



a HUMPY & TEX adventure

HELL BENT FOR HEINIE

by ALLAN R. BOSWORTH

There was nothing but black water under them until destruction sang through the air. Skulking U-boats still held control of the Channel until a Yank cloud-cracker gripped their heart with the fear of death.

THE LITTLE CROWD of bluejackets on the shore at Ile Tudy shivered in their dungarees as a cold wind swept down the bleak coast of Finisterre. Every eye was turned toward a tiny speck, low on the gray horizon offshore; every ear was listening to the hum of a motor. It grew into a roar as the speck became larger and shot nearer with seemingly increasing speed; then the watchers at the seaplane runway could make out the sign, I-33, on the fuselage.

"It's 'Humpy' and 'Tex'!" somebody announced. "Humpy's always headed straight in, fog or no fog!"

"Yeah, guided by his sense of smell!" another bluejacket sniffed. "All you gotta do is follow your nose and you'll find Ile Tudy, strong as Mary's breath in onion time!"

The others chuckled. For the naval air base at Ile Tudy, France, had been built after the goose and goat spoor had been cleared away. And even then they used a sardine factory for headquarters, and if there was anything rotten in Finisterre, it was the odor that assailed the noses of pilots who had been out flying over clean salt water and then came back to this seaplane station.

They watched as the I-33 swooped, flattened out and came taxiing in lightly atop the water. The waiting sailors laid hold and dragged the ship toward the hangar. From the pilot's cockpit Humpy Campbell, a short thickset boatswain's mate, first class, spat an unbelievable quantity of tobacco juice to leeward and grinned back at his observer as he clambered down.

"Damn good thing you waited!" growled Tex Malone, boatswain's mate, second class, and the other half of the best enlisted men's flying team in the Navy. "If I ever have to fly with another masticatin', aviatin' son-of-a-gun that can't take a crate up without a wad of tobacco in his cheek that would sink a sub, I hope to hell the observer's seat is forward!"

He unbuckled his helmet strap and thrust a long leg out over the side. Humpy snorted in supreme disgust.

"And if I ever have another observer that has to take sixty foot of rope with him everywhere he goes, I hope he hangs himself," he retorted. "You still think you're punching cattle."

"Dang! I nearly forgot it!" Tex murmured, half to himself. He was already out of his seat; now he leaned his long frame half inside the cockpit and emerged with a neat coil of rope while the assembled bluejackets laughed good-naturedly. They all joshed Tex about that rope, from which he was inseparable.

And there was not one of them but admired the ex-cowboy's prowess with it.

The two returning flyers, who always appeared on the verge of civil strife, strolled up the station street to report at the smelly headquarters of the Ile Tudy station. This done, they hastened to their barracks and tumbled in their cots. There was no telling when one would be called out on sky patrol, and sleep was a precious thing.

Humpy was a veteran who would soon rate two hashmarks; Tex was a D.O.W. man fresh from the Texas Panhandle. Everybody marveled at the fact that the latter had made one of the navy's most difficult ratings almost overnight. The answer lay in his ability with that omnipresent rope.

They had kept Tex overlong at the Great Lakes training station, teaching recruits how to tie knots, for he had mastered the double carrick bend, the running bowline and others pictured in the Bluejacket's Manual before they issued him his first suit of boot blues. By the time he got his second shot in the arm he was teaching fellow recruits how to tie knots the navy had never heard of—knots that Mexican *vaqueros* had taught him on the ranch long before.

He went a step further, and taught them to splice and plait a four strand quirt or lariat. Then somebody with Authority and gold braid on his sleeve discovered what was going on and had Tex rated coxswain. He was put in charge of one of the long lines with the shorter ones attached, where boots who had never tied anything more than a four-in-hand, or a stake rope around Bossy's neck sweated over seagoing intricacies. Eventually, when he had acquired another chevron for his crow to roost on, he raised a row and submitted so many requests that they sent him to sea. He was not worth the proverbial hoot in Hades as far as seamanship was concerned, other than being able to apply a stopper to a rolling bent and such, and so it came about that he got into aviation.

Little has been told of the Ile Tudy station, which did so much to win the war. Whether you believe the navy won the war or are willing to concede a part of the glory to the leathernecks and doughboys, it will not be amiss to look up the record of that base established in a tiny fishing village of Brittany. The log laconically reveals that although there were but a hundred and forty-two days suitable for flying, Ile Tudy aviators flew on two hundred and three days.

The French district commander reported to Paris that before the creation of the air patrols in the Loire

district, one big ship a day had been torpedoed by the German U-boats. The air patrol cut this loss to three ships in ten months. And the Americans from Ile Tudy escorted six thousand and nine hundred vessels through the sector.

