

JOURNAL OF
A FIGHTER DIRECTOR OFFICER
IN WORLD WAR 2

July 1943 - April 1945

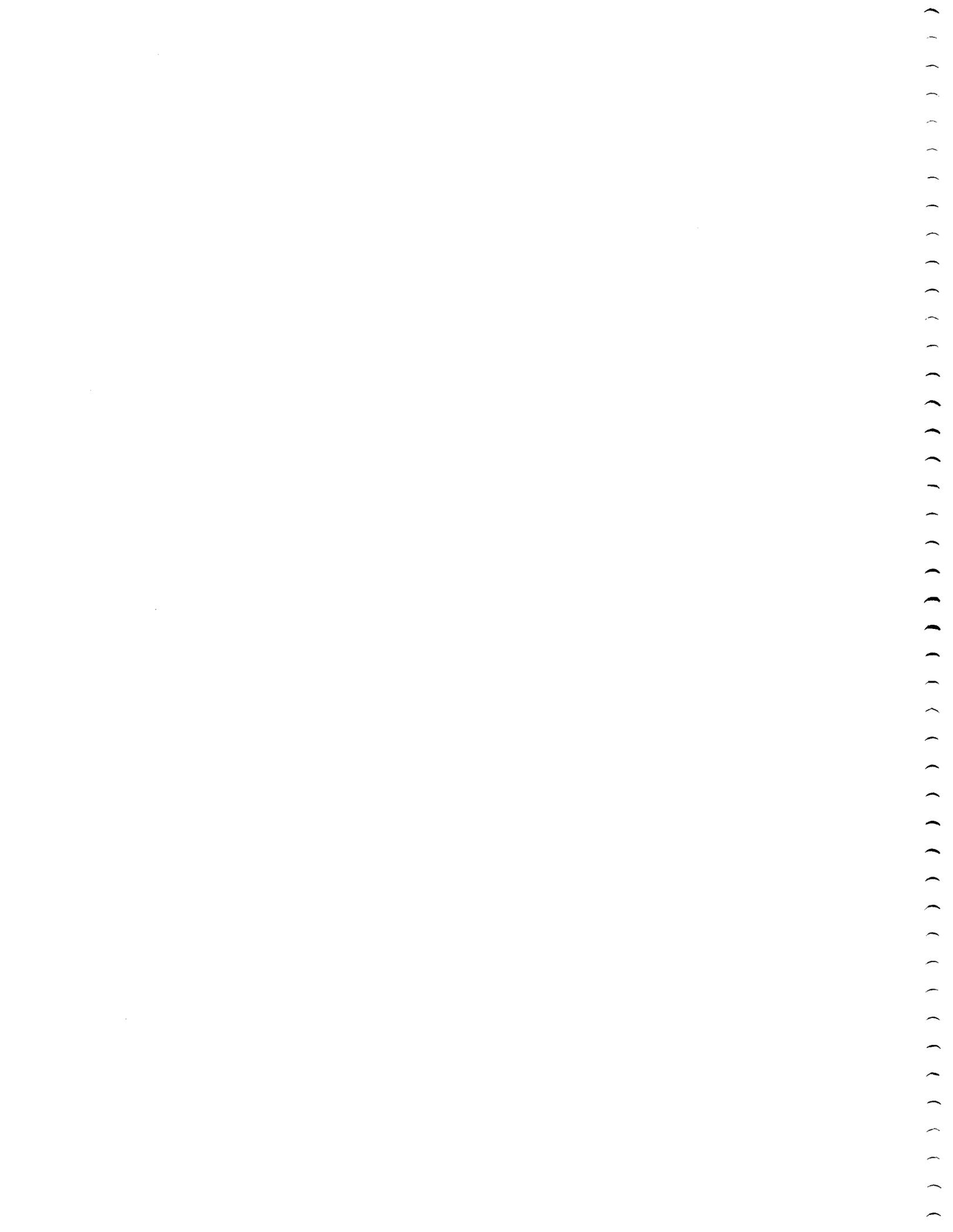
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2008



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PREFACE

Journal of A Fighter Director Officer in World War 2

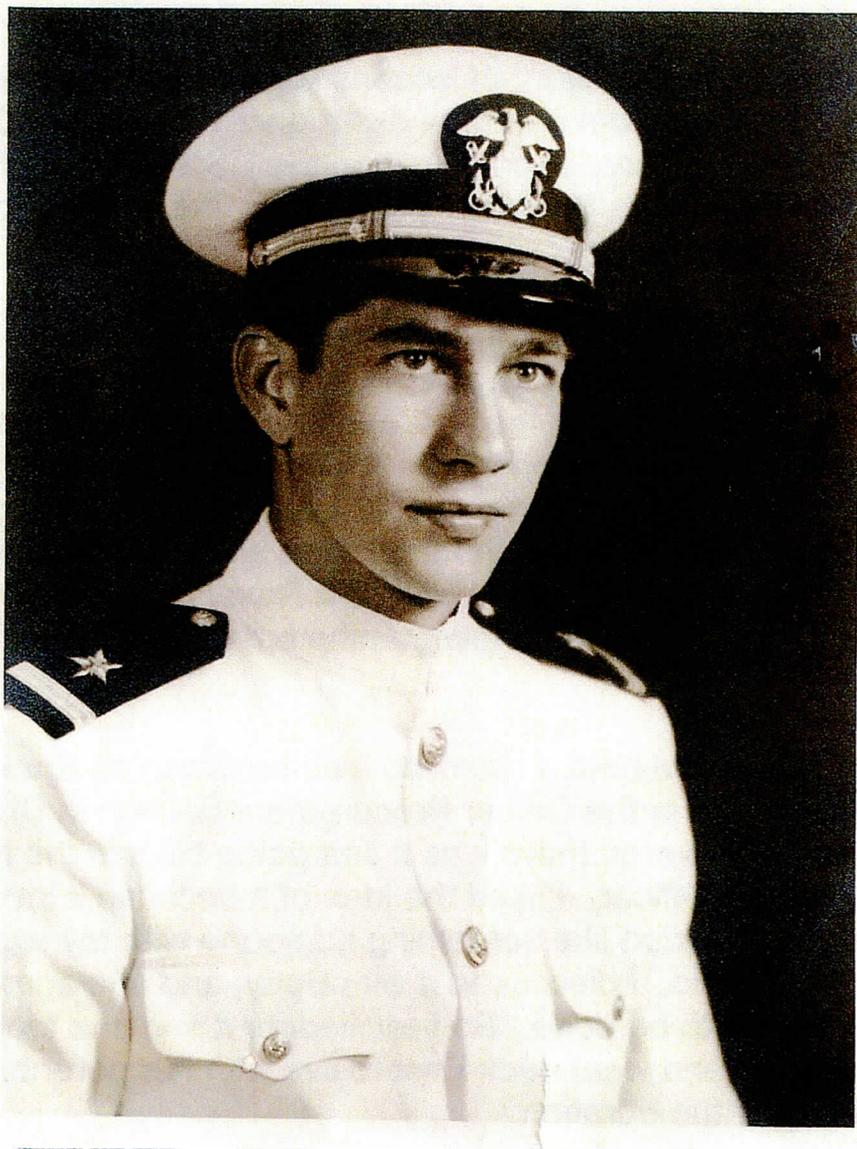
This journal is the true story of lessons learned and memories indelibly imbedded from personal experiences as Fighter Director Officer on board a navy aircraft carrier, the USS Cabot during the battle to take back the Pacific in WW 2. But first some background to put the story in perspective.

When World War 2 started December 7, 1941, my wife Betty and I plus our brand new baby daughter lived in Evanston, Illinois. I had recently started a job with the Balaban and Katz theater owners of Chicago to work on developing an experimental television station for them. My boss was a man named Bill Eddy an early TV pioneer and a retired navy officer. When the war came along my boss turned our early efforts at a television station into a Naval Radio Training School. I worked for the school for a few months but soon decided I needed to do more.

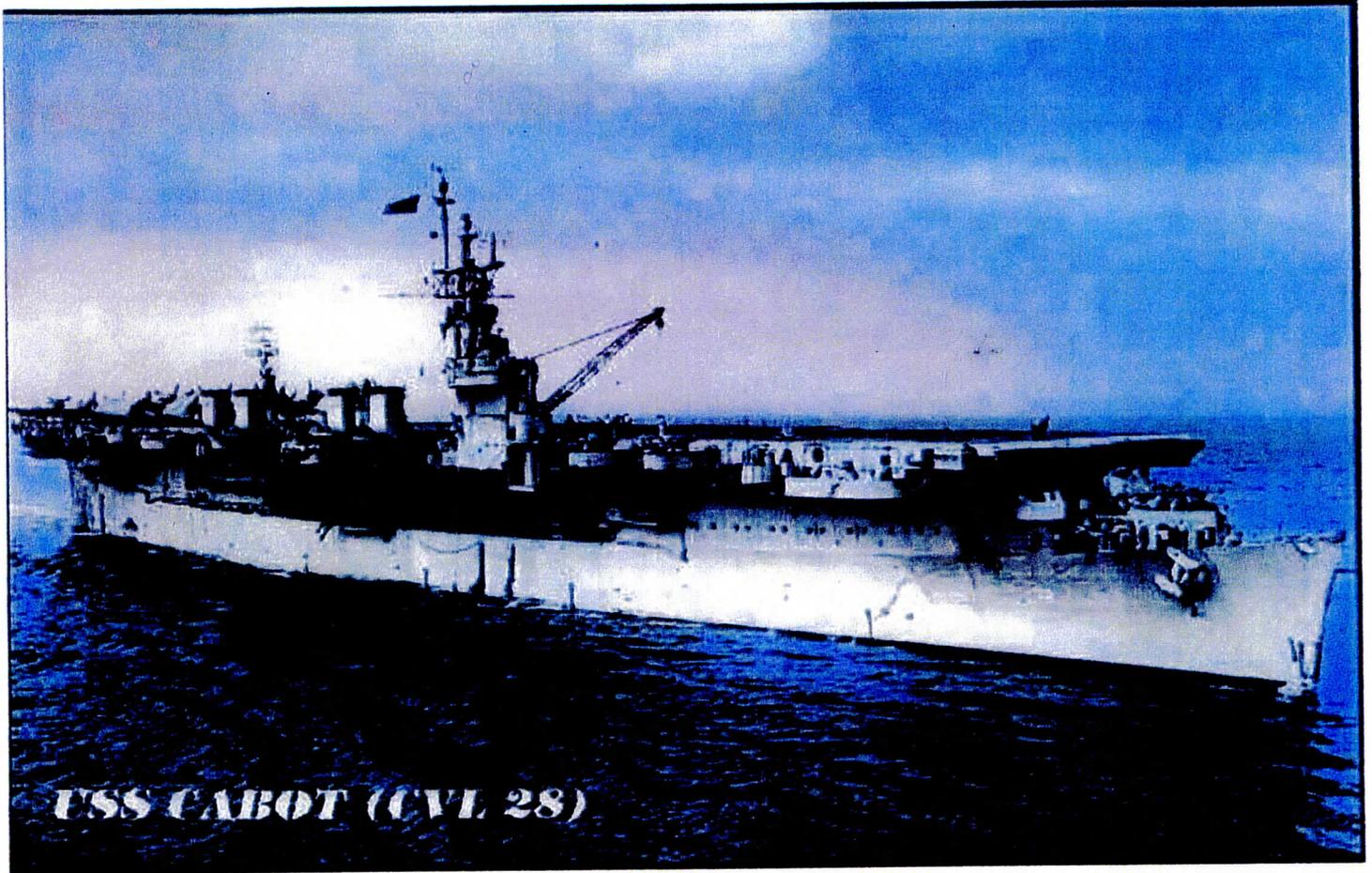
So, with Bill Eddy's help, I received a commission as Ensign in the Navy and worked in the Officer Procurement Section in Chicago. Doing this I discovered there was a sea going billet in the Navy called Fighter Director Officer. I liked the idea of it because it involved Radar and it sounded like something someone with my experience in television could do. I discussed it with Betty, and she agreed it was a job that needed to be done. So I applied for it and she took the family we had started and went back East to live with her parents(God bless them) for the duration.

I applied for the billet and they wasted little time giving me two months training at a Naval Radar School then assigning me to a newly built ship named the USS Cabot - a small aircraft carrier designated as "fast" or over 30 knots.

The following chapters are my best effort to describe a year and a half duty in the Fast Carrier Task Forces. I'll try to give you a taste of it from a narrative I started to write when I sat down after the war to catalogue some of my experiences.



Reinald Werrenrath, Jr
Ensign, USNR 5 June 1942



USS CABOT (CVL 28)



Love At First Sight

Yes, it was love at first sight !

When I first laid eyes on the USS Cabot, I fell in love with her. She was peacefully moored dockside in the Philadelphia Navy Yard in the spring of 1943. My first view of her was bow-on and she looked so slim and trim you couldn't help liking her lines. I could just see that bow plowing through ocean waves neatly cleaving them and creating waves of its own.

In time, I learned to know her for what she really was - top heavy, lopsided and made for only one purpose. Like all aircraft carriers she was made to transport aircraft and to get them and their pilots and crews to their targets as fast as possible.

This was a whole new world to me. When first putting on the uniform I was sent to a Naval Indoctrination School at Harvard University for basic training in how to march and salute and generally comport yourself as an officer in the Navy should.

Then I had served several months in uniform working in Chicago in the Navy's Officer Procurement Section. From this I learned about a billet called "Fighter Director Officer". I applied for it and the Navy gave me several weeks of training at a special school on the use of the newest electronic weapon system the Navy had - *radar*. We learned about how it was used to plot the position of aircraft or surface units and how we could use that information to our advantage. However, it was such a hush-hush equipment we never even saw it in operation until we got on the ship. In the school we were taught how to plot on a chart the distance and direction of planes and surface targets that the ship's radars detected. This proved to be almost primitive in comparison with the techniques used on the ship, but at least it gave us an idea of what was ahead of us.

Now here I was facing a few months of duty in the shipyard learning what I could about our ship and my job on it before we went to sea.

Prior to this I never really did know what the inside of a modern Navy ship looked like. From first experiences on the USS Cabot I learned it was really a collection of water tight steel compartments inside a steel hull. This means the ship could be made almost unsinkable by closing "water-tight doors" on every compartment.

Our particular compartment was referred to as "radar plot", and in later use as "Combat Information Center" or CIC. The central unit in our compartment was a circular electronic screen about 16 inches across. It gave us an electronic image of what was showing on each of the ship's radars, both air and surface search. It was mounted face up on a pedestal in the center of the room.

For those of us unaccustomed to life on an aircraft carrier it was difficult to appreciate the advantage this radar equipment gave us. The few of us who had worked in television broadcasting could understand the vast expanse of sky beyond the visible that could be scanned by radar. The horizon to the naked eye was about 10 miles from our ship for surface targets. On radar we could see every target higher than that horizon and for many miles beyond it. This was an incredible advantage for us and we probably owed it to the Brits who had been in this war for several years more than we had.

In our compartment we also had a six foot vertical plastic plotting board where all air and surface information given to us by the radars could be plotted.

As we learned what our job would be we were also learning about who our men would be. We were given the chance to pick the best and the brightest from the young seamen assigned to the ship. We only needed about 24 men who could learn to operate the radars, do the plotting on the big vertical board, and otherwise relay information originating in our space to the rest of the ship, to Gunnery, the Bridge, Navigation, the Lookouts, etc.

During this early period I also learned an important lesson on what is expected of ship's officers - mainly, it was that as an officer you are expected to *lead*.

This was graphically demonstrated to me in an experience early in this period of preparation.

For no apparent reason I was sent for a six day visit to a "Naval Firefighting School" in Boston, along with about 10 men, general hands from the ship's company.

The school was on an island in Boston Harbor on a very open portion of land, with only a few steel Quonset type buildings surrounding a several story square steel structure. It was built to simulate a ship's steel compartment. Inside, covering the floor, was a two foot deep mixture of gasoline, oil and water. We were each issued a covering of a heavy rubber coat, hat, and boots. We were then given a number. Being the only officer there, I was given the number 1.

The first day we were shown how to put on the rubber gear, how to undo the ship's firefighting hoses, how to put the nozzle on the hose and how to fight a fire in a ship's compartment. For this the instructors built a roaring inferno in the compartment from a mixture of gasoline and oil poured on the surface. Then they lit it and showed us how to put it out.

In its simplest terms they showed us how to work fast, attack the fire with water, aim at its base, push the fire back into a corner and snuff it out.

The next day the instructors worked with us for a while, then they announced it was our turn to do the job. They lit the inferno which filled the compartment with flame and smoke then the chief instructor turned to me and said "No. 1, you take the nozzle". I grabbed it from its rack next to the hose and the men started laying out the hose and attaching it to the spigot. We at the other end seemed to take an eternity threading the hose and the nozzle together. The time must have been all of a minute but while we worked you could hear the intensity of the fire increasing.

The compartment door was then opened and in we went, number 1 leading with the nozzle. The hose was now alive and with a mind of

its own. We attacked the fire, pushing it back, always attacking it at the base and sweeping the hose back and forth across the surface. With a little direction from the instructors we forced the fire back into a corner of the compartment and finally snuffed it out. This was the real thing! When the hose was at full pressure it felt as if we were trying to control an angry, 15 foot Boa Constrictor.

For the next few days we went through it again and again, rotating the jobs so that each of us learned every position and whenever I heard that command, "Number 1 you take the nozzle" I was reminded that the Navy didn't expect its officers to just sit around and give orders, they were expected to *lead!*

Back on board the Cabot after FF School I was soon involved again in preparing for life on a ship, but I had learned a very important lesson about being an officer in the Navy.

Mrs. R. Wenamath

You are cordially invited to attend the commissioning
of the

U. S. S. Cabot

Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pa.

Two o'clock, July 24th, 1943

M. F. Scheffel, Captain, U. S. Navy
Commanding

PRESENT THIS INVITATION
AT NAVY YARD GATE

Return ^{to}
Wenamath

CONTINENTAL BRIG CABOT

THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, BY RESOLUTIONS OF OCTOBER 13 AND OCTOBER 30, 1775, AUTHORIZED THE PURCHASE, EQUIPMENT AND ARMING OF FOUR VESSELS. THESE VESSELS, THE ALFRED, COLUMBUS, ANDREW DORIA AND CABOT, NAMED AFTER FAMOUS NAVIGATORS, WERE THE FIRST VESSELS OF THE CONTINENTAL NAVY. THE CABOT, PURCHASED SOME TIME BEFORE DECEMBER 22, 1775, WAS MOUNTED WITH EITHER 14 OR 16 GUNS, AND WAS COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN J. B. HOPKINS.

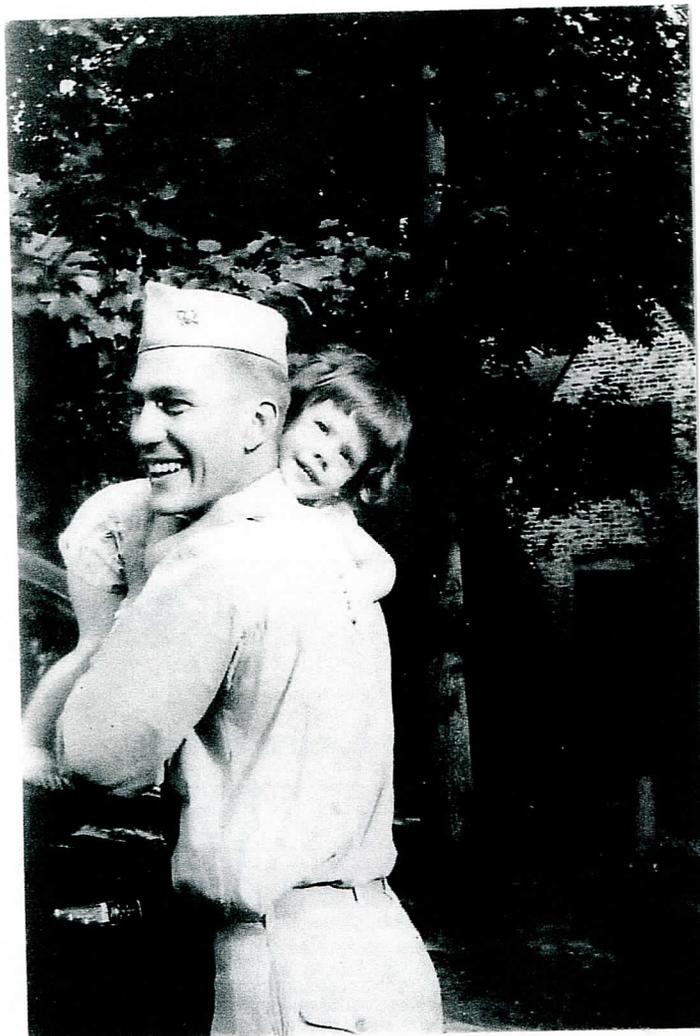
ON JANUARY 4, 1776, THESE VESSELS LEFT PHILADELPHIA AND SAILED FOR THE BAHAMAS ON FEBRUARY 17, 1776, IN COMPANY WITH THE PROVIDENCE, THE HORNET, THE WASP, AND THE FLY, UNDER COMMAND OF COMMODORE HOPKINS. ON MARCH 3, 1776, THE FLEET CAPTURED NEW PROVIDENCE, INCLUDING MUCH NEEDED MILITARY STORES.

