

DECLASSIFIED

Pers 8249-GP

DECLASSIFIED - OPNAV INST 5500.30
BY 18 K DATE 20 AUG 59

From: Former Commanding Officer, U.S.S. POPE (DD225)
To: Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet
Via: (1) Former Commander Destroyer Division Fifty-nine
(Captain Edward N. Parker, U. S. Navy)
(2) Former Commander Destroyer Squadron Twenty-nine
(Captain Herbert V. Wiley, U. S. Navy)
(3) Former Commander Southwest Pacific
(Rear Admiral William A. Glassford, U. S. Navy)

Subject: Action Report--U.S.S. POPE (DD225), 1 March 1942

02000

Reference: (a) Pacific Fleet Conf. Ltr. ICL-45

PART I.

- A. At 1900, 28 February 1942, U.S.S. POPE together with H.M.S. EXETER (damaged in the Battle of Java Sea) and H.M.S. ENCOUNTER left Soerabaya, Java, N.E.I., in an effort to clear the waters to the north of Java. The plan, in general, was to round Bawean Island, steam westward through Java Sea, and pass through Sunda Strait on the night of 1 - 2 March.
- At 0730, 1 March, while on westerly courses, first contact (by the EXETER) was made with an enemy force consisting of two eight-inch heavy cruisers and one large destroyer, and at about 1050 with two additional eight-inch heavy cruisers and three more destroyers. Gunfire engagement with the first force contacted began about 0935 and continued until 1140. The reenforcing cruisers and destroyers were engaged at about 1100 with gunfire until 1140. Torpedoes were fired at first enemy group, then on port quarter, as follows: at 1040 (about) - 2 torpedoes, torpedo range about 7000 yards; at 1125 (about) - 4 torpedoes, torpedo range about 6500 yards. Torpedoes were fired at reenforcing enemy group, on starboard beam, as follows: at 1125 - 5 torpedoes, torpedo range about 10,000 yards. Enemy destroyer was observed to be seriously hit shortly thereafter by torpedoes or gunfire. Several others were hit by gunfire and there is evidence to indicate that an enemy cruiser of the first force contacted was hit and sunk by torpedoes.
- At about 1140, H.M.S. EXETER and H.M.S. ENCOUNTER were put out of action and sunk shortly thereafter.
- At 1230, six cruiser-borne planes began dive-bombing POPE, each plane individually making two attacks from starboard bow. The ship was seriously damaged by a near miss on the port side aft, which was delivered on the eleventh dive-bomb attack. The ship was holed port side aft below the waterline and the port shaft was thrown out of line to such an extent that shaft glands were opened and seams were sprung over an area extending well into the after engine room.

142188

FILMED

DECLASSIFIED

The damage immediately precluded further use of the port engine. Four horizontal bombing attacks were then delivered by six Mitsubishi 97's, from about 3000 feet. Flooding was such that it could not be controlled, and the ship, settling fast by the stern, was quickly becoming most unstable. Decision was made to prepare to abandon ship and destruction steps were taken and later the ship was abandoned. Shortly after the last live members of the crew left the POPE, the ship was hit by cruiser gunfire which expedited the sinking.

PART II.

- A. Force consisted of H.M.S. EXETER, Captain O. L. Gordon R. N. Commanding, H.M.S. ENCOUNTER and U.S.S. POPE. EXETER had suffered engineering casualty from enemy action in the Java Sea battle the previous day and was only capable of making 16 knots upon departure from Soerabaia. Next higher in operational command was Commander Naval Forces Southwest Pacific.
- B. At 1700 POPE received despatch orders from Commander Naval Forces Southwest Pacific directing this vessel to report to Commanding Officer H.M.S. EXETER for duty as escort vessel. At 1800 Commanding Officer and Communication Officer reported on board EXETER and received general instructions regarding plan of operations, station keeping, and communications. We were informed that EXETER's orders directed her to depart from Soerabaia that evening, (February 28, 1942) steam until clear of Northeast channel and minefield, proceed eastward approximately one hour, northward until clear of Bawean Island, and then on westerly courses off the south coast of Borneo, and passing through Sunda Strait during the night of March 1-2, attempting by these maneuvers to avoid the enemy. With the repair of an additional boiler a maximum speed of 21 knots was expected by midnight. At 1900 underway proceeding in accordance with instructions outlined above. When clear of channel POPE took assigned station on starboard bow of EXETER, distance 1500 yards. At 1130 (about) intercepted a radio message indicating a severe sea battle was in progress off entrance to Sunda Strait through which we were directed to pass the following night. At this time this force was on a northerly course approximately twenty miles east of Bawean Island. At 2400 course changed to 345 and speed increased to 21 knots. At 0200 (about) vessels were sighted off port bow at range of about 5000 yards. EXETER turned away to eastward for several minutes resuming course 345 when clear of unknown vessels. At 0400 (about) changed course to 270 and shortly thereafter to about 280.

