere in the firerooms and had her speed reduced to about 12 or 15 knots. On being hit she slowed and turned left about 45 degrees, falling out of column. To avoid the EXETER when she slowed and turned, the HOUSTON turned left about 90 degrees. The PERTH passed astern of us and laid a smoke screen between the EXETER and the enemy. At this time the Japanese launched a destroyer attack. The EXETER was smoking badly at this time; the HOUSTON made another turn left about 90 degrees and emerged from the PERTH'S and EXETER's smoke and sighted the incoming destroyers. During the brief interval of visibility we fired one salvo with the main battery at the incoming destroyers, estimated range 13,500 yds. The salvo landed apparently on in range but off in deflection; then the targets were obscured by smoke and the HOUSTON herself commenced smoking for a short time. The incoming destroyers apparently launched their torpedoes at maximum range because several were seen to porpoise one of two hundred yards short of the HOUSTON, and one was reported to have hit somewhere on the port quarter without exploding. Simultaneously with the destroyer attack, enemy submarines attacked from a previously-unengaged side. It is uncertain which fired the torpedoes that sank two destroyers. No other ships were hit by torpedoes, although an amazing number were seen.

At about this time the DE RUYTER orders the Allied destroyers to attack the enemy battle line. They launched their torpedoes from extreme range and no hits were apparent, although smoke prevented our seeing much of the attack. The EXETER left the scene of action for Soerabaja, making about 15 knots, escorted by one Dutch destroyer.

The HOUSTON emerged from the smoke screen just after the destroyer attack. We were

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on an easterly course and opened fire on the two heavy cruisers, now to port. About this time the HOUSTON was hit by a shell which hit 9" inboard at frame 14 on the port side of the forecastle. It penetrated the forecastle deck, the main deck, the second deck and emerged through the starboard side of the ship about 3" below the second deck. The shell did not explode but partially broke up before emerging. Considerable water was taken through the hole in the side while steaming at high speed during the evening and night. A fragment of the shell was found stamped with a "6", but the hole through the forecastle deck was about 8" in diameter. The hole in the side was about 18" x 32". The only other damage from the enemy was from a near miss, port side aft, at frame 115 near the water's edge. This dished in the side somewhat, ruptured a bulkhead in fuel oil tank C-9 and contaminated the oil with salt water, flooded D-14A, and wrecked some machinery in the laundry. We fired about 30 salvos (range 18,000 to 20,000 yds.) during this phase and the action ended at dusk. Our original target (heavy cruiser) was no longer returning our fire, and she was burning badly, principally from two turrets. No damage was apparent to the other cruiser, although she is believed to have been under fire from our light cruisers.

During the action a Japanese plane (apparently from one of the cruisers) was overhead continuously, flying up and down our column in the unengaged side, never coming within range of our A.A. battery (shortest range observed 16,000 yds.)

At least one enemy ship (light cruiser) was sunk by Allied bombers during the action. Nothing else is known of Allied air activity. None of the Allied cruisers launched planes.

The Allied force turned to the north headed for a reported group of transports.

About 2045 sighted two cruisers to port. Fired 10 or 12 star shells at maximum range but were short of the target. Fired one salvo from turret 2, range 15,000 yds., a good salvo, very close. The PERTH and DE RUYTER also fired one or two salvos, no hits apparent. The enemy ships fired two or three salvos at the HOUSTON with no illumination. They were very close, but no damage done. This action lasted only a few minutes before the enemy ships were lost in darkness.

We continued towards Bawean Island coming very close to it about 2100, at which time the JAVA and De RUYTER were hit apparently by torpedoes. For about 20 minutes or half an hour we had been illuminated off and on by flares.

The JUPITER was torpedoed several miles astern of us, sending message "AM Torpedoed". The flash could be seen from the HOUSTON.

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Orders from the Admiral were that the cruisers should not stop to pick up survivors, so the HOUSTON and the PERTH headed west for Batavia, speed about 28 knots, column astern, PERTH leading, zig zagging without plan. The Java's fires lasted only a short time, but the De RUYTER was burning fiercely until we were out of sight. Subsequently survivors from the DE RUYTER said that the JAVA sank in eight minutes, and that the DE RUYTER burned for two hours. No more was seen of the JUPITER after the first flash when she was hit. There were no more enemy contacts that night.

On the morning of February 28, secured from General Quarters at dawn, and set condition II in the A.A. Battery. During the morning several planes were sighted. Some resembled P-40's, others were twin float seaplanes. Identification was not positive but they were believed to be friendly and no shots were fired.

Arrived off Batavia about 1200 and docked about 1300. Shifted ammunition from turret 3 forward. Commenced fueling as soon as possible (about 1500). Considerable delay was experienced because of damage ashore from bombings. Welded patch on the hole forward. No repairs were necessary aft. The Captain went aboard the PERTH for a conference while we were fueling.

Got underway about 1930 in company with PERTH. Received a message saying the only enemy in the vicinity was 60 miles to the northeast on an easterly course. Dutch destroyer EVARTSEN left in port. PERTH ordered her to follow as soon as she could get underway. EVARTSEN replied that she could not get underway for about an hour.