RETURNING TO THE CONTINENT IN APRIL, THE FLEET CAPTURED FOUR BRITISH VESSELS OFF LONG ISLAND.

ON APRIL 6, 1776, THE CABOT AND THE ALFRED ENGAGED THE H. B. M. FRIGATE GLASGOW, BUT DID NOT CAPTURE HER.

DURING THE SUMMER AND FALL OF 1776, THE CABOT CAPTURED SEVEN PRIZES OFF THE NORTHEAST COAST OF AMERICA.

THIS IS THE THIRD VESSEL IN THE U. S. NAVY TO BE COMMISSIONED WITH THE NAME U. S. S. CABOT.



Daughter Kirie and Dad living with Mother in temporary accommodations in Haddonfield, N.J. while preparing ship for commissioning

Commissioning and Shakedown

Standing on a wooden deck under a blazing sun for what seemed like an hour, can't be called a great way to spend the day, Except, this was Commissioning Day for the USS Cabot (CVL28) - a ship built on a cruiser hull, that was changed to a small aircraft carrier when the Navy decided that airpower was the way to win the war. They eventually built nine of this class a ,few of which had already been tested in battle.

It was the afternoon of Saturday, July 24, 1943 and our entire ship's company as then constituted, less than 1500 officers and men, were in ranks on our flight deck, dressed in our best white uniforms. Also attending were a few relatives and friends who lived near the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Lucky for me, my dear wife and daughter were among them.

Commissioning is the day the Navy takes full responsibility for the ship, the day the builders say "the ship is ready to put to sea", and the day a qualified Navy Captain takes command.

But this was not the day we actually went to sea. We had several weeks ahead of us to get to know how we would live on the ship, and how we would do our jobs, get to know our equipment, and whom we would be living with and working with.

The top officer on the ship , of course, was the Captain. He was the senior officer, and was ultimately responsible for the action of all the officers and men of the ship. "Men" includes all Non- Commissioned Officers, Petty Officers , Rated Men, and Seamen. It is an awesome responsibility for the Captain and difficult to fully appreciate until you have seen it in action.

The senior officer on the ship was Captain Malcolm Schoeffel, and he was the finest example of what a Captain should be that I saw in my five years of Naval service. Comfortable and confident in ship

handling, calm in battle , jovial and at ease in social situations, a strict but a fair disciplinarian and born to lead. He was not a very imposing man so he had to do it all by the quality of his leadership.

Next in command was the ship's Executive Officer, Commander G.A.T. Washburn. His responsibility was to manage each department on the ship by conveying the Captain's orders to the Department Heads who all answered to the Executive Officer for carrying them out .

The Department Heads were all Senior Officers, Commanders or Lieutenant Commanders, and unlike those of us in the lower ranks were highly experienced. Our unit, CIC, with six officers and about 30 men, plus photographers and air intelligence, was under the Air Officer and his assistant.

The senior officer in our group was an experienced Navy pilot, Lt. Pat Rooney. Having an experienced pilot in our unit made a big difference. The rest of us were neophyte Ensigns and as Radar Watch Officers we stood four hour watches around the clock in CIC when under way, along with enough trained men to operate the radars, plot the information on the big board, and make sure that radar information was available to everyone on the ship who needed it. Among the men who were as green as the Watch Officers was at least one experienced Petty Officer of note. His name was John Pettit, a 1st Class PO, who provided leadership and discipline for the men and some wise counsel to this Watch Officer.

One other Junior Officer in our department deserves special mention. He had a key responsibility for the ship's success in later operations. He was the ship's Radar Maintenance Officer, who with two or three skilled Petty Officers, kept the equipment highly tuned and ready, under some very stressful circumstances we would later encounter.

That was the organization for the Officers and Men who were going to take this vessel to sea. Ninety percent of us were green and lacked experience, but the Navy felt we were trained enough and ready to go. The rest of it was up to the Captain.

Finally, when the day to "shove off" came, the weather refused to

cooperate. As we started out from the dock to travel down the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean, we faced solid fog. Our ship's radars were tested to their fullest the very first day the ship traveled under its own power.

To no one's surprise we could see on our radars every ship and both shorelines from the shipyard down the river to Delaware Bay -about 50 miles. We discovered quickly what our radars could do even though we newcomers hardly knew how to use the information they gave us. In time, we would learn. Ahead of us lay the prospect of a "shakedown cruise". In reality this was a series of tests of our readiness, tests with our Air Group landing and taking off, tests of us maneuvering at sea, flight operations, gunnery, speed trials, degaussing.

Degaussing?

It turned out this meant putting the ship into a dock specially rigged with electrical cables to remove any magnetism in our steel hull. It seems a certain type of ship's mine that could be set off by the residual magnetism in a passing ship's hull had been developed by the enemy and was . We all lived aboard during this procedure, but we were warned not to wear our watches on the ship because the degaussing might ruin any watches worn on board. Some of us were puzzled by that . If it did something to watches, what would it do to us? But nobody took the issue seriously enough to ask.

Our ship spent much of this shakedown period in flight operations with our assigned Air Group - AG31. This all happened in the open waters of the Atlantic along our Southeast coast where the pilots could fly out from naval airfields. The pilots stayed on board for these training periods in order to accustom themselves to living on a ship and also to routine anti-submarine patrols the bombers would eventually fly.

At first the types of planes being flown were quite varied. Later all fighters switched to the F6F or Hellcat for its better armament and armoring. The rest of the group were all changed to TBM torpedo bombers. Perhaps the high command decided the maintenance of several different types of plane was too much for a small carrier.

Probably a good decision emerging from practical experience. Remember there were 9 ships in our category and several were already operating with the Pacific Fleet.

As these training exercises went on we started sending the torpedo bombers out to fly anti-submarine patrol patterns in the vicinity of the ship. They were armed with depth charges which represented a reality for us all. Weren't there enemy submarines in these waters? We always had De's or DD's with us, but our own planes patrolled with live depth charges. In a way this was an invitation to disaster which no one on the ship appreciated until it happened.

During the shakedown one of our planes taking off for patrol went down in waters off the bow and before the pilot and his two man crew could be picked up the charges in the sinking plane went off with fatal results for the crew of the aircraft.

Following this tragedy all pilots of these ASP flights were instructed to drop of all depth charges on any take off if they felt the slightest failure of the engine. Not long after that, during flight operations we heard the following report from our man in CIC listening in on the lookout reports. As I remember it sounded like this, "The plane is out ahead of us . Yes, he seems to be having trouble, he dropped his depth charges. Yes, I said he was ahead of us." In CIC all of us within earshot froze. What does a depth charge feel like exploding nearby? We quickly found out. If you are seated you will feel and hear a powerful jolt, as if someone kicked you in the rear.

After the shock we quickly got back to doing our jobs , and fortunately our equipment all seemed to be working. No structural damage to the ship was reported, but I'm sure new instructions were issued to pilots including, "don't drop your depth charges in front of the ship" or perhaps "don't arm your depth charges until clear of the ship".

This whole episode dealing with depth charges and fatalities was a sobering experience even though it had its comic moments.

The important training of officers and men in CIC was done every time there were air operations of any kind for our ship.

The men operated the radars and made sure that all air targets of any kind were analyzed and relayed to the big plastic plotting board in CIC where they were posted for everyone to see. I was designated as a Radar Watch Officer which meant I was qualified to stand watch and supervise the CIC operation. But I was also qualified as a Fighter Director Officer.

This meant I was trained to use the ship's radars to direct our fighter pilots to intercept and attack enemy planes. This was called a "fighter intercept", and to do it I needed the enemy's course, speed, and altitude as fast as it could be calculated. The men doing the plotting were being trained, first to calculate speed by making 3 plots at exactly 1 minute intervals.

From this he can conclude that if the plane averages 3 miles per minute it is doing 180 MPH, if he averages 2 miles per min. it is doing 120 MPH, and if he averages 1 mile per min. it is doing 60 MPH (which is very unlikely).

For the remaining information, I could calculate the enemy course from plots I made on my own radar scope with a marking pencil. Then, using triangulation, I could give our pilots their course and speed to the point of intercept.

First estimate of altitude of the target was obtained from distance at which our radars first picked it up. The radar operators themselves seemed best positioned to do this as well as other details such as number and size of planes.

All of this and more I gave to the pilots by radio phone as I watched their progress to the target on my scope. It was my job to give the pilots the altitude advantage and up-sun position if possible at intercept and give them the heading home when it was over.

This training had a feeling of reality to it, and indeed it was. Their guns were loaded.

Our Shakedown Cruise included a visit to Guantanamo Bay during which we went through an important test. Our Navigation

Department was being tested on its ability to use the ship's radars for emergency maneuvers.

One day at the end of the day we scheduled a high speed return through the harbor entrance. We came toward the entrance at what the Navy calls Flank Speed and in a tight turn then at the last moment straightening out and going in. We didn't quite make it.

Well, we arrived, but not unharmed. The Navigation Officer, a very senior officer, pretended nothing had happened. But I felt it and I saw evidence of it in that I saw a great curving swirl of muddy water behind the ship where the propeller blades had dug into the channel bank. Hard not to notice it but worse was to come.

The following day while heading into open waters, the ship had a noticeable vibration to it that had not been there before. The Navigator had made a simple mistake. He had not allowed enough time for the turn command to be executed.

A few more days and it was decided something had to be done so the top command made a date for us with a Navy "Dry Dock", and we took a pause in our shakedown trials.

Dry Docking is an amazing procedure, and here is where you as a landlubber begin to develop a real respect for the Navy's ability to get its job done.

Under our own power, vibrating all the way, we returned to an east coast docking facility where we found a big, solid concrete "Dry-dock". It has an opening in one side large enough for a big ship. This opening was presently filled with sea water. We were eased into it by tugs and small tractors and tightly tied in place, then great steel doors at its mouth were closed and the water pumped out.

The ship's entire bottom was exposed.

Since you could leave the ship and walk around you could see things you had never seen before. There was a crowd on the dock at the ship's stern and you could soon see why. The ship had four big,

bladed, solid brass propellers, and on one of them one of the blades had a very distinct ripple on its edges.

Crews were soon at work in the dry-dock. It took about two days for the propeller to be replaced. Then the water was pumped back in to the dock and we were floated out and on our way back to sea. All the time we lived on board as if nothing had happened. Of course, no liberty was granted, except in emergencies.

In rethinking this whole episode, this whole unique experience left me with some unanswered questions. "How did they balance the Cabot so perfectly on her keel on the bottom of the dry-dock?" and "How did they happen to have a replacement propeller immediately available there at the dry-dock?"

Well, stay tuned, because there will be more stories ahead of the Navy's preparedness and its ability to face emergencies. One of the things I heard about the Navy when I first signed up to fight was the motto of the Navy's Construction Battalions:

"The difficult Jobs we do immediately – The impossible take a little longer".

Attitudes like that win wars.



The Canal and the Pacific

After several months of training with and without the Air Group on board the good ship USS Cabot, headed for the Panama Canal. I say "good ship" because we on board felt we were experienced and ready for the job ahead. We also knew generally what the job would be.

But in reality there was one thing missing - we on the ship didn't know our enemy.

Unlike the ship's company, the pilots had been trained in new tactics developed by the older pilots who had met and fought against the Japanese planes and their best pilots. Our experienced pilots had developed new tactics for units and for individual engagements, fighter to fighter so to speak. When we, as a ship got into it, our air group was ready but we of the ship's company didn't yet know how to handle it. That would take time.

One day on our SE Atlantic coast operations we just turned our nose toward the Caribbean and headed for the Panama Canal. Few on the ship even knew what had happened. Security measures were intense to guard against important information being sent home by some careless or casual information about destinations or ship's location in letters home. The junior officers had to do the censoring of mail. It wasn't enough just to cross words out, we had to physically cut out lines in letters. Some mail would end up looking like a spider web or loosely knit fabric.

Arriving at the Atlantic end of the canal on 12 Nov. 1943 we had a chance to visit ashore in the historic town of Colon, named for our country's discoverer. Then we started through, and I found that the most interesting part of the passage was looking to see if either side of the ship scraped on the locks. There was about a one foot clearance on each side. We even had to temporarily remove the life

rafts from the outer rails to achieve that. The Panamanian landscape was uninteresting. After a slow trip we finally got through to the Pacific entrance where a surprise awaited us. The Pacific end is markedly farther East than the other end of the canal. If this is hard for you to cope with, look it up in an Atlas, or better still, "Google" it.

Panama City is at the Pacific end and as we cleared that city another surprise awaited us - we were notified that we would be going to have a skirmish with an American submarine. It must have been a one sided skirmish that was planned, because the only experience we had was some of the lookouts reported seeing the wake of a torpedo fired at us. Our radars never picked up anything. This may have been our own fault for not having trained ourselves to get the coordinates or direction of the torpedoes from the lookouts.

From here on we traveled to San Diego Cal. where the Navy had yet another surprise for us.

The Navy dominates San Diego particularly in wartime, but we didn't even get ashore to see the town. We had no Air Group(AG) on board, as they having unloaded before we left the Caribbean. The authorities in the yard simply loaded on board an entire new Air Group, a different one, of personnel and planes. Then we were ordered to continue our travel to Pearl Harbor in formation with other ships leaving immediately This appeared to be another case of the Navy trying to control information on movement of ships and personnel, and thank heaven they did.

The AG was strange to us and in the language of the time was called a "hot bunk" group. The plan was that they would sleep in our bunks during the day and we would sleep in the same bunks at night. The Junior Officers on the ship were the most affected because the Air Group we were transporting consisted of mostly pilots, thus mostly J.Os also.

On a ship, officers like me lived three in a room with minimum storage space for clothing and such. We also were bunked on the lowest habitable deck level of the ship. That happened to be on the

waterline of our bow. One "bulkhead" or wall of the room was the steel skin of the ship. What do you think it was like sleeping in a bunk a foot from the rushing water as our bow plowed through the ocean? What do you think it was like in a storm? We got used to it.

Soon after getting underway I received another surprise - assignment to Officer of the Deck Watch underway. Instead of radar watch duty for the trip to Pearl, I would stand deck watches on the bridge, with total responsibility for the operation and the safety of the ship. The Captain would always be nearby in his "sea cabin", and there would only be four or five watches four hours long, but what an awesome responsibility!

In connection with my assignment on the bridge I was given a short training course in what was called "emergency ship handling".

The course primarily dealt with what orders to give to the helmsman when you find yourself on a sure collision course with another ship. This is usually first detected when you see that another ship is closing on you but its bearing is unchanging. In the daytime this is a routine matter. You can see the other ship and whether it is in the process of maneuvering. At night, it is a whole different matter. You can't see action being taken by the other ship if you can see it at all. In peacetime, there are always red (port) and green (starboard) lights when underway. But in wartime there are no lights allowed at night that a submarine could pick up.

The purpose of training deck watch officers in emergency turning is in wartime it is so frequently needed. Which is the best way to turn to avoid a last minute collision if another ship is closing on your bow - which way on your stern quarter..... which way amidships? Is it always best to turn away from or to turn inside an oncoming ship? The Cabot had several near misses in its active days where we could have been put out of action permanently.

Our radars helped a great deal when we were underway at night doing what we called "station keeping" on other ships.

I was somehow reminded of something that had been quoted to me when first being trained in Navy ways - "In the Navy there is a manual

of instruction for every job, so well written any idiot could do the job. Then the Navy went out of its way to find idiots to do it". I never believed that for a moment.

It turned out to be a less terrifying responsibility than I had expected. Instructions for nighttime steaming were pretty simple. The captain would most likely be off the bridge nearby in his "sea cabin". Your job was to follow the zigzag pattern assigned to all ships in our group and to travel at the assigned speed. Otherwise, you just made sure the ship's routine was carried out.

I remember on the bridge one night we got mixed up on the change of course when we went from one Time Zone to the next in the middle of a zigzag pattern. It was soon corrected with the aid of one of the other ships. Steaming in the daytime seemed to be an easier job because the Captain or some other senior officer was usually on the bridge giving you a chance to get acclimated to the equipment and design of the bridge.

One item was intriguing to me from the first day I stood my daytime deck watch. The center of the bridge where the controls are, the wheel, the compass, etc. was well protected by glass, but I noticed that the steel fronting on the open bridge was a flat vertical, double-faced plate of steel. The second plate stood off about 5 inches from the main fronting. Was this for more protection from shrapnel? "No" I was told this double plating caused the wind that was usually blowing on the front side of any ship's bridge to be deflected straight upward. This formed a wind screen that blocked out the strong winds normally blowing across the open bridge. I tried it on a windy day and it worked.

One of the most interesting episodes of my naval life so far occurred by chance out of this short concentrated experience of deck watches underway.

By pure chance my last OD watch was the 4 AM to 8 AM during which we were scheduled to enter Pearl Harbor. Wow! Luckily we were well into the watch and the sun was up by the time the Captain appeared on the bridge. He had a wonderful way about him.

I started to make the usual verbal report to him about everything on the ship being in order and finishing with the standard line "the chronometers have been wound and compared". I knew a chronometer was some kind of navigational clock , but suspected the assurance to the captain about "wound and compared" was some useless and ancient phrase. Prior to the captain's appearance on the bridge I had sent the Quartermaster of the watch to see if anything had actually been done and he had not reported back. What could I honestly say to the Captain? I improvised. I said "the chronometers are being wound and compared". He kind of raised an eyebrow at that and repeated my phrase aloud to himself. Fortunately, he let it pass. And we went on to chat about some of his recollections of past duty in the Islands.

Oahu had come in sight and as we got closer it was a beautiful sight on a lovely sunny day.

After a half hour of following the coastline he turned to me and said "Mr. Werrenrath, I have the Con".

That was news to me. I assumed he had taken the Con. the moment he stepped on the bridge. It appears everyone on the bridge had just done their jobs without orders.

We were nearing the mouth of Pearl Harbor where a pilot came aboard to take her in and berth her. But I wasn't finished yet.