maneuvers POPE received signal to "CONFIRM IN MOVEMENTS". This was the last signal received from EXETER, succeeding operations by POPE being initiated by example of EXETER, or doctrine. During the entire period between time of departure until the beginning of the enemy engagement POPE was steaming in Material Readiness for Battle, at Battle Condition II for gun and torpedo batteries, at Battle Condition I during the periods enemy ships were sighted during the night and morning.

- E. Enemy forces engaged consisted of four heavy cruisers of the ASHIGARA class carrying ten 8" guns each and four large destroyers of the ASASHIO class each carrying six 12.5 CM guns. Initial force engaged consisted of two heavy cruisers in column screened by one destroyer. Reenforcing force consisted of two heavy cruisers in column and three screening destroyers. Screening destroyers took station several thousand yards off the engaged bearing of cruisers in both formations.

PART III.

- A. At 0915 (about) EXETER, upon sighting cruisers to northwest changed course to 325.
At 0920 (about) sighted Japanese plane which hovered in vicinity thereafter.
At 0925 (about) sighted Japanese destroyer and two heavy cruisers ahead. The cruisers were maneuvering and eventually assumed eastward courses. The destroyer when first sighted was steaming directly for our force but after the initial exchange of salvos turned to starboard so as to bring her target angle to 280, and later to 240 at the end of the initial gun engagement.
At 0935 (about) ENCOUNTER and POPE opened fire on enemy destroyer at range about 12,000 yards, then about 30 degrees on our port bow. ENCOUNTER appeared to cease fire after about 12 salvos. Initial salvos were with guns #1 and 2, later with guns #2 and 4. Salvo interval 5 seconds, closest range 9,400 yards. Splashes from enemy destroyer salvos fell close about POPE, salvo interval 10-15 sec.
At 0945 (about) enemy cruisers and EXETER began exchanging gunfire. As salvos appeared about EXETER, POPE initiated smoke screen which was duplicated by ENCOUNTER and EXETER. These smoke screens were continued throughout the gun actions. (Personnel of the EXETER later reported that Fire Control Tops were able to see over destroyer smoke screens and continue firing and spotting. These screens apparently so hindered enemy spotting that it was necessary for them to close within our effective torpedo range in order to obtain gun hits).

At 1000 (about) EXETER changed course, swinging to south and eastward under cover of smoke screens. POPE turned to port (to better cover EXETER with our screen) and increased speed to 29 knots to take station on port bow of EXETER. Course set was approximately 090. EXETER was then making approximately 25 knots. As the EXETER became obscured POPE under fire from all enemy ships. During our firing on destroyer a hit was observed near its stern. Destroyer retired to starboard leaving a trail of brown smoke. At this time #2 and 4 guns were firing in salvo, and POPE was only ship firing on this vessel. When range increased to about 11,000 yards "cease firing" was given, smoke having obscured target. To avoid cruiser gun salvos small changes of course were made after "cease firing" on guns. Cruiser range was about 14,000 yards. At this time POPE was about 3000 yards on port quarter of EXETER and it took considerable time to reach our station on the port bow. During this period the Commanding Officer directed the firing of two port torpedoes at the oncoming cruisers at a torpedo range of about 7000 yards, Target angle 30; launched torpedoes about 1040. At 1050 (about), observed three enemy destroyers (range 12,000 yards) and two heavy cruisers (range about 18,000 yards) slightly abaft starboard beam on approximate course 080.

At 1100 (about) EXETER, ENCOUNTER and POPE engaging enemy to starboard. POPE fired on leading destroyer which was slightly abaft our starboard beam, and we were under fire from the leading two destroyers. At this time ENCOUNTER was on engaged beam of EXETER firing at second destroyer in column. During this critical stage, all enemy ships closed determinedly and each vessel was under severe fire from several enemy ships. EXETER zigzagged right and left, firing alternately at both formations. Smoke screens only partly obscured her at this time.

