

On March 6, 1945, YMS-365 got underway as part of an assault group headed to Zamboanga as part of the overall invasion of Mindinao – the second largest island in the Philippine Islands.



Zamboanga, Mindinao, Philippine Islands

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)



**Crewmen of USS YMS-365.**

**Top row left to right: BM1c Donald J. Treshman, PhM2c Walter J. Wolak, S2c James D. Robertson, S2c Edward Kologinski, SoM3c Joseph F. Pomager.**

**Middle row left to right: MoMM2c Edwin Mordenski, MoMM2c George E. Brown, CMoMM Edwin A. Johnson, MoMM2c George E. Todd, Cox Henry J. Scarino, SC2c William R. Quirk, MoMM2c James E. Szukics and StM2c Joshua C. Wiley.**

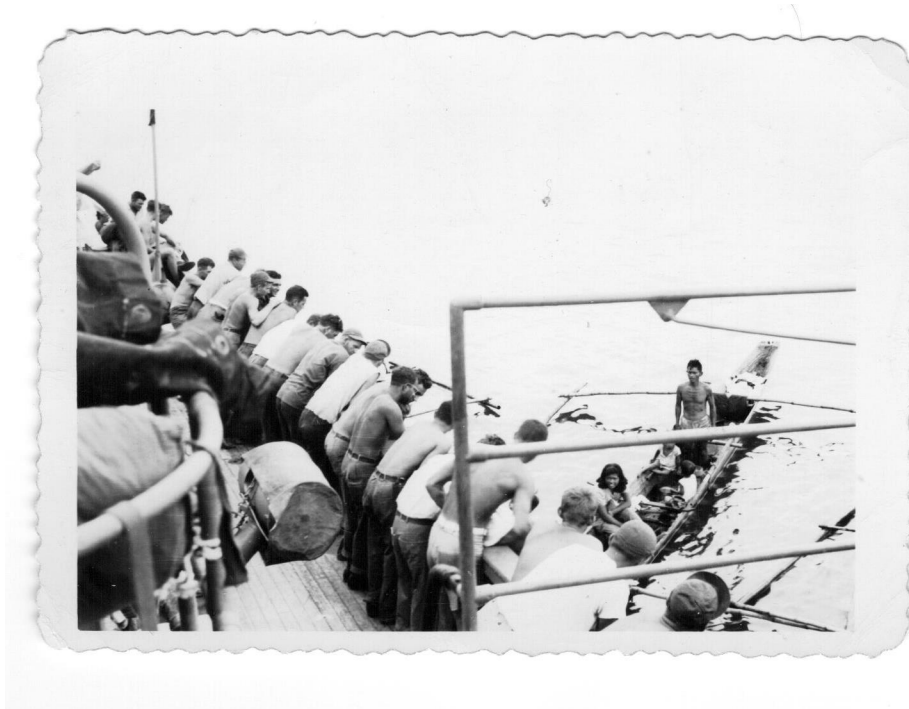
**Bottom row left to right: MoMM2c Alfred F. Martorano, S2c Dale E. Spitler, EM2c George J. Powell, QM1c Charles B. "Chick" Silcox, GM2c John W. Woodward, S1c William C. Bones, GM2c Russell D. Richardson, MoMM2c James I. Mitchell**

(Credit CMoMM Ed Johnson, USNR)



YMS-365 minesweeping operations. Location unknown.

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)



Filipino bumboat alongside YMS-365 in Zamboanga, Philippine Islands.

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)

On March 8, 1945, the ship entered the Basilan Strait between Zamboanga and Basilan Island and began sweeping the channel. For the next several weeks, YMS-365 conducting minesweeping and patrolling operations in the Basilan Strait in support of operations in Zamboanga.



Japanese currency used during occupation of the Philippines.

(Credit CDR Rick Bigelow, USNR(ret))



LTJG Cushman and CMoMM Johnson examine Japanese canoe off Zamboanga, April 29, 1945.

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)



“Doc” standing a bridge watch on YMS-365.

(Credit CMoMM Ed Johnson, USNR)

On March 31, 1945, YMS-365 got underway as part of the invasion force headed toward Jolo and Sanga Sanga Island.



Moro islanders at Tawi Tawi, Philippine Islands (1945)

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)

NOTE: At this point in time, the detailed chronology of YMS-365 from deck logs ceases. All logs for the period 1 APR – 26 JUN 45 were lost when the ship was sunk.



