

## WARREN E. MCLELLAN

*Excerpts from*  
*Clash Of The Carriers*  
*The True Story Of The Marianas Turkey Shoot Of World War II*  
*by Barrett Tillman,*  
*pages 225, 271, 272*

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The Avenger that Vraciu had seen was Lieutenant Junior Grade Warren E. McLellan's. The VT-16 crews had been alerted to fighters ahead, and kept their eyes peeled in that direction. McLellan was raptly watching an attack on a big carrier when "about fifty tracers appeared to pass through my plane and go directly out ahead and slightly upward." Nearly a dozen Zekes had executed a six-o'clock attack from above and below, taking the Americans by surprise. McLellan's assailant had dived below the Grumman, hiding beneath the tail to shoot into the vulnerable underside.

In seconds the Avenger called "61 Gimlet" was afire. McLellan, his gunner, and radioman rang up the 'for-sale' sign and abandoned ship. They delayed pulling their rip cords in order to clear the combat area, then tugged the D-handles. Yards of silk blossomed overhead, yielding the welcome violence of opening shock.

Descending toward the water, McLellan took a professional interest in the scene below. He observed further attacks on what he thought was a Shokaku-class carrier, then busied himself with his water landing. He lost his inflatable raft when it sank with his waterlogged parachute. Buoyed only by his Mae West, facing a night in the ocean, the twenty- two-year-old flier was a long way from Arkansas.

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Lexington torpedo pilot Warren McLellan and his crew spent twenty-two hours in the water. Part of the time he wielded his shoes to beat off nosy sharks.

The crew had become separated on bailout over the Mobile Fleet and spent much of the night linking up. That helped a lot: The only thing worse than being down in the Pacific at night was being alone. "Mac's" gunner was AMM2c John S. Hutchinson, whose middle initial stood for Seaman. Time would tell whether that would prove apt or ironic.

By afternoon of the twenty-first the three fliers felt much better emotionally than physically. During the day Hellcats had circled the spot, and Avengers had dropped extra rafts, so obviously the crew's position was known. Radioman Selbie Greenhalgh had been able to sleep a bit, but all the men were sunburned and they continually retched from swallowing seawater. Their tongues had swollen, making swallowing and speaking difficult.

Late that afternoon McLellan's educated ears detected a low drone. He identified it as an F6F. In minutes four OS2Us motored into view, escorted by a division of Hellcats. Three Kingfishers splashed down and taxied toward the raft. The first pilot leaned out, grinning hugely and asked rhetorically, "Want a lift?"

Warren McLellan rasped, "You're the best thing I've seen since I've been living!"