The SHANGRI-LA

HORIZON

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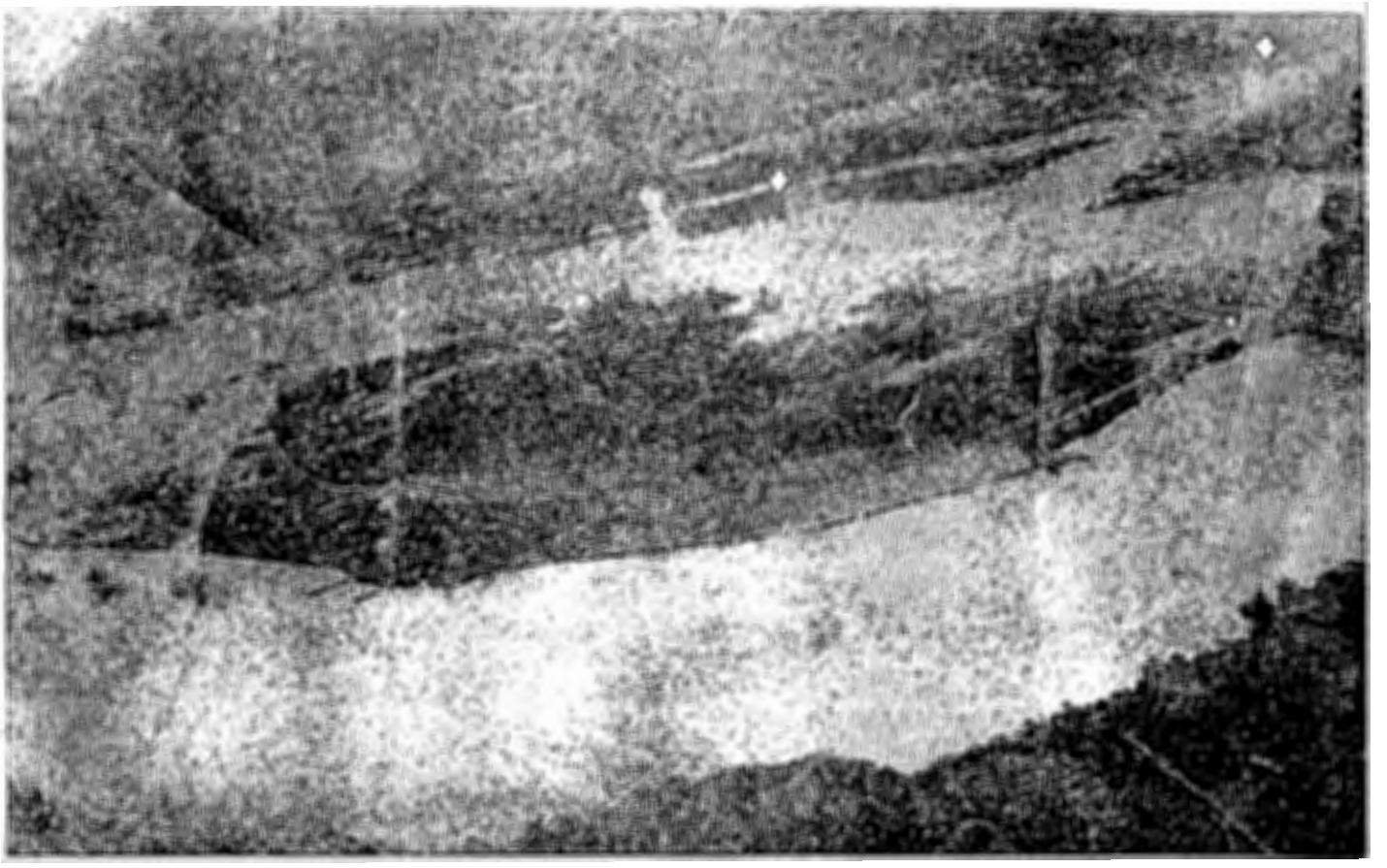


THE JAPS STARTED IT---This rare picture taken by some Jap pilot showing the first bombs dropping on Pearl Harbor from enemy planes (see arrows) was found at Yokosuka Naval Base by Shangri-La photographers. Picture had been torn up and thrown in waste basket by Japs leaving the base but photographers pasted it together.

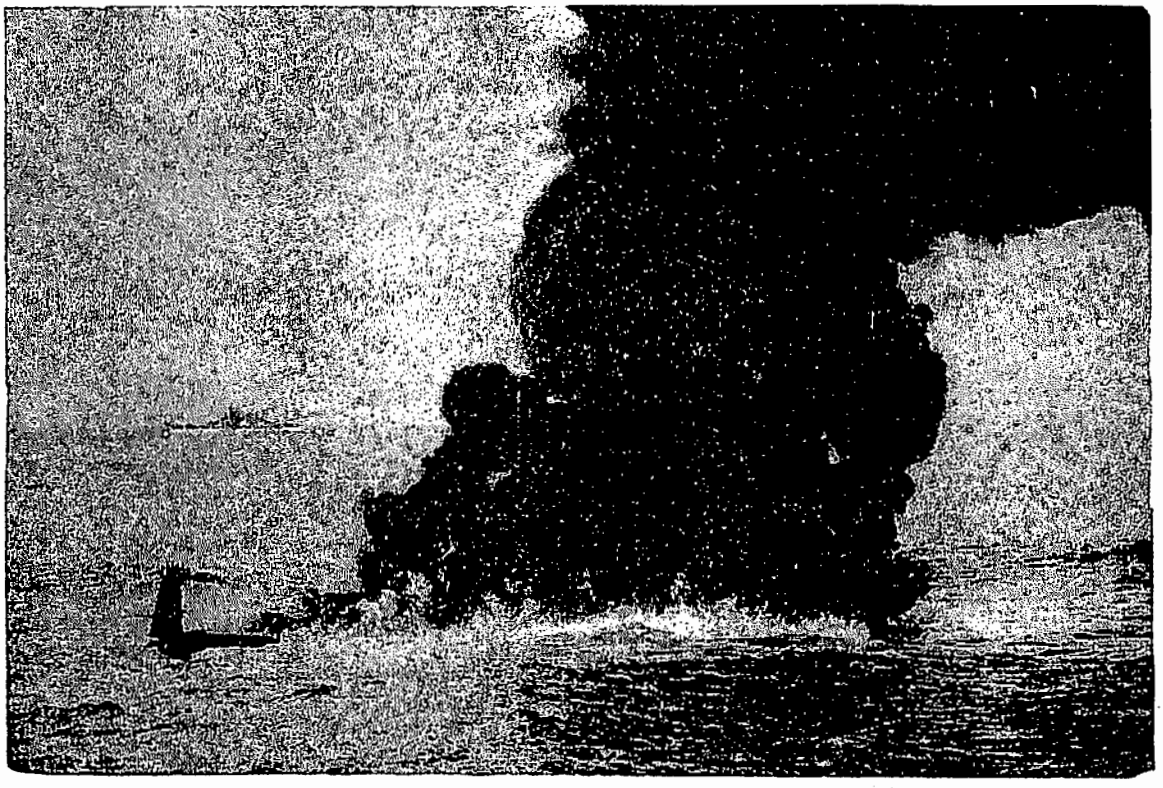
BUT WE FINISHED IT---General Douglas MacArthur (at desk) signs peace terms aboard the USS Missouri anchored in Sagami Bay on September 2, 1945 while Japanese officials and officers stand before him in defeat. While this ceremony was taking place, planes from the USS Shangri-La roared overhead in victory parade.

OVER THE HORIZON

ON THE SHANGRI-LA

The story of the ship and the crew who sailed over the horizon to fight the war in enemy waters so that the world might find the peace that is symbolized by the name "Shangri-La."

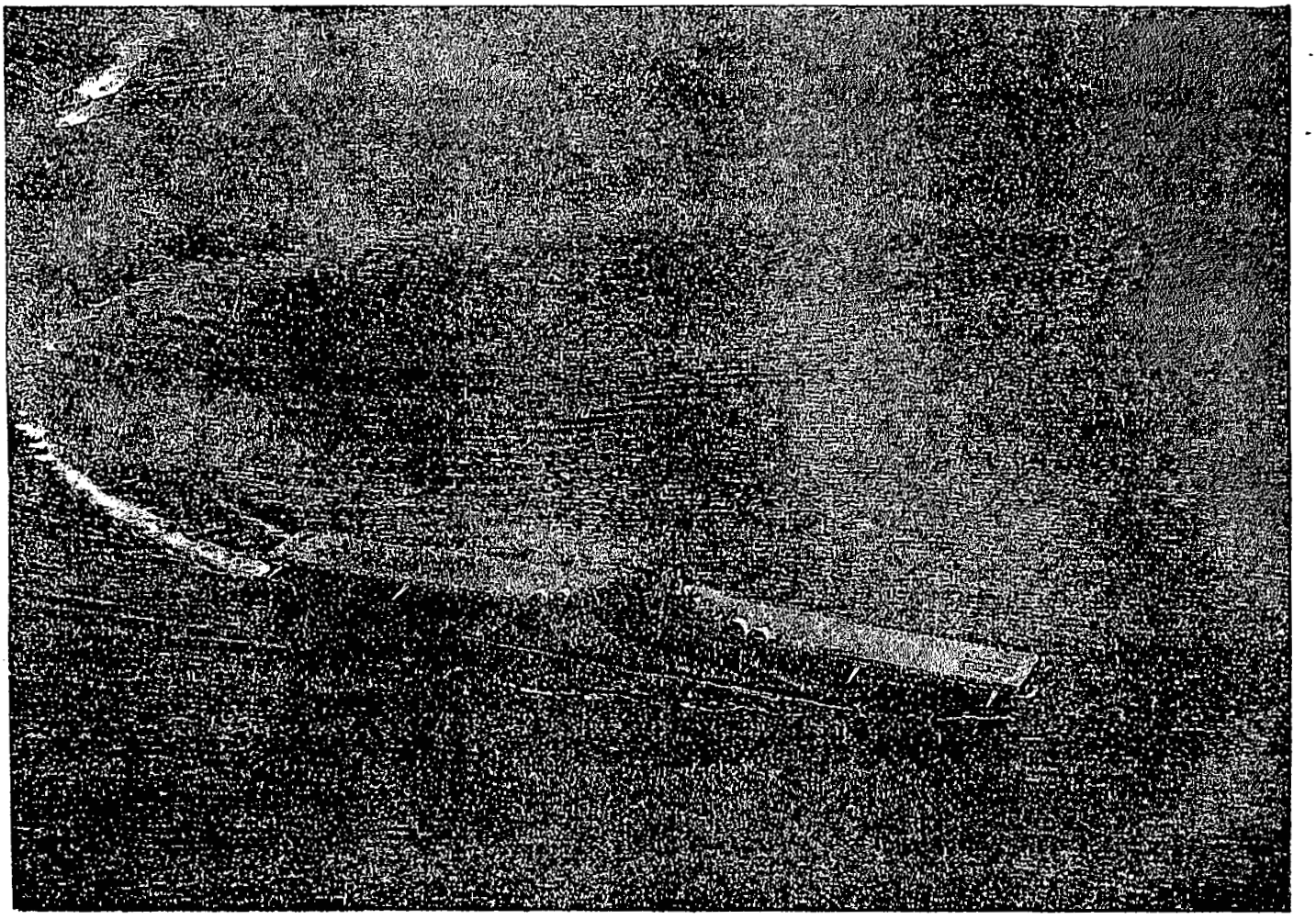
Dedicated To...



The Men Who Fought but Didn't Come Back...

Captain James D. Barner, USN, our first "skipper"

Captain Richard F. Whitehead, USN, our present "skipper"



Dressed in her "Atlantic war paint" the USS Shangri-La as she looked just after commissioning before entering fight.

An Open Letter to Emperor Hirohito

September 15, 1945

Dear Hirohito:

Did you ever hear of Shangri-La?...Yes, I'm sure you have. In fact you probably have heard of Shangri-La so often during recent months that you have dipped into your honorable sleeping powders to try to forget.

If you will think back a few years, you probably will remember James Hilton's book "Lost Horizon", in which Shangri-La was the legendary city of peace and contentment. That is quite a contrast to the Shangri-La that you have heard of recently, isn't it, Emperor? It must puzzle you no little bit that such a name denoting tranquility could reappear in such a belligerent form as an aircraft carrier. Still it isn't so strange, for should you talk to any of the American men and boys who make up my crew you would find that they have had but one goal ever since they started fighting you...That was to help create in this world which you tore asunder a world that would reflect as nearly as possible the ideals of the mythical city of Shangri-La.

When the Doolittle raiders first struck your land during the early days of the war and later our late President Roosevelt remarked that they had come from the mythical base "Shangri-La" you probably gave the incident little more than a passing thought. You found out later that the "mythical base" was in reality the U.S.S. Hornet, but that probably didn't bother you.

In those days the war was going entirely your way. At that time you probably did not think a carrier such as the Shangri-La, plus countless others just like her, would come striking relentlessly back over the horizon until your Navy had been depleted, your air force battered into suicidal desperation, and your armies beaten in every theater of the world in which they chose to fight.

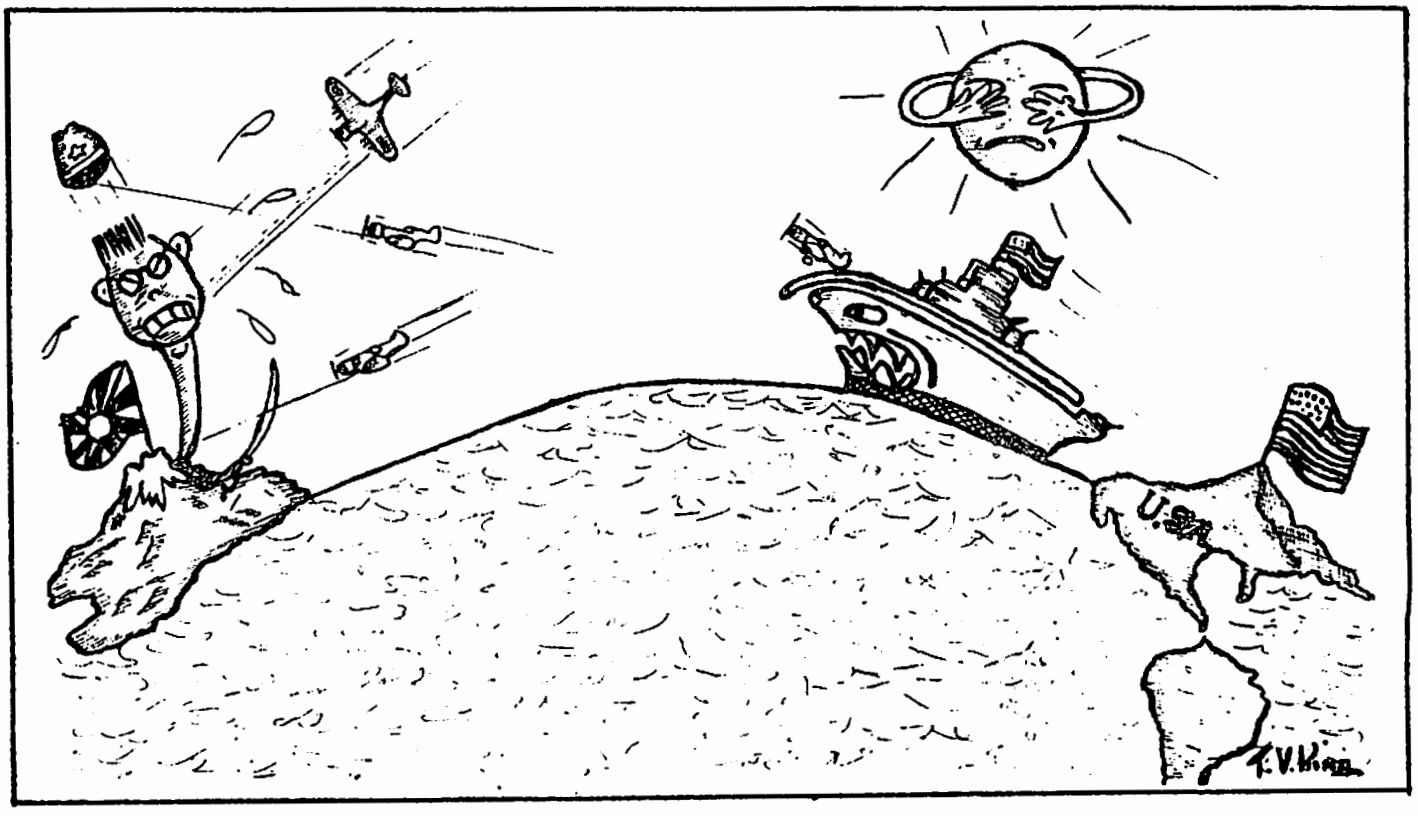
Well, Emperor, I'm just one year old today, but I'm celebrating my birthday right in your own front yard. It's a particularly happy celebration because I'm also still celebrating your surrender of one month ago. When my crew joined me a year ago back in Norfolk, Virginia, they nicknamed me "The Tokyo Express"...It looks as if we were able to live up to that name, doesn't it?