At 1105 (about), EXETER was observed to fire torpedoes at cruisers on port quarter.

At 1110, POPE fired four torpedoes at these cruisers on port quarter (torpedo range about 6000 yards) and after swinging ahead of EXETER, fired five torpedoes in a regular spread (all that remained) at the destroyers (and cruisers) on the starboard side.

At 1120 (about) the rear enemy destroyer dropped out of column after a heavy explosion, and retired with fire and smoke trailing from her stern. In prison camp at Macassar several weeks after incarceration Mekkelson CMM and others in repair party stated that they observed explosion at bow of enemy vessel astern through a rift in smoke in second phase of the action. Details of Japanese admission of torpedo hits on cruiser are covered in Part V.

At 1140 (about) the EXETER appeared badly hit, followed soon by a hit on the ENCOUNTER. Both vessels began to slow radically and ceased firing, EXETER emitting heavy gray smoke. (Information was received in Prison Camp later that EXETER and ENCOUNTER abandoned ship shortly after this time).

At 1148 (about), a small rain squall appeared. Commanding Officer directed full speed and stopped making smoke upon entering rain squall. All ammunition having been expended forward, redistribution was made at this time. During the final stages of the gun action, the brick walls on #3 boiler had crumbled and fallen inside the boiler from the shock of over 140 salvos fired (345) rounds and this boiler had to be secured. The main antenna had been partly carried away by an enemy shell.

At 1150 (about), changed course to 060.

At 1210 (about), passed through a second rain squall and changed course to 040. By this time Commanding Officer had decided to attempt to skirt the southern coast of Borneo and retire south of the barrier through Lombok Strait during darkness. An attempt to take a navigational sight at this time revealed that all chronometers were greatly in error as a result of shock of continuous gunfire.

At 1215 (about), a cruiser plane and later a second plane began trailing us and the 3"-23 calibre gun fired on them when within range.

At 1230 (about), six additional cruiser planes appeared and soon began individual dive bombing attacks on POPE from ahead or starboard bow, each of these making two drops and then retiring. Planes were fired upon by the 3"-23 calibre gun until it failed to return to battery on about the 75th round. This occurred just prior to the first bombing attack. On each dive bombing attack, two 50 calibre machine guns and three 30 calibre machine guns fired upon planes when within range. The attacking planes approached to within 500 - 1000 feet on each drop. There were twelve dive bombing attacks in all. These were followed by four level bombing attacks by six Mitsubishi 97's which made four level bombing drops, from about 3000 feet. Evading maneuvers at maximum speed were initiated on commencement of each attack. On the third dive bombing attack, a bomb exploded close aboard, off port bow. Fragments caused minor topside damage and injured two men on gun #1. A four inch hole was torn through the rangefinder. On the eleventh drop, the bomb just missed the side of the ship abreast #4 torpedo tube and exploded under-water. The explosion put a large hole aft below the waterline, sprung the ship's plating for a considerable length and threw the port shaft seriously out of line, necessitating the stopping of the forward (port) engine because of the severe vibrations set up at once.

Serious flooding began in the area of the port shaft alley, extending into the after engine room and after living compartments.

Immediate steps were taken to plug the open hole and an attempt to control the rapid flooding of after compartments and after engine room by the Damage Control parties. However, water levels rose rapidly during the next ten minutes, despite all pumping and repair efforts. Flooding in the after engine room was gaining so rapidly that it appeared that all motive power would be lost in time.

At 1240 (about), approximately ten minutes after this near miss, and while the ship was maneuvering to avoid the second level bombing

flooding was beyond control and that there was already several feet of water above the deck of the after living compartments. From the bridge it was quite evident that the stern was settling fast. After a brief consultation with the Damage Control Officer (Executive Officer), preparations to abandon ship were directed. During the next ten minutes, the following steps were taken:

- (a) All depth charges aft were dropped, on "Safe" setting.
- (b) Watertight doors and ports were opened.
- (c) Secret underwater sound gear on bridge was destroyed by a demolition charge.
- (d) The M.W.B. was prepared for lowering.
- (e) Final steps for use of demolition charge in Forward Engine Room were completed. Confidential publication destruction was completed.

