

DIARY OF
FRANCIS ROLAND REGISTER

MARCH 17, 1941

TO

OCTOBER 14, 1942

FIRST SEGMENT - MARCH 17, 1941 TO APRIL 5, 1941

March 17, 1941

Arrived in Mpls. at 7:10 to report for U.S.N.R. training, and arrived out at the post at 9:00. Received part of my equipment and met quite a few of the fellows. Got a room in the "Bunk House", and the fellows seemed very friendly.

March 18, 1941

Got up at 6:15 and went to breakfast at 7:00. Back from that we did all our detail, then went over to hanger #2 and rolled out ten ships and lined them up on the line and warmed them up. Was supposed to go up but didn't. Rolled the ships in at 16:00 and washed them up, then went over to supper.

March 19, 1941

Went up today for first time. Got one of the toughest instructors as my teacher, but do not mind. The first time he let me taxi the plane off the line and I took off and landed for 50 minutes. I understand they very seldom let a person fly his first lesson. He cussed me out some but that is the way it is done here.

March 20, 1941

Went up again today and did much better. He complimented me today, but I still have lots to learn, and am sure that I don't have any trouble. They are really tough down here, and quite a few are flunking out.

March 21, 1941

Flew again today; nothing more of interest.

March 22, 1941

Didn't fly today. Received leave about 1600 and went downtown with the fellows.

March 23, 1941

Sunday - Slept late and stayed around the base all day.

March 24, 1941

Didn't get to fly today. Nothing of importance.

March 25, 1941

Again I did not fly; nothing more of importance.

April 5, 1941

Soloed today which finishes my flying here at Minneapolis. Was quite a thrill as I was the first one in my class to do such.

SECOND SEGMENT - OCTOBER 21, 1941 TO DECEMBER 12, 1941

October 21, 1941

Finished checking out at Pensacola and said goodbye to many of my friends who I very likely will never see again. Got all my luggage packed and started out at 1300 with two other fellows. We drove down.

October 22, 1941

Left Talahasee at 9:30 and arrived in Tampa about 1700. Stayed here over the night.

October 23, 1941

Drove from Tampa to Miami and saw the Everglades on our trip. Was very impressed, but would certainly hate to be lost in there.

October 24, 1941

Reported into the Naval Air Station Miami to resume my duties as a fighter pilot.

October 25, 1941

Took my physical and passed without any trouble. Finished checking in, so will be ready to begin Monday. Met a Lt. Kluneman that knows Uncle Paul well and had a pleasant talk with him.

October 26, 1941

Took it very easy today and slept most of the day.

October 27, 1941

Reported to the squadron and was assigned to flight class #48. There are 12 in a class. Didn't do much but read a lot of pamphlets and reports. Am very impressed so far as this is what I have been looking forward to for so long. It is going to be very hard though and a tough grind, but know I will make it. There were 21 planes cracked up last week. This will be my last step before I become an officer in the Navy Air Corps. I hope to make it as good as my record has been so far. It won't be long now.

December 11, 1941

Finished my flight training today which completes my training. Looking back, it certainly has been a long tough grind, but well worth everything put into it.

December 12, 1941

Received my commission today. My dream has now come true. Am now a full fledged officer in the Air Corps. Home, here I come.

THIRD SEGMENT - MAY 31, 1942 TO OCTOBER 14, 1942

May 31, 1942

Sunday morning received word to be aboard Saratoga by 2400. Was very busy packing. Said goodbye to my wife, Ruth. Looks like it will be a long voyage before I see her again.

June 1, 1942

Got up at 0700, ate breakfast and wandered around the ship. Had a lecture at 1445. We were told a large Jap force of 5 CV were approaching Midway. It looks as if we will meet them. I am to fly part time on the way out. We are cruising at 20 knots without a convoy along. Don't know if the destroyers can keep up the pace. O'Leary cracked up on deck, smashing the plane pretty bad, but no injury.

June 2, 1942

Nothing much of interest today. Got up at 0530 and to bed at 2200. Think I am coming down with a cold. Am attending a lot of lectures, and a lot of running around.

June 3, 1942

Up at 0530. At 1100 an alert was sounded. I and 5 other planes took to the air. My airspeed meter was not working. We split up into two groups. The other group spotted a 4 engine bomber which turned out to be ours. Really thought I was going to see action today. Dutch Harbor was attacked today. I was the only new fellow to fly. My cold is very bad now. Tomoso lost his ship in the ocean today because of

June 3, 1942 (Continued)

engine trouble; was picked up by a Destroyer. Reported tonight 11 enemy ships 700 miles bearing 270⁰, speed 19 knots headed for Midway. Don't think we can make it to intercept them.

June 4, 1942

Did not fly today. My cold is very bad. Received news tonight of a great battle taking place at Midway. The Yorktown is sinking, but it sank two of their carriers. One other Jap carrier was hit. A battleship left afire. Understand the enemy has 80 ships there. It now looks as if we will get into it. Hope my cold is better before I have to fly.

June 5, 1942

This has been an easy day. Big news came in though. A very large attack has commenced at Midway. News is rather indefinite though. We destroyed 4 CV - 1 BB - 1 CA of the enemy and they are supposed to be on the run. They may organize and come back though. They have a very powerful force. We figure that this attack was meant to take Pearl Harbor. We are to leave for Midway as soon as we can take on fuel and planes at Pearl. Morale is high; everyone having to get a crack at them. Naturally we're all scared, but willing and eager. This country can be proud of its fighting men. They are doing more than people back home will ever know.

June 6, 1942

Arrived in Pearl Harbor about 0730. I took off of carrier at 0500. It was still dark, so got quite a thrill out of it. We flew in and landed at Ford Island. Found out we were not going out to Midway although the ship went out. We are to go to UF-42 temporarily.