Set condition II in the Main Battery and in the A.A. Battery. Turret I manned, powder train filled. Five inch battery divided with flight deck guns on forward director, boat deck guns on after director. Boat deck guns to be used for illumination and ready boxes contained mostly star shells. Flight deck ready boxes filled with common shell. Speed about 22 knots. At 2315 Toppers Island light plainly in view on starboard bow. Sighted ships. PERTH leading challenged and Jap destroyer fired a red Very star. PERTH opened fire. General Quarters on HOUSTON and turret I opened fire on Jap destroyer (about 500 yds.) and fired about two or three salvos before turret II joined. Spot I director I in control. Reversed course to right and began maneuvering behind PERTH following on various courses and speeds. The enemy seemed to have cruisers and destroyers close to shore covering landing operations with cruisers and destroyers outboard as guards. No number of enemy ever accurately known. Fight developed into a melee, HOUSTON guns engaged on all sides, ranges never greater than 5,000 yds. No known record of ships sunk, but following day revealed three transports beached (one either seaplane tender or motor torpedo boat tender). Japanese destroyers illuminated

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with searchlights from all sides. HOUSTON main battery shifted to director II once but crew there was blinded by our own 5 inch flashes. Tried local controlling turrets once but turning and twisting at high speed prevented picking up targets so fire was shifted back to Director I and Spot I.

First major hit received on HOUSTON was a salvo in after engine room which burst steam lines -- all after engine room personnel believed killed. Secured #3 and #4 fire rooms when pressure dropped to 170 lbs. and lost feed water. Steam escaped up engine room ventilators and filled #2 mess hall. After midships repair party secured after engine room steam stops. Steam forced 5 inch guns on boat deck, director II and aft AA director personnel to abandon stations temporarily. Boat deck guns later resumed fire. Hit on forecastle deck set paint locker on fire, which continued to burn. Turret II hit by shell, which did not explode, in face plate just as powder was exposed for loading 28th salvo causing fire which caught powder train as far as powder circle. Central station ordered turret magazines flooded which put turret I out of action. Fire in turret II extinguished. Received 2 (3?) torpedo hits to starboard and one to port. One under #1 1.1" mount fired by MTB from about 1,000 yds., another below boat from destroyer, third believed under starboard catapult. Machine gun nests and some 5" guns continued to fire until all ammunition expended. Last rounds fired were star shells fired as surface ammunition. As firing from HOUSTON decreased Japanese destroyers became bolder and approached within 1,500 to 2,000 yds., increasing fire. Abandon ship passed. Shells hit communication deck passageway behind Radio I demolishing #1 1.1" mount and fatally wounding Captain. Japanese destroyers machine-gunned quarter deck and port hangar causing great loss of life. Final hit was delivered on portside by MTB which caused ship to roll to starboard beam and sink about 0300 March 1st. PERTH had sunk about 20 minutes earlier.

EVARTSON did not catch up, but believed sunk later the same night attempting to get through Sunda Straits.

Actual sinking of ship was slow enough to permit any unwounded men to get in the water and clear of ship, although some may have been killed by shells and torpedoes in the water.

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ENCLOSURE (A) - No. 12

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Many life rafts were got in the water before the ship sank and most of the crew was equipped with life jackets. No prisoners were picked up until dawn when the Japanese ships began landing operations. Quite a few prisoners were picked up by Japanese ships but the greater number reached the beach and landed at scattered spots over a distance of about twenty miles south of St. Nicholas Point. Others landed on Toppere Island and Sangiang Island. Survivors who reached the beach in the vicinity of Japanese landings were captured by Japanese Army troops in the area. Those picked up by the Japanese Navy were subsequently turned over to Japanese Army ashore. The survivors in the vicinity of the landings were forced to help unload ships, although protests were made by surviving officers. (For details of actual capture see reference (a).)

Prisoners were concentrated mostly in the town of Serang in the local jail and the local theater. Conditions here were atrocious. Cells were extremely overcrowded, very little food provided and practically no sanitary facilities were available. During the six weeks stay in Serang dysentery became very prevalent and all hands suffered from malnutrition.

On about the 6th of March eight surviving American officers, including Comdr. A. H. Maher, left Serang presumably for Japan.

On 13 April all survivors from Serang were moved to Bicycle Camp, Batavia. Already in this camp there were a large number of Australian AIF troops, some Dutch prisoners and three American prisoners, Col. A. C. Scrale and two enlisted men of the U. S. Army. When the concentration was complete there were present eleven commissioned officers, U. S. Navy, one commissioned officer U. S. Marine Corps, three Warrant Officers U. S. Navy and 340 enlisted men U. S. Navy, survivors from USS HOUSTON. Conditions in this camp were very good for a Prisoner of War Camp. Barracks were good, fresh water was available and work was easy. On May 14th the 2nd Bn., 131st F. A., U. S. Army (less Btry. E), Lt. Col. B. S. Tharp, U. S. Army, commanding, arrived in camp as prisoners of war. With this group also was one seaman formerly from the USS STEWART. Statement by Seaman Thomas from the STEWART included in enclosure (a). HOUSTON survivors and 131st

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P. A. remained in this camp until October, 1942. On October 4th a party of 191 Americans including 62 enlisted men from the HOUSTON, left Batavia enroute to Burma. The 191 Americans were under the command of Capt. A. L. Fitzsimmons, 131st P. A. On October 11 a party of 68 Americans including 30 enlisted men and two Warrant Officers from the HOUSTON, left Batavia enroute to Japan. These men were classed by the Japanese as "technicians." On October 11 a party of 488 Americans left Batavia for Burma and the major part of the Houston survivors (237 enlisted men and nine officers) were included in this number.

