

*Don Danforth and Melvin Chapman*  
*Safe in San Diego* *June 16, 1942*

Donald Danforth and Melvin Chapman, Newton boys aboard the Aircraft Carrier Lexington, which was sunk in the Battle of the Coral sea six weeks ago, are safe in San Diego, California, a telegram from the former to his mother, Mrs. Ruth Danforth of Newton, states. The carrier was sunk by an American destroyer after gasoline vapor exploded five hours after the battle, as a result of ruptured tanks and gas lines from Japanese bombs and torpedoes.

The Aircraft Carrier Lexington, the Destroyer Sims and the Tanker Neosho were the only American vessels lost, the Navy reported, in the resounding defeat handed to the Japanese in the battle of the Coral sea.

That battle, as described by a Navy summation and complementing reports from fleet correspondents, was entirely one between air power. Surface warships were never in contact with one another and fired only their anti-aircraft guns.

#### **Destroy Fifteen Jap Vessels**

The fight of May 4-8 was actually only the climax of a two months' campaign which resulted in:

1. Frustration of Japanese plans to invade Australia or island bases on the American - Australian shipping route, and

2. Shattering of an enemy invasion fleet with the destruction of at least fifteen vessels and heavy damage to twenty others, some of which probably were sunk.

One of the Japanese craft certainly sunk was the Ryukaku, a 20,000 ton aircraft carrier so new that it is not listed in standard naval reference books. Four cruisers and two destroyers also are known to have been sunk and one of the ships heavily damaged was another aircraft carrier, the Shokaku, a 11,000 ton craft laid down only in 1939.

All these Japanese losses had been previously reported, but not in such detail.

#### **Ninety-Two Per Cent Rescued**

A large part of the personnel of the Lexington, the Sims and the Neosho were rescued, the Navy said, in the case of the Lexington about ninety-two per cent. The 33,000 ton ship normally carried a complement of about 2,300 men and eighty to ninety aircraft. Whether any of her aircraft were saved was not disclosed, naval officials commenting only that "obviously, planes were lost."

Ill luck played a part in the carrier's loss. A terrific internal explosion rocked her and set fires at many places when she was escaping more than five hours after the battle.