

Herstine, Richard O.

Local Men Survive Bunker Hill Bombing

Lieutenants Hockenbury and Herstine
On Leave After Part in Sea Drama

Two Bethlehem men, both full lieutenants, were aboard the USS Bunker Hill, famed airplane carrier, when it was damaged May 11 by Jap suicide planes off Okinawa, it was learned today.

They are Lt. Stuart E. Hockenbury, one of the ship's damage control officers, who was manager of Hotel Bethlehem, when he entered service; and Lt. Richard O. Herstine, 705 Sixth Avenue, assistant communications officer of the ship.

Lt. Herstine sustained burns to one hand when the ship was hit. Lt. Hockenbury was unhurt. Both are now on leave.

Lt. Herstine could not be reached by telephone today, but Lt. Hockenbury was located. He said he will leave for the West Coast on the evening of July 4 to report back for duty.

He said he was on duty on the third deck when the two Jap planes struck the ship. His position was just forward of the damaged area and below the flight deck. Lt. Herstine, he said, was in the communications office amidship.

Both Bethlehem men have been assigned to the Bunker Hill since it was commissioned in May of 1943.

The carrier was operating with a task force in the "slot" between Okinawa and Kyushu when hit twice within 30 seconds by two Jap suicide planes on May 11. News of the damage and pictures of the burning ship were released only a few days ago by the Navy.

According to Navy reports, 392 men are dead or missing and 264 wounded as a result of the suicide attack. The crew fought fire and exploding ammunition for three hours before the fire was brought under control. Handling of other damage required continuous control work for 24 hours. The Bunker Hill was saved, however, and brought to a West Coast shipyard where it is now undergoing repairs.

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