We've made a pretty good team, my crew and I, during this past year. I was an Essex-type carrier purchased through the sale of war bonds in a campaign inspired by the Doolittle raid on your country. In other words, I was "The People's Ship" and my crew was made up of American men and boys representing a cross-section of our nation. They were all just peace-loving Americans with very natural reactions. They could be happy or sad, brave or afraid, worried or carefree, and they didn't get mad easily. In fact I can't say that they ever have been really mad since we started out together. You have seen what they've done to your Empire through determination. You can imagine what they might have done had they really gotten mad. They had a job to do and did it without losing their heads. It didn't take fanaticism on their part, such as you have had to instill in the minds of your people.

I might add that not once while we were fighting you were your pilots ever able to damage us. We had a few close moments when things might have happened, both from your planes and pilots and from operational mishaps which were bound to occur while we were fighting you. Some way we always managed to escape, though we will know just why. Some of us call it luck...others call it God.

And so, Hirohito, here is the way we helped defeat you during the first year of my life. I was the tool of war used by the American men and boys who made up my crew. My story is their story of how they lived, how they thought, what they saw and how they reacted to various situations.

Yours for a lasting peace,
THE U.S.S. SHANGRI-LA



If the Shangri-La Could Speak--

A little over a year ago, I was an aircraft carrier fast nearing completion for my commissioning. I had no crew, therefore I had no soul. I was just tons of iron and steel and brass shaped into the design of the nation's newest aircraft carrier. Potentially I was a mighty weapon designed to go to war to bring about peace, but at that time I was mostly statistics.

I had been authorized on August 7, 1942, as the twelfth ship of the Essex Class and the twentieth "CV" to be commissioned. My keel had been laid in Norfolk Navy Yard on January 15, 1943, and the name "U.S.S. Shangri-La" had been assigned to me on August 16, 1943. One hundred thousand people had witnessed my launching on February 24, 1944, when I tasted my first champagne as Mrs. James H. Doolittle cristened me.

The largest part of my crew were completing their pre-commissioning training at the Naval Training Station, Newport, R.I. There, they were part of what was commonly called "Magruder's Navy", going through the rigors of fire-fighting school, rifle range, swimming tests, marching and drilling, and listening hour after hour in classes which would fit them for duties they would perform aboard ship. Others were following a similar pattern at the Navy Yard at Portsmouth.

I did not really come to life until my crew marched up the gangway and boarded me for the first time on the morning of September 15, 1944. There, mustered for the first time on my long flight deck, they listened to the ship's bells on harbor craft proclaim high noon as Commander Joseph F. Quilter, my first executive officer, passed the first official word, "All hands, Attention!" From that time on, I was alive and animated, and with my crew aboard me I could describe anything that I did in the term "We".

It was hot and humid under the sunless Virginia sky on commissioning day, but these were historic moments passing only once: The reading of the commissioning directive by Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, USN, commandant of the Navy Yard, the acceptance of the ship by Captain James D. Barner, USN, my first commanding officer, and the setting of the first watch.

By these simple tokens, administered in profound solemnity, the U.S.S. Shangri-La became a full-fledged warship in the United States Navy, but readiness for battle did not end there. For several weeks while fitting-out was being completed, we carried out normal routine to the disturbing accompaniment of welding torches, and chipping hammers, deck spaces afoul with rubber hose, steel lines and construction gear. By October 15 we were ready for our one-day builder's trial run when we sailed out into the entrance of Chesapeake Bay and conducted drills, performed experiments and executed various tactical maneuvers. But the main event was left to Commander Wallace A. Sherrill, USN, of Air Group 85, who flew a torpedo bomber out from the Naval Air Station at Norfolk to make five landings and takeoffs from our flight deck. At last we had wings.

Then followed more days in port, more fitting out, around-the-clock loading of stores and ammunition, and more trial runs, this time with full-scale flight operations with Air Group 85.

We didn't realize back in those days how much that air group would mean to us...that often they would be the ones to drive off or shoot down the Japanese who would come out to attack us.

On November 15, we experienced our first "first" when we launched and landed a P-51 type fighter plane and an F7F twin-engine fighter, plus a B-25 bomber in several landings and takeoffs. This was the first time that planes of this type had ever operated from a carrier deck.

Our trial runs completed on November 18, we returned to the Naval Operating base, Norfolk, and after replenishing our stores we headed out once more for our long shakedown cruise to Trinidad, B.W.I., and the Gulf of Paria.

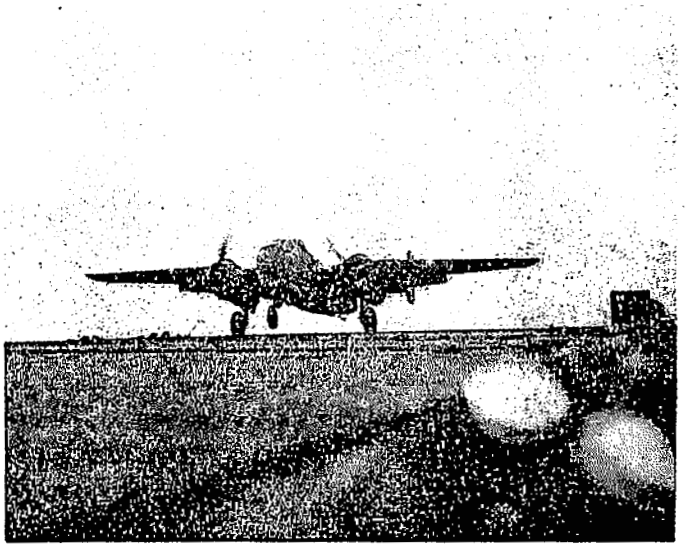
We had long days of hard work, flight operations, gunnery excercises and damage control drills which continued day after day. We had our dawn and dusk "General Quarters" and day-long battle problems, when we drilled on almost every conceivable problem which might befall a ship at sea.

We also had fun, for in the Gulf of Paria we had our first beach party, swarming over the side on cargo nets, later to be taken to the palm-studded shores of Scotland Bay. Swimming, playing games, visiting the native zoo, climbing palms and exploring jungles--all were part of the day.

In addition to that we had earned for ourselves a letter of commendation from Vice Admiral P.N.L. Bellinger, Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, when we bought $67,650 worth of War Bonds during the Sixth War Loan Drive.

Finally, on the afternoon of December 16, we headed back to the States, our shakedown period completed. But although we were returning, still we carried out battle operations, staging a group offensive along the way against Culebra Island, Puerto Rico, plus gunnery practice until we returned to Norfolk Navy Yard for post-shakedown availability. The shakedown not only revealed the numerous little things that needed attention in a new ship, but it had also given the experienced seamen renewed confidence and satisfaction from the resumption of old tasks in familiar surroundings. Our first-timers had earned themselves a stout pair of sea legs and the right to the American Area ribbon.

Capt. J.D. Barner, "our first skipper" and Mrs. James Doolittle talk it over at the commissioning ceremonies.



The Shangri-La's first "first" came shortly after commissioning when a B-25 landed on the flight deck.

Best of all, our return at this time brought a three-week period of yard availability over the Christmas and New Year holiday...and an eight-day leave.

Whether it was because of transportation difficulties, the protracted spell of foul weather that blanketed the East Coast, or sheer personal negligence, we will never know, but at the end of the leave period there were a great many men overleave, numerous stragglers and a few outright deserters, but on the whole the crew came through reasonably well and by January 14 we had completed the major shakedown overhaul jobs.

After everything had been squared away and stores had been loaded for our cruise to the West Coast, there came the last night of farewells. Wives who had stood by their husbands as far back as pre-commissioning were faced with separation. Romances which had run their course no longer than the ship's attachment to the area were suspended outside the sentried gates. This time it wasn't a matter of a few days between liberties or a few weeks in the South. We were moving out for good.

And so, on the cold, gray morning of January 17, the Shangri-La slid quietly away from the dock, this time headed west by way of the Panama Canal.

Outward Bound to Pearl Harbor

This trip had added interest over the shakedown, for in addition to the ship's company and the air group there were special passengers aboard, including several prominent figures in the theatrical world and publishing profession who were observing standard warship procedure in order to acquire atmosphere for possible dramatic productions and editorial analyses of life aboard an aircraft carrier.

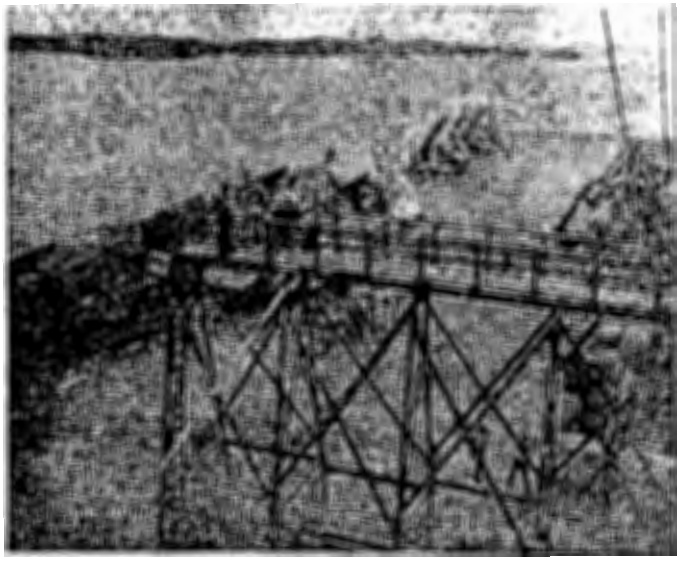
As we sailed into the Caribbean and on toward the Panama Canal, the old familiar routine was carried out, more or less as a continuation of the shakedown routine. All flight operations, drills and exercises were aimed at one goal..to acquire perfection of skill and hardening of endurance for the task that lay ahead. We climaxed this training as we neared the approaches of the Panama Canal by staging a mock assault against zone installations..an attack that was so successful that only one group of eleven dive bombers was intercepted by Army aircraft protecting the area.

Then we turned our thoughts and interest toward squeezing through the canal. That was an eight-hour job that day as we inched through the locks. At times it seemed as if there just wouldn't be enough room, but the tugging locomotives and the skill of experienced pilots nursed us through without a mishap other than scraping off a little paint in a few spots.

All this time, the prime question that continually was running through our minds was..after Panama, where? San Diego seemed the logical place for jumping off into the forward area. Yet, what of Hunter's Point? For days there had been talk of further yard availability on the West Coast for installation of additional 40-mm. quads. Foreboding truths, distorted and exaggerated by scuttlebutt, had been reaching us about the battle in the Pacific and of the new suicide weapon the Japanese had been using. Undoubtedly, in view of the damage sustained by active units in the combat zone, the Shangri-La must be urgently needed for replacement... guns or no guns.

A brief dispatch squelched the shipboard prophets who had held out for Hunter's Point. Instead of receiving West Coast yard availability we proceeded to San Diego for a short period of rigid military inspection and additional battle problems until shortly after noon on February 8, when we pointed our bow westward toward Pearl Harbor, carrying a surplus load of planes and passengers as replacements for the forward area.

Before we had left the San Diego area, however, we had witnessed one of the most tragic accidents that had occurred to our group to date. On our shakedown and during subsequent operations we had suffered several operational accidents in which five pilots or aircrewmen had lost their lives, but in most cases the men had been rescued. But on February 3, as our air group launched an attack against San Clemente Island, one SB2C dive bomber without flaps attempted a landing. Failing to engage the arresting gear cables, the plane crashed headlong into the barriers. The forceful impact nosed the big plane over in a burst of flame, ripped off its tail assembly and left the seriously injured pilot, Ensign Glen Even, pinned in the cockpit. Fire parties made short work of the flames, but it was a slow and painful job to cut the

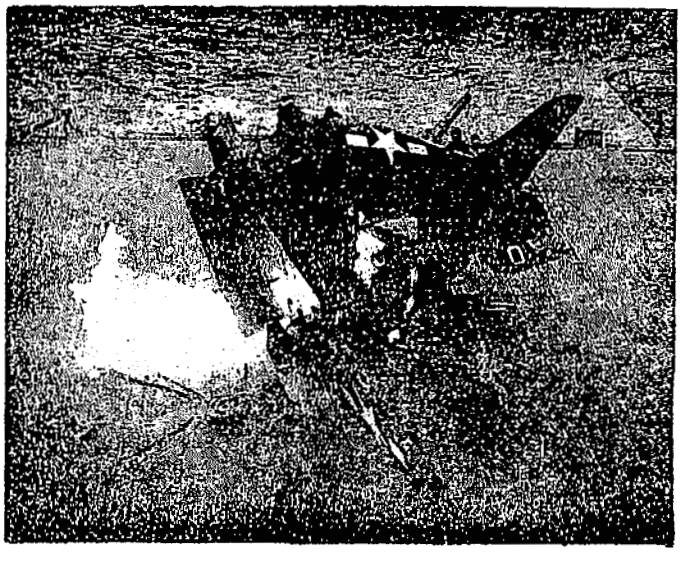


Cinching in our girdle we squeezed through the Panama Canal. Platform was built to help pilots navigate ship-

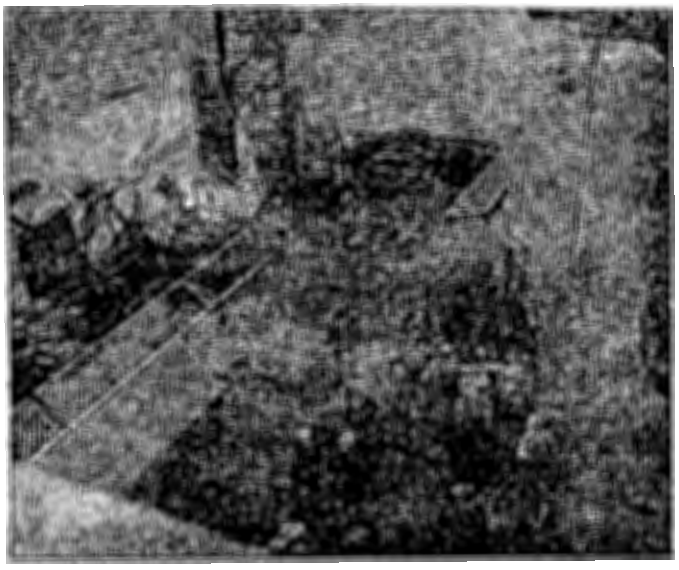
pilot free. The radio gunner, Frank Riker, ARM2C, had been flung to the deck several feet ahead of the wreckage and never regained consciousness.

Our passage to Hawaii with a capacity load of planes and passengers was eventless except for the modified plan of the day, which provided recreation and amusement for all hands. All movies were shown once in the morning and twice at night, so all could see them, and the band played overtime to break down the monotony and bolster morale. Finally, about mid-day of February 13, we moored at the Pearl Harbor Naval Station and set about the business of hoisting out our cargo of planes and disembarking passengers.

