

1946

Big Ben, the flat top: the story of the U.S.S. Franklin

Unknown Unknown

Follow this and additional works at: http://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his

Recommended Citation

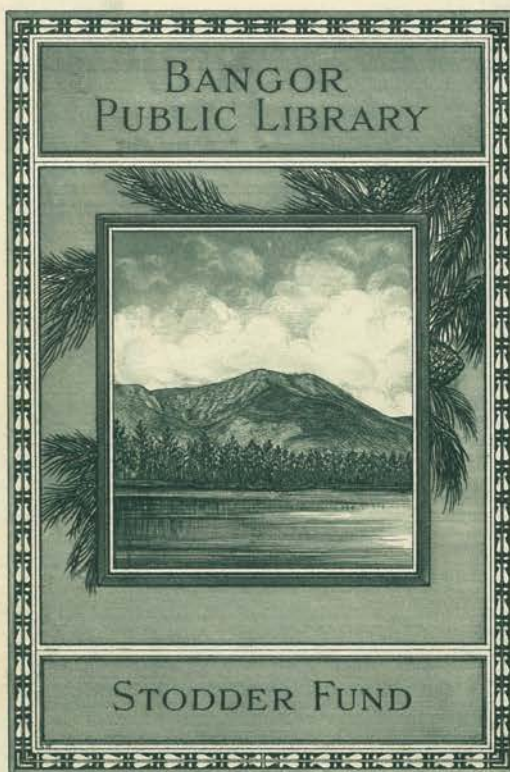
Unknown, Unknown, "Big Ben, the flat top: the story of the U.S.S. Franklin" (1946). *World War Regimental Histories*. 135.
http://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his/135

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the World War Collections at Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. It has been accepted for inclusion in World War Regimental Histories by an authorized administrator of Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. For more information, please contact ccoombs@bpl.lib.me.us.

BIG BEN THE FLATTOP



THE STORY OF **U.S.S. FRANKLIN**



SHELF NUMBER	VOL.
940.545.B6848	
ACCESSION NUMBER	COPY
348821	
ACCESSION DATE	
SEP 30 1947	

DOES NOT
CIRCULATE



BIG BEN THE FLAT TOP

The Story of the
U. S. S. FRANKLIN



To the Memory

of the

Officers and Men who laid down their lives
for their country while serving aboard
the U.S.S. Franklin

We the Former Shipmates Pay Tribute

As shipmates we appreciate
their sacrifice because we were close to them
we worked side by side with them
entered combat with them
feared and laughed and growled with them
we prayed with them

Hence shall we always
revere the memory of their sacrifice

May their Souls Rest in Peace

Joseph T. O'Callahan, S. J.

Honor Roll

Lt. (jg) Robert Ephraim Abell, Jr. USNR
 Lt. David A. Allen, USNR
 Lt. Richard T. Angell, USNR
 David Albert
 J. D. Adkins, ART1c
 Rosario V. Albanese, ARM3c
 Victor E. Abate, Rdm2c
 Gerald R. Ackerman, SM3c
 Harm K. Adkins, S2c
 Luther V. Adkison, S2c
 Joaquin Aja, ACOM
 Thomas J. C. Akins, S2c
 Roy S. Albiston, S1c
 Frederick A. Alderisio, ART3c
 James R. Allen, S2c
 Harold Alt, AMM2c
 Floyd R. Ames, Phm2c
 Guyn L. Anderson, Cox
 Henry Anderson, Rdm3c
 John B. Anderson, S1c
 Ronald Anderson, AOM2c
 Robert E. Andrews, S2c
 Frank J. Angell, Jr. WT2c
 Charles I. Ashurst, Stm1c
 Keyro Atanasoff, SSMB3c
 William M. Atkinson, S1c
 William G. Barclay, Pfc, USMCR
 Francis P. Burke, Pfc, USMCR
 Lt. (jg) Frederick A. Beckman, USNR
 Lt. Clarence F. Blair, USN
 Lt. (jg) Richard H. Bridge, USNR
 Lt. (jg) Robert E. Brooks, USNR
 Lt. (jg) Marshall D. Barnett, USNR
 Lt. Milton J. Bonar
 Lt. (jg) J. A. Burgess
 Major S. R. Bailey
 2nd Lt. C. R. Beeler
 Lt. Victor Charles Buhl, USNR
 Jack Clinton Bacholite
 Willard J. Bird
 Robert Boyd
 R. L. Baucum, ARM3c
 J. J. Bigos, AMM2c
 W. R. Black, AOM2c
 J. J. Bond, Jr., ARM3c
 D. Brown, AOM2c
 Henry E. Borja, ARM1c
 Walter Brooks, Jr., ARM1c
 Marcos R. Baca, S2c
 John N. Bachman, AOM2c
 Walter Baggett, Jr., S2c
 Earl R. Baker, ARM2c
 Walter C. Baldwin, Rdm3c
 Robert L. Bamberg, F2c
 Wrener F. Banicke, CSK
 Abraham J. Barbash, S2c
 James Barfield, AMM2c
 John J. Barreto, S1c
 Joseph A. Barron, SF2c
 Henry E. Bartlett, AMM2c
 Byron W. Barton, S1c
 John R. Basham, RM2c
 Clifford E. Beane, S2c
 Willie C. Beck, S2c
 Raymond O. Beckwith, S1c
 Billy D. Belcher, S2c
 William E. Beloit, AM3c
 Ned J. Bennett, AMM2c
 Elwood H. Berberich, F2c
 David Berg, S1c
 Marvin W. Bergman, F2c
 Philip A. Berkowitz, Cox
 Charles E. Berringer, F1c
 Walter P. Bigusiak, RM1c
 Mark D. Bingaman, Y1c
 William H. Birchall, Jr., S1c
 Clarence J. Blair, CM3c
 Raymond D. Blair, SPTR
 Ray M. Blanchard, Jr., AM2c
 Warren H. Blankenship, M1c
 William G. Blanton, Mus3c
 Lester R. Blossch, AMM1c
 Arthur L. Bobo, S2c
 Morris Bochenek, SK2c
 George M. Booth, S2c
 Anthony V. Bosco, S1c
 John W. Bowen, S2c
 Edward J. Boyd, F1c
 Thomas L. Brasel, S2c
 Robert C. Bresnahan, S1c
 Edmond E. Breton, S2c
 Floyd N. Brown, MMS3c
 John Brown, Jr., CEM(AA)(T)
 John E. Brown, AOM2c
 John F. Brown, Y2c(T)
 Thomas L. Brown, BM1c(T)
 Earnest V. Bryant, S2c
 Everett Bryant, Jr., Rdm2c(T)
 Clarence E. Buckley, S1c
 Edwin C. Buescher, EM3c(T)
 Willard D. Bulson, S2c
 Elwood B. Bumbaugh, MM3c

Harold Burke, S2c
 Jackson P. Burket, Rdm3c(T)
 Allen R. Burkhamer, S2c
 Eugene W. Burroughs, S2c
 Willard H. Burton, S1c(AOM)
 George D. Bush, S2c
 George E. Buza, Phm2c
 Edward S. Byczkowski, S2c
 Joseph J. Cerione, Jr., Pfc, USMCR
 Edgar E. Core, Pfc, USMC
 Capt. W. O. Chapman
 Lt. (jg) Kenneth E. Carlson, USNR
 F. J. Crowley
 Ernest Cage, (n)
 Carl Henry Castleman
 Hoyle V. Coltrane
 Chelette, AOM1c
 Robert D. Chandler, ARM2c
 Webber W. Callicott, Rdm3c
 Peter Campbell, F1c
 Joseph T. Campiglia, RM2c
 Robert F. Campora, Rdm3c
 John W. Cannon, SF1c
 Calvin B. Capell, S2c
 Patsy Capobianco, S2c
 Peter J. Carawlanis, Rdm3c
 Christopher J. Carr, S1c
 Donald D. Carr, S2c
 Joseph Carrara, Jr., S1c
 Lawrence C. Carstens, S2c
 William H. Cartwright, S2c
 Morris E. Caruthers, F2c
 Clyde M. Cason, S2c
 Charles D. Castellucci, S2c
 Darrell F. Centers, AOM3c
 Felix C. Cerra, S1c
 Joe Chacon, S1c
 Bliss E. Chambers, S1c
 Herbert Y. Chambers, WT2c
 Mark Champion, CMM
 Kermit Chilcote, S2c
 Stanley J. Chivas, Rdm3c
 Frederick W. Christman, S1c
 Cecil V. Clark, S2c
 Walter F. Clark, S1c
 William R. Clark, S2c
 Richard J. Clarke, SK3c
 Cletus Cliburn, S2c
 Earl W. Clouser, AM2c
 Thomas W. Coburn, S2c
 Robert Cochran, S2c
 Charles V. Codrea, Rdm3c
 John T. Coffey, AOM3c
 Americo A. Colatacci, S1c
 Willie R. Colbert, S2c
 Carl E. Coleman, Rdm3c
 Estil V. Collins, S1c
 William G. Collins, AM3c
 Valentino C. Columbo, S2c
 Earl N. Combs, Rdm3c
 James W. Conant, Rdm3c
 James H. Conlon, S2c
 Charles C. Conner, AMM1c
 Thos. J. Cook, ACETM
 Wilford W. Cooperider, S2c
 Walter V. Copeland, AOM3c
 Odie L. Corbett, ACOM
 Edward Correia, S1c
 Thomas W. Cosson, EM1c
 Roland R. Courcy, S2c
 Radford S. Coward, S2c
 John L. Cox, S1c
 Walter B. Cox, S2c
 Wayne L. Cox, S1c
 Herman N. Criswell, S2c
 Paul B. Cronin, SSML3c
 Grant A. Crook, S1c
 Donald L. Cross, AMM2c
 Graham Y. Crossley, S1c
 Lem Davis, Jr., Pfc, USMC
 James L. Dillon, Pfc, USMCR
 Paul E. H. Dolbier, PISgt, USMC
 Ens. Norman E. Drouin, USNR
 Ens. G. E. Druliner
 Lt. David R. Dunlap, Jr., USNR
 Orville Coolidge Drosdal
 A. J. Dusi, AOM1c
 R. A. Dwyer, S1c
 Stanley F. Dalton, SOM2c
 Ernest E. Damico, AMM3c
 William M. Danforth, AOM2c
 Rolland P. Datzman, Y3c(T)
 Clarence L. Davidson, AM3c
 Arthur L. Davis, S2c(Rd)
 Roy E. Davis, S2c
 James R. Delap, Phm3c
 Roy F. De Lav, S2c
 Carmine Del Sole, SSMB2c
 Lawrence B. Dendinger, SSML3c
 Philip G. Deringer, AMM1c
 Raymond E. Desmarais, S1c
 John R. Deuel, Rdm3c

Samuel T. Devine, AMM2c
 Michael J. DiPalma, S1c
 Norman Dizak, S1c
 Joseph B. Dougherty, S2c
 Romelia J. Downen, Rdm3c
 Albert N. Drake, S2c
 George L. Dube, S2c
 Richard H. Duff, GM1c
 John T. Duncan, S2c
 William A. Dunlap, SKV2c
 Edmund E. Dupras, EM3c(T)
 Luke J. Durante, CPhoM(T)
 Joseph H. Durden, GM3c(T)
 Benjamin M. Durrance, CSF(AA)
 Benjamin B. Dye, Pfc, USMCR
 John H. Eady, Pfc, USMCR
 Lt. (jg) D. R. Evans
 Lt. Comdr. Edmands
 Alexander Elias, Jr.
 Joseph Eppolito
 Joseph Eberline, S1c
 Dan Edwards, S2c
 John Edwards, Jr., S1c
 Richard L. Ellis, FC3c
 Melvin H. Endress, S2c
 John R. Epting, S2c
 Richard B. Erickson, S2c
 Joseph W. Eslinger, MM1c
 Edward Evans, AMM1c
 Lt. John H. Finrow, USNR
 2nd Lt. C. K. Faught, Jr.
 2nd Lt. Kenneth G. Fiegenger
 Lt. H. P. Fleming
 Lt. Comdr. George W. Fox, USNR
 Belver H. Fullilove
 L. E. Fairbrother, ARM1c
 P. M. Finn, ARM1c
 Lloyd T. Fairchild, S2c
 Norman E. Faiss, AMM3c
 Domenic Falcone, S2c
 Otto L. Fedewa, S2c
 John A. Felmer, S2c
 Patrick F. Feneck, S2c
 Nat Ferrell, S1c
 Peter R. Fiesel, Jr., RM3c
 William E. Fike, AOM2c
 Paul M. Fineberg, AM2c
 Kenneth C. Fischer, Y2c
 William W. Fish, BM2c
 Irving Fishman, S2c
 Thomas P. Flannery, S1c
 James H. Fleenor, S2c
 Russell E. Fleming, ART3c
 John H. Fluhr, S2c
 James A. Forberger, S1c
 Billy G. Forbes, S2c
 Thomas P. Ford, Jr., S2c
 Donald W. Forsyth, Y1c
 Thomas A. Foster, S2c
 Nathan I. Fourrours, GM1c
 Cecil E. Fouts, S2c
 Edmund F. Fowler, S1c
 Rosario Frangiamore, S1c
 Donald C. Friend, AMM2c
 Robert Ellis Froehly, CRT
 James F. Frost, S1c
 Richard E. Geidl, Pfc, USMC
 Berlyn H. Goddard, Sgt., USMC
 Stanley E. Godek, Pfc, USMCR
 Frederick L. Grimm, Pfc, USMC
 Lt. (jg) William R. Gilfillan, USNR
 Lt. James Robert Griswold, USNR
 A. J. Green, AMM1c
 Alfred C. Gaddy, AMM2c
 Michael J. Galbo
 Sylvester L. Galles, EM1c
 Wallace Galloway, S1c
 Charles A. Garber, AOM3c
 Bernard J. Garland, S2c
 Edgar P. Garon, F1c
 Albert C. Geiger, S2c
 Herbert Geller, Phm3c
 Donald Gerard, S1c
 Wilfrid J. Gibeau, S2c
 Edward J. Gibson, AOM1c
 Robert G. Giffen, S1c
 Ray A. Gill, S2c
 Erle J. Gillenberg, EM1c
 Clothz Gillis, AOM3c
 William F. Gilmore, ACMM
 Lorenza D. Gilstrap, S2c
 Jacob Gindi, S2c
 Clarence O. Gleason, S2c
 Alan F. Goble, AEM2c
 Anthony C. Godleski, WT3c
 Jack T. Goetz, FC3c
 Mitchell A. Golden, S1c
 Elias J. Goldsmith, S2c
 Roger A. Gooch, S2c
 Charles R. Goslee, S2c
 Paul E. Gottlick, S1c
 Ernest O. Grafton, S2c

James L. Graham, S2c
 Paul Grata, AOM3c
 James M. Graves, S2c
 Kenneth B. Gray, AOM2c
 Oscar G. Gray, S2c
 Joseph J. Greco, S1c
 Delwyn F. Greenlaw, S2c
 Robert A. Gregg, SK1c
 Henry G. Greitner, WT3c
 Raymond Griffin, S1c
 Robert J. Grobarick, AMM3c
 Abraham L. Groll, S1c
 Darryle A. Grose, RM1c
 Fernand J. Guidroz, S2c
 Philip W. Gwarzanski, AMM2c
 William J. Gwin, S1c
 Ens. Joseph Heinrich, USNR
 Lt. Ancil C. Hudson, USNR
 Lt. Comdr. Carl B. Holmstrom, USN
 Lt. (jg) H. A. Heyman
 Lt. Philip Emerson Hathaway, USN
 J. D. Harvey, ARM2c
 J. H. Hobes, AOM1c
 J. P. Hogel, AMM2c
 R. N. Hute, ARM3c
 Andrew E. Harlin, AM1c
 James Hatt, ARM3c
 Frank J. Hack, AOM3c
 Carl F. Hagerstrom, GM2c
 William J. Haggerty, EM3c
 James E. Hall, S1c
 James W. Hall, Rdm2c
 Millard P. Hall, Sr.
 Albert L. Hallman, III, S2c
 David F. Halpin, S1c
 Vernon H. Hames
 Troy W. Hamilton, Cox
 Louis M. Haney, S1c
 James L. Hanlon, S2c
 Robert H. Hannah, EM1c
 Albert W. Hans, AMM2c
 Kenneth M. Hansen, Rdm3c
 Edward Harbin, S1c
 Larry C. Harding, S2c
 Albert A. Harlow, BM2c
 Carl M. Harmon, Y3c
 Harry L. Harper, EM3c
 James A. Harper, S2c
 Robert D. Harris, Jr., S2c
 Robert J. Harrison, AOM3c
 William E. Harrison, BM1c
 Clyde M. Hart, S2c
 John J. Hart, S1c
 Thomas Harte, EM2c
 Glenn B. Hasberger, S2c
 David M. Hattin, Jr., S2c
 Doddrid E. Hayes, S2c
 William R. Hayes, S2c
 Orville E. Heck, WT1c
 Theodore P. Hendricks, S2c
 Evan R. Henrichs, S2c
 Archie L. Henson, S2c
 Everett E. Hereford, S1c
 Willard W. Herkert, AM1c
 George N. Hermance, S2c
 Thomas C. Herrod, S2c
 William G. Highfield, BM1c
 Franklin H. Hill, EM3c
 Robert Hillas, ARM1c
 Ferren R. Hinds, AOM1c
 Rhudy L. Hinkle, AMM2c
 Harold W. Hitzeman, AMM3c
 Calvin W. Hocanson, S2c
 Anthony Hoffman, S2c
 Samuel Hoffman, ACOM
 John Hogrogian, S2c
 Velvin W. Holland, SK2c
 John A. Hoover
 James A. Horton, Cox
 Laverne A. Horton, Jr., S2c
 Jack A. Huddle, S1c
 Grady Hudson, Stm2c
 James E. Hudson, SC1c
 Willard D. Hughes, F2c
 John H. Hummel, F2c
 George S. Hurd, S1c
 Anthony G. Ingelido, SK2c
 Capt. Arnold J. Isabell, USN
 Duane L. Irwin, S2c
 Domenick Joe
 C. R. Jenkins, ACRM
 Thomas Jackson, Stm1c
 C. L. Jones, AEM1c
 William L. Jackson, CHPM
 Benjamin L. Jones, Jr., ARM3c
 Harold G. Jacobsen, S2c
 Henry Jalufka, AOM1c
 Carl L. James, S2c
 Esteen James, S2c
 Frederick W. Jerdo, S2c
 Audley E. Johnson, S2c
 James B. Johnson, Y2c

