

¶ LT. (J.G.) ERNEST E. TUCKER '38 had for some months been the captain of the armed guard on a freighter in the South Pacific run. The voyaging through the far reaches of the Pacific was without incident. The Japs apparently didn't have that ship's name on any of their torpedoes or shells.

Homeward bound, the ship had cleared the Panama Canal, bound for an east coast port. It was a black night. Visibility was low. Tuck was asleep in his bunk.

Then came the alarm. Barefoot, clad only in pajamas and struggling into his Mae West, Tuck raced for his post on the bridge. The torpedo struck, just as the gun crew fired at the sub which had attacked.

The blast knocked out the ship's communications, disrupted the gun's electrical controls and jammed the breech block. The crew worked swiftly in the darkness to loosen it, to get off another shot at the Nazi U-boat. But the heavily loaded ship was going down swiftly.

The order came to abandon ship. All but one lifeboat had been smashed by the blast. The men went over the side, swimming away from the sinking ship, grabbing for any floating wreckage.

On the bridge, Tuck urged the skipper to get into his life jacket, without success. Then the ship went down, with both still aboard.

It probably was only a few seconds later that Tuck popped back to the surface again, saved by his Mae West, although it seemed like eternity. The terrific suction of the sinking ship left him wearing the life belt and bits of his pajama top.

As he swam toward the overloaded lifeboat, to check on his crew, the U-boat cruised by 100 yards off, but made no attempt either to molest or assist the (*Continued on page 12*)