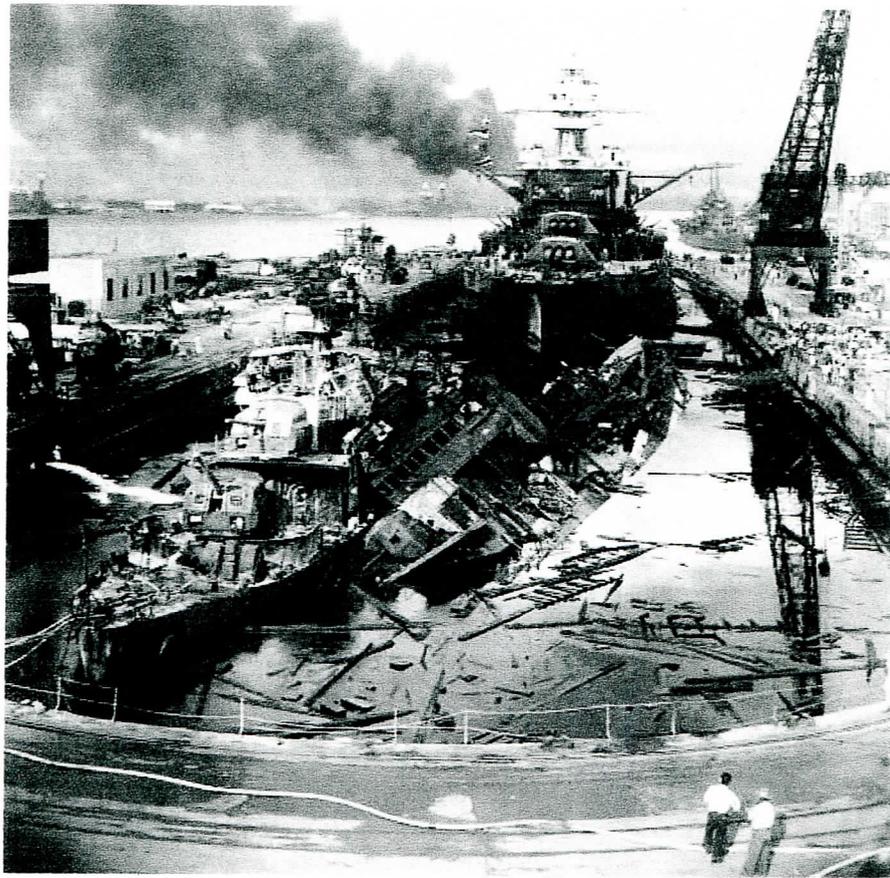
Here we were - the Pilot, the Captain and me , a buck Ensign on the bridge along with other skilled personnel at the wheel and other stations.

After a brief discussion with the pilot, the Captain turned to me and said "Mr. Werrenrath, you take the microphone".

Having worked in a television studio for several years I had no fear of microphones, but talking to tugboats? That was the job. Actually, all it amounted to was repeating the pilot's orders to the tugs that were maneuvering the ship into port and up to the dock. These orders were conveyed to them audibly by loud speakers mounted outboard on the ship. What a way to finish the morning already filled

with new and exciting experiences.

On reflection, I knew it wasn't the first and it wouldn't be the last exciting moment - and we hadn't even met our foe yet.



Pearl Harbor December 1941



Pearl Harbor

Pearl Harbor is, by itself, a unique experience.

The mouth is narrow enough to be closed off by anti submarine barriers. Once inside you find yourself in a longer than wide harbor rimmed on both sides with all types of docks and naval vessels and noisy activity, and a mixture of navy uniforms and work clothes, male and female, plus the cranes and hoists and welding torches and jumble of other working equipment that goes with rebuilding, repair and replenishment of steel ships.

we were also reminded of the attack on Pearl Harbor, by the silent evidence of a few huge warships still lying where they sank on that grim day, about two years earlier is no place quite like a shipyard, especially this one.

One more unseen item that makes this place unique, it's home to CINCPAC, which stands for Commander in Chief-Pacific. This is the top military commander in the whole big wide Pacific.

The entire time our ship was in the Pacific theater , the CINCPAC top man was Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, a man respected throughout the service. Several top Admirals were responsible for carrying out his operation orders at sea, including some of the largest air and sea battles ever fought. None of the admirals was more colorful than Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, Commander, 3rd Fleet.

On the same level was Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, Commander 5th Fleet

But let's not get ahead of our story.

After arriving in Pearl Harbor, during our first day at dockside the one experienced officer in our CIC group, Pat Rooney, announced to us junior officers, "Gentlemen, welcome to The Fleet", and added "this is not just the Pacific Fleet, this is The Fleet".

Perhaps the significance of his remarks was lost on us until we actually saw ourselves steaming as one small unit in a Task Group consisting of 3 large or small aircraft carriers, 3 battleships or cruisers, all surrounded by 18 or 20 destroyers. Awesome! And as more and more ships joined us in the months ahead we could put together several of such Task Groups. Which was even more awesome!

My first day of liberty in Honolulu was like most every other day in the Islands, perfect weather . I went ashore in my Khaki uniform and found that downtown, about half the population was in uniform, mostly sailors in whites. But I had special plans. My mother-in-law, my wife's mother, who was a very dear person herself, had a friend and college classmate who was a long time resident of Honolulu. On first contacting her she had invited me to visit her in her home and I was dutifully responding.

After a 20 minute bus ride through the city to the suburbs, I arrived at a house well appointed with a lovely view of the ocean from the *lanai*. I spent the afternoon with a hostess who couldn't have been nicer or more welcoming. We were a generation apart, but we developed a comfortable rapport, and on each of the rare occasions when the ship returned to Pearl Harbor I took the opportunity to pay her a visit. To me she was an oasis in a military world. And proved to be more than that on one future occasion.

Now a little history on what was happening with "The Fleet".

It was devastated by the attack on Pearl Harbor, but by luck only part of it was in the harbor at the time of the attack. Carriers and some of the newer big ships and destroyers were on maneuvers well away from Oahu.

For the next two years the ships of the remaining Fleet fought against a well prepared, trained and led enemy force in Southern Pacific waters and defended Midway Island where our fleet scored a considerable victory. Four Japanese carriers were sunk.

In late 1943 the commanders at Pearl (CINCPAC) decided, in view of their present strength and the fast ships that they knew would be delivered, it was time to put into operation their plan to take back the Pacific.

By the time we arrived at Pearl Harbor they had accomplished the first step, taking back the most easterly conquest the Japanese had made, the Gilbert Islands. We weren't aware yet but the next step would be the Marshall Islands and we would be part of it.

For the next few weeks we trained in and out of Pearl Harbor with the big, fast ships. Our regular air group AG31 had joined us, and their familiar presence was a welcome sight. Now we were a whole fighting unit, and it felt good.

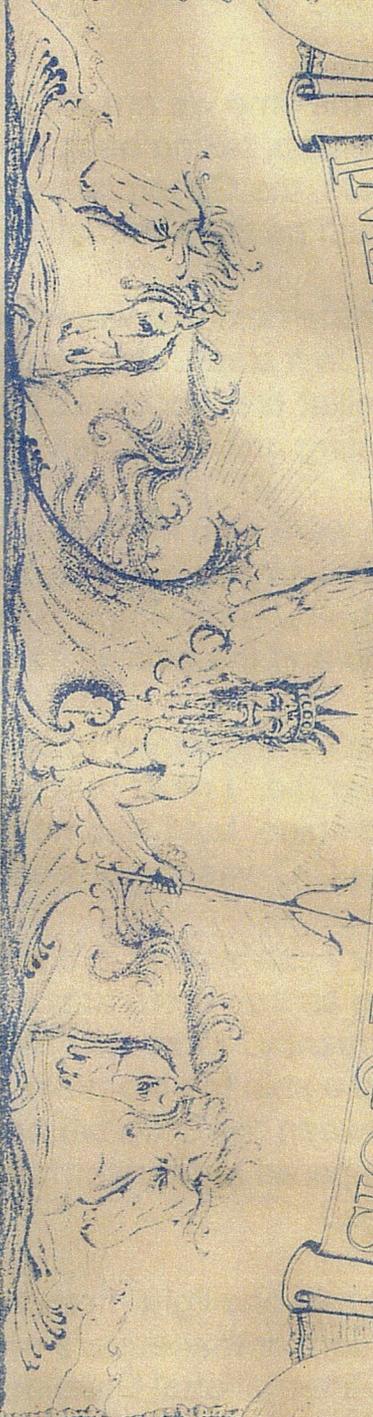
We were also into the ultimate phase of our training as a fleet unit, we were carrying out launches for the whole formation. Every ship, Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers, Destroyers, all turn uniformly into the wind and the aircraft carriers launch simultaneously.

That's a maneuver to see if you ever have the opportunity to see it. I never did. I must have done it a hundred times, day and night, rain and shine, but I was never topside to observe it because that's the time CIC was the busiest.

Every carrier was in constant radio contact with its own planes as long as they were airborne. Each ship had its own code name and frequency. Ours was "Mohawk" for the first operation. There was also a ship to ship radio channel on the bridge for maneuvering. Between the CICs we had a separate radio channel on which we compared radar information. This proved invaluable in the days ahead.

We had one light moment while training out of Pearl Harbor on one of our longer maneuvers with the other ships. It was when we crossed the International Dateline. That's the famed 180th Meridian where nothing really happens except everything jumps ahead one day, on the calendar. Monday becomes Tuesday and so forth. In a ship's routine this means that if you have become used to your laundry going out on a Tuesday, you might easily miss it, if you get

IMPERIVM NEPTVNI REGIS



TO ALL SAILEDS WHEREVER YE MAY BE
Sophia, Lucia, Victoria, etc. Ships, Factors, Vendors, and all other bearing Trunks of the
GOULDING-KRAMER Co. That on the 23rd day of Jan. 1944, at the
there appeared within Our Royal Domain the U.S.S. CABOT
and for (censored) found So. for the Equator

THE IMPERIVM NEPTVNI REGIS

That the said Vessel and Officers and Crew thereof have been inspected and passed on by Counsel and Our Royal High
Lord Be the Known: By all ye Factors, Vendors, and others who may be honored by his presence that

REGINALD WERRENATH, JR.

having been found worthy to be made out as one of our Frigate, he has been duly initiated into the

SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP

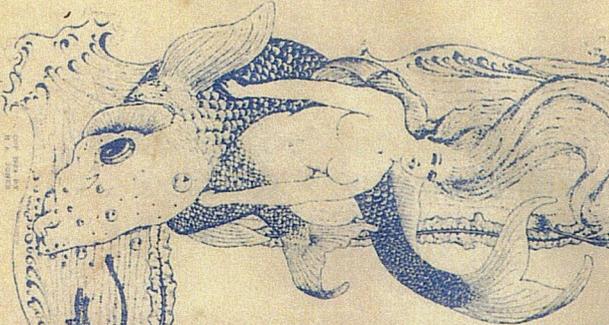
Be It Thus these Undress toed: That by virtue of the power invested in me, by the sacred command
all my subjects to show due honor and respect to him who wears the may be

Disobey this order under penalty of Our Royal Displeasure
Given under our hand and seal this 23rd Jan. 1944.



Edmund
His Majesty's Secretary

Neptunus Rex
Ruler of the Raging Main
By His Secretary



preoccupied with events.

As if that wasn't complicated enough we crossed the equator, or 0 degrees Latitude at the same time and place.

All over the world, on crossing the Equator, ships go through traditional initiation rituals for newcomers. King Neptune and his Court magically appear aboard ship in full costume with trident and beard. After a series of discomforts to the uninitiated on board, they are declared "Shellbacks" and members of the "Royal Order of the Deep".

In full recognition of our distinction of crossing the 180th Meridian at the same time we were also made members of "The Order of the Golden Dragon". Somewhere in my treasures I believe I still have the certificates.

Our day of crossing was a hot, windless day and all the ships devoted part of the day to this activity. That speaks well for our task force commander's regard for morale building. I believe it was Admiral Raymond Spruance at the time.

Our discomfort on the Cabot was that the whole ship's company had to wear their pants backward for the whole day. If you don't think we suffered enough, try it yourself for a day.

As part of our training in being Junior Officers in the Navy we sometimes stood deck watches in port. This was an entirely different kind of duty than my regular job of CIC officer.

We stood watch at any 4 hour time of the day or night. If it was the mid-watch, 00:00 to 4:00 hours, we just stood or walked the Quarter Deck for four hours in the middle of the night with a couple of sailors as company. If we stood a deck watch in the middle of the day it could be the busiest place on the ship and you needed to be on your toes all the time. The Quarter Deck was the forward gangway where all visitors or new arrivals on the ship boarded. Any visitors Navy or otherwise coming up the gangway or ladder to the Quarter Deck were required to say "Request permission to come aboard sir". The after gangway was where the crew came aboard and went ashore and

where, when the ship was at anchor and not tied up to the dock the small boats used by crew, Captain, or officers on official business were moored.

The officer standing deck watch wore side arms which every officer on the ship is issued, as indication of his official status. This "side arm" is an imposing weapon, a loaded 45 caliber automatic pistol in a holster.

I remember one time when a good friend and fellow CIC officer, Ens. Frank Hansen came to me with a tale of woe. He had recently stood a late-night deck watch and after it he had mislaid his pistol.

This is indeed woe for a JO, but luckily I was able to bring to bear some civilian training in what was called an "Infallible Finding System" It goes something like this. Think of the last place you specifically remember seeing or holding in your hand the missing item – go there and retrace your steps over the ground you took following that event. Frank remembered taking his side arm off when he sat down in the chart house to write his report of the night-watch, and there he found it.

We were both happy to get this load off his shoulders and to find that we civilians in uniform still had some things to teach the Navy, even though we might best keep that last part to ourselves.

Invasion of the Marshall Islands

We, the Fast Carrier Task Forces, set out for the Marshall Islands with orders to act as the advanced attack force for the invasion. It was early 1944 and our job was going to be to start to attack the Islands on D minus 5 Day and to destroy the Japanese defenses before our slower troop ships came up to mount the landings on D Day.

How fast is "fast"? In this case it's 30 knots or about 34 miles per hour. That doesn't sound like much when you are driving down the highway in a car. On the other hand if you're driving an 11 thousand ton vehicle loaded with tons of planes and ammunition and 1700 personnel, that is "fast".

During the invasion phase we would continue to provide air support to the landings and to screen against an enemy response by sea or air. When news about our mission spread around the ship the 90% of us who were newcomers had a variety of reactions. In the Ward Room there was still the feeling of anticipation, and everyone in our CIC group felt we were ready. This was the real thing. We had trained for this for months and now here it was.

We could see on the map the Marshalls were a series of volcanic, coral, and sand islands spread out over a wide area of ocean. The larger ones were now occupied by Japanese military forces. There were a few good harbors among them. The islands were centered roughly 2,000 miles west of Pearl, about 3 days steaming for us. The troop transports couldn't make it that fast.

As we neared the Marshalls those of us who needed to know became aware that our immediate targets had real names, the islands of Eniwetok, Kuajalien, Majuro, Roi and Namur.

On D minus 5, I was up early, grabbed a quick breakfast, and

headed for CIC. This wouldn't be a routine flight call this morning. I got on my station which was on one of the intercept monitors and started checking my equipment. Others were doing the same thing. We knew some of our fighters were going in to the target with the main force of bombers to do real combat. All the ships would start launching soon - a coordinated attack. We would also launch a combat air patrol (CAP) but the possibility of an attack on this Task group, 40 miles away from the target wasn't uppermost in my mind. Perhaps it should have been. Perhaps we had become too comfortable with the long range capability of our radars.

· Launching planes from all carriers in a large formation at the same time is a complex operation - not only for the ships but for the pilots as well. Doing the same thing pre-dawn is an incredibly more complex event. Pilots have described it to me.

In CIC we're busy putting up plane numbers and pilots names on the information board, also weather information such as location of rain squalls. Radars can find them for you. We also can usually give pilots rendezvous position for their division under normal circumstances. But this time everyone is in radio silence - no radio use except for emergencies.

In CIC we hear the planes go off because they're right over our heads and the catapult is almost next door to us. We know what a full launch is for the several hundred men on the flight deck, the plane captains, the plane handlers, the ordinance crew, the gasoline crew and all dealing with those whirling propellers in semi-darkness.

Imagine a whole formation launch of sixty or seventy planes, flying to rendezvous points and going for the target all in radio silence during partial daylight.

Finally every one who is supposed to be off the deck has been launched without mishap. Our CAP is climbing to take station at angels five over head, and another couple of divisions of our fighters are accompanying a massive flight of dive bombers, torpedo bombers and more fighters to the target. I can see them all going in, but there's no evidence of the Islands yet on our radars. Soon our pilots report the Islands in sight. They report planes taking off from airfields on the

Islands. There will be action for our fighters today.

As the morning wears on our first planes return and the pilots report some fierce air battles. Only two planes received some minor damage and no one was missing. Everyone breathed a little easier as all ships prepared for an early afternoon launch for the second strike of the day. The Cabot continued to supply the CAP over the formation.

No evidence yet of any enemy ability to retaliate. It came soon enough, in early afternoon, when one of the air search radars picked up a large air target just beyond ten miles, identified as five or six planes low on the water, and closing fast. This was a shock. Pat Rooney quickly sent Mohawk 7 down after them at flank speed to do whatever they could do.

The first ship's guns that we heard were some of the twin forties on the ship's in the outer perimeter. Then all of our CIC seemed to come to life and started passing information to other stations on the ship. The lookouts were reporting to us in CIC what was happening in visual range. The reason some ships were firing was there appeared to be a plane at the edge of the formation. "Yes, there's a plane there with one of our fighters chasing him -- yeah, they're crossing the middle of the formation- of course, the ships are shooting, can't you hear them? Wow, he's going down."

Now we're hearing more and heavier firing, and an occasional burst of 20 millimeter canon from our ship which means something is too close to us.

In a minute or so, the firing has quieted down. I've been listening in on the pilots' radio conversation, but they've been an excited hubbub of voices with everyone talking and nobody listening. Suddenly a voice with a conspiratorial tone cut in and said "Mohawk, this is Mohawk 7-3. Got any more bogies for me?"

This is the pilot who had just splashed an enemy plane after chasing him through the entire formation. Incredible -- he wanted more of it.

Rooney told him to join up with the rest of his division but stay outside of the formation and avoid ship's gunfire.

That was the last enemy attack on our ships that day and it had been a real surprise. Low on the water like that the planes can get close to their target without being detected but they are much more vulnerable when they are that low. Three out of six of these were shot down before they could attack. One of them had gotten inside and strafed us which accounts for the rapid fire twenty millimeters we heard. Some stories got around that flight deck hands were up there during the attack cheering the gunners and one of them was using a fire ax to chop out pieces of the wooden decking that had bullets imbedded in it.

As more such stories emerged I wondered how long before the whole ship's crew would start taking its fighting more seriously. Our CIC hands seemed to have been sobered by the day's experiences. Maybe this was my imagination, but we had been directly involved in the day's action. Suddenly the war had become something personal, at least for one of us it had.

Counting down to D-Day there were no large attacks on us and resistance on the Islands diminished to the point that the Battleships and Cruisers could move in to where they could use their big guns. The description we heard of this event was they were so close their shells bounced off the Island and exploded in the water beyond. But that was only the rumor.

On D day, landings were made on strategic points and after a surprising resistance the Islands were taken by our troops.

The carrier attack forces then headed to one of the islands named Majuro already occupied by our troops. It was just a circle of small coral reefs formed by the top of a worn down volcano and called an "Atoll". This made a wonderful anchorage for a whole fleet of ships, giving us a protected area for rest and replenishment in the middle of a hostile ocean.

