

May 9, 1942

The identity of the leader was closed today in a White House ceremony at which President Roosevelt personally decorated the flier, already famous as "Jimmy" Doolittle of peacetime records, with the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Of 79 others in the historic air raid, only 11 survived the Distinguished Vice Cross.

SHIP HIT

One salvo made a direct hit on the cruiser or battleship under construction in the navy yard, little related in a statement, "left it in flames."

The aircraft plant was strewn with incendiary bombs "along a strip of a mile" of its length, added. Japanese planes gave the raid little trouble, their leader led, and not much difficulty encountered in getting to the objectives in the sensational raid, which threw Japan into confusion and gave a great lift to the morale of the United Nations, while from inflicting important damage.

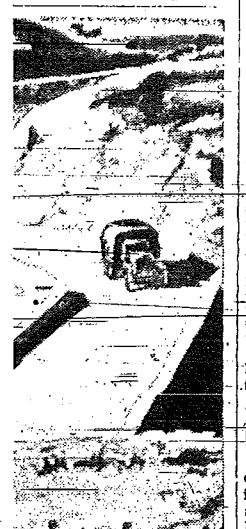
Doolittle said that the squad of American planes came in over the housetops, and dropped bombs from 1,500 feet. Low-level flying, he said, made it difficult to observe the paths of the bombs.

It appeared to us," the flying general declared, "that practically every bomb reached the target for which it was intended. I would like to have tarried watched the later developments of fire and explosion, but I was so fortunate to receive a fairly detailed report in the excited Japanese radio broadcasts. It took them several days to calm down to deception and accusation."

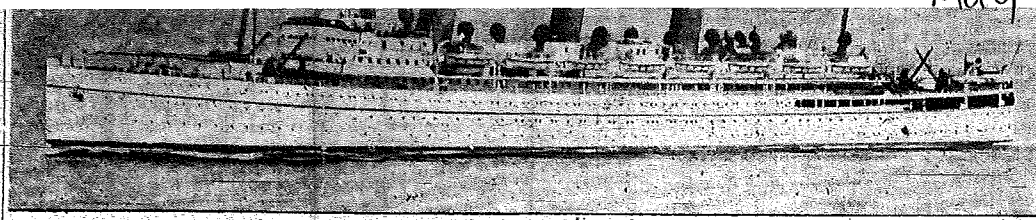
Y BALL GAME

Doolittle said part of his party served a ball game in progress one point and players and spectators did not start to run cover until just as the field was covered from view.

The identity of the leader of the air raid had remained a closely-guarded secret. Just before pinning the Congressional Medal of Honor on Doolittle's chest, Mr. Roosevelt remarked to a group of reporters that not a columnist had guessed it. Beside Gen. George C. Marshall, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, Lt. Gen. H. H. Arnold, chief of the army air service, Mr. Roosevelt, no one knew of the decoration until a few days previous. And Mr. Roosevelt said he thought it would be quite a surprise to Gen. Doolittle. Marshall and Arnold were on hand for the ceremony, as Mrs. Doolittle, who was in here from Los Angeles,



Canadian-made torpedoes driven in view, made in Iran. The trucks, loaded with Radiophoto).



"Only steel skeleton now," say rescued sailors . . . Ss. Empress of Asia.

MONTREAL (CP)—The Canadian Pacific liner Empress of Asia was bombed to destruction off Sumatra February 5 with the troops she was carrying blasting at the Japanese planes with anti-aircraft and machine guns until flames drove them off the ship, it was revealed here today.

Official announcement of the loss said merely that the Asia was destroyed by air attack while engaged in transporting troops to Singapore. The details of what happened to the former luxury liner were released here in the form of a report to the company from Chief Officer D. Smith.

The death blow came while the Asia was in a convoy of four transports escorted by the British cruiser Exeter.

Empress Escaped First Big Attack

The convoy was passing through the narrow Banka straits when the first attack, by 27 bombers, came. The Empress was last in line and came in for a severe attack, but escaped any direct hits although bomb splinters damaged lifeboats and deck planking.

The lethal attack came while the convoy was approaching Sultan Shoal, 16 miles from Keppel Harbor and had to slow down to take aboard pilots to travel through the mined area.

"The two ships immediately ahead of us received direct hits, and then the Empress of Asia, being the largest vessel and the last in line, came in for the concentration of the attack," Chief Officer Smith stated.

"Successive waves of low dive bombers flew over at an estimated height of 600 feet. There were many near misses from bombs, causing violent concussion. Finally the ship was hit, as far as can be ascertained, in three places simultaneously, the locations of hits being—forward of No. 1 funnel, after end of lounge dome, and through cabin No. 126 on the starboard side."

Bombs Smashed Through Decks

The bombs penetrated through all decks down to the fan flats, causing casualties and starting fires. Although fire parties sprang into action immediately, there was no water available, apparently due to damaged mains. The fire was soon out of control, isolating the forward and after parts of the ship.

