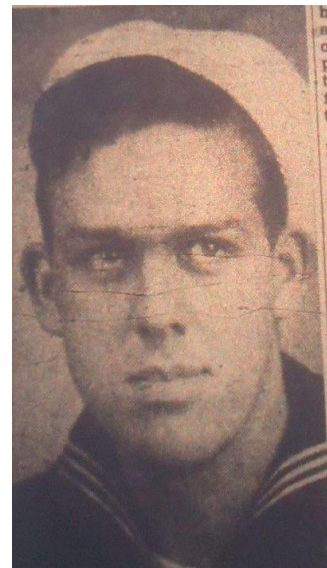


William Carson Scarbrough, T-41

1 November 1923 – 7 September 2008

(aged 84)



In looking back over his months of patrol duty aboard a big Catalina flying boat whose job it was to effect rescues in the wide blue waters of the South Pacific, Seaman William C. Scarbrough Jr., 20, of Memphis, finds it hard to decide what was his most thrilling experience. Maybe, he said yesterday, it was the time the Navy's huge man-made bird on which he was bombardier and bow gunner, landed on the rolling sea off a tropical island and took aboard 50 wounded Marines and flew them to a hospital. Maybe it was the time his squadron picked up that Army pilot who had been adrift on the ocean in his rubber life raft for three harrowing weeks, sustaining life with fish and seaweed. Or maybe it was the time they spotted a tiny object bobbing in the water far below, circled, banked and glided down to snatch from the sea the pilot of an Army P-40 who had been floating in his lifebelt, with a broken ankle; for hours. Since Scarbrough can't decide between them, we'll tell you about each case - just as he described them yesterday - and let you figure it out for yourself. Wearing the stripes and insignia of an aviation ordnance man second class, the tall dark-haired young bluejacket is spending a furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Scarbrough, Sr. of 1930 Felix. First -- "Three of our big flying boats evacuated 150 wounded Marines from the island, where they had been in battle with the Japs and had lived on days on scant rations dropped to them by parachute. We landed in the bay, lifted them aboard from rubber rafts on which they had come out to meet us. Boy, I'll say that our plane was

crowded with 50 wounded Marines aboard in addition to our crew of nine! There wasn't even room for me to swing my machine gun, if I had to use it. The other two flying boats each carried away just as many. "

"Did the Marines hold that island against the Japs? You bet they did! One hundred and fifty of their number were wounded, but the rest held out until reinforcements came. They're still there, too. Second -- "It was off the coast of New Guinea that my squadron found the Army pilot who had been adrift in his life craft for 21 days living on fish and seaweed after his emergency rations were gone. What did he do for water? Well, he told us that when his water supply ran out, he killed a seagull, cut a piece of fat from the bird's body, boiled the grease out of the fat by means of a small pocket mirror that he focused on the sun and then drank the grease. "He said this grease insulated his stomach so he could drink saltwater without harm. The doctors I've talked to say positively that such cannot be done, but this pilot claimed that he did it, and he looked to be pretty good condition, too. He was thoroughly at himself when he landed on the sea beside him and hauled him aboard. Third -- "We picked up the Army pilot floating in his life belt five miles off Munda, on the first day of the Munda campaign. He said the Jap Zeros had strafed him with their machineguns while he was on his way down in his parachute, and had even strafed him in the water, but the bullets never hit him. He had been in the water for hours and he had a broken ankle. And oh yes, be sure and put this in the newspaper - when we landed on the water beside this Army pilot, the first think he said was: "I knew the Navy would find me." The narrowest escape Scarbrough had in all his months of patrol duty aboard the big flying boat, circling hundreds of miles out to sea each day, came when they landed in a rough sea to affect another rescue. "It was a pretty bumpy landing on the high waves, and we smashed off the retractable float at the tip of our port wing," he said. "To have tried to

land that way would have meant that this wing would have gone down into the water and we would have been swamped, but four or five of the fellows crawled out on the other wing and balanced the ship with their weight. "We took off and made it back to our base in fine style.

Fortunately, the bay in which we landed was as smooth as a mirror that day and we came down on the water with little trouble. Nine out of 10 days the bay was as rough could be. Pretty good lucky break, wasn't it?"

Young Scarbrough was well known in Memphis as an amateur golfer before he volunteered for the Navy in February 1941. He quit Tech High in midterm to enlist. He served first on patrol duty aboard a plane in the North Atlantic before the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor, when his outfit was transferred immediately to the Pacific. Prior to entering Tech High, he attended Fairview Junior High and carried a route for The Commercial Appeal in the vicinity of Court and Rembert. In 1938 he competed in the Overton Park golf tournament and went to the semi-finals. When his furlough is over, he's going back to duty in the Pacific -- to fish more survivors out of the trackless blue desert of ocean and convey them to the nearest friendly island.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, November 10, 1943.