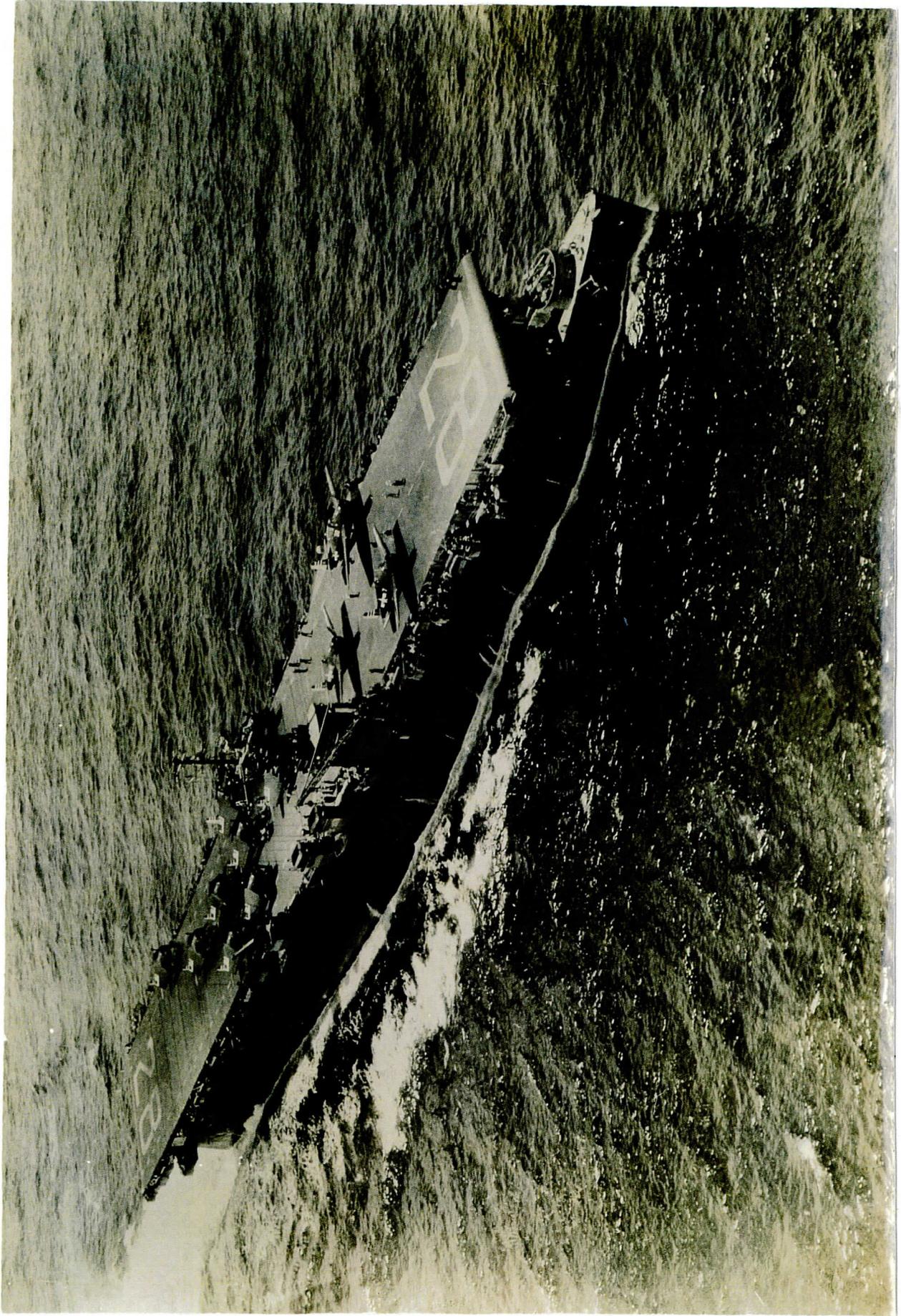
One of these rest and rehabilitation periods when I was still a junior officer on call to do Officer of the Deck watches, I had some bad

moments that won't soon be forgotten. We were in an anchorage with many other ships. In the day time these watches could become busy beyond reason for the OD and one cause was the "small boats". These were the Crew's Whaleboat, the Captain's Gig, and the Officer's Launch which were tied up at the boom by the rear gangway and maintained by the Ship's Bosun.

We had recently had a new Executive Officer come on board, the number two officer on the ship. He was a fine and effective officer but was reputed to have a very short fuse. It was my ill fortune to be the one to prove this. One day he unloaded his ire on me when as OD at anchor I had messed up the small boat assignments he had specifically given me. His eyes would blink furiously when he got mad and on this occasion he got so mad I could hear them snap. It was entirely my fault and I was lucky that his ire didn't last beyond that particular event.

While we're on the subject of " Small Boats" let's clear up one item of Terminology. You sometimes hear it asked "What is the difference between a boat and a ship ?" To me the simplest and most seamanlike definition "A boat is a seagoing vessel with beams small enough to be bent by steam". Apply that to something like a whale boat and it has some meaning. For today's boat builders it has little meaning, but it's a lot more fun to quote and it makes you sound like an "old salt". A ship is any larger vessel





USS Cabot in Pacific waters



Getting to Know Pilots

That particular episode in the first real action we in CIC experienced was a revelation to me on the nature of fighter pilots. It said something like this - "Fighter pilots are absolutely fearless in pursuing their target and once put in contact they will go through anything to do their job".

The fact he flew through our whole formation of ships' concentrated gunfire to pursue and down one enemy plane shows rare determination and disregard for his own safety.

I didn't watch the episode. I just heard it described by a lookout as it was happening but when the pilot called in after he had come through unscathed, "Mohawk, this is Mohawk 7-3, got any more bogies for me?" I could just see him in my mind circling out there on the perimeter of the formation at less than 500 feet off the water, ready to pursue another target.

In our day to day work, CIC officers had opportunities to mix with the pilots and we took advantage of the opportunities.

Once when our ship was in one of those rare periods of relaxed cruising in the forward area of the Pacific I had a taste of what the pilots went through every day. I rode as a passenger in a carrier plane making take offs and landings at sea.

This is how it came about. I had just moved up to number one in CIC by way of seniority. It meant the date on my commission was slightly earlier than the date of other junior officers. In this capacity I had been asked to attend a coordinating conference of CIC officers on the flagship. Our Captain gave the go ahead, so a launch of one of the torpedo planes was arranged. They dressed me up in minimal flight gear and at the appointed time along with a one man flight crew, I was helped to climb up into the rear compartment of the plane. We were going to be catapulted so the pilot, who was one of the senior

torpedo bomber pilots had told me "Just hang on back there during take off and landing, otherwise move around all you want".

These pilots flew a great many hours of dull anti submarine patrol along with often being called on to add punch to a major fleet or land attack.

Our pilots who flew these routine ASP patrols were called on to fly some of the most deadly missions asked of any pilot anywhere, such as attacking a well armed modern battleship. They have to press the attack home on a ship that has guns of all caliber firing at once at them - 20 millimeter canon, 40 millimeter canon, three inch anti aircraft, and batteries of 50 millimeter machine guns.

To get back to our story, we were hooked to the catapult rapidly, and by hand signals between pilot and the catapult crew on the deck, the engine was revved up to flight speed, and on the final signal the catapult flung us off the deck like a clay target on a trapshooting range.

In the rear compartment the lurch forward was very strong. Worse than that, when the plane hit the air at the bow of the ship, the lid flew off the bomb site opening in the compartment floor. It hit the ceiling followed by a blast of air right in my face. Unsettling doesn't really describe the launch!

The landing on the flagship's deck wasn't very violent but still had the feeling of being snagged out of the air and forced to land which is indeed what happens.

The meeting was constructive and we got the feeling the admiral's staff members were pleased with the way we were doing our job and they were really encouraging us to share information .

We had a chance for coffee and a doughnut and a little socializing so we could put names on faces. Then we were back on deck - a much larger deck - to join our planes and crews for the short trips home.

This catapult launch was not as violent as my first one from the

Cabot.

After I was loaded into the rear compartment of the plane the pilot taxied into position over the catapult and the deck crew hooked us with a bridle to the only part of the steam catapult that shows above the deck - a steel hook . This is attached to a highly polished round steel shaft about 14 inches in diameter and about 20 feet long in its own compartment under the deck.

The rear of the plane is hooked to a deck plate by a special ring designed carefully to break at exactly the same pressure every time. So every plane goes off at a predictable time and speed.

Other than feeling like the strongest tug and the most Gs that any drag racer has ever felt, it's not that bad.

I'd like to say it was an uneventful return but it wasn't. The take off was as calm as a catapult launch can be, but alas, the landing was not. Maybe it was the sea that was running, but this time the plane was grabbed out of the air by the tail-hook hitting an early wire and we were slammed on the deck so hard I felt as if I had been in a train wreck.

When I climbed down the pilot greeted me and said something about a rough landing, but he was laughing when he said it. His seat must have been softer than mine.

In CIC we heard the flight deck activity all the time during take-off and landing activities. We heard every plane taxiing into position and the catapult firing it off because we were directly under the flight deck and in the forward one third of the ship. But, we also felt each landing which a person would assume to be on the after one third of the ship. It was, but when landing a series of planes they each taxi forward and park so that the next plane can come in.

Landing on a carrier deck by a prop driven plane is accomplished by the pilot extending a 6 foot long metal hook from the rear of the plane. As the pilot flies the plane forward, low and slow over the deck, his tail-hook will catch on to one of the several heavy steel cables raised slightly and stretched across the deck. The tension on the wires is

controlled as needed to bring the plane to a slow halt rather than a dead stop.

One deadly problem is if a plane fails entirely to catch a wire, it will crash into all those planes parked forward. To cope with this the ship has a barrier to protect those planes. This is a heavy wire barricade that is raised on the forward flight deck on every landing and then immediately laid flat on the deck where planes can taxi over it.

A few serious accidents happened at the Cabot's barrier, and in CIC those on duty heard them all. Once, during landing operations I heard a plane actually hit the barrier. We heard and felt a heavy thud followed by the sound of something heavy and solid tumbling across the deck and falling into the metal catwalk that rims the ship. Whatever it was hit with a clang right outside of our compartment door so one of the men went out to have a look at it. He reported back that it was a small bomb that must have hung-up on the plane and been shaken loose when the plane missed a wire and hit the barrier. Everyone took the news calmly which showed me the men were learning to live with danger every day. Of course, the pilots were the ones who really lived with danger every day. One time a fighter pilot missed a wire and tried to complete the landing anyway. He hit the deck so hard he bounced over the barrier and into the planes parked forward. He didn't survive.

The Commander of the Fighter Squadron, Lt. Cdr. Robert Winston provided a lot of leadership to the young pilots. He was a veteran fighter pilot himself with plenty of combat experience. He led every combat mission that he could and kept good discipline in the turmoil of a dog fight. He also scored his share of enemy planes shot down.

These pilots were actually a bunch of wonderful young men to have on board and to be working with, although they generally lived and socialized among themselves. They were friendly and open in the Ward Room, and generally glad to share their thoughts about their job. They would sometimes discuss air tactics in the Ward Room but in such human terms as "I made an overhead run on him", or "I chased him off somebody's tail". It was not uncommon for them to use their hands to illustrate the exact angle of their attack.

You could join the conversation but only as a listener. Unless you were a pilot you just let the conversation roll. This was the real thing they were talking about. These were the men who were always in the thick of it, and sometimes one of them would be missing at the dinner table that night.

Among the fighter pilots the tactical organization was based on two planes forming a mutually protected pair. Four planes formed a division. This division was led by a senior, experienced pilot.

After several early air battles a few of the individual pilots were turning out to be more successful with more kills than the others. Since my job was very much involved with their success, I had a chat with a very quiet unassuming young pilot named Connie Nooey who had been the most successful of the whole squadron.

I said, "Connie, with the help of radar I can get you out there to the point of interception but how do you do it from there?" He said, "You also give us where to look. 'bandits, 1 o'clock, five miles'. Now, I have a system. When you say that, I look down into the cockpit where my eyes refocus close in. Then I look at that position of 1 o'clock in the sky and by my changing of focus I seem to see the target sooner than the other guys".

I never found out if any of the others tried the same thing, but Connie's total score by the end of the war was one of the best in the Navy - 19. And you can't ask for much better than that.



ISLAND HOPPING

After the Marshall Islands invasion our stay in the protected anchorage of Majuro was just a short pause in our operations against Japanese held islands and harbors in the Central Pacific. Our targets there would be primarily the islands of Truk, Palau, the Bonines, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai. We attacked those Islands for 5 months

These attacks would be briefly interrupted by an excursion south to support the Allied landings at Hollandia on New Guinea where Gen. MacArthur was conducting operations.

After five months of these raids it turned out our next real objectives for occupation were the Marianas including Guam, Saipan, Tinian. If any of those names are familiar to you then you know the reason they headed our list for invasion. These were once American territories.

The open ocean anchorage at Majuro was, in itself, an interesting experience. Think, if you can, of an entire fleet of warships all at anchor, filling a harbor created in the middle of a hostile ocean by a circular chain of sand and coral islands.

The crews of these ships were now following a very relaxed routine. There is liberty on some of the islands although there is little to do there - a swim off a sandy beach where you may see tropical creatures you have never seen before, a swim off the side of the ship where you will wonder what might be under you in the deep water and why those sharpshooters with their guns are up on the deck watching you swim. One liberty party from our ship even went ashore, each member supplied with a bottle of beer. This is the first evidence I saw that the Navy had some secret stores for special situations.

The junior officers even made up some of their own recreation. We dropped the elevator down to the hangar deck level and rigged improvised basket ball hoops at each end which gave us a pretty

good playing surface. We had no trouble getting teams together and I enjoyed several games before I tried to run under the basket on a shot and bashed myself on one of the beams of the ship's frame. The guys joked I was just trying to get a Purple Heart the easy way. But the doctors were able to patch me up enough to stand my regular watches.

Things may have become too relaxed during this stay of about a week. But if my memory serves me correctly this was the occasion on which we learned a valuable lesson. One night we were having movies on the hangar deck. It was a warm night and the elevator had been dropped down to hangar deck level to provide ventilation. The captain, most of the senior officers and about half of the ship's company were watching the movie with a big open space of the elevator almost over our heads. We could even see the starry heavens. In the middle of the film I thought I heard a plane go over that open space and I wondered what it could be at this time of night. Very soon I heard a loud boom and a simultaneous flash of an explosion that lit up the skies. Everyone on the hangar deck stood fast until the Captain and senior officers had cleared the area. Then all hands ran pell mell for their battle stations.

In CIC they already had the story partly put together. An enemy plane had flown in on the anchorage, very low on the water, undetected by the radars that were operating, and after flying over our deck the pilot had rammed himself and his bomb into the stern of one of our big carriers. The result was a badly mangled steering mechanism and a lesson learned: Vigilance, always vigilance.

This was one of the early cases of a suicide attack on our ships, but the name Kamikaze hadn't been invented yet.

After a few more days at the Majuro anchorage we learned that our next target was to be Truk Island, a major Japanese harbor and well fortified base in the Central Pacific, a couple of days steaming west from Majuro.

Advanced information to CIC revealed, this Truk Island to be a major facility – a large harbor for shipping well protected by airfields and fortifications. From this we could assume there would be a major

response to any attacks we would launch.

For this reason our entire task force was committed to the attack and one day the USS Cabot and many other ships sortied one by one out of the Majuro anchorage and formed up into 3 task groups of about 12 ships each and headed West. When fully formed up into its normal, circular, steaming formation a task group measured at least 3 miles across so a task group is not easy to hide, but we still tried to make an undetected approach.

One big difference between this operation and the last one – there was no D Day, no landings were planned.

Now how do you mount a large scale, attack on a fortress? You try to surprise them coming up fast and silently. This meant a busy day ahead for CIC in more ways than one.

When we were about 60 miles from Truk, on signal the entire task group of ships turned into the wind and began launching. Every plane took off and flew to a preplanned meeting point, where all the attack units formed and headed for the target in an order dictated by their mission at the target.

In CIC our own planes were posted by call letter and those scheduled to fly over the formation as Combat Air Patrol (CAP) were specially designated. We expected to have some business for them today so there were 8 fighters overhead. Actually it was Cabot planes that went in on the first strike that saw action and we achieved the surprise we wanted. The reports from the pilots on their return were of many enemy planes downed over the harbor and others destroyed on the ground plus several air fields put out of commission by bombs with time delay fuses.

It was a busy day in more ways than one for the carriers and the CIC's in the three task groups attacking Truk. Several of our planes were shot down by AA and in aerial combat. But, the American pilots were well organized so when one went down his wing man stayed over him, or someone else from his division would call for rescue.

If possible, the downed pilots landed in the water. Two forms of

rescue were available. Float planes from the big ships, the Battleships and Cruisers could land on the water, pick pilots and rear seat men up and fly them back to the float plane's ship, where they would eventually be returned to their own ships. A second rescue source for this operation was available through American submarines placed in position outside the harbor at Truk. That tells you something about the Navy's preparation for these operations. Both of these sources of rescue were a test of seamanship, communication skills and the will to survive.

There was one reported instance during the Truk operation where a float plane landed in the harbor, protected overhead by carrier planes, picked up so many pilots and crewmen that he couldn't take off, so he taxied out of the harbor like a small boat and offloaded them all safely on one of the rescue subs.

Can you visualize a float plane bouncing along on the surface of the lagoon harbor with half drowned pilots and crewmen holding fast to every strut and pontoon on the plane as it taxis out of the harbor? It really happened and the survivors, their families and their friends are all grateful for it.

Two other events of note occurred on the Truk Island operation that I can remember but I'm not sure of the exact sequence. One day it looked as if it would be a quiet day in CIC. I was on duty but I called the ship's doctor and asked if there was a time he could change the bandage on my leg where I had been injured by a collision with the hangar deck wall. The doctor was a nice young junior officer and we got along well. He said he couldn't do it later but could come to CIC and do it now. I said, "of course" and when he arrived everything was calm. I was on my radar scope in the middle of the room and as soon as the doc got my leg propped up on a stool and the bandage off I heard a tapping on the plotting board. Our air search radar had picked up a target about 20 miles off and closing fast. There I was stretched out horizontally talking on the radio phone, sending out the combat air patrol to stop an incoming raid. The doctor could only sit back and watch CIC in action. Even when our ship's own guns started firing on a straggler that got through, all he could do was watch. His own battle station was the Officers Ward Room two decks below which was always turned into an improvised morgue when we

were in battle. So this was a new experience for him, and when I look back on it this somehow reminds me of the pictures we see from every war of corpsmen on the battle field trying to rescue the wounded, only in this case I was the wounded. One of my roommates later said "Oh, you were just lying down on the job". I ignored him. The doctor thanked me and said it was an interesting experience for him to see how the rest of the ship did its job when things got hot.

Another unique experience happened near Truk when our first big nighttime attack on the ship occurred. Our task groups were steaming at night in the vicinity of Truk. Our CIC was at a relaxed form of readiness with all radars operating and our best operators on them. None of our pilots had been trained in night takeoffs and landings. But a few of the big ships had some specially trained pilots on board and some of those had been launched that night. Night fighter protection was a new skill and we in the Cabot's CIC were watching and listening with great interest. The commands and communications between pilot and intercept officer were similar but briefer and based on the pilot's limited visibility at night.

Our air search radar picked up some activity of large planes within 15 miles of our formation, but flying slowly and in no discernible direction. This couldn't be our night fighters because these appeared to be bigger aircraft. As I watched my own scope I saw what appeared to be a rain cloud form in the midst of the planes evident on my screen. As the antenna swept around, which it did about every minute, a second cloud appeared and on the next sweep a third cloud. Now there was a notable direction and the movement was toward us. As this path continued it occurred to me that what we were seeing was the Japanese using a new device called "chaff", or "window". These were bundles of foil which when tossed from a plane would hang in the air to confuse the enemy's radars. In this case it appeared to be an effort to hide their own approach. Actually, we could easily see a large plane flying through this path of chaff towards us, so the guns on all the ships opened up when the gun crews had the plane on their own equipment.

Not knowing if our night fighters had gotten in on the attack and were chasing the raiders was a scary thought but we breathed easier when

it was later found out that no friendly forces were involved.

The bad news was it also turned out that one of our big carriers, the INTREPID in another task group, had been torpedoed that night and put out of action, and needed repair badly.

This seemed serious to me but some of the men made a joke out of it saying the name of the ship should be changed from INTREPID, to DECREPID.

The whole Truk operation had been a bruising battle and it would take more full scale strikes before the base could be safely bypassed.

Scuba divers today who have circled the globe in pursuit of their sport will tell you there is no better place in the world where you can see the abandoned evidence of a major battle between two great military powers than on the floor of Truk Lagoon

Happy News at Pearl Harbor

The Cabot has been detached with six other ships from Task Group (TG) 58.2 to form TG 58.24 and accompany the damaged USS Intrepid to a safe anchorage at Majuro.

After this it didn't take long for the decision to be made to send the Cabot on to Pearl Harbor accompanying the Intrepid.

Our ships arrived in Pearl on March 4, 1944 where I received a surprise telegram. It was delivered on the ship and said our first son was born on March 2nd and that everyone was well and happy. I knew from previous letters that our second child was on the way and pretty close, but mail sometimes took a month or more to get out to the forward area. Here was some eagerly awaited news and the message included a clue that was a tip off on the gender, too. I think it said "we men must stick together". It was a good feeling knowing our second child was a boy. Now our family had one of each. ✓

During our short layover at Pearl we heard a follow up story - another hard luck story - on the Intrepid.