This party arrived in Singapore on October 16 and remained until January 7, 1943. All the Americans resumed their journey to Burma with the exception of a few sick who were left in Singapore. The journey was by rail to Port Prai (port for Penang), British Malaya. From Penang to Moulmein, Burma, the journey was by Japanese naval transport. Enroute to Moulmein, on January 15, the convoy, consisting of two transports and one small escort vessel, was bombed by Allied planes, apparently two B-24's and two PBX's. Four misses on the transport carrying the Americans killed two Australians and three Dutch prisoners and wounded about 35 others. Two Americans were slightly wounded. The other ship in the convoy was sunk in about ten minutes time. This ship was carrying about a thousand Dutch prisoners and about 500 Japs. The bombs which sank the ship hit in the after hold where the Japs were. Only about 50 Dutchmen were lost, and most of the Japs were lost. The transport carrying the Americans remained in the area for five or six hours picking up the survivors. Remaining transport arrived in Moulmein on January 16. Prisoners were kept in Moulmein district jail until January 27 when they moved by rail to Thanbyunyat about 40 kilometers southeast of Moulmein, and by truck to a railroad camp 18 kilometers from Thanbyunyat. This was the beginning of the year's work constructing the railroad linking Moulmein to Rangoon, the western railroad junction in Thailand. For the greater part of this time the Americans were divided into two parties, those under Col. Tharp and those under Capt. Fitzsimmons.

Enclosures (b) and (c) will give what detailed rolls are available for the many moves from camp to camp, which were made during the year's work.

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At the beginning of this period of hard work the Americans were in good physical condition and it was not until the beginning of the rainy season (end of May) that the first American died on the Burma railroad. The beginning of the rainy season marked the beginning of a six-month period of extremely hard manual labor under the worst possible conditions. Food was scarce and of a very low quality, consisting principally of rice and usually served with a thin, watery stew. Transportation to outlying camps was difficult because of mud, poor roads and washed-out bridges. During this period approximately one-fourth of the Americans on the road died. Details are in enclosure (d). These deaths were due to malaria, dysentery, tropical ulcers, beri beri and pellagra, complicated by overwork and malnutrition. Most of the deaths occurred at the 100 Kilo Camp and the 80 Kilo Hospital Camp. The policy adopted by the Japanese authorities was to feed the working men and abandon the sick. The 80 Kilo Hospital Camp was a hospital only in the sense that it was full of sick men. No staff of well men was provided to care for the sick and almost no medicine was provided for the one doctor allotted to care for approximately 250 American, Dutch and Australian patients. Almost exactly half the Americans who were sent to this hospital camp died there. In the working camps such as 100 Kilo, many sick men were driven out to work in the rain with large ulcers, dysentery and malaria chills. Only those who were absolutely incapable of walking out to the job were permitted to remain in camp.

The railroad was completed in September 1943 and from that time until the end of the war conditions improved steadily. Most of the Americans came out of Burma and into a settled area of Thailand in December of 1943. Allied planes frequently bombed military objectives near Prisoner of War camps in Burma and Thailand from June 1943 until the end of the war. Approximately 225 prisoners were killed by these bombings and approximately 400 were wounded, some seriously, but only one American was killed (a soldier) and none wounded.

In the latter part of April 1944 a party of 208 Americans left Thailand for Japan, and approximately half this number were HOUSTON survivors. This party got as far as Saigon but did not embark for Japan.

In June of 1944 another party of 35 Americans, including some HOUSTON survivors, left for Japan via Singapore. During the remainder of 1944 and 1945 there were many shifts of prisoners from camp to camp in Thailand, and some even returned to Burma for maintenance work on the railroad. On the whole, however, during this period conditions were quite bearable and very few deaths occurred.

In January 1945 officers were separated from enlisted men and sent to an officers' camp at Kumburi. The only officers left in enlisted men's camps were doctors. This was the condition existing when the war ended. When the war ended the officers' camp was in the process of being moved from Kumburi to a location about 100 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. Part of the American officers were still in Kumburi, part in Bangkok and part at the new camp. When the armistice was announced by the Japanese, a small staff of senior Allied prisoner officers was set up in Bangkok. In accordance with instructions received American prisoners in the area were concentrated near airbases and evacuation began on the 28th of August, 1945, in planes sent in by American Air Command in India. Most of the HOUSTON personnel who have been evacuated are in reasonably good physical condition. One officer, Ensign John B. Stivers, is dangerously ill, suffering from a brain tumor. One enlisted man, Stanley Deweyport Barnes, SS2c, is seriously ill, suffering from tuberculosis. At this date one officer, Ensign P. R. Clark, is still in Bangkok, and the personnel in Saigon and Singapore have not yet been evacuated.

ENCLOSURE (B)

THE WARTIME CRUISE OF THE U.S.S. HOUSTON

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NOV. 27 - In Cavite Navy Yard for overhaul. All repairs are being speeded up. We have been taking aboard our capacity of fuel and ammunition. Started standing condition watched on the anti-aircraft battery.