Throughout this process there was the increasing suspense of curiosity which overshadowed the ship. What was to be done here? How long would it take? How much liberty would be granted? We were out in the Pacific now and we wanted to get along with the business at hand. Yet we also wanted to stay around and at least glimpse this peace-time vacation mecca for tourists. Hardly had first-timers set foot on Hawaiian soil or felt the pinch of military curfew restrictions than the answer came. In a surprising move, Carrier Air Group 85, which had by this time seemed to be an inseparable part of the ship, was suddenly detached and assigned to shore-base status. We of the Shangri-La, instead of proceeding into the forward area, were ordered to conduct carrier familiarization exercises for the benefit of replacement air groups stationed in the Hawaiian Sea Frontier.



Our nastiest crash came early during the cruise when an SB2C broke in two, killing gunner. The pilot escaped.



Besides liberty, a period in port also meant ammunition handling parties. Here 40 mm shells are hoisted aboard.

For about two months we sailed in and out of Pearl Harbor with various air groups in qualifying runs. While at sea, it meant day and night flight operations. While in port, it meant liberty for the crew and back-breaking working parties loading stores. All the while, the war in the Pacific progressed as Task Force 58 struck against Tokyo for the first time and the battle for Iwo Jima raged.

We continued to make these short runs in and out of Pearl Harbor until we at last started referring to them as "the pineapple run" and scuttlebutt spread that this was to be our mission of the war... that the Navy Department didn't want the Shangri-La to enter the combat zone where the Jap suicide planes were raging, for fear the ship would be hit and the morale of the people in the States who had paid for her with War Bonds would be hurt.

But scuttlebutt has a habit of sounding hollow and lacking in truth and in spite of our outward signs of bravery still the favorite topic of conversation for both officers and men was... "Where is the safest spot on the ship during battle?" Some said well forward, in the vicinity of the forecastle, but this theory was refuted when the U.S.S. Saratoga limped into port showing a gaping hole in the starboard side of her hull and the ugly bulge on the forward end of her flight deck which looked like the collection depot for a junk drive. Others contended that well aft was the safest until the U.S.S. Franklin returned from the forward area; her flight deck a shambles and her hangar deck a jungle of twisted steel. For the first time we were seeing the actual results of the dreaded "Kamikaze" attacks and they were far from pretty. But these were not all. The U.S.S. Wasp was laid up too and back in the States West Coast Navy yards held other fast carriers forced out of action by these savage attacks.

We began to wonder if maybe our "pineapple runs" weren't a good thing after all, if that was the way the Navy wanted us to fight our war.

Finally we decided that if we went into the forward area we would just take the attitude of the rest of the Navy.. that if it wasn't your time you wouldn't get it,.. and that was pretty much our theory from then on.

And so it went for about seven weeks.. a "pineapple run" and liberty, another run and more liberty. Our monotony at sea was broken only by an occasional nose-over by a plane, and once by a hospital apprentice who was accidentally knocked overboard while watching flight operations. He was tossed a rubber life raft and his position was marked by a smoke bomb, and soon an accompanying destroyer had plucked him from the water unharmed

Finally, after having had hours of hard work at sea that had given the crew invaluable experience for the job to come, and having had our fun in Honolulu on liberty, we received our old group, Air Group 85, once more, and pointed our bow over the horizon on April 10, headed for the forward area. The Shangri-La and Air Group 85 were to be a fighting team together against the Japs after all.

As we quietly resigned ourselves to the uncertainties of the future and tried to allay any doubts and misgivings which had been aroused be the untimely appearance of the Saratoga, Wasp and Franklin, we steamed toward Ulithi. A good deal of the glamor attached to carrier warfare had been rubbed out of our minds within the past few weeks, but still we had confidence in our ship and in our ability to take care of ourselves.

Over the Horizon to "Indian Country"

Only a short distance out of Pearl Harbor, we assembled at parade on the flight deck, dressed in full battle gear, while Captain Barner told us with intimate frankness just what lay ahead. Captain Barner had always been a good showman as well as a good skipper, and by having us dressed in our battle gear we unconsciously felt the seriousness of what he said.

"You are like your forefathers, the pioneers," he said, "who ventured out into the unknown Indian frontier to create a new world. As you go out into the forward area, you, like they, may have to do some Indian hunting of your own, but your Indians will be Japs."

And then he went on to tell us what we might have in store, what tricks the Japs might pull, and touched briefly on what we would do in the battle area. It wasn't a pretty picture the "skipper" painted that day, but we all felt better for having received some "inside dope".

One thing worried us, however. Always before in friendly waters we had traveled with an escort, but this time we were standing out for Ulithi, the last outpost before the battle zone, and we were steaming absolutely unescorted and unprotected in the open sea. We soon forgot our fears, for day by day we were drawing nearer to the Equator and the sun became hotter and hotter as the mile after mile of water washed against our hull.

During our first week under way, the crew took frequent holiday routines, when the ship looked more like a luxury liner than a war vessel as the crew sunbathed on the flight deck or played games on the hangar-deck athletic courts.

Then, on April 13, we crossed the 180th meridian, and first-timers officially joined the Order of the Golden Dragon. We were a bit confused, once crossing the international dateline, trying to figure out where we had lost a day, and we kidded a bit about feeling the bump when the ship crossed the date line.

We bypassed Jap-held Wake Island without incident and after sailing north of Eniwetok we picked up a destroyer escort that would take us on to Ulithi. Once we had an escort, flight operations began once more, augmented with various battle problems which refreshed our minds on the job to come. One day we even held an all-day practice "GQ" so that feeding of battle rations could be rehearsed.

Finally, on April 20, after ten days at sea, we arrived in Ulithi, sweltering under the heat of the tropical

Occasionally between the lull of battle, the crew enjoyed a "jive concert" by the band on the flight deck.

sun. We were to stop only overnight before proceeding to the battle zone, but we had a chance to see what a Pacific atoll really looked like.

Ulithi brought out one interesting little incident, however. We had lost a plane in the water just out of Ulithi, due to an operational failure, and we were replacing it with one from the U.S.S. Intrepid. The crew of that ship was quick to grasp the opportunity to "rib" us as a newcomer and had scrawled their message all over the side of the plane:

"Welcome to the forward area from the Fighting Lady to the Showboat. Come over and we will tell you some sea stories... The Intrepid Crew."

That made us mad. Who were they to call themselves the "Fighting Lady"? We'd show them just how a "showboat" could operate, and the funny thing was... we really did.

Hunting Japs - a Specialty

It was a quick one-night stand at the Ulithi anchorage, however, because less than 24 hours after dropping the hook we were under way again--this time finally entering the long-awaited "Indian country".

Still, not a moment was wasted in getting the ship ready for combat. In company with the U.S.S. Iowa and three destroyers, one of which, the U.S.S. Haggard, was later to be hit by a Kamikaze, we concentrated on gunnery practice and putting the finishing touches on air operations.

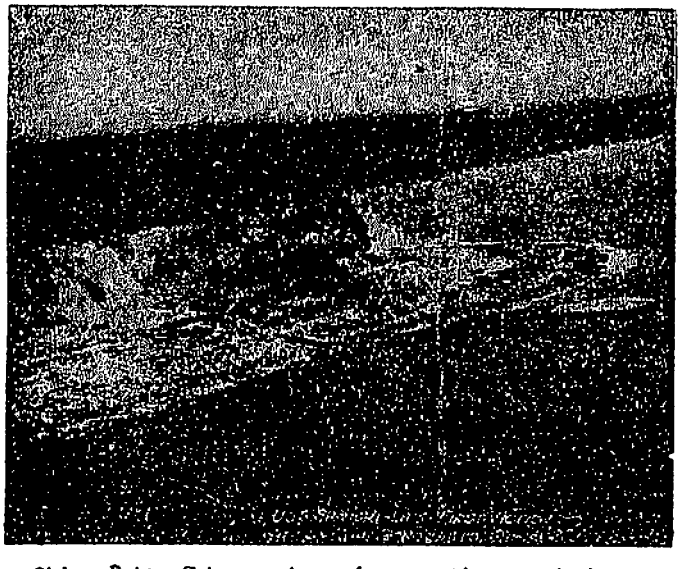
There were planes towing target sleeves most of the day, with all five ships firing every gun on board. At the same time Air Group 85 sharpened up its coordinated attacks.

To many it seemed like just so much more training until one morning, the 28th of April, we finally reached our goal. Task force 58, the marauding fast carriers of Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, was in the refueling area that day and we were welcomed by all hands as a long-expected member of the team. We had reached the big leagues.

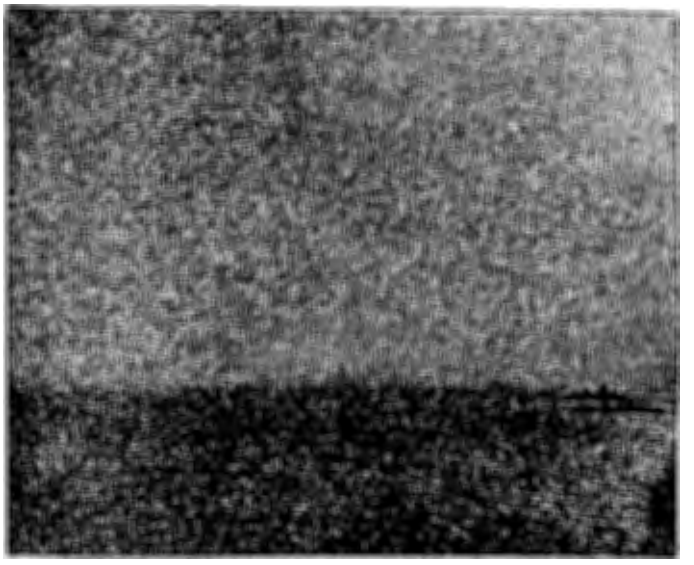
It wasn't all gunfire and bomb blast the first few weeks after we joined the famed 58 outfit, but the action wasn't long in coming either. Just to get us into the spirit of things, the air group was given its first bit of red meat to chew. That was tiny Okino Daito Jima, a phosphate depository southeast of Okinawa, which the Japs had been using for a weather observatory.

After Air Group 85 sent thirty-six sorties over the target, dropped some twenty-eight 500-pound bombs, eleven half-tonners and twenty-four rockets, and brought back pictorial evidence of the damage inflicted, we decided it was just a phosphate depository once more and continued up to the big show--Okinawa.

By the time we had arrived, the Battle of Okinawa had entered its bitterest phase. The Japs were entrenched in caves on the southern tip of the island and the Army and the Marines were engaged in the bloody job of rooting them out.



Okino Daito Shima smokes after getting "worked over" by Shangri-La planes on our first strike against Japs.



The sky fills with black ack-ack puffs as ships in task group open fire on raiding Japanese plane.

We soon saw that this was where we came in--to do a bit of blasting on those caves of our own and to help keep the Jap air force out of the skies.

Our first kill came three days after entering the combat area around Okinawa. Ensign John S. Patton, a night fighter pilot, was put on the tail of an enemy contact about fifty miles from the task group. In the half-darkness before dawn he first thought the plane to be a friendly B-26. But his controller in CIC assured him that there were none in the area and to give it a burst anyway. The result: Splash one Jap "Betty" in flames and first blood for the Shangri-La.

Then came our turn for some excitement aboard ship. Early one morning we were called to "GQ". We spurted out of hatches and passage-ways and had hardly reached our battle stations when we learned two groups of Jap planes were headed our way. There was no dallying about putting on flashproof gear, helmets and life belts this time. They were uncomfortable, but we didn't mind. Our combat air patrol was already engaging the nips and were having good success when suddenly down through the clouds came the Jap we had all dreaded....a single plane.

As he came in, anti-aircraft fire from a cruiser and a battle ship in our group bracketed him with flak. Closer he came through that wall of steel and shrapnel. Everything in the area was shooting at him, but still he came, choosing the battleship U.S.S. Wisconsin as his target. How close he came to hitting that ship, we hardly knew, but just yards away, the Jap burst into flames and crashed into the sea.

Things started to pick up from there. In a strike against Kikai Jima three planes were lost, two SB2C's and a TBM, and two pilots, Lieutenant (jg) Robert Elmore and Ensign Charles Brownmiller, and Gunner Merrill Atwell, ARM3C, were killed. These were our first losses in combat, but not our last.

Our main job was keeping an umbrella of aircraft over Okinawa and by the end of the first few weeks both pilots and ship's company were beginning to think it was a very large umbrella, indeed.

Planes, everything from Corsairs, Hellcats to more cumbersome torpedo bombers, were started off before dawn each morning and there were aircraft over the target throughout the daylight hours. And even then there was no rest at night, with a schedule of night fighters to launch at certain times plus the constant menace of "bogeys" in the area.

Another day, a high flying Jap came snooping over our task group. We watched as he circled us. First he dropped a parachute on our starboard side, then circled to our port side to drop another. He was too high for our guns to reach and air patrol was climbing up after him but had quite a way to go. The Jap didn't try to bomb us or dive on us, but circled like a vulture apparently on reconnaissance and the parachutes were carrying "window" to confuse our radar.

Japs on Okinawa had dug into caves and tunnels and it was up to Shangri-La planes to help blast them out.

Our first experience with a big Jap raid ended with the score heavily in our favor: Seventeen enemy planes downed by combat air patrol or task force guns. During the same engagement two destroyers, one of them the same U.S.S. Haggard which accompanied us up from Ulithi, were hit by suicide planes, but several more Kamikazes were shot down as they tried to enter the screen. During those days we were running to and from our battle stations so often we couldn't remember how many times it had been by the end of the day.

From then on bogeys were almost constantly in the area, either near our force or coming down from the north toward the American shipping at Okinawa. On one memorable day twelve Corsairs on combat air patrol over Okinawa were suddenly jumped by a large force of enemy planes. In the furious melee that followed, Shangri-La planes destroyed five twin-float biplanes, five Zekes and three Petes. The score would have been higher if the new 20-mm. guns on the Corsairs had not jammed at high altitude. Two F4U's were downed in this engagement but both pilots were picked up by rescue planes.

Our air support missions were not without excitement either and many spine-tingling stories came out of them.

One plane, a TBM, was struck by anti-aircraft fire and set aflame. The pilot, Ensign Charles C. Brownmiller and crew man, Fredrick P. Coffee, AMM3c, bailed out. The pilot was never rescued but the crewman had so many close calls that he was like the cat with nine lives.

When the plane was hit, Coffee found his turret enveloped with flames, searing his face and hands. He threw back the "greenhouse" and started to snap his harness, onto his chute but it was burning. He went for his auxiliary chute, but it too was burning. After beating out the flames in the chute burning the least, he snapped it onto his harness only to find that too was afire. Padding out this blaze he started to jump from the plane when the ammunition in his gun began to explode from the heat. "There was no hesitation about that jump then," Coffee said.

His troubles were only starting when he jumped for his parachute failed to open and as he hurtled through the air, he had to pull out the chute by hand. When he was finally airborn, the Japs on shore began to fire at him and he could see the curles of smoke that followed the bullets as they punched holes through his "top". Once he hit the water, he climbed into a rubber raft that had been dropped, but the raft had a leak, and Coffee was kept busy bailing out water and blowing up the raft with his painfully burned lips.

Finally a "Dumbo", Navy flying boat, rescued him and returned him to a seaplane tender for first aid, and it seemed Coffee's trials were over.... But not so, three days later the seaplane tender was hit by a suicide plane.. Somehow or other he escaped this and soon was on his way back to the states.

Another bomber that was hit flew out over the open water and the crewman bailed out and soon was in the rubber life raft. The pilot took his time checking everything to make sure his jump would be a success, and soon was in the water bobbing in his life jacket. Planes orbited over him the first time, the pilot waved indicating all was well. He had broken out his sea dye and his position was well marked. When our planes made a second pass to drop him a life raft, he was gone. Nothing could be seen but a trail of green dye going straight down into the sea. The only explanation that could be made was that earlier in the day, the pilot had sighted some very big fish who must have been hungry.

