

June 28, 1945



The above Official U. S. Navy photograph shows Lieutenant (jg) Florent J. Schuch, U. S. Naval Reserve (right) of Newton, co-pilot of a navy search plane, receiving the Air Medal from Lieutenant Commander L. P. Pressler, U. S. N. squadron commander at an advanced Navy base somewhere in the Marianas.

Lt. Schuch has been at home on leave following his decoration which came as a result of his accomplishments against the Japs. Of all his missions against the Nips, his last one was the most outstanding, he says. In this brief, but hazardous moment "I died at least a dozen deaths," he recited.

Both pilots wrestled with the controls. Exerting every ounce of pressure, they fought the plane off on its left wing and the Liberator righted itself only 100 feet above the sea.

Looking for Japanese shipping off the enemy mainland, his Liberator was escorted by three twin-engine Ventura bombers.

Several picket boats were sighted and the Venturas attacked with rockets and machine-gun fire. The pilot swung the big Liberator into action, his gunners strafing the enemy's decks.

Heavy anti-aircraft fire streamed up from the vessel, but the Navy plane swooped in low and dropped four

bombs. Three were direct hits along the deck, smashing the superstructure and apparently breaking the ship in two.

Meanwhile the plane had taken some hits. One of the crew was wounded in the fire, the starboard horizontal stabilizer was damaged and half of the elevator knocked off.

What happened next has never been fully explained. The plane was blown 200 feet into the air, nose up. Only instinctive reaction from the pilot and Lieutenant Schuch prevented the aircraft from flopping over on its back.

Lt. Schuch is a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Schuch of Newton.