During this period, the ship was maneuvered on one engine to avoid level bombing attacks and all battle stations remained in readiness for action. When the storage battery was connected up in the circuit to the sound gear (a standard demolition circuit installed by the Navy Yard at Cavite in 1941) word was passed on the bridge for everyone to stand clear. When the Commanding Officer observed that all men were either lying face down on the deck or at a distance from the sound gear, he closed the switch on the forward bulkhead of the chart house. The resulting explosion was much greater than had been expected from the small demolition charge and a number of fragments pierced the chart house bulkhead. One piece of metal entered the chest of the Fire Control Talker Davis, Yeoman second class, then lying face down near the starboard pelorus, resulting in his death. As soon as the boat was ready for lowering the Commanding Officer directed that all wounded men be placed in the boat.

After the next level bombing attack, the starboard engine was stopped and the boat dropped into the water. By this time the weather deck aft was awash on the starboard side. Word was passed to "abandon ship", sea cocks were opened, magazines were flooded and the Gunnery Officer was instructed to set off the ten pound charge of TNT in the forward engine room (near the fireroom bulkhead), after the ship was abandoned. The Commanding Officer then went below for an inspection, returning topside in about five minutes. Insuring himself that all confidential publications had been destroyed and the ship was in a sinking condition, the Commanding Officer reappeared on deck. By this time the ship was almost completely abandoned and the Gunnery Officer recommended that he leave the ship before the large demolition charge was set off. When the Commanding Officer had cleared the ship, the demolition charge was exploded, and demolition personnel left the ship. Shortly thereafter splashes appeared in the vicinity of the sinking ship from two cruisers which were observed for the first time. On about the sixth salvo the sinking ship was heavily hit and sank within fifteen seconds, stern first, listing somewhat to starboard.

one man) and made a number of passes at men in the water. All planes left the area in about one half hour. The MWB circled around until it located the three life rafts,* (one large and two small), the damaged wherry which was repaired the next day, and lashed all to the side of the boat. At about 2000, a muster was held and all personnel, (with the exception of Davis, Y2c, who had been killed), 151 in all, were found present. The officers and men were divided into six watches, allowing one watch (plus the wounded) in the boat for about thirty minutes at a time. This procedure was modified later as conditions became more desperate. Inasmuch as several radio messages had been transmitted during our engagement, and friendly planes had apparently bombed the cruisers in the vicinity shortly after the POPE was sunk, it was hoped that an American submarine might possibly pick up survivors. A flare was set off at 2200. In the afternoon of the second day an enemy plane circled the boat. After sundown, in the interest of morale, since all men were becoming restless, the motor was started and the rafts were towed in the direction of Java. The repaired wherry was used to pick up stragglers who became detached from the greatly overcrowded life rafts. During the night two Japanese destroyers approached within several miles of the boat whereupon we stopped the motor in order to avoid detection. After the gasoline ran out about noon of the third day, a sail was rigged with a blanket at the bow to point the boat in a southerly direction and the strongest officers and men rowed in relays with all available paddles and oars. An enemy plane again circled us during this afternoon. By nightfall life jackets had become so waterlogged as to become almost useless, many men were almost completely exhausted, (those completely "out" were gradually filling the boat), and it was feared some unobserved stragglers would be lost this night. (Several heroic rescues had been made during the previous night). At 2230 (about) a Japanese destroyer hove into sight, picked the boat up in her searchlight beam, and hailed us. Lt. Wilson, (who speaks Japanese), answered them. All personnel were then taken on board, sprayed with a solution of carbolic acid, searched, and made captive. There was no loss of life in the water.

- B. During the morning of 1 March 1942, the sea was calm, light swell, wind force 0-1 from southwest. About noon, it was dead calm, and shortly after noon wind was force 0-1 from northeast. The POPE passed through several squalls for about forty minutes around noon. Zone (-) 7½ Time used.

*One large life raft had been destroyed by the near miss port side aft.

A. Performance of Own Ordnance Material and Equipment.

1. Detailed Information on Ship's Gunnery.

(a) Ammunition Expended,

11 Torpedoes MK VI I-3D, (all on board).

340 Rounds (Correct to 5) 4" 50 cal. Common.

75 to 80 Rounds 3" 23 AA Common.

3500 Rounds (Correct to 100) .50 cal. Machine Gun, ball and tracer.

1800 Rounds (Correct to 200) .30 cal. Machine Gun, ball and tracer.

(b) Fire Discipline, Gunnery Communications, Fire Control Methods.