“HIT the deck!” the master at arms was yelling, and it seemed to Tex and Humpy that they had just begun to caulk off. “Want you in the skipper’s office, quick!” he declared. “I guess it’s Penmarch Pete!”

That announcement dashed all desire and hope for slumber. Penmarch Pete, the champion ship-sinker of all the U-boats, the submarine that every converted yacht, destroyer and seaplane hoped to meet and every troopship and freighter hoped to avoid!

The two sailors grabbed their shoes and coats, seized their helmets and dashed for the odoriferous headquarters.

“Convoyed troopship standing in off Point Penmarch!” the captain told them briefly. “Submarine reported—in fact, she discharged one torpedo and missed. Ensign Hamden is taking the 1-27 and leading the way. You will escort the convoy south until you make contact with the 1-24 and 1-28, patrolling the lower sector.”

“Yes, sir!” Humpy breathed.

“Watch for mines—she’s probably a mine layer!” the skipper warned as they sped out the door and ran toward the shed where machinist’s mates were trundling the Yank flyers’ ship out. Hamden was already in his plane at the runway; his observer, a chief quartermaster named Miller, was in his seat, and the motor was idling.

“Make it snappy!” yelled Humpy. “They’re waitin’ on us!”

There was no answer, and the stocky pilot looked back as he climbed in the crate, adjusting his goggles. Tex Malone was vanishing around the corner of the shed, making top speed up the station street.

“Well, of all the dumb—” began Humpy. Hamden was impatient to be gone, frowning back at the delayed ship. Every minute counted. And here was that cowpunching fool galloping off somewhere for the Lord knew what! “I’ll run him up to the stick for that!” Humpy swore aloud. “He oughta be busted to apprentice anyway! A lot he knows about it!”

“Take me, Humpy!” begged a boyish-faced bluejacket in dungarees. “I’m there when it comes to observin’ and I can plant a bomb in a bucket from five hundred meters up!”

“Nothin’ doin’!” Campbell answered., “Tex is the best damn observer in the navy. And here he comes now! Say, you big rubber sock, what’s the idea holdin’ up the parade? I’ve got a notion to put you on the rebound!”

“You go to hell!” Tex panted, throwing his loose-jointed frame into the cockpit. “I had to have my rope, didn’t I? My line, as they call it in this man’s outfit—only I insist she’s a rope. And I can rope anything with it that wears hair.”

“Well, subs don’t wear hair, but your folks’ll be wearin’ crepe if you don’t snap out of it!” Humpy growled.

He took a vicious bite out of his plug of tobacco—always a sure sign he was ready to take to the air. The plane slithered through the water with increasing speed; her motor’s crackling became a high-pitched roar, and when Hamden’s plane left the surface a hundred yards ahead of them, the two enlisted men were shooting skyward too.

Humpy set her course on the tail of the ensign’s ship, and Tex settled down in his seat, enjoying that thrill of winged flight that never grew old to him. He watched the Atlantic unrolling beneath them. It looked like his own green Texas prairies, flecked here and there in the hollows with bits of snow and bordered on the dun beaches with a delicate lace of surf that shimmered as a curtain in the wind. Headlands dwarfed into insignificance, the station became a doll village and then vanished entirely, and they were droning high above the water toward a monster of fog that crept out of the west to swallow them.

Behind that shroud of mist would be ships, coming warily down the coast to turn in at St. Nazaire or Nantes, dropping their escorts of destroyers. And there might be other ships—slimy craft that lay in treacherous wait below the surface with a few inches of periscope showing them where to speed a torpedo on its deadly mission.

Hamden’s plane vanished suddenly, and wet clouds swirled about the ship following. They were into the fog and found it not nearly as dense as it appeared. Through rifts, ships could be seen occasionally. Tex strained his eyes in vain for the long shadow of a submerged U-boat, so much more visible from the air than from the surface.

They turned out at sea, pointed the ships north and roared over the lane that convoys followed. Then something happened to Hamden’s motor.

Humpy turned and yelled to Tex, while he throttled

his engine down. The lanky observer had already seen Hamden working valiantly at something on his instrument board; his motor cut out entirely for a minute, then gasped and sputtered as it took up the load, only to die anew. The ensign waved his hand, swung the ship out and to the right, then headed her shoreward in a long glide, his motor hitting on two and three.

Humpy banked, spiraled, and followed, although the ensign waved him back. It was no time to desert a comrade, for there was a possibility that landing with a dead motor on those rolling swells might mean capsizing. The water rushed up to meet them; Hamden swung his ship head on into the wind and lighted atop the waves with a little splash.