Fred Fischer and Fred Huff

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)

While steaming in the Dutch East Indies, an unverified “Splice the Mainbrace” evolution reportedly occurred. The ‘365 had recently provisioned and had an abundance of stores on board – including a locker full of meat. At some point in time, the ‘365 met up with a certain New Zealand Destroyer. The NZ vessel had been at sea a long time and was just about out of stores. So the ‘365 swapped some meat for 40 cases of Heinekens beer. At the first opportunity, the CO declared “Splice the Mainbrace” and the crew enjoyed some fine Dutch beer.

In late April, 1945 YMS-365 sailed to Morotai, Dutch East Indies where it remained for about a month. On April 29, 1945, LTJG Fred Huff relieved LTJG Dick Bigelow as Commanding Officer.

At the end of May, 1945, YMS-365 participated in the invasion of Brunei Bay on the northwest corner of Borneo. This invasion was fairly routine and the ‘365 experienced little opposition.

In early June, 1945, the ‘365 headed down the Makassar Strait between Borneo and Sulawesi to the vicinity of the well-defended Japanese stronghold of Balikpapan, Dutch East Indies. Balikpapan was an important oil production center. It was attacked by Japan in January 1942. The Japanese Army defeated the Dutch garrison and massacred many civilians.

The ‘365 arrived in the Balikpapan area in mid-June. In contrast to the relative ease of the Brunei invasion, it became clear that the Japanese would not give up Balikpapan without a fight.

The harbor at Balikpapan was heavily mined. In mid-June, YMS-50 hit a mine and was hit by 3” shells from the beach. No one was killed, but the ‘50 sank. YMS-335 was hit by a shell from a shore battery killing nine members of the ‘335’s gun crew. YMS-10 took a hit from a shore battery which did not explode.

On June 23, 1945, the ‘365 joined YMS-364 and YMS-49 sweeping areas close to the beach. Three other YMS’s were supposed to be part of this group, but they reported engine and/or sweep gear problems and did not participate. The ‘364 took a shell through the chart house (a dud – no explosion) and retired back out to sea. The ‘365 opened fire with its 3”/50 destroying some houses and pill box on the beach. The ‘49 took fire from the beach and retired to sea.





Ship's mascot Doc and friends.

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)

The '365 was ordered to proceed along the same path that the '364 and '49 had taken. As the '365 is headed straight towards the beach about a mile off shore, a shell splashed about 30 yards astern. The CO orders GQ. As many as eight shells land very close to the '365. The '365 returned fire with more than 100 shells. When the paint melted off the barrel, the 3"/50 crew decided to let it cool down.

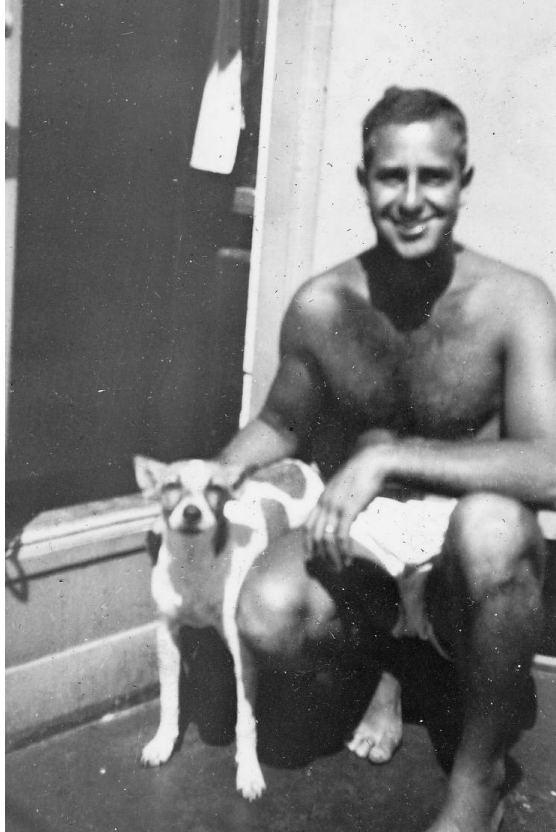
These operations continued on June 24 and 25, 1945. On the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup>, four Japanese Betty bombers attacked the formation. The planes came close enough that they were in '50 cal range. The '365 hit one of the attackers and it splashed. The Bettys dropped a lot of bombs, but didn't hit any of the ships.





