

officers, deckhands, divers, tenders, and engineers. Few of us had seen one another before; none of us knew where we were going. All we knew was we were aboard a tug called the "Intent" which boasted a seven-ton icebox full of good food. Her fantail was only a couple of feet above the water, and people began to predict she would be half under water if she ever got out of the harbour.

They were right.

As we headed out into the Gulf the waves swept over the "Intent" in every mild breeze, and luckily none of us knew just what it would be like before our scratch crew had fought the little ship the 15,000 miles from Port Arthur to Massawa across stormy oceans, dodging German and Jap subs.

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Massawa was a mess. The hills ringing the bay were bleak and barren in the sun glare. The heat ranged from 100 to 128. A yellow haze of desert dust hung over everything. Nine ships were sunk in the main channel. Two drydocks and seventeen other ocean-going vessels were under water all over the harbour.

The British were yelling for supplies, and the headlines in the little Asmara newspaper said: Axis within fifteen miles of Tobruk in big advance.

Supply ships from England and America lay off the closed port. A trickle of supplies got ashore in lighters and small boats. Here was the war's worst bottle-neck.

Captain Brown waved his hand toward the line of sunken ships. "There they are, boys," he said. "Bounce 'em!"

"Bouncing her," I may say, is underwater slang for raising a sunken ship. Two days after we got to Massawa, we had the equipment broken out, the pumps rigged, the suits tested and were at work on the 10,000-ton German freighter "Liebenfels."

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We worked in black, oily water at a temperature of 95 degrees. The ship had been blown open by time bombs and inside she was a fantastic nightmare of torn steel, twisted timber and assorted



wreckage. We worked mainly on our hands and knees, crawling painfully around—divers stride gaily about only in the movies. It was a nerve-racking and physically exhausting job.

By the time I had on two suits of heavy underwear, heavy socks, short overall pants, shoulder pads and tennis shoes I was sweltering. Then my tender, Tom Dee, hung on my breastplate and canvas pants to protect the rubber dress. The minutes were sheer hell; sweat could not evaporate in the suit. The heavy helmet went on, the seventeen-pound iron sandals, the forty-pound belt. Then I tested my air and phone lines, and went down.

Every day was a battle to live. We could not use soap to wash because every tiny chafe turned into a running sore. We suspected there might be booby traps in the ships, and every time our hands touched wire, down below, we expected to be blown sky-high.

Ashore for recreation were an American commissary, a couple of English canteens, and the Turino Club. This haven was on the roof of Massawa's tallest skyscraper, five stories above the dusty street. You could get a cool drink there,