The plane was tossing idly, its motor silent, when Humpy set the other crate down a hundred yards away and taxied close. He throttled down his motor and yelled at Hamden.

“Want me to tow you in, sir?”

“Hell no!” the ensign shouted back, “Go on and pick up the convoy. Come back after you meet the other two ships, and if I haven’t got her fixed you can tow us then.”

“It’ll get plenty rough out here!” Humpy warned.

“Go on!” the ensign repeated.

“Okay!” Humpy shifted his quid from port to starboard, gave her the gun, and lifted the I-33 out of her foaming wake just when it seemed an approaching swell was going to roll the cockpits under.

“What in hell’s the good of that damn rope?” he yelled back at Tex. The ex-cowboy thumbed his nose with a gloved hand in reply, and Humpy retaliated with a barrage of wind-blown tobacco juice. Then they settled down to business and sighted Point Penmarch, turning point of convoys and graveyard of many an Allied ship.

TEX peered over the side, keen eyes scanning every foot of the water. Hull down on the horizon the big ship was coming, faster and smaller craft scurrying around her as she zigzagged through the water, for all the world like a mother duck and her brood. She was a fearsome thing in her strange coat of camouflage, the maws of her funnels belching black smoke that rolled astern and beat down over a snowy wake.

The seaplane’s speed was cutting down the distance that intervened; they could make out the numbers on some of the patrol craft now, and it was almost time to swing the crate around and circle with the convoy

over the course. Tex Malone’s eyes swept the water below, found a dark blob and stayed there as he yelled at Humpy.

Not a long, whalelike shadow; just a round blot in the clear green of the water where a patch of sunlight had cut through the fog rift. A mine, swinging steadily with the tide, a few feet below the surface and right in the path of the approaching convoy!

There was a submarine in these waters, then, and a minelayer, the most dreaded of all. Tex yelled again at his pilot, a leather-lunged screech that rose above the motor’s roar. Humpy looked where the observer was pointing, nodded, and swung the plane back to circle lower over the death trap.

Tex fumbled with the French bomb sight that the American flyers had to use without being instructed in its technicalities. The ship carried two bombs; all planes at Ile Tudy carried two bombs, and a fortunate few had machine guns. The I-33 was not thus blessed.

They were swooping near the spot where the hidden menace was anchored. Now was the time. Tex released the bomb; it hurtled down like a plummet, and sent up a splash a few feet from the submerged mine. The plane roared on, and the bluejacket looked behind to see a double explosion shoot a geyser of white water high in the air and turn that bit of the Atlantic into a devil’s cauldron of seething foam. It had been a hit.

Then hell broke loose from its fire-tempered moorings and surged all through the little fleet of ships below. Even in the plane the two men from Ile Tudy could hear the clang of bells and the screech of the siren from aboard the troopship. spurts of steam shot up as her whistle added its throaty note to the din; brown-clad pygmies scurried about her decks and lined up in orderly masses near the boats and life rafts.

A destroyer scurried past the big vessel, her taffrail almost awash with the 30-knot speed, and dropped an “ash can” over her stern. A few seconds later, another huge portion of the Atlantic spouted upward and settled back into a maelstrom.

“Give her the other one!” yelled Humpy.

He shoved the joystick away. The I-33 dived almost straight over the troopship’s rolling funnels, roared down near the surface two thousand yards away and then shot upward, leaving her other bomb settling down into the Atlantic—

Boom! A peculiar sound, that explosion beneath the surface! The I-33 soared, went into an almost vertical bank and came back over the spot. Tex Malone

whooped in glee. There was a sheen of shiny oil spreading its scum over the restless waters! Whether it was the destroyer's depth charge or their own bomb, it meant another submarine accounted for.

Now the destroyers were gone mad as they circled the big lumbering craft that was bearing more men for the A.E.F. They shot past, knife-sharp bows cutting the waves, four stacks vomiting black smoke that left the transport visible only from above. Humpy swung the plane ahead and they scouted in advance of the convoy, scanning the water for more mines or the shadow of another U-boat. But now, if either was sighted, they could only attempt to warn the ships below, for they had no more bombs.

For almost an hour they droned southward, flying in circles to keep from outdistancing the convoy, and then the two planes from Ile Tudy which were patrolling the southern sector took up the job, appearing suddenly from behind a curtain of mist that hung to landward. Tex and Humpy waved farewell, and the pilot headed the I-33 back on the sky trail north and east, where Hamden's crippled plane would be tossing on the waters.