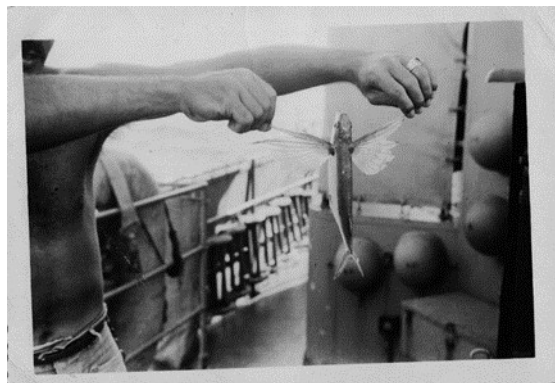
Chief Johnson on board the YMS-365 somewhere in the South Pacific.

(Credit CMoMM Ed Johnson, USNR)



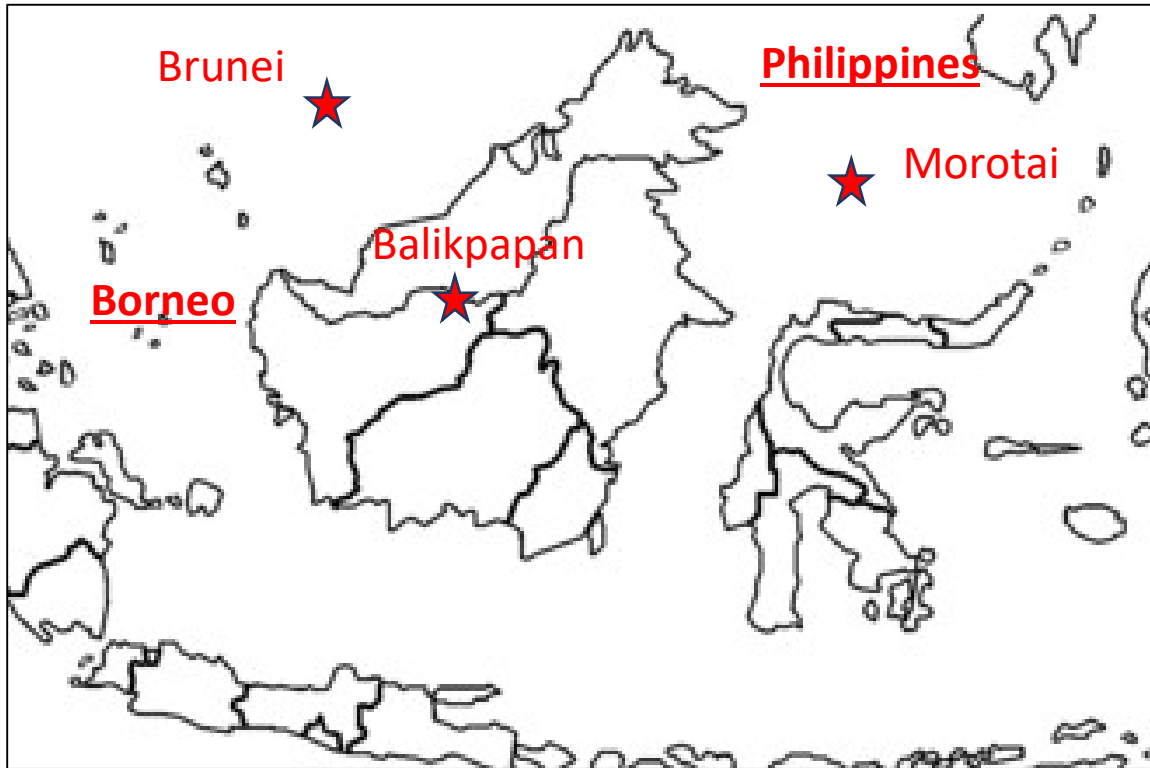
**QM1c Charles B. "Chick" Silcox on USS YMS-365.**

(Credit CMM Ed Johnson, USNR)



**Flying Fish – somewhere in the Pacific**

(Credit LTJG Dick Bigelow, USNR)



YMS-365 operations in the Dutch East Indies.

(Credit CDR Rick Bigelow, USNR(ret))

On June 26, the '365 swept and destroyed two contact mines. At 2 PM local time, the '365 was doing another sweep in the area where it had been fired upon a few days before. The following is an edited transcript of the account of LTJG Donald C. Cushman – gunnery officer and a survivor – in a letter sent to former shipmate LTJG Fishman, who had been detached from the YMS-365 in April 1945.