Honor Roll

James E. Johnson, S2c
George R. Johnston, AOM3c
Virgil E. Johnston, RDM2c
Howard G. Jones, TM3c
Bernard Joslin, S1c
Thomas K. Joyner, S2c
Lt. (jg) Joseph Kopman, USNR
Peter Joseph Kartye
C. C. Kasch, Y1c
D. H. Kenfield, Y1c
Reuben H. Knocke, ARM3c
Charles E. Kai, S2c
Forrest E. Karr, S1c
Joseph Karvatsky, Halc
Howard H. Keener, S2c
Claude Keeney, Jr., GM3c
Richard G. Kelley, EM3c
Thomas C. Kelly, S1c
Joseph J. Kempowicz, S2c
Kenneth T. Kidd, AM3c
Ralph W. Kiefel, S1c
Philip H. Kimball, S2c
Walter I. Kimmich, AMM3c
Thomas N. Kirk, RM2c
Julian S. Kling, S1c
Walter E. Kniss, S2c
Vernor H. Knutson, GM3c
Joseph F. Kolek, S1c
Frank P. Knopka, S1c
Emil V. Kopec, ART1c
Frank J. Kopec, S2c
Leonard R. Krause, S2c
James H. Krenske, AM3c
Matthew J. Krynski, S1c
Robert P. Kubala, RDM2c
Glen W. Kuhn, S2c
John S. Kujawski, AM1c
Valentine F. Kust, S1c
Paul F. Kuta, S1c
Franklin G. Kyrlund, S1c
Ens. Roger W. L'Estrange, USNR
Albert L. Lambert, MM3c
Lt. (jg) R. E. Lancaster
Ens. P. C. Lacy
Lt. M. Leonard
Ens. P. O. Larson, USNR
Alvy Edward Lisbon
A. D. Leitzke, ARM2c
O. I. Light, ARM1c
E. J. Lowry, AOM3c
G. H. Lundgren, AMM2c
Albert D. Loenthal, ARM3c
Marvin C. La Forest, PhoM2c
Leslie G. Lainson, S2c
Dwight Lancaster, S2c
Carlton J. Lanni, BM2c
Peter Lasky, S2c
Guy J. Lazzaro, AM3c
Vernon L. Leach, S2c
Philip R. Leake, Jr., S2c
Anthony S. Leanza, F2c
Bernard J. Leavy, SC2c
James W. Lee, GM1c
Robert E. Lee, S1c
Russell H. Lehnhoff, S2c
Raymond E. Lenon, EM1c
Charles E. Leslie, AOM1c
Chester R. Lewis, S2c
Evan M. Lewis, Y2c
Fred A. Liddell, S1c
Johnnie Lindsey, S1c
Henry F. Linebarger, Cox
George J. Lingham, AOM3c
Dock Little, AMM2c
John R. Little, S2c
George R. Loftus, S1c
John R. Logue, Cox
Charles R. Long, S2c
Wiley H. Love, Jr., S2c
William F. Lovitt, AOM1c
James L. Lowry, S1c
Santos D. Lucas, S1c
Warren P. Lucas, S2c
John J. Luchik, CSK
Edward F. Lukoski, AMM3c
Pfc. Mario J. Maggio, USMCR
Pfc. Frank J. Mikula, USMCR
Lt. Eric Magnusson, USN
Ens. Robert H. Martin, USNR
Ens. Benjamin J. Miles, USNR
Lt. (jg) Donald A. McPhie, USNR
Lt. (jg) R. W. Molthrop
Lt. (jg) R. E. Moore
Ens. C. H. McAllister
James Orlando Mazzier
D. W. MacLead, AOM3c
I. W. McNamara, ARM1c
W. J. Miller, ARM1c
Harrison A. MacKenzie, AMM3c
John E. Mac Lane, ACOM
Joseph A. Mangina, S1c
James W. Mann, S2c
Robert C. Mansur, S2c
Lawrence H. Mardis, PhoM1c
Paul J. Marino, AOM1c
Earl J. Martin, S2c
J. Q. Martin, S2c
John J. Martyn, S2c
Felix McAbee, BM2c
Donald E. McCauley, S2c
James F. McCloskey, PhM3c
Robert F. McCracken, FC3c
Eugene D. McDonald, MM3c
Harvard McDonald, Stm1c
Julian H. McDuffie, Stm1c
Julian H. McDuffie, S2c
Charles S. McGarry, Jr., S1c
Leonard McGlone, Jr., FC2c
Robert E. McGonigal, S2c
John J. McGuigan, AOM3c
Howard P. McKenzie, S1c
John A. McMullan, S2c
Roger D. McWilliams, PhM3c
Ellie E. Meeks, GM2c
Peter Mekus, RDM3c
Celido G. Mendoza, Jr., AOM1c
Alfred Merchant, S2c
Frank H. Miller, Jr., AMM2c
George J. Miller, AOM2c
Samuel A. Miller, S2c
Finas A. Millican, S2c
Raymond Milner, GM2c
Alfonso Mintoni, MM2c
Fred M. Mitchell, MM1c
Morton J. Mittleman, MM3c
James J. Mixon, Jr., S2c
Marvin R. Mizell, S2c
Raymond L. Moe, AOM2c
Joseph W. Mohr, AM3c
John V. Montagu, AOM2c
Garlan C. Moody, S1c
James T. Moore, S2c
Joseph R. Moran, EM2c
Lawrence J. Morgan, AEM1c
Granville Morgan, Flc
William E. Morgan, S1c
Charles O. Moseley, Jr., S2c
Robert G. Moslander, S1c
James P. Murphy, S1c
Kenneth J. Myers, S2c
G. L. Nold, Y3c
Lt. (jg) Thos. G. Norek
Richard Napiwocki, AMM1c
J. Natysyn, AOM1c
Clifford V. Nelson, S2c
Donald E. Nelson, S1c
Robert R. Nelson, S1c
William L. Ness, GM2c
Norbert J. Neudorf, S2c
Henry I. Neukam, ACOM
Harry E. Newman, Jr., RM3c
Charles P. Newton, Cox
Eugene P. Newton, CMoMM
Harry W. Nicholas, S1c
Peter H. Nicholas, S1c
John S. Ninos, RDM3c
Joe E. Norman, Halc
Robert W. North, AOM3c
Horace J. Norwood, Y1c
Frank E. Novak, MM2c
William R. Nutick, S2c
Clair E. Oberholtzer, Pfc, USMCR
David W. Offman, Corp, USMCR
William J. Olsen, ARM2c
John R. O'Connell, S2c
Norman G. Ogden, S2c
William J. O'Hara, SF3c
Orville K. Oliver, ACMM
Frank N. Ongaro, CCM
Chester O. Orendorf, S2c
Robert N. Orr, SF1c
Franklyn G. Orr, AMM3c
Herbert J. Ott, S1c
Warren H. Ousley, EM1c
Donald E. Overlin, F2c
Elwin A. Owen, Flc
Tony A. Ozbolt, ACMM
Ens. J. Paul Parent, USNR
Ernest Joseph Poe
R. A. Pagel, ACRT
Leonard Pickens, ARM3c
Robert G. Palmer
Lewis J. Parise
Boney B. Parker, Jr.
Fred L. Parker
Johnnie F. Parsons
Daniel B. Pastell
James F. Patterson
Richard D. Patterson
Raymond H. Paugh
Francis J. Paulson
Raymond F. Peck, S1c
Jack S. Pendelton, AM3c
Morris Perlman, RM3c
Arthur E. Perreault, F2c
Phinis J. Perry, Ptr3c
John M. Peterson, S2c
William M. Pewitt, AMM2c
Michael Pidanic, S1c
Samuel Peil, CMM
Clayton A. Pike, S1c
Hubert W. Ping, S2c
James J. Pipolo, S1c
Richard C. Plaggerman, RDM2c
Robert V. Plympton, F2c
William S. Polansky, S2c
Walter E. Pollick, S2c
Paul Pollock, EM1c
Anthony J. Pompa, S2c
James R. Powell, QM3c
Douglas R. Preset, S2c
Julius M. Price, Jr., S1c
Rocco Provenzano, S1c
Albert N. Pugh, S2c
Ward E. Putnam, PhM3c
Conrad L. Royston, Corp, USMCR
Ensign J. B. Rhodes
C. F. Ritter, ACRM
Richard E. Ratzel, AMM3c
Harry E. Ray, AOM2c
Charles G. Reader, S1c
James E. Redmond, ART2c
Willard E. Reed, S1c
Willmer L. Reed, S1c
John R. Reeves, S2c
Roland L. Reynolds, S2c
Alexander B. Robertson, SK2c
George H. Robinson, AOM2c
George W. Roe, S2c
Eden D. Rogers, S2c
Hubert L. Sims, Sgt., USMC
Lt. J. R. Stewart
Homer DeWitt Sanford
Isaiah Spencer
G. E. Smith, PR1c
F. A. Stepanek, Y1c
H. L. Stone, AOM1c
Harry J. Steele, ARM3c
Morris O. Sacramento, CK2c
John I. Sadler, PTR2c
Kenneth L. Salada, Jr., S2c
George A. Salerno, S1c
Christopher C. Sanders, Jr., S2c
Gabriel L. Santiago, Jr., S2c
George B. Saunders, AM3c
Joseph F. Saunders, S1c
Arthur E. Schelle, S2c
Andrew J. Schmidt, EM2c
George R. Schoder, S2c
Melvin H. Schreifers, S2c
Arthur W. Schultz, S2c
Howard F. Schwartz, S1c
William F. Schweitzer, RDM3c
James V. Scott, S2c
Clifford R. Seifried, S2c
Richard L. Seidler, AMM3c
George Seivwright, Jr., AOM1c
Joseph I. Serpe, S2c
John T. Shaw, AMM3c
James M. Shealy, EM3c
Leon G. Shebloski, Jr., S2c
James J. Sheehan, Cox
Grady W. Sheppard, ACM
Christian G. Shireman, S2c
James J. Short, S1c
James N. Shreve, S2c
Paul E. Simard, S1c
Omer D. Simms, S1c
Donald E. Simpson, S2c
Robert W. Slavton, S1c
Harold L. Smith, ARM3c
Hughlin H. Smith, Jr., S2c
Ralph V. Smith, PhM1c
Thomas G. Smith, S2c
Victor N. Smith, S1c
Francis A. Snodgrass, AMM1c
John W. Snyder, S1c
Robert E. Snyder, Flc
Raymond H. Sokolowski, S1c
Demetrios C. Solovicos, S2c
Samuel S. Soloway, Flc
Oscar W. Songer, Flc
Robert J. Soukup, S1c
Roy N. Spain, S2c
Peter J. Spalluto, Flc
Bryan J. Sparks, MM3c
John T. Sparks, S2c
Ollie O. Spears, CM3c
Shelby Speck, SK2c
Albert B. Spitzkoff, S1c
Chester R. Sprague, Flc
Ernest C. Sprowl, AOM3c
Pete Stallings, S2c
James M. Steele, S1c
Elwyn E. Stephens, S2c
Dave H. Steppach, Jr., PhoM3c
Robert C. Stern, S2c
Roland G. Stillman, S2c
Theodore A. Straub, AOM2c
John F. Streck, Y1c
Walter G. Strehlow, Flc
Gordon Stripling, Jr., S2c
George C. Studeny, ART2c
William A. Sutherby, SF1c
Donald W. Swanson, S2c
Austin B. Swearingen, S2c
Leo S. Swiski, S1c
Frank E. Syrek, AOM3c
James W. Truax, GySgt., USMC
S. W. Tumosa, CAP
Dwight T. Taylor, EM3c
Jay A. Taylor, AOM3c
Vet E. Tenney, AOM2c
William A. Thomas, Flc
Orville W. Thompson, Flc
James V. Thorsell, S2c
Herbert S. Thorgeresen, AMM2c
Marshall Thornton, S2c
Leo Toomaian, F2c
Louis A. Toro, S2c
Michael A. Towey, RDM2c
Carl B. Trager, S2c
Johnny Tremonte, PR1c
Frank J. Triano, S2c
Pasquale Trivisonno, S1c
Joseph F. Trombino, S2c
Ralph G. Trotter, S1c
Edwin S. Trzepak, AMM2c
Michael J. Tschida, S2c
Herman Tucker, SSML3c
Clarence E. Tyler, Flc
E. V. Upton, Jr., AOM1c
Robert C. Utterback, S1c
William E. Van Vleet, Pfc, USMCR
Francis J. Vamos, RT1c
Ralph D. Van Etten, S1c
Russell E. Vasey, TM3c
Lebert W. Vaughn, S1c
Charles E. Venable, SM1c
Earl K. Vincent
Alvin L. Voss, S1c
Quentin G. Weinkauff, Pfc, USMCR
James L. Wooten, PISgt., USMC
Lt. John E. Weniger, USNR
Lt. Wade H. Winecoff, USNR
Lt. Rupert J. Weber, Jr., USNR
Lt. G. R. Watkins
Ensign J. E. Watson
Ensign W. P. Wheeler
Joel Allen Waller
Keith Allen Webb
R. E. Wakefield, ARM3c
D. A. Wilkinson, ART2c
L. A. Williett, PR3c
Frank J. Waggoner, F2c
Harry R. Wall, S1c
Philip M. Walsh, S1c
Henry S. Walters, F2c
Stanley R. Walton, S1c
Howard J. Warner, S2c
Joseph S. Wead, S2c
Earl E. Webb, S2c
Murrell H. Webb, PR1c
William M. Weeks, ARM2c
George F. Weidenbacher, S2c
George M. Welcome, MM3c
James E. Wells, S1c
Samuel E. West, AMM3c
Howard C. Wheatley, S1c
Vergin D. Widener, Mus2c
Dennis C. Wilkerson, PhM1c
Clyde H. Williams, SF2c
John E. Williams, S1c
Leslie A. Williams, AMM1c
Libert C. Williams, GM3c
Victor W. Wise, S2c
Walter J. Wise, GM2c
William Witkowski, S1c
John S. Wolak, Jr., AOM2c
Howard D. Woodard, S2c
Lonnie H. Woolard, S2c
Carroll G. Wright, SK3c
W. C. Yocon, PR1c
Frederick C. Yagle, Cox
Omer Yocum, Jr., S2c
George A. Young, Jr., RDM3c
Harry Zassman, S1c
John Zeedik, S1c
Andrew J. Zelinski, S1c
Dale E. Zimmerman, S2c

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THIS BOOK is as nearly as possible an authentic history of the *U.S.S. Franklin*. The data was assembled from official action reports, ship's records, the history of Air Group Thirteen, and from conversations with crew members. The story was prepared by Lt. Marvin K. Bowman, U. S. N., with the advice and assistance of Mr. Paul Warrick, of Atlanta, Ga.

Grateful acknowledgment for material and editorial assistance is made to many officers and men who served in the *U. S. S. Franklin*; in particular, to Comdr. Richard L. Kibbe, U. S. N., Capt. Leslie E. Gehres, U. S. N., Capt. James M. Shoemaker, U. S. N., Capt. Joe Taylor, U. S. N., Capt. Benjamin Moore, U. S. N., Capt. F. F. Agens, U. S. N., Chief Boilermaker Robert C. Stewart, U. S. N., Lt. Comdr. Donald A. Gary, U. S. N., Ch. Mach. William E. Green, U. S. N., Comdr. T. J. Greene, U. S. N., Lt. Comdr. James Moy, (MC) U. S. N., Chief Yeoman William Tyree, U. S. N., Aviation Chief Ordnanceman Carl Orndorff, U. S. N., Lt. Comdr. Philip X. Walsh, ChC. U. S. N. R., and Comdr. Joseph O'Callahan, ChC, U. S. N. R. Also to Lt. (jg) Jack Stilwill, Chief Musician H. K. "Saxie" Dowell, Lt. Joseph LaRocca, and Lt. Knute Weidman, who are now separated from the naval service.

All pictures are official U. S. Navy photographs. Credit for many of them is due Chief Photographer's Mate Luke J. Durante, who was killed in action 19 March, 1945.

The art work, including the cover design, was prepared by Thomas Leo, Seaman First Class, U. S. N. R.

Attempts to achieve accuracy of detail, especially in connection with individual's names, have been handicapped to a certain extent by meager records, separation of personnel from the service and partial destruction of photographic files and records during the action of 19 March, 1945. It is sincerely hoped that no grave omissions have occurred.

The interest and assistance of the Commanding Officer, Comdr. H. H. Hale, U. S. N., have made this book possible.

March 19th, 1946.
U. S. Navy Yard,
Brooklyn, N. Y.



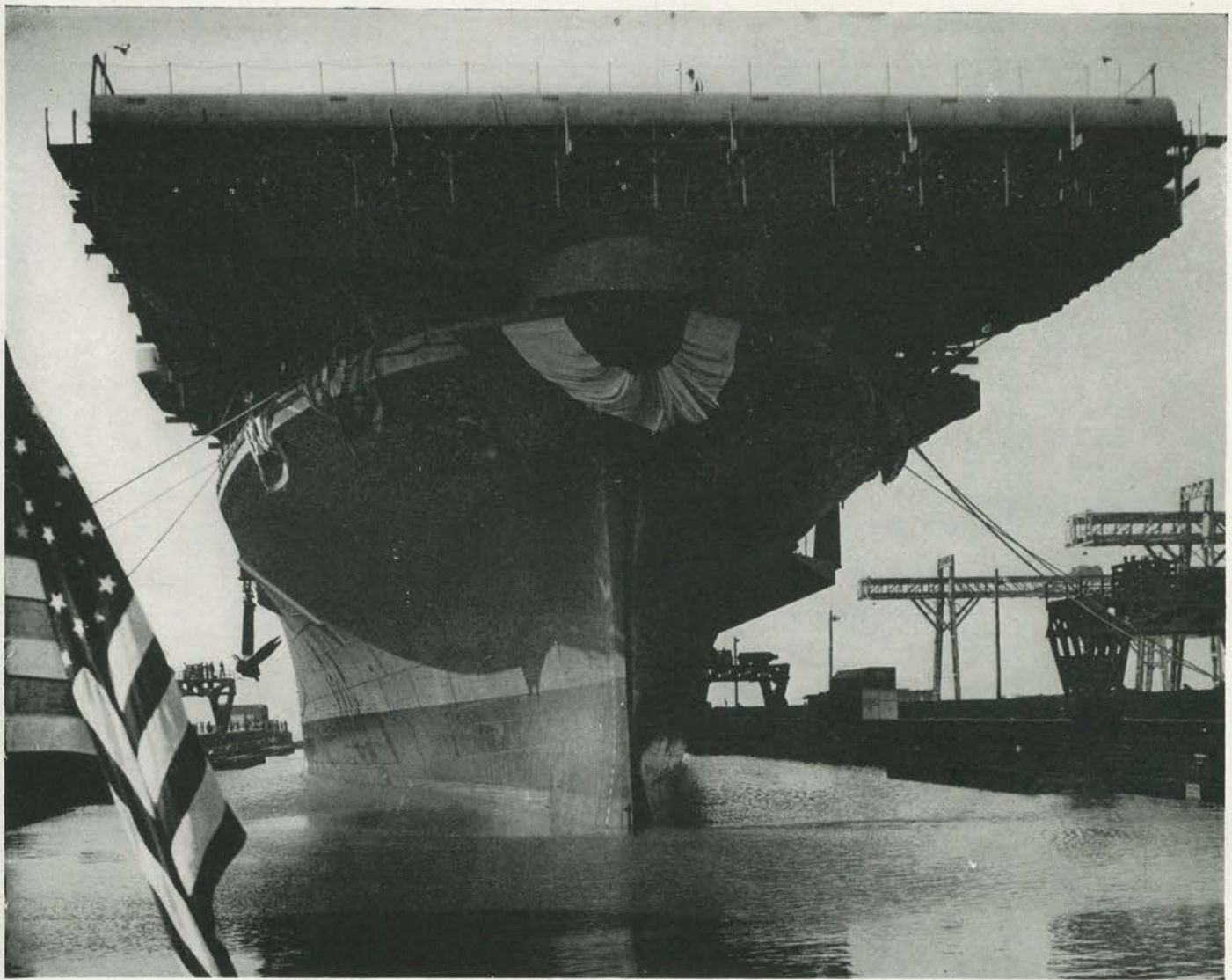
FLEET ADMIRAL WILLIAM F. HALSEY

FOREWORD

We who had the privilege of serving in, and with, the "flat-tops" of our Navy have always known them to be fighting ships. The story of the Franklin is the story of one of these fighting ships; one that dealt out destruction from The Marianas to the home islands of Japan; one that veritably returned from the jaws of what seemed certain destruction; their stubborn will to win; the American tenacity and reluctance to give in no matter what the odds; these were the pulsating characteristics of our ships and men, characteristics that will always keep our way of life, our freedoms, inviolate. Our enemies who survived this past war will never forget the "flat-tops" of our powerful fleets. We who knew these graceful ships and knew the men who fought and lived them shall forever honor their bravery and achievements.

W. F. Halsey

Fleet Admiral U. S. Navy



The Franklin is launched

THE FRANKLIN

MARSHALL D. BARNETT

Hungry for the ocean's surge,
for white plumes across her bow;
Thirsting for a draught of oil,
to snort, to roll, to plow;

Longing for the touch of men,
someone to pull her hook;
Looking for the enemy;
the devils are in her book;

Grim missionary of Peace,
but she is mighty full of fight;
Sent out with tender touches,
to set the world aright;

She doesn't believe in luck or omens;
she is on God's side of this war;
She mothers red-blooded Americans
who know what they're fighting for;

She's ready to die tomorrow,
if dying she can turn the tide;
That men may live once more,
where harmonious love abides;

We salute you, proud warrior of steel,
with Mizpah we say adieu;
Our eyes will be on your actions;
our prayers will be for your crew.

Lieutenant (junior grade) Marshall D. Barnett, U. S. N. R., of Bombing Squadron Thirteen, was killed in action 24 October, 1944, while his squadron was attacking the Japanese Second Fleet in the Sulu Sea, Philippine Islands.

BIG BEN THE FLAT TOP

" . . . I stood on the dock and set down my seabag. Then I pushed my hat back on my head and just looked. There she was . . . my ship. No name, no planes, no bridge, no guns. Just a great, big hull—the biggest hunk of steel I'd ever seen in my life. It looked like a floating table top. On that I was going off to fight a war . . . "

BIG BEN IS BORN

ON DECEMBER 7TH, 1942, the first anniversary of the stupid and infamous aggression which plunged the United States into global conflict, the keel was laid of the *U. S. S. Franklin*, an airplane carrier of the Essex Class, in a graving dock of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, on the shores of the Atlantic, in Virginia. Most of the lads who one of these days would man the planes that would thunder across her deck into enemy skies or who would push her planes, load her bombs, fire her guns, were still in school or working at home—though a handful of them, even now, were with a hardpressed fleet fighting for Guadalcanal, and others were off Africa, forging the steel noose which one day would throttle the men who ruled with horsewhips.

But none dreamed that a ship was born that morning which they would sail and fight through one hundred and two thousand combat miles in five major Pacific campaigns; a ship whose warbirds would send scores of Japanese ships and hundreds of Japanese planes to destruction; a ship whose bombs would sink the mighty carrier *Zuiho* and a dozen other warships. This was to be the carrier on whose decks they would live through the thunder of exploding bombs with enemy planes crashing all about them, where they would fight and die to save her from a holocaust of fire. Four times they would suffer with her in battles where the Jap broke through and from the last battle seven hundred and four of them would sail her thirteen thousand miles and write into history the story of the most heavily damaged warship ever to reach port under her own power. Home from the very shores of Kyushu, shattered but undaunted, eager to return and avenge her dead.

These early days after the keel was laid knew not the noise of combat action, but they were far from peaceful as workmen and engineers toiled at top speed, under the sun and by the glare of electric lights at night, hastening the giant carrier's construction. It was not a simple task of providing a hull to support the eight hundred and eighty foot flight deck . . . almost as long as three regulation football fields. In ten months she must be forged by master American craftsmen into almost a sentient being, nearly 30,000 tons of warship. Her topmast would tower 150 feet above the water; the width of her beam would be 106 feet; the massive flight deck would rise 60 feet above the sea. Four engines would be installed, with the power of 150,000 horses, to thrust her through the water at any speed up to 32 knots with ease, and for days on end.

There must be huge tanks for fresh water, for salt water, for fuel oil, for high-octane gasoline, lubricating oil—great generators not only to supply enough power to light a city but also to furnish that essential force to turn the guns, swing the rudder, raise the swift ten-ton elevators which hauled the planes from hangar deck to flight deck. This power would keep radio and radar alive, run the ventilators, spin the fans, hoist the fifteen-ton anchors and—what was also important—cook the meals in the great modern galleys.