NOV. 28 - We have been warned that if we are attacked it will be a surprise attack from the air.

NOV. 29 - Gun Capts and air crews were shown pictures of different aircraft and told to study them. A.A. crews sleep by their gun stations.

NOV. 30 - All Navy Yard men and equipment have left the ship with the exception of one gang in the engine room.

DEC. 1 - Underway on 30 minutes notice.

DEC. 4 - Arrived at Iloilo on the island of Pansy.

DEC. 5 - Payday. Made a liberty with Heavey and Trim.

DEC. 6 - Am standing outer harbor patrol watches in M.L.

DEC. 8 - General quarters at daybreak. This word was passed over all circuits.

(For the information of all hands. A state of war exists between the U.S. and Japan. Japan has bombed Pearl Harbor inflicting some damage). About sunset Adm. Glasford (Com Yang Pat) arrived by P.B.Y. and the ship got underway about one hour from Iloilo the city and harbor were bombed. We were in the shadow of a mountain at the time so were not seen.

DEC. 9 - Contacted U.S.S. Boise and two four pipers.

DEC. 10 - Picked up convoy consisting of Holland, Langley, Peccos and two more destroyers. e/c South.

DEC. 12 - After dusk sighted an enemy cruiser and a destroyer. Did not engage enemy as it would have endangered our convoy.

DEC. 14- Crossed equator. No ceremonies.

DEC. 15 - Arrived at Balikpapan, Dutch Borneo refueled.

DEC. 16 - Left Balikpapan before daybreak. e/c South.

DEC. 17 - Left convoy. Increased speed.

DEC. 18 - Arrived at Soerabaja, Java, refueled and provisioned ship. Transferred flag to beach.

DEC. 19 - A.A. defense at 1100. A.A. manned in record time. Turned out to be 18 of our planes from the P.I.

DEC. 21 - Underway at 1400.

DEC. 25 - Holiday dinner, very good. Merry Xmas.

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- DEC. 28 - Arrived Port Darwin, refueled.
- DEC. 30 - Underway.
- JAN. 1 - Holiday dinner. Happy New Year.
- JAN. 2 - Arrived Thursday Island and anchored.
- JAN. 3 - U.S.S. Pensacola arrived with convoy Bloemfontein, Wm. Holbrook
(2 U.S.A.T.'s) and Chaumont. Pensacola left for States.
- JAN. 5 - Arrived Darwin.
- JAN. 6 - Anchored. Receiving provisions from Chaumont and Holland. Fueling from
barge. Fire in #1 M.L. Gold Star called away F. & R. party.
- JAN. 7 - Provisioning ship.
- JAN. 8 - On lookout for miniature subs as sub net is being repaired.
- JAN. 10 - Underway with two destroyers.
- JAN. 13 - Boarded a freighter (Filipino) O.K.
- JAN. 14 - Boarded a freighter (Russian) O.K.
- JAN. 15 - Appear to be cruising aimlessly. Crew is crying for action.
- JAN. 16 - Cruising slowly along Timor Coast.
- JAN. 17 - In P.M. sighted a derelict. Sent destroyer to investigate. Victim
appeared to be a Dutch inter-island steamer which had been torpedoed
about 12 hours earlier. No survivors around so left in a hurry as it
was growing dark and sub might still be around.
- JAN. 18 - Arrived at Kibola Bay fueled on Port side of Trinity. Boise on stbd side
doing likewise. We were informed we were to form a striking force for a
raid on Macassar Straits. In P.M. we were told the orders were cancelled.
All growling for a fight. Boise and three cans going west. Houston and
three cans east.
- JAN. 20 - Arrived Thursday Island and met convoy: Pre. Polk, Hawaiian Planter and a
Dutchman. Underway for Darwin immediately.
- JAN. 21 - Happy birthday Alice.
- JAN. 22 - Arrived outside of Darwin. Dutchman went in and Pecos took her place.
e/o North.
- JAN. 23 - Happy birthday Martha.
- JAN. 25 - A.A. defence about 1500. Turned out to be a Dutch Naval Patrol plane. Late
P.M. in Bali Straits.
- JAN. 26 - Entered Soerabaja where we learned that the raid on Macassar Straits

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(or Massacer) as we later called them were very successful. Spent day transferring torpedoes for destroyers.

JAN. 27 - Moored to dock. Made a liberty.

JAN. 28 - Fueling and provisioning ship.

JAN. 29 - Left Soerabaja in late afternoon.

JAN. 30 - In company with four destroyers.

FEB. 1 - Marblehead and some destroyers left to attack a convoy in Macassar Straits planning to attack in the dead of night. The Houston and 2 cans left about 6 hrs. Later, planning on arriving at the South entrance of the Straits about the time of attack to act as a supporting force should the Marblehead run into too strong a force and be forced with withdraw.

FEB. 2 - Houston received a message that the attack had been called off because of the bright moonlight. Contacted Marblehead about dawn & anchored Madura Straits after dark.