TEX almost relaxed his vigilance, for they were on their own now, with no responsibility for convoyed ships, and with nothing to fight a sub with if one was sighted. He slouched down in the cockpit for a time, feeling almost drowsy with that incessant roar in his ears. Finally he roused himself to watch for Hamden's ship. Perhaps the ensign had repaired the motor, but in that case he probably would have flown south and picked up the convoy. It was likely he was still down on that heaving surface.

"We sure as hell did our bit to-day!" Tex soliloquized as he watched the green carpet unroll below in the late afternoon sunlight. Visibility was better now, with only areas of fog scattered below like the wraiths of the ships who had perished there.

"And the day ain't over yet—" Tex told himself, and then jerked himself upright and alert. "Hey-y-y!" he yelled excitedly.

Humpy heard the yell, looked back and then down in the spot his observer indicated. For the third time that day the two sailors saw death lurking in the water below, in wait for ships. This time, however, it was no mine or sub, but a slim blunt-nosed thing that tossed idly on the surface—a spent torpedo.

Under rules of civilized warfare, a torpedo that misses its mark will sink of its own accord and

cease to be a menace to shipping. Many a German Schwartzkopf fish, however, plunged gleamingly on its way until its mechanism gave out and its rudders ceased to hold it just beneath the surface. Then it rose to toss about until recovered or until some ship bumped against the deadly head.

There was nothing they could do. Humpy shifted his quid, banked the plane and circled. No bomb to drop on the Schwartzkopf that was swinging along idly with the tide, almost in the path that ships followed down from Point Penmarch. If they left it for the night, it might be in the darkness that it would take toll of another Allied vessel. By to-morrow it might drift until lost.

Humpy circled again, at a loss as to what should be done.

"Go on and find Hamden!" yelled Tex. "He ain't far away, and he's got bombs!"

That was a good idea! Humpy nodded, shot the ship into a steep climb and turned her east, gaining altitude until the idle torpedo was but a stub of a matchstick behind. Then he flattened the crate out and they roared along until the bleak headlands of Finisterre loomed up, a distance-dimmed blue cloud that lay low on the sea's rim.

It was Humpy who sighted the dun speck of a seaplane, far to port and below, and he slipped the ship into such a steep dive that Tex gasped and wondered if they were falling. It hurtled seaward, the heaving surface rushed up to meet them, and wind sang through the struts as Humpy idled the motor down.

The tiny figures in the cockpits of the drifting plane were occupied with something else and paid the approaching sister ship no attention until Tex and Humpy were quite near, then, strangely enough, they waved frantically for the I-33 to remain in the air and fly elsewhere!

"What the hell?" Tex exclaimed, and then, out of the swelling waters several hundred yards from the crippled plane the answer rose—the conning tower and sleek whaleback of an *unterseeboote!* He yelled involuntarily. If they landed it meant the capture of all four men and probable sinking of the two planes. If they only had time to rescue Hamden and Miller! But already the ugly snout of the sub's deck gun emerged drippingly from its well; men swarmed out on the whaleback deck. They cried out and gesticulated as they saw the plane above, for they feared the bombs that seaplanes carry. It was too late to submerge again and escape that way. It had to be a fight.

The ugly muzzle turned skyward, a dagger of yellow flame stabbed out of a sleeve of black smoke.

Humpy gave her the gun and sought higher and safer regions. Above the motor's roar they heard the scream of the shell as it rocketed past, felt the shock as it burst none too far above their ship. Humpy zoomed, banked and dived to confuse the submarine gunners, climbed again and heard another 5.9 inch shriek by, then found safety in distance and speed.

"Whew!" Tex gasped. "Pity the sailors on a night like this—if it was only night!"

"The lousy so-and-sos!" shouted Humpy. "If we only had a bomb! If we had a gun, even!"

"All I got's a rope!" Tex retorted. "Say—!"

An idea, born of peril and necessity, flashed into his mind. He leaned forward and shouted it into the wind. Humpy Campbell listened, spat a gigantic quid down at the unoffending Atlantic, bit a huge gap in the plug of tobacco, nodded his head in agreement, and shot the seaplane toward the rolling ocean.

BACK on Hamden's ship the two Americans watched their comrades vanish, safe from the deck gun's menace. The ensign shook his head. "Just like I figured, Miller!" he told the chief quartermaster. "They've dropped both the bombs. They can't help us—in time."

"It looks plenty bad!" the chief petty officer agreed. "Here she comes!"

The U-boat, a large one evidently of the latest type, was still under way on the surface. She circled around the crippled plane at slow speed, drawing a little nearer. She had circled them once before, previous to the arrival of the I-33, with only her periscope showing a few inches above water. She was playing with her defenseless prey, waiting for the time to strike.