Our last day in the battle zone was one we will long remember. It seemed that the Japs must have known we were to withdraw for a while and were attacking with almost unprecidented fury. We were running to and from our general quarters stations most all day long. As Japs would near the area. Our air patrol was having a field day running up a big score as were the planes from other carriers with us. Few Japs were getting through, but one particular little destroyer just over the horizon was having a picnic. Before the day was over, she had set a new record by shooting down 19 Japs in one days battle.

Our side didn't fare too well either, for the USS Bunker Hill was hit by two Kamikazes, who dove through her combat air patrol, dropping bombs ahead of them and crashed her flight deck with a double impact that set off a series of explosions.

We stood at our stations and watched her burn on the horizon while her crew battled the flames. Finally they gained control and made preparations to return to Ulithi, licking their wounds and burying their dead in Jap waters.

Later that afternoon we withdrew, headed for Ulithi and a rest. We had been in the thick of the fight but had passed safely through one of the most difficult periods our fleet had faced to date. We had been right off Okinawa, one time within 15 miles of the island so that we could see it plainly.

We had 25 Jap planes to our credit as well as over 8,000 landings and we had given invaluable support to our troops fighting bitterly on Okinawa, not mentioning the damage done to Jap installations and airfields.

Ulithi, Sweat, Rest and Mail

Our return to Ulithi was supposed to give us a rest from the rigors of fighting, but somehow we all felt like we would prefer to stay in the battle area with the Japs. Ulithi meant we could let down a bit, but at the same time, it meant back-breaking loading of stores and repairing equipment that needed attention. It meant too, that we were back in that tropical heat and would swelter 24 hours a day once more. Frankly, we preferred the Japs and cooler weather to the heat and possible security of eight days.

Two crewmen paint Jap flags on the bridge to represent the first planes shot down during Okinawa battle.

But whether we wanted to or not, three days later we were back in those torrid little coral reefs, where our bodies broke out with heat rash over night and we slept in pools of prespiration.

Ulithi did give us a chance to play once again in spite of the work. Hardly had we dropped anchor than the basketball games were started on the hangar deck and continued until we left. Movies were shown once again and all hands had the opportunity to go on one of those famous South Sea Island beer parties on a little island known as "Mog-Mog". The facilities were crude and the heat intense, yet there was a sort of tropical lure to the tiny desert isle with it's towering palms, sun scorched huts and crumbling grave stones.

After a long spell at sea, a few cans of beer and a plunge in the surf made any spot in the vast wilderness of the Pacific look like an island paradise. It was the escape from the ship and diversion from routine that helped more that anything else...and Mog-Mog apparently offered us that.

It was surprising what a change had come over the crew since we had last been to Ulithi. On our first trip, most of us were overly conscious of the fact that Japs were still on Yap and Truk nearby. This time since we had been right up to the Jap's front door, we felt as safe as though we had been in Pearl Harbor...hardly giving the Jap a thought except to envy him a bit sitting up on his home island where it was cool while we rotted and prickled in our own sweat.

On May 18, Vice-Admiral John S. Mc Cain hoisted his flag and quartered his staff, bringing to this new carrier, which had operated in the forward area for less than a month, the distinction of being the Flagship of the Third Fleet's Aerial Armada.

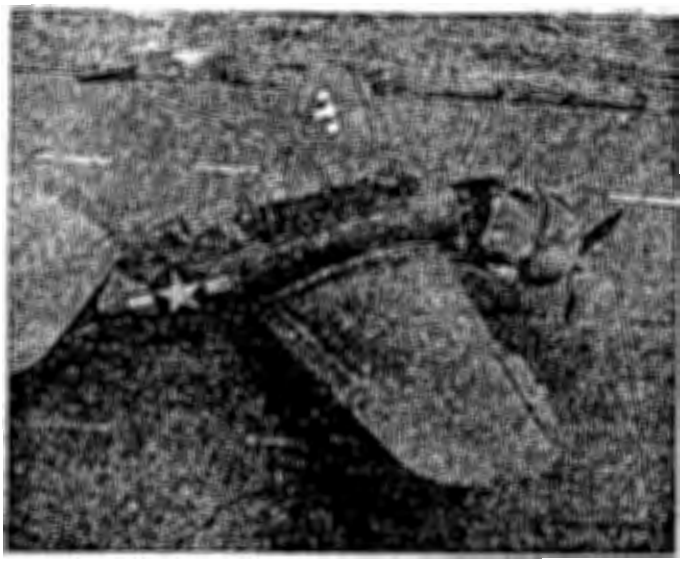
This brought a flurry of excitement for the crew who now wondered what this might mean to their daily lives. After a couple of days of cleaning and polishing, the Flag was well settled and the crew hardly knew there had been a change.

Then after a couple of holiday routines, we upped anchor once more on the morning of May 24 and returned to the Okinawa battle zone once again.

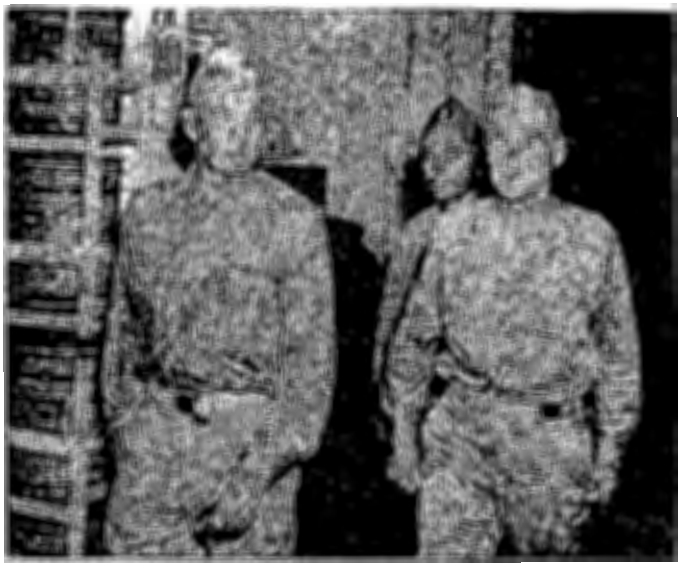
Back to Okinawa

We knew our strike days would be more strenuous this time than on our first trip for now we would stay at our General Quarters Stations from before dawn until well after sunset in order to insure maximum readiness in the event of a raid and localization of fires and casualties in the event of a hit.

We had the figures cold and hard from ships that had been hit while at General Quarters as compared with those who had been taken by surprise when their stations were not manned and the answer was plain. Though it would cause more hardship on our part, still we were thankful that our officers were fore-sighted enough to take this precaution.



Looking like a bucking bronco, this SB2C has "engine trouble" after running into crash barrier.



We fought under the command of both these men; Vice-Admiral John S. Mc Cain and Vice-Admiral Marc Mitscher.

When we read the plan of the day for our first strike day we received quite a jolt. There it was..Reveille at 2:45 A.M. and we would remain at "GQ" until after 8 P.M. Wow! war was going to be hell after all. We piled into our bunks early that night to catch every possible extra minute of sleep, but the night was gone before any of us knew just where and we found ourselves groping bleery eyed down the passage way for breakfast before taking our stations. Succeeding nights seemed to fly by even faster than the first.

Except for our mental state of mind we really were not suffering too much from the all day "GQ"...Particularly when we thought of the Soldiers and Marines wallowing over on Okinawa in the mud. We felt tired because we thought we were tired. Actually with the exception of remote cases, most of the crew was allowed to relax and sleep near their stations as soon as the flights were launched and it was certain there were no "Bogies" in the area.

We squalled over our battle rations of two sandwiches and an apple that were served us at noon and we fumed about our early breakfasts and late suppers, but a sailor is never happy unless he is complaining about his food.

And so it went, day in and day out. Some of the boys below decks suffered a little from the lack of fresh air while some of the boys topside suffered from sun and rain, but our suffering was trivial and we all admitted that this was really the best way to fight, and the surest way to make certain of coming home in the end.

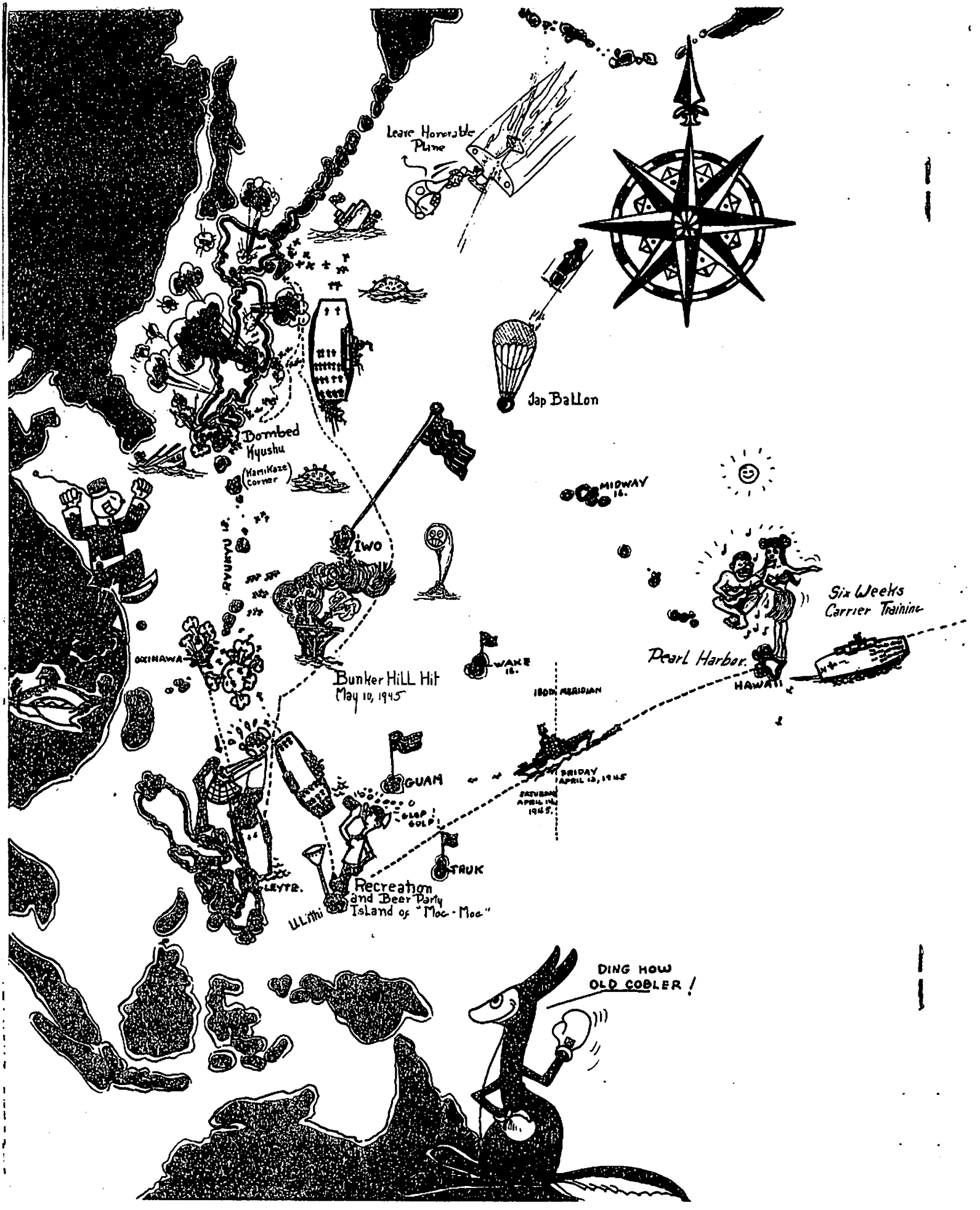
For the rest of the month of May, our operations consisted of flying support missions over Okinawa and there were many a Jap who found skies full of stinging surprises and flew on to his "Glorious Ancestors".

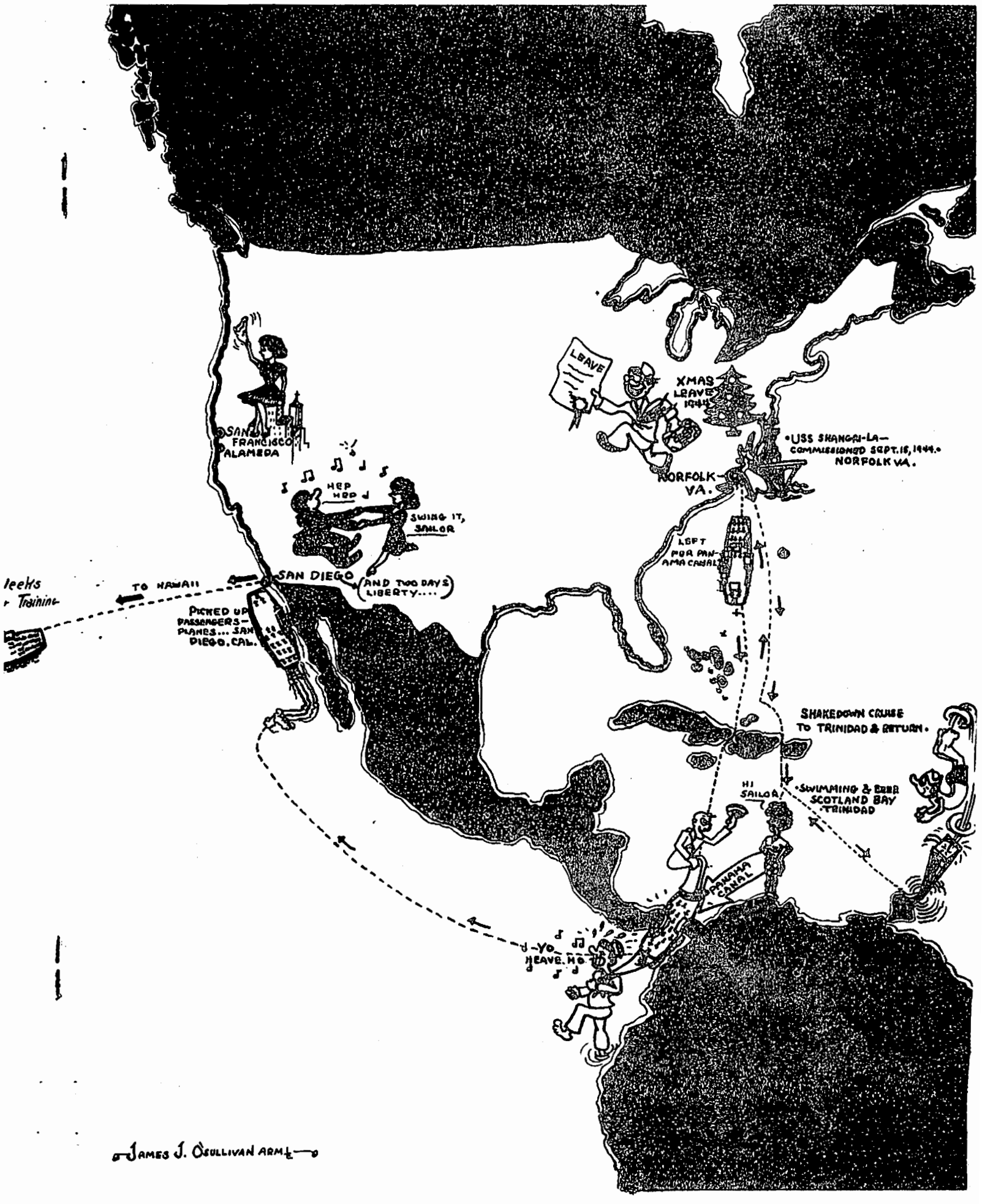
The surprises were not all for the Japs, however, for on June 2 and 3 our planes were ordered to blast air fields on Kyushu, the Southernmost Jap home island, where the suicide planes were based.