In Pearl the decision had been made to send the Intrepid back to the States to fix the steering mechanism. The crew of the Intrepid thought that they could steer well enough with the ship's engines to get her back, but as soon as the ship was out of the harbor they found they couldn't, so the Intrepid had to struggle back in and a dummy rudder was attached. Somehow the pressure of the water from the ship's propellers against this made a crude form of steering with the engines possible.

Wouldn't you think that someone in the Navy would have learned this from experience?

Soon the Cabot was on her way back to Majuro where more surprises were in store for us.

During one of our ship's R and R's (rest and relaxation periods) at an open ocean anchorage, it occurred to me that the radar operators needed some new incentives to sharpen their skills at early detection. After some discussion with a few of the senior men we decided to offer extra liberty periods for being the first ship in the formation to pick up a radar target, a kind of private rewards system.

I asked the senior men in the radar operators' division to be responsible for awarding the extra liberty and over time the system worked quietly and effectively. The Cabot developed a reputation in the Task Group for being the first to pick up targets and to develop accurate information on them - how many planes, what altitude, accurate course or speed, and other valuable information. It was also sort of a morale builder because the men began to feel that they were an important part of the task force and they were being recognized for their skills.

The next major target for Task Group 58.2 turned out to be the Palau Islands which, next to Truk, was the most important Japanese base in the Central Pacific, and destined for eventual invasion. After March 25 the ships and planes of Task Force 58 were busy attacking harbors, airfields, ships, and planes in the Palau Islands.

At Palau the training and experience we had gone through began to show results. There, Cabot pilots scored big numbers in enemy planes shot down and enemy ships sunk. CIC was becoming more effective with better information on planes as the men, perhaps with some added incentive, became more skilled at their craft. Our CIC began to operate as one effective unit within a group of effective units. One day while on a watch not crowded with action, I totaled up the number of fast ships we really had, that is ships capable of 30 knots or more and I was amazed.

In each of three Task Groups we had two light carriers (CVL) with 36 planes each. (72 total)

We had two heavy carriers (CV) that were "fast" with 86 planes each. (172 total)

We had 2 "fast" cruisers. (CC)

We had 12 "fast" destroyers. (DD or DE)

A few "fast" battleships (BB) traveled with this force of 3 Task Groups to provide big guns if needed for bombardment or protection in a fleet engagement which happens very seldom, or quarters for the Admiral and his staff which happens very often.

That's about 200 to 240 planes our Task Group alone could put in the air at one time and remember that we had 3 Task Groups operating separately on different tasks but always coordinated.

So to put it all together we as a Task Force could put 600 to 700 planes in the air and travel 500 miles in a day to deliver them.

At the end of March 1944 rumors about trips to exotic locations began to circulate on the ship. Scuttlebutt about trips is a treasured commodity in the Navy. In CIC we had just as much scuttlebutt as other departments but ours was of much better quality, more dependable. At least, that's what we thought. Actually the trip promised to be a very different experience. We were going to travel southwest about 2000 miles to join Gen. Douglas MacArthur in an invasion at Hollandia, New Guinea. Gen. MacArthur, or "Dugout Doug" as we called him, was leading a combined force of Australian, British, and American troops.

This area on the north coast of New Guinea didn't look like an invasion site when we got in on the north coast so close we could see the beach on the radars and we didn't get shot at, perhaps it wasn't so formidable a target. In fact, we were there for only a few days, and the only thing I saw of interest while on the radars were at night a few enemy planes and some of them put on a show of "window". This was our second experience with it. At the time we couldn't understand why they put on the

show. "Window" is a false radar target, strips of foil bundled together and thrown out of the plane to drift down in a small cloud. They dropped the "window" so high it stayed very long in the air.

We were puzzled by what they wanted to accomplish in using it.

Were they trying to confuse us?

Were they trying to distract us?

Were they trying to sew the entire area with "window" so as to hide their planes entirely from our radars?

✓ Not unless they can figure out a way to neutralize Gravity and suspend the "window" indefinitely in midair. This was our second experience with "window" and it appeared to me to be a distraction so I made up my mind not to let it become a distraction.

Our task group soon started back to our more familiar area, the Central Pacific.

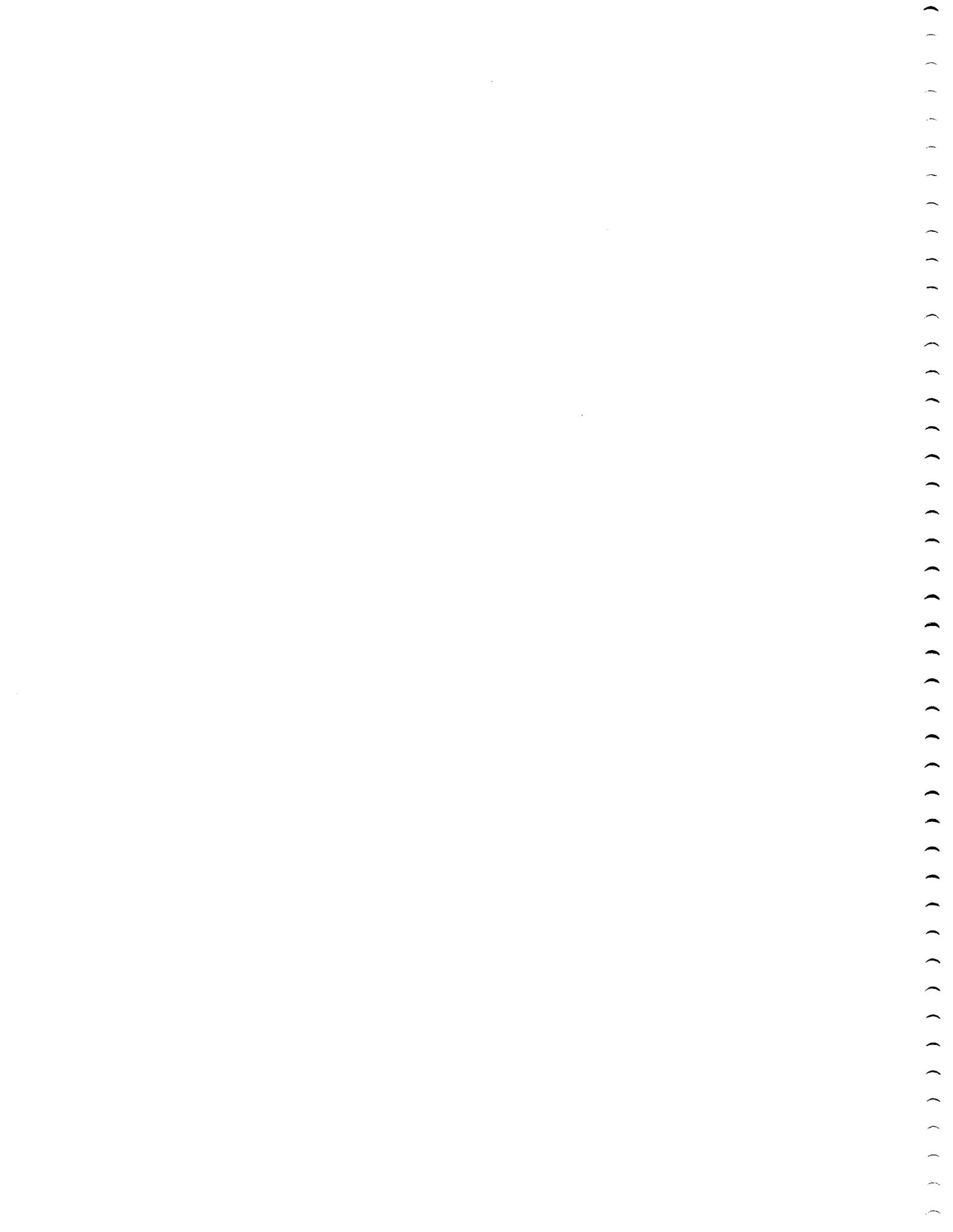
We had a lot of different voice radios in CIC such as Inter-ship Radio, and Plane to Ship, and Plane to Plane and we used them all 24 hours a day. But one night when I came on watch the men were listening to Tokyo Rose. Someone had apparently brought a portable AM-FM radio on the ship and had it in CIC to give us the chance to listen to her.

We had heard descriptions of her but this was the real thing and it was pathetic. She spoke perfect English with an American accent, and chatted with us as if we were right in the room with her. Most of the one-way conversations were about the wives or girl friends infidelities, but not even a little bit convincing.

This didn't last long. To the men it was just a novelty and they got the

idea that if they wanted to listen they should listen on their own time.
Tokyo Rose was supposed to be a distraction, but failed miserably.

Nonstop action awaited us when we returned to the Central
Pacific



The Marianas Turkey Shoot

U. S . naval ships in WW II traveled mostly on burnable fuel oil . It was delivered by Navy tanker ships at sea and sometimes under very hazardous weather conditions. When fueling an aircraft carrier tanker ships also delivered gasoline, a much more volatile fuel which adds to the danger of the fuelling operation particularly in heavy seas.

The heavier the weather, the greater the danger while fuelling and both must be moving rapidly enough to maintain headway on parallel courses. As the fuel is pumped across, it's an incredible operation to watch.

In relatively good weather with little wind almost anything can be transferred at sea, and is _ food, fuel, ammuniton, personnel, supplies. The ship's boatswains, using ancient seamanship techniques, casting lines, rigging boatswain's chairs, rigging breeches buoys, cargo nets and hoses. It is pretty impressive to see a cluster of 500 pound bombs in a cargo net coming across ship to ship on pulleys from an armoring ship, the net rising and falling as it passes slowly over a calm sea. It's even more impressive over a heavy sea and personnel sent back or forth between ships in a boatswain's chair is the ultimate. Someone occasionally gets dunked, too.

On our return trip to the open ocean anchorage at Eniwetok I watched the operation in a fairly heavy sea while both ships - the supply ship and we were rolling heavily.

As I watched I visualized where that fuel oil was going in the ship. My knowledge of the ship's interior working was limited. I knew we had 4 propellers, each propeller had its own steam turbine engine driving it. The steam was created by burning the oil to heat the water. Each of the four engines could be set to drive at its own speed, or in tandem with the other engines.

Two other main sources of power were provided by the burning oil.

The entire ship's electrical supply system was one. This operated like any steam turbine electric power generating station. And the other was the ship's fresh water system and this was the greatest surprise to me. When our natural fresh water tanks ran out (and they did when we were underway for a long time) we could pump sea water into special tanks where it could be heated and turned into steam and the salt distilled out of it so it was drinkable. Thus we had enough fresh water for drinking and sea water could be used to run the entire flushing system. We changed to something called salt water soap which made it possible to wash in salt water. It really wasn't bad though no one stayed on it any longer than they had to.

Another commodity we sometimes ran low on was fresh food such as fresh vegetables or fresh milk. We started to run out of them about a week and a half after leaving a supply source such as Pearl Harbor or one of our open ocean anchorages such as Majuro. We could tell because of the craving that sets in on you when the substitutes begin to appear on the table. I've never been able to tolerate powdered milk since my earliest days at boys' camp.

So, at that time oil was the life blood of a Navy ship at sea and we would need a lot of it for the next few weeks and months. Our fast carrier task forces were going to be attacking and subduing each of the main Japanese bases in the Central Pacific.

This would include another major strike on Truk Island and following that one of the largest naval air battles in history – the battle for the Marianas, more commonly referred to as “the Marianas Turkey Shoot”

This occurred in June of 1944 and would be our furthest advance into Japanese waters so far in the war. The Marianas were originally an American protectorate, and included the islands of Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. They were on the western edge of the Philippine Sea and was our opening to that major objective, the Philippine Islands themselves, islands so dear to General McArthur's heart.

In the early stages of the attack on the Marianas there was little aerial opposition so on our ship those of us in CIC were under less stress. I even had a chance to watch some of our big ships in a daytime

bombardment of one of the Marianas.

What a sight!

Each big shell fired by one of the battleships was like a fiery football thrown in an arch six or eight miles long, a 16 inch projectile with a fiery tracer in the tail. Some of them we could even see land though it was so far away we were never sure we were looking at the right explosion.

Few people are aware of what is involved in the firing of one of these monstrous projectiles from a rolling ship.

There is almost always a roll of some kind to the ocean's surface and thus to a ship's hull, but the big guns are held steady on the horizon by a large gyroscope or counter weight, so that the gun turrets stay on a steady level while the ship rolls under them. One day while this part of the operation was underway we received word that Japanese fleet units had been sighted heading in our direction. That was a first for us and it sure got our attention. We in CIC immediately went back into a high alert status and plans of action started coming through from the flagship - Combat Air Patrol to protect the force to be provided by fighters from the small carriers and the big carriers provide the planes ready on deck with armaments loaded to deal with the Japanese ships.

Nothing different about these roles in the battle plan. We had found this was a good division of responsibility among the carriers, but for this action the ship formation was totally different from the usual task group circular formation.

For this battle the formation would have the big surface ships in line abreast on the front row facing out from the islands. The next row would be the medium sized ships, mostly the cruisers in lines abreast. In the last row closest to the islands and prepared to launch at a moment's notice were the carriers, large and small. This new and unfamiliar formation indicated to us that the high command , Admiral Spruance's staff, fully expected a major surface engagement.

What a surprise there was in store for them!

I tried to visualize what the formation would look like from the air. It would have looked like something one of the earliest naval powers in the Mediterranean, like the Carthaginians might have used, but no time to worry about that now.

Our snoopers and submarines kept us pretty well informed of the Japanese ships' position and their composition. We knew there were a large number of carriers and heavy ships. We knew when their carrier planes would be in striking distance and we were in formation and ready to meet them.

We were ready in CIC with all personnel on station and our CAP overhead when the first large raid showed up on my radar screen at 80 miles NE. That's a long way out for them to launch. It also meant they were very high so I sent our fighters out immediately at Angels 20, which meant they would be climbing on their way.

By now all of the small carriers had their CAP's on the way to meet the ever growing groups of raiders. It was obvious the battle in the air would be a major one

As I watched on our radar screen and relayed information to the pilots the "tally-ho" calls started to come in, first from our fighters – then from others until the radio traffic became a jumble. From my screen I could see the air was full of planes, perhaps the greatest number we had ever faced. Calls of "many bogies" could be heard until one of our planes radio button got stuck down blocking all voice traffic.

It looked like there were more than 200 raiders but it also appeared that our fighters were doing their job, breaking up the raids so that most were unable to get through.

As reports started coming back from the fighters, the enemy strategy began to come clear. CIC was alive with activity just keeping track of what was going on in the air at long range and close in to the formation.

The screen of the radar was so full of targets we were beginning to lose track of friend and foe alike, the ultimate problem in every type

of warfare, enemy overload and now we are seeing it in the modern electronic warfare, too.

But now reports from the air battles began to reveal the Japanese strategy. Instead of returning to their own ships the Japanese pilots had been instructed to head for the islands for landing. From our individual pilot reports a few enemy planes got through and attacked some of our big ships but most planes headed for the islands. That revealed what we had missed in the Japanese strategy all along. Their ships had turned for home as soon as they launched giving the ships a head start getting away. It was late in the day before we had a fix on their fleet's position, but our big carrier planes which had been ready all day were now being launched, even 4 of the Cabot's torpedo bombers were sent off to help build a massive attack force.

I will never forget hearing this conversation between our attacking force leader and the radio voiced instructions issued by the Admiral's staff.

"Number 1, your new target position is -----"

And in a moment the attack leader's voice came back "Hey, wait a minute-----" ✓

The meaning was clear. To the attack leader, that new position was beyond the range of some of the attackers. The staff member confirmed the new position and that was it. As many as 100 of our attack planes were going out with no assurance they would come back, but they went anyway.

Now that they were on their way to the attack on the enemy ships, the realization of what was going to happen came clearer. The distance, 216 miles, make one bombing run, and get back to us would take about everything they had in their tanks.

First thing the carriers had to plan was to be ready to land them immediately - not difficult because we would see them first on our radars so we would all be headed into the wind.

But, wait a minute! IT WOULD BE AFTER DARK!

✓ Our ship had never practiced night landings and I suspected most of the pilots hadn't either. What about the ship's lighting system on deck? Who said we could even use our lights?

CIC had little responsibility in the landing process so we concentrated on what we could do best - identifying, and bringing them home by using our radars.

We had an electrical identification system for the planes and the formation had its own radio beacon so our CIC role was to help where we could.

After what seemed like hours but must have been less, the returning planes began to appear on our radars. And almost immediately some began reporting emergency fuel situations. We immediately notified the Bridge and the air Officer. The flag must have realized we had to turn on some lights so the order went out " all red truck lights visible from the air are to be used".

Returning planes were now able to find their own ship. If their tanks were down to nothing they could, and did land on any deck that was open. The newer carriers had additional lighting built into the flight deck itself which most ships turned on.

Of the 4 planes that we sent out 2 returned to our deck, and 1 landed on one of the big carriers. To my recollection the 4th one of ours landed in the water and the pilot and crew were later rescued and returned to us by a destroyer. The Destroyers performed many rescues that night and in the days following. At least 2 visitors from other ships landed on us that night and their planes thrown overboard to make room for others.

One other noteworthy event happened when one of the returning planes mistook a thunder and lightning storm 50 miles south of us as the lights of the formation. We gave him directions back to the formation but we don't know if he ever made it.

The task force patrolled the area for 2 days and many more daytime rescues were made.

When the entire score for the Marianas operation was totaled up 473 Japanese planes were launched against our task force that day. Well over 300 enemy aircraft were destroyed, by some counts, up to 395 planes, officially.

Counting only those of ours that were lost in defending against these attacks, there were 29 American planes shot down. The operation went on all day in waves of attackers every one of which were met so early and so vigorously that little damage to our ships or to our landing forces resulted.

This enemy technique of carriers launching planes with instructions to attack their target then to land on the nearest friendly territory was called "shuttle bombing" and Nimitz and Halsey at CINCPAC at Pearl Harbor had warned us that this was the perfect situation for the Japanese to use it .

A lot of lives were lost that day, mostly Japanese lives, but the greatest battle in naval air history was fought and won that day and the U.S. Navy's conviction that the aircraft carrier was the ship of the future was also once again proven that memorable day - June 19, 1944.



The Night Watch in CIC

Having served on the USS Cabot for about a half year in the forward area of the Pacific we radar watch officers and our men felt pretty experienced. We were a team. Not nearly as experienced as we would be, but still we had learned our jobs well. There were now five watch officers and since we stood watches of 4 hours and rotated as frequently as required by the threat level, we were experienced at our specialties. We had learned to expect the unexpected and to deal with it, with the big events and with the small ones.

the following is a typical, small mid-watch event as it unfolded:

At night on board USS Cabot,
Central Pacific, Forward Area.

Two inches of teakwood and a half inch of steel was all that separated us, the Combat Information Center (CIC), from the night sky outside. In the darkened room the antenna beam glided around the luminescent radar screen like a slowly moving windshield wiper that decided to continue around in a full circle.

The CIC was mostly lit by the light from radar screens and the big, vertical plotting board in the middle of the room. The men on the mid-watch sat around as men do when they're tired and had enough, and know there will be more tomorrow.

There was a slight roll to the ship but when you've been at sea for as long as we had, you notice the roll more when it is not there than when it is.

As the antenna beam passed 320 degrees a light trace appeared and held on the luminescent screen at about 75 miles. It was as if the beam had given a little extra squirt of electrons at that point, which is exactly what happens when the long narrow beam of a radar sniffs

out a distant target.

I was tired . We were all tired. We had been at general quarters most of the day and part of the night in hostile waters dealing with this sort of thing, and now it looked as if we might have another unwelcome visitor.

I picked up the sound powered phone. The radar operator had already spotted it. The antenna beam had stopped on the target which meant he was studying it. "What does it look like?" I asked. The voice came back, "Large, single plane, about angels 20". It was Pettit's voice and he spoke with assurance. He should have, our senior Petty Officer was one of the best in the fleet at his job. But he was showing off when he gave me the altitude so fast. He was guessing at 20,000 feet because of picking up a single at that distance. But where we were you sometimes lived or died based on that kind of guess.

The man behind the big vertical plastic plotting board began to put up the information, printing backwards as always, to make it readable from in front. He had two plots of the target, the second plot closer to us, by an inch. I asked the plotter to get course and speed as soon as possible. Then I leaned over and flipped down the switch on the line to the bridge.

