

Landing Predicament at Leyte Gulf

When we went from New Guinea to the Philippines, it was beyond our - we didn't have fuel to go up there and come back. We had to land when we got there, because we were out of fuel in our fighters. And when we got there, the field was under attack, and the navy was - they had shot down a lot of their airplanes, and they were laying all over the place. And anyway, we called in for landing instructions. They had a strip there, at Leyte Gulf. And a flying field. But they were working on it, because it was just kind of a mudhole. But they were putting down that steel planking that I told you about. And when we got there, they said - they called in the landing, they said, "well, sorry, you can't land. You gotta go home. You gotta go back where you come from." And I'll always remember, our seal said, "well, that ain't gonna happen." He said "because we're out of gas. So we're landing. And whatever is there is what we gotta land on, and that's all." He said, "okay." He said, "give us - how much fuel have you got left?" And our commander said, "well, we got about an hour left, and then we gotta land." And he said "okay, give us an hour." And boy, they worked like crazy to put down as much metal as they could get down. We call it PSP. And they got enough down and they said, "okay, we're out of gas, we gotta land," so they all came down to land and look at that strip and it was - I forget what it was - anyway, it was about half of what we needed to land on. But we all made it, we all landed and made it. Now, we burned up all the breaks on the helicopters - on the air fighters - but we all landed. So we had to put new breaks on and we were alright. It was quite a thing. It was a remarkable operation and very successful.