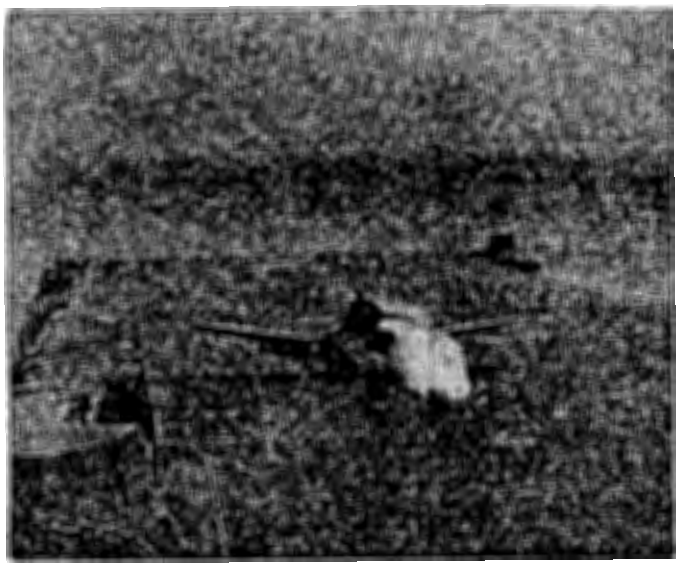
On their initial sweep over Kyushu, 32 of our fighters were jumped by a sizeable force of enemy aircraft who dived in a surprise attack out of the overcast. Our planes passed, tailed, dogfought and maneuvered violently to turn the tables on this crack team of enemy pilots which had ambushed them from the clouds but the Japs were experienced and aggressive...quite different from those enemy pilots previously encountered... and they attacked with bold fury taking advantage of their element of surprise.

By the time that luckless mission was ended and the planes had returned to the ship, we had lost eight fighter planes and six pilots, while the enemy had lost but two planes downed, one probably destroyed and one damaged.

As the planes returned, it didn't take long for us on the carrier to sense that all had not gone well either. Planes returned with tail assemblies shot up, wings


Leave Honorable Plane
Jap Ballon
Bombed Kyushu
(Kamikaze Corner)
Iwo
MIDWAY 1s.
Six Weeks Carrier Training
Pearl Harbor.
HAWAII
OKINAWA
Bunker Hill Hit May 10, 1945
WAKE 1s.
180th MERIDIAN
GUAM
FRIDAY APRIL 13, 1945
SATURDAY APRIL 14, 1945.
SLOP SOLP!
TRUK
LEYTE.
ULITHI
Recreation and Beer Party Island of "Moe-Moe"
DING HOW OLD COBLER!


LEAVE
XMAS LEAVE 1944
•USS SHANGRI-LA— COMMISSIONED SEPT. 15, 1944. NORFOLK VA.
NORFOLK VA.
SAN FRANCISCO ALAMEDA
HEP HEP
SWING IT, SAILOR
LEFT FOR PANAMA CANAL
SAN DIEGO
(AND TWO DAYS LIBERTY....)
TO HAWAII
PICKED UP PASSENGERS— PLANES... SAN DIEGO, CAL.
SHAKEDOWN CRUISE TO TRINIDAD & RETURN.
HI SAILOR!
•SWIMMING & BEER SCOTLAND BAY TRINIDAD
PANAMA CANAL
YO HEAVE HO
JAMES J. O'SULLIVAN ARM'L



This was a close one but it came out alright. Belly tank burns and rocket breaks away after landing.

had ragged holes through which the skeleton of the injured plane could be seen, other planes had neat patterns of machine gun bullets sewing a seam of holes along the fuselage.

Lieutenant Commander S.B. Strong, Commander of the bomber-fighter group came in with the wings and tail of his plane chewed up and a pattern of holes in his fuselage just behind the cockpit. That plane was his pride and joy and the sight of it being torn up sent him into such despair that he hardly spoke to anyone for two days to follow.

Another plane came in with a large hole through the center of his plane emerging out the top just behind the pilot's head, but the pilot was unhurt. Planes landed with their hydraulic system shot out and without the use of flaps, one plane lost its hook and spun dangerously around the middle of the flight deck, but through it all there were no crack-ups.

Another cause for worry was that the planes were running short of fuel since they had fought foul weather to and from the target as well as fighting the Japs. Should there have been a crash that snarled up the landing, many planes would have been forced down into the water. When one pilot was given a wave-off from a landing, he radioed that he had only enough fuel to last one more try. When he landed on his second pass his wheels had hardly touched the deck than the engine coughed and died with a dry tank.

And so it went on that first day over Kyushu until all the planes returned that were coming. There was much talk about the Jap planes that in some instances were able to out-dive our Corsairs at a speed of well over 400 knots and at the same time make right turns. Our airmen had truly run face to face with the best that the Jap had to offer.

Besides the air battles, the crew also found that there were other things to think about for all day long our lookouts began to spot mines floating in the water. We would sight a mine, veer around it, mark it with a smoke bomb for our destroyers to explode when the task group had passed.

Succeeding strikes over Kyushu were much less costly and more damaging to the Jap. There was a flurry of excitement on the ship, when a high-flying Jap plane ranged over our task force at about 30,000 feet and out of reach of our guns. We could almost hear him radioing for a swarm of planes to strike us, but whether our force was too big or weather grounded the we will never Japs we never will know, but no attack materialized.

With the two-day strike at Kyushu completed we returned to our routine patrols over Okinawa, but hardly had we launched our first flights on June 4, than all other flights were cancelled. A typhoon was threatening us and we secured everything for a rough sea.

For hours we maneauvered on various corses. Throughout the night in order to keep to the edge of the typhoon's path, our task group succeeded in eluding the strength of the storm, but other units of Task Force 38 were not so fortunate and received considerable damage. 50 feet was ripped from the bow of the USS Pittsburgh and the forward end of the flight deck on the USS Hornet collapsed. Other ships suffered varying degrees of damage, but these two were the only ones requiring withdrawal from the fleet for repairs.

For the next few days, things went along quietly while we flew missions over Okinawa, until July 8, when we returned to strike the Kanoya airfield on Southern Kyushu. We still had the tales of those crack Jap pilots and first line planes fresh in our minds, and we wondered how tough this assignment might be for our pilots.

Our fighters were to fly protective cover for bomber-fighters from the rest of the fleet.

If the Japs had surprised us on the first raid on Kyushu, we turned the tables on them this time. The attack came so fast that in five minutes time the airfield had been bombed and strafed and our planes had gone as fast as they had come. Our own fighters flying cover protection encountered only five planes. These made one wild pass and retreated. Although full damage assessment was impossible at the time, the whole area of the airfield had been rocked by successive explosions and swept by spreading fires.

We lost two planes that day, but all the pilots returned to the ship. It took a great deal more than luck to bring back Lt,(jg) Raymond L. Meltebere. For a couple of nerve shattering hours he battled a fate ten times more terrifying than guns of the enemy. His engine had cut out and he hit the water in a steep dive. With nothing to protect him other than the bouyancy of a rubber life raft and the point-blank fire of a 38, he successfully repelled a school of maraudering sharks until a seaplane could stand in close enough to pick him up.

By now the Okinawa campaign was nearing its end as the Jap troops were being compressed into the southern tip of the island for a final stand. Our big job complete, we made several minor strikes in the area, and on July 11, we headed south once again, this time for Leyte Gulf in the Philippines.

We now were completely battle seasoned, and had completed another phase in the war without our ship being damaged. Now we could rest and relax once again, and paint 16 more Jap flags on our island scoreboard.

Leyte - - - Another Spot on the Globe

After the day-long strike-day routines, our arrival in Leyte Gulf in the Philippines was a welcome change. Not only did we add a new spot on the globe to our list of travels, but also it was a chance once again to relax a bit from the war.

It was hard to believe, as we dropped anchor in the quiet waters of Leyte Gulf, that there was still heavy

Favorite pastime of crew in port was sunning on the flight deck during ship's holiday routine.

fighting going on to the north and south of us as the doughboys crowded the Japs back into the hills of Luzon and Mindanao. We didn't think too much about it either, for hardly had the anchor dropped than the basketball court was cleared and the in-port marathon of games began once again. A couple of days later beach parties were started also and we put the Japs far into the back of our minds while we enjoyed the recreation parties, ball games, movies and our mail.... Not to mention the rare privilege of "sleeping in" until 5:30 in the morning.

All was not rest, however, for soon the dreaded working party lists began to appear for reprovisioning the ship, telling which men would soon have sore backs and knotted muscles from loading stores.

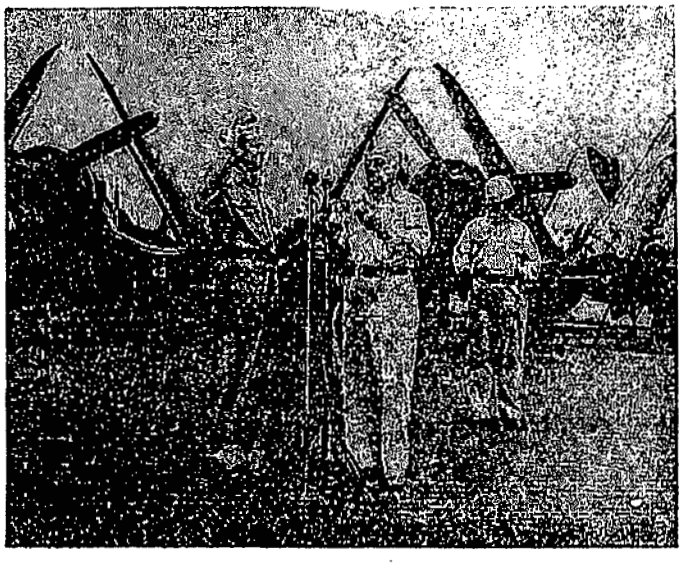
Toward the end of our Philippine period, interest began to pick up on board in the war and our next operation. For sailors who are used to reading the "hand-writing on the wall" it appeared that this next trip would be one which would make blazing headlines in the States. We were certain our first stop would be Tokyo and from all appearances the rest of the operation would be equally as important. Three wire service war correspondents appeared on board, John L. Sullivan, who was to be the new Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air established himself aboard. More high ranking officers were coming and going than we had ever seen before. We even had a short visit by congressman Jamie L. Whitten of Mississippi, who was making an investigation for the Navy appropriations committee. Yes, it looked like big news was coming out of the next operation.

Into Hirohito's Living Room

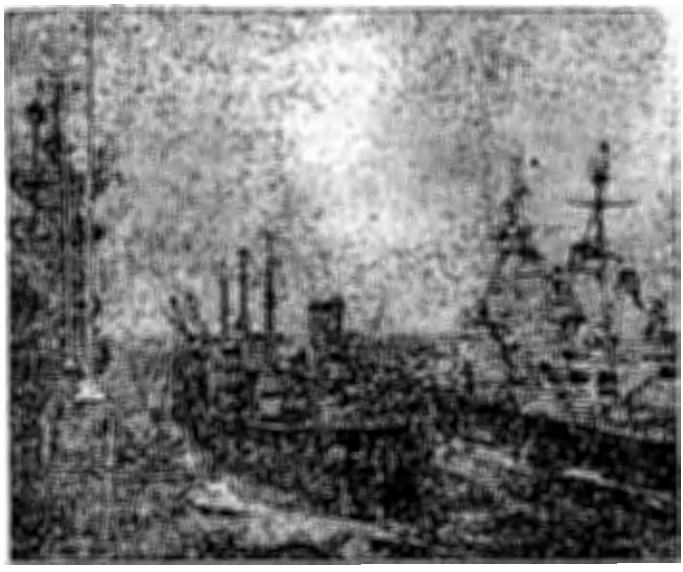
On July 1 we upped anchor and headed into the open sea once more taking an angling north-east course which would take us between the Marianas and Iwo Jima. On the second of July, in an impressive ceremony before the assembled ship's company, the oath of office was given to Mr. Sullivan as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air by Vice Admiral A. W. Fitch, USN. Full honors were rendered and a salute was fired by our 5" gun battery. This was the first time in the history of the Navy that such a ceremony had taken place at sea in the war zone.

We spent thr Fourth of July listening to our gunners "Celebrate" as they fired the ship's guns during target practice. It wasn't a celebration, for we were rehearsing for battles which might be before us. The same day we also witnessed the 10,000th landing on board with Mr. Sullivan as a passenger in the plane and topped the day off with a fried chicken dinner. The day was dampened, however, by the loss of one plane and pilot through an operational failure.

The eight-day trip from the Philippine waters was one dress rehearsal after another for D-day. Almost every day our ship's guns barked at tow targets and our pilots flew practice sorties until at last on July 8,



Another "first". John L. Sullivan takes oath as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air in battle zone.



We didn't even return to port to refuel. Instead we took on fuel from tankers right in the combat area.

we rendezvoused with our tankers to refuel before our initial strike against the Tokyo area which was slated for the 10th.

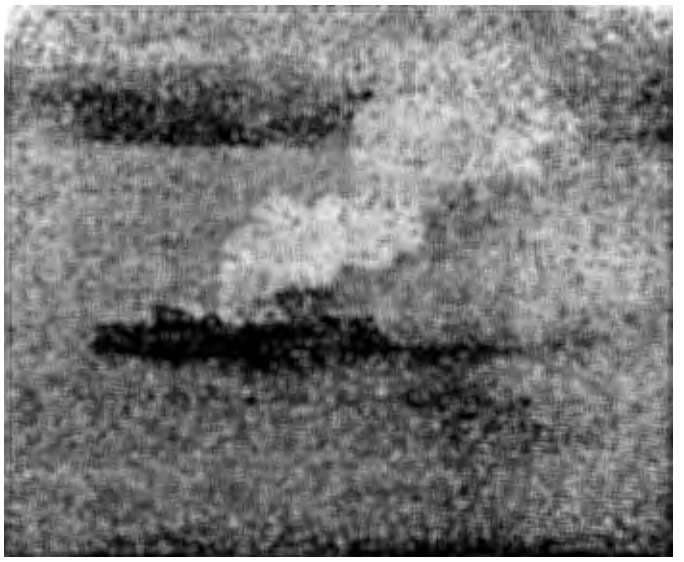
When we awoke on the morning of July 9, there was an atmosphere about the ship which is generally felt over a college campus just before a big game. We had been informed that the Japanese still had hundreds of planes many of them designated for suicide attacks. In the tokyo area, we were alert for a mass attack at any time as we made a fast run toward Japan. We knew we were getting closer by the hour for here and there mines began to appear which our destroyers promptly exploded with their guns. Late in the afternoon we had a submarine contact, and all of us felt sick inside, for we had counted on surprising the Japs this first raid. If the sub was a Jap and had radioed a warning, we could visualize the swarm of suicide planes that would be waiting to greet us. We hit our sacks early that night for the plan of the day read... "revelle, 0136"... and that was the earliest we had ever gotten up before.

When the bugle sounded the next morning, we were up fast, no dwadling this time, for our big day had finally arrived and we were only a matter of minutes by air from Tokyo. As our initial sweeps flew out toward Tokyo, none of us on the ship envied those pilots for we expected heavy opposition. Our greatest surprise came not from an attack on our force by the Japs, but virtually no opposition what so ever except for anti-aircraft fire from the ground. All day long our flights hit airfields in the Tokyo area and we were even more surprised to learn that few Japanese aircraft were on the ground on any of the fields our planes had hit. By the end of the day, we had seriously damaged air fields and installations, and the USS Shangri-La had not lost one single plane or pilot.

We withdrew from the Tokyo area as fast as we had come, keeping the Japs guessing as to where we would strike next. We knew it would be against air fields, shipping and shore installations on the northern-most island of Hokkaido, and we also knew that strike would be held on Friday the 13th, a notable unlucky day.

"Shangri-La luck" had been with us up to date but we wondered if it was wise to test that luck too far on such a superstitious day. As dawn approached and we stood our Gener l Quarters stations, it was obvious that there could be little flying. A low haze and mist kept our planes on the deck all day and finally at noon we secured, postoneing the strike until the next noon we secured, postponeing the strike until the next day. Yes, Friday 13th had been lucky after all for everyone except those in command who had to revise their timetables to compensate for the lost day.