"Bridge, this is Combat". I said

"Bridge, aye, aye". He replied

"Is the Officer of the deck there?"

"This is the Officer of the deck"

"I've got a single bogie north of us at about 75 miles. Seems to be closing"

I made it as casual as possible. Some OD's get spooked by reports like that depending on how you report it to them. There was a long pause from the voice on the bridge.

"Well, what do you think, Combat ?"

It sounded like Lieutenant Commander Zymanski and there was no panic in his voice. I knew he was wondering if he should hit the General Quarters button. There were now four plots on the big board and the track had taken a crossing course.

"Bridge, our snooper now seems to be on more of a crossing course. We'll keep you advised of any changes"

"Very well". The voice came back. This is an impersonal Navy response that only means they have received the information. It doesn't mean they know what the heck to do about it. In this case it likely meant the OD had decided not to wake the Captain out of a badly needed sleep.

I heard a tapping sound on the plotting board and picked up my sound powered phone. Every ship in the Navy had a ton of these because even when the electrical system goes out, these still work.

The operators voice said "I can see he's dropping Window".

I looked down at my own screen. Yes, the target was dropping Window - bundles of foil strips dropped high in the air creating a false target designed to confuse enemy radars. Of course, it helped us more than it confused us, because it clearly identified them as enemy snoopers who had spotted us. I thought to check with other ships in the formation, but we were in radio silence.

I looked down at the blip on my screen and wondered what it looked like in the plane - three, or perhaps, four men bundled in warm flight jackets huddled over their instruments or weapons, looking like a scene out of Hollywood. Did they all have families and homes the way we did? I looked around the compartment at the men sleepily manning their battle stations. Were these men having the same thoughts as most men do when they have been at this kind of thing for too long?

I turned back to my own luminescent screen and settled down for what might be a long night of playing electronic tag with a distant snooper.

How long would this go on? Months in the Central Pacific attacking islands in preparation for invasion - fighting off attackers and snoopers, sending out our fighters to intercept them. The pilots were friends you chatted amiably with in the ward room knowing some of them might not come back, or might crash on the flight deck when they landed. We could hear it when it happened because the flight deck was right over our heads. We could hear them go off too.

I was jolted back to reality by a tapping noise. The plotter behind the big board had written "target fading" beside the last plot on the board.

I reported that to the bridge and got the same "very well" response.

My watch would be over soon and the next important decision I would have to make was, should I flop in my bunk and get what sleep I can or should I go have a cup of coffee in the ward room where the pilots might be having their never ending game of poker? But on a ship at sea not all decisions are that easy.

Our Senior Petty Officer Pettit, had come to me privately with a problem. Some of the men had been beefing about one of the CIC watch-officers getting bossy, even autocratic, and putting out some unreasonable orders.

✓ Men always have beefs. It's part of being on a ship under constant pressure. But a happy ship is one where the serious beefs are quietly taken care of and everybody wants a happy ship.

Pettit never hesitated to give advice to officers when he knew he had a sympathetic ear. And one thing he said to me in our private conversation stuck with me long after the war.

"We know who gives the orders but you should never give the men an order to do something you wouldn't do yourself".

I gave Pettit no reassurance I could fix the problem but took it on myself to watch the young officer. He was younger than the rest of us and a few hints were all that was needed to make him see the trouble he was making for himself by giving the men an unreasonable

order without staying with it to carry it out.

Not long after this the opportunity came up to test Pettit's advice. It was during a night watch when a storm was creating a heavy sea outside and one of our radars had temporarily been put out of action by water somehow getting into the equipment. Water and electronic equipment don't mix well. This radar compartment was a small room about 40 feet removed from the main CIC room but along the catwalk on the same side of the ship.

The young officer in question happened to have the watch so I asked him what he would suggest doing about it. His decision was a good one. The first thing we needed to do was to have a look at it. So he organized an inspection party of 5. This included the 2 Radar Operators on watch who, without the equipment, were just sitting around. Then there were two other brave souls who volunteered for this job and himself.

I warned them all to stay together "You're not out there to wander around on the flight deck". Then, they went out of CIC to an open catwalk with him in the lead. Walking on a bare flight deck in weather like this could be dangerous but this flight deck was full of planes parked and lashed firmly to the deck. The ship was rolling heavily and the wind was driving what little rain was coming down but it was not as dangerous as it could have been and they made their inspection and returned without delay. Back in the dry CIC compartment they agreed that, - somehow enough water had gotten into the radar compartment to soak the equipment which would need to be dried out - probably piece by piece - and we would need a daylight inspection to figure out how to keep it from happening again.

The radar repair officer and his skilled electronics men worked full time for two and one half days to get it going again. Luckily for us these were low activity days for air operations.

Whenever I look back on this event I remember the early episodes at the firefighter school on the island in Boston Harbor and the admonition of the instructors, "No. 1, you take the nozzle" I'm reminded the Navy expects officers to lead.

The young one made the right decision that night.

All of these small events were happening as the big picture was evolving. Over the months of 1944

Task Force 38 or 58 (mostly the same group) was making coordinated attacks on islands and island groups held by the Japanese in the Pacific.

29. Jan. 1944 Invasion of Marshall Islands

Attack on Truk Island

Palau Islands

Wolea Island

Hollandia Island

Truk Island

Marianas – Guam, Saipan, Tinian

Bonin Islands - Chi Chi Jima – Ha Ha Jima

Iwo Jima

Sept. 1944 Invasion of Palau Islands

The big important targets were beginning to come into focus for the personnel of the USS Cabot.

The Streamlined Bait

I don't know who named this one the "Streamlined Bait" episode but it may be one of those operations in naval warfare that didn't succeed, but the high command that planned it wanted the story to be preserved anyway.

This is how it all came about.

It was a clear, sunny day and we already had our first CAP (Combat Air Patrol) of 8 planes launched and overhead. CIC (Combat Information Center) was fully manned.

Our ship normally operated as one of a large force of ships. However, occasionally some of these ships would be reorganized into smaller units designed for specific missions.

Picture this - our ship, a small aircraft carrier, two light cruisers for AA protection and five destroyers, had been separated from our usual Task Group of big ships, and sent on a specific mission to protect a damaged cruiser that was under tow retiring from hostile waters near Formosa.

I don't know why we got the assignment. There were other ships of our size and similar number of planes. Actually I think our skipper could have volunteered us for it. He was a real eager beaver.

The ship under tow had been hit by a torpedo, but was salvageable if she could be towed out of danger. Under tow by cruisers, the group could only make about 3 knots, so for three or four days they would be in danger of efforts by the enemy to finish her off.

In CIC the lighting was low but the activity level was high. It was at its highest pitch - general quarters - all hands at their battle stations. There was a feeling of tension everywhere. The two men behind their

vertical plotting board were tracking several targets, putting up information as the radar operators fed it to them. There was the buzz of low level phone conversations in CIC - lookout reports, bridge reports, ship's gunners. There was radio communication with pilots or other ships - all concerning information our air and surface search radars were providing.

All of them, the lookouts, the bridge, the gunners, the pilots could see what was going on in visual range around the formation. In CIC we saw what the ship's radars showed us, what was in the vast space beyond the visible. To an aircraft carrier and its pilots the value of that information couldn't be measured.

My own station was at a luminescent screen that gave me an exact duplicate of info available on any of the ships radars. We had something that looked like trouble on the air search right now.

"Opal One, this is Opal" I said into the phone.

"This is Opal One".

"I think I have some business for you. Vector 325, Angels 15, Buster".

"Roger, 325, Angels 15, Buster".

You don't have time to worry when you do it, but I had just sent 8 fighter pilots, to do battle, to shoot enemy planes down, as many as they could.

Now I had to keep them informed about distance, altitude, numbers of planes and their course - until they had their target in sight.

The pilots' chances of getting back unharmed were about 10-1 but nobody had time to think about that, either. Our pilots were good and their planes were good. They had done this before. They were young, and experienced and eager. We had worked together through a lot of other episodes of this kind.

In CIC the story, as it happens, is going out to every battle station on

the ship. On my screen, our own fighters led by Opal one are showing as an electronic target on their way to an intercept.

Tension grows as the interception is plotted on the big board. I can hear the men in the room reporting it to the stations concerned.

"Tally ho, 11 o'clock - many bogies - many bogies." This pilot's voice was shouting almost as if he wanted to be sure we heard him back on the ship. As the targets closed on my screen I could visualize the maneuvering that was going on in the air. There followed some excited exchanges among the pilots, "Coming in on the left!" "Look out! Look out!" until Opal 1 cut in and stopped them. From there on hand signals would be used.

We had sent 8 fighters to meet and break up a raid of a large number of torpedo planes, dive bombers and fighters. There would be no further reports from the pilots - they would be too busy just staying alive in the melee that followed. We would be sending off additional fighters momentarily to meet what enemy planes came through and to help those fighters on the scene. Recent experience told us that not many enemy pilots would get through because they were inexperienced and without the skill to find their target. They would head home as soon as they had the chance. About half would likely be shot down for the same reason, inexperience

Our pilots, especially the first ones, would go a long way today toward making "ace" - that magical goal of five kills sought by all fighter pilots since World War I.

Above our heads we could hear the action on the flight deck, additional fighters being readied and now one being fired off the catapult, which sounded like an explosion of steam where we were in CIC.

" Opal this is Opal one, over" I grabbed the radio phone.
" This is Opal, help is on the way"
" Roger that"

Conversations tended to get a lot shorter when you're in action.

Soon we would begin to hear reports from the extra division of fighters we sent out. If those were favorable, all remaining planes on the flight deck would be moved forward and the deck made ready to land our returning fighters - damaged planes or injured pilots first in the circle. Depending on immediate circumstances, badly damaged planes would be tossed over the side after the pilots were out.

The LSO (Landing Signal Officer) would be on his platform on the stern port quarter of the ship with his signal flags ready to tell each pilot if the plane has the proper altitude, heading and speed and finally, if the plane's tail hook is down. If not, he would wave the pilot off to go around and try another landing.

On this operation one pilot did not return. A few planes had enough damage to be sent down to the hangar deck for repair. The pilot of the missing plane was eventually rescued by a float plane from one of the battleships

Late in the day, CIC had returned to a normal watch rotation - four hours on and eight off. Word came to us that another ship like the Cabot, the USS Cowpens, would soon join us. Also, another cruiser had been damaged and would join the towing group. It looked as if the Flag had decided more and bigger raids might be expected tomorrow. People on admiral's staffs tend to think ahead. That day when it was all over our pilots had shot down 26 fighters and bombers, and the pilots of the Cowpens 8 more.

I looked around at the men in the darkened compartment. Their endurance had been stretched today and they showed it. There was little information on the plotting board - just the position of the towing unit - about ten miles South of us, giving us space enough in which to operate freely, landing and launching aircraft. Also, we couldn't saunter along at 3 knots and make ourselves an easy target for lurking submarines. We had to keep moving around inside a wide circle of destroyers.

Some of the men scheduled for the mid-watch would already be in their bunks trying to grab some shut-eye. They had earned it today.

If they were already asleep, those men would miss the usual late evening pep talk by the Captain or Chaplain on the ship's speaker system. This was always a sign of expected action the following day. But tonight's message would be different. As I began to nod off I couldn't believe my ears when I heard the ship's Senior Medical Officer say, "Be sure to put on clean underwear in the morning". He might have added "that's so, if you get wounded tomorrow, you won't get infected from dirty underwear" - but he didn't.

That's a pep talk?

The next morning I jumped into my clothes and headed for CIC first thing. The word was the cripple group was on its way to a rendezvous with a seagoing tug, whatever that is. I was always impressed at how coordinated the Navy could be when faced with a problem at sea. And that was nothing compared to what the Flag had planned for us.

Now the real strategy began to come into focus. Ostensibly the other ships of our own task force, including the big ships, had left us to protect this small moving group, while they went to rest and replenish.

Actually they had left us for a cold but calculated reason, which, if any of us had known it, would probably have sent us into a case of instant battle fatigue. We didn't know it because admirals don't share their strategy with just anyone. They let it dawn on others. The rest of the force had retired about 60 miles east and waited, over the horizon, for enemy surface units to come after us: we were the "Bait" in a well prepared trap.

I headed down to the ward room for a quick breakfast. We were already at Flight Quarters and the planes - the first CAP of the day - were being prepared for launch. In the ward room the stewards mates were already preparing the room for what it became during battles, a temporary hospital and morgue.

After a bite I headed back to CIC expecting a long day ahead.

The pilots would spend most of their day in and out of the Ready

Room, being briefed and flying.

The first CAP would be 4 planes over head. Our sister ship, the Cowpens, would have 4 planes covering the group under tow in case a low flying bomber like a Betty, came after them.

As the morning wore on nothing developed but by afternoon we had 8 fighters in the air. No bogies yet, except an occasional single plane flying between Formosa and Luzon in the Philippines. We would normally try to intercept those, but not today.

At around 13.25 it happened. The air search got its first faint target at about 70 miles north. With each sweep of the antenna the target grew and the radar operator reported it appeared to be many planes. After making sure it wasn't a land target, I started our fighters North and reported to the bridge. The Captain's voice came back "Thank you Combat, keep me informed". He sounded calm because he had likely already seen the target on his own repeater on the bridge. Soon General Quarters would be sounded. The Bo'sun would sound "attention" on his pipe and call "all hands man your battle stations".

"Opal 6-1, this is Opal, continue vector 330, Angels15, Buster"

"6-1 Roger". "

"6-1, looks like large target. Many bogies. "

CIC was now filling with men and there was a low buzz of conversation with each man getting updated on the situation, checking his equipment, checking the big board. They had done it all before. In Army terms, they would be called "seasoned troops".

I looked at my screen. Something different seemed to be happening to the radar target. The big board showed it was not making much progress towards us but seemed to be splitting into two groups. I reported this to the bridge and then checked with the CIC on the Cowpens. They concurred. I told them to concentrate their planes on intercepting the group that seemed to be going after the crippled ships. We would tackle the other raid coming for us.

It looked like yesterday was just a rehearsal for what would happen today - and so it was.

Today's raid, just the one coming after us, appeared to be about 70 planes of all shapes and sizes. Everything the enemy could put in the air. It turned out the Cowpens reported about the same number in the raiding group assigned to them.

And so the day went. Every fighter who could fly from either ship saw action, and their success was overwhelming. A few single raiders got into our groups of ships including the cripples where one of them took another hit but still stayed afloat. In our group we heard the guns on our ship, the familiar blam, blam, blam, and sometimes the pop, pop, pop of the 20 millimeter cannon which meant the targets were close to the ship. All were shot down by AA fire.

By the end of the day it appeared that one of our pilots had gone down but the other pilots had spotted him in the water and within two hours he was picked up by a float plane from one of the cruisers. These cruiser pilots performed some miraculous rescues.

During the day the story that we had been designated by the Flag as the "Streamlined Bait" had spread throughout the ship. Scuttlebutt travels fast on a ship. By evening even a better story had evolved out of it, that the Japanese Navy had been sighted at sea and coming after us. And, further, that our 6 or 7 torpedo planes were being readied to fight them off.

As I headed down to my room from my last visit to CIC, I was passing one of the planes being serviced on the hangar deck. No special activity was going on, but when I passed the cockpit I looked up and noticed someone had stored a comic book that was wedged in against the planes' transparent canopy. Can you guess what the title on the cover was? "War Birds".

The next day was a relatively quiet day with only a few snoopers to bother us. No one in CIC seemed unhappy with that. It turned out the crippled group had joined up with the seagoing tugs the previous day. I wondered how the skipper of a tug might feel being involved in an

aerial attack on the open sea.

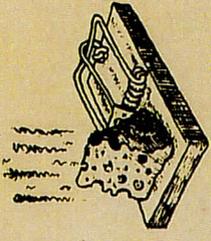
October 16, 1944 should go down in naval aviation history as the day when so few of our pilots faced so many enemy planes and dealt with them so successfully. The "Marianas Turkey Shoot" in which our entire force of ships and planes, in one day shot down 395 enemy planes, may be the biggest air battle our Navy has ever fought. But, surely these two ships, the USS Cabot and the USS Cowpens, both CVLs (light carriers specifically designed for this type of mission) have set some kind of record. And, if there is no category for this kind of record there should be.

Almost every pilot who flew achieved a score and some became aces that day. Even one of our torpedo plane pilots who was flying routine anti-submarine patrol downed a raider because he was quoted as saying, "He got in my way"

Luckily I have kept up a correspondence with one of the radar operators, John Ackers, RDM, 2C, who has helped me with some recollections of the past. At my request he recently wrote this recollection.

"The only thing I did was when we were escorting the two torpedoed cruisers, the USS Canberra and the USS Houston, from Formosa on the way to Pearl Harbor. You were the Fighter Director Officer and I was on radar watch back in the rear Radar Room. I picked up a Jap *Jake* and sent the report in to you. and you directed our CAP to him and they shot him down".

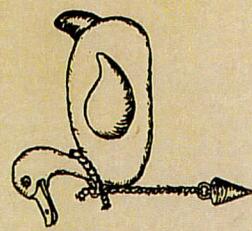
How is that for remembering the details of something that happened sixty four years ago? You can expect that every RDM in the division has a story like that to tell



Creations



To all who shall see these Presents:
Know Ye: That reposing special trust and confidence
in the **Superficial Qualities** of



LIEUTENANT REINALD WERRENATH, JR.

He has been appointed

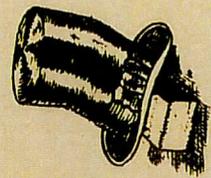
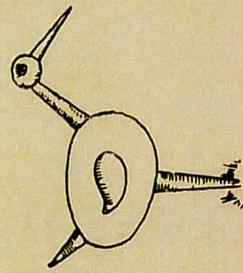
Hall Guy

in the Streamlined Bait Group of the

Battered Remnants

of the

Blue Fleet



Done on board the U.S.S. Santa Fe (Flag)
on the 18th Day of October in the Year
Shackle Mike Jig Nray Peter Ung Shackle

Subscribed

R. Michael

Commanding U.S.S. CABOT

L. J. Reed Jr.

Combatron



The Battle of Leyte Gulf

In Sept. 1944 when the 5th fleet became the 3rd fleet and Admiral "Bull" Halsey took over command of the fast carrier task forces could best be described as when Task Force 38, using a lot of muscle, started making the Phillipine Sea our home waters, and Ulithi and Saipan our regular anchorages, and the Philippine Islands our apparent objective.

Now our task group started carrying out a series of strikes on air bases and harbors in the Philippines:

Mindorao Island, Koror, Davao, Tachloban, Cebu, Leyte, Luzon and Manilla itself - all this over a period of several weeks in preparation for invasion.

But where?

The Philippine Islands are one of the largest and most complex collection of islands in the world. At that time, lucky for us, we had someone close at hand who in a military sense knew these Islands as well as any person alive - General Douglas MacArthur. Ever since he was chased out by the Japanese early in the war, had been preparing to lead the return invasion. He sat down with Admiral Nimitz at CINCPAC and developed a plan for landing a major invasion force at Leyte Gulf - a vast anchorage opening on to the west side of the Philippine Sea. CINCPAC even assigned him a Navy of his own headed by Admiral Kinkaid.

True, his Navy was made up of old warships and support ships, some of which had most likely been resurrected from the bottom of Pearl Harbor - old Battleships, old Cruisers, Destroyers, Destroyer Escorts all of them left with a lot of fight in them. And for air cover there were numerous Escort Carriers each with a full complement of planes. In addition, because these waters are inter island waters and restricted

and narrow there would be a fleet of Torpedo Boats available.

We in our Fast Carrier Task Groups would be making sure nothing came at the landing troops from the Philippine Sea.

We did not realize it at the time but the scene was being set for the greatest naval battle in history to be fought in this corner of the world in the next few days. The setting would be the Philippine Sea and adjoining islands and waters and the Cabot would have a significant role in it.

I sometimes wondered why the Cabot seemed always to end up in the hot spot of the upcoming action. Maybe we were just lucky.

Right now, early in October 1944, along with the other ships of TG38.2, our ship had been busy with air strikes throughout the Central Philippines.

Remember no substantial landings had yet been made.

