

Wetzel, Donald

Bethlehem Gunner is Credited With Sinking Jap Landing Barge

JAN 17 1944

Donald Wetzel, gunner's mate, 2d-c., son of Mr. and Mrs. Asa Wetzel, 622 Leibert Street, was credited with sinking at least one of ten Japanese landing barges in the Pacific theater of war in an Associated Press report from New Guinea. The Bethlehem gunner was on one of



DONALD WETZEL

two P-T boats attacking the landing barges.

He participated in another exploit, one of the most daring of the

war, in which two P-T boats somewhere along the south coast of New Britain battled 30 Japanese planes to a standstill for 40 minutes, shooting down four planes which were seen to crash into the water. Tokio later erroneously reported that Jap dive bombers had destroyed the P-T's.

"Wetzel poured machine gun fire into one barge so fiercely that it seemed to be cut in two. It sank," the AP dispatch stated. The two P-T's accounted for the 10 barges in one night due to their sharp-shooting gunners, including Wetzel, the report, written in praise of the boats, declared.

Gunner's Mate Wetzel has been in the Navy since August, 1942, and has been in the Pacific since July. A graduate of Bethlehem Technical High School, he was an apprentice draftsman for the Bethlehem Steel Company prior to his enlistment.

His parents knew nothing beyond that he was in the Pacific area until they were notified of the wire report.

"He never says anything about what he's doing," his mother said today. "We had a letter from him this morning. It just said that he's well, and that he got three Christmas packages.

In one letter, he said that he was very busy and was working hard, and that they were doing a good job. That's the only thing he has ever said about what he's doing—except before Christmas he wrote that he hadn't had a shave or a haircut in three months!"

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