*“LTJG (Fred) Huff and ENS (Kendall) Niesses were on the flying bridge with (Seaman First Class Cletus) Burch and (Seaman First Class William) Jones when the '365 hit the mine. Most of the black gang and the other boys off watch were crapped out under an awning on the fantail or in the galley. Goelitz and I were in the wardroom – he was seated*

*and I was on my way out the starboard end and was right in the passageway by the bulletin board when the ship was hit. We must have been hit square in the generator room because it just plain vanished. The bulkhead between the engine rooms was intact and holding but the rest of the room was gone as were half of the officers' staterooms. If anyone of us had been in the sack, he would have been blown away.*

*"I must have rattled around inside that passageway like dice in a shaker. I remember climbing up on my feet again, climbing over a lot of debris, going out the door, and the next thing I recall is being on the flying bridge trying to lift the mast, flag bag, and other crap off of Huff who was trapped and pinned under all that stuff up on the top of the forward wind break rail.*

*"Niesses and Burch were thrown clean from the flying bridge to the forecastle and evidently Huff was caught by the falling mast just as he was going over the rail. Jones was still up there with the same leg he had broken once before broken again. Both were conscious though dazed.*

*"The immediate danger was that the ship would capsize – at least the forward part because she assumed a decided list to port and there were only a few longitudinal beams, mostly just the bulwark on either side, holding the ship together and when those tore loose, over she'd go and Fred Huff, for one, would be a dead duck.*

*"I called for more men and ordered the rest to stay aboard and we finally freed Fred. I gave that boy all the credit in the world for although trapped and pinned down as he was and realizing that if the ship rolled over that he was a goner, he remained calm. He asked me to take command and I said "what for" – you'll be free in a minute (although it took us about ten minutes) and then the only thing he asked was whether we would stay up or not. Hell, yes – we'll stay up – at least long enough for us to get everyone off.*

*"As soon as Huff was free, I took a quick canvas of the joint. It was impossible to get communications as the wardroom was full of wreckage and water was up to the bench on the port side because of the list – so to hell with them – ain't worth a man's life to get them.*

*"While we were clearing Huff and Jones down to the forecastle and seeing to it that all the boys were either there or on the fantail, Tobin was wig-wagging back to the '364 to come alongside and they proceeded to do so.*

*"(Pharmacists Mate First Class Charles) Morgan, thank God, was not hurt and was all over the ship like a jack rabbit and did one hell of a good job. Chief (Motor Machinists Mate Edwin) Johnson was also OK and did a damn fine job. He secured the main engines immediately – the bulkhead between the engine rooms still held and the engines were purring like a couple of kittens – and dogged down the port in the bulkhead and then helped like hell in freeing Fred.*

*“The '64 came alongside finally, and none too soon for me for we were rapidly being swept up on the beach and we were in just about the same place where we had been fired upon a couple days before. We tied the ships together with a one and four line and proceeded to transfer the men. Just as Fred and I started to climb aboard the '64, our forecastle rolled out from under our feet and capsized to port. The '64 had to chop her lines to keep from getting fouled up with us.*

*“Immediately, I called to (Yeoman Chief Oscar) Pelino for a muster, but he was one step ahead of me for he had already taken one and everybody was present. Thank God. Everyone got out alive. I couldn't hardly believe it, but Pelino said he was sure.*

*“I was about to give a sigh of relief when I looked back at what was left of the '65 and what I think all of our crew who could still walk also saw – the little dog “Doc” bob up to the surface of the bow and that was still above water and climb up on it. At the same time, I heard the tin can give orders over the MN to another YMS to come up, shell and sink what was left of us.*

*“Damn, hell, they aren't gonna shell little Doc. He was one of us and I was damned if I was going to see him go like that. I grabbed the MN, called the can and told him that our little dog, a shipmate if ever there was one, was still aboard and requested permission to go back and get him. Believe it or not, it was granted - though we would have gone back whether it was given or not. The '64 backed down to 25 yards of where Doc was and we all called to him to like mad – but the little guy wouldn't jump off and swim over.*

*“Chief Johnson then stripped down, swam over to him and threw him into the water. Once in the water, Doc swam like a shot and straight as an arrow to the stern of the '64 where I was reaching down from a kite hanging over. He even beat the chief back. Once aboard, he was the happiest little dog I have ever seen and damned if he didn't make the rounds again like he used to do every morning, wagging his tail till I thought it would wag off and kissing everyone in the ear or the cheek.*

*“The '64 took us to the Columbia (CL56) and put us aboard where their doctors went to work. As I remember, the guys were hurt as follows:*

*“Huff had a bone or two chipped or broken in his leg and heel and several cuts about the face.*

*“Neisses landed on his back on the forecastle and badly bruised his back and cut his chin open.*

*“Goelitz suffered a broken nose.*

*“Jones broken leg.*

*“Burch slightly broken back – not a complete break.*

*“Todd a broken arm and Pappy a slight concussion. Both were sitting on the starboard midships .50 cal and were thrown back to the fantail and were lucky they weren’t killed. Pappy was kind of out of his head for three or four days.*