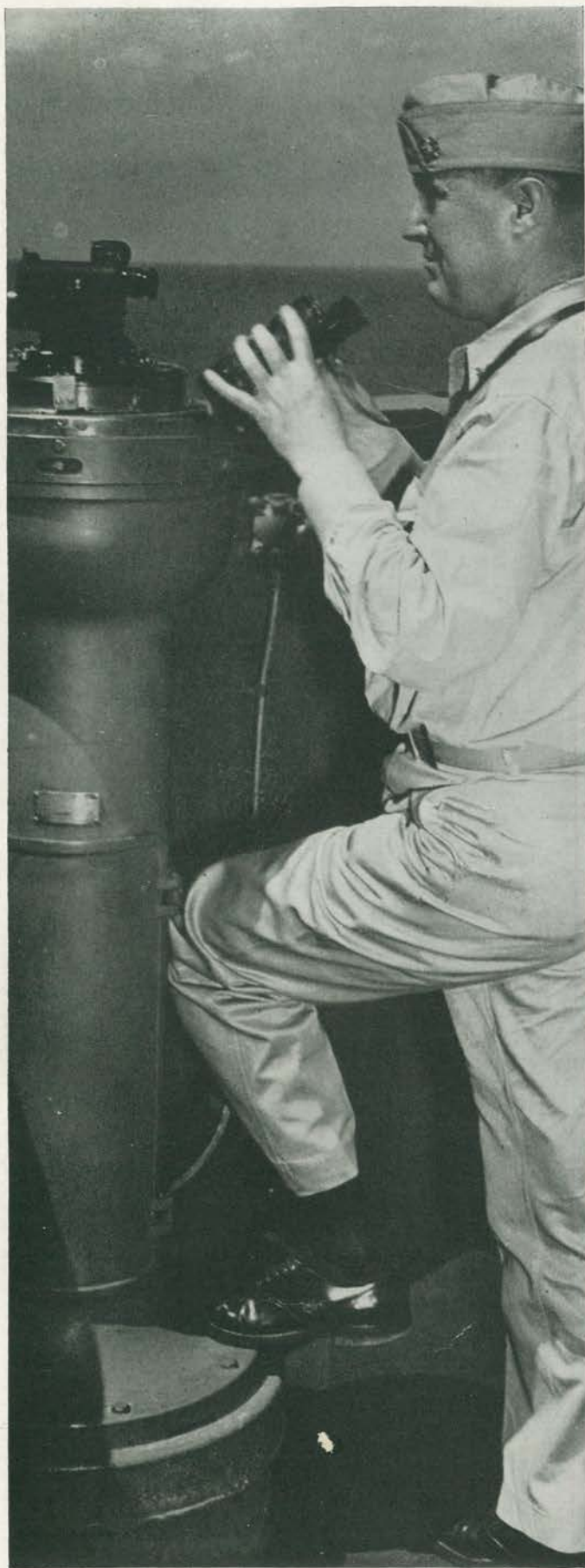
Thirteen quadruple mounts of 40 mm. machine guns would bristle from her gun galleries and island structure. Forty-six high speed 20 mm. machine guns would guard her flight deck and twelve five-inch rifles would add a lethal five-mile punch to her armament.

So Big Ben was born, ten months prior to her launching on October 14th, 1943, when Captain Mildred A. McAfee, Director of the WAVES, splashed the traditional magnum of champagne against the massive bow and the dock was flooded to lift her gently from the chocks until she floated in the sea.

Now speed became ever more vital as the 2,500 officers and men who would compose her crew were being assembled from all over the fighting world, as well as from more peaceful, but sweating, training bases.

A carrier—first and last—is a mobile base for her warplanes; her fighters, dive-bombers and torpedo planes. All the seemingly endless preparations, from the moment the first rivet was pounded into the keel, focused on the day when the planes could thunder off the flight deck to take the skies over an enemy target. Captain James M. Shoemaker, U.S.N., a naval aviator, now designated to be *Franklin's* first Commanding Officer, knew well his task and Big Ben's mission. Commander D. L. Day, also a naval aviator, would be Executive Officer; her first Air Officer, Commander Joe Taylor, had won the Navy Cross in New Guinea and had won it again as the flying commander of a torpedo plane squadron in the battle of the Coral Sea. Then, too, the 600-odd petty officers and chief petty officers who were to be the backbone of her crew began to assemble at the Receiving Station, Newport News, Va. in December, 1943—scarcely a year after her keel was laid.

Practically every man of the 600 was a veteran of two years of history's toughest naval war. One chief water-tender had helped bring the cruiser *New Orleans* out of a flaming Pacific battle in which her bow had been blown



*Captain James M. Shoemaker, U. S. N.,
on the Navigation Bridge*

asunder by enemy torpedoes; others were familiar with the grim road to Murmansk. Some, like "Old Bean" Harrison, came from the heroic "Old Lexington;" there were Paul and Baker who had fought on the *Enterprise*. Many had come from the ships that stood off the beaches at Salerno, or from the Armed Guard's crews that dueled with Goering's Junkers in Norway's icy waters. These men had met the enemy in fierce engagements around the blazing world, and they knew him.

The 50 officers first assembled were for the most part, young reserve officers, with a sprinkling of Naval Academy men and ex-chief petty officers, but veterans all.

The next step for this nucleus crew was to report to Newport, R. I., where *Franklin's* crew would be trained for a month as a unit in the then-new Precommissioning School for Large Combatant Ships. From the day of their arrival there, December 7th, 1943, Newport Training Station was disappointing to many of the men. To them the principal mentors on this station seemed to be ancient chief petty officers of the peace-time Navy, recalled from retirement for this shore duty, who apparently did not understand that this was really a war and not the Junior Miss affair that 1918 had been from the Navy's standpoint. The super-regulation GI haircuts meted out to everyone, the rigidly enforced regulations (such as no smoking on the streets, shore leave up at midnight), the general atmosphere of Newport in December, 1943, left nearly every man with a bitter feeling that was not soon forgotten. They knew this was a brief respite from sea duty and battle; it could not but rankle when they suddenly found themselves again being treated as "boots." But the training was excellent. A carrier — \$60,000,000 worth of her — is a complex thing, requiring a lot of learning even to find one's way around. Using models and blueprints, skilled instructors taught every man the details of his ship. He learned how to find his place of work, the amusement center, the hospital, church, library, restaurant, sleeping quarters, and all the other factors that make a ship a sailor's home.

Comdr. Taylor, now far from his action in the Coral Sea, frowned and fretted as he made shipshape the Air Organization Book, heart and soul of a carrier's plan for action. Comdr. H. S. "Speed" Cone, Supply chief, never stopped in the swift well-organized activities which were to win for his department many compliments as one of the best supply jobs in precommissioning history, setting a record which remains unequalled, for *Franklin's* outfitting was completed in 66 days. Comdr. F. C. Agens, Engineering Department head, newly returned from the Pacific, found time from the task of readying Big Ben's machines, so ably started by his assistant, Lt. Comdr. T. J. Greene, to instruct even the deck watch officers in the intricate machinery they would control from the Bridge.

Comdr. Day oversaw the huge operation and kept order forging ahead where confusion would have been so easy as to be almost excusable—even in such an epoc-making emergency as a world war.

Captain Shoemaker first met his men at Newport. His introduction of himself deserves a niche not only in the

annals of the *Franklin* but in history itself. A strongly-built, determined man; black-haired, in aviation greens, his words were brief but packed with punch as he addressed his men on a bitter-cold day:

"Gentlemen, I have been ordered by the Bureau to be the first Commanding Officer of the *U.S.S. Franklin*, CV Number Thirteen. We will put the *Franklin* in commission and bring her to the firing line faster than any carrier in history. Six months from now you will have seen what your first Jap looks like. *Thirteen is my lucky number*. Good hunting!" It was more than a promise, for it was a fact.

The going was rugged at Newport but there were bright spots as well. The first day at quarters Comdr. Day introduced Saxie Dowell, famous orchestra leader who was to lead *Franklin's* band. The band, whose leader had composed "Three Little Fishes," "Playmate" and other popular songs, was popular with the ship from the start. Most members were well-known musicians in their own right: "Jumbo," the massive master of the tuba . . . "Red" James, the boy who did things with men's hearts when he bore down on his trombone; Dean Kinkaid, arranger for Dorsey. The first selection that Saxie and his men played was one of his own composition, "Big Ben the Flat-top." There may have been significance in the manner in which the words and music reveal the spirit that animated the crew of the *Franklin* and of every other carrier in the fighting months to come.

Every man had to take swimming practice, contradicting the old and false legend that sailors are the poorest swim-

mers in the world; these swimming lessons saved many a life in the tempestuous days which were ahead.

Fire-fighting instruction was given—another lesson which came into use on Big Ben. Gun crews studied their weapons and learned how to use them by actual firing practice. Engineers studied the maze of valves, pipes, intricate wiring systems—together with the machinery and auxiliaries—that were the nerves, the muscles and almost the brains of the ship.

Heads of Air, Gunnery, Engineering, Communications, Damage Control, Navigation, Medical, and Supply Departments—the whole works—sweated constantly over perfecting the million-on-one details which must be figured down to the proverbial gnat's eyebrow before a major warship is ready to fight, or even put to sea.

"Big Ben the Flat-top, mistress of sea and sky . . .

With every ounce of strength we'll help our fighting aces fly;

*As from her decks those motors roar and rocket out to sea,
We'll give a mighty heartfelt cheer for those wings of Victory."*

Officers, men—even the men behind the bass drum and the clarinet—were already instilled with the knowledge that a carrier's function was to get Navy fliers in action, to get them to the spots on the ocean wastes where they could do the most damage to the enemy; and, with every ounce of energy and sacrifice, to bring them back if human effort and endurance could manage it.



Saxie Dowell and the men on Big Ben knew they had the best band in the Navy

At Newport the crew had been steadily increasing. Every day brought new arrivals from naval training stations all over the nation. Some veterans were among these fresh arrivals, enough to provide a healthy leavening of experience for the two thousand, five hundred and forty-four men which the top chiefs of the Navy had set down as needed for the crew of Big Ben.

On January 29th, 1944, when the officers and men reported to Newport News, Virginia, and boarded their ship, already the nickname, "Big Ben," had come to stay. It had simply dropped down out of thin air; no one will ever know the name of the casual genius who first used it. All Essex class carriers are named either for famous ships or famous battles, so the *Bunker Hill*, the *Intrepid*, the *Hornet*. The *Franklin*, fifth ship of her name in the Navy, was named after an eight-gun sloop of the American Revolution which had served her country bravely and with distinction. But that *Franklin* had been named for the illustrious Benjamin Franklin—therefore the nickname, ready-made, both respectful and affectionate.

On the morning of January 31st, towed by tugs, she entered the Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Virginia. That afternoon she was placed in commission with impressive fanfare and under the official gaze of many dignitaries. The crew was drawn up on the flight deck—the Marine Guard was at attention—Big Ben's officers faced the platform which had been erected for the ceremony. The pilots of Air Group Thirteen, Big Ben's own fliers, were present. Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, commandant of the Fifth

Naval District, and Artemus L. Gates, assistant secretary of the Navy, were notable among the several hundred guests.

In the wan sunshine of a winter afternoon with a chilling breeze, after the martial music of the band, no man who was there will ever forget the brave, solemn words of the Secretary:

"This is the fifth *Franklin*. Her predecessors have fought and won many battles and have left a record of sea-worthiness and valiance which rise up before her as a challenge. She will meet that challenge."

As Secretary Gates spoke every person on that windswept flight deck remembered that far away, on distant battlefronts, American boys were fighting and dying. This mighty carrier would reinforce them. This crew, more boys, would soon be fighting beside them. In the end, through all the misery of war, America would triumph . . .

A wave of emotion swept the gathering as Captain Shoemaker arose to accept command.

"Mr. Secretary and Honored Guests:

"We have followed the final stages of construction of this great ship, and know from personal observation that in a material sense she is as nearly perfect as possible. Today our *Franklin* becomes a unit of our Navy, and we are charged with the large responsibility of training ourselves to have complete knowledge of all the potentialities of our ship, to the end that she will soon be ready to take her place in the line of battle.

"This is no easy task. The ship's company and the air



January 31, 1944; Big Ben's crew assembled for commissioning ceremony



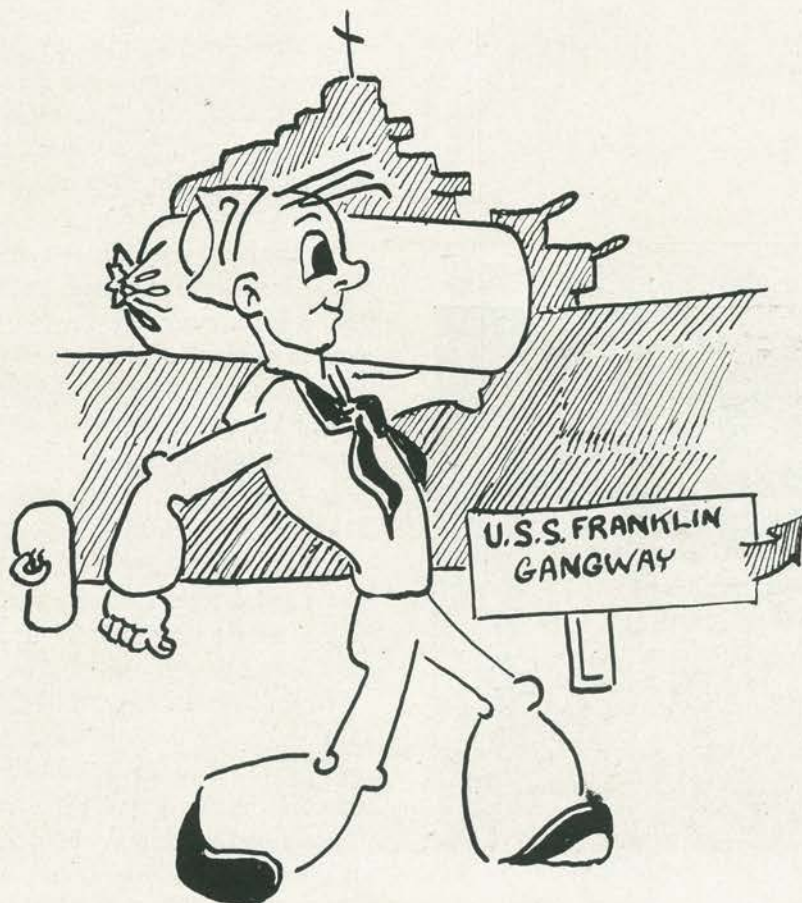
Captain Shoemaker prepares to accept command, as Secretary Gates addresses Big Ben's crew and guests

group together compose the most complex combat team in the world.

"Knowing this, we in the *Franklin* highly resolve that the trust reposed in us shall prove to have been well justified, and that our ship will join the Fleet ready in all

respects to strike hard, again and again, until the enemies of this great nation shall have been beaten to their knees."

The watch was set and Carrier Number Thirteen, *United States Ship Franklin*—"Big Ben the Flat-top"—was well on her way to the wars.



CHAPTER TWO

"... I never worked harder in my life, nor met more people. Guys who were only names on the pay list two months ago were now my buddies. On rope-yarn Sundays we would play acey-ducey on the focs'l or swap lies as we caulked-off in our bunks. But other times, it was drill, drill, drill..."

"We knew every bulkhead and rivet on that big pig-iron barge like we knew the kitchen linoleum back home..."

THE SHIP

THE MISSION: To seek out and to destroy the enemy, where ever he may be.

THE MEANS: Those swarms of dive-bombers and torpedo planes and rocket-firing fighters which will soar from her decks.

THE METHOD: "Keep 'em flying."

FOR NEARLY THREE WEEKS Big Ben lay majestically beneath the huge cranes at Pier Two in the Norfolk Navy Yard while her innermost being seethed and churned. In the mind of her Captain there was a master plan; under Comdr. Day and the firm, devoted Department Heads, it came into being. From lists of names on the Watch, Quarter, and Station Bills, the divisions were born—each division with its Lieutenant, with his "jgs" and ensigns, his petty officers, each division with its Port and Starboard Watch.

Men came to know their own important assignments; the faces and names of their shipmates. Each came to know his battle station and his place in fire drill, abandon-ship drill, collision drill, torpedo defense, flight quarters. He had to become familiar with the meaning of bugle calls, the boat-swain's pipe, and to accustom himself to the orders that flew through the ship over the metallic vocal chords of the "squawkboxes."

The men not only began to know their own duties, but also to realize the importance of their own divisions and, in turn, to understand how the function of each division must mesh to perfection with that of every other division if Big Ben was to become the fighting ship which every man wanted her to be.

Into the master plan would fit the Engineering Department, under Comdr. F. C. Agens, ex-Bunker-Hill "Chief", with its "M" or machinery division that lived with, tended, and loved the mighty engines; with its "A" division to groom and pamper the many auxiliaries necessary that those engines might run; its "B" division, keepers of the four giant firerooms with their boilers; the "E" division to tend the river of electricity from its throbbing source in the huge main generators down to the last rivulet entering some remote light. All so that Big Ben might come up to 28 knots and into the wind, and the captain could give the word "Commence Launching", and those Helldivers and Avengers could roar down her deck and into the sky. Or so that she might steam swiftly through the stormiest waters with her



Comdr. D. L. Day, Executive Officer until Sept. 24th, 1944

sister carriers to blast an enemy base and then fade back into the ocean mists from which she had come.

In that last, desperate moment, when the 40's are barking and the 20's commence to open in a wild staccato, and the captain shouts his commands, then the Engineering Department would be able to live up to its boast and its creed: "We answer all bells." The *we* being men like "Pop" Turner, watertender first class, who looked too old for combat duty, but actually was 50 years young, and would have nothing but the toughest for himself. He went forward, that fateful March 19th and won the Bronze Star. Men like Esslinger, Mintoni, Hummel, Brown, Darjany, and hosts of others gave their life's blood that a thing of steel should answer all bells.

R-One Division and R-Two Division of the Damage Control Department, under Comdr. W. R. LeFavour, who had only recently been a submarine commander, soon acquired the air of haughty efficiency which was to characterize them. Custodians of the holds and voids, ever-vigilant watchers of the status boards in Central Damage Control; welders of steel, hewers of wood, experts of improvise and "Can Do", these boys were busy with a purposeful zeal from one end of the road to Kyushu to the other. In each of the eight Damage Control and Repair parties that stood by the length and depth of the ship when battle threatened, the key men—masters of fog nozzle, of "Foamite", of shoring timber, of the last hatch and water-tight door—these were boys from Damage Control. Their deeds would become legendary. Chief Shipfitter Durrance would die beside his burning rods as he strove to cut his way through a bulkhead to free Doctor Fox and the eighteen boys trapped in the sick-bay with him.

The Navigation Department, under the beloved Commander "Benny" Moore, with its expert quartermasters, and its departmental auxiliary, the ship's band, was worthy of its name from the first day. While the quartermasters had their jobs to perform on the bridge, the band had their battle stations down in the powder handling rooms or on the stretcher details. In the evenings on the hangar deck before movies the band played their hearts out, with every man-jack who could muster within hearing distance as their cheering audience. Among their most enthusiastic followers, in later days, were the crews of destroyers fueling alongside, who never tired of a flight deck serenade. Their favorite request was "Sidewalks of New York."

The Marines came aboard as a detachment under Captain Herbert Elliot; they kept their own compartments as shinningly clean as their rifle racks; they manned their own group of 40 mm. mounts and stood their sentry and orderly watches with military precision. The spirit of this outfit from the first day aboard was typified by the grim sort of courage that forced Private Steve Novak back into the smoking wreckage of a compartment from which he had just escaped, to lead his shipmates to safety. Or Private W. L. Kliemozwitz, with that handful of volunteers on Big Ben's last 40 mm. quad, blazing away desperately at a diving Jap bomber with such effect that the bomb missed the ship when another hit would have sent her to the bottom. Those were Big Ben's Marines—the 7th Division of the Gunnery Department.



Comdr. F. K. Agens, Chief Engineer until May 4th, 1944, came from the Bunker Hill to found the Black Gang



Comdr. W. R. LeFavour, Damage Control Officer until Feb. 2nd, 1945. An ex-submarine skipper.



Comdr. Benjamin Moore, Navigator to Sept. 24th, 1944; Executive Officer until Dec. 20th, 1944



Big Ben's Marine Detachment

Aft, down on the third deck in the ship's hospital, Commander F. K. Smith's Medical Department had little trouble with the battle of organization—the Hospital Corps of the Navy is a self-integrated outfit and only the “cream of the crop” is assigned to ships. No one, at any time, heard much from this department, but somehow it was always there when the need was mighty.

Lt. Comdr. L. H. Birthisel, Jr., the fiery Texan whose gleaming high leather boots had spurned the snows of Newport as he spurned any soil or subject alien to the “Lone Star State,” was “Gun Boss.” The Fighting First Division the Terrible Third, all the Gunnery Divisions from One to Eight, came into being branded with the fire-breathing imprint of a master gunner and rustler-chaser. It was a job

well done. The Jap pilots who flamed into the Pacific can bear witness to the fact.