June 7, 1942

Stayed at old B.O.Q. last night. Went into Honolulu today and found it very disappointing. There is nothing there and resembles Pensacola a lot.

June 8, 1942

Moved over to Ewa Field today. It is a very new field and not complete as yet. It is very dirty and very much of a wilderness. The accommodations are very poor.

June 9, 1942

Nothing of interest. Just sat around killing time. The Midway battle reports are coming in. They sound very favorable. The papers and news are giving the Army great credit. They were very ineffective and had very little to do with the battle. Since I have been out here and have seen and heard the many reports on the battle, it makes it very hard to believe that they are doing a damn thing. It is a crime the credit they get when the Navy is without prejudice doing everything.

June 10, 1942

I flew around the island today with Doc. Sellstrom. Enjoyed it, only wish I could fly more. Things are very disorganized.

June 11, 1942

Nothing to write about.

June 15, 1942

Three carriers came into the harbor today with all their escorts. There are really a lot of ships here now. Talked to a lot of my friends that were out there and they certainly tell some hair-raising tales. A good friend of mine was shot down by his own ship's AA fire. This happens often though. Saw Lefty Hoernor and talked to him for quite a spell. Had dinner and went to a show. He is quite a hero now as in the Midway battle he sank an enemy destroyer. Am very happy for him. Get a big kick out of kidding him about it.

June 16, 1942

The most important subject I have to write about today is an SBD crash. Doc. Sellstrom was in the back seat. The plane had a 500 lb. bomb on it. On the takeoff the plane hit a derrick with its wing. When it hit the ground it started fire. Some soldiers dragged Doc. out, but were unable to get the pilot. Fifty caliber shells started to go off but several soldiers still tried to get the pilot out when the bomb went off. It killed six of them. Saw the pilot's body as they pulled it out of the wreckage. A very charred bit of flesh, very ghastly. The soldiers that died in the crash deserve all the credit in the world.

*Home of several
Lions, NY
for extra
heroism.*
*ENS
HELMUT
ERNEST
"LEFTY"
HOERNER
V-55
NAVY CROSS*
*V-5
Crew member
LT. W.C. Short
USN.*
*18 SBD's
Gorktown.*
*(Sinking
1200 tons)*
*B-12-4, 1914
West Bend
Wisc.*
*Wound
6/16/42*

June 17, 1942

I helped arrange the office and started to get squared away as Assistant Engineering Officer. Met Loyly Caine from Wohpeton. Saratoga goes out tomorrow to Midway with P-40 on board. She will be back in about a week. Then we will go aboard, but don't know where we will go. Doc. Sellstrom is expected to live, which gladdens all our hearts. It would have been such a useless way to die. Understand he will never be able to fly again though.

June 18, 1942

Little of interest. Received the first letter from my wife.

June 19, 1942

Flew for an hour today. Had a very near accident. Came as close as I ever have to a mid air collision. Felt certain we would hit, but by some miracle we didn't. We are to move over to Maui tomorrow where we will be stationed for a month. Have heard a great deal of the F6F. We are all very anxious for it to arrive.

June 20, 1942

Moved over to Maui today. I flew over which took about 40 minutes. The base is very new but as nice as any I have seen out here so far. It is located between two mountains. One is 10,000 feet high. We all hope and expect to get in some good practice while here. Seems odd Ruth doesn't write more often. Have been gone three weeks and have received only one letter. My friends have received as many as ten. It kind of hurts not hearing from her.

June 21, 1942

I and Duffilo flew back to Pearl today. Had a very scenic hop. Saw some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. Waterfalls 400 and 500 feet high dropping straight down on Molokai. Doc. Sellstrom died this morning. I understand he was burnt very badly and was broken up. A lot of fellows have been killed since I have been here. Have seen several and it's pretty tough to watch. A person has to steel himself to death and pain in this organization.

June 22, 1942

Made some gunnery runs today.

June 23, 1942

Made some more gunnery runs and did very well. So far I'm shooting very well.

June 24, 1942

Did not fly today. Some fighter pilots were transferred to torpedo squadrons, but not me thank goodness.

June 25, 1942

Wrote a couple of poems or something today. Will send them to my wife soon. Had FCL today and did very well.

June 26, 1942

Had some more FCL today and check out, so will be through until we go aboard. Have heard no further news on when I'll be going out, but probably in about 20 days.

June 27, 1942

We seem to be relatively inactive considering everything. Wish I could fly more, although I feel I can hold my own with the older fellows out here. Only wish I had their experience.

June 28, 1942

Had a close call today. On my takeoff my engine was not turning up properly, only got 40" and 2200 RPM. Was impossible to get off, so cut my gun and saw I was going to run out of runway so I ground looped, but did not hurt the plane. They sent an ambulance, wrecking truck and fire engine out, but to no avail; which I was thankful for.

June 29, 1942

Had FCL today and did well in them; also gunnery and was shooting pretty good. Finally got my laundry so can put on something clean for a change. Some of my things were missing though.

June 30, 1942

We are getting all new currency out here with Hawaii written across the bill in blue. Will try and send a bill home for a souvenir. Received a compliment today from Scoop Voris, our Executive Officer. He said I flew like a veteran and was doing very well. I feel I am making more headway in the squadron than any other new pilot.

July 1, 1942

Flew our personnel officer over to Oahu today. Gave him a few thrills on the trip and he got a big kick out of it. Went over in a SNJ. Saw Hoppy, Johnston and many more of my friends. Seemed great seeing them again.

July 2, 1942

Am disappointed tonight. Don't know yet what is going to happen but it looks like there is to be some action. Maybe something big. We received a dispatch requesting 4 pilots from our squadron to go aboard with UF-8. All three CV are to sail. We are to remain ashore. I volunteered to go, and really wanted to, but Butch said no. They only took the men with experience. Am getting very fidgety and restless sitting here on shore. I know it's my job to be out there fighting, so am ready to go.

