



Robertson, as Kennedy, encourages crewman (actor James McCallion) after PT 109 sinking.

and strafed us with machine-gun fire. "We had two lifeboats. All but three men jumped into one boat, which was lowered into the water. The captain was in the wheelhouse taking care of the log, and the carpenter and I were unsuccessfully trying to lower the second boat."

During the last strafing attack, Cliff saved the carpenter's life by shoving him to the deck just as the plane came over. Bullet holes marked the spot where the carpenter had stood seconds before.

"The rest of the crew returned to the ship when it appeared we would stay afloat after all. Fortunately, the Japanese bomber pilot didn't think so. He took off." The *Admiral Cole* went to New Zealand for a week of major repairs—and a chance for Cliff to jump ship. "I wanted to join the New Zealand Air Force," he told me.

"I hid in a cemetery on a hill overlooking Wellington for five days and lived on raw carrots. On the sixth day, I saw smoke rising from the funnel of the *Admiral Cole* and decided it was safe to leave my hide-out."

No sooner had he arrived in town than he was stopped by two plain-clothes men. "Is your name Robertson?" one asked.

"No, sir, it's Richardson," he answered. But the man insisted, "You're seaman Robertson, all right."

"How did you know?" Cliff burst out. "You forgot your accent, old boy."

Back aboard the *Admiral Cole*, Cliff faced a not-too-stern captain. As he recalls: "Because of the perilous journey to New Zealand, almost all the guys got drunk and went AWOL. Only two of us were able to work at all that first day."

The day after his ship finally pulled into San Francisco, Cliff walked up to his grandmother's house—and found a gold star on her door. His ship had been reported sunk with all hands lost, and Cliff

had been named La Jolla's first victim of World War II!

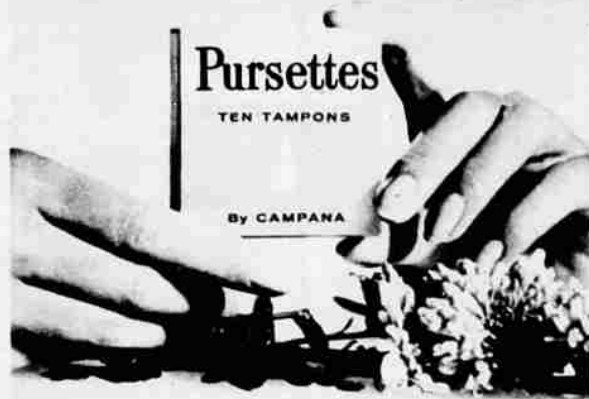
Later, Robertson enrolled in the U.S. Maritime Service, rose to Lieutenant (j.g.), and became one of the few sailors whose ship went down—after VE Day. "We piled up on rocks off the coast of Sweden during a heavy storm," he recalled, "but no one was seriously hurt."

He continued his sea duty after the war as third officer aboard a freighter out of New York, while trying to get up enough nerve to make the theatrical rounds. "I had some summer-theater experience in high school, but that was all," he says.

CLIFF GOT HIS apprenticeship in the Catskill Mountain resorts at \$5 a week, plus room and board. But his big breaks came on Broadway and through television. Unfortunately, the tv roles he created went to other actors when movies were made of them. Marlon Brando starred in the film version of "Orpheus Descending," Paul Newman in "The Hustler," Anthony Franciosa in "Career," and Jack Lemmon in "Days of Wine and Roses."

But Cliff is convinced that "PT 109" will be a turning point in his career—and he hopes it will be a turning point in his private life as well. Although there's no one "special" right now, he wants to get married again and have more children. Cliff was divorced in 1959 from Cynthia Stone after two years of marriage. They had one daughter, Stephanie.

"I've always longed for family life, probably because I didn't have the benefit of a mother or father," Cliff told me. Then he added philosophically, "I would like to use my childhood as an excuse for things I did wrong, but in all honesty I can't. It wasn't that bad. In fact, life has been pretty good to me all along—and it promises to be even better!"



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