Almost all personnel had been in the ship since the outbreak of the war and therefore, having been through the engagements in Macassar Straits and Badoeng Straits, were settled into their jobs. Fire discipline was excellent. Full salvos of all guns that would bear were maintained at 5 second salvo interval until exhaustion of ready racks. Good salvo interval was maintained after this point in both phases with ammunition supply by hand direct from the magazines. Under these circumstances there was at first a tendency toward ripple salvos, but director pointer accommodated his firing interval to the changed conditions.

Gunnery communications were satisfactory.

Director Fire was used throughout, all equipment functioning satisfactorily. Due to the longer ranges at which fire was opened, with resulting increase in range pattern, no spread or laddering was used. Rangefinder was used for range keeper solution up to time fire was opened, after which spotting controlled the range.

Performance of control party and battery personnel were all that could be desired.

(c) Effectiveness of Gunnery, Surface and Anti-Aircraft.

Ranges were rather long, approximately from 12,100 yards to 9400 yards in the first phase and from 11,000 through about 9500 to 13,800 yards in the second phase. There was little dispersion in deflection, but large patterns in range made spotting sometimes difficult. This was no problem in phase I due to sharp angle on the bow of firing, but in phase II, own ship's motion produced apparent dispersion in deflection. Occasionally it was difficult to distinguish own fall of shot from that of ENCOUNTER, which fired on second destroyer in column in phase II, our fire being on the first destroyer.

At longer ranges the problem was to utilize the probability of gunfire, (probability of hitting), most effectively, considering the dispersion; this was given full play in the control of fire, and was the limiting factor in obtaining hits. Factors affecting dispersion which were under our control were all in hand; material condition of the installation was excellent, and bore-sighting, roller-path, and director checks had been constantly carried out, whenever opportunity permitted in the course of operations. All 4" guns had more than 100 rounds on them. It

were obtained in both phases. (See Damage, Part V, B, 1.)

Both the 3" 23 and .30 and .50 calibre machine guns were used against aircraft when within range while we were being trailed prior to the dive bombing attacks. The fire was effective in forcing them to keep their distance, and it is believed hits were obtained with the 3" 23 at this time. (See Damage, Sect. B, 1.)

During dive bombing attacks, streams of tracers from two .50 calibre and three .30 calibre machine guns were held dead on the attacking planes with no apparent immediate effect. Pull outs from dives were rather high in most cases, however; and no direct bomb hits were obtained by them. (The 3" 23 AA gun was out of action during these attacks).

(d) Material and Training Deficiencies

After firing about 80 rounds, the 3" 23 failed to return to battery, apparently due to failure of the counter-recoil springs. All efforts to repair this casualty in the time available were unavailing. This gun had about 1065 rounds on it prior to the opening of the action. It had been thoroughly overhauled in the last Navy Yard period, upkeep and maintenance routine had been carefully followed, and no deficiencies noted in its operation in gun practices or war-time action hitherto.

B. Performance of Enemy Ordnance Material and Equipment

1. Effectiveness of Gunnery, Surface and Anti-Aircraft.

Enemy ranging was considered to be good. Enemy put their fall of shot on the target quickly, but were not content to spot "No Change" if hits were not observed, and frequently spotted off again.

Enemy patterns were extremely small. In one case, there was evidently some divergence in the line-up between forward and after groups of a cruiser 8" battery, but in general, good battery line-up and high angle of fall produced, for example, a pattern at about 6000 yards range of full 8" battery of Ashigara class of not over 100 yards in range.

After we were obscured by smoke from cruisers engaged in the first phase, trailing and spotting planes were observed lining up on our bearing for indirect fire on us by the cruisers. This was carried out, but although near misses were obtained, it was not long sustained.

2. No comments.

Evidently Japanese shell fuses were defective or quite insensitive. It was noted that some shell, perhaps a majority, did not explode on striking ship's structure (when the POPE was sinking), and less on plunging into the water. When they did detonate, damage did not seem nearly as much as should be expected of 8" shell. It was concluded from observation at this time and previously, at Badoeng Strait, that Japanese shell were not nearly as destructive as they should be expected to be, except when concentrated at shorter ranges or when hits were made in or among explosives or inflammables.

Half or more of the bombs used by the cruiser planes in the dive bombing attacks (estimated 50 kilogram) did not explode. When they did, some fragmented poorly or were low order bursts, indicated by excessive size of fragments.