July 3, 1942

Flew over to Ford Island again today. Will probably be here for a couple of days while our planes are fitted for belly tanks. Very sad news today. Hoppy was killed night flying July 1. I had seen him only 4 hours before it happened. They don't seem to know just how it happened, but he went into the ocean about 500 yards out to sea, and they have found no trace of him. He is the first one of us to go. Will write his wife as soon as I'm sure the Navy has informed her.

July 4, 1942

A very quiet day for the Fourth of July. Rather hard to believe that so much time has passed. The last Fourth I was in Pensacola. Wonder where I'll be next Fourth.

July 5, 1942

Today was a big day. Much happened and after much work and seeing the right people I am going to be transferred to fighting six with 7 other flyers. We will go out on the Enterprise in about a week. All the new VF squadrons are to be 36 plane squadrons. 3 CV are to go out and I believe we will meet the Wasp and possibly some Army transports. I think this is the start of our offensive, and will probably be the biggest battle of the war so far. Am glad I can be in on it. The Marshall Gilbert Islands I believe will be our objective. Only guesswork on our objective though, as they won't tell us that.

July 6, 1942

Killed most of the day just sitting around visiting with old friends. Chased around some getting some gear.

July 7, 1942

Ran around all day getting squared away, checking gear in and out. At 1600 we flew over to Kaneohe and secured quarters for the night. It is a very nice place with a beautiful Officers Club. Saw a lot of my old friends. Still no trace of Hoppy over here. I guess they have given up looking for him and notified his wife.

July 8, 1942

Today was the big day. In the morning we prepared to fly our 36 planes out to the Enterprise which was about 100 miles out of Oahu. We left about 1300 and landed aboard about 1500. A fighter that landed behind me had a bad crack up washing his plane out entirely. He came through the barrier and ended up very close to me. Many pilots have been killed while sitting in their planes and the fellow behind running into them. The Enterprise is a very nice ship with comfortable quarters. A TBF went over the side while landing.

July 9, 1942

Today was probably the fullest day I have ever put in and the most tired I have ever been. Got up at 0320 for flight quarters and received a lot of information. At 0630 took off for some tactical maneuvers with 36 UF and 36 U.S. UB. Landed at Maui, then took off again for another problem of bombing the carrier. Flew 6-1/2 hours of very strenuous flying, but learned a great deal. We are rehearsing a coming raid. It is now 2130 and we just secured.

July 10, 1942

Had another big day and ended up flying into Ewa. Understand we are to be here about a week before we go out for an extensive trip.

July 11, 1942

Went into Honolulu today and am staying at the Royal Hawaiian. It is rather nice, but the rooms are not exceptional. We are just laying around resting.

July 12, 1942

Another day of rest at the Royal.

July 13, 1942

Came back to the base today, but did not fly.

July 14, 1942

Today we moved back on the Enterprise. We then went ashore again to fly our planes out to the ship, which pulled ashore at 0900. We conducted exercises with radar and intercepted the bombers coming in. We landed aboard at 1315. We have the BB North Carolina with us, a very beautiful ship, speed 30 knots.

July 15, 1942

Went out to sea today. Had a problem today and intercepted the bombers. Straffed a sled towed by the Enterprise. Course 200 - speed 16.

July 16, 1942

Another problem of intercepting bombers and torpedo planes. Our 36 plane UF squadron is working out very nicely. Landed aboard with 8 gallons of gas. Position: Long. 161-00; Lat. N-17-21; Course 195; Speed 16.

July 17, 1942

Our destination for this trip is Tongatabu, Southeast of the Fiji Islands. Don't know how long we will be there; probably not very long. I think it will be soon though when we are to see some real action. Possibly the start of our offensive. Position: 0730; Long. 162-34; Lat. N-12-09; Course 195; Speed 16.

July 18, 1942

Did not fly today. It rained a good part of the time. We are drawing very near to the Equator. Had mock torpedo attacks which were very good and interesting. The fighters straffed the CU. This CU can really turn sharp, and really heels over. Long. 196-14; Lat. N-6-38; Course 164; Speed 21 (0630)

July 19, 1942

We crossed the Equator at 1253 today, then 18 of us took off and flew over it. We lost an SBD today on a search. We all think he got lost as the radar picked him up 90 miles away, but couldn't reach him. 0630 - Long. 165-10; Lat. N. 1-10; Course 164; Speed 21. Crossed the Equator at 1253 at Long. 165-48.

July 20, 1942

Went out on a 100 mile search today. It gives one a very strange feeling to get out so far from the ship. Only water as far as you can see. A person has to have great faith in his navigation. It is a great relief to see the fleet on your return. Long. 166-07; Lat. S 4-27; 0630; Course 197-16.

I was up 4 hours on this search as we had the intermediate air patrol when we completed our 100 mile search. Four hours is a long time to sit in one of these fighters. Have 18 landings now with no waveoffs as yet.

July 21, 1942

None of the fighters are to fly today. That doesn't disappoint me any, as I'm pretty tired today. It won't be so long now before we will be flying plenty. Have been out six days now and gone over 2,000 miles. Long. 166-30; Lat. S 08-23; 0630; Course 196; Speed 17.

July 22, 1942

Bad weather today; quite a heavy sea running. No planes flew today. We are drawing near to Tongatabu. Long. 168-42W; Lat. 13-31S; 0630; Course 203; Speed 17.

July 23, 1942

On takeoff this morning we lost an SBD. The pilot spun in. His rear seat man got out but the pilot Bradley went down with the ship. I knew him well. Long. 171-36W; Lat. 19-06S; 0630; Course 226; Speed 15.

Bob Bye almost went over the side in his TBF, but was caught by the gun barbelts. Smashed the plane up some, but they got it on board after a lot of work.

