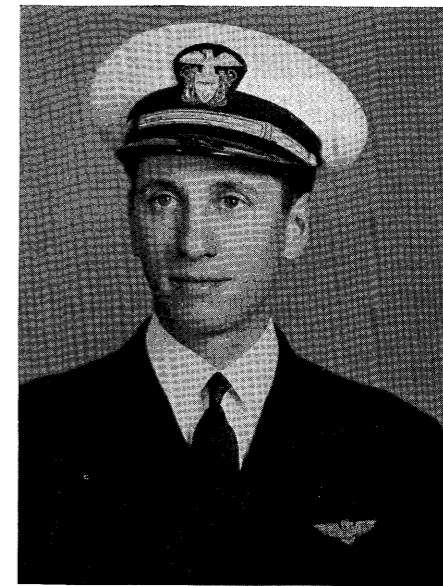


ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL

what my position might become, my real job would be not to direct so much as to represent; for the army had simply reaffirmed for me in another sphere something I'd already known—that a nation or a people or an army is not its leaders or its intelligentsia, but the common qualities of the average run of men."

On April 25, 1944, Heckscher died of spinal meningitis at Camp Luis Obispo. He was then a First Lieutenant, Assistant Adjutant and Morale Officer on the staff of the commanding general of the 96th Division, which had just finished its amphibious training and was about to leave for the Pacific.

The *Citizen-Advertiser* of Auburn, New York, on whose staff Heckscher had worked for the year and a half before he enlisted, published an editorial about him entitled "Maury." After speaking with feeling of his sincerity, his vital and generous interest in the town of Auburn,—to which he had come on an impulse, as to Carraroc,—the editorial concluded: "The present is claiming the leaders of the future: only if those who remain have caught something of their spirit can the hope for a brave new world be realized."



HERBERT BRONSON SHONK, JR.

1934

Bronson Shonk entered the Third Form in 1930 and graduated in 1934. He was an intelligent boy, fond of music, a leader in the Rubber Band, and interested in all else that went on at the School. Though small and light he played football and was captain of the third Isthmians.

After graduating from Wesleyan in 1938, he went to the Harvard Law School, but left after his second year. He spent the summer of 1940 at the Harvard Aviation School in Falmouth, took the C.A.A. course at the University of Buffalo, and then enlisted in the Navy. He was commissioned Ensign more than two months before Pearl Harbor. He joined Bombing 2 aboard the *Lexington*, April 11, 1942, just before she set out for what proved to be her last cruise.

When the *Lexington* was attacked in the Battle of the Coral Sea, Shonk was on board ship. He described afterwards how he and other bomber pilots went below, and, in gas masks on account of the thick smoke, fought fires until a huge explosion stopped the water pumps, how they strung lines to the water level, after the order to abandon ship had been given,—an officer had gone below to see how the torpedoes were faring and had found them too hot to touch—how some, himself included, who had not eaten all day, lingered on board to eat ice-cream which some resourceful sailor had got out of the ship's service store, how he went over the side absent-mindedly wearing not only all his uniform, but also a tin helmet and a pair of dark glasses, with a gas mask slung over his shoulder and a .45 strapped round his waist, how after he had got rid of all this superfluous

equipment and nearly drowned doing so, he swam madly for five minutes to get away from the anticipated suction only to find that he had somehow got the line down which he had climbed wound around his waist and was trying to tow the *Lexington*.

Finally, after they had been picked up by a cruiser, he and Commander Hamilton watched the great carrier slowly settling and together composed her epitaph:

“Beneath the skies her planes have flown,
She lies majestic, proud, alone.
The seas hold her in their embrace;
A white-cap marks her resting place.
The mighty wind and roaring tide
Will mourn their friend who bravely died.
A gallant ship in victory,
Full worthy of her pedigree,
Even in death, how proud she fell,
How beautiful her blazing shell.
The thunder of her guns is stilled,
Her glorious destiny fulfilled.”

Shonk then returned to the United States, and from that point on, his story is told in a letter from T. E. Hambleton, '30:

“On July 31, 1942, he reported to Bombing 11. His old commanding officer, Commander Hamilton, had chosen him, with several others [from Bombing 2] to be part of the new squadron he was forming. . . . Bronson was given a group of fifteen to teach dive bombing. . . . Seven of them were Marines who came straight out to Guadalcanal and have been decorated for their achievements. They all say that Bronson was a good teacher, and the results show they are right.

“By October, Carrier Air Group Eleven . . . had arrived at the new Naval Air Station, Barber's Point. Bronson had been made Lieutenant (j.g.) and was sixth in line of seniority in the squadron.

“In November I joined the squadron as Intelligence Officer and met Bronson for the first time. . . . He was radio officer . . . and it was his work, in large part, with the radio men that has resulted in such good luck with our equipment out here. He was always interested in new ideas and trying to work out a means of using them in the squadron.

“After four months of training around Oahu, we once more started for the war zone—this time it was Nandi in the Fijis. Here Bronson became a division leader.

“Once a week we had group tactics in which the squadrons of the group would attack some target, usually against fighter opposition, to simulate combat conditions. On March 25, 1943, we were having such a problem. We were protected by P-40's of the New Zealand Air Force. As we approached the target, the attacking fighter made a pass at our second division and the leader of the New Zealanders jumped on his tail. The New Zealander pulled back on his stick but not in time to escape mashing into Bronson, who was leading the third division, just behind the second. I happened to be riding ahead and I saw the wing come off the P-40 as he dove down and then Bronson's plane go into a steep glide. It first seemed that he had his ship under control but his wing man who followed him down from our altitude of 10,000 feet saw him go straight in.

“. . . Bronson always used to say that the SBD was the safest plane in the Fleet, and I think he was right. The chance that he was killed in one is not so important as the fact that many of the things he was able to do have saved the lives of others in the squadron.”

Bronson Shonk was married in December, 1941, to Louise Whittemore. He never saw his son, Herbert Bronson Shonk, 3rd, who was born October 15, 1942.