



31 May 1942.

Dear Mom, Dad, Don, and Mary:

This letter will be mailed only if I do not get through battle which we expect to come off almost any hour.

I am making a request that this be mailed as soon as possible after I fail to return.

As you know, I am the gunner and radioman in a plane and it is up to me to shoot first and best. I would not have it any different.

I want you all to know that I am not in the least worried and Mom, you can be sure that I have been praying every day and am sure that I will see you "up there."

Perhaps I have not always done the right thing. Only hope that you do not think too badly of my action.

The best of luck to all of you and be seeing you when life will be much different, "up there."

Be sure and remember I am only one of many and you are also only one of many.

Love,

BILL.

So on the evening of June 3, 1942, the pilots of Torpedo Eight filed into the ready room of the HORNET where Skipper Waldron handed them a mimeographed plan of attack. Jap forces had been sighted heading toward Midway. It looked as though the squadron would soon see the action for which it had trained.

At the bottom of their attack sheets, the boys found a personal message from Skipper Waldron.

“JUST A WORD to let you know that I feel we are ready. We have had a very short time to train, and we have worked under the most severe difficulties. But we have truly done the best humanly possible. I actually believe that under these conditions we are the best in the world. My greatest hope is that we encounter a favorable tactical situation, but if we don’t and the worst comes to the worst, I want each of us to do his utmost to destroy our enemies. If there is only one plane left to make the final run-in, I want that man to go in and get a hit. May God be with us all. Good luck, happy landings, and give ’em hell!”



However, it was not until the next day after breakfast that they got their word to go. The teletype in the ready room tapped out the message letter by letter “E-N-E-M-Y N-A-V-A-L U-N-I-T-S S-I-G-H-T-E-D W-I-T-H-I-N S-T-R-I-K-I-N-G D-I-S-T-A-N-C-E E-X-P-E-C-T-E-D S-T-R-I-K-I-N-G T-I-M-E 0900... L-O-O-K-S L-I-K-E T-H-I-S I-S-I-T.”

Skipper Waldron’s final words to the squadron were, “Just follow me; I’ll take you to them.”