FEB. 3 - All last night more ships were arriving. This morning the bay held more ships than we had seen at one time since leaving Paerl Harbor. With us were the Marblehead, 11 U.S. destroyers, the Dutch cruisers Tromp & De Ruyter and six Dutch destroyers. We learned we were a striking force to raid Macassar Straits again. At 1100 the detectors picked up the sound of planes. Some 10 min. later we sighted fifty planes at 25G. Later they came back over us again and we learned that the docks at Soerabaja were bombed causing some damage.

FEB. 4 - Last night a Dutch officer came aboard, Lt. Van Lear (Lear ?), to facilitate communication. At 1000 we were attacked by 27 enemy bombers South of the Kangean Group, in the Flores Sea. Our force broke up & scattered. Being the biggest target, the planes made straight for the Houston flying in groups of nine in a very flat V formation at 15G. The first wave came in from the port beam. The bombs landed on each side of the ship aft and threw water over everything. Second wave came from Stbd. but dropped no bombs. The third wave came in from port and dropped their load. We were making high speed and were in a hard turn when one bomb hit the bottom of the ship. Luckily, it did not explode but sprang a few plates. On this run I saw one plane peel off and circle down with his starboard motor afire. Each run made on us was separate and distinct

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and all the while we could see the planes being thrown about by the concussion of the A.A. On the fourth run one stray bomb hit port yardarm antennae on the mainmast. It went thru the searchlight deck and entered the after leg of the tripod mast. It made its exit from there a foot above the deck of searchlight control and exploded as it hit the main deck between #3 turret, which was trained out to port, and the washroom. The shrapnel pierced the turret in a hundred places and set fire to the powder in the gun chamber. The crew on the electric deck, powder circle and shell deck and the crew of turret 3 less 2 men were all burned to death. The flaps of the powder train were closed and Kunke flooded the magazines. All the after repair party was also wiped out with the exception of Eddy & Collins. My motor launch & #1 M.L. were blown to bits. One of the repair party trained a hose inside the turret and shorted the firing circuit causing the center gun to fire. There was no confusion or shouting. All was well organized. After our hit it was every dog for himself and no fooling. We started away and noticed the Marblehead was going in circles. We offered to help her but her skipper said he was O.k. so we headed for Bali Straits. Luckily there were quite a few rainstorms right on our course so we ran from one to the other without being attacked again.

FEB. 5 - Entered Flapjap (Tjilashap) Stared to build coffins I volunteered to help. We got all the available lumber in town and worked from 1300 to 0400. At 0430 there was an electrical fire in turret three which was put right almost immediately. All the dead were lying on the stern covered with canvas and were beginning to smell. At night an army hospital train came and took all the wounded to hospital.

FEB. 6 - Early this morning trucks arrived to take our dead shipmates from the ship to their last resting places. As they were carried over the gangway the band played the dirge while the entire crew stood at attention. When they were all in the trucks the bugle played taps and then moved off. At 1500 the Marblehead entered port and went into a floating drydock. They had ~~two~~ two direct hits killing thirteen while the Houston lost 48. The Marblehead had one of her hits in the steering engine room and her rudder had jammed hard to port. After the Houston left her the Marblehead tied up to a destroyer aft ~~off~~ and used her for a rudder. Houston stationed a guard of honor over the Marblehead dead who were lying in a warehouse.

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FEB. 7 - Temporarily repairing bomb damage, fueling and provisioning ship. Took aboard 500 rounds A.A. ammunition. Admiral Hart & General Wavell (Cincaffee) came aboard and inspected our damage. Wavell (?) said we were not damaged bad enough to go to the States and we still had 87 per cent of her fire power. Houston buried Marblehead sailors with full military honors.

FEB. 8 - DeRuyter arrived. Marblehead to go to States for repairs. Houston underway.

FEB. 11- Entered Darwin in late P.M. and tied up to dock where we were receiving fuel.

FEB. 12- U.S. Troops (147th & 148 Field Artillery from Washington & Oregon) are being loaded on transports evidently we will convoy them. Left at sunset with one destroyer, four transports and two corvettes. The Perry took the screening position in front and the corvettes took the beams.

FEB. 14- Sighted an enemy 4 motored flying boat. Message was sent to Darwin for air support a bit later one P-40 arrived. We fired two rounds in the direction of the enemy and the P-40 turned and streaked away. The bomber decided to make a run on us but dropped his load about 500 yards from the ship and crashed in flames on the horizon.

FEB. 15- After sunrise sighted enemy flying boat. He stayed just in sight and kept tab on us. Sure enough at 1130 we sighted 45 bombers in the clouds. Part flying boats and part medium bombers. We started firing rapidly and drove back wave after wave. One of the merchantmen lay a smoke screen and covered part of the convoy. All this time we were twisting in and out of the convoy like a mother hen protecting her chicks. The attack lasted 45 min, and during that time we fired 900 rounds. All the convoy is safe and we sustained no damage. (We had a Q.M. on the USAT Meigs. He says there was just a sheet of flames on the boat deck and flight deck from the 5 inch. The Capt. of the Meigs just stood on the bridge saying over and over. Look at that bastard go. I thought she's leave us.)

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FEB. 16- Reversed course and headed back for Darwin on receipt of orders. We had been going to Keepang, Timor.

FEB. 18- Entered Darwin fueled & departed.