"The ship was anchored close to Sultan Shoal with both anchors down. The bridge meantime was in flames and had to be abandoned. Stretcher cases were lowered to the boats and later dispatched to hospital. At 12.30 the ship was finally abandoned, the commander, chief officer and officer commanding troops being the last to leave."

The Asia was not abandoned before some toll was exacted on the attackers, the report showed.

2 Enemy Planes Fall to Aack Aack

The "removal and attention to casualty cases, and safety of life in general were very effective and well in hand, so the loss of life was comparatively small," it said, and then added: "Meanwhile attacks by low dive bombers had to be contended with, and our ship's guns, together with machine guns from the units on

board, kept up a steady barrage, and it is reckoned that two enemy planes were brought down.

Late in the afternoon, officers of the vessel circled the ship aboard a naval craft, H.M.S. Sedlitz, and organized fire parties from naval ships, in the hope of saving the forward and after ends, "where much valuable military equipment, machine guns and small ammunition were stored." But a breeze had sprung up in the meantime and the fire party could not approach the ship.

Four days later, boarding of the shattered, fire-swept hull was still impossible because of the intense heat. The following day, with Keppel harbor under continuous artillery fire and frequent bombings, the remaining personnel of the liner were ordered out of the area in three small coasting vessels, "being the only means left of getting away."

Two of the coasting vessels eventually found their way to Batavia in safety. The third proceeded to Palembang. Forty-five minutes after she arrived, short of fuel oil and out of provisions, Japanese parachute troops and naval units arrived in the vicinity, and the vessel was abandoned, with her complement traveling overland to Batavia.

The company's official announcement read:

"The Admiralty have granted permission to Canadian Pacific Steamships Limited to announce that the Empress of Asia was sunk last spring by attack in the Far East while engaged in transporting troops to Singapore."

Registered at Vancouver, the Empress of Asia ran between that port and Victoria and cities in the Orient. Built in Glasgow in 1913, she was 570 feet long, 68 feet wide and had a depth of 42 feet.

2nd Largest Ship Lost By C.P.R.

The Empress of Asia was the second largest ship in the Canadian Pacific fleet whose loss has been announced so far in the war. Most serious loss was that of the 42,000-ton Empress of Britain, flagship of the fleet, in the Atlantic early in the war.

In addition, four of five ships in the "Beaver" class of freighters operated by the company have been announced as lost—the Beaverdale, Beaverburn, Beaverbrae and Beaverford. Also lost was the liner Montrose, which had been converted into an auxiliary cruiser.

The Empress of Asia, with her sister ship the Empress of Russia, was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company at the Clydebank. A three-funnelled coal burner, she was propelled by four screw turbines with six double-ended and four single-ended boilers.

Officers of the ship from Vancouver were Captain J. B. Smith; D. Smith, chief officer; L. H. Johnstone, first officer; C. W. Cross, second officer; J. W. Donnelly, third officer; H. J. Owen, chief engineer; and B. D. Morgan, purser.

Survivors Relate Story of Sinking

AN EAST COAST CANADIAN PORT (CP)—With the official announcement today of the loss of the Empress of Asia, the story of how the 16,909-ton Canadian Pacific liner was beached

and burned while transporting troops to Singapore may be told as it was given newsmen here by 14 Canadian survivors of the disaster, landed April 18.

The Canadians said they were only six miles outside besieged Singapore when Japanese dive bombers spotted the troop-laden transport and from a height of about 25,000 feet began to plaster the ship with bombs.

"About 80 in all were dropped," Owen Gillett of Vancouver, 18-year-old survivor, said, "and five of them were direct hits." Four of the five struck well forward, near the bridge, but one crashed into the galley, causing a fire.

Other fires sprang up and soon flames were roaring through the liner, turning her into a funeral pyre for many of the 44 Canadians in the crew. However, about 100 seamen escaped, along with the majority of the 2,500 Imperial troops aboard.

Gallant Yarra Praised for Rescue

"Escape by lifeboats was impossible—they too were burned—and crew members said they owed their lives to the Australian sloop Yarra. The little fighting ship sidled up to the blazing behemoth and took off the men, all the time keeping her guns pumping lead into the bomber-filled skies.

The Yarra afterward was sunk during the Allied withdrawal from the Dutch East Indies.

Attempts to save the Asia were futile. Out of control, she drifted into a mine field and finally ran aground, the fire dying down only when nothing was left but her twisted steel skeleton and ruined engines.

So ended the "lucky ship" reputation the Empress of Asia had enjoyed during two years of ferrying troops across the Atlantic, down the dangerous Mediterranean Sea lanes and across the hazardous stretches of the Pacific. Not once was she touched—until those five Japanese bombs crashed on her decks.

Lost White Coat In War Service

In peacetime the glittering white luxury liner sailing from Vancouver and Victoria was widely known in the Canadian Pacific Steamship Empress line. However, in this port the Asia was better known as troop transport, a long, dirty-colored ship that stayed in harbor only long enough to pack her holds with soldiers and airmen. They, too, called her a "lucky ship" as the months rolled by and German submarines and planes failed to catch her.