Having pulled north into colder waters, all hands welcomed the sudden change from the sweat of tropical weather. Now we slept under blankets, wore our foul weather gear most of the time, and the order was even



At Hokkaido, one of the things Shangri-La planes left was this burning railroad ferry at Aomori.

given to wear undress blues as a precaution against colds.

What we didn't accomplish on Friday the 13th, we made up for the next day. Our primary target was airfields, but when weather closed on those targets, our planes centered their attention on Jap shipping. Flight after flight roared off the flight deck and returned and apparently our pilots were having a field day in spite of reasonably heavy ack-ack. Destroyers, Freighters, Transports, Warehouses, Railroad trains, Rail Installations, Factories.... All were feeling the brunt of our bombs, rockets and machine guns. Our side was suffering some too, but not badly. Several planes returned with flak holes in their wings, fuselage, tail and cowling. A couple of planes crash-landed on the deck with their hydraulic system damaged and they had but one wheel, but except for chewed-up props and a few bent parts, damage was at a minimum.

The next day was as much of a field day as the first and we all worked a little harder to make it a success for this would be the last strike day under the command of our skipper, Capt. Barner, who was being transferred back to the states to a new command. Again Jap shipping rail transportation and industrial facilities took the punishment and all that seemed to be bothering our pilots was that they couldn't seem to carry enough bombs and rockets to cause as much destruction as they would like. Life for the crew continued it's familiar pattern of launching planes, catching naps on the cold steel deck, eating "K" rations at mid-morning, hot soup in the afternoon. We kept a constant alert even though we were tired and worn from continuous all-day "GQ" that started shortly after midnight and didn't end until late the following evening. In addition to occasional "Bogies" that would snoop around our task group only to be shot down or chased away by our air patrols, the crew found there were other thrills to break the monotony of the day. Continuously we were spotting mines for our destroyers to explode, one of our pilots returned with a bullet hole through his "Greenhouse" but he had escaped unharmed, but the biggest excitement for the crew came late in the afternoon. A few planes returned with bombs and began to play nine-pins with the missels down the flight deck as the bombs would become detached when the planes landed.

One bomb broke away from a plane and was struck by the propeller, spinning the arming device as the missel skidded down the flight deck, miraculously missing everything. When it finally halted, the bomb rolled ominously with it's 500-pounds of death ready to go off if the firing pin was given a slight tap. Three seamen sat on top of the bomb to steady it as the ordnance officer removed the fuse and tossed it overboard. While all this was going on, most of the crew was digging "fox holes" into the deck, but one seaman who could stand his curiosity no longer poked his head up over a catwalk and with his fingers, plugged tightly into his ears, yelled: "Has it gone off yet?".

Another bomb that broke away was having its picture taken by one of the photographers, a portly chief. When the bomb failed to stop with the plane, the chief decided it was time to run. So off he went, down the deck, with the bomb right behind him. He finally out-dodged it but his developed pictures weren't so successful. What he got was a beautiful shot of an oncoming bomb, suddenly disrupted by a wild panorama of deck, sky and planes. He'd forgotten to switch off his movie camera.

Also during the day we watched the battleships, cruisers and destroyers return to our task group after they had gone in close to shore for a point blank bombardment of steel mill installations at Muroran.

For us, the two days at Hokkaido seemed very profitable for we sunk or damaged 44 Jap vessels and in addition had heavily damaged rail and industrial facilities with a loss of but two pilots and one air crewman.

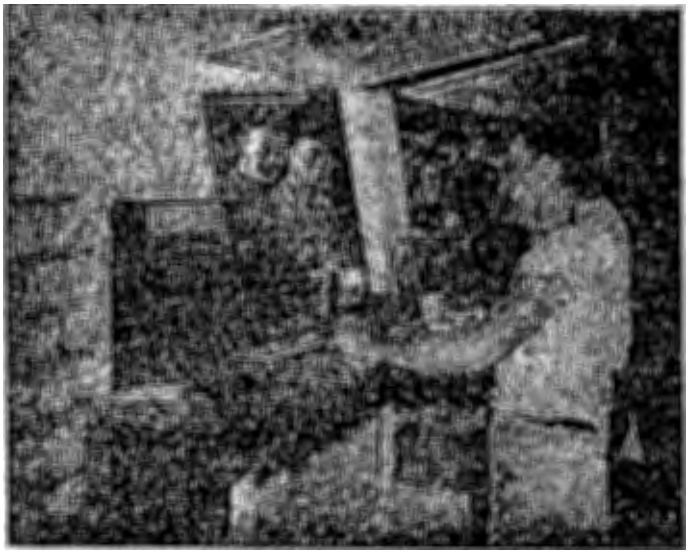
The next day we pulled out to refuel once again at the same time all hands crowded on the fantail to bid goodbye to Captain Barner who was transferred in mid-ocean to a destroyer that would start him on his trip back to the states. Now under the command of our new skipper, Captain R. F. Whitehead, we headed back to the Tokyo area.

Strikes and Scuttlebutt

If the Jap Chamber of Commerce was doing anything about the weather, they surely were not trying to make us feel welcome, or impress us with their sunny climate. For on the 17th of July when we were primarily interested in blasting the Jap battleship Nagato at Yokosuka our pilots encountered nothing but foul weather. It was too risky for our planes to return with their bombs and rockets which often broke loose and were a constant threat to the ship. The pilots had to expend them in the sea. One fighter pilot decided he wasn't going to make the trip over Japan for nothing even though the target was blanketed by clouds. Spotting a Jap riding down the road on a bicycle, he decided to have a little fun. Diving down, he spurted machine gun bullets on either side of the Nip.. "Boy that Jap really hauled", the pilot commedted to the crew upon returning.

Another pilot with a 500 pound bomb to get rid of searched in vain for some sort of target. Finding none, he headed out to sea, intending to jettison his bomb in the water when suddenly he spied a lone Jap in a row boat. Pealing over on one wing, he dived on the little row boat releasing his bomb. Of course he didn't hit such a small target, but the Jap probably died from fright anyhow.

By the following day, the weather had cleared only slightly when we went to our early morning "GQ" stations, and it appeared that the strike was off against the Nagato. In fast by shortly after sun rise the weather was so thick, we secured for the day and returned to our sacks to catch up on the sleep we had been losing.



During the strain of battle, there was nothing like an occasional "gedunk" at the ship service fountain.

Shortly before noon, however, the weather suddenly cleared and strike day was resumed immediately ... We were after the Nagato.

Our first sweeps struck at nearby airfields with the intention of pinning Jap air power to the ground, then followed the bombers whose one aim was knocking the Nagato out of the war forever. By midafternoon, the bomber pilots and air crewmen were over their target, diving through an almost solid wall of flak. It was the heaviest our fliers had faced to date. Back on the ship we waited...hoping, wishing them success and wondering what would be the outcome.

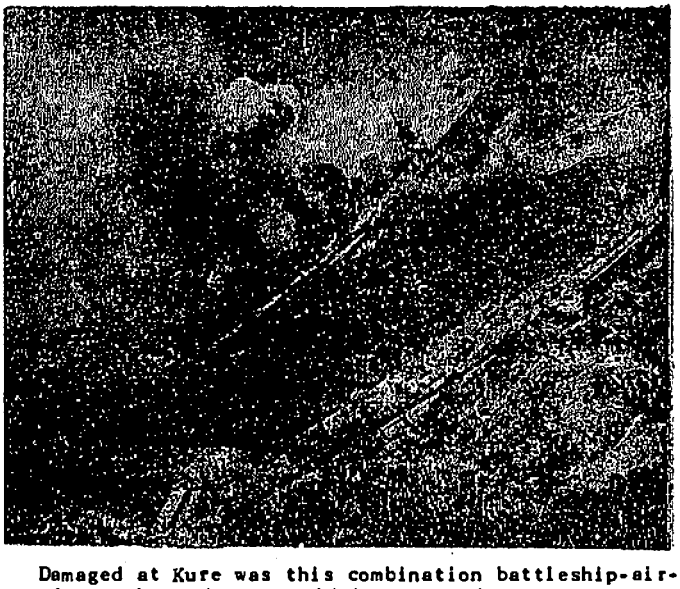
A short time later, we began to find out for back to the ship well ahead of the rest of the flight, came two bombers carrying casualties in theif gunner's cockpits. The first plane landed smoothly and first aid and rescue men swarmed over the plane. It was to late, for the crewman Alfred Bonozconi, ARM3c had died of loss of blood when his leg had been shattered from flak.

Then the second plane landed as easily as the first for the pilots were doing all in their power to lessen the pain of their injured crewmen. The second crewman Walter Kaufmann, ARM1c, had been more fortunate than the first. His legs also had been shattered by flak, but he had remained conscious throughout the return flight. Ripping away his flying togs, he applied a tourniquet from his first aid kit to one leg, and having no material for the other, had ripped out the wire to his earphones and fashioned a makeshift tourniquet for the other, saving his life.

Then the remainder of our flight began to return and the crew was due for more excitement. One plane could not get its tail hook down and had virtually no rudder control for the plane had been hit by flak cutting the cables in the tail. Ordinarily the pilot and his gunner would have ditched the plane in the water and would have been picked up by a destroyer rather than chance a crash landing on the deck. This pilot had some highly important photographs taken over the battleship and he wanted to make sure those films reached the ship undamaged.

All the other bombers were landed while he circled the carrier and finally came in for a landing. The first try brought a wave-off, but on the second, while everyone on deck held his breath the pilot brought his plane down onto the deck. It veered dangerously over on one wheel for a split second and then settled down to run full speed into the barriers. Surprisingly he came to a moderately smooth halt for a crash landing and more surprisingly the plane didn't nose over. Both the pilot and the gunner climbed out unhurt.

Later that night after we had secured, the crew went to the hangar deck to see the damaged planes and sailors waded through bloody water that washed about the deck after the cockpits had been hosed out by the repair crew. The supper was good that night, but it didn't taste just right knowing one of our shipmates was lying dead below decks and the other was in pain at sick bay. The knowledge that we had heavily damaged the Nagato so that she would never fight again and had given the Jap air fleet another blow failed to bring us to the mood to cheer.



Damaged at Kure was this combination battleship-aircraft carrier, the Ise, which was a prize target.

Walter Kaufmann, ARM1c is gently lifted from his gunner's cockpit after being wounded by flak over Yokosuka.

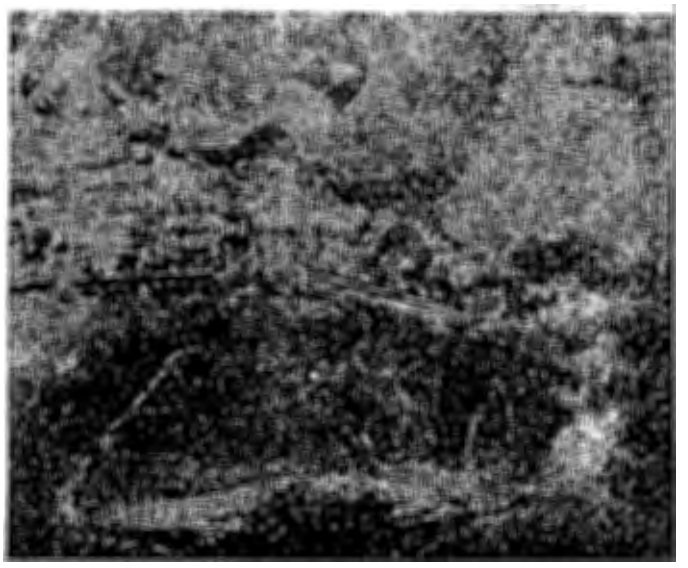
The next morning, after pulling out into the safety of the sea once again, we witnessed our first burial at sea as Chaplain Paul H. Martineau assisted by Chaplain P. H. Mitchell said the last rites for Alfred Bonosconi ARM3c. Later the same afternoon we had a flurry of excitement when our patrol shot down a Jap free balloon similar to the ones that had been drifting with the winds from Japan to the United States.

Five days later, after we had steamed under a complete radio blackout to keep the enemy guessing, we opened up on the Japs with full fury once again. This time we were after more of their fleet units bottled up at the Kure Naval Base on Southern Honshu. The weather was not entirely ideal on that day of July 24, but still our planes ranged out from the flight deck all day long pounding anything they could find through the overcast. Freighters, locomotives, a roundhouse, airplanes on the ground, air installations and Jap war ships were all feeling the brunt of our attack. We felt particularly happy when we learned the names of some of the Jap Fleet units we were damaging; names such as... Ise, Haruna, Fuji, Tone, Hosho, and Oyodo.

At the same time, all the action was not our own for "Bogies" kept popping up in our area. One Jap who had sneaked in within 20 miles of us was "Splashed" by our air patrol. Another broke through to our sister task group and dived, only to be shot out of the air by ship gunners. A third came in close to our group but again the air patrol was on the job... "Splashed, another Jap".

The activity over the target by our last bomber strike caused a late return of our planes and it was dusk before the first planes began to arrive. One pilot radioed that he would have to make an emergency landing since he had a shell hole in his fusilage just behind the cockpit and he didn't know the extent of the damage. He came in for a landing, being expertly guided by the landing signal officer and his wheels settled onto the deck in what appeared a normal landing. Then there was a ripping crunch... the tail hook and after part of the plane remained at the end of the flight deck where it belonged, but the cockpit, engine, wheels and wings tore loose from the strain of the arresting gear cable on the weakened fuselage and raced down the flight deck headed straight for a gun turret... out of control. The wing struck the turret and the derelict spun crazily around ending in a tangle in the barriers. A short silence covered the deck as everyone waited to see the whole mass burst into flames and the pilot possibly seriously burned...but there were no flames and in less time than it takes to tell it, the pilot climbed from the wreckage, unhurt, and walked away.

Somehow it seemed that particular gun turret had a curse on it, for only minutes later a big Torpedo Bomber reeled down the deck, its wing smacking the



This is what the Jap battleship Haruna looked like at Kure before planes got through with it. Later ship sunk.

turret before the plane came to a crunching halt.

Two Torpedo planes entered the landing circle at the same time, with the second pilot radioing that he didn't have enough gas to make another approach. The first plane was waved off and the second brought in just before his tanks drained dry.

By now darkness had fallen and pilots were searching vainly for their own carrier decks, landing by the dim lights along the flight deck. In the darkness, planes were wasting precious fuel in search of their own ships until finally the order was given for pilots to land on any carrier in their area.

One Torpedo Bomber from a light carrier came onto our deck but also crashed his wing into that same gun turret. As he climbed from the plane, he commented... "Your deck is so big compared to ours that I couldn't tell which landing strip to use. I guess I picked the wrong one".

And so it went with one exciting landing after another until at last all the planes were out of the sky and our own flight deck was jammed... both with our planes, and those from other carriers who had picked the Shangri-La for a haven. We lost five planes, two pilots and two aircrewmen that day.

The next day our planes were back over Kure, but the weather again interfered. Never-the-less the pilots roared off the flight deck all day plastering Jap merchant shipping and air fields, catching many planes on the ground. Twice that day of July 25 "Shangri-La Luck" held out. Once when a returning fighter landed and accidently sprayed the deck with machine gun bullets. Sailors clawed into the deck digging "fox holes" and no one was hurt. Another time, when a plane was being catapulted the sudden jerk broke the detachable gas tank loose spilling highly inflammable gasoline over the deck. One spark would have made the the deck a mass of flames, but all that happened was that gasoline fumes were sucked into the ship's ventilation system, making it impossible for the men below decks to smoke for a while.

Late that afternoon a Navy "Dumbo" (Rescue Flying Boat) ran out of fuel near our task group after making a rescue near Japan and had to land. All the ships in the group made a quick turn to produce a smooth "slick" on the choppy water, and the big ship landed smoothly.

Because we were so close to Japan, none of the ships dared stop long enough to refuel the plane for its return trip to base and after the pilot and passengers had been removed by a destroyer, we all watched while a destroyer sank the mercy plane with gunfire.

