



Gold Star Seaman Joe Di Cesare with his mother.

*Cleveland Press - * March 30, 1943*

Naval Battle Survivor Doesn't Like Hero Role

By RAY DE CRANE

Joe Di Cesare can't figure out why everyone is making such a fuss over him.

"Wherever I go visiting around the neighborhood people start to treat me like a hero. Shucks, I haven't done anything."

But Joe has a gold star on his left sleeve—the Navy's new insignia for its sailors who have survived a ship sinking.

He saw action in February off Guadalcanal Island. The whole

fight lasted only 5 minutes. It ended with Joe's ship, the destroyer De Haven, going down.

That was the biggest sea battle Joe was in, but for a real thrill he would sooner tell you about the sub his ship sank in the Caribbean last August.

The 21-year-old veteran of 10 months in the Navy had just been out of Great Lakes Naval Training Station and was on his first assignment. The sub sank a tanker and the De Haven started out after it.

Guadalcanal Battle

"We tracked it four days," he said today at his home at 6902 Madison avenue. "Frequently we would lose it but our sound detectors would pick up the trail again. We finally cornered it."

The Guadalcanal action came as a task force was escorting troops from Savao to Guadalcanal Island, a distance of about 10 miles.

"It was 3 p. m. Feb. 1 and the condition was red, meaning there were enemy planes in the air. We trained our guns on the approaching planes but at first we didn't know if they were our own or the Japs. Then they started to dive down on us. We opened up with everything we had.

"It's a funny feeling to have a Jap plane fly about 300 feet overhead. I could see the silver bombs under the wing. Then I saw one let go and thought it was going to hit me right on the head. I ducked.

Captain Killed

"There were 18 Jap bombers. None of them ever got back to their base. One of their bombs made a direct hit on one of our guns. I could hear someone holler to duck and as I bent down I could feel pieces of the gun whish over my head.

"The captain was killed by a direct hit on the bridge. Five minutes after the action started an officer ordered the men to abandon ship. The screws were already out of the water but the men were still firing their guns."

With the rest of the crew Joe spent a half hour in the water before being picked up in a Higgins barge. Eight inches of oil covered the water. Taken to Guadalcanal Island, the Marines made Seabees (construction battalion men) out of the sailors.

Although Joe just got home Friday and doesn't have to report back until April 22, he would just as soon return right now were it not for his family.

"None of the fellows are left in the neighborhood," he explained. "Only two of the old gang are still here and they will be going any day now."