Later - Just an addition on my close call. On my takeoff at 1330, I hit a slip stream that turned my plane at an angle of 60° to the deck. Had a very hard time correcting and getting in the air. Everyone seemed to think I was a goner, but not this time.

July 24, 1942

Arrived in Tongatabu at 0930. As we came in the harbor, we saw 5 Maine transports, 4 DD, 1 hospital ship, 2 tankers, 2 supply ships awaiting us. We all left at 1500. This is the start of the big push. We will meet the Saratoga, Wasp, Hornet tomorrow I think. We don't know when we're going but expect to be in battle in a week anyway. Tongatabu has very many small islands around it. Would love to stay here about a month and sail from one to another and explore. Have always wanted to do this; maybe someday I will. 0930; Tongatabu; Long. 175-34; Lat. W 21-18.

July 25, 1942

Crossed date line so the 25th never occurred as far as we're concerned. We gain a day crossing Long. 180-00, so after the 24th comes the 26th.

July 26, 1942

We joined up with two task forces, 16 and 18. We now have over 70 ships in the group. This is the largest congregation of ships the Allies have had. It is a sight one will never forget. Carriers, Destroyers, Cruisers and Battleships, Transports, Tankers, Supply, Hospital and Torpedo Boats. We are not going anyplace now, but are killing time waiting for more forces.

July 27, 1942

The force has spread out some now; many are out of sight, but all are still in the vicinity. As soon as we move ahead, we will join up again. We are going to have a mock landing on a nearby island tomorrow or the next day. Then we will move ahead.

July 28, 1942

Did not fly today, and we continued circling.

July 29, 1942

We were supposed to fly but at the last minute it was called off. Received our plans for the coming battle today. We will practice tomorrow on a nearby island. UF-6 will screen the landing force, and protect the carrier. They seem to think we are the most experienced squadron so the most important and toughest job is ours. We are all well satisfied. UF-5 and UF-72 will go in with bombers and strafe and knock out enemy forces.

July 30, 1942

Got up at 0400 and took off at 0530, an hour before sunrise. Really dark out. We flew over to this island about 40 miles away and enjoyed going through the practice. We ceased our operations about half way through and began preparing to get under way. Don't know why we didn't finish, but there must have been a good reason. We are getting under way now at 1700 and I figure we should reach our objective, Tulagi first, then Guadal Canal and Rabaul. Our landing exercises took place on Koro Island in the Fiji group.

July 31, 1942

Today we continued to mill around; evidently we are still waiting for the Army. They are to begin bombing intensively two days before we arrive. I did not fly today.

August 1, 1942

I flew today for 2-1/2 hours. Believe without a doubt that today I came closer to being killed than any time previously. On combat I blacked out very badly. I was completely unconscious. I began coming to and realized I was in an airplane just over the water; I would estimate 50 feet. I was unable to fly the plane, however, but managed to hold the stick partly back. I could not hear, so thought my engine had quit. My legs would not move, and I began to go unconscious again but pulled out of it, and after about a minute of being scared my reflexes and nerves came back to normal. Long. 177-33E; Lat. 17-43S; Course 280; Speed 15.

August 2, 1942

I did not fly today, although almost did on an enemy interception that did not come off. We are now less than 800 miles from our objective, so about tomorrow or the next day we can expect to intercept some four engine patrol planes. Sure hope I get the chance to get one. That will give me a good warmup for the real thing. My section leader is getting nervous and jumpy; am afraid he is not going to be so hot out there when we start. Am feeling fine, in good health and ready to go. We have the best squadron in the fleet, and are all set to prove it. Long. 174-43E; Lat. 17-33S; Course 280; Speed 15.

August 3, 1942

Today we lost one of our pilots. Allard did a slow roll over the ship at 200' and scooped out coming out and couldn't quite make it. His plane exploded when it hit. A rather unpleasant sight. He was a swell guy and a good friend. His loss is felt by all of us. Did not fly today. Have been very busy studying maps and reports for the raid. Long. 168-13; Lat. 17-54; Course 280; Speed 15.

August 4, 1942

Did not fly today, but was kept busy on maps. Expect to make contact with enemy patrol planes tomorrow. Hope I get a chance at one. We start flying combat patrols tomorrow. Long. 164-10; Lat. 17-34; Course 290; Speed 10.

August 5, 1942

Flew today for 3 hours. We expected to see some enemy planes but didn't. The tension grows, but everyone is calm. Everyone is very busy preparing the ship for action.

August 6, 1942

Today is the day before the battle. Everyone was very much on the alert. Flew for 3 hours on patrol but saw nothing. Are 150 miles out now. Several buggies were picked up on radar but not found. Weather is very bad. Ceiling 800', visibility 500 yards. Ideal conditions for us. I'm all set for the raid, and pray that I can

August 6, 1942 (Continued)

get at least one Jap. Eight pilots have to go ashore to hold the island after the fleet leaves. I volunteered. Should see lots of action, as the Japs have bases close. Long. 159-34; Lat. 13-14; Course 000; Speed 12. I'll be back to write some more tomorrow night.

August 7, 1942

Today was the biggest day of my life. I took off at 0600 and flew in on the attack, but saw no enemy planes; in fact I saw none all day. The attack was like hell broke loose; the cruisers, destroyers and dive bombers raining death on everything. It was a wonderful spectacle to behold. I flew all day and got in 8-1/2 hours. Opposition was light for us and the ground troops at first. The Japs flew in at 1400 with 8 "O's" and 22 H.B. and 6 D.B. I missed it as I was over the ship. We shot down 8. Lost four pilots. Cook was lost tonight, a forced landing at sea after dark; might find him tomorrow. Lost six pilots all together. Am dead tired tonight.