By dark, we were ready to secure once more when suddenly "Bogies" began to appear on our radar once more. It was the Jap alright making one of his famous dusk attacks and the planes closing in on our destroyer screen had "Meat Balls with Catchup" on their wings. Anti-aircraft tracers spurted into the sky as we stood there watching the fireworks, wondering if the Jap would get through. Suddenly there was a big dull ball of orange fire in the sky that plummeted into the water. One less Jap. A few minutes later tracers spurted again. Another Jap was trying to find a hole through our destroyer screen through which to attack, but after several poor attempts, he returned to his base while he still had a whole skin.

A couple of days later, after refueling, we were back hitting the Kure area once again to wipe out the rest of the Jap Fleet. The night before we had heard that the allied powers had given Japan their final ultimatum for surrender or face complete destruction and we were determined to put all the emphasis we could in this strike.

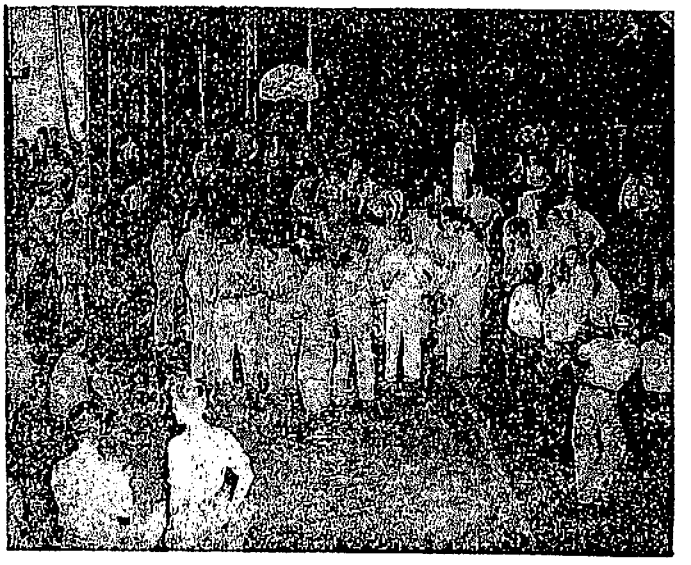
Our planes maintained a constant shuttle between the ship and the target and again Jap air power, railroads, merchant shipping, and installations were smashed. But best of all our attack on the Jap Fleet was highly successful with the battleship Haruna and the light cruiser Oyodo being left burning. Later the Oyodo capsized, and the Haruna was beached and was down by the stern which was flooded.

Our pilots and gunners faced intense anti-aircraft that day and as their planes would land one by one, we didn't have to hear their stories to tell it. Again "Shangri-La Luck" was with us and most of the planes were alright. One pilot returned with the plexi-glass of his cockpit shattered and his goggles dangling about his shoulder. A piece of shrapnel burst through the cockpit right behind his head and he felt his goggles hit his shoulder. He rubbed the spot expecting to find a mass of blood, but none was there. The fragment had come close enough to sever the goggle strap but had completely missed his skull.

Another bomber returned in which the air crewman related that an anti-aircraft fragment struck his machine gun, exploding several rounds of his own ammunition in his face, but he was untouched. A fighter came to a normal landing and the pilot waved to the flight deck crew, but the crew didn't notice the wave. They were too busy looking at a gapping 8-inch hole in the plane right behind the cockpit.

One pilot told of having an anti-aircraft shell explode, taking out most of his wingtip. He radioed his wingmates that he was turning out to sea and later gave them his position as, "I'm circling over a group of ships in the Japan Sea". His wing mates spotted him alright, but when they saw the Jap convoy, they all but forgot about their "Sick Chick" and blasted the ships below with all the explosives they had left until they set a large two-stack transport afire. Later when the planes had returned, the pilot of the damaged plane had his picture taken with his head sticking through the hole in his wingtip.

Another close call by a bomber pilot was related when the pilot told of feeling his plane hit. He called to his crewman to look around for damage, but the crewman could find none. Then the pilot looked around to discover a hole on either side of his cockpit close to his



Shangri-La marines assemble with gear on hangar deck just before they shoved off to occupy Yokosuka.

legs. Closer inspection revealed a hole in his pant leg but he had not been touched.

Lady luck was with us another time that day too when a fighter accidently sprayed the deck with machine gun bullets, but again no one was injured. We lost four planes in combat that day, and by nightfall we had to pull out to sea at full speed to duck another one of those typhoons that seemed to be eternally "Getting in our hair".

By July 30 we were back in the Tokyo Bay Area once again but the weather was so bad over our assigned targets, our pilots were told to search for "Targets of opportunity." Usually this doesn't provide very lucrative results, but on this day it was just the opposite. Our pilots found a nest of submarines, sinking three midget subs and three larger ones plus damaging four midgets. Besides this they plastered small freighters, a cruiser, a large transport, small merchant ships and locomotives plus the Japan Imperial Aircraft Plant which was bombed and rocketed and left burning. We were bothered by the usual Jap "Snoopers" but none attacked our group, although the British nearby "Splashed" one that ventured too far from his bowl of rice.

Then for over a week, we cruised around a short distance from Japan. First we were dodging a typhoon, then we were replenishing ship, then we were just waiting, and waiting and waiting. The crew began to get restless ... "Let's got on with the war", they said. Still we cruised, holding a couple of half-day holiday routines while we sailed about 500 miles from Japan. The crew lolled in the sun on the flight deck without a care in the world and little thought of the Jap who was only a couple of hours flight time from us. Still we wanted to get on with the war so we could go home... Then came the news. Japan had been blasted by the new Atomic bomb. We had laid a safe distance off shore until the big "Blow out" was over.

When the first news of the Atomic Bomb was released, many of the crew would not believe it.... it was too fantastic to be true. Still as more and more information trickled through, and the facts came out we pushed the end of the war up on our calendars to two weeks more or at the most two months.

Our spirits were high on August 8 when at last we were ready to start our strikes once more, this time in the Hokkaido area once again, but the weather still was against us. Fog over our force kept our planes on the deck except for our air patrol that flew no matter what the weather was. Though we couldn't attack, still the Japs kept heckling us all day long. They would duck in and out of the fog at us and our air patrol would chase them away or shoot them down.

With foggy weather still holding around Hokkaido, we dropped south a bit the next day to blast aircraft and airfields on Northern Honshu. Generally strike day started off rather quietly but August 9 was an exception. The first thing in the morning we learned the news that Russia had entered the war. The ship fairly buzzed with the news and prognostication as to what effect this would have on the war.

Another close call. Bomb (far right) skids down deck after breaking away from landing plane. It didn't go off.

Fighter plane breaks in two upon landing. Although all of his plane wasn't there, pilot walked away unhurt.

Excitement was to be the order for the day, it seemed, for as our first planes roared off the flight deck a plane from our sister carrier had to make a forced landing in the water just off our port side and we watched as the pilot was rescued by a destroyer. A short time later the same thing again was repeated.

Then about noon our little slant-eyed customers with grinning teeth began to appear and our cash register began to clang with new receipts as our air patrol shot down two bombers headed our way.

All the while, our own planes were blanketing Jap air fields with rockets and bombs, destroying planes on the ground and heavily damaging ground installations.

Early in the afternoon, as a flight of planes was landing, the last plane had no hydraulic power and would have to land without flaps. This meant he would come in at high speed and generally this spelled trouble. In he came like a streak of lightning, the landing signal officer doing everything in his power to guide him safely. As the plane dropped onto the deck, it veered crazily as it raced down the strip. The tail hook caught the arresting gear cable but the strain was too great. The plane split just behind the cockpit with the derilict cockpit, wheels, wings and motor racing into the barrier. It struck the first, and plunged into the second, spinning and twisting as though in agony. The second cable held and the wreckage came to a twisted halt against the island structure. No one on the deck thought the pilot could have escaped serious injury through the pounding and careening the wreckage had taken. But Shangri-La Luck was still there. Not only was there no fire but the pilot unbuckled his safety strap and walked away from the wreckage.

Hardly had we caught our breath from this, than in came the word that one plane had been unable to release its 500 pound bomb. The plane came in, the arresting gear cables snapped it to a halt and the bomb spurted down the deck...but there was no explosion. Like all the other bombs before it, this one had miraculously missed everything in its path and slid to a halt beneath the planes parked on the forward end of the flight deck.

Things really began to happen in fast succession. "Bogies" began to pop up on all sides of us. One of the picket destroyers just over the horizon reported she had been hit by a suicide plane and that she needed assistance in caring for her wounded.

At the same time the combat air patrol shot down two more Japs and the little destroyers accounted for another pair. Yes, the Japs were coming out for business after nearly a month of hiding, and we were ready to to give it to them.

Soon afterwards we got one of our closest calls of the war. Just as our strikes were returning a jap was reported somewhere near the task force and all hands were put on the alert. He popped up suddenly several

Part of the Third Fleet maneuvers a quick turn as the ships pose for their first portrait after war ended.

miles astern of us and the combat air patrol hadn't. time to set him afire before the ship's guns opened up. But he came on in, more guns opening up all the time, and commenced his dive on the U.S.S. Wasp. It looked for a while as though there was another Bunker Hill or a Franklin in the offing, but the 5-inch batteries deflected him enough to send him crashing in flames just off the carrier's starboard bow.

Late that evening, when all our planes had returned, our pilots found it hard to tell their stories of destroying Jap airfields because we were so busy recounting our own excitement that day.

But we did listen when the announcement was made that another atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki. That sounded like the shades of things to come.

The Shangri-La crew will long remember August 10. Late that night as we were getting ready for bed, the news suddenly swept throughout the ship..., the Japs had sul tted a proposal for peace. Impromptu celebrations broke out in every compartment. The war wasn't over yet. But we felt certain this was "It" and only a matter of hours would bring the official end of hostilitites.

The weather turned bad enough to cancel whatever air operations were on the schedule and for the next two days we glued ourselves to the radio. The news was brief and many questions went unanswered: mainly were we or weren't we going to end the war? But what fact didn't supply we filled in with scuttlebutt until we actually were whipping ourselves into a war of nerves.

But the big jolt came on August 13. Twice strikes were scheduled and then called off and each time the tenslon mounted. Finally the strike was on "for sure."

However, while we were half-heartedly eating our breakfast we were jerked back into reality when it was announced that a Jap plane had been splashed nearby. A few minutes later more bogies were reported in the area and the ship went to battle stations. The war was on again, and in earnest

We sent off our strikes to the Tokyo area, and the same time our defenses were working overtime. More enemy planes were sent down near our outer ring of destroyers and by noon the combat air patrol over the cans accounted for three more.

Throughout the day we were heckled by Japs trying to break through into the task force. One group of bogies was intercepted by our fighters but it turned out to be B-29s. Somebody suggested over the "squawk box" that "we have just been scouted by some army B-29s Guess MacArthur is trying to keep track of us."

But the pattern was mostly the same until after sundown....alert after alert...report after report..... "splashed one Jill," "splashed one Myrt," "splashed one Zeke." A total of 22 enemy aircraft were knocked down that one day.

Yet it wasn't enough that August 13th was one of our toughest days with the Nips. We also came within a hair of blowing ourselves up.

One of the strike planes was unable to release its 1000-pound bomb over the target. And the only place he could land was on us --- with the bomb. The pilot was told to orbit while the air patrol chased away a Jap snooper plane, but finally was told to come on in.

There had been other planes land before with their bombs stuck aboard but this was by far the biggest one yet. The pilot made a good landing, but there were few spectators for this one: everyone who could get away was on the deck, face down, or under cover.

We peeked up cautiously after the plane had landed safely on the deck and saw with relief the bomb still was hanging on the underside. But it was close. The ordnance officer, Lt. Ed Jackson, checked and found the bomb fully armed: had it hit the deck with just a slight jar it would have blown up.

The strikes were called off for the following day but the scuttlebutt wasn't. We were in the refueling area for a few hours and then started back toward Japan. Whether it was for another strike or for the occupation we couldn't tell. The ship's Marines were preparing for a landing force: the air department was making preparations for another strike.

However the word came out to strike anyway, despite the constant peace talk. The crew was up at 2 a.m. and the planes went off at dawn.

A few minutes after the first strike was out of sight word ame that another Jap was shot down in the Tokyo area. The Japs were still fighting, too. We sat and fidgeted for it seemed sure the end would come that day. Even so, often a sailor would swear. For no reason at all, except to let off steam.

Suddenly the air cracked with an order over the inter-ship radio channel: "Cancel all remaining strikes for the day." A few minutes later: "Recall all planes from the preasent strike."

This was it. The war was over.

It hadn't come any too soon, either, because one of our pilots, Lt.(j.g.) Jack Dunn failed to come back. However, he was seen alive and in good condition in one of Japan's inland lakes. The Japs got him, however, before we could, and he didn't return for several weeks.

Surprisingly there was little celebration on board. While the people in the states went wild, we smiled and laughed, but in the main we were so tired, strained, fatigued and relieved all at once that there was little energy left with which to celebrate.

We were thankful more than anything. Thankful that the end had come without the ship being hit ...that with the exception of the air group, therehad been no casualties from enemy action since we had entered the war zone...that all were alive, safe and that someday we would head back to the United States.

We had been at sea for 46 consecutive days and had struck Japan on 22 of them. We had lost much sleep and we were worn out by the constant air operations.

Headed for the beach at Yokosuka Naval Base, sea going marines go in for initial occupation of Japan.

But nearly as great was the strain of the last five days of waiting and hoping for peace.

With the war ending on the 11th month anniversary of the Shangri-La it was almost as good as a birthday present However there still was a job left to do before our first year could draw to a close.

We flew regular patrols in assigned sectors of Japan to make sure the Japs would carry out their part of the peace agreement. Our Marines helped take over the Yokosuka naval base. All planes were used for what the pilots called their happiest job of the war. Seabags full of food, candy, toilet articles and medical supplies were dropped on prisoner of war camps throughout Japan and airmen returned with tales of how the prisoners had laughed, waved and pointed to "thank you" and "home!" signs they had painted on rooftops.

On August 28 a plane from the Shangri-La was the first Navy aircraft to land peacefully on Japan since the war started. Several communications specialists and public relations officials were sent ashore to work with the Army in the first phases of the occupation.

But all this was leading up to the big event. Finally on September 2 came the day for which the world was waiting. The formal signing of the peace treaty took place aboard the battleship Missouri, anchored in Tokyo bay. Planes from the Shangri-La rendezvoused with those from all Task Force 38, flew in mass formation over the Emperor's palace and out past the Missouri during the actual signing.

It also was a special day for the Shangri-La, because five who we thought were lost came back.

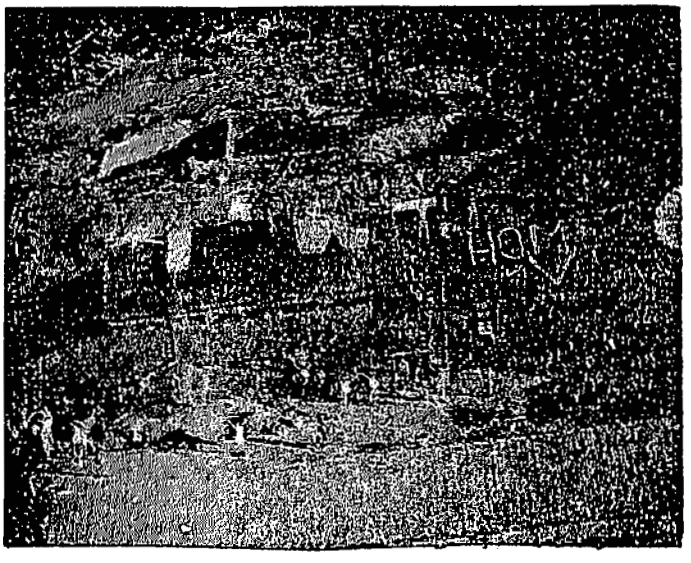
With the band playing "Happy days are here again" on the flight deck, a rescue plane taxied to a halt bearing Lts.(j.g.) E. Dixon, J. H. Chapman and J. C. Dunn; Ens. R. W. Mann and rear seat gunner R. F. Hanna. All had been just released from Jap prison camps and except for Chapman and Dunn, they had been definitely given up for lost.

though many units of the Third Fleet sailed into Sagami Wan and Tokyo bay shortly after the surrender it was not yet time for the Shangri-La to enter. She still had those patrols to fly -- we still were taking no chances on having the Jap airforce suddenly coming to life.

