



# The USS Flier: Death and Survival on a World War II Submarine

*Michael Sturma*

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The fate of the USS Flier is one of the most astonishing stories of the Second World War. On August 13, 1944, the submarine struck a mine and sank to the bottom of the Sulu Sea in less than one minute, leaving only fourteen of its crew of eighty-six hands alive. After enduring eighteen hours in the water, eight remaining survivors swam to a remote island controlled by the Japanese. Deep behind enemy lines and without food or drinking water, the crewmen realized that their struggle for survival had just begun. On its first war patrol, the unlucky Flier made it from Pearl Harbor to Midway where it ran aground on a reef. After extensive repairs and a formal military inquiry, the Flier set out once again, this time completing a distinguished patrol from Pearl Harbor to Fremantle, Western Australia. Though the Flier's next mission would be its final one, that mission is important for several reasons: the story of the Flier's sinking illuminates the nature of World War II underwater warfare and naval protocol and demonstrates the high degree of cooperation that existed among submariners, coast watchers, and guerrillas in the Philippines. The eight sailors who survived the disaster became the first Americans of the Pacific war to escape from a sunken submarine and return safely to the United States. Their story of persistence and survival has all the elements of a classic World War II tale: sudden disaster, physical deprivation, a ruthless enemy, and a dramatic escape from behind enemy lines. In *The USS Flier: Death and Survival on a World War II Submarine*, noted historian Michael Sturma vividly recounts a harrowing story of brave men who lived to return to the service of their country.

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