We in CIC spent most of the time intercepting incoming raids or snoopers, or steering pilots home from intercepts. We were in tropical waters so the weather was balmy and gave us the opportunity to make some extra effort in effecting rescue.

One of our pilots who went down got the aid of a native and spelled the name of the ship, "Cabot", on the beach where some of our pilots saw it and called it in. Eventually he was picked up by a float plane.

Major fleet operations of the Japanese were being reported by our submarines and other sources.

Slowly but surely we began to understand the strategic picture that was coming together for Admiral Halsey and his staff in the Flag Ship New Jersey.

Our landing forces, that is MacArthur's forces and ships had just arrived at Leyte Gulf.

All sources of information indicated the Japanese Navy had organized and dispatched a multi-pronged attack on the forces now offloading at Leyte. One unit of ships made up largely of what remained of the Japanese aircraft carriers was coming directly from the homeland waters to attack our carriers in the Philippine Sea. The remaining attacking groups were made up of surface ships coming

after the Leyte landing from different directions. One group of heavy ships, including two of the heaviest Battleships in the world would come through the Sibuyan Sea in the central islands, sortie the San Bernardino Straits into the Philippine Sea and travel South to attack the landings.

The remaining Japanese forces, two Battleships a Cruiser and four Destroyers coming through the Islands to the Southwest and through Surigao Strait would attack the Leyte landing forces at night.

How all this information was obtained and put together is a tribute to our Admirals and their staffs. The Japanese plan was brilliant and appeared to be an all or nothing strategy on their part. CINCPAC asked Admiral Halsey to lay out a counter strategy.

He proposed the following: There were three of our Task Groups available right now in the Philippine Sea. TG 38.2 would remain in the vicinity of San Bernardino Strait. TG 38.3 Would remain in waters North to meet Japanese Carrier forces coming from home waters, and TG 38.4 would remain in a position close at hand to back up any of the other groups that needed it. One new Task Group, TG 34 consisting only of heavy ships that could be assembled on short notice from the heavy ships in the three available TGs would be planned to guard San Bernardino if needed. A fourth Carrier Group replenishing at Ulithi would be called back to the area as soon as possible. Admiral Kinkaid developed his own plan for meeting the ships coming through the islands from the South.

It appeared to be a good plan. We would be with the TG patrolling the waters off San Bernardino. Just as our TG was making detailed plans on sending our planes against the Japanese group of heavy ships

we received some startling news. American Submarines trailing the Japanese Central Force off the West coast of the Palawan Islands had torpedoed and sunk an enemy Cruiser. It later turned out the ship had been Japanese Admiral Kurita's flagship. He was a very senior Admiral, and the one in charge of this entire operation. He was forced to abandon his flag ship and move his flag to another ship. He chose the Yamato, one of the largest Battleships in the world with 18 inch guns. Defying all treaty restrictions, Japan built three of these in preparation for making war on the US. Two of these giants were in

this TG as it reorganized itself. Not exactly what you would call a successful start for the Admiral.

Further reports from the submarines and aircraft indicated the force had continued and the next day would be transiting the Sibuyan Sea. The waters between the Sea and the San Bernardino Straights were quite restricted giving big ships less room to maneuver so a major series of air attacks was planned by our TG for tomorrow.

It's amazing how a ship can come together and focus its efforts when everyone knows what he will be doing tomorrow. For example, on the assumption we will be at GQ most of the day I have to make sure our best radar operators are on the equipment at the times of greatest likelihood of air activity for our planes.

Some of our torpedo bombers will go in with the strikes as will some of our fighters. We will provide some fighters over the TG to intercept enemy air attacks, but after two weeks of our attacks on the Islands there is less likelihood of attacks on us.

But wait a minute! We just received a report that our task groups to the north have been hit by the leading group of Japanese carriers in a major air attack of 250 planes in which the USS Princeton was lost!

Another CVL just like our ship has been blown up and sunk in an attack employing the same "shuttle bombing", a tactic used by the Japanese in the first battle of the Philippine Sea at the Marianas. (All carrier planes take off in one mass attack, hit their target and proceed in to land, refuel and rearm). This means that all our fighters will see action tomorrow in protecting our group of ships and the bombing groups.

News of a sister ship blowing up and going down is unsettling. All those familiar scenes you see on your own ship every day are duplicated on the Princeton, only the faces are different. You can visualize what happened to those scenes.

We had had some ship damage from enemy sources in our task groups during the nine months we had been in the forward area, but the Princeton is gone, wiped out, sunk. Was this a reflection of

desperation on our enemy's part? Should we be expecting suicide tactics from here on?

The next day, October 24, dawned clear and bright and our crew in CIC were at their stations well before the first raids on the Japanese Central Force were launched. It was well into the day and a raid of torpedo bombers headed for the Japanese force before it reached the San Bernardino Straits. We were operating in waters just off the Strait thus offering no problems for our pilots on fuel consumption. Care and precision for bombs and torpedoes - put them where they hurt the most.

Which is what our pilots surely did. They reported great confusion and circling among the ships, several torpedoes hitting home and much effective bombing and strafing. Later reports from raids in the afternoon brought back eyewitness accounts of at least one battleship and one cruiser sunk, and one of the largest BBs in the world beached. The entire force had turned around and was headed west and away from the Straights.

Picture this - in the Air Combat Intelligence (ACI) Officer's office, which is adjoining CIC, one of the returning bomber pilots is being debriefed. Now we're getting the real story and it sounds as if there was massive damage done to the Central Japanese Force that day and our pilots were in the thick of it. By evening pilot reports were still coming in and the last one said the Japanese ships had turned around and were once again headed East.

Soon after receiving this report we received an order from the Flag that all Task Groups immediately join up and head North to engage a major Japanese force of Carriers coming from the home islands.

Most of us were uneasy about this. Did Admiral Halsey not know about the last sighting of the Central Force? How could he leave the San Bernardino Straights unguarded? He had even provided for just such a contingency by setting up, on paper, a Task Group 34.

Tomorrow looked to be another busy day in CIC. On the Cabot we could almost feel the speed of the ship quicken as we headed North. Those of us who would have to carry the brunt of tomorrow's activity tried to get some sleep, but it was a troubled sleep.

By morning developments started coming thick and fast. The north Japanese forces had been spotted by our search planes and were fleeing to the north at full speed. Strikes were planned and launched - then the dreadful news got to us. The powerful Central Force of Japanese ships had sortied the San Bernardino Straits, turned south, and part way down the Leyte coast had engaged units of Kincaid's fleet. Then the next thunderbolt hit. CINCPAC sent an open, uncoded radio message to Halsey saying, "where is Task group 34?", followed by a similar message from Admiral Kincaid. It was the ultimate embarrassment for Admiral Halsey.

Halsey had made a bad move in sending his entire force North and letting Admiral Kurita through the Strait, and by CINCPAC sending an uncoded query every ship knew he had made it.

Now Halsey had another dilemma on his hands – should he pursue the Northern Force or start South on the off chance he could accomplish something by trying to get back in time to intercept Kurita ? He was saved making a decision by having it made for him. CINCPAC ordered him to turn around and return. The trip north had resulted in the sinking of two Japanese Carriers. As the Cabot traveled south at high speed we and likely every other ship and Halsey himself pondered what happened and how it could be made right. But his big gun ships and his Carriers arrived too late to intercept Admiral Kurita's force which escaped back through the Strait. The only thing left for our force was to mop up a few crippled Japanese ships left from Kurita's engagement with units of Kincaid's fleet, and to make a few long range air attacks on Kurita's fleeing forces.

Admiral Kurita never did accomplish his primary objective, an attack on Leyte Gulf itself where the landings had been pretty well completed.

In CIC we were reviewing what happened.

Part way down the coast of Leyte, Kurita and his depleted force that were headed for Leyte Gulf had encountered a unit of Kincaid's Escort Carriers protected by a few destroyers. Badly outgunned the Americans who were totally surprised fought furiously even resorting

to smoke screens at one point. By the time Kurita decided to retire, two of the American Escort Carriers and two American Destroyers had been sunk.

However, the depleted condition of Admiral Kurita's forces and the fierce resistance of the American forces and the utter exhaustion of the Japanese Admiral himself convinced him to turn back from pressing on to the Gulf. That would have been suicide. Perhaps, too, his decision was a humanitarian one, - he wanted to prevent further blood shed among his crews. Those who remained alive had had enough.

When things had calmed down in CIC those of us still around discussed the events of the day.

The bright spots were - two Japanese Carriers of the Northern Force sunk - Four major ships of the Central Japanese Force including one of the world's largest Battleships, the *Mushasi*, were sunk - the fact that none of the enemy forces penetrated to attack the Gulf - and Kincaid's brilliant success in dealing with the combined Southern Japanese forces. We were just now beginning to hear the full story and it was just what we needed to cheer us up. By judicious use of his old Battleships, Cruisers, his Destroyers, and his Torpedo Boats in a night battle he was able to wipe the attacking force out by using one of the most traditional of naval battle maneuvers, "Crossing the T". It also would have been the perfect maneuver to use at San Bernardino Strait if anyone had been there to do it.

Who knew those old ships had that much fight left in them?

But now that we had time to think about it, what had made Halsey decide to take all the fast ships north to attack the North Japanese force? That was the topic for discussion throughout the Cabot. Was it because he always favored an attack on carriers because they were an available target? Possibly.

Was it because he never got the message that the Central Japanese force had reversed course? It's known he had been up for at least 48 stress filled hours and went to bed early on the evening of October 24, 1944, leaving orders not to be disturbed. Though all of us felt it was a mistake, we asked ourselves why didn't his staff on the flagship feel the same way?

By developing a plan in advance to deploy a Task Group 34, all big ships, he reassured CINCPAC about the Central Force. Did he or his staff forget to deploy it? We'll never know for sure, but exhaustion will do strange things to a person and the war will go on. The Japanese suffered a crushing blow and the Philippines surely will be totally in our hands soon.

Is the Japanese Navy leadership on its last legs? We were about to find out what desperation measures they were ready to take in the face of predictable defeat.

U.S.S. CABOT

CVL28/P15/00
SERIAL NUMBER: 265

c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California,
15 April 1945.

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Lieutenant Reinald WERRENRATH, Jr., (A)X, USNR., (172303).
Subject: Philippine Liberation Ribbon with Two Bronze Stars -
Authorization to Wear.
Reference: (a) Alnav 64-45.

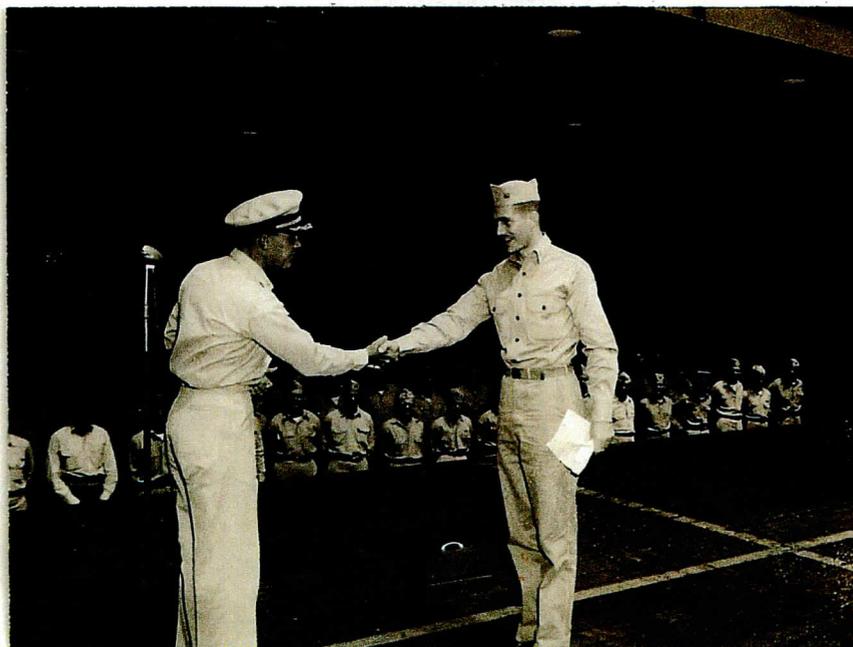
1. Under the provisions of reference (a) you are hereby authorized to wear the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two bronze stars; being aboard this vessel in Philippine waters and participating in the initial landing operations on Leyte and adjoining islands from 17 October to 20 October 1944; participating in an engagement against the enemy during the campaign, this vessel being actually under enemy air attack and fire; having served in Philippine waters more than thirty days commencing with 17 October 1944.

D. W. Smith

W. W. SMITH.

Copy to:

BuPers
Jacket
File





Kamikaze !

On November 25, 1944 our ship was still working with the other fast carriers trying to clear Japanese planes and ships out of the Philippines. Then one night while we were conducting night interceptions in the passage between the Philippines and Formosa our task group just kept on steaming through the passage into the China Sea. A quick look at a map would tell you what a vast new area is opened up by this move. A whole new section of the Philippine Islands, the West side of Mindoro, and Mindanao, and the commercial ship traffic supplying the vital needs of Japan itself, the steel the energy, the food, the clothing for 75 million people.

For CIC and the air groups on board we were busy attacking shipping targets and occasional land bases still in enemy hands. Very little in the way of air targets – perhaps some commercial air traffic which we assumed was military.

For about one week we traveled the South China Sea destroying the merchant shipping all the way to the China coast until 25% of all Japanese commercial ship traffic had been sunk. Then one night we just up and left the China Sea – the same way we came in. It was if all the Admirals and Captains had gotten together and just said “Oh, well, we’re here at the passage anyway, we might as well leave”. Of course, we were aware command level decisions were not made that way, but when Halsey was in charge who knew? This bold and successful strike must have driven the Japanese military command to desperation.

Could this have been the beginning of the end, or was it just the end of the beginning?

We had pretty well taken control of the Philippines

before we realized this war was changing. We were getting more and more suicide attacks on ships of the fast carrier task forces particularly Destroyers. So many of them were hit by enemy planes crashing them there must have been a tactical change by the enemy. The ships would usually be DDs on "picket duty" stationed outside the main body of ships where they could report approaching planes and aid in intercepting them. This was a new tactic on our part.

But, the Japanese played no favorites and even the Cabot had its experience with suicide tactics and it was a deadly one.

Those moments are etched in my memory. A flight of our torpedo bombers were being launched for a final attack on Luzon and the last one had been hooked up to the catapult. The look-outs had just reported enemy planes on the outskirts of the formation. There had been so much enemy activity it was no surprise, but these planes seemed to come directly at *us*. It was as if we had been assigned to them as their target.

The first one came in across the Starboard side over the big radar antenna making a two foot gash in it as it went by - then continued on a downward slanting path from high to low across the deck knocking the spinning propeller off the plane on the catapult and crashing into the port catwalk and gun tub destroying a quad 40 mm gun mount and killing 35 sailors and marines. Immediately following that we had a Kamikaze come after us from the stern port quarter. This one didn't quite make it but exploded close enough to injure some of the aft gun crew members.

Were they working as a team? The action of these two made it seem likely. In CIC we were all pretty much stunned by the hit. The first attacker had come in across the ship not far from over our heads and had blown a 6 foot hole at the flight deck level port side, close enough for us to feel the blast, smell the gunpowder, and see the residue hanging in the air.

The Executive officer , the #2 on the ship, had recently changed his General Quarters Battle Station from After Steering Control to CIC and he set a fine example of behavior for the CIC crew after the explosion. I can clearly hear him saying, "everybody check your

equipment". And he said it immediately. It focused everybody back on their jobs, gave them a useful action and put their attention back where it should be. CIC was soon back in partial operation. It also gave each of us a few minutes to review what we did at the crucial moments of attack.

My recollection is that I followed my own instincts and did the logical thing, I ducked down. This may have been the practical thing to do but was it the proper thing? In view of the fact the explosion was about 25 feet from our room, we didn't have a lot of time to make a carefully thought out decision. So we got back to the here and now, "what happens from here on?"

This was the worst day we've had for casualties, (35). Because of the way the plane hit us most of our men were blown overboard. However, there were still enough remains that a burial at sea was planned. We were under way in open ocean waters. This is a sobering experience as are most religious observances on a ship. As I remember there is a guard of honor for the dead. The remains have been sewn into heavy canvas bags loaded with heavy weights so that they will go to the bottom and stay there. The Chaplain said a few meaningful words and then the bag slid down shutes into the sea. Perhaps the reason for its significance is in its simplicity.

It turned out we had been hurt badly enough to be sent back to Ulithi for repairs, primarily patching the 6 foot hole. Our radar technicians would be busy full time working with the radar people from the repair ship on installing a new antenna. Luckily such a commodity was available and we were able to keep pace with the hole patching, and can you guess who paid us a visit during all this repair work? ---- Admiral "Bull" Halsey came up over the side totally unannounced, unaccompanied and went directly to where the work was in progress. By the greatest good fortune I was on deck near the ladder where his boat had pulled up – a total surprise to everyone and I immediately saw why he made an impression on everyone around him. He was a commanding presence.....heavy brows, heavy features, heavy proportions, and his manner and voice told you that he was in command.

No possibility this man could have made the kind of mistake he made

at San Bernardino Straight if he had been the same man I saw that day on the Cabot.

We were soon once again able to join our Task Group. The Kamakazi attack had happened, on December 11, 1944. Now our ship was underway again to attack Mindoro Island in the Philippines as part of Task Group 38.2.

We were striking in the area near Manila in preparation for MacArthur and his army to move in. Word was sent to us by Halsey's staff that a typhoon was on its way to our area and that we should clear the region and move away from shore to avoid the storm. A typhoon is the same thing as a hurricane except in the Pacific this big, powerful, circular storm has a different name.

Apparently the staff officers who decided on the course we should all take did not have the experience with typhoons that they needed because they sent us directly into the path of the typhoon and to about six to eight hours of battering by an angry sea in which the task group strayed apart endangering themselves and others.

This is what a Typhoon is like for a ship's crew.

Inside the hull of the ship anything that isn't lashed down breaks loose on the steel decking and is sliding noisily back and forth with every roll of the ship. Very little noise of the storm is heard inside, just the racket of someone's personal gear, or cups and glassware, or furniture or, heaven forbid, ammunition, or plane parts roll across or scrape across the steel decks. It says in the manual that our ship's maximum roll capacity is 37 degrees. Many of our people say it was closer to 70 degrees that day.

The real tragedy is that during the storm there were three destroyers that completely turned turtle because of improper ballasting for a storm. These ships had been preparing for fueling so some of their fuel tanks were completely empty making the ships too buoyant for a heavy sea.

The next day when the storm had cleared and the ships had gotten back together, a search was made of the area and it was reported

that of the roughly 700 crew that were lost, only 70 were found.

That typhoon shook us up pretty well. In fact, there were times we rolled so far I wondered whether we were ever going to roll back. We even lost a few planes over the side, but we were lucky. Some of the other light and heavy carriers had hangar deck fires and many planes lost. On a flight deck crowded with planes even though the planes are lashed down, if one is broken loose by the forces of the water over the deck, it is almost bound to break other planes loose by battering them. When that happens they are sure to go over the side, and you are better off if they do.

It's hard to believe the power of a mass of sea water until you see the damage that can be done by it. One of the big carriers had her forward 20 feet of flight deck bent up by the force of a wave during the storm and destroyers have had their bow deck plates bent in by masses of storm water pounding on them. The repair ships in Ulithi will be busy for some time to come.

At one time a roommate of mine was in the gunnery department and was in charge of the quad 40mm gun mount on the bow under the lip of the flight deck. He said that gun got so much water in storms he fully expected it to squirt water the next time the crew fired it. Visualize that if you can.

I had one more experience worth mentioning and this time a happy one. A good friend and former college fraternity brother, Henry W. Lowe reported on board for duty in CIC. He had known the kind of work I was doing and had asked for it when he received his commission. When he finished his training and was sent out to the fleet he saw there was a billet open on the Cabot and asked for it. Our wives were going to be really happy about this, they were classmates in college. I couldn't have been happier. An old chum to get broken in to this ship's way of operating, particularly under enemy fire. A few days after he arrived we in CIC were under attack at night for a couple of hours and when the all clear sounded I heard a familiar voice at my side say, "so that's the way it feels, eh?"