"It looks like a prison camp for us!" Miller exclaimed. "If I only had a gun—anything to fight with! From what I've heard of prison camps—"

Hamden swore slowly as the submarine came slowly to a stop, not five hundred yards away. An officer calmly surveyed the drifting plane through field glasses.

"Don't be too sure about that prison camp!" the ensign warned. "Submarines are crowded for space. They don't always take prisoners!"

"My God!" Miller shrieked hoarsely. "They wouldn't—"

"Get ready to dive!" Hamden barked. "They would!"

The black nose of the deck gun was swinging around to point at them; a gunner depressed the muzzle. Perhaps it was only a threat—more of this chilling game of the cat and mouse. They would know soon.

The officer's guttural command came to their ears across that strangely silent space that lay between the two Americans and death. They flung themselves into the cold water as that round muzzle spouted flame and noise. The shell ripped squarely through the fuselage a little aft of where Miller had been sitting; there was a shock that they felt under water, and they finally brought their heads above surface gasping for air to see the I-27, floating crazily, a twisted ruin aft of the observer's cockpit.

One deep breath and they went under again—a hopeless prolongation of a fight that could end in only one manner. But just before Hamden submerged he saw a plane coming, low in the west over the whaleback deck of the sub—so low it appeared to be ready for landing.

Down under the cold green water again, thinking fast. Those crazy fools, Humpy and Tex! What could they do, unarmed? Only land and be captured or shelled to death as he and Miller were being! The Germans probably figured a seaplane showed no mercy when it bombed a submerged U-boat, and they were playing this game of war the same way!

Boom! Shattered bits of steel splashed into the water about them. That shell had struck the motor, blowing it to smithereens and fairly lifting the plane several feet in the water. It nearly heeled over, but the pontoons were still intact. It wouldn't be long—probably the next shell, Hamden reasoned as he popped his head out of the water just at Miller's side.

Both took a deep quick breath and prepared to dive again. Both saw the submarine gunners whirl their gun suddenly, heard guttural shouts of alarm and the roar of a motor as the I-33 swept upon the sub like an avenging demon.

They clung to the pontoons and waited breathlessly, water streaming down their faces and blurring their vision. The gun pointer jerked the lanyard, and the shot shrieked out and away, going wild. Hamden saw the submarine roll with the recoil of firing squarely athwartships; then the plane shot over the slippery whaleback, clearing it by less than twenty-five feet.

Tex Malone was leaning far out of his cockpit; he slashed at a long taut rope with his knife. The I-33 zoomed up above and away from the submarine as though her life depended on it.

Germans threw themselves into the water as a torpedo, traveling faster than a torpedo had ever traveled before, coasted across the remaining distance and buried its blunt nose into the slimy steel hull of the submarine.

“What in hell?” began Hamden in amazement when—

Crash! The sub fairly lifted itself out of the water, broke in two with an ear-splitting explosion, and settled into a seething pit that bubbled with escaping air and sticky black oil. One section rolled over, turned a slimy belly skyward, and then vanished. Fragments of human bodies spattered the water, and floated against the shell-torn I-27. Then all grew still. The Boche demon of the seas and its crew would never fight again.

Hamden and Miller both began to shout excitedly as the I-33, after circling about some distance away, bore down upon them in a beautiful three-point landing.

“Where in hell did you two miracle men get that torpedo?” yelled Hamden, his hair bristling with amazement.

Tex, cool and deliberate, busied himself with attaching the I-33’s towing cable to the disabled I-27,

and did not reply immediately, while Humpy, as unconcerned as if blowing up Heinie subs with Heinie torpedoes was nothing to get excited over, continued to chew tobacco reflectively.

Finally Tex spoke. “We got that torpedo with my rope, and now I’ve got to send clear back to Amarillo for another one,” he mourned.

“With a rope!” shouted Hamden and Miller.

“Rope hell!” Humpy broke in. “Tex, you’re a boot—a plow coxswain. How many times I got to tell you it’s line in the navy—not rope?”

“Maybe it’s line when you use it on a ship,” Tex answered. “But when you have to land a plane in the middle of the ocean, taxi up to floating dynamite in the shape of a Heinie torpedo, lasso it with a rope—just like around a horse that ain’t learned to lead—and then tie the other end of the rope to the plane, and drag the torp through the water hell-bent for Heinie, cut the rope and zoom up at just the right moment and leave the torp to sail smack-bang into the Heinie sub, then that ain’t a line—it’s rope! And, hell, Hamden,” he went on, “I’m going to charge you and Miller up with that rope. It was the best damn one I ever had.”