After going aboard Japanese vessels, we noted their excellent glasses--large numbers of binoculars 7x50 or larger at all stations for lookouts--huge night binocular glasses on mounts on the bridge and upper superstructure. This state of optical preparedness was no doubt also implemented in their ordnance optical gear. In the POPE, the gunnery department was allowed two 7x50s, the remaining glasses being 6x30s of BuOrd issue about twenty years old.

PART V.

- A. The near miss in the vicinity of #4 torpedo mount delivered on the eleventh dive bomb attack holed the ship below the water-line in the after crew's living space (D-204), and threw port shaft out of line. Seams were ruptured on the port side over an area extending well into the after engine room. By inspecting compartments where possible and by inspection externally of hull damage it was apparent that the following compartments were rapidly flooded: D-204, D-205, D-108M, D-111, D-110 and D-106. Shaft glands port side were opened up considerably. Small electrical fire started on switchboard in after petty officers' quarters, D-205.

Shells exploding in water, horizontal and dive bombing misses riddled areas of ship above water-line with fragments.

Shellfire and bombs destroyed main antenna.

Own ship's fire, much of it well on the bows and quarters, caused much superficial damage to own ship's structure and equipment. As fire continued over long period, racks welded to ship's structure broke away, chart tables, desks, battery boxes and similar installations were torn loose, chronometers stopped or jarred in error, and splinter mats disintegrated.

In the case of damage done by dive bombing, because of terrific vibration of shaft, it was necessary to stop port engine. Hole in side quickly flooded after crew's living space. This hole was plugged and flooding through this entry was partially stopped.

a short time all propelling power was lost. A loss of stability was apparent and free surface had pronounced effect on ship in her maneuvers to avoid bombs. The ship was listed heavily and was settling rapidly by the stern when decision was made to abandon. Switchboard fire was quickly extinguished. Emergency antenna was rigged to replace the main antenna destroyed.

B.

Battle Damage to Enemy Units

1. About 0935, phase I, target was destroyer in company with two CAs. ENCOUNTER opened fire on same target about same time but ceased fire after about 12 salvos.

About 0940, when range had decreased to about 10,000 yards, a drift of smoke was observed aft on the target. From this time on until this destroyer was obscured in the smoke her fire from the after mounts was irregular, and it was observed that only one and sometimes neither of these two mounts was fired at the regular salvo interval. This was verified later in conversation with EXETER officers.

About 1100, phase II, opened fire on leading destroyer in column on engaged side of cruisers to southward. ENCOUNTER took the second destroyer under fire. EXETER took leading cruiser under fire and has stated that she used 8" battery against targets presented as the smoke screen from ENCOUNTER permitted. As the action progressed, it was noted that fire from the leading destroyer, which had us under fire, became very intermittent, nor did she always fire complete broadsides. At one time enemy destroyer speed was noted to drop to about 27 knots, but picked up again later. About 1110 ceased fire at range about 13,800 yards.

At about 1110 POPE fired the five torpedoes from the starboard tubes at the destroyers to starboard. In about 10 minutes a heavy explosion was observed on the third destroyer in column, and she lost speed and dropped aft, soon to be lost to view behind ENCOUNTER'S smoke.

During phase II members of the repair party, including CMM Mekkelson, looking aft, observed a heavy explosion at the bow of a large vessel through a rift in the smoke which quickly closed in again.

Enlisted men held prisoners-of-war in Makassar, Celebes, reported that many sailor members of the crew of HIMS ASHIGARA told them that in this action the cruiser of same class astern of the ASHIGARA was sunk by torpedoes. In one case this story was reported to have been told prisoners by a Japanese naval officer who said he was attached to ASHIGARA at time of the action. It is believed that Lieutenant A. J. Fisher (SC) U. S. Navy who was in charge of American prisoners in Macassar during the last two years of the war can give more

accurate details on this matter is available at this writing. The story in essence was that one torpedo missed close astern of ASHIGARA and that at this time the cruiser astern was hit and sunk.

From about 1145 for about a half hour the POPE was running through squall areas. Toward the end of this period, cruiser planes to the number of 8 appeared, commenced shadowing and making approaches, and were brought under fire by 3" 23 AA gun and .50 calibre machine guns when in range. At about 1230, (the 3" 23 AA then out of action) dive bombing attacks commenced, and .50 and .30 calibre machine guns were used against the 6 planes making them, (cruiser based bi-planes, similar in appearance to our SOC type). Two planes of the original eight had discontinued shadowing and retired into the mists of the squally weather. British ratings accommodated on a Japanese heavy cruiser were told that one of these planes had been shot down and saw another with heavily damaged tail surfaces.