I hadn't realized you could get so accustomed to the pressures of a Combat Information Center under attack.



Carriers.

Light Ships Protect Pacific Task Force

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON, July 5.—The Navy disclosed today that nine light aircraft carriers, built on cruiser hulls, have taken over a big and important tactical role in the war against Japan—protection for big carrier task forces.

"They have a deadly sting," reported the navy in revealing for the first time some of the duties to which the U. S. S. Independence, Princeton, Belleau Woods, Cowpens, Monterey, Cabot, Langley, Bataan and San Jacinto have been assigned.

"Airmen from a light carrier," the Navy continued, "join up with the larger air group from a big carrier to add a greater punch in a strike upon enemy shipping or islands.

"Or the light carrier's pilots assume the vital job of protecting the task force against enemy attack, thus freeing the larger carriers entirely to concentrate upon the mission of assault.

"Some of the interceptions accomplished by protective planes from the light carriers have been spectacular; entire formations of attacking Japanese bombers have been shot down before they could even get within sight of the fleet."

N. Y. Times

THE CABOT NICKNAMED IRON WOMAN OF FLEET

WASHINGTON, June 23 (AP)—The aircraft carrier Cabot has won the name Iron Woman in the fleet for her run of 225,000 miles of operations in the Pacific.

Included in her battle list, the Navy reported today, are Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Truk, Palau, Hollandia, Saipan, Chichi, Mindanao, Luzon, Formosa, Hong Kong, Saigon, Iwo, Tokyo, Kyushu and Shikoku.

In the First Battle of the Philippine Sea the Cabot won from the task group commander the commendation, "You are tops in the league today" for her high score. Her bombing pilots had dropped bombs squarely on a Japanese carrier and battleship.

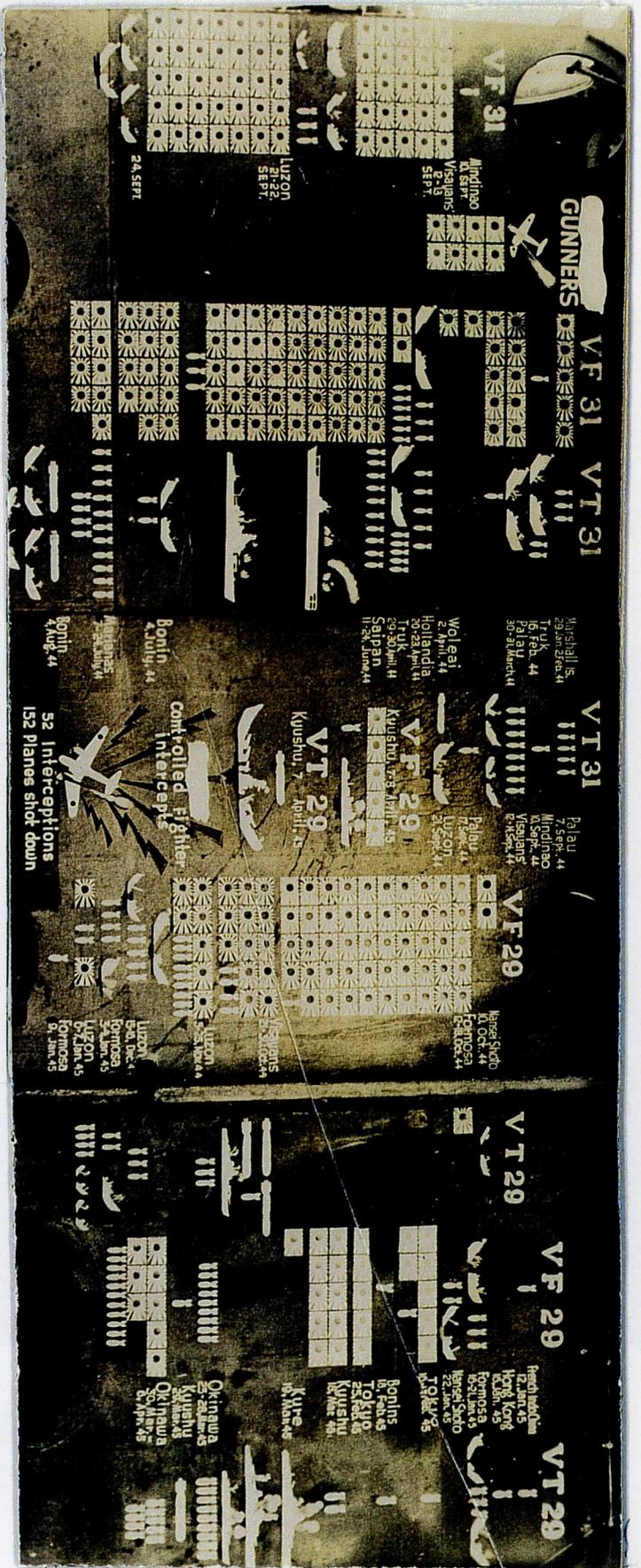
In the battle for Leyte Gulf she hit a battleship and a cruiser. When the fast carrier task force of Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet steamed boldly into the China Sea the Iron Woman was first in and last out.

She escorted two crippled ships to safety from the dangerous waters off Formosa, and during that slow journey her fighter planes smashed two attempted enemy bombing attacks of seventy planes each. In one action eight of her Hellcats shot down thirty-one attacking planes.

In her most recent meeting with the remnants of the Japanese fleet her Avenger pilots sent three torpedoes into the enemy's prize battleship, the Yamato, sunk off the southern tip of Kyushu.

Capt. W. W. Smith of Laurel, Miss., is the Cabot's current skipper.

The press at home
telling what it
could of the story



The ship's island saying
 what it could of the ship and
 Air Group's scores

Okinawa, The Beginning of the End

April 1945, we had been at sea for too long. You could see it in the faces of the men who did their jobs in a dull, sullen sort of way. You could feel it in the humorless, gritty relations with your shipmates who at other times and other places had been so full of fun and spirit.

It's hard to describe what the next few months of our experience in operating in Japanese home island waters was like, and it wasn't just because the names of some of these Islands were hard to spell - like Iwo Jima, or Chichi Jima, or Okinawa. It was because every one of those small islands, just a blip on the radar screen, was actually a living breathing island with men trying to stay alive and to do their job - at the same time trying to blow each other up. On the radar screen the islands looked pretty much the same, but we knew the ones where the mayhem was going on - where the battle was the hardest.

We also had some radar echoes which could not be explained which we called "the galloping ghosts of the Nansei Shotos". These were unexplained radar echoes, named after islands in the chain directly south of Japan, but which appeared as patterns of faint radar echoes where nothing really existed. They were a puzzle. They appeared to be moving, flying too fast to be flocks of birds and too slow for aircraft.

We understood the problems of tracking moving aircraft, of "Relative Motion". To be able to bring two moving objects together Fighter Director Officers were doing that all day. We knew that planes moved in relation to other planes and other ships, and that birds moved, but that mountain tops didn't. That is, only to the extent that the ship tracking the radar position was moving.

The radar technicians felt the "ghosts" might be some kind of a reflection off a temperature inversion at high altitude which could create the appearance of mountain tops and somehow produce faint echoes of them when nothing was really there.

But we had learned early on in doing our jobs of searching out targets how to distinguish natural phenomena from unnatural.

The best example of natural phenomena are mountain tops. Radar operators see them frequently. They are also good for use in radar navigation because they appear as a measurable target on most navigational charts.

On a ship you always have a water horizon and sometimes a land horizon. The distance of your water horizon on the radar depends on the height of your radar antenna above the water. Since your radar signal goes out from the ship in a straight line it's like your sight. Starting at about 10 miles from the ship and for 360 degrees around you the water horizon starts to cast a shadow screening off objects on the surface. The radar beam scans the air out far beyond the water horizon, but only that air above the water horizon. So if you are on a ship approaching a land area with some mountains on it the first thing your radar may see is the mountain tops. On a radar you very frequently see mountain tops that appear to be floating in the ocean. You have a chart of the area so you can immediately tell your distance from the coast because these mountain tops give you an exact distance reading and your chart gives you the distance the coast is from the tops.

If these mountain tops appear to be moving, it's only because the ship is moving. Radar is great for nighttime navigation in an area of ocean heavily populated with islands which is just the type of area we were in.

Our radars were not very accurate in detecting altitude of targets. It required an experienced radar operator's judgment based on a combination of factors - distance at first point of detection, and an understanding of natural horizons, and a lot of experience on the part of the operator.

Some of our men had been spending 10 or 12 hours a day for months on a radar screen studying targets - altitude, size of planes, number of planes, providing lifesaving information to the pilots and to the ships.

Now that we were operating in and among strange new island groups we also had other new presences - American bombers flying through the area. Now we had to get acclimated to seeing the biggest high flying planes in the world traveling between Guam and Japan with their deadly new cargoes.

I remember one of the first times we saw these big targets under way in the area north of Guam. It was the middle of the night and it sent us all to our battle stations. Problem was they were so high (about thirty thousand feet), that most of the ships were having trouble getting a solution for their guns. We just sat there and looked at them on our radars

We also had a new and more serious attacking force to cope with. Almost every attack on us, and there were many, had the elements of a suicide attack that came with it - enemy planes that dived on us and that just kept on coming, until we shot them down.

We had changed our top command again and had gone back to being the Fifth Fleet. Thus the Fast Carrier Task Forces became Task Force 58 under one command. We also could operate as 4 different Task Groups under separate commands. The TGs were made up of several carriers, several big ships and 15 or so destroyers each. These were powerful groups capable of inflicting terrible damage on any target they loaded for. If today's target was shutting down an enemy airfield some of our planes were loaded with delayed time fused bombs, if the target was ships we loaded with armor piercing, if the target was cities we loaded with fire bombs

Our Groups target for today was something we had all been waiting for, Tokyo!

One day in February of 1945 we went up to the home islands close enough to see Mt. Fuji or whatever it was on the ship's radars and sent our planes in to pound Tokyo. One of our fighter pilots went down about a mile off shore, but the rest of the planes in his division were able to fly protective cover over him until one of our subs, at great risk to themselves, was able to get to him.

You can well understand why some of the heaviest air resistance occurred during these strikes on the home islands and over a period of days the Japanese lost 400 planes doing it. As a nation how many times can you have this happen to your forces, your best pilots ? Over the past few months the Cabot had been in 3 other such massive Japanese defeats: "the Slippery Bait", "the Marianas Turkey Shoot", and "the Battle of Leyte Gulf."

When a task group could make an open attack on the capital city itself this must have left a doubt in the mind of the Japanese leaders as to their ability to go on. But it didn't appear so. It didn't appear they had learned anything. The little that we, living on the ship had learned about their view of how successful they had been in their major engagements with us was that they saw the outcomes quite differently. In plane losses alone, even allowing for our pilots optimistic reporting we knew they were about nine Japanese to one American. To call the outcome of the Second Battle of the Phillipine Sea, which included the Leyte Gulf action, to be "a great victory" was almost total self delusion.

Now in Japanese homeland waters we had a few more chances to attack enemy fleet units and in these their biggest, most effective carriers and battleships were put out of action. Our TG retired to Ulithi for a couple of weeks of R and R (rest and rehabilitation). This usually meant something big was brewing and it was. We came out of this rest period to support our troop landings at Iwo Jima.

In our daily CIC work I began to feel a greater spirit of cooperation with CICs on other carriers in our group, more interchange of information, they began to trust our radar information as much their own. We had our own common frequency with them on our hand sets so we were in constant radio contact and my tendency was at the first new radar contact check with one of the other CICs to see what they thought it was. Our operators analysis was frequently better than theirs, or at least our operators often had an analysis sooner. Also the big carriers now had a few trained night fighters on board and they occasionally let us conduct a night intercept. The language used for these was different in several ways, much briefer perhaps because the pilot had his own radar in the plane and after you got him into

position about ten miles behind his target he took over control with his own radar.

I don't have an accurate recollection of the sequence of events, but at one point in this complex operation our job shifted over to protecting the landings at Okinawa. It was in this phase that we got word the Battleship Yamato, the worlds biggest, existing battleship was on her way with a task group to attack and destroy these same landing forces. There were no planes covering their ships so it appeared this was a suicide mission

A full force of torpedo planes from all carriers in the group found them, and after a protracted battle the Yamato was sunk. This was largely a torpedo attack and you can be sure there were several Cabot torpedoes in her when she went down. For more than few days after this battle stories were told by pilots in the ward room about what it feels like to make an attack on a battleship and see your own torpedo hit the big ship.

It was during this phase of the battle to protect our troops landing at Okinawa that we received our orders to join a newly formed Task Group that was headed for home ports. I said some good-byes over our ship to ship CIC radio circuit, which should not have been done, and I think I even talked to the Admiral commanding our TG, but somehow these good bys in the middle of a battle needed saying. We must have left our own TG soon because their radio voices faded and we were in the company of other ships that were not as interested in communicating.

Soon after this I received separate orders to leave the Cabot and travel home by military transport, and after a number of weeks of liberty I would report to the radar training school on St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Spending time with my wife and two children was a joy beyond description. Our one year old boy whom I had never seen before looked at me very suspiciously and it appeared this might be a challenge, but I had recently been able to win the respect of Captains and Admirals in the Navy, so we would just have to work on this relationship now.

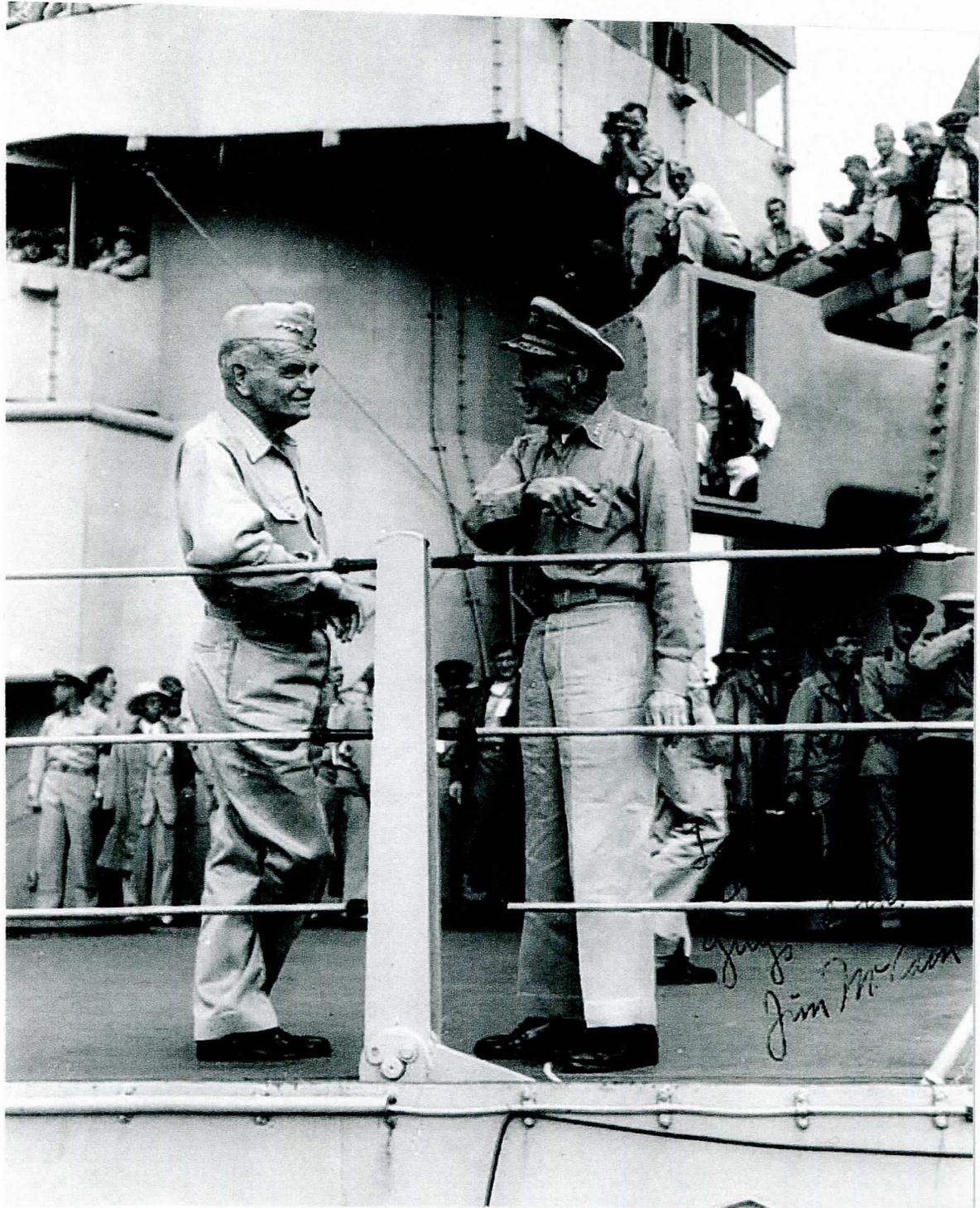
The whole family was together at St. Simons for a period of several months while I went to school to provide them some practical experience and get myself up to date on the recent developments in radars. As a family we lived the typical Florida life, days on the beach with ocean swimming and crab catching and days spent removing sand flees from the flooring of the house and days spent worrying about hurricanes. We also had an even more serious worry. I received my orders to rejoin the Fast Carriers for the invasion of Japan. We knew the massive casualty lists on both sides that would result from this. When the word came through that the two A bombs had been dropped and Japan had surrendered, my orders were cancelled immediately.

Do you think I didn't celebrate that the bombs were dropped? Think again. Millions of lives were saved and I was headed back to civilian life with my wonderful family. What's not to like about that ?



My immediate family: Betty, Kirie, Ren and Peter

*Admiral William Halsey and Vice Admiral James McCain
on board USS Missouri observing the signing of documents
formalizing the capitulation of Japan in WW2. Both men
played an important part in making this occasion a reality.*



USS Cabot entering Port of New Orleans after WW2



Epilogue

In the last event described in this Journal there is a major unresolved issue that needs further discussion - that is "Wars and how we resolve them".

WW2 was ended on VJ day 1945. It was formalized at a ceremony of military and civilian representatives of Hirohito the Emperor of Japan, which took place on the deck of the Battleship USS Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945. It was announced by the Emperor to his people on August 15, 1945, but is celebrated in the US on August 14 because of the difference in time.

The Emperor gave in because we showed him the terrible things we could do to his cities and his people if he didn't stop "now". His Generals and Admirals would have gone on, and in fact tried to persuade him to do so, but perhaps to save his own legacy as much as to save his own people, he decided to stop it .

This meant a total, unconditional surrender, and his country would be occupied by an unlimited force of the allies that had won this victory.

Some of his people tried to say " The defeat wasn't really his", but this was just more self delusion. When our occupation troops started pouring into the country it must have been apparent to even the most unbending patriots that it was over and they had lost

Yet where is the Emperor today? The Emperor of Japan is a middle-aged man named Akihito whose successor to the throne will be chosen depending on the best candidate at the time. Needless to say Akihito is of the same lineage as old Hirohito himself, whom we used to scoff at so derisively when we were out there on the USS Cabot facing his forces.

Now how did that happen? It happened because our country's

leadership at the end of WWII decided to try something different. They weren't revenge seekers. They wanted to get the world back on its own economic feet. It was to our advantage as much as to theirs to get our enemies rebuilt and reorganized so instead of imposing monstrous indemnities we stepped in with a management team led by General Douglas MacArthur who over the following years turned Japan into one of our best allies and one of the world's leading economic powers.

In a similar manner our political leaders in Washington and our military leaders in Europe were offering a plan to our European allies and enemies called "the Marshal Plan". This was a plan proposed by Gen. George Marshal whereby the United States would make available a fund of many billions of dollars to countries that wanted to rebuild their infrastructures or otherwise return themselves to a status as contributing members of the world economic community.

In the simplest words possible what these actions had shown was that we had finished the war in these two areas of the world by insisting on "unconditional surrender", but we had also won the peace by making it possible for all nations to return to the world economic community. Can we, should we, use the same approach to finish the wars we are involved in today during the 21st century? Makes sense to me.

Reinald Werrenrath, Jr.

Ren, Kirie and Dad – at war's end