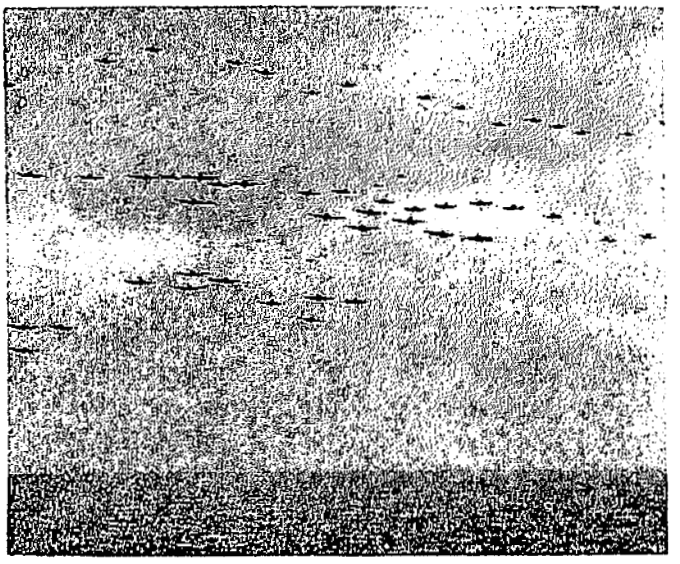
Also we said goodbye to Air Group 85 which had done such a fine job of protecting our ships during battle and had rung up an excellent combat record. Many of our crew left, too: those who had the necessary points for discharge.

Finally on September 15 we celebrated our first anniversary with a holiday routine and a turkey dinner, and made plans to enter Tokyo bay the next morning.

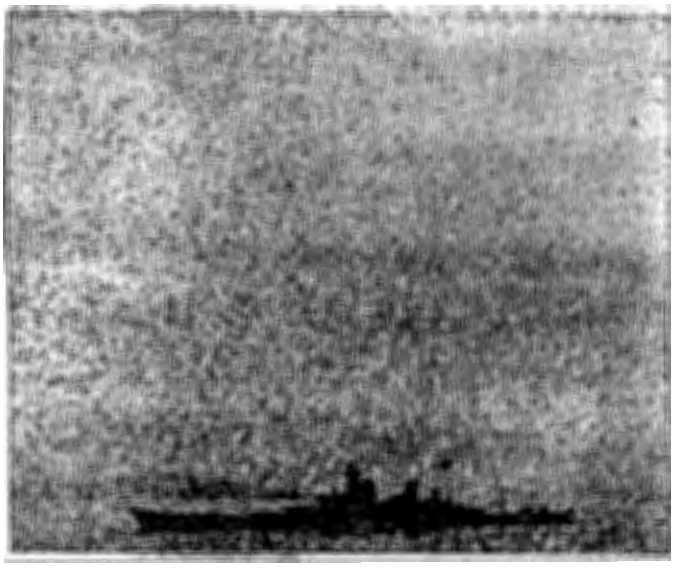
And so on September 16, after having spent 78 days continuously at sea during the last operation of the war, the Shangri-La sailed into Tokyo bay and dropped anchor just off what little remained of Yokohama and Tokyo. The Tokyo Express had arrived.



War Prisoners wave hilariously at Shangri-La planes as they drop food packages. Note bomb crater, right.

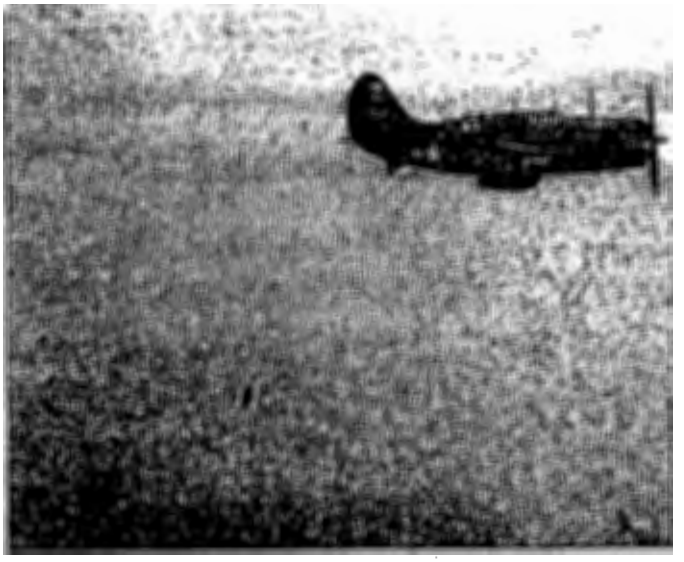


A few of the mass formation of planes from fast carriers fly in "victory formation" over the Shangri-La.

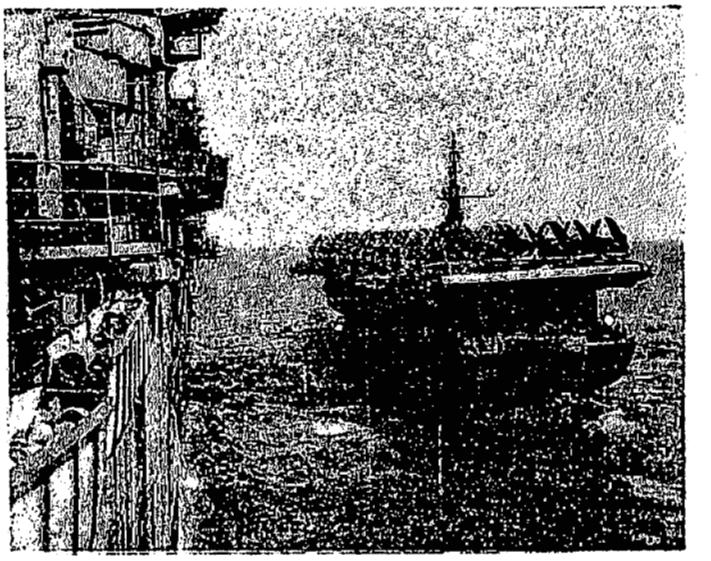


Carrier planes roar over USS Missouri anchored in Sagami Bay as peace terms are signed, ending the war.

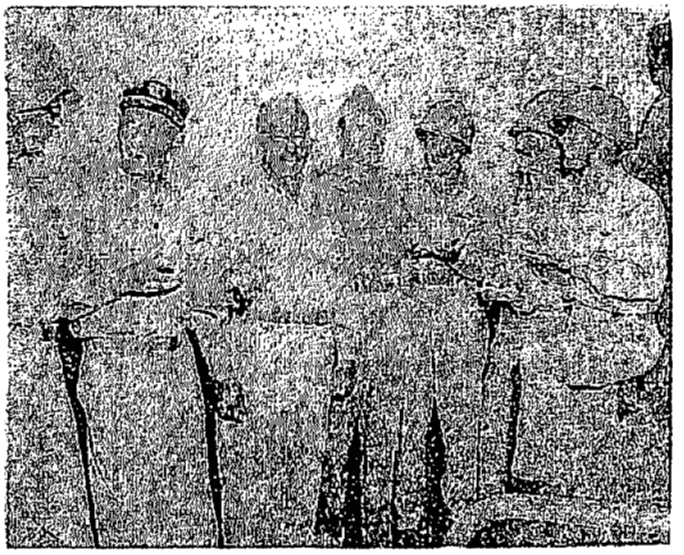
Japanese officials give information to U.S. Navy officers as first troops take over Yokosuka Naval Base.



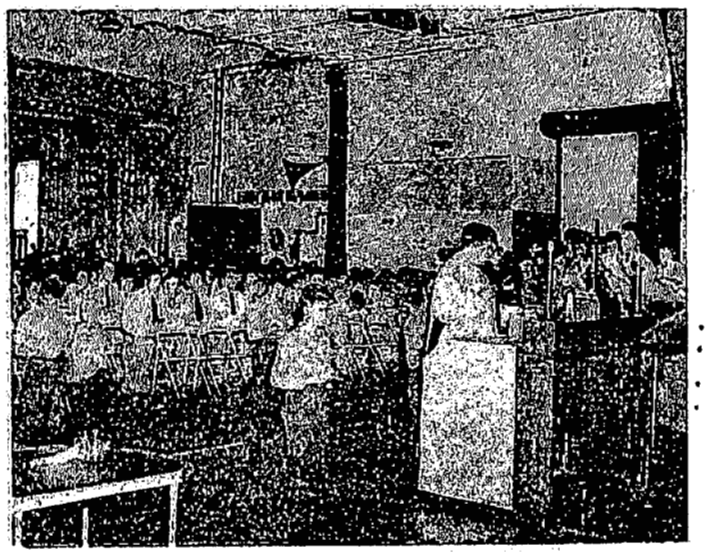
A Shangri-La bomber flies over the battleship USS Missouri (lower left) while Japs sign surrender terms.



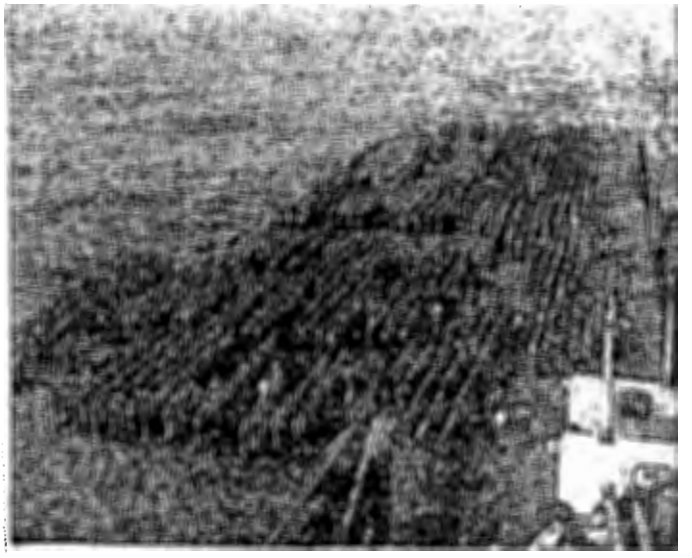
When the "jeep" carrier, USS Attu, came along side just off Japan, we sent Air Group 85 home for a rest.



Vice-Admiral J.S. McCain (second from left) stands with part of staff as war correspondent hold interview.



Even in combat, sailors stopped long enough to thank God for safety and sucess during Sunday services.



Standing at quarters once again after the end of the war, Shangri-La crew musters on the flight deck.

The marines land at yokosuka Naval Base and have everything well in hand during initial occupation.

Here's How We Hurt Hirohito

Enemy Planes Destroyed:

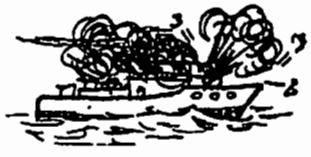
In The Air	50
On The Ground	135
Total	185

Enemy Planes Damaged:

In The Air	14
On The Ground	190
Total	204

Total Japanese Planes Downed Or Destroyed 389

Merchant Ships Sunk	48
Warships Sunk Or Destroyed	7
Total Ships Destroyed	55



Merchant Ships Damaged	89
Warships Damaged	22
Total Ships Damaged	111

Locomotives Destroyed	24
Locomotives Damaged	9
Total	33

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P.S. HIROHITO!

Here's One You Didn't Get

Oliver Rasmussen, ARM1c, (right) tells his shipmates about his escape from Japan after dodging Japs for two months on Hokkaido.

One of the war's most amazing tales of ingenuity, high courage, daring and just plain will-to-live came to light when Oliver Rasmussen, ARM 1/c, returned to the Shangri-La after eluding capture on the Japanese homeland for 68 days.

Reported missing in action and definitely given up for lost when on July 14 the Helldiver in which he was rear-seat gunner failed to return, Rasmussen came back from the dead to collect his most important possession: a one-way ticket to the states by plane, priority 2.

But before he left Rasmussen's story, that of a modern Robinson Carusoe, had been wirelessed to the states by every major news agency and he had recounted most of his experiences to the Shangri-La crew.

Rasmussen's odyssey began back on one of those overcast strike-day mornings in mid-July when the whole air group was up for an all-out blow against Hokkaido.

Low clouds forced the pilot, Lt. (jg) Howard Eagleston, to fly low and while in the overcast the plane struck a mountainside. Rasmussen was knocked unconscious momentarily and Eagleston was killed instantly.

Dazed and suffering from shock, Rasmussen tried unsuccessfully to extricate his first-aid kit from the wreckage, and then stumbled back into the hills away from the plane to avoid capture. He carried nothing but the clothes on his back, a small packsack and no food. He had only a vague idea of his location; he knew only that he was in northern Japan and that it would be a good idea if he didn't get caught.

Then started days of wandering through the rugged countryside of Hokkaido, living off the land, dodging Jap surveying parties and trying to reach the coastline.

He finally found the coast on July 31 and had his first real nourishment in two weeks. He found a farmhouse and noticed a cow staked nearby. That night, weak from hunger, he crept up, milked the cow and gorged himself on fresh milk.

This, Rasmussen decided, was the place to wait for the allied rescue planes. So every night for nine days he helped himself from the farmer's one-cow dairy and began to get his strength back. It would have gone on longer, Rasmussen said, but the Jap eventually turned the cow loose because it wasn't producing.

"That Jap was sure fouled up, but he never got wise that I was the guy getting all the milk," he said.

His best supply of food gone, he wandered back into the mountains after first unsuccessfully trying to launch a small fishing boat through the breakers.

Eventually he discovered a small railroad shack for living quarters and for nearly a week lived on raw onions, raw frogs' legs, eggs from bird nests and uncooked rice. But on the 16th of August a Jap workman discovered him and he was forced to pull up stakes in a hurry, leaving behind two possessions worth their weight in gold by then: 20 pounds of raw rice and a bit of saki he'd found.

For the next week Rasmussen said he would no more than get comfortably settled in some hideaway than the Japs would get too close and he was forced to move on.

But the cows of Japan came to his rescue again. He found lumber and built a little shack in a secluded spot, yet strategically located among five farms. During the evening he noticed the farmers putting their milk in containers in the river to keep it cool. That was enough for him.

"I only took the cream off the top and put the container back so the Japs wouldn't get suspicious. I could have taken more but it only would have soured on me. My best night was 9 quarts.

"The night of September 5th some dogs started howling at one of those farms. Several Japs came out jabbering and some of them started to close in on me. I bowled a couple over and run like hell. That was my really close call," he added.

Rasmussen missed his milk after that, but he was beginning to believe the war was over. At least he had seen several Allied planes flying surprisingly low and no one fired at them. His diary from then on was brief, and drily to the point: Sept. 5. Milk. During night was chased. Sept. 6. No milk and raw corn. Sept. 7. No milk and raw corn. Boiled potatoes. Sept. 8. No milk, boiled potatoes and corn. Mighty fine. Sept. 9. No milk and raw corn.

That kept up for another week until on Sept. 15 he made this entry: "No milk, squash, potato stew. 0915 looked like PBM NE by NE. I think I'm still sane, but a DC with American markings flew over at 1158. Maybe the war is over. ha ha ha. 1230 8 PBMs flew over.. Could be. 1400 had boiled potatoes, squash and fish.

American planes continued to fly over the area in increasing numbers and four days later he decided to risk going into the town of Tomakomai. He said he spent all morning on the beach hoping to attract attention of friendly planes but finally gave up and started into the town.

A policeman on the outskirts of the village took him in to the chief of police. He gave him a cigarette and called in an interpreter who told him he was right: the war was over.

The police also were curious about thefts of milk and rice in the area over the previous month, but Rasmussen stoutly denied any part of it.

So on September 19th, after 68 days of living in the open, dodging capture and going hungry most of the time, Rasmussen had his first real bath and hot meal: And more important still, a chance to go home.

This was his last laconic entry in his diary:

"War sure must be over. Well, now I'll see if I can make it back to the states." He did.