*“(Electricians Mate Second Class Henry McGlaughlin) Mac had his forehead split open so that you could see his skull and also a fairly bad cut over one eye.*

*“Shorty was in making up a bunk and somehow escaped with nothing more than a few broken ribs.*

*“A number of other guys suffered nothing more serious than a few minor cuts and bruises.*

*“I had the top of my noggin split open and both knees fouled up somehow.*

*“Nobody it seems was right over the explosion – a couple of Motor Macs and a gunners mate had just been shooting the breeze around the gen room hatch a couple minutes before and just decided to go up to the galley for coffee. You know how damn popular the mid-ships part of the ship was for crapping out but amazing as it may seem, there wasn’t one soul between the wardroom door and the stack (which ended up cocked over on its ear). A lot of guys had just been there and several of us were just heading for the area - I for one was about to step out the starboard wardroom door and as it was, was only about two feet from where the ship blew.*

*“I tell you, Fish, we were a lucky bunch of guys and our friend upstairs sure must have had his eye on us.*

The crew was transferred from YMS-364 to the cruiser USS Columbia (CL-56) which had first rate medical facilities.

Several of the crew were transferred to the Naval Hospital on Samar Island, Philippines. Eventually, all the crew was transferred back to the continental U.S. When the Second World War ended a few months later, most were released from active duty.

June 26, 1945 was not a good day for YMS’s at Balikpapan. An hour after the YMS-365 struck the mine and eventually was sunk, YMS-39 also hit a mine and rapidly capsized and sank. Three crew members were killed. The rest of the YMS-39 crew survived and was also transferred to the USS Columbia (CL-56).

YMS-365 was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for operations associated with the invasion at Balikpapan, Borneo, Dutch East Indies. The ship also earned the Pacific Theater Ribbon, the American Theater Ribbon, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one star.

The crew held at least two reunions in the 1980’s.

**LTJG Fred Huff** (New Orleans, LA) returned to New Orleans, graduated from Tulane and Loyola Universities, and became an accountant. He eventually relocated to Pensacola, FL where he passed away in 2005 at the age of 89.

**LTJG Richard Bigelow** (Hazleton, PA) became an instructor at the NROTC Unit at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL after he was relieved as CO of YMS-365. After the war, he graduated from Dickinson (PA) Law School and became a lawyer in Hazleton, PA and then a county judge. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. He had two children and two grandchildren. He died in 1988 at the age of 72.

**ENS Kendall D. Niesess (Fullerton, CA)** returned to Southern California and became an educator and school principal in Orange County, CA.

**ENS Harry G. Goelitz (Oak Park, IL)** returned to Oak Park and ran his family's construction company. He passed away at age 30 in 1952.

**LTJG Donald C. Cushman (Wilmette, IL)** returned to Wilmette. He was one of four Cushman brothers who served as officers in the Navy during WWII. (Wife Marilyn). He moved to Green Bay Wisconsin after the war and eventually to Sturgeon Bay, WI. He was VP of Sales for Fort Howard Paper Company.

**Chief Motor Machinst's Mate Edwin Johnson.** Chief Johnson returned to the US and left the Navy saying he had enough of war. He married Margaret Jennings and they settled in Chicago where he operated a locksmith and lawn mower repair business. The family eventually moved to a new house in Addison, Illinois. They had four children. Chief Johnson passed away at age 68.

**Seaman First Class William H. Shannon** earned a bachelors degree from William and Mary, a MA and PhD from the University of Maryland and was a teacher and administrator in Maryland for thirty-one years. He had four children and eight grandchildren. He died in 2004 at the age of 85.

**Chief Yeoman Edmond O. Pelino** left the Navy in 1946 and returned home to Bridgeville, PA where he owned and operated a furniture and appliance store. He had four children and eight grandchildren. He passed away in 1989 at the age of 68.

**Electricians Mate Second Class George Jerry Powell (Philadelphia, PA)** returned to Philadelphia. He was an electrician for the Delaware River Port Authority and Fox Chase Cancer Center. He had four children and seven grandchildren. He passed away in 1995 at the age of 73.

**LTJG Fred B. Fischer (Lexington, KY) (S/N 269097)** left the ship on April 27, 1945 and returned to Kentucky. He became Chairman of the Board of the Henry Bickel Construction Company. He had a son and four grandchildren. He passed away in 1989 at the age of 73.

A cartoon rendering of Chief Johnson's heroics is shown below:





The official Navy Department Press Release was consistent with LTJG Cushman's account of the sinking.