August 8, 1942

Another very big day. Flew 8 hours. Missed out on everything again today. I flew more than anyone else today because I volunteered for an extra flight when they thought the Japs were coming but they came after I got back. There is nothing I want more than to shoot some down. Our squadron got 6 today and lost no men. 12 were knocked down all together. I have volunteered to go ashore with

August 8, 1942 (Continued)

7 other UF to occupy the island. We will have raids every day and I will have plenty of chances then. I'll need luck, but by God I'm willing, and I know now they will never see me running away. Am afraid Cook has passed on. This is a great blow to me. My best friend here.

August 9, 1942

Quinrey, Vincence and Canambarie

Today we withdrew the carriers from the field of battle. The going was getting pretty rough on the submarine situation. We lost the Astoria, a CA today. We are going out a ways to refuel and then I don't know where we will go. Maybe back on attack some other base. Still no word on any of the 6 missing pilots. Just about given up all hope on Earl Cook. It's sure going to be tough on his wife. I guess they aren't going to put us ashore. We are all praying for new fighters; if we don't get them soon, there won't be any pilots left to fly them. We can't compete with the Japs in the F4F.

August 10, 1942

We made no headway today as we met some tankers and at 1730 a tanker pulled up alongside and we started taking on fuel. I think it is a very dangerous situation as we are moving so slow and in a straight line. Hope we don't get a torpedo tonight. Four have crossed our bow so far; hope our luck holds. Long. 164-17; Lat. 16-03; 0630; Course 140; Speed 15.

August 11, 1942

Task force still is taking on fuel. No sign of sending 8 of us into Tulagi. I can't figure out or can anyone else how they can possibly leave the Marines with no air support. They have been raided every day since we started and with no air opposition, they will slaughter them. Very few Jap prisoners were taken as I feel is proper. I swear that no Jap will live that crosses my path. They are not human beings. They can't be, the atrocities they have inflicted on conquered people.

August 12, 1942

Still taking on fuel. The situation looks very bad for us at the present. Japan is sending everything she has in this area down against us. A lot is coming from Japan itself. 40 "O's" were over Tulagi yesterday. If we would have been ashore there they undoubtedly would have cleaned us up. Am afraid before this is over, we will be missing at least one carrier and have darn few pilots left. Our air officer says the biggest Naval battle in history is approaching. We have a good fleet, and will take a terrible toll when the time comes. Everyone is praying for a new UF quickly; it will bring victory much closer.

August 13, 1942

Started on a course headed back to Tulagi. Hard telling where we will end up though. I was up in the air 9-1/2 hours on one hop. Was pretty tired when I came down. The first two planes crashed on landing. One washed out his landing gear. The other hit the barrier and went over on his back, a total loss. I still have not damaged a plane or had a wave off. A remarkable record. I flew 16.2 hours in two days of our attack. Only four men in the fleet flew more than I did and they are in my squadron and only got 1/2 hour more. Hurt my back today and can hardly walk.

August 14, 1942

We are still holding course 330 which takes us back to Tulagi. UF-6 did not fly today. Everyone is very interested in what is going to happen next; just what and where we are going to hit. See by the news that we are getting quite a play in the papers. Hope we can really keep moving, so they will have something really big to write about. Looks like the Navy is the only fighting force that plans on fighting this war. It doesn't do a hell of a lot of good to have a million soldiers and thousands of planes in the U.S. The Army had better get going pretty quick before it's too late.

August 15, 1942

Today was payday. I drew \$210.00 in a check; will send it home as soon as I can. I also sent a money order of \$100.00 to my wife about July 10. If these do not show up, investigate. We continue waiting about 300 miles from Tulagi for developments. We are starting to run out of food. Have no more fresh vegetables and very little meat left. Will be eating hard-tack pretty soon I guess. Been out to sea for over a month now. It will sure seem swell to run some dirt through my fingers again.

August 16, 1942

Nothing of excitement today. It seems as if we are in the lull before the storm. From the daily summary reports it looks as if there will be a sea battle pretty soon.

August 17, 1942

The best news today is we got one of our pilots back, Joe Aktin. Gordon Firebaughall is also reported safe as is Warden. No news of Cook though.

August 18, 1942

Well we got some of the bad news from the attack. The day we left Tulagi some Jap cruisers sneaked in the harbor at 0200 and sank four of our CA, with us inflicting no damage on them. They caught them very much asleep. Have heard the Marines were not doing as well as they should. No coordination between ground and us, the Air Force. There are still no airplanes on Guadal Canal. Long Island will steam

August 18, 1942 (Continued)

in and land 19 UF and 12 UB tomorrow. My opinion as is most others' is that this was a rotten job; no foresight, planning or initiative on follow up or action.

August 19, 1942

We are still going around in a circle. The Japs are back at Tulagi shelling it today from cruisers. We sit here and send no support to them. We are about 600 miles south. Regardless of what our strategy is, we have made blunders that will be hard to erase. No excuse can cover up what they have done on this raid. They should have had aircraft ready to move into Guadal Canal a day after we took it. Our position is very precarious out here and I pray to God we can hold them now. Fundamentally I think the U.S. has what it takes, but we're soft people now, but pray that people will wake up soon and realize this is a life and death struggle.

August 22, 1942

This morning we got up at 0400 located just south of Guadal Canal. We expect action all day so we're fully prepared. At 1100 our section intercepted a 4-engine Jap patrol plane. Voris, our section leader, set it afire on his first run so I didn't even get a shot. It was a very big plane and it really did burn. It went into a spin and the wings and tail came off. One man jumped out without a parachute and I tried to catch him and shoot him but couldn't overtake him. Didn't make any difference though. He fell 8,000 feet. This was very exciting and a beautiful spectacle. More action coming soon; hope I can get one soon.

August 23, 1942

Did a lot of scouting today. Three submarines were contacted and bombed, one damaged. Enemy force of 2 CA, 4 DD, 4 AP, 350 north of us on a course of 180, speed 16. Figure they will hit Tulagi some time tonight. Supposed to be other enemy forces around. We should see action tomorrow, maybe a great deal. Went up on the bridge tonight and looked around and watched the navigation. Very interesting.