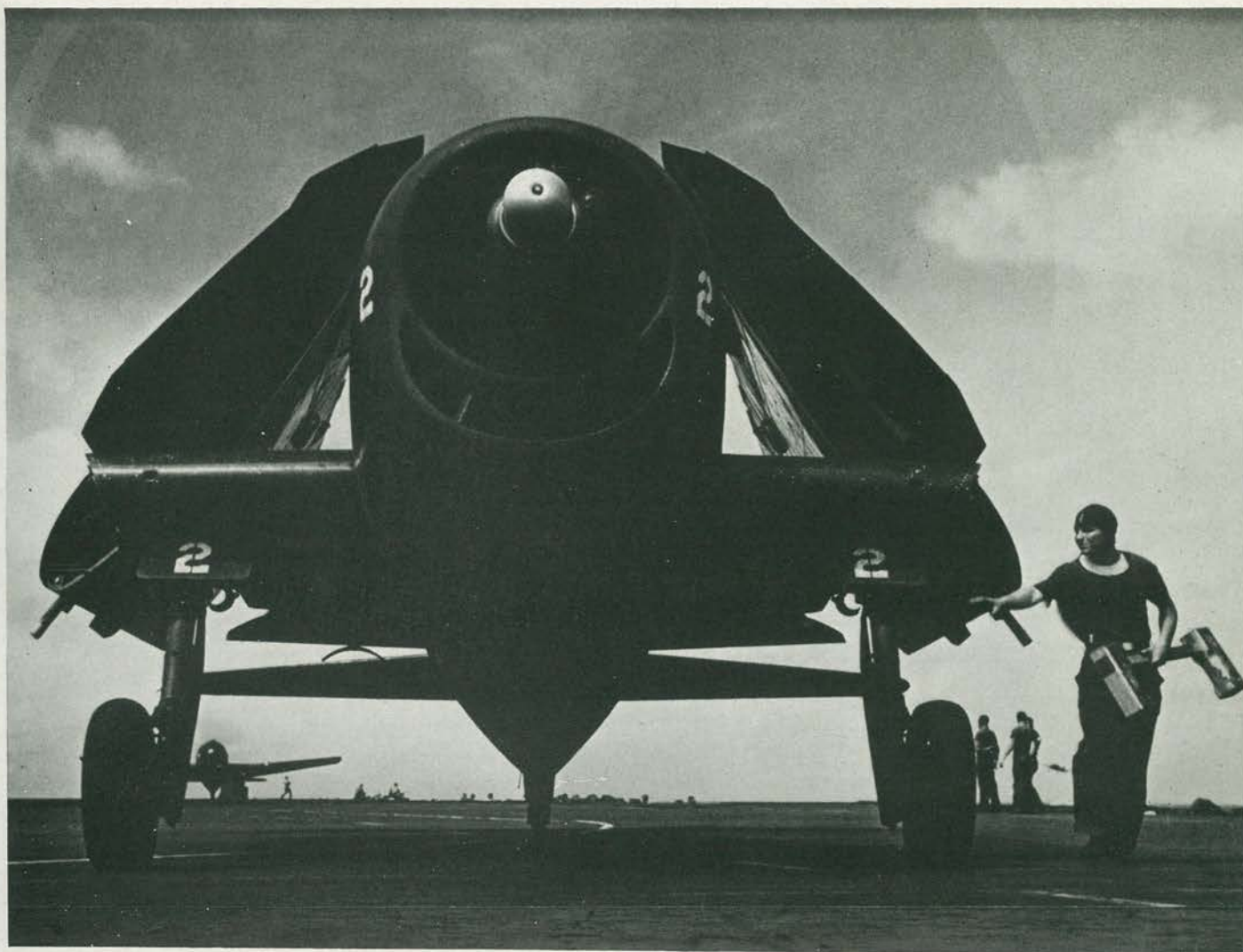
The Communication department, under Lt. Comdr. D. I. Mather, was composed of the radiomen, K-One; the signalmen, K-two; the yeoman, mailman and printers, K-three. The radiomen—with sparks on their sleeves—were to flash out contact reports and receive the orders that helped to doom the last proud fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy; the signalmen—wearing the crossed flags—would send many a battle signal whipping from the halliards in the gusty winds of the Pacific, and they would be the most alert “gang” in the Fleet if Chief Harry Reese had his way. Yeomen, manning vital talker circuits in battle, would spend their waking moments with every report and request Big Ben could de-



Lt. Comdr. L. H. Birthisel, Gunnery Officer until December 1944



Comdr. F. K. Smith, (MC). Flight Surgeon and Senior Medical Officer until June, 1945



A Hellcat's plane captain, wary of the prop, stands by with a wheel chock

wise. Mailman Raymond T. Lorentz, with his five helpers, would be the most important men aboard ship as letters began to come and go. The printer's work was never quite finished and the debt due Chief Raymond D. Blair for his unselfish devotion to the ship's paper will never be repaid — Chief Blair was killed in action.

Under Comdr. Cone, the Supply Department had many activities. There were more than three thousand tons of groceries to fill Big Ben's larders to be ordered and stored aboard! there was government insurance to sell; payrolls must be met—and were. The pencil-pushing storekeepers checked and accounted for every last item and penny. The Commissary Section brought aboard the flour, sugar and other stores from freight cars on the dock. The Disbursing Section called \$50,000 an average payday; hit a bumper record of \$750,000 when Big Ben pulled into Bremerton, handling seven and a half million dollars in the first 18 months of service. The Aviation storekeepers ran their own department store. All of those sections composed the S-One Division.

S-Two Division was made up of steward's mates, cooks, bakers, and laundry men. These sound like humdrum tasks, but every man had a battle station—passing powder, keeping watch on the guns, on repair parties. A task is not

humble or menial when a man is at his battle station for many hours through the night, then passes food or clean clothing to his shipmates all day—and still grins.

To every plane on a carrier comes a lad to be its constant guardian and protector. This man is not an officer, but is called a "captain"—a plane captain. And while he does not have stripes of gold on his sleeves or golden wings on his chest, he loves his plane just as surely, he sacrifices himself just as uncomplainingly, as only a real "Captain" could. He boasts of her deeds, he sorrows in her hurts; he is the last to touch her before she roars down the deck, the gladdest to greet her when she lands aboard. His only duty is his plane. No tear in her sleek fabric, no rip in her tires or broken cable to her radio must ever mar her performance. Lack of gas, lack of bullets, or faulty lubrication must never make her the prey of crafty Zeke or Jap AA, or the victim of a crash landing at sea. In his leisure hours he polishes her gleaming skin; he sleeps beneath her folded wings, or on the cushions of her cockpit. In the anxious hours, while gunners stand tense and the combat air patrol is busy just over the edge of the sea, many of the quiet little knot of men "sweating it out" by "Combat Information Center" are plane captains.

The story of the Air Department is the story of the plane's



Comdr. Joe Taylor, Air Officer until Dec. 1944; Executive Officer Dec. '44 to June, 1945, watches the planes come in, from Flight Deck Control

captain. The Air Department is to its ninety planes what the plane captain is to his one. With Comdr. Joe Taylor at the head of its fifty officers and twelve hundred men, the Air Department was the reason why Big Ben was in existence; the reason behind all the other frantic activities which were readying her for combat. All the intricate construction, all of the master plan, led up to that moment when the command comes: "Pilots, man your planes!" It was then, and only then, that an aircraft carrier became a fighting force, an element in actual warfare.

The Air Department had its divisions, and *what* divisions!

V-One, flight deck: arresting gear and barrier men must be quick of hand and true of eye. Misjudgment can be

fatal to plane and crew. The eight-man teams of plane-pushers braved the menace of whirling props in the half-light of dawn to pull the chocks and lower the wings; they shuffled and reshuffled planes from dawn to dusk that the "Strikes" might leave on time. A few minutes delay and returning gasless aircraft might be forced to crash in the sea. The catapult crews forward, under Lt. M. C. Woodburn, must be able to fire a dozen fighters into the air in a few minutes to meet the threat of approaching bombers.

V-Two, on the hangar deck, was composed of mechanics and metalsmiths of superb skill; men to whom replacing a damaged wing was a minor operation.

V-Three, the operations section, had yeomen and administrators who plowed through the paper work and passed on the Air Officer's commands.

V-Four, the division for combat information, was most complex of all. Charged with responsibility for all radars and radios on ship and planes, it also supervised every surface lookout, the aerological department, the photographers and the recognition officers. Its fighter director team of a hundred radarmen and their officers under Lt. Comdr. Bob Bruning would be Big Ben's first line of defense. Some day, when enemy planes would flicker on the radar screens, fighters of the combat air patrol would roar off to intercept, guided by "vectors" radioed from Combat Information Center—"CIC"—where Lt. Jim Griswold and his tense teams crouched over their plotting tables.

V-Five, the service division, had its life-breath given it by Chief Otis Lee Corbett, a son of the old South, who died in action off Kyushu. It dispensed the bombs, the machine gun bullets, the high-octane gasoline and torpedoes, because an aircraft carrier, as well as being a floating and movable airfield, must also be a service station of wide variety.

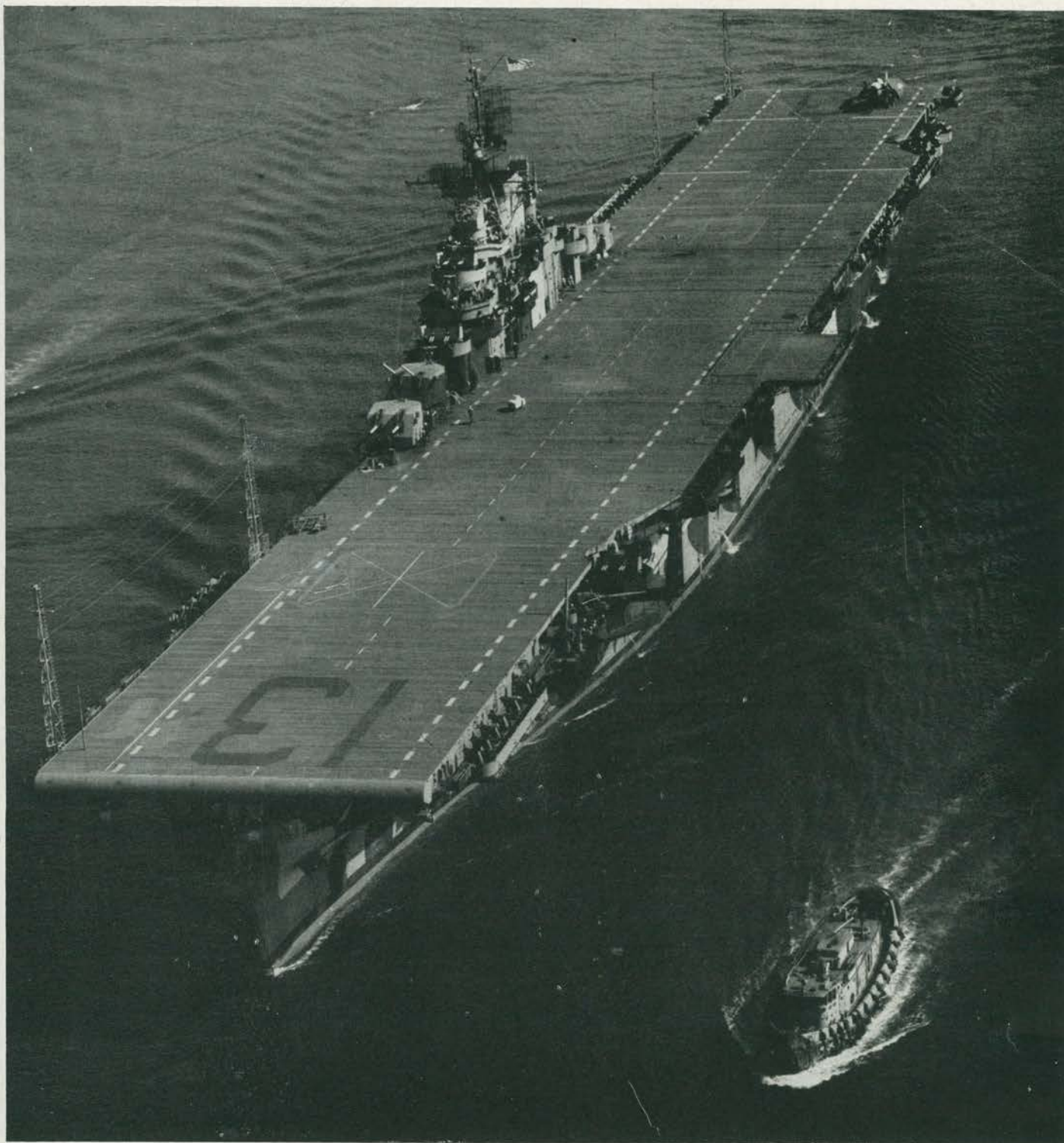
And . . . V-Six, the squadrons: combat air crewmen for all planes; lads with the silver wings that testified they were aerial gunners; others with the golden wings of pilots. Most



General storekeepers in their "No cash—you carry" store on the Fourth Deck. STANDING: F. Melvin; C. Delello; Gene Levine; C. L. McDuffie. SECOND ROW: Robert Stricker; Charles Russell; Leo Smolinski; Leroy Vanet. TOP: Billy Stribling; Manny Solomon; David Lashinsky



The "outfittin'est" supply officer in the Navy! Comdr. H. S. Cone, (SC), USN, re-outfitted the battleship Nevada after Pearl Harbor, set a record on Big Ben, and left the ship only to outfit something bigger—the super-carrier Midway.



Big Ben puts to sea the first time. February 21st, 1944

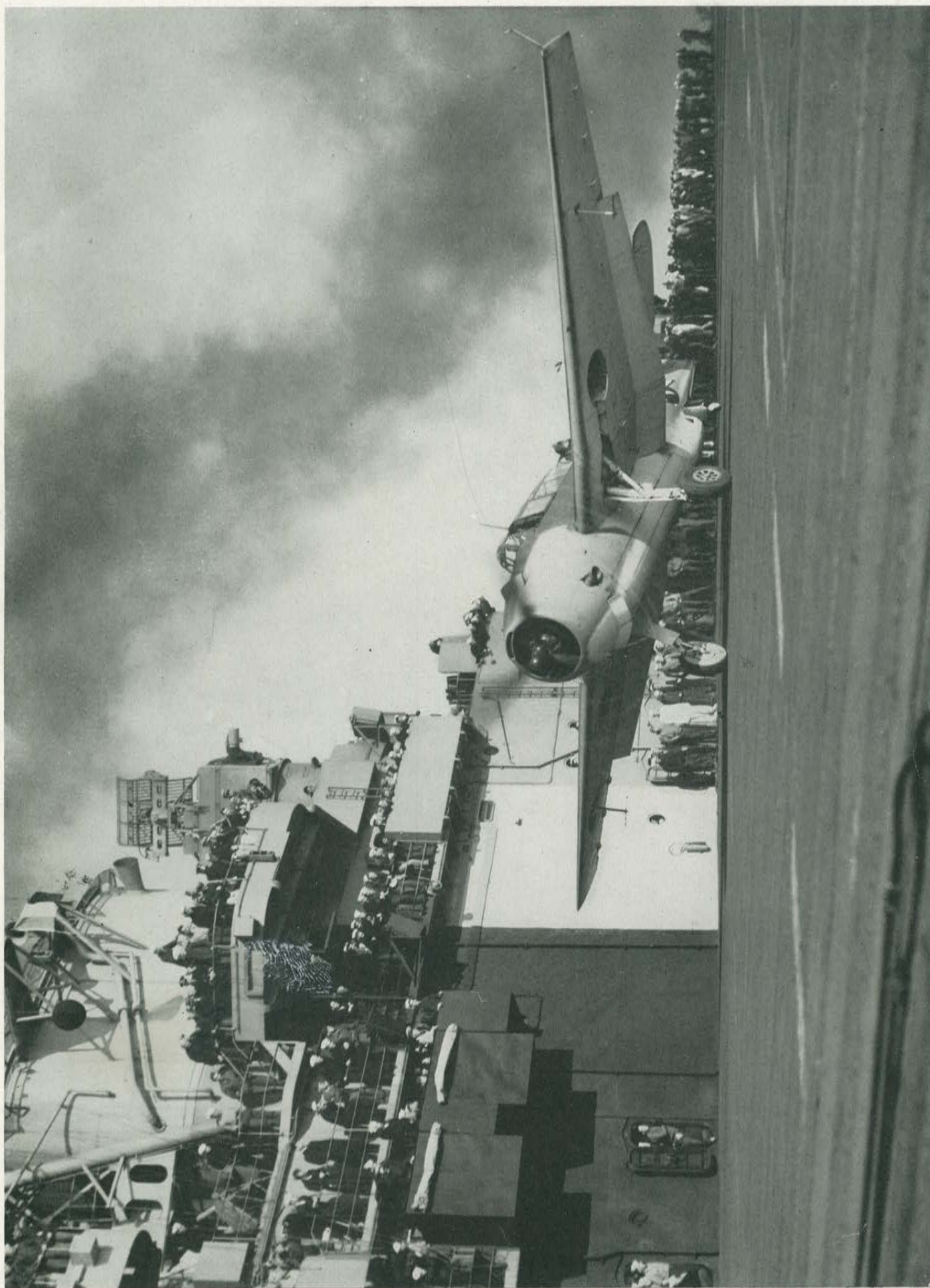
of these were now with the planes at the Naval Air Station, Oceana, Virginia—nearly every man a volunteer from some shore station. There will be more about them . . . much more.

Tension was mounting, activity was increasing throughout the vast and impatient bulk of Big Ben when, on February 21st, all these preparations began to be translated, for the first time, into real meaning — for it was on that day that she was eased gently into Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay. Deserted by the last of the puffing tugs and left to rely on the power of her own giant engines, Big Ben was on her own.

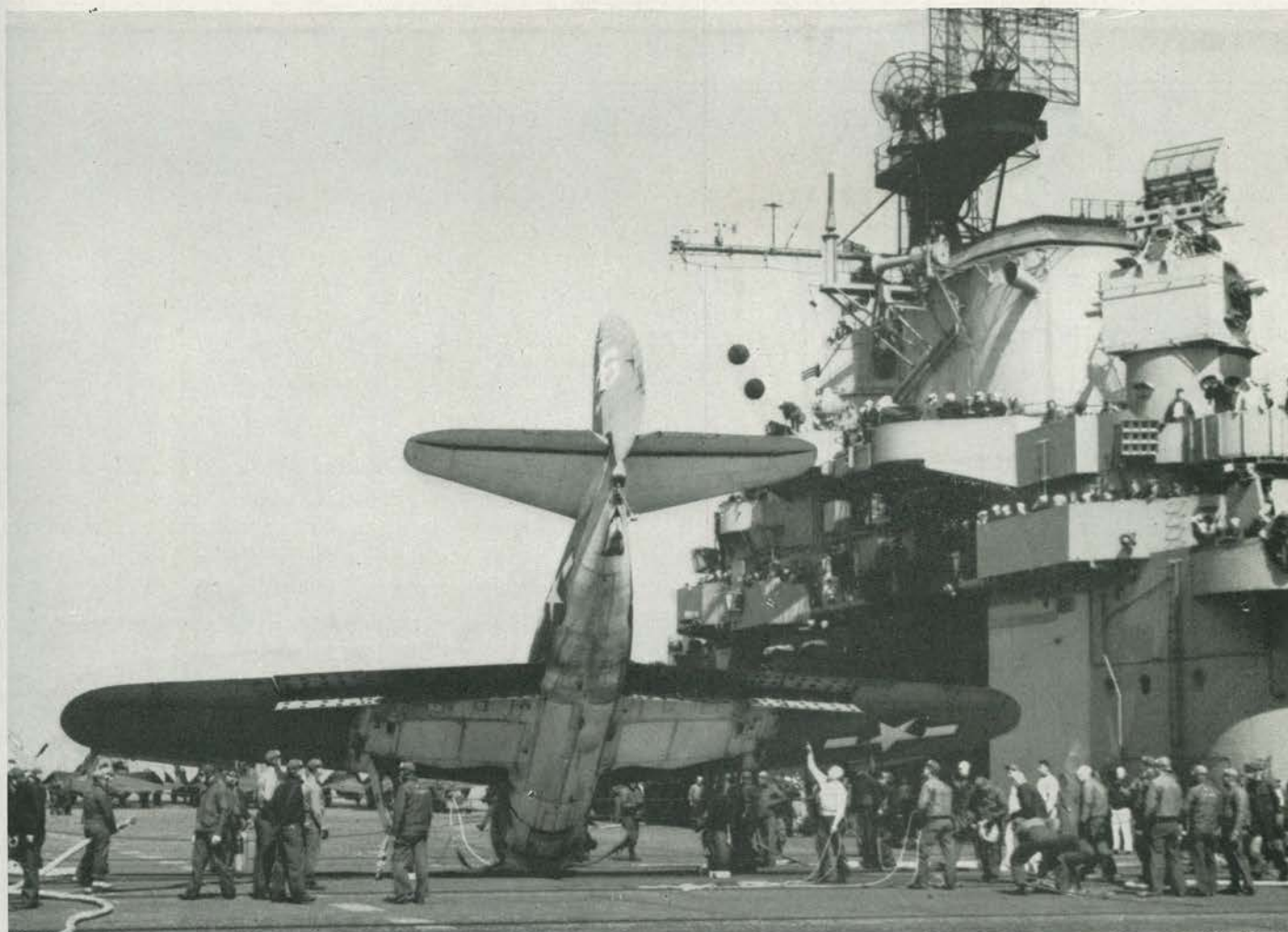
It was not time to steam straight for the Pacific. Much was yet to be done; trial runs, gunnery practice, special

tests, and the gruelling carrier landing qualifications which must be undergone for Air Group Thirteen.

The first flight quarters sounded February 27th, a moment more historic and significant than any man on Big Ben realized that day on Chesapeake Bay. This time, all hands watched with awe as the divisions of the Air Department went about their then-mysterious business and Comdr. Joe Taylor brought his Avenger to rest on the deck, catching the second wire with its tailhook. This was Big Ben's first landing! Warplanes would roll down that flight deck and land again more than nine thousand times during her combat service.