It was in this port, too, that the Empress of Asia catered to her first dissatisfied customers. A group of Aussie airmen, fed up with their quarters, walked down her gangplank and refused to sail. They claimed they had been placed in a noisome hold, its floor covered with greenish bilge.

The 14 Canadians who survived the transport's last trip were not aboard her then. They joined up later, in Vancouver, where all but two of them lived. Those two—Hector Millett and Roger Denomme—hail from Three Rivers, Que., and Montreal.

Herbert Stanton of Vancouver, a survivor, took the story of the sinking regally in much the same terms as other survivors.

Visited Victoria Every 3 Months

The Empress of Asia visited Victoria regularly every three months for a quarter of a century when she was plying in the Trans-Pacific service between Vancouver, Victoria, Japan and China.

She came here in 1913 from her builders' yards in the United Kingdom with her sister-ship. That was a memorable year in Victoria shipping as it marked the advent of a new type of ship in the trans-Pacific service. It saw the arrival on her maiden voyage of Ss. Niagara, which was lost last year off the New Zealand coast by enemy action. The Niagara replaced the smaller vessels in the Australian service, while the big white Empresses with their three funnels, introduced a luxury service to the Orient. The yacht-like two-stackers, Empress of China, India and Japan, had been used over the latter route for 20 years.

Empress of Asia and a sister-ship engaged in a new tussle for the blue-ribbon of the Pacific. The older Empresses had been running from Yokohama to Victoria in a little more than 10 days but the new fliers sliced a full day off that time. They took turns in holding the record until the arrival of Ss. Empress of Canada in the '20s when she was crowned Queen of the Pacific. Subsequently the laurels went to Ss. Empress of Japan, which is the present holder.

Aided in Chase Which Ended Emden

When war broke out in 1914 the Empress of Asia was commandeered and fitted out as auxiliary cruiser. The Empress of Asia was in the fleet headed by H.M.A.S. Sydney which ran down the destructive German cruiser Emden in the Indian Ocean.

The Empress of Asia was centre of great reception here in Victoria in January, 1919, when she brought home, via the Panama Canal, over 1,000 Canadian troops from England. (Vancouver Story Page 11).

Refuse Japs Right To Buy B.C. Land

A group of Japanese, evacuated from the coast and anxious to start farming in the northern interior, were today refused permission by the provincial cabinet to buy land. Acting Premier R. L. Maitland, K.C., said following a meeting of the Executive Council, at which he presided in the absence of Ottawa Premier John Hart.

Some weeks ago a firm of Vancouver lawyers made application to Justice Minister St. Laurent in Ottawa to purchase 160 acres of land in Burns-Lake district for 30 Japanese families who wished to settle there. The Justice Minister referred the application to the B.C. Attorney-General, who in turn consulted the cabinet before announcing his decision.

The lawyers, in their letter to Mr. St. Laurent, said the location was isolated and white Canadians in the neighborhood had no objection to the Japanese.

"We considered the Japanese application, but at the present moment were not inclined to give our consent to the plan," Mr. Maitland said.

which effectively prevents many valuable British Columbia copper properties from being used to produce copper at a time such as this when this metal is one of the chief bottlenecks in the North American war effort.

It is hoped early action may put the mines in the Kootenays and on Vancouver Island to work.

The cost-plus plan is a method of bypassing the tariff, which Congress shows no sign of reducing.

Meanwhile, the two nations are actively considering a plan to extend the P.G.E. to Alaska. But while this project may be desired by military authorities, shortage of steel for rails may hold it up for the present, at least. It is questionable that when steel is needed for such No. 1 priorities as ships, enough could be spared for rails and rolling stock.

Sunloch, Mt. Sicker Near Victoria, Inland

"I do think, although I know no details, that there is something in the wind in this regard," Hon. Herbert Anson, Minister of Mines, said today. "I wouldn't be surprised if the federal government, to get more copper and other war metals, would do something like this, although I have heard of no international scheme. I think Ottawa has come to the conclusion the country must have copper, as it must have oil."

There are three copper mines on Vancouver Island—Coast Copper of Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company, behind Port Alice; Sunloch, near Jordan River, and Mount Sicker, near Duncan. All are now idle. The Sidney Inlet copper mine, abandoned by Japanese operators a few years ago, is mined out.

"There is no doubt the United States is desperately short of copper at the moment," an official of the mines department said today, "and they may be making arrangements with Ottawa to step up the price. Ottawa has always taken the stand that, as long as we are an exporter of copper they are not going to do anything toonus us. The present copper mines in B.C. are not in operation because they can not produce at the present price. And then there is labor. I do not see how we can keep the mines going without selective service or something like that."

Churchill Candidate Elected in Chichester

CHICHESTER, Eng. (CP)—The government, defeated in two recent by-elections, today retained Chichester when Lieut.-Cmdr. Lancelot Joynton-Hicks, Conservative, trimmed two independent candidates.



BRavery Award—The George Medal has been awarded Lieut. William G. Teller, R.C.N.V.R. of Westmount, Que. The decoration was won for "courage and coolness" in a "bomb disposal" incident.