FEB. 19- Received word that Darwin was bombed to hell & the destroyer Perry sunk. They were probably looking for the Houston.

FEB. 21- Arrived Tlapjap. Fueled & provisioned ship. On the way thru the minefields a P.B.Y. flew near and dropped a depth charge. We thought he had sighted a sub but it turned out that he had a $\frac{1}{2}$ foot hole in his wing so he could not

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land with it.

FEB. 22- Departed Tlapjap and headed for the western end of Java.

FEB. 23- Happy birthday Dad. Entered Java Sea by way of Sundya Straits enroute to Solioboja to join the striking force.

FEB. 24- Entered Soerabaja during an air raid but the all-clear siren went a few minutes later. Tied up to the dock and started to fuel. In the late P.M. the siren went again and we manned the A.A. while the Dutch cruiser astern of us abandoned ship and went to air raid shelters. There is a merchantman afire right across from us. She was hit yesterday and her cargo of rubber is afire and the heavy black curtain of smoke which she is sending up gives the enemy bombers a good chance to estimate the surface wind. In the evening a Dutch mine layer came and tried to sink the merchant by shellfire but it could not be done.

FEB. 25- Air raid at 1105. Bombs landed on the beach about 500 yards from us destroying a house. Underway at dusk.

FEB. 26- Entered port at daylight. Anchored midstream. Three air raids today. Bombs never landed closer than 100 yds from us. We are happy to welcome to our force the H.M.S. EXETER (of Graf Spee fame) and HMAS Perth, two English destroyers (Jupiter and Electra). Underway at dusk made an all-night patrol along the coast of Madura Island. Nothing sighted. General quarters all night. No sleep.

FEB. 27- Clouds very low this A.M. One enemy bomber started to make a run on us but was driven off by gunfire. Headed into Soerabaja. At 1530 A.A. defense sounds. Ship turned and headed back into the channel again. Admiral Dorman (Dutch) in the De Ruyter sent out a message "Prepare to meet the enemy o/s NNE o/s 28 knots. Two Dutch destroyers on the bows of our force acting as scouts. The main force was formed in a single column with the De Ruyter in the lead. Exeter, Houston, Perth, Java and the destroyers on the flanks and astern. One of the Dutch cans came back and reported the enemy to stbd. Our formation went to full speed (33 knots). As soon as the enemy was sighted the De Ruyter change course to port about 45 degrees to parallel the course of the enemy whose formation speed was about 30 knots. The enemy main body consisted of a heavy cruiser, three light cruisers, six destroyers and three more light cruisers all in column with another column of three cruisers on the

far side of them, then a line of transports and another line of three cruisers. The Houston had the longest range guns so opened fire first at 28, 500 yds. On our third salvo we obtained a direct hit and on the tenth salvo our ~~xxx~~ target burst into flames. (The Perth spotting officer made the statement that our first target was a battleship). This ship was seen no more after it burst into flames so we believe it was sunk. We shifted targets to the second ship in column (cruiser) and after a few salvos it started to smoke all over as though the whole inside of the ship was afire. The smoke towered upward thousands of feet and she pulled out of line. About this time we ran into a nest of enemy submarines. On our stbd side a Dutch destroyer had been hit square amidships by a torpedo and had broken in half with the bow and stern sticking out of the water. I recall a man standing on the stem waved as we went by and a man hanging onto the port screw. Then both parts sank very quickly. Horrible. One of the Limey destroyers came around our stern and dropped some depth charges and pieces of a sub flew a hundred feet in the air. The destroyer never even paused but came up our stbd side and right abeam of us launched a torpedo which looked like it was headed for our bow. About halfway between us and the destroyer another sub went sky high. That destroyer was certainly efficient. During this time the HOUSTON had dodged six torpedoes and the EXETER had been hit by a 10-gun salvo aft near the water line which reduced her speed to twelve knots. She was ordered to retire from the scene and pick up survivors. We laid a very heavy smoke screen as cover for the EXETER and the enemy did likewise. We got clear of the submarine trap as quick as we could. I wish to mention also that when the battle started the PERTH ran up her battle flags on the fore and main and they looked fine. Our Navy stopped using them a long time ago. After laying the smoke screen we lost contact with the enemy. Half the A.A. battery was secured in order to move ammunition from turret 3, which had been useless since the bomb hit, to turrets 1 and 2 which had expended over nine hundred rounds of ammunition. We were dangerously low on 8" and 5" ammunition. As a result of this day battle the liners of the guns of both turrets were sticking out beyond the muzzles approximately two inches. Our force was headed for Batavia at 30 knots in shallow water. We were carrying a stern wave about 7 feet high and