August 24, 1942

1-"0"

1-MC-109

1-"0" assist with 2 other of my men

Total - 2-1/3 down

The end of my big day. Flew all day. At 1630 we intercepted 55 enemy airplanes; 40 bombers, 15 fighters. I didn't get a chance to hit the bombers. The Jap UF attacked us and I shot down the first "0" off my wing man. Got separated and had gun trouble. Fought several more, but due to guns did not get them. Shot down a MC-109 which just about got me. Just shot him down when the "0" attacked me. Had no ammunition, but pointed my nose toward one and got by him, and someone shot the other one off as he was shooting at me. UF-6 got 29 airplanes and lost two pilots, a wonderful record. The Enterprise was hit by three bombs. 100 killed, 150 wounded.

August 25, 1942

Landed on Saratoga last night as did most of our pilots. Had a burned out engine, no guns, no gun sight and 3 gallons of gas. The Enterprise has to go back, so we were transferred over here and will stay. We think we sank a Jap CV, CA, and an AK. The Hornet will join us tomorrow. It's a very odd experience to go through a flight like this. There is no doubt of being scared. My mouth was so dry I couldn't swallow, but as soon as I started firing I started cussing until he went down in flames. Guess I sort of went out of my head, as I was in a group of "O's" and was shooting at them as fast as I could. Give me a little luck and good guns, and I'll shoot down a lot more.

I have one assist also.

August 26, 1942

Sat around on the Saratoga today not doing much. Certainly is discouraging being transferred from the Enterprise to this ship.

August 27, 1942

Flew a UF over the Wasp today. Was impressed by it, as it is a very elaborate clean ship. They treated me swell and the food was very good. Left the plane there and came back on a 398 destroyer. Quite an experience going from ship to ship in Bosin's chair. First time on a tin can, so really looked it over and had dinner on it before going back to the Saratoga.

August 28, 1942

Hornet joined us today. No excitement or nothing to write about.

August 29, 1942

Don't seem to be going anyplace; certainly wish we would get this battle over with and get ashore for awhile. Everyone is beginning to growl and we are getting anxious to get back. My ears are troubling me again today and had to have them packed again. It is very uncomfortable.

August 30, 1942

Flew combat patrol today but otherwise it was a rather quiet day. There are 6 Jap CU north of us with their task force. It sounds pretty rough, and am afraid will never get through that one. We are pretty well worn out and crippled now. Subs have been giving us a lot of trouble and the way we have been going, I expect we will get a torpedo soon.

August 31, 1942

Had G.Q. at 0400 then we went to bed until 0530 when we had it again. Subs have been after us, and sure enough they got us today. At 0730 I was in the ready room when a terrific explosion just about knocked me out of my seat. We were hit on the starboard side in the middle. At least two more missed us. We started to list quite badly, and lost our way. At 1400 got some way on, corrected list, and launched planes for El Centro. The ship is headed back. Don't know where or what will happen to UF-6. Wouldn't doubt if we were hit again tonight.

September 1, 1942

Got word today we were to be transferred to Espesito Santo and are to fly over this afternoon. We are still all right and every hour takes us farther from danger. The plane was changed and we will probably fly into Efate tomorrow.

September 2, 1942

28 UF flew into Efate at 0930 today. We were about 150 miles out. The field is all dirt, but not too bad considering everything. Have seen quite a few old friends here. The Marines and Army are located here. Quite a few have Malaria. We moved over to a little island in the Bay of Efate called Iririki. The tents are on the sides of the hill and it's pretty rugged living. The old boy scout days only much tougher.

September 10, 1942

Have neglected to write in my diary for some time. We have been just sitting around killing time. Things are very tough up at Guadal Canal. 36 UB and 36 UF just about every day. The Japs also try landings all day and night. They are losing heavily, but we're also losing a lot. Most of the UF has been knocked out up there, so we expect to move up very soon. When we go we will be up there in action every day. This is our only front and as tough as they come.

September 11, 1942

Woke up this morning with the news that we are to fly to Guadal Canal today. 24 of our UF. We left Efate at 0945 and got at Espesito Santo at 1110. Left there at 1250 and arrived at Guadal Canal at 1645. A 750 mile hop. Fields are very bad, but we didn't lose or damage an airplane. The field is covered with wrecked planes and bomb craters. Cruisers shell us at night and we're bombed during the day, with sniping from the hills. It's a tough, rugged, dirty outfit quartered here.

September 12, 1942

Today started the war to the end for us. This I believe is the hottest battle front there is now. 26 UB and 20 UF came over today dropping bombs on field; really raising hell. Again I got separated because of engine trouble and was attacked by Zero's. Got one and was very lucky to get back. There is no way for me to explain the seriousness of our position. We are fighting for our very lives. Everyone is exhausted from fighting day and night. May God give us the strength and help us. We get no help or relief from home. This is beginning to look like another Bataan. We are expecting to be shelled tonight by cruisers.

September 13, 1942

Later next morning. - We were shelled last night as if hell broke loose. Eight of us were in a bomb crater digging like gophers. Shells whistling and bursting all around, with heavy fire from the hills around us. Lost 4 UB pilots last night with a direct hit on the bomb shelter. Many more gone. We are standing by now for a carrier attack.

I have never seen and I don't think this has occurred any other place, the terrific courageous fight the men are making here at Guadal Canal. We have the worst jungle conditions here with the Marines striking out into it hunting out Japs. We only hold a 10 mile radius from the beach. The island is 80 miles long and 30 miles wide and the rest of it is full of Japs. Over 5,000 and more coming in every day and night. They shoot at us on takeoff and landing. Our strategy and leadership has been very poor on this whole invasion. It has been very disheartening and has discouraged the men terribly. So many mistakes have been made. They have sent us no equipment or reinforcements. For two weeks they ate Jap rice on the island. If the people back home only knew the truth, instead of what is put out to them.

