

DEARDORFF TELLS OF TUG'S SINKING

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Parents of a crewman who survived the sinking of the navy tug Sarsi off hostile shores in Korea Aug. 27, received a letter from their son this week explaining the whole incident.

Gunner Johnnie Deardorff, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Deardorff, Poulsbo, Rte. 1, Box 288, was one of 92 crewmen saved when the tug sank after hitting a Communist mine.

His letter follows:

"Well, I guess I'm calmed down enough now to write a letter that may make some sense.

"As you know the ship hit a mine the 27th of August and sank in 19 minutes. Well, after that everything has been kind of shaky for me. We spent eight hours out there in the dark trying to get away from the beach. This was one time we didn't want to see land.

"Well, anyway, we were on our patrol up by Hungnam and at 14 minutes before midnight everything went crazy. I had just hit my sack when next thing I knew I was lying on the deck. Bells were ringing and all hell broke loose. I got up, put my pants and shirt on and went to my general quarters station, but when I got there the whole bow of the ship had gone under.

"I THEN WENT to my abandon ship station and started to lower



JOHNNIE DEARDORFF

the boat. Then someone said to get the guns so off I went and got them. As soon as I returned I had to man one of the 40 millimeters in case they (the Communists) started firing from the shore.

"The ship stopped by this time (sinking, I mean) and we thought she would stay afloat. Then all

of a sudden one of the bulkheads gave way and once more she was heading for the bottom. Everyone went over the side but the executive officer, Mr. Brown, and I. Then Mr. Brown said it was time to go.

"By that time the ship was straight up and down. We went from the starboard side to the port side and went off. We walked or ran across the bulkhead. It was just like the deck in the position the ship was in. I hit the water at three minutes after 12. Anyway, my watch stopped then. And at 12:05, the ship was gone.

"We then picked up as many men as we could find and headed for the open sea. One thing sure, we weren't going to the land. We went for seven hours and what a long time that was. Then came the dawn and we looked around for a ship, but none was in sight. We had thrown a rod in the engine by then and had to stop. Then finally at 7:30 a. m. the USS Compton (AM 316) picked us up. By then they had picked up most of the others also.

"LATER THAT DAY the helicopter pilot said he saw tanks and men on the beach. They more than likely were waiting for us to drift in to them.

"Everyone kept quite calm through it all. We lost five men. One of them was swimming to-

ward the land the last time they saw him.

"We leave here (Sasebo, Japan) Monday, Sept. 9, and should be home around Oct. 1 if they give us leave, and they had better. If not, everyone will be quite mad. We still have our seabags to get. Everyone lost everything they had. All I have now is shoes, pants and shirt. We put in a claim for our other gear but it will be quite a while before we get any money. As I said, I should be home soon, so keep the car in good shape."

Young Deardorff was last home in January when the Sarsi was in Puget Sound naval shipyard to assist in towing the cruisers Boston and Canberra to eastern ports.