and stretching out 500 yds. on either side. At 2300 flares started dropping over our battle line. There appeared to be about six or seven flares tied together and the flare paralleled our course. They lit as they hit the water and were evidently made of calcium. About this time the De Ruyter, which was just ahead of us, seemed to explode up forward. Then followed four or five land explosions in rapid succession. We knew then that her magazines had exploded. Her whole foc'sle was ablaze and we had to swerve very sharply else we would have hit her. Right after we resumed our course there appeared about a dozen splashes on each side of our fantail. Each group of splashes covered a diameter of 10 or 12 feet and we did not know if it was shellfire or bombs. (It is still a matter for argument) At almost the same time the JAVA, which was astern of the PERTH, was also hit. I happened to be looking back at her at the exact time she was hit and it seemed as though her whole foc'sle exploded. Flames and debris could be seen flying a hundred feet in the air. There followed several explosions with each one looking like fireworks on July 4th. Then the Perth and the HOUSTON were alone as our destroyers had left earlier for an attack on the transports. The flares stopped dropping shortly after this attack. Long about this time we passed through clouds of swimming soldiers. They were blowing whistles and shouting at us. A lot of them were on life rafts or debris and a hell of a lot more were just swimming around. We learned later that our bombers had attacked their transports. It was then we realized we could not hope to stop the invasion unless we had a lot of help. We had already lost the De RUYTER, JAVA, JUPITER, ELECTRA and one British destroyer. The EXETER was severely damaged but we did not lose any American destroyers. G.Q. all night.

FEB. 28- Arrived Batavia at noon and began fueling but could not get near our capacity. No activity in the dock area at all except for 15 light tanks coming out of a shed near the quayside. We were expecting one of our planes to return from a reconnaissance flight and we saw what was apparently it but the PERTH opened fire. As the plane sheered off we could see the red spots under her wings. They have a plane copied exactly from our S.O.C. Our plane returned about 15 minutes later but landed in the middle of the bay and taxied alongside to be picked up. On taking stock of our damage we found that there was a shell hole in the foc'sle. The shell did not explode and went all the way down and out of the canteen storeroom. We also had a shell hole

thru the stern which also failed to explode. It passed thru a fuel oil tank and then left the ship. Aside from these two hits, whose damage was relatively slight, we were in fairly good shape. As soon as we finished fueling was got underway and cleared the harbor just as the sunset headed for Sunda Straits. The dope also came out that we were headed for the States for reconditioning. Condition 3 was set in the A.A. battery as we were dead tired from lack of sleep having been on the go for about 72 hours. I was off watch and sleeping by my gun station when the sound of gunfire woke me up. I manned the A.A. director and found that it was 2315 and that the PERTH had opened fire. It was impossible to tell how many ships were there but we could tell that there were at least three heavy cruisers besides the numerous smaller craft. The PERTH was struck by two or three torpedoes and capsized and sank almost immediately. The HOUSTON was caught in the glare of three searchlights and every gun on the ship which could bear on the lights tried to put them out. Eight inch, five inch, pom poms, 50-cal. machine guns and .30 cal. all were firing at the lights. Those guns which could not bear picked other targets of which there were many. One destroyer was seen to sink and another had the bridge blown off by one on the port side, boat deck 5 inch guns. No. 4 pom-pom cut a torpedo boat almost in half after which it exploded. Then we received either a torpedo or a salvo in our after engine room which must have got the main steam line. The crew of the engine room never had a chance but were killed immediately. All power was out now and live steam was coming out of the two boat deck exhausts in a cloud fogging up the lenses in the after director and cutting vision down to almost nothing. The after A.A. magazines were flooded, then a shell hit the face plate of No. 2 turret and exploded in the gun chamber. The forward eight inch magazines were flooded to keep fire from spreading. No. 1 pom-pom got a direct hit killing the entire crew. Another torpedo hit us up forward ~~amidships~~ also on the starboard side. The ship was beginning to list to starboard, the lights were still on us and the enemy was getting a bigger percentage of hits. There was a fire down by sick bay, the marine compartment was afire, there was a fire down by the brig. There was a big fire down in the forward paint locker, and the Captain had been killed on the communications deck. He had run down from the bridge to get a look at No. 2 turret when it was hit and received shrapnel wounds in the back. The word was passed to abandon

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and I went to the main deck aft. While back there abandon ship sounded on the bugle blown by Stafford from the port side of the flight deck. He was never seen again. I sat down on the port waterway, took off my tin hat and my shoes and laid them in the waterway and checked the tie-ties on my life jacket. Finding them okay I dropped over the side and watched my ship slide off into the night. It did not seem right to leave the old girl after all we had been through together. The enemy was still firing and the concussion of the shells exploding in the water caused a very painful feeling of the stomach and intestines. We were 17 miles from the beach so I picked out a life raft which was about a quarter of a mile away and struck out for it. Men were everywhere in the water and occasionally a cry for help was heard. We were trying to pull the raft towards an island as the tide threatened to carry us into the glare of the searchlights and line of fire. After I had been on the raft for about two hours the men started to get tired and were all resting. Dr. Burroughs was the only officer on the raft and he flatly refused to take charge. So I and Atterbury struck out for the beach. Rex Austin followed us a bit later but we never saw him nor was he ever seen again. We swam on and on and were constantly carried in different directions as we hit first one current then another. A few times we heard a plane flying round and also thought we heard machinegun fire. Our aim was to get to Java and head for Batavia and catch another ship. At dawn we sighted about ten transports headed in our direction so we swam with renewed vigor. They passed real close to us and we could see soldiers pointing at us and laughing. We could also see that the broadside guns on the transports were just lengths of pipe secured to a big block of wood. We swam on still hoping to make the beach before they did. About an hour later we were picked up by a landing boat flying the Geneva cross. There was a soldier in the bow with a pistol pointed straight at me. (It looked like a cannon) I put my hands above my head and told Atterbury to do likewise. The boat stopped alongside us and I tried to pull myself up but found that I was exhausted which surprised me because up to that time I still felt strong. After getting into the boat the soldier gave me a cigarette, a light and a canteen of hot tea. Upon taking stock of myself I found I had passed thru an oil slick some time during the night and was covered from head to foot with oil. My eyes commenced burning and I could find no relief. After we had