EXETER officers in conversation have stated they saw hits on the first and second destroyers in column, in the second phase.

Certain of the Japanese engineer force ratings who could speak some English, in conversation with our men on the destroyer which picked us up later, stated that three destroyers which had engaged our ships had been damaged in the action. (One of our men who had spoken with these Japanese was Smith, C. H., SCLC.)

PART VI. Special Comments and Information

D. 2. Communications

Three radio messages were sent by the U.S.S. POPE. A contact report (which included position) was sent out on the Anglo-Dutch frequencies about 0900 but was not receipted for. Radio contact was then made with Radio Corregidor and the last two messages were put on the Baker schedule. These messages read "Have destroyed all confidential publications", and "Retiring to the northeast, request you drive off trailing planes".

PART VII. Personnel Performance

The POPE was continually in the presence of the enemy from 0730 in the morning until her sinking in the early afternoon. Her operations from the outbreak of the war until this date had been such as to engender considerable psychological tension. Despite the superiority of the enemy, and with general disregard of the critical situation, the personnel on all stations functioned as a team, showing in their general display of initiative, efficiency, and courage, the results of their training. This was especially

notable when ammunition had to be replaced in the ready racks in the intervals of action, or directly supplied to the guns when ready racks were exhausted, all available personnel turning to with a will. Response to orders was immediate and intelligent. There was no needless exposure to danger, but when the occasion called for it, devotion to duty of the crew in general was worthy of the highest traditions of the United States Navy.

PART VIII. Lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations

It is considered that as this report has been delayed three and one-half years and that the installations used are now obsolete, no lessons or conclusions obtained from this action would be of value.

Welford C. Blinn
WELFORD C. BLINN

CC:

- (2) Former Commander Southwest Pacific
(Rear Admiral William A. Glassford, USN)
- (2) Former Commander Destroyer Squadron Twenty-nine
(Captain Herbert V. Wiley, USN)
- (5) Former Commander Destroyer Division Fifty-nine
(Captain Edward N. Parker, USN)
- (2) Former Commanding Officer Task Force Unit (HMS EXETER)
Captain Oliver L. Gordon RN Via ComNavForEurope
Advance copy all addressees

29 November 1945.

DECLASSIFIED

From: Captain Edward N. PARKER, U. S. Navy,
(Formerly Commander Destroyer Division FIFTY-NINE,
Asiatic Fleet - Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific).
To : Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.
Via : (1) Former Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-NINE
(Captain Herbert V. WILEY, U. S. Navy).
(2) Former Commander Southwest Pacific
(Rear Admiral William A. GLASSFORD, U.S. Navy).
Subject: Action Report - U.S.S. POPE (DD225), 1 March 1942.

1. Forwarded.

2. The account of the last action of the U.S.S. POPE (DD225) has been read with great pride. The story told in such matter of fact language is one of high courage and fortitude in the face of overwhelming odds and in a situation where the hope of success was non-existent. The gallant spirit displayed by the Commanding Officer, Officers, and Men of the U.S.S. POPE is in conformance with the highest tradition of the Naval Service. The failure of the enterprise and the loss of the U.S.S. POPE reflects no discredit upon Captain Blinn or the brave company that manned his ship.

3. It is considered that the Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. POPE and all personnel attached to the U.S.S. POPE should be especially commended for the action of 1 March 1942 in which they fought so bravely in support of our ally as represented by HMS EXETER and HMS ENCOUNTER. Action in this regard has been initiated and will be forwarded to Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet through the same chain of command as the basic letter.

Edward N. Parker
EDWARD N. PARKER.

cc: Former Commander Southwest Pacific,
(Rear Admiral W. A. Glassford, USN).
Former Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-NINE,
(Captain Herbert V. Wiley, USN).
Former Commanding Officer Task Force Unit (HMS EXETER).
(Captain Oliver L. Gordon, RN Via ComNavForEurope.
ComDesPac (with one copy of basic report).
Former Commanding Officer, U.S.S. POPE (DD225),
(Lt. Comdr. Welford C. Blinn).
Advance copy all addressees.