First take-off February 27th, 1944. Pilot, Comdr. Taylor; Photographer, Chief L. J. Durante, killed in action, March 19th, 1945



A flight deck is a dangerous place

The next day Air Group Thirteen began to land aboard, from their training base at Oceana Naval Air Station.

For two weeks Big Ben prowled through the narrow confines of Chesapeake Bay while the pilots sought to qualify in both day landings and night landings. The flight deck crews, the plane-pushers, the entire Air Department, gathered experience, skill, and that subtle quality, for which war experience coined the awkward but expressive word: "know-how."

Flight quarters, naturally ceased to be a novelty, but the men never tired of watching the planes come sweeping in, nor of the acrobatics of the Flight Deck Officers, signaling above the roar of motors.

The busy teams of men in bright-hued jerseys and helmets—red for fire-fighters, green for ordnance people, yellow for flight deck crews—were engaged in dangerous work. The slipstream behind a 300-knot fighter warming up for a take-off equals a tornado in concentrated strength and can blow an unwary sailor over the side in the twinkling of an eye. The propeller blades are a constant deadly threat to the men who work about the planes. The seeming safety of the gallery beside the flight deck disappears quicker than a man can think when a five-ton plane misses a wire and bounces in that direction at more than fifty miles an hour. Then there's the hazard of fire. An axiom on a carrier is "never smoke when you can see an airplane." The words: "Smoking lamp is out above the third deck" became a fa-

miliar chant, reminding all hands that planes were being gassed or having their fuel removed until their next flight.

On March 15th, Big Ben took a breather; came into the Naval Operating Base at Norfolk and rested her tired new beams and bulwarks beside Pier Seven. Just a breather, because she came here to take on her full complement of supplies and to fill her tanks with high-octane and fuel oil for the shakedown cruise.

Pilots of the squadrons came aboard to live and among the ship's Junior Officers was a mighty wailing and a donning of sackcloth and ashes as they left the rooms in which they had been quartered to take their rightful places in the large Junior Officer Bunkrooms. Aft, in the crew's quarters, many a woeful seaman moved his belongings to some less desirable berth that the Air Group men might have their places. Loud were the cries, but Lt. D. G. Billington, the Berthing Officer, was unimpressed, and soon Big Ben had taken Air Group Thirteen to her bosom.

It was here in Norfolk, on a Saturday afternoon, that Yeoman First Class Joe Norwood married his best girl, Nadine, of Miami, Florida. Lt. Comdr. Kelly, Air Operations Officer, was best man. Streck, Hand, Fisher, Kai, Pederson, Johnson, Brown—all his fellow yeomen—were there to wish him well and assist in the celebration. Little Joe Norwood, good yeoman, and most of those buddies, are sleeping now in the blue Pacific. But Big Ben has not forgotten.

CHAPTER THREE

"... We had some great times, too. Scotland Beach ... Port of Spain ... there were some real guys in that old division ..."

SHAKEDOWN

WITH A FAREWELL BLAST of her whistle to Cape Henry's fading shoreline Big Ben and her escorting destroyers, the *Wainwright* and the *Rhind*, stood south on March 20th, 1944, bound for Trinidad, in the British West Indies—and the shakedown cruise.

As the weather warmed, Big Ben and her crew stretched themselves. Divisions came to morning quarters in whites, less blouses. Men took on a tan. The Bos'n, Mr. Spiewak, became more conscious of unsightly blemishes on Big Ben's skin and the boatswain's mates, with their divisions, set about remedying winter's stain. The din of chipping hammers, wire brushers and scrapers echoed endlessly about the decks.

The Gulf of Paria is a large, landlocked arm of the South Atlantic between the island of Trinidad and the main land of South America. It has two entrances, the northern called the "Serpent's Mouth," the southern named "Dragon's Mouth. It was into the channel of the Serpent's Mouth that the little group of warships steamed on March 24th, shadowed by the mighty bulk of Big Ben. They anchored off the U. S. Naval Air Station. For nearly a month in the calm waters of this warm sea *Franklin* and her destroyers careened through practice missions during the day, anchoring at night behind the safety of the port's submarine nets.

Shakedown cruise ... It gives the captain of a new ship the opportunity to weave the men and the departments into one fighting unit, before taking her into battle.

There was gunnery practice. At five miles, with five-inchers, at two miles with 40 mm. guns, at one mile with forty-six high-speed 20 mm. machine guns—every conceivable target situation was practiced for use in the combat that men knew was on the way when these quiet waters and planned maneuvers were left in Big Ben's wake.

And the Air Department filled the air. Here it was that the men of Big Ben fastened their devotion on the planes which were their pride and joy. They strained their eyes and their hearts watching the fighters in the preparatory burst—and the bomb-toting Helldivers and the torpedo-lugging Avengers as they flashed down in screaming dives from every corner of the tropical sky. The attacks were simulated, but in deadly earnest, on the destroyer-towed targets.

There were mock battles, using Big Ben's Hellcat fighters, under Lt. Comdr. W. M. "Wild Bill" Coleman, to intercept

Lr. Comdr. R. L. Kibbe's Helldivers and Lr. Comdr. Carry French's Avengers. Desperate battles, radar and Grummans defending the *Franklin*, would thunder to a conclusion, far out at sea. When the last "enemy" had been "splashed," Big Ben's defenses would relax and the attackers would come whipping in for the kill. Torpedo planes, skimming low over the blue water, would flick from side to side at a terrifying 300 knots to avoid imaginary AA and then roar over the *Franklin*'s decks. Dive-bombers plunging from the skytop, grew by the split-second from insignificant specks into hurtling monsters that would fill a gunsight to the



Plane-pushers fold an Avenger's wings, as the flight deck officer signals the pilot



A Helldiver, a split second before it crashed

rims, pulling out of their daring dives, it seemed, just before they crashed on the deck.

There was shore leave and every man had his day. The men had swimming from the white beaches of Scotland Bay and they could play at baseball, volleyball, football. There were cocoanut trees, too, for the men who cared to climb. But cocoanut trees have rough bark, as "Yogi" McMullen, piccolo-loving seaman, discovered when a frond snapped at the top of a tall one and he landed on every wrinkle going down.



Air Group Thirteen's Commander—Comdr. C. C. "Sunshine" Howerton

The restricted zones of Port of Spain led many a curious lad to venture forth in search of some justification for the Navy's taboos. Radiomen Frank Wickers and Johnny Basham were among those who found themselves struggling in the web of jungle violence. When rescue came they were whisked away by Shore Patrol in the Navy's own "Black Maria." Some, like Ron Noyes, were typical American tourists and brought home the full quota of carved horn ash trays and pillow souvenirs. Others, like "Jinx" Dizak, missed the spirit of things. "Jinx" brought back a heavy fever, which later developed into measles.

The first few days of the shakedown, however, were disappointing. Plane after plane would take off, roar down the flight deck, then tumble into the water or spin away to one side and crash in the sea near the ship. Mechanics sweated into the night; civilian experts ate and slept with the problem—when they slept at all. No one had been injured yet; the water was warm and a crash-boat from the destroyers was always on hand. Yet it gave every man on Big Ben a bitter sinking feeling to see those huge, beautiful machines go thundering up the deck, so seemingly full of power, then veer and crash into the ocean. They were not loaded; what would happen when they had to carry a ton of bombs?

After several days, when the fourteenth plane, and the third in a row, had staggered off the end of the flight deck to circle wildly then crash and sink in a welter of foam, the Air Officer roared on the speakers:

"Flight quarters cancelled!"

Conferences were held. Capt. Shoemaker, Comdr. Day, the Air Group Commander, C. C. "Sunshine" Howerton, the civilian technicians and mechanics struggled with the problem. There was no one simple explanation. The planes were older models with three-bladed props instead of the



Miraculously uninjured, it's pilot and gunner escaped . . . the plane sank in 45 seconds

newer four-bladed ones. They carried more equipment than design had provided for. The carburetors required readjustment to meet tropical flying conditions. Pilot technique was a factor; experienced pilots lost fewer planes. But what was the answer?

There were serious talks in the ready rooms that evening: "Boys," said Comdr. Howerton, "for the last three days we have been putting on the aquatic act—let's give them an aerial show! Now this is the way . . ."

And into the night mechanics toiled feverishly.

Next morning at flight quarters, a thousand eyes were on the first Helldiver that rolled up to the take-off spot. Mechs, grimy but confident, watched with tired eyes as the big plane went storming up the deck. Before it reached the forward elevator the wheels were in the air and she soared up so powerfully the mechanics could have wept for joy. The gunner in the rear seat, anxious a moment before, clasped his hands over his head in triumph as the Helldiver climbed away.

Big Ben never lost another plane on a deck take-off.

"Sunshine" Howerton had been named by sailors. Always a kind word or understanding smile as he passed the "little guy" sweating over his bench or straining under his load of bombs. They swore by him, though no one ever thought he was soft. There was the time in Trinidad when he alone of all the fliers had some difficulty in finding his way back to the *Franklin*. When he finally returned aboard he delivered himself wrathfully of the remark: "If you can't find the ship, boys, just head for the biggest rain cloud you can see. Big Ben will be right in the middle of it." Throughout the long months of combat flying in the oft-times rainy Pacific the pilots of Air Group Thirteen counted this as reliable advice.

Only one fatal accident occurred during the cruise. Dur-

ing the afternoon of March 31st, Charles Van Camp, 18-year-old ordnanceman, was fatally wounded when the 50-caliber machine guns of the Hellcat he was de-arming accidentally discharged. He was buried at sea, the first of many who gave their lives at their posts on Big Ben.

On the more placid side, it was at Trinidad that the first issues of "Radio Press News," six pages a day ungarbled from the static by Radioman George Jarrett, made its appearance. Edited by Dick Hand and Joe Haile, mimeographed by Chuck Greshko, the 600 copies were distributed in the early hours of the morning watch—Big Ben's own newspaper, bringing news from home and the world. It was prized by the men; the captain had a private copy with his morning coffee.

And the Franklin Forum, Big Ben's monthly paper, arrived through the efforts of Chaplain C. A. Chamberlain and Chief Printer Blair. There are no copies left in the official files but they are treasured all over the world today, in many scrapbooks.

It was here, too, as much needed light relief, that the "Franklin Frolics" were born. Nick Kenny's songs; "Honeyboy," who was none other than the fabulous Lt. "Red" Harris, in blackface. "Honeyboy" Harris was with Big Ben a long time, but fair weather or stormy, his skeptical thoughts reminded men that they, too, "would rather be home, Mistah Shoemaker." "Tom" Kelly's golden voice and the old Irish ballads he used to sing—they still ring down the hangar deck in the evenings.

So shakedown ended.

Taps came, clear and sweet, to seaman and to captain. The officer of the deck looked up at the Southern Cross. The quartermaster sounded eight bells and all's well.

Big Ben bulked huge and grim against the dark-shrouded horizon.

CHAPTER FOUR

" . . . we saw the Arizona and Oklahoma, bedded down for good in that mud on Pearl Harbor's floor. But some way, when we left them, those gallant hulks were farthest from our thoughts . . . we were heading west, farther west than we had ever dreamed; somewhere out there in front of us was a war . . ."

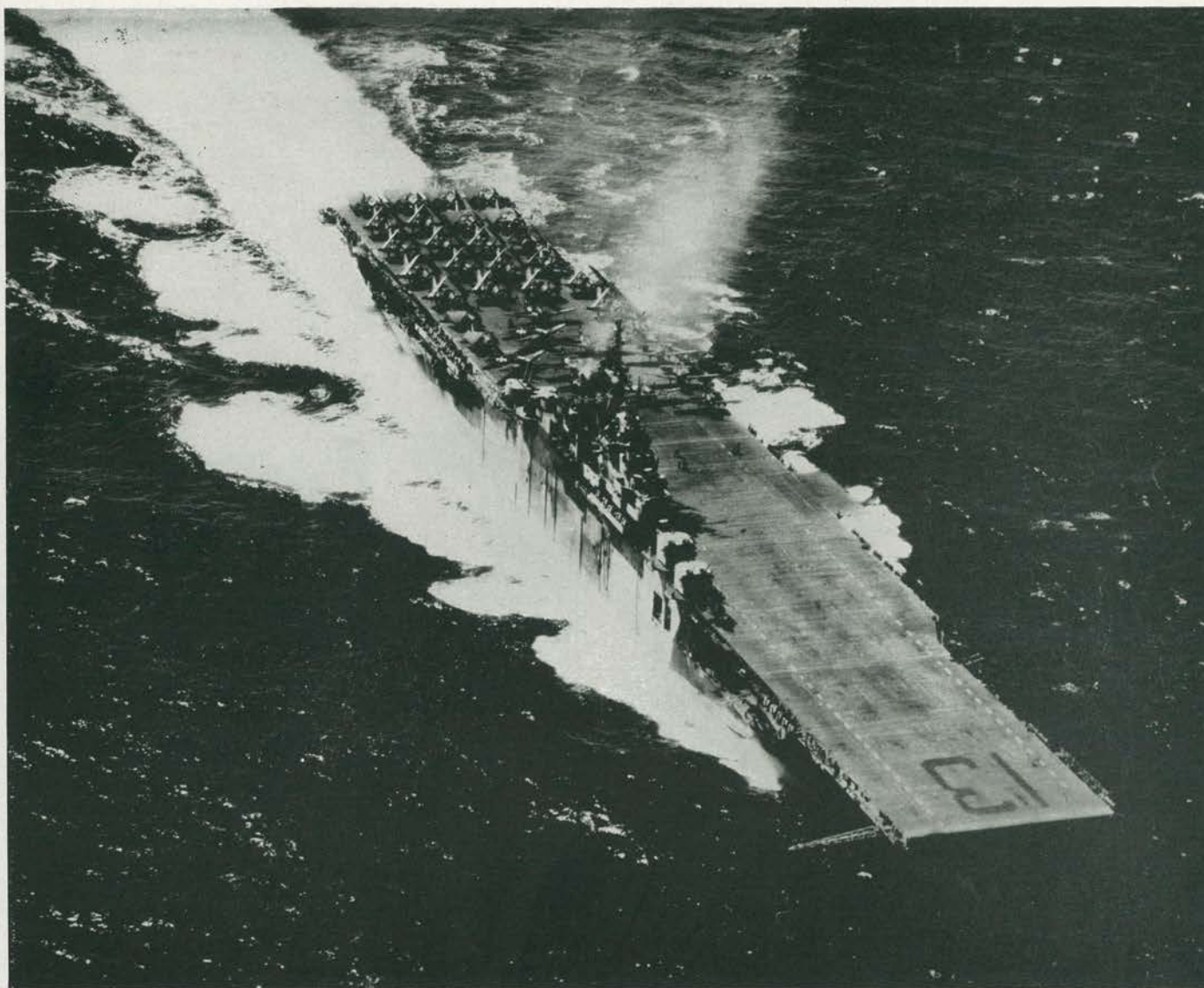
WESTWARD

IT WAS APRIL 15th, 1944, when Big Ben dropped her 15-ton anchors in the roadstead off Annapolis, the first stop since Trinidad. There was shore leave that evening, little of which has—or ever will—creep into the pages of history.

The next morning the Naval Academy's Board of Visitors inspected Big Ben. Midshipmen, admirals, congressmen, educators, were shown every department of the latest major warship to join the mightiest Navy in the world. Senator

David I. Walsh, of Massachusetts addressed the crew over the public address system and told his own feeling of *Franklin's* impressiveness. He then assured the crew that the greatest of all the country's weapons was her *youth*—such as made up the crew of Big Ben.

The pause was not for long. The next day *Franklin* moved into Hampton Roads, moored at the Norfolk Naval Base, and 1500 of her sailors scattered on their first real



Big Ben, with a "deckload" ready, swings into the wind to launch



Chief Boatswains Mate Bog Gregg (center) with two of his assistant "policemen" . . . Gregg used to walk 15 miles a day on Big Ben, in his Chief Master at Arms post

liberty in more than a month. Not even wartime censorship can defeat the intuition of a Navy wife or sweetheart; there were many happy reunions on shore that evening which might mystify Naval Intelligence.

Monday, April 19th, Big Ben moved to the huge drydock at Portsmouth. Urgent voyage repairs must be made; acres of bottom must be scraped clean of barnacles, even on so young a ship. Final supplies were taken aboard—for the next destination was no doubt the Pacific Ocean and Admiral W. F. "Bull" Halsey's Third Fleet.

Every man would have four days' leave before sailing; those not on leave must work double time. For three days and nights the duty sections labored heroically to clean and paint the bottom. After two days' barter with the supply department extra rations were promised for the men on the third night. There was many a sardonic jest when this extra ration turned out to be a solitary candy bar per man. But in high spirits, though weary, the herculean task was finished in record time and the drydock flooded.

By May 4th all yard work was done—but those words are woefully inadequate to describe what went on aboard and ashore before the last leave party returned and the last freight car on the dock had been relieved of its burden. Aboard, for just one example, the catapult had been removed from the hangar deck to the flight deck, a colossal task in itself; ashore, one lad was stretching his four-day leave into thirty because he had met a young lady school teacher and had been in constant attendance in the First Grade of a Norfolk public school.

A sense of finality hung over these last days. The spring weather made even the drab streets of Portsmouth attractive. In the warm evening air the lads went ashore in gay little groups, to lose themselves in heedless crowds. The war was real, grim, and near; men thought of the distant Pacific and wondered when, if ever, they would see another State-side spring.

The warrant officers honored Captain Shoemaker at a party which was to bid farewell to the States . . . and to

Norfolk, which has been described by an Army wag as the perfect Port of Embarkation—no matter what the destination, it is a pleasure to go, if Norfolk can be left behind.

New faces were aboard Big Ben before she departed. Tall Lt. Walter Kreamer became Communications Officer, relieving Lt. Comdr. Mather. Ens. Stanley S. Graham, possessor and uninhibited user of a foghorn voice which earned him the name of "Steamship," leaped the rail in these final moments. Much to the sincere regret of all hands of the Engineering Department, as well as a host of others, Comdr. Agens turned his Chief Engineer's post over to his aide, Lt. Comdr. Greene, bid everyone a perfunctory good-bye, and disappeared over the side before anyone could see the tears in his eyes. Chief Boatswain's Mate "Anthony" Wayne was called to shore duty and Chief Bob Gregg became head Master-at-Arms. Gregg, jovial but efficient, was known in a week as "the only friendly Master-at-Arms in the United States Navy," a man with only one vice—Copenhagen Snuff.

Big Ben, fueled to capacity, stood out through the channel on the morning of May 5th, to be joined by three new destroyers, the *Twiggs*, *Leary*, and *Cushing*. A year later, locked in mortal combat with suicidal Jap planes off Okinawa, the *Twiggs* would go down in glory, guns blazing. Off Cape Henry, *Franklin* and her escorts turned into the wind. Air Group Thirteen landed aboard, to take up permanent residence, or as permanent as such hazardous residence can be in time of war. With all watches set, air patrols in the sky, Task Group 12.1 steamed southward through the mists toward Panama.

May 11th, 100 miles from the approaches to the Panama Canal, the Thirteenth Air Group, in all its roaring, low-flying splendor, hurled itself in mock assault on the great waterway to test the Army's defensive strength, and as a spectacular announcement that Big Ben was on her way to the war. Half the crew went on shore leave in Cristobal, then by evening of the next day she had squeezed through the westernmost lock and was berthed in Balboa.

One day here, with liberty in Panama City, was one



Lt. Comdr. Thomas J. Greene, USN, Engineering Officer, May, 1944 to July 1945, Acting Executive Officer to May, 1946.



deringly of the days to come as she plowed northward, determined and forbidding.

Just one day out of San Diego, on May 16th, ready rooms were alerted. The Army Air Force, charged with protecting San Diego's vulnerable warplants, had been informed that a giant "enemy" carrier with escorting warships, was slipping northward to throw a suicidal blow at these precious installations.

Mitchell bombers, Flying Forts, long range reconnaissance Liberators, were searching through the fog off the California coast for a carrier with the number "Thirteen" in huge figures on her flight deck. They were still searching the next day, with Big Ben only 100 miles off San Fernando Island. Clouds, rain squalls, favored the raiders; Big Ben lurked in the middle of the blackest squall. Then a lucky Mitchell, speeding through the overcast, had a contact on his radar screen. Like a pencil line, his course

Even a routine patrol can have a lively ending. This Hell-diver is headed for trouble. A wing is smashed, as he crashes into after gun mount. Pilot and



gunner are shaken but not badly hurt. Fire didn't start, this time. But hoses are ready as flight deck crews swarm about plane.

grand foray into souvenir-land, with unbelievable nylons, Chanel Number Five from France, alligator skin bags, Swiss wrist watches, all manner of impressive gifts for that girl back home—and all the other loot a sailor loves.

The little task group stood north on May 16th, with the command in Big Ben. Daily flight operations, daily pounding away at target balloons, daily drills by every department and division—and an ominous lack of details each day in "Radio Press News" about the actual operations in the Pacific, where Task Force Fifty-eight was poised somewhere, ready for battle. There had been no major operation since March. The Marshalls were secure; bloody Tarawa and Eniwetok were history. MacArthur's men continued their relentless mopping-up in New Georgia, New Guinea, the Solomons. Somewhere there was a still-powerful Japanese Navy. When would it come out and fight? Could we get there to meet the thrust? The men of Big Ben talked won-





Every big flat-top in the Navy made their last stop here at Ford Island, in Pearl Harbor, before steaming westward into battle

veered for the little group of warships. There was tense action in CIC as Hellcats were ordered catapulted from the deck, and another pencil line moved across the plotting boards, to intercept the search plane.

But it was too late. Radio on the Mitchell had warned the waiting airfields on the mainland. The Hellcats cut the Mitchell down 50 miles from Big Ben, but now an ominous warning of many swiftly approaching planes came from CIC.