Don't know how much longer I can last. Flew over 4 hours and most of the time at 26,000 feet. Zero's came over this morning with us losing many pilots. Two very good friends were killed, one on the field. This afternoon we intercepted 26 UB and 20 UF. I got 1 UB, ran out of gas and just made the field. Two were killed like this yesterday. God, I never knew life could be like this; we are like rats in a trap.

September 13, 1942 (Continued)

fighting every minute for our lives and knowing it's just a matter of time before we will all go. Very few of my friends I started with are left. We are taking a terrible toll on the Japs, but can't stop them.

September 14, 1942

Two Zero's shot down one of our SBD over our field last night. We had no UF in the air to help. This morning they tried the same thing, but we shot down 4 Zero's with no losses. Towards Sundown, single engine bombers came over. I couldn't get in the air so got in a bomb shelter. They went over the field at 3,000 feet. The sky was filled with AK but no hits. I never wanted to be in the air so badly. A bomb hit 50 feet from me knocking me down; thought I was a goner but no injury. Our UF contacted them out of sight of the field and got 10 of them. Pilots are becoming exhausted and sick; it's a pitiful sight. Everyone is trying so hard and is driving themselves on. Am so tired I can't eat. I didn't get any planes today.

September 15, 1942

I passed out today so had to stay at the field hospital for a day and a half. Lack of food and exhaustion from high altitude were the causes. No planes over today and no shelling.

September 16, 1942

Left hospital today but did no flying. There were no enemy planes over today, so everyone got a little rest.

September 17, 1942

Flew today but no action. We can't figure it out. Can't believe we have them scared off. Probably the lull before the storm.

The Wasp was sunk by three torpedoes by a submarine. Went down very quickly with a loss of personnel of 10% of complement. This is a very tragic loss and cripples us badly. This leaves us with only the Hornet here to protect us from a heavy carrier attack.

September 18, 1942

Twenty-one ship convoys came in today with 5,000 Marines on board. We were all pleased to see them as we need reinforcements badly. Have lost a lot of men and material. There aren't over 13,000 men on the island now, so it would not be very hard to take it back again if To-jo wants it back. We are expecting a big attack tomorrow.

September 19, 1942

Went up on an early morning alert but nothing came over. About nine, Admiral Fitch flew in on a DC-3. He left again at 1200 so 8 of us escorted him about 80 miles on his way back to ensure his safety.

There seems very little prospect of any relief here for us. The biggest trouble with us all is lack of vitamins and being unable to eat. We are all losing weight and are slipping every day. We are all filthy and unhealthy. The Marines on the island really appreciate us, however. They speak and look at us as Gods. They feel that we came just in time and have saved them. We have done a wonderful job and have kept the Jap planes away lately. Their appreciation means more to us than anything else, and we'll all fight to the end to keep that faith.

September 20, 1942

Got up at 0400 and went out as escort for J2F, which was looking for my good friend Finke who had a forced landing last night. We found him and rescued him. Went up to 27,000 later but contacted no enemy.

September 21, 1942

Flew several times today, but no enemy planes showed up. There was a big battle last night with the Japs almost reaching the field. Many were killed and we pushed them back the next day. Heard over my plane radio a very dramatic forced landing at sea by two SBD pilots. They lost their way and ran out of gas. On their hop they bombed Gizo. It was very interesting but tragic listening to these two pilots sending as much information on their bombing and position. They were brave good men.

September 22, 1942

We did not fly today as we had no alert. This evening at 1700 we are standing by for an invasion and possibly an air attack. A very strong attack could destroy us and we all realize this. So much depends on so few here.

September 23, 1942

Had the dawn patrol today, with no action. Things are becoming very quiet for us. Have had no news of enemy action at sea. We have two fields; Henderson and No. 2. The bombers flew to Gizo, but no damage.

September 24, 1942

(Written October 7)

Just received some very authenticated true information. This will never get out to anyone back in the States and few in the service. The Generals and Admirals have thought from the start that it was impossible for us to hold Guadal Canal. They gambled with a very small force hoping that it would do what it has done. No supplies or reinforcements were sent up for a month and even now nothing to help us. The day we were ordered up here this place was in a critical position. We arrived the eleventh. The day of the fourteenth they gave this place a maximum of 36 hours to hold out. Of course at the time no one here knew of this. For two days they sent no planes or supplies. Even now they have sent nothing to us. It was our squadron that turned the tide and has held this island. We are getting a raw deal here.

September 27, 1942

2 - Zero's

We scrambled at 1330 today. They told us to expect a torpedo attack so we were at 14,000. Saw the bombers coming at 23,000. I led a division and tried to climb up to them. Got up even with them and very close still trying to get higher to make a run when zero's attacked us. Everyone left me as 6 zero's attacked me. The first one shot and missed and then I got him. The others were then on my tail shooting like hell. I couldn't shake them and saw their tracers going all around me. Went into a dive and lost them. Just pulled out when another zero came straight down on me. He went straight down by me not hitting me. I got on his tail and shot him down. He dove straight into the ground and exploded. Today was my toughest day. Didn't think I was coming back.

September 28, 1942

Left at 1000 on an attack group. We flew 400 miles to hit a Jap convoy but made no contact. Just got back when they scrambled the fighters. The four of us that escorted the attack group couldn't get off. 35 UF got in the air and got to 25,000. I stood by a dugout and watched it all. I saw 11 bombers go down in flames. Their bombs dropped about a mile from me. Altogether 24 enemy planes were knocked down with no loss to us, although 5 were damaged. It was a big day for us; am sorry I missed it; probably could have busted my score. I'm leading the squadron now, but several are close.