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picked up a few more men the boat headed for the beach and put us off. We then found we were a group of some 30 or 35 men from the HOUSTON. We were told to sit down and were each given another cigarette and were asked questions about the ship, armament and destination. After this we were searched during which time I lost my cameo ring. We could see one large ship, one large aircraft carrier badly burned and lying on its side, four transports and one destroyer. Evidently an attempt had been made to beach them. Evidently we were not the only ones to suffer losses. Eye drops after nine hours.

March 1 - About 96 of us worked all day unloading landing barges full of supplies.

March 2 - Walked 20 miles to Serang. 35 men to a 20-man cell in Serang prison.

March 21 - Comdr Maher, the senior officer here, told us today that all men eligible for advancement in rating with courses in their records would be advanced in rating as of March 1st on our return to the States.

March 29 - All the men in our cell were transferred to the theater today.

April 2 - Down with dysentery eight days.

April 15 - Moved to Bicycle Camp, Batavia. The men from the prison were moved yesterday.

April 18 - After a check of known survivors we find we had some six hundred and fifty odd men missing. 356 survivors with Maher (etc.)

May 14 - The 31st Field Artillery from Texas moved in today four hundred strong.

On the morning of January 12th we spotted a sub on the surface and moved in for the attack with one of our destroyers (the other destroyer was tracking another sub eight or ten miles astern) The sub submerged and the HOUSTON ordered the destroyer not to drop any depth charges was the PERTH was supposed to be in that vicinity. We catapulted a plane and the pilot stated that he saw where a sub recently had been but did not drop any bombs. These later turned out to be enemy subs so that may be listed as our second contact with the enemy. About 2130 while on a westerly course we passed thru crowds of swimming men. The ELECTRA was sent back to rescue them about 2145. The JUPITER which was astern of the column sent a msg. "Torped" after which she exploded and burst into flames. About 2330 the quartermaster on the wheel reported that it was getting very hard to steer. The fathometer was out in and indicated fathoms. It turned out that the bottom of the rudder was dragging on the bottom.

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About 20 miles east of Toppers Point light a group of ships was sighted. The PERTH went into a sort of figure 8 and slowed down to about 15 knots and we slowed and kept position. Not very long after the action started a salvo of shells went thru our after engine room killing the whole crew and putting two engines out of commission. The enemy had some ships down close to the island of Java but the only time we could locate them was when they fired their salvos. Destroyers came in on both sides and the pom-poms swept their decks. The enemy then illuminated the HOUSTON with searchlights and it was then that the climax of the battle was reached. The PERTH was sinking bow first, stern up high. Turret 2 was hit and control shifted to 2nd conn. Inneecessary personnel were getting life rafts ready. Magazines of 1 and 2 turrets were flooded. Word was passed to man stations and the Captain was going to try to run the ship aground on a small island close by. The ship had almost lost way and all engines were stopped. The destroyers came in and put a torpedo in the starboard bow. Abandon ship on the bugle. After three more torpedoes and some shelling the ship listed heavily to starboard and went down down first. So passed the HOUSTON. The old Navy tradition of "Go down fighting" was upheld by both ship and crew.

THE CRUISE OF THE FLAGSHIP HOUSTON

All thru the years ahead of us, we'll give a thought or two to the fighting ship we battled on and her fighting crew. Maybe at conventions or talking with old friends we'll recall her record from the start, to where her story ends.

She had a suicidal mission, convoying without support, with three eight-inch guns/ turrets her main and last resort.

2/ She sped to Darwin from Manila with all speed she could boast, a prelude to her nickname, the famous "Gallopig Ghost". She first met the gods of war there on the Sea of Flores. When 33 planes appeared majestically before us we were patrolling with the Marblehead. All was serene that day when the call to "quarters" sounded, meaning trouble on the way.

3/ Those silver specks against the blue looked harmless up so high;

But the gates of Hell were opening and Death was standing by.

The Marblehead and our destroyers were scattering at full pace

To escape those shrapnel-laden bombs that soon would fall from space.

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At our five-inch guns we waited tensely for our captain's first command--

The signal to commence firing every shell we had on hand.

4/ They roared toward us in groups of nine,

Intent upon their prey

And the Houston like a hunted thing raced

Madly through the spray

Our Lord stood by the Captain and helped

Him with the Wheel

And though the planes passed overhead we

Felt no piercing steel

One plane, then two, came twisting down--

Victims of our fire

While the rest came surging back again

Revenge their one desire

5/ Trying to get from underneath, we

Carreened wildly in a turn

And watched with trepidation the bombs

Burst off our stern.

Then came a shuddering explosion as a

Missile exacted its toll;

And in our smooth, grey deck appeared

A gaping hole.

The shrapnel shattered turret three, setting

Powder bags aflame.

And cried of wounded seared our soul--

Cries of misery and pain.

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