

The Gyrfalcon today



The Gyrfalcon is a retired US Coast Survey ship, formerly known as the Patton. She spent the war years surveying from the Strait of Juan de Fuca, up through Canada, and into the Aleutian Islands. This brochure details an amazing rescue of the crew of a bomber from Ilak Island.

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THE PATTON DURING WORLD WAR II

The Patton was a US Coast Survey Vessel and spent World War II in the Aleutian Islands



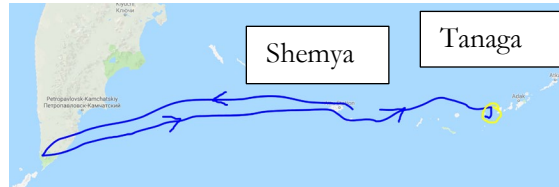
The Patton's first full year in service was in 1942, which coincided with the bombing of Dutch Harbor and the invasion of Attu and Kiska islands by Japan. During World War II, the primary mission of the Patton did not change as she continued to survey the coast of Alaska. A defensive gun was installed on the pilothouse roof, but the log books do not have a record of it being used except for monthly drills.



Early on the morning of August 13th, 1944, two planes from the 404th Bombardment Squadron of the 11th Army Air Force Liberators, including B-24D bomber 41-11850, dropped bombs on the Kashiwabara Staging Area in the Paramushiro region of Japan.

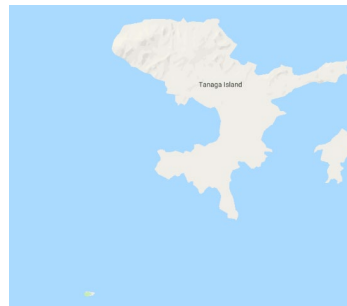


The return to base was hampered by dense fog around their base at Shemya, so they continued another 340 miles east towards Tanaga Island. Unable to land due to weather and lack of fuel, Lt. Corbin Terry prepared to ditch the plane in the sea.



The rest of this narrative was provided by Larry and Bob Gilinsky, the son and grandson of Technical Sgt O.E. Gilinsky. Photos from the Gilinskys, via flight engineer Harold Edinger and copilot Ted Buszek.

“The fog was so thick that all landings were cancelled in the western Aleutians. My Dad and their sister crew were heading for Tanaga Island when they did not have enough gas to continue flying. According to Harold Edinger, the flight engineer, they only had 17 gallons of fuel left and already one engine had stopped -- only moments until the plane would go down.”



“My Dad was resigned to his fate. His position for a water crash landing was to wait till the plane stopped moving to release the life rafts. There were no rescues of any crews that went down in open water far from a base. Even though it was August, hypothermia would set in quickly in the North Pacific.”

“Suddenly the fog cleared and there was a postage stamp sized island! Corbin Terry, the pilot, made a single pass wheels up landing on the tundra. No one was injured.”

“Ilak Island is 1.2 miles long and 3,000 feet across at its widest point. The plane came to rest about 30 feet short of a crevasse that might have caused difficulty with the landing.”



“The radio still worked, and a distress call went out. The USS Patton, the closest vessel, steamed to Ilak and arrived in 4 hours. A dory was launched and successfully rescued the entire crew of the bomber. If not for Ilak Island and the Patton, my father, myself, my children and grandchildren wouldn't be here. That's my Dad, by the way, with his arm out to come aboard.”



“Dad claimed that if the Patton hadn't been in Tanaga bay, a couple hours away, the military would have left them stranded as there were no other sea craft in the area. My Dad, who could not swim and hated the water, spent the several hours aboard the Patton heaving over the side.”

