

* “The Pantsless Gunner of the *Panay*” by Vaun Al Arnold

Ernest Mahlmann, Chief aboard *Panay*, gained fame as the “Pantsless Gunner”. Awakened from a nap in the boatswain’s locker when the first bombs hit the ship, Mahlmann raced to the deck clad only in his shirt and life jacket. He appeared in that outfit (as Darby Perry writes) “before millions of Americans in darkened newsreel theatres and from the banner-headlined front pages of hundreds of newspapers.” Perry went on to compare Mahlmann to such heroes as Farrugut at Mobile Bay, Paul Revere, Molly Pitcher at Monmouth, Sgt. York, etc.

This poem, by Kansas City writer Vaun Al Arnold, is a tribute to Mahlmann’s bravery.

Commend me to that noble soul
Who, in the battle’s heat,
Rushed to his post without his pants,
The bombers dive to meet;

Who stood upon the rocking deck
In careless dissattire,
With shirt tail flaunting in the breeze,
To deal out fire for fire.

Old glory’s color deepened
As she floated o’er this son —
The man who had no time for pants
But plenty for his gun.

Come, name a million heroes,
But to me there’ll never be
A finer show of nerve and grit
On any land or sea.

Then dwell upon your epics
Should you feel an urge for chants
Recall the sinking *Panay*
And the gunner minus pants.

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