

Blatnik, Frank W.

Four Bethlehem Navy Men See Action In South Pacific

MAY 28 1945

Four Bethlehem Navy men aboard a carrier and battleship in the Pacific have taken part in a number of hectic engagements with the enemy.

F 1/c Frank W. Blatnik, 18, son of Mrs. Helen Blatnik, 408 Railroad Street, and F 2/c Donald L. Ritter, 19, son of Mrs. Cula Ritter, 1110 Maple Street, are serving aboard a veteran U. S. battleship which poured a withering torrent of high explosives into the Okinawa beaches as a unit of the greatest naval bombardment force in history. Highlight of the ship's action came during an air attack when one of the enemy planes broke through the sheet of anti-aircraft fire, singling out their ship for a suicide run. Seconds later, a cheer went up from gunners and crewmen when a hit sent the plane flaming into the sea.

The two Bethlehemites serving aboard a U. S. carrier in the Pacific are Kenneth C. Topalis,

S 1/c, 19-year-old son of Christ Topalis, 461 Montclair Avenue, and Richard C. Serman, TM 3/c, son of Charles Serman, 1428 Easton Avenue.

The two bluejackets became tried and proven veterans of rough-and-tumble warfare in one dramatic afternoon after engaging in three major Pacific operations without firing a shot.

Up to the time of that first baptism of fire, Topalis and Serman were being heckled as "the hitless wonders," and hadn't a single Jap plane to their credit. In one afternoon they repulsed six separate attacks, nipped a Jap torpedo plane making a beeline run for a large carrier nearby, sending the raider crashing in flames a few feet from its target, got two more dive-bombers and probably a light bomber. Quite a score for one afternoon!

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