

Marine Dive Bomber Pilot Hits Jap Ship, Gets Zero Same Day

(By First Lt. Penn T. Kimball,
Marine Corps public relations of-
ficer.)

MUNDA (Delayed).—In the first divebomber and torpedo plane raid on shipping in Rabaul Harbor from a newly-constructed field somewhere in the Solomons, Marine First Lt. Phillip E. Laughlin of Houston damaged a 10,000-ton Jap ship and shot a Zero off the tail of an American fighter.

Diving through heavy anti-aircraft fire, Lieutenant Laughlin had just planted a 2,000-pound bomb off the bow of the enemy vessel when he sighted a Jap fighter closing in on the rear of a P-40 covering the attack. The lieutenant said:

"The Jap rode right up on the P-40's tail, and I hooked onto his rear just as he began to open fire on the unsuspecting fighter. I let go with my wing guns and watched my tracers pour into the right side of the Jap's engine cowling.

"Ordinarily my Avenger torpedo plane does not have enough speed to keep up with a fighter, but the inertia of my dive on the ship was enough for me to get several bursts into the enemy interceptor.

"The Jap started smoking badly, and broke off from the P-40 and darted for a cloud. Zeros were all around me now, and I was unable



LIEUTENANT LAUGHLIN.

to pursue the damaged plane. The Zeros kept pecking away at me all the way to the harbor mouth, and a couple dropped aerial bombs of white phosphorous in my path, but I escaped and got under the protective cover of our own fighters before the Japs did any harm."

Lieutenant Laughlin is the son of Phil E. Laughlin of Houston and of Mrs. Everett Hoagland of Mexico City. He is a grandson of Mrs. W. G. Burton of Fort Worth. He is a veteran of 24 combat missions against the enemy. He attended the University of Texas, where he was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity, and he enlisted March 26, 1942.