Into the wind came Task Group 12.1. Destroyers closed in a tight circle that their powerful AA batteries might better defend the carrier. Dozens of Hellcat fighters were racing off to battle the Army bombers. Dozens of carrier bombers roared into the sky and arrowed for the prime targets in the San Diego area.

Soon came the swirl of mock battle as Grummans tore into Flying Forts. But some of the Mitchell's and Forts slipped through the fighter screen, twisting and turning to dodge imaginary AA, then levelling off for their bomb runs. Every gun in the task group had them covered—it had seemed very real.

Quiet returned, however, and Big Ben finally rested at the San Diego Naval Air Station. Air Group Thirteen had already landed ashore; mechanics, ordnancemen, plane captains, and others hurried to the planes to take up their unending tasks.

Two days were consumed in urgent repairs after the 10,000-mile run from Norfolk. Fuel and supplies were replenished; half the crew were given shore leave, with preference going to men whose homes were on the West Coast. Three days were needed for operations at sea, in which Rear Admiral Sherman, Commander of Fleet Aircraft, would pronounce upon the readiness of Big Ben and Air Group Thirteen for battle. After all tests Admiral Sherman was satisfied; back in San Diego things begun to hum again. Two thousand passengers, inevitable complement of a carrier anywhere except in action, brought themselves and their baggage aboard. Tons of supplies were loaded. Days were busy but there was shore leave in the evenings.

Franklin's crew saw also another side of war preparations. Each morning, long chains of landing craft, LCT, LCI's, LCM's, and others, loaded to the gunwales with troops, would pass down the channel for drills on the coast. Late in the day they would return, a tired, sweating bunch of soldiers—the men Big Ben would later cover and assist with fighters, dive-bombers and torpedo planes.

Shore leave expired at midnight May 31st. At dawn next day, with the *Twiggs*, *Leary*, *Cushing*, and cruiser *Denver*, Big Ben edged into the channel and stood westward with her passengers, 500 tons of urgent cargo, her 90 airplanes, and a crew of nearly 3,000 men. She was headed for a fast voyage to Pearl Harbor, at 23 knots, without air patrols. She entered the winding channel to Ford Island on June 5th.

Here, at Pearl Harbor, thirty months after their demolition, men saw the wrecks of what had once been the battle-ships *Arizona* and *Oklahoma*. They saw also the speedy repairs which had been made to the base since December 7th, 1941; they saw the formidable defenses which had been constructed. Army planes wheeled ceaselessly overhead; there were bristling rows of anti-aircraft batteries and radar stations which felt their way through the skies with magic rays from their weird antennas. This was a Pearl Harbor for men to remember, just as that other Pearl Harbor is one that the world will not forget.

On December 7th, 1941, this had been the Navy's front-line post in the Pacific. Now Pearl Harbor was a staging base, 3,000 miles from the nearest Jap in arms. Big Ben and America had traveled a long way but the hardest journey still lay ahead.

Here the passengers debarked to go their various ways, after a four-day trip which would have taken much longer by even the fastest transport then plowing the Pacific. The planes of Air Group Thirteen had been flown to Puuneme, but the next morning the *Franklin* and her destroyer escort put to sea to refresh the fliers in night landings, the most delicate operation which carrier personnel must master. Two tiny rows of light on her flight deck, visible only from astern, were there to guide in the planes; coordination



The boys of "Pop" Wright's S-Two Division were serious about the war and in dead-earnest about their religion.

that would make a micrometer look like a steam shovel was necessary to success — perfect harmony in the movements of pilot, plane, fighter director, and the big ship herself.

Even the episode of "Willy" could not slow down these final preparations. It was on this cruise that "Red" Harris discovered among his plane-pushers a huge colored boy, sweating as only a colored boy can; doing as much work as any man on the ship and obviously enjoying it more than twice as much. It was an odd sight, but "Red" passed it off with a shrug, thinking that one of the steward mates had come up for fresh air and exercise, curious as the latter seemed.

Willy became known all over the ship. Below the third deck he labored tremendously with the engineers; on the hangar deck he fell in with working parties and joined willingly into any toil. Willy was taken for granted as a part—some part—of the crew, for no man arises to question another man who is working hard and seeming to love it. One day, however:

"Mistuh Wright, Ah'd lak to get paid five dollars, suh." This to Lt. "Pop" Wright, harrassed mess manager, who saw in Willy just another of the 150 Negro boys of his S-Two Division. "Pop" signed the request, as did Lt. Comdr. Paul Speer, aide to the executive officer, merely as a matter of adding to "Pop's" endorsement, and hardly looking up from his desk.

Paymaster Jess Albritton, however, had to be a trifle more technical about these matters. He sent to the exec's office for Willy's pay accounts. The exec's office did not have them and a minor squall seemed threatening. Then someone thought to ask Willy about the situation.

"Where'd you come from, boy?"

"Fode Islan', suh."

"Brought your records and pay accounts, didn't you?"

"No use looking for my pay accounts, suh—dey was lost a long time ago."

Then it all came out, in a string of events which will not



Fighters of VF-13 at Puuneme Airfield, Maui, during Big Ben's operations at Pearl Harbor

stand dialect. Willy had not been paid in two months; his clothes had gone the way of the Lucky Bag—Navy Lost and Found Department. So had his bedding. He had been denied liberty—so he had just come aboard Big Ben in his dungarees, to get away from Ford Island and its restrictions, and out into the broader Pacific where he might see what a Jap looked like. He simply wanted five dollars for a few little things such as cigarettes and soap. He was willing to "wuk like Hell."

But it was no soap for Willy; the Naval Regulations, which he did not understand, decreed that he must go back to Ford Island. He was standing on the dock, sad and dejected, when Big Ben, on June 14th, stood out to sea, and to battle.



The Toughest Sailor, "Little Ben," tells the SP (Shore Patrol) where to "head in."



"Willy" wanted to go to war on Big Ben . . ."

CHAPTER FIVE

*"... you won't be hearing from me for a long time now, so don't worry ...
But I gotta go ... there's a fella named Fourroux on Number Five Mount
wants his coffee, and I've had mine ..."*

FIRST ACTION

AN UNDERCURRENT of excitement could be felt as Big Ben slipped out of Pearl Harbor on June 15th. Somewhere, thousands of miles to the westward, the mighty Fifth and Seventh Fleets were gathered for another historic assault on the Empire's defense lines. Hundreds of transports, jammed with hardened, sunburned shock troops of the

Marine Corps and Army slipped into Pearl Harbor for refueling. Silently they left, over the sea and into the setting sun, circled by squadrons of lean, grey destroyers.

America was on the road back! Would the next strike be against mysterious, "impregnable" Truk? The Philippines? The mainland of China? Somewhere a still powerful Im-



S 1/c Fedewa and GM3C Osborne cleaning one of "Big Ben's" five inch guns.

perial Navy rode the high seas; it numbered battleships, carriers, cruisers, dozens of destroyers and submarines in its fleets.

Millions of fanatical yellow troops garrisoned an undefeated Empire. The air force that had sent the *Prince of Wales*, the *Repulse*, the *Arizona*, the *Oklahoma*, the *Lexington*, the *Yorktown*, and scores of other warships to the bottom, still patrolled the skies above Japan and its island fortresses.

Hawaii dropped quickly into the sea. Astern a thousand yards, the new cruiser *Denver* glided along in Big Ben's wake. Old friends, the *Twiggs* and *Leary*, with two other destroyers, tossed and plunged ahead. Shortly after clearing the harbor Comdr. Day spoke to the *Franklin's* officers and the fliers of Air Group Thirteen:

"Gentlemen, on June 15th, (that's today), the Amphibious Forces will land the Second Marine Division and the 27th Army Division on the Japanese island of Saipan, in the Mariannas group. The landings will be supported by the Seventh United States Fleet, Vice Admiral Kinkaid, composed of the battleships *Tennessee*, *West Virginia*, *New Mexico* . . ." the list sounded like a roll call of all the fighting ships of the Navy.

"The Fifth Fleet, Vice Admiral Spruance, consisting of carriers and battleships, in Task Force Fifty-eight, will operate between Saipan and the Philippines, the direction from which the Japs are expected to counter-attack. The Fast Carrier Task Force—of which the *Franklin* will be a unit—will cover the landings and destroy the Imperial Japanese Fleet if the opportunity presents itself. One group of fast carriers will neutralize by bombing the Bonin Islands, of Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima, from which the Japs might send air strength into the Mariannas.

"At last reports, an enemy concentration of six battleships, five carriers, twelve cruisers, and thirty destroyers was assembling in the Philippines and has been sighted by our submarines moving into the Philippine Sea. Make no mistake. We think the Japs are going to come out and fight this time. We are going to be ready for them.

"The *Franklin*, with her escorts, will remain in reserve in the Eniwetok area, as reinforcements, until called upon. *This is it.*"

To the crew of officers and men, to helmsman and lookout, pilot and engineer, this *was* it; the first certain indication of where Big Ben might expect her entry into battle. Of course, the pattern might change, as so often it did change, but here was something more definite than mere scuttlebutt.

On June 17th, the *Franklin* crossed the International Date Line, longitude 180 degrees east. The calendar moved back one day; there were two Sundays in a row. Now the combat air patrol took to the sky; six Hellcat fighters to protect the little task group from a surprise attack.

Big Ben entered the circular lagoon of Eniwetok on June 21st. It was a dreary spot, but one of America's farthest outposts, and had been in Japanese hands only three months before. Torn hulks of Japanese ships, ripped to tatters by American steel and American courage, lay in the anchorage—mute but eloquent tribute to the American boys from all sections of the nation, who had splashed ashore to cut down the fanatical Imperial Marines to the last man. There were

also rusted helmets of American type; rows of lonely white crosses.

Meanwhile, meager and delayed reports of the action on Saipan came in. Marines were hanging on; an Army division was ashore; Jap planes were coming in from Guam to attack the transports as they lay along the beachhead. Then word came that the Japanese Navy was steaming toward the scene. It was the job of Task Force Fifty-eight to see that it never got there.

Four hundred miles from Saipan, the Japanese launched a cloud of dive-bombers and torpedo planes which—the Japs believed—would seal the issue. How Admiral Mitscher's fighters took care of this Oriental dream is a part of history, but Big Ben never got into this First Battle of the Philippine Sea, since the Japanese Navy did one of its famous vanishing acts after Mitscher's men had blasted down its air cover. Big Ben, like a substitute at a football game, was still sitting on the sidelines when orders came on June 29th to break the inaction. The *Franklin* was to join Rear Admiral Ralph E. Davison's Task Group 58.2, bound for Iwo Jima to maintain the enemy airfields and installations in the Bonin Islands inoperative. She was to be in company with the carrier *Wasp*, the light carriers *Monterey* and *Cabot*, all escorted by the cruisers *Boston*, *Canberra*, and *San Juan*, with nine destroyers in the screen.

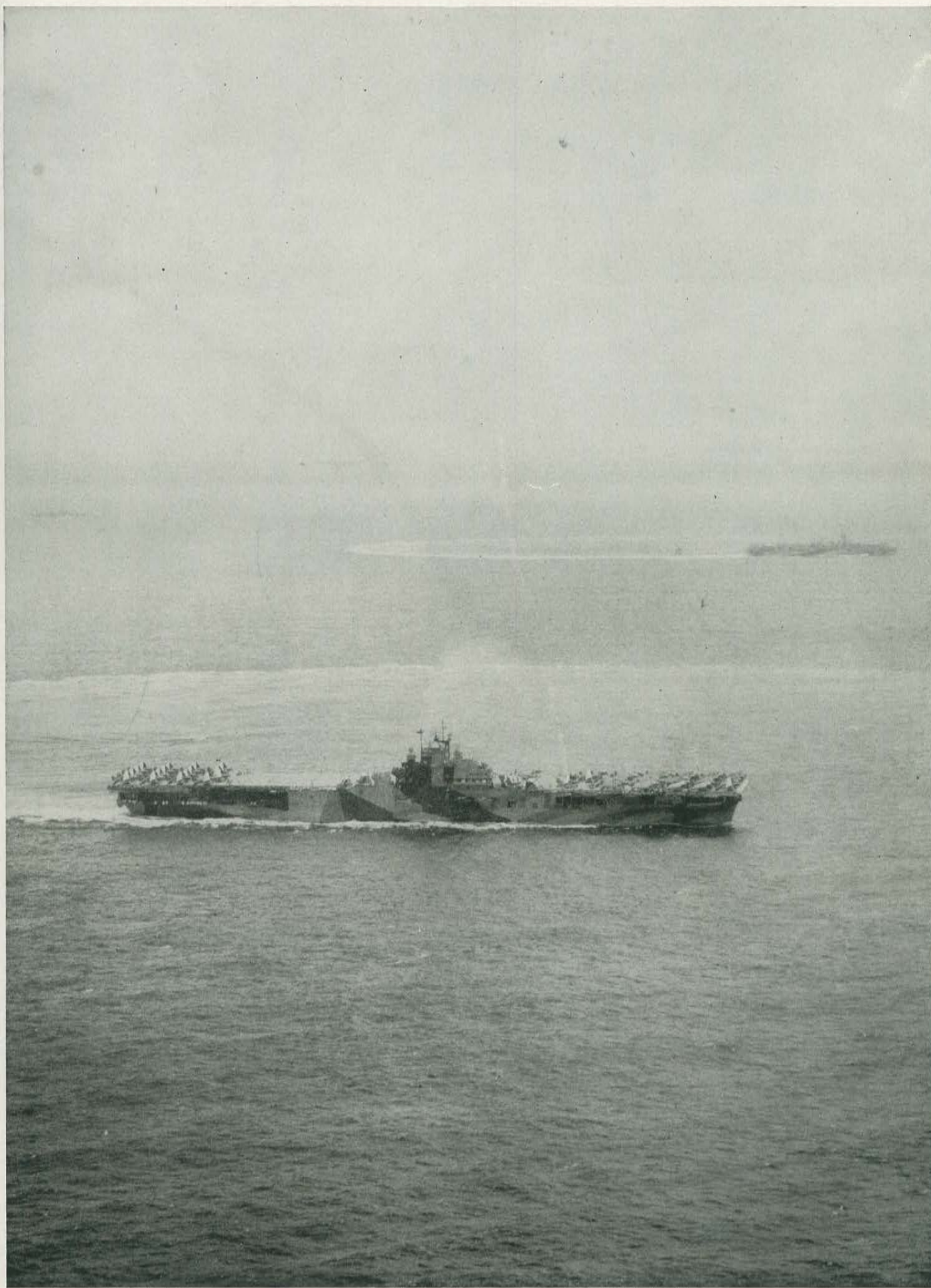
The Bonins, only 600 miles south of Tokyo, were heavily patrolled and guarded. Their airfields were stepping-stones for the squadrons which might be flung into the desperate battle that still raged on Saipan.

By July 1st the task group was steaming through waters constantly patrolled by Jap search planes—"snoopers," as they are called in Navy language. The American combat air patrols were doubled in strength and the radarmen never took their eyes from the screens that might disclose the approach of a "bogey." Since surprise is the essence of a carrier-borne attack, enemy search planes must be spotted and shot down before they could locate the task group and flash a warning to home bases. It was that afternoon when Big Ben's first casualty in combat zones saddened all hands. Lt. Clarence F. "Kelly" Blair, lanky, hard-flying leader of a division of the Thirteenth Air Group, suddenly side-slipped and plunged into the sea as he attempted to land after a patrol. Neither plane nor pilot were seen again.

The task group was only 400 miles from Iwo Jima on July 3rd when a long range Japanese search plane sneaked in low over the formation, dropped two bombs, which narrowly missed a destroyer, and fled. The plane was identified as an "Emily," a name well known to men who fought the Japs. Types of enemy aircraft were designated by girls' or boys' names—thus the Betty, Jack, Jill, Zeke, Frances and dozens of others.

In the afternoon Admiral Davison decided the Japs might be aware of his approaching force and decided to do something about it. Twenty Hellcats from the *Wasp* were flung across the remaining 300 miles to surprise the enemy on the ground and shoot up his planes. The fighters returned at sunset, reporting that they had knocked down a dozen Japs as they were taking off and had damaged many others on the ground.

Through that night the group sped on toward the morn-



Big Ben and the light carrier Monterey make a 180 degree turn to rejoin formation



Pilots of Air Group Thirteen relax in the fighter's ready room . . . tomorrow will be a busy day . . .

ing position. Attacks were to begin at dawn and Captain Shoemaker had promised the crew a Fourth of July celebration with fireworks aplenty at the expense of the little men who did not believe in independence. Bib Ben, named for one of America's greatest leaders, was to see her first action against an enemy of her country on Independence Day!

The captain's promise was fulfilled. All day strikes roared from the flight decks of the four carriers in this concentrated attack on Iwo Jima, Chichi Hima, and Ha Ha Jima. The enemy seemed stricken with paralysis. Hellcats shot down Zeros over their own airfields. Helldivers loosed tons of bombs on gun positions, airfields, hangars and barracks. Avengers roared in low over the coastline, dealing death to shipping with their torpedoes.

Big Ben lost three good men on that flaming Fourth: Lt. (jg) Milton Bonar, from Akron, Ohio, was shot down by Jap flak. His gunner, Albert D. Lowenthal, from Pulaski street in Baltimore, perished with him when the dive-bomber

crashed into the sea. Later in the morning, a damaged Hellcat, missing the wire with its tailhook, crashed the barriers and careened into the island structure. The pilot, Lt. (jg) Davy Jones was seriously injured. Eighteen-year-old, blond Jimmy Mulligan, electrician's mate and movie operator, was struck by the plane and instantly killed.

Throughout the day the force steamed within sight of the islands. It withdrew that night and set a course for Guam, arriving off the northeast coast of that Jap-held island on the morning of July 6th.

Guam was one of the four major Japanese bases in the Mariannas. Saipan, the main base, writhed helplessly as its garrison slowly died at the hands of American soldiers and Marines. Rota, Tinian and Guam remained. They must be pounded to impotency from the air, their swarms of planes destroyed, their garrisons prevented from aiding doomed Saipan. On "William Day," July 21st, Guam itself would be invaded. Then, for the first time since December

Lt. Willy Gove cuts his birthday cake





Bombers from Big Ben gave the Japs on Guam lots of headaches

10th, 1941, free, fighting American troops would walk again on the soil of that island; would redeem the flag that had been trampled there in the dust.

The afternoon of arrival, sixteen Hellcats from Big Ben, each armed with six rockets and six 50-caliber machine guns, went in for the preliminary kill over Guam's Orote peninsula. Here were barracks for thousands of Jap troops, supply dumps, ammunition stores, gun emplacements, an airfield. Flak was moderate at first, but increased heavily as the attack progressed. Again and again the Hellcats thundered over the Jap positions, pouring destruction on the enemy, starting dozens of fires, silencing guns, blasting buildings.

It was during this assault that Lt. Willy Gove, leading his division, pulled out of formation with his engine streaming ominous smoke. He glided his Hellcat into a water crash landing, two miles off-shore, near Point Ritidan, almost directly under the muzzles of Jap batteries. Dark was fast approaching. Ens. Roger L'Estrange, his wingman, carefully noted the position of the crash.

Back on Big Ben that night, Navigator Benny Moore and Lt. Walter Levering, Intelligence Officer, worked far into the night computing the exact drift the downed officer's raft would take. Half an hour before dawn, four fighters, led by "Sunshine" Howerton, flew to the computed position with two seaplanes from the cruiser *Boston*—hoping for the best. Within fifteen minutes Gove was located almost exactly where Benny Moore had scientifically prophesied, twelve miles west of where he had crashed. Conscientious, friendly, faithful, Will Gove lived to strike many another telling blow at the enemy.

On July 13th, photographers discovered a concealed ammunition dump on Orote; the following day thirty-five of *Franklin's* planes blew it to kingdom-come, smothering the surrounding gun positions with their own fire. Troop concentrations near Agana, Rota Island's airfield, and radio stations—all of these felt the punishing blows of Big Ben's flying arm.

Until July 17th *Franklin's* fliers continued to attack the defenses of Guam; the boatyard at Piti Town, the airfield at Orote, bridges on vital roadways near Taloforo and Togcha Bays.

On one of these embattled days, before dawn, a group of Japanese planes rose from one of Guam's torn airfields to seek out the task group. Radar spotted them. Big Ben's fighter directors, collaborating with a combat air patrol from the carrier *San Jacinto*, made a perfect interception thirty miles away. Four Oscar fighters and six twin-engined Betty bombers of the Japs were splashed in flames. Long after, intelligence officers learned that those last Japanese planes to leave Guam were carrying high Japanese officers, trying to flee the doomed island stronghold.

All was not triumphant shouting. On July 16th, during the pre-dawn warm-up of planes for the day's first strike, in treacherous half-light, Jim Smiley, seaman first class and a plane captain, was struck by a whirling propeller—one of the countless hazards always threatening the men on a carrier's flight deck. His shipmates buried him at sea. Death was breathing on the necks of Big Ben's men and fliers.

All was not tragedy either. Routine "general quarters" sounded one morning an hour before sunrise, and every man began to grope his way to his battle station. Doctor James

Moy was hurrying to his post on the flight deck when suddenly, he decided it would be an excellent idea to proceed by a new and untried route. He wished to familiarize himself with the ship. Groping forward on the flight deck, he pressed on through the darkness—pressed on until he dropped headlong into the black Pacific, sixty feet below. Coming to the surface, after endless seconds, he began tooting the whistle which every man on Big Ben had been issued for just such an emergency. "Man overboard, port side," blared the loudspeakers. Eyes strained to pick out the struggling victim in the water and darkness but only a faint despairing wail of the whistle marked the spot as Big Ben sped on at twenty knots. Doctor Fuelling, Moy's fellow medico at the battle station, remarked, "these darn seamen. Always walking in their sleep."