September 29, 1942

We scrambled at 1030. Climbed to 24,000; no enemy showed up so we pancaked. On the way down my engines burned out; was going to jump but decided to try and land. Just made the field with a good landing. Didn't have a plane for the scramble in the afternoon. They contacted zero's and had a big fight. We outnumbered them, shooting down four. We lost one pilot. Shoemaker was a very good friend as I have gone all the way through training with him. It is a great loss as he was a swell guy and a very good pilot. He was shot down while making a forced landing. Our planes are in very bad shape.

September 30, 1942

Tested hopped #20 my airplane after they put a new engine in it. Really put it through the paces and put on a good show for the ground crews. Rained very hard all day. Admiral Nimitz flew in at 1600. A few of us will be awarded medals. I have been recommended for some time for the Distinguished Flying Cross and have just been recommended for the Naval Cross. Don't know what I'll get, if anything. Received a very nice compliment from the Captain. He said, "Register you're a damned good man; you have volunteered for every hop and have done far more than your part". This and my work and what I have done is my satisfaction.

October 1, 1942

This morning I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Admiral Nimitz pinned the medal on my chest. He read my citation and shook hands and said he hoped to see me with Stars and many more planes. I have never thought of medals, as I never dreamed I would get one. I have always

October 1, 1942 (Continued)

done my very best and have flown whenever possible. I am very thankful and joyful. This will give my wife and folks joy; mine comes from my work.

October 2, 1942

We scrambled at 1230. Ran into a bunch of zero's, but no bombers. I shot down one zero, getting my own plane shot up pretty badly. Everyone agrees I am very lucky to be back. We lost five fighter pilots today. Three TBF pilots were lost last night. A few of us are going every day now so it looks as if it's only a matter of a little time before it will be all over. Am becoming so exhausted and disappointed in our relief that we are all losing our spirit and fight. Our planes are in very bad shape and no match for the enemy.

October 3, 1942

Flew but made no contact. Zero's were over, some straffing the field. The Marines contacted them and got some. Received word that 8 DD and 1 CA were steaming in. Sent bombers out to hit them, but no hits. Expect a big landing and probably some shelling.

October 4, 1942

Two of our pilots were evacuated today. They were exhausted and in pretty bad shape. The General sent out a dispatch requesting our immediate relief due to our conditions. Probably won't be for some time yet though. No attack today.

October 5, 1942

There was no attack today although 6 DD are coming in tonight. Our attack group hit one, but they're still coming. Probably will be shelled tonight. Two more men are to be evacuated tomorrow. I'm feeling pretty well compared to most of them.

October 7, 1942

Rained very hard today. Field is in very poor shape.

October 8, 1942

At 1700, eleven VF took off to accompany an attack group. One CA and five DD were approaching 120 miles away. We hit them just before dark. One torpedo hit was made on the CA. Encountered heavy fighter opposition. They were biplane two seater UF. Very maneuverable, but not as fast as we are. Shot one down and a probable on another one. Came close to getting it myself, though. Lost one pilot, Roach; hope we can find him. Started back in the dark 120 miles out to sea. Found the field, but we had many crackups on landing. Was the last UF to land; field was foul with only 5 gallons of gas left. Landed on the fighter strip warn net.

October 9, 1942

Took off on a scramble at 1100. Climbed to 30,000 but encountered no enemy. My wing man evidently had oxygen trouble as he lost control of his plane and dove into the ocean. He must have been unconscious as I could not get him on the radio.

20 UF came in today which looked mighty good. No relief, though, yet. Some of the Marine fliers are going back however. We are the fall guys around here.

October 10, 1942

Found Roach today. He had a very wierd experience. He drifted in his rubber boat to a small island. When he landed there Japs chased him with bayonets. He crawled into an alligator hole, and they wouldn't follow him. He was in there all night. He was cut up pretty badly by the coral.

October 11, 1942

Was grounded by the doctor today. Asked the Captain to let me fly but he wouldn't. Doctor recommended and said I needed a two months rest. Guess I'm in worse shape than I thought. Still think I could fly though. Will try and get flying in a few days. Two Jap CA and 6 DD are approaching. We have a task force close that is supposed to intercept them. Will probably catch hell again as usual.

October 12, 1942

The Japs turned the trick on us again. We lost two destroyers and a CA damaged. No damage to them as I've heard. This could be wrong though. The Air Force here got them today though. Two DD and one CL. We left 50 men in the water all day and will have to stay there tonight due to the inefficiency of the men in command here.

October 13, 1942

Learned this morning that three other fellows and myself are to be evacuated tomorrow. They seem to think we are too exhausted and run down to fly. Still believe I'm all right; am the same as before. The doctor found out about my neck and said I was through for awhile. Had the worst raid we have ever had today. 22 BB came over with us not making interception. They hit the runway and surrounding area very hard. The earth shook and the air howled. An hour later 13 BB came over and hit us worse. We lost many planes and a lot of material. Runway is in very poor shape. If there ever was a hell on earth, this was it today.

October 14, 1942

Last night looked like the beginning of the end. A battleship and cruisers shelled us for two hours. Never thought I would live through the night. Our whole area was wrecked. Gas, material and planes were just about wiped out. Shells rained all around us hitting not more than 30 feet from me. The ground shook all through the shelling. Many

October 14, 1942 (Continued)

people went crazy and many were killed. There never was a hell like this and people will never know what this has been. Got out on a B-17; very lucky as the runway was in very poor shape. Looks very bad for Guadal Canal. They bombed us 8 times last night.

November 15, 1942

4 day sea battle total at Guadal Canal

<u>Japs (Sunk)</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
1-BB	2-CL
3-CA	6-DD
2-CL	
5-DD	
8-AK	
4-AP	
1-BB damaged	
6-DD damaged	