

Introduction

Few pieces of writing better encapsulate the early days of Pacific B-26 Marauder operations than an article by US war correspondent Frederick Schroeder who interviewed the survivors of a 7 January 1943 mission in New Guinea shortly after it happened. The aircraft involved was *Boomerang* (see Profile 35), borrowed by the following 33rd Bombardment Squadron crew for the mission:

Pilot Captain Hoyt Jolly
Co-Pilot Second Lieutenant Robert Pearson
Navigator First Lieutenant David Nelson
Bombardier Second Lieutenant Wyatt Hundley
Engineer Staff Sergeant William Groff
Radio Operator Staff Sergeant JF Shepard
Gunner Staff Sergeant Howard Davis

Schroeder subsequently published the following article titled *Bullets, Shrapnel and Blood*:

The last bomb was screeching 9,500 feet down upon the transports of a ten-ship convoy in the Huon Gulf. Eight to ten Zeros started coming in head-on. Bullets and cannon shells were tearing into us. Hundley was already on his gun and firing back at them. A cannon shell shattered through the nose and exploded. It ripped Hundley's skull wide open, fracturing it. The shrapnel penetrated his left shoulder and wrist. His right ring finger was blown off and flew through the air landing on the floor in the next compartment, between the co-pilot's feet.

Hundley sank to the floor, bleeding profusely and dying. Wind was gushing through the holes inflicted in the nose glass. It splashed the wounded man's blood all over. The co-pilot was sprayed with it. A cannon shell came through the pilot's window, exploding as it struck the armoured-plating seat. The shrapnel went tearing between the plating and Jolly. Hundreds of pieces stuck into his back on its travel around to his right, and set his shirt on fire. Pearson ripped Jolly's burning shirt and seat chute off as Jolly lunged forward as if to get up and Pearson yelled "Don't jump, Jolly!"

Jolly replied "I'm not; I'm trying to get this off." Besides shrapnel having severed the tendons in his right arm, he was burned badly - third degree burns of both sides. Pearson turned back to his position. Just then another cannon shell came in through the nose and exploded. It blew the pipelines away in front of them and drove pipe threads, rivets and shrapnel into both legs from ankles to knees. Thirty-calibre machine gun fire shot bullets right into his legs and out the other side. One bullet went through him, into the navigator's compartment and straight through Nelson's shoulder as he was taking motion pictures through the oval of Zeros making passes. Another hit his wrist. Shepard grabbed the first aid kit and