Fortunately Dr. Moy could swim strongly. Bemoaning the trick of fate that caught him with his life jacket still stowed at his battle station, he buttoned his collar and inflated his shirt to stay afloat. An hour later, a destroyer picked him up and he was back on Big Ben in time for breakfast—adorned already with a nickname he was never

to lose: "Wrong-way" Moy. Yet the chance of his escape had been narrow. Three months later Felix C. Cerra, seaman first class, of Carbondale, Pa., fell overboard in similar circumstances, but could not be located.

Almost every plane on Big Ben flew at least two missions on July 19th—177 sorties for 90 planes. Every plane that would fly took the air against that battered island of Guam. They rained incendiaries on the last standing buildings; they strafed everything that moved on the roads. The enemy opened up with the concealed batteries he had saved for an emergency. For this, the Jap seemed to decide, was an emergency, if ever one was to occur. These batteries took their toll. Damaged planes limped home after every strike. Ens. Nick Smith, engine dead and aileron shot away, crashed ahead of a screening destroyer; Lt. (jg) Raymond B. Cook, with a huge hole in his right wing and his stabilizer in ribbons, made a miraculous landing on deck which could have meant death to any pilot.

July 21st was William Day—the day of Guam's invasion. At 8:30 that morning a hundred transports and LST's stood off the beaches by Orote. A thousand landing craft, jammed



Lt. Comdr. James Moy comes home to Big Ben, after a swim before breakfast



William Day! The invasion beach as it looked to Big Ben's pilots on July 21st . . . Troops and tanks are ashore.

with American youth, headed in waves toward the shore. Three hundred dive-bombers and torpedo planes were exploding destruction on Japanese lines, a thousand yards from the beaches. As the first landing barges grounded and the troops began to pour ashore, the Japs opened up. But a special strike squadron from every carrier in the force had been waiting for just this. Now those Hellcats and Hell-divers stormed down on enemy trenches, on mortars, on mobile artillery and on tanks, enshrouding them with lead and explosives. By 10 a. m. the first wave of troops was a mile inland and the tanks were coming ashore.

Throughout the day the captain kept *Franklin's* men informed of the invasion's progress. Army officers, who had expressed themselves as uneasy, a few hours before, were now filling the radio with such fervent remarks as "Your support of landing well timed and effective" . . . Heavy air strikes during the last four days and especially today have left nothing to be desired." There were few spoken words among the men of Big Ben about what had gone on; "Mech" looked at plane captain, engineer looked at gunner, and grinned. But here the feeling was born that Big Ben was earning her place as a fighting unit to be classed with the best.

The day after the invasion of Guam, Big Ben distributed her last bombs in two final strikes by Air Group Thirteen and set her course for Saipan, where Japanese and Marines were still locked in a struggle to the death. At sunset, *Franklin* anchored in the open roadstead off Saipan, disdainful of the nearby enemy, to go through the ordeal of loading bombs and rockets from a supply ship in a tossing sea. Throughout the night artillery flashed on Tinian, six miles away, and flares lit the mountains of Saipan. By 6:30 a. m. more than a hundred tons of bombs and rockets were aboard. Three minutes after the last bomb touched the deck, Big Ben weighed anchor and was bound south with the task group to meet the tanker fleet and refuel at sea.

Task Group 58.2 was now joined by the two other task groups which had assisted in the leveling of Guam. As Task Force 58, without any decimal points, the merged groups became a fleet which could sink any navy in the world. Westward and south it steamed, for the islands of the Palau Group. The words in the air for weeks had been: "Next the Philippines," but the key islands in the Palau chain must be conquered as bases before that invasion could be attempted. This cruise, the mission of Task Force Fifty-eight was primarily reconnaissance, secondarily the destruction of enemy aircraft, shipping and installations. Big Ben had been assigned a full share of all objectives.

On July 25th, *Franklin's* flying fighters were swarming all over the islands of Babelthaup, Koror, Arakabesan and Malakal. Three enemy planes were knocked down; the airstrip at Babelthaup was demolished; a small oiler, a lugger, and a cargo ship were sunk. Ens. J. J. "Jimmy" Langford, Jr., in his Hellcat, made a photographic run over Babelthaup which won him the Distinguished Flying Cross. Five times, on a straight course, at one thousand feet and through intense flak, he roared across that island to accomplish his mission.

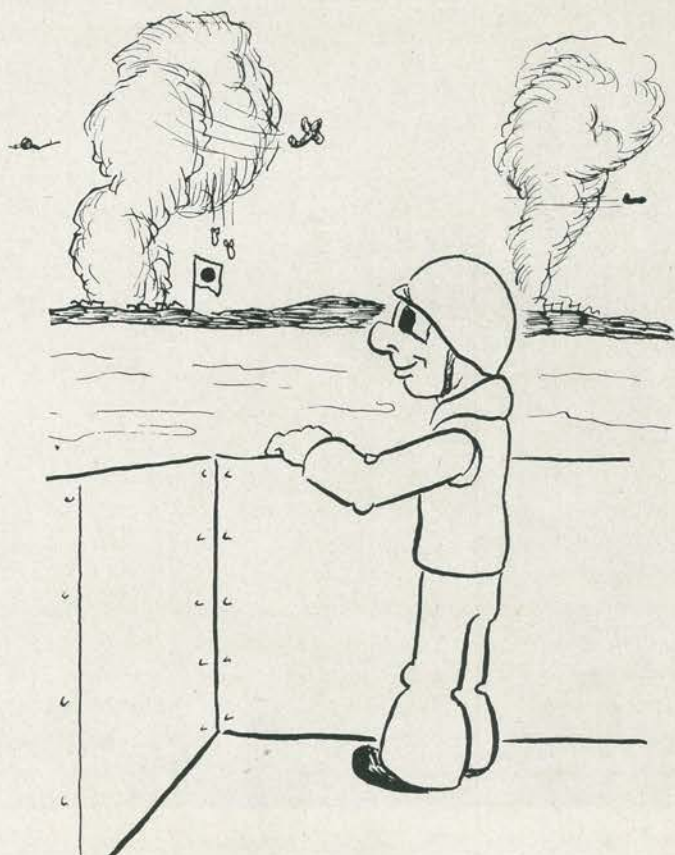
During the next two days nearly two hundred and fifty combat and photographic sorties were flown from Big Ben.

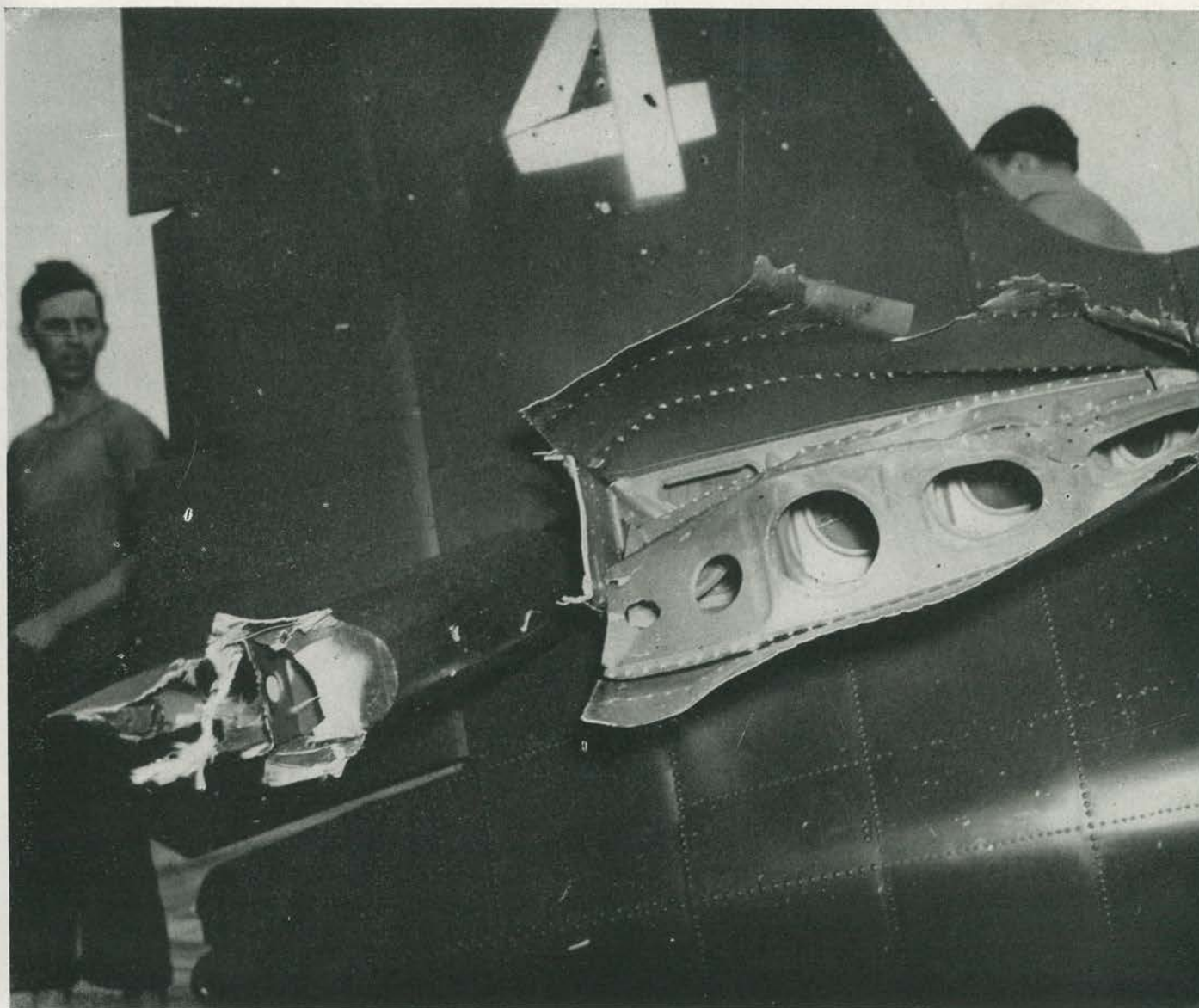
Two bombers were lost in combat but their crews were saved. Two fighters were lost, and Ens. Robert H. Martin, of Rutherford, N. J., died in one of them as he crashed into the sea while landing. The other pilot was saved.

The mission accomplished, the task force swung eastward on July 28th, then north on a course to Saipan.

Captain Shoemaker had a message of appreciation for the crew. In the *FRANKLIN FORUM*, he reminded his men that he had told them in Newport they would be in the Pacific war with Big Ben in six months. He was proud that Big Ben was here, proven ready for battle, carrying out the same assignments as veteran carriers, and equally well. Proud too, he was, of Big Ben's offensive weapon, its super-long-range battery, Air Group Thirteen. But, to quote him verbatim, "without a smart, efficient ship, the air group would be impotent—unable to show its high quality; and without a highly competent air group the most experienced carrier would be ineffective. That is why I have repeatedly stated that none of us in the *Franklin* has a non-essential job, because the bombs and the bullets that the airplanes carry won't hit the Japs with scheduled regularity unless all hands carry out our duties with courage and determination. As your commanding officer, I want you to know you have all lived up to my greatest expectations and that, come what may, I have complete confidence in you . . ."

The *Franklin* already had another assigned mission when Task Group 58.2 arrived off Saipan and dropped anchor in Garapan Roadstead August 1st to take aboard bombs, rockets and fuel. She would join Rear Admiral J. J. "Jocko" Clark's Task Group 58.1 and proceed to Iwo Jima to destroy enemy aircraft and shipping in the vicinity of the Bonin Islands, which must be kept ineffective if the invasion of the Marianas was to proceed successfully.





This damaged Hellcat came back from Chichi Jima August 5th, a tribute to the American workmen who built it and to the American boy who flew it . . . Lt. (jg) Joseph Wiedman

Weather at the anchorage was foul, but forty sacks of mail from home did manage to come aboard. Now, after weeks of waiting, Ed Pyktel, S2c, would find out whether or not he was father of twins; and Durrance, CSF; Hasiuk, S1c; Messick, S2c; Lange, ACMM; Ellis, MM2; Meade, CMM; Harvey, EM3c; Russell, SK2c; Rose, EM3c; Pay Clerk Fowler and Lt. D. S. Smith all awaited mail call for a favorable report on the boys they were expecting.

Meade and Messick alone drew girls, but their relief was just as apparent, their smiles were just as high, wide and handsome, and their delivery of cigars just as graceful and earnest as the other chest-expanding papas.

Now came the mission, after the weather had cleared and loading was completed. Big Ben joined her comrades: the carrier *Hornet*, flagship; the light carrier *Cabot*; the cruisers *Santa Fe*, *Mobile*, *Biloxi* and *Oakland*. In the screen steamed twelve destroyers; valiant workhorses of the fleet, deserving more than honorable mention. The *Mauray*, *Craven*, *Gridley*, *Helm*, *McCall*; *Izard*, *Cahrette*, *Bell*, *Burns*, *Boyd*, *Bradford* and *Brown* filled the dangerous stations on the outer circle.

The force sped for the Bonins, and for the second time within a month, enemy search planes failed to detect a powerful carrier force approaching the islands. At 9:30 the morning of August 4th, a powerful fighter sweep again surprised the Japs, prowled about on reconnaissance, strafed shipping and airfields, played havoc in general, mostly without effective opposition. A Japanese convoy of five large cargo vessels, eight to ten barges and luggers, with an escort of four or five destroyers, was discovered steaming northward for the mainland of Japan, near the island of Ototo Jima. There were also seven or eight large cargo ships in the harbor of Futami Ko, at Chichi Jima. A light cruiser was underway, leaving the harbor.

Thirty-five of Big Ben's planes took immediate flight and tore into the cruiser and the ships in the harbor. Ens. Jack Kehoe registered a damaging hit on the cruiser's bridge, despite the vessel's frantic defensive maneuvers. Other vessels were left burning.

Hurriedly twenty more planes, half of them dive-bombers, thundered from Big Ben's flight deck in swift pursuit of the



August 5th, 1944 . . . It cost American lives to destroy these Japanese ships in Chichi Jima Harbor

convoy, but only one bomb hit was registered on this flight.

At 4 p. m. a third strike of forty planes went out, determined to draw blood. This attack was well-planned and perfectly coordinated. The fighters strafed three destroyers, two of which blew up and sank. The third stopped dead in the water, on fire. The dive-bombers left two cargo ships burning. Nine torpedo planes attacked and registered nine hits out of nine torpedoes dropped. Four big cargo ships sank beneath the waves.

Flying conditions were bad, making further flights too hazardous. During the night cruisers and destroyers of *Franklin's* screen raced ahead and finished off the convoy. Of 18 to 20 Japanese ships, only one old-type destroyer may have escaped.

Though it had been a bad day for the enemy, there were several sadly empty seats at Big Ben's mess tables that night. Ens. Roger W. L'Estrange, the laughing boy whose brother was a major of Marines fighting on Guam, crashed in the ocean after his Hellcat had been struck by flak from the Japanese destroyers. Lt. Ancil C. Hudson, who had left his wife and year-old daughter in Kentucky, failed to return from the last strike. The right wing of his Hellcat was blown off by flak and the plane dove into the sea.

Six strikes were scheduled against Chichi Jima for August 5th, a day that brought dismal flying weather. At dawn, twenty-five Hellcats, Helldivers and Avengers took off from the rain-drenched flight deck. They left three cargo ships sinking in the harbor and strafed another, ten miles to the west. A special search group that day, flying toward Japan, 500 miles north, located new targets. Comdr. Dick Kibbe, in his Helldiver, escorted by Ens. R. F. "Moose" Bridge, in his Grumman, met and bracketed a "Betty" bomber, 240 miles from Tokyo, and shot it down. Returning, this pair also sank three landing craft, bearing troops from Japan to Iwo Jima. The radio station on Muko Island was knocked out by another team.

But two of Big Ben's planes did not return. Lt. Comdr. C. B. Holstrom, from Washington state, a graduate of An-

napolis and the executive officer of his squadron, together with his gunner, Walter J. Brooks, Jr., from 41st street, in New York, were plunged in their Helldiver into Chichi Jima Harbor by AA fire. Lt. (jg) H. F. McCue's torpedo plane, with aircrewmembers Hevey and Robinette aboard, crash-landed in the sea after being hit by flak. The words "missing in action" were written alongside the names of these shipmates, although covering fighters reported that a rescue submarine had headed in their direction. Nearly two months later Lt. McCue was returned aboard. But Walter D. Hevey, a Yankee from the hills of North Attleboro, Mass., and his comrade, Ralph T. Robinette, a lad with the Southern drawl of North Carolina, died in action that day.

Heavy weather made further flights impracticable so the task group set its course southward for Eniwetok. Three small Japanese vessels blundered into the force through the fog. Two destroyers of the screen took them under fire and they sank at once, hardly a mile from Big Ben. No prisoners were obtained.

In the afternoon an "Emily" was chased in the direction of the formation by the combat air patrol. As the Jap came out of the clouds Big Ben's gunners, and every gun in the fleet, opened up. Due to poor visibility some gun crews were firing at one of the friendly fighters. In the confusion the Jap fled into the clouds and the Hellcat crashed in the sea. Happily the pilot was soon rescued, uninjured, and a few minutes later the Emily was shot down by an alerted plane of the air patrol.

Early in the morning of August 8th, the task group arrived in Eniwetok lagoon, after more than a month of combat operations. Big Ben, along with the other carriers, cruisers and destroyers of the group, received this climactic dispatch from Admiral Clark:

"We are at the end of a long and arduous cruise. In the campaign of the Mariannas many damaging blows have been struck at the enemy. It is with great pride that I can tabulate the record of the Task Group 58.1 as having contributed its full share. To all hands: Well Done!"



" . . . Guam was a push-over, I guess—except there's a lot of Marines who will be staying there. We're a fighting ship now; our planes have made the Japs plenty mad. Tokyo Rose has had us sunk four times; we've even had a "Well Done" from our allies, the Army!

Now we have another side trip to make back to Iwo, then an excursion planned for Palau, then a stop-over at Yap . . . and then . . . I'm due for a haircut on the equator!"

BIG BEN'S WAR IN THE CAROLINES

ENIWETOK'S ANCHORAGE was a sight every good American should have seen. A thousand men of war were anchored in its wide blue basin. Half a dozen heavy carriers, as many more light carriers, divisions of battleships and cruisers, transports, destroyers, and ships of the train contributed to this nautical beehive; a constant interweaving stream of boats plied the water on ship's business.

Now, at last, there was time to overhaul Big Ben's hard-

worked equipment. It was a busy time for engineers, radio technicians, gunners, electricians, mechanics, fire controlmen. The planes of Air Group Thirteen had been landed on the island and were being serviced there by their own mechanics. Badly damaged and missing aircraft were replaced from the pool of new and refitted planes. The supply department was restocking from the Service Force's supply barges. The few repairs which could not be made

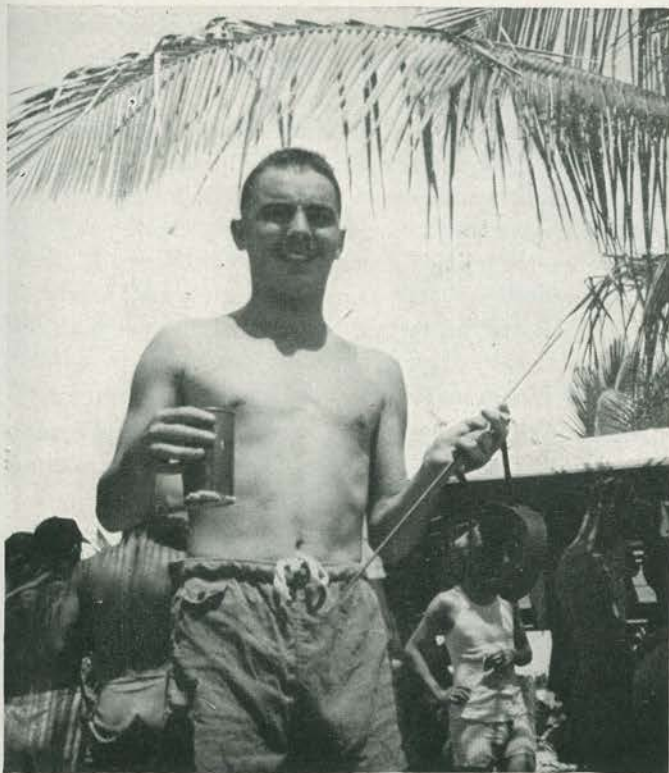


Men of Big Ben and other ships of the Fleet on the beach at Runit Island, Eniwetok. In the background is a wrecked Japanese ammunition ship. American warships are anchored in the lagoon

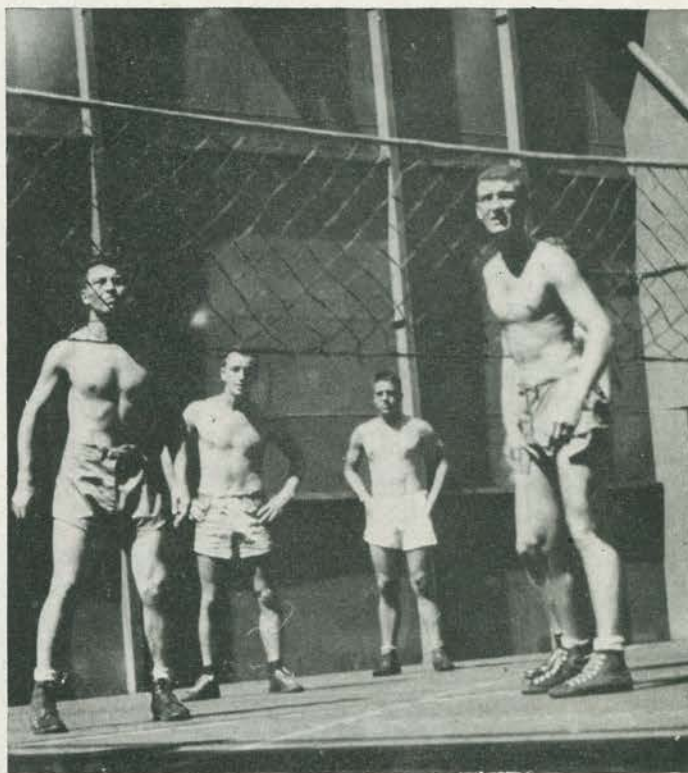


*Commander Henry H. Hale, Navigator
 27 August '44-21 Decemb - '44, Air Officer
 21 December '44-30 June '45, Commanding
 Officer 1 July '45-8 June '46.*





Three more cans of beer to go! Lt. (jg) Robert F. Brooks, of Fighting 13, enjoys one . . . Lt. Brooks was lost in October, over Leyte



The plane elevator pit made a good volley-ball court



The steward's mates of S-Two Division could play championship basketball . . . but V-Five's team won the tourney

by the ship's own crew were made by repair ships, those floating machine shops which were anchored only a few thousand yards from Big Ben.

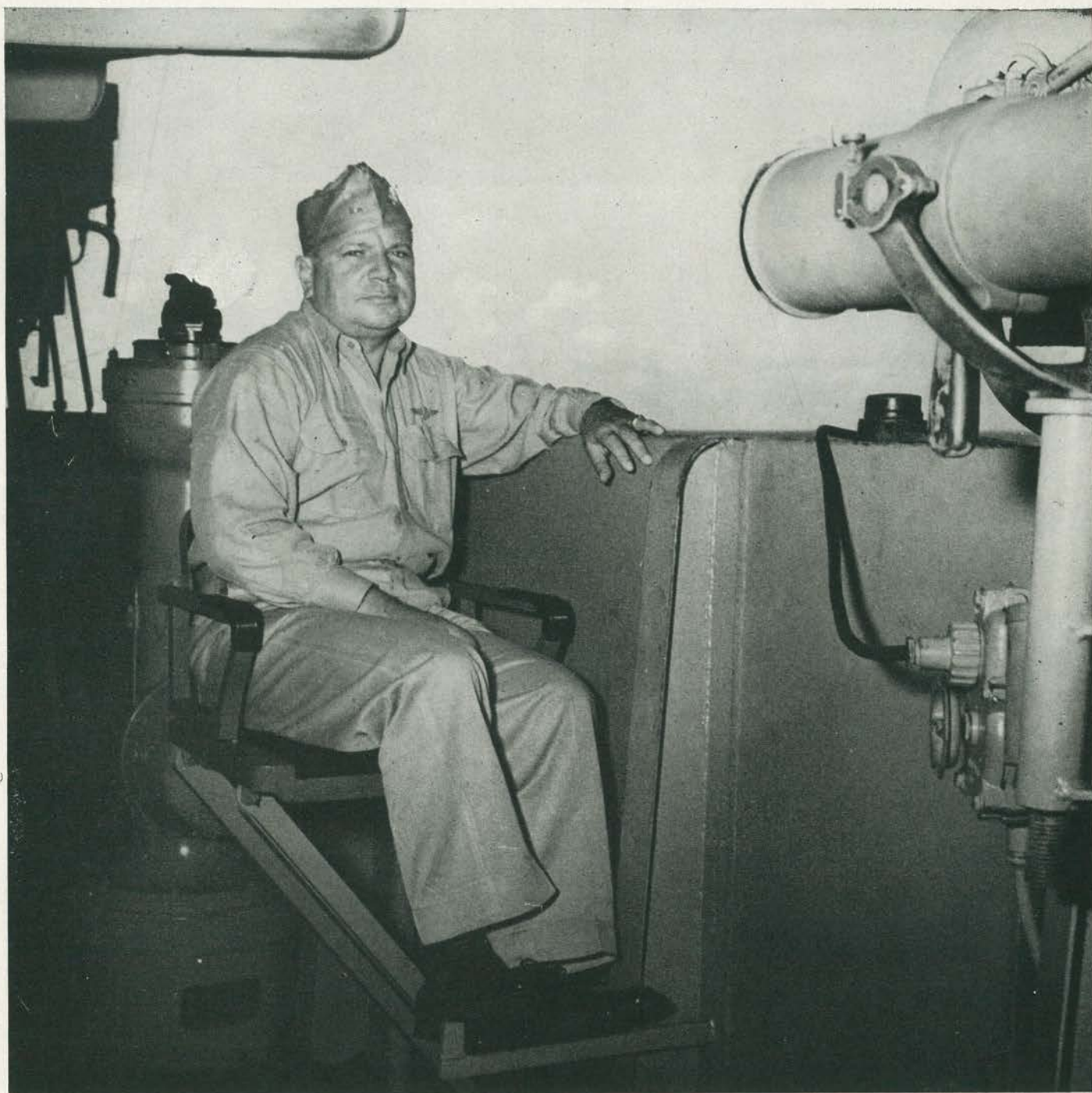
There was shore leave each afternoon when several hundred men from each ship were loaded on landing craft and deposited on the white coral sand of Runit Island—with their beer supply, four cans to a man. Four cans of beer under a palm tree, a smooth white beach, these were reminders of things to be enjoyed when the war was over.

And when the war *would* be over was a favorite topic of conversation during this rest at Eniwetok. Baseball, medicine ball tossing, volleyball, even football, within obvious limitations, took place on the flight deck. A first-rate basketball tournament was held on the bangar deck, with all di-

visions entering a team. It was won by the V-Five Ordnance men, who trounced the S-Two Division in the finals.

Franklin became task group flagship on August 12th, 1944, when Rear Admiral Davison hoisted his two-starred flag aboard. All hands came to admire and respect this strong, sincere gentleman, who had little to say at most times, but was always on the Flag Bridge in the thick of action when the going was rough. Comdr. Henry H. Hale, U. S. N., reported aboard from the *San Jacinto*, where he had been Air Officer, to take the post of Navigator on Big Ben when Comdr. Day received his promotion to Captain and Benny Moore moved up to the Executive Officer's spot.

The days slipped by, until August 21st, as the *Franklin* was preparing to shove off the following dawn, Arthur



Rear Admiral Ralph E. Davison, U. S. N., on Franklin's flagbridge

Klastersky, S2c, a torpedo plane captain, found himself marooned after a friendly visit to a ship about a mile away from Big Ben's towering bulk. No boat was available to bring him back home, but Arthur, a 19-year-old New Yorker, had no idea of being left behind. He climbed down his host ship's anchor chain and his pal tossed him a life jacket. Off for Big Ben he went through the dark waters, struggling against both wind and tide, and a half hour later he reached the *Franklin* — and none too soon, because his life jacket had begun to lose its buoyancy.

Big Ben steamed out 50 miles east of the lagoon, for two days' gunnery practice, came back for a load of bombs and ammunition. On August 27th, as Task Group 38.4, Rear Admiral Davison in the *Franklin*, with carriers *Enterprise*,

Belleau Wood and *San Jacinto*, got underway for much-bombed Iwo Jima, escorted by the cruisers *Biolixi* and *New Orleans*. The circular screen held the destroyers *Maury*, *Craven*, *Gridley*, *McCall*, *Mugford*, *Ralph Talbott*, *Patterson*, *Bailey*, *Wilkes*, *Micholson* and *Swanson*. This was the third time in three months that Big Ben and her comrades had paid a call on the Jap in his closely guarded home waters. Surely this time he would be ready.

But on September 1st the warplanes thundered in on the island redoubts, undetected. Pillars of smoke again rose to the sky from blazing Jap shipping, hangars and barracks. Once more a force of cruisers and destroyers moved in and pounded the harbors and coast until the very rocks flew into the air. Again the fast carrier task force slipped away



Comdr. Richard L. Kibbe, USN, of the divebombers, became Commander of Air Group 13 on August 12, when "Sunshine" Howerton was called to other duty



Big Ben's Bombers have pinpointed their objectives on Iwo Jima

after two days of furious assault, unchecked and unharmed.

This time Big Ben carried with her two unwilling strangers; Japanese naval prisoners of war who had been picked up by a destroyer from a blasted ship. Fearful and hesitant, they were brought aboard in a breeches buoy, much as Dr. Moy had returned to the ship. As Chief Gregg led them down the flight deck through the groups of curious blue-jackets the Japs glanced once at the many Nipponese flags painted on the island structure, then passed along with bowed heads. Their first question to Tom Young, radarman,

who interpreted their language, was: "When will we be done away with, please?"

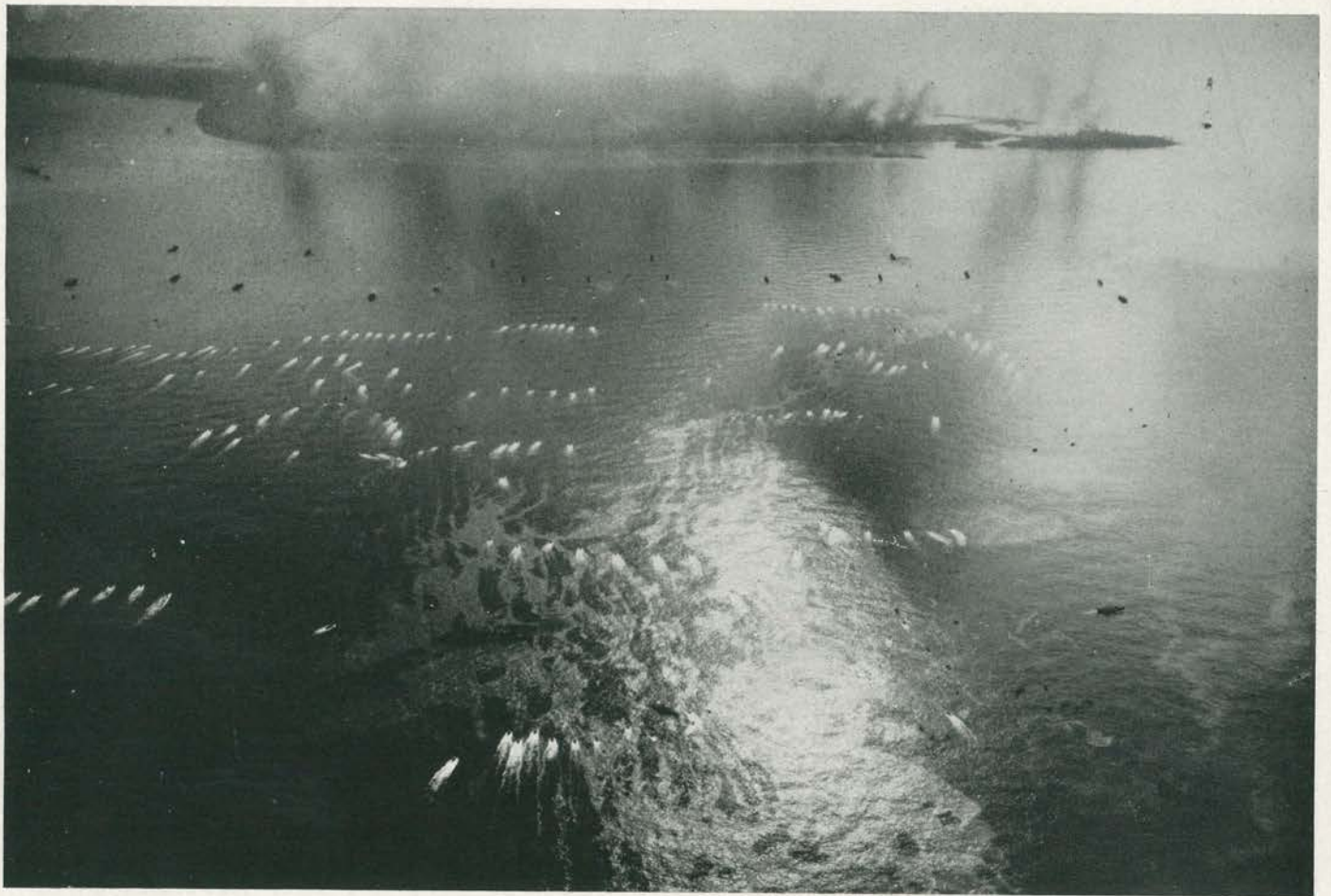
Enemy planes buzzed through the night as the task group steamed south. Two Emilys, closing from the northward, flying 75 miles apart, were detected by the radar. Without hesitation, two night fighters were catapulted from Big Ben's deck. Lt. Tony Martin, veteran Jap killer, and Lt. (jg) Warren Wolf, flew out to meet the Japanese "Sandman." In CIC, Lt. John Wineger stationed Tony and Warren in the path of one on-rushing Jap. Warren made the



There wasn't much left to do on Yap after the Thirteenth finished . . .



Big Ben's bombs explode on Peleliu



A few minutes before "H" hour, following a coordinated bombing strike, Peleliu looked like this



A few minutes after "H" hour; already American landing craft blaze on the beach, as one of Big Ben's Hellcats swoops down to give an "assist"

first pass but lost contact in the darkness as the Nip became suspicious and took an evasive twist that landed him smack in Tony's orbit. A master night fighter on his trail, the Jap did everything in the book to escape, but to no avail. Relentlessly, on the radar screens, the two dots closed together.

Somewhere, out in the black night, high over the sullen Pacific, a Hellcat fighter was grimly closing the yards to a careening, twisting Emily, with ten scared Japs aboard. "Contact" came the words, low but ominous, on the radio. Moments dragged by, until: "Splash one Emily," came Tony's voice, barely audible above the static.

Elation surged through the dozen of radarmen and plotting officers. John Wineger grinned with pride for his "night chick," Tony. Men on the radars rubbed their strained, sleepy eyes and sucked hard on their cigarettes. They had joined in the kill, just as surely as had Tony. "Guess we ought to paint four meatballs on this old piece of gear, eh boys?" Vergil C. "Hiram" Johnson, radarman second class, kidded Johnny Ninos and Albert Hallman, two of the lads who had been passing in the bearings, fast and true. Even Bob Froehly, quiet, efficient senior radio technician, wore a smile of triumph.

The other Jap had passed to the southward, but he soon reappeared on the screen. The night fighters swept out, unseen and deadly. Again ten Japanese airmen took the final plunge as their Emily fell two miles down to the sea.

The task group turned southwest on September 3rd, after refueling at sea, for the next mission: to assault and neutralize the important Japanese bases of Yap, Ulithi and Palau, then to make a scouting thrust at the island of Ngulu.

The three-day attack on Yap, in the Caroline Group, began September 6th, when eighteen rocket-blasting Hellcats flared down on the startled Japanese. The next day, beginning with a sixteen-plane fighter sweep, three whole deckloads of planes, ninety in all, even the combat air patrol, roared in to tear the island's defenses to shreds. On the 8th only sixteen planes were needed to take care of unfinished business and to bring back photographs of every corner and cove.

Big Ben lost only one plane during this operation. Ens. Slingerland was shot down as he made a low strafing run along the beach but he made a good water landing. After spending the night in his rubber boat he was spotted the next morning seventeen miles south of the island by Lt. Comdr. Coleman on a special search. He was rescued by a destroyer.

The advance word was that the U. S. Marines would invade Peleliu Island in the Carolines — of which Palau Group was a part — on September 15. Big Ben and the rest of Task Group 38.4 were to provide air support for this operation and give cover for the troops after they had landed. To be ready for this mission the group turned south from Yap and headed for the Palau Islands on September 9th.

Starting the attack with a fighter sweep of twelve Hellcats at dawn the next day, Big Ben was to launch five flight deckloads, 150 planes, every day for a week, through the 16th, the day after Peleliu's invasion. A total of 256 tons of bombs were dropped to aid in destruction of Japanese defenses or in direct support of the infantry.

The first fighter sweep ran into intense and accurate flak. The Japanese were not using tracer fire, making the AA difficult to dodge. Ens. Norman Drouin and Ens. Paul Rene Parent, both Frenchmen from the hills of New Hampshire, went down on Peleliu in flames and were not seen to bail out. They were reported missing in action.

After this bad start, no more planes were lost in the campaign by enemy action, for the strafing, rocket-firing and bombing dwindled the enemy anti-aircraft fire to a few desultory machine gun bursts and rifle shots from the crushed Jap troops. On the 11th, however, there was enough enemy flak to strike the wing of Ens. Kehoe's Helldiver with such effect that it appeared the plane would crash. Kehoe ordered his gunner, Abner "Red" Harris, to bail out over a rescue submarine. He then decided that he might be able to save his plane. He brought her back to Big Ben, and though his landing gear collapsed when the plane touched the deck, no damage was done the ship and every intact part of the aircraft was salvaged. Good flying! Abner Harris returned aboard Big Ben seven weeks later, none the worse for his experience.

On the night of September 12th, *Franklin's* most costly operational accident occurred. A twilight patrol of four night fighters had been ordered to patrol Peleliu Island against the chance the Japs might salvage one of their smashed aircraft and attempt to fly some of their senior officers from the scene of impending invasion. The weather was rainy and visibility poor. At patrol's end, three planes landed safely but the fourth came in too far over the flight deck and crashed among the thirty planes parked ahead of the last barrier. No one was injured; fire did not break out, but five planes were demolished and eight others so badly damaged it took several days to repair them.

Just before invasion day, the cruisers and battleships moved in close to the shore and blew the beach defenses to rubble. On the morning of the 15th, waves of assault troops began to move in; although the first waves encountered little difficulty, the Japs soon began to emerge from their caves and foxholes. From the hilly terrain north of the landing strip, artillery, mortars and mobile guns went into action. Wrecked American landing barges were strewn along the beaches. The opposition stiffened so seriously that the invasion of Angaur, scheduled for the next day, was postponed, and Big Ben launched five more deckloads of planes to support the infantrymen on Peleliu.

With supplies low, *Franklin* and her task group refueled at sea on the 17th, before throwing one last support strike to the slogging Marines on the morning of the 18th. Then, with death-flinging bombs and rockets exhausted, Big Ben and her sister ships turned the invasion support over to a fresh task group and stood southeast toward Manus, in the Admiralty Islands—down below the equator.

Franklin was approaching the realm of Neptunus Rex, and preparations for the traditional ceremonies which greet a sailor when he crosses the equator for the first time occupied all the spare time of the "Old Shellbacks." Unfortunately, there is little record to be found of this crossing, save in the pictorial files of Big Ben. On September 21st, 1944, *Franklin* arrived at Manus—with another star on her campaign ribbon.



Lt. "Honest John" Tansey kneels before the Royal Barber



Comdr. Kibbe presides over rites in bomber's ready room



Some brand-new "shellback" Chief Petty Officers; FRONT ROW: Heibel, Neuman; Lotridge; Burkhardt; Hardy; Durrance; Gilmore; BACK ROW: Womack; Coia; Brown; Gjesfle; Mullins; Matzen



The Royal Court: Royal Baby, Lt. Casson; Davy Jones, Ens. Lienen; Mephistocles, Lt. "Red" Harris; Royal Queen, Lt. Newman; Royal Baby, John Whittaker; Chief of Police, Lt. Comdr. Caldwell



A worried "pollywog" is finally brought to bay by Shell-back Hizer and his merry men

"... they're good, alright, but not good enough; we took everything they could throw at us, then threw it right back. I heard "Pee Gee" Minkten say the Coral Sea scrap seemed like a one-ring circus to him now.

"We had some more prisoners aboard; crew of a bomber we shot down. One of them jumped over the side, but swimming was mighty poor that day. I don't know, but when I look at this gang I'm with I wouldn't trade them for all the "banzai" boys in the world. I'd hate to be on the other side..."

IN THE PHILIPPINE SEA

SEADLER BAY, named after the German raider of World War I, is on the large island of Manus, in the Admiralties, and is one of the best harbors in the world. Big Ben, with the warships of Task Group 38.4, anchored there four days. Every moment was used to advantage, taking aboard fuel, food, and a cargo of explosive consigned to the Japanese.

This was September, 1944, and Manus was being developed into a springboard for the battle-hardened divisions of MacArthur's Sixth Army, a base for amphibious assault. A floating drydock and repair shop that could make emergency repairs to the largest warship were ready for service. The base hospital would accommodate ten thousand wound-



Murderer's Row, they called it . . . Manus Harbor, with six big Essex class flattops anchored there



An Avenger takes a wave-off . . .

ed; the fueling depot could fill a fleet's oil tanks; modern piers were flanked by warehouses on the jungle's edge.

A huge recreation park was waiting for the men of the fleet, and the beer ration was limited only by the five hours allowed to consume it. Saxie Dowell's band, at home under the eucalyptus trees and alien sky, made many new friends as Big Ben's men mingled with lads from other ships to swap yarns of battle, meet old shipmates, talk of home.

There were odd reunions—Lt. (jg) Joe Heinrich, one-time Bronx cop, of Fighting Thirteen, met two fliers from other squadrons and in exchanging reminiscences learned that of the twenty-five fledgling pilots who came through Pensacola together three years before, they were the only ones alive. The others had smashed up in operational accidents, or fallen to flak over enemy targets.

At Manus, Comdr. Day received a long-due promotion to the rank of Captain and was detached to command a new escort carrier. Comdr. Benjamin Moore, who had been Navigator since the commissioning, became Executive Officer. Comdr. Day had worked hard to make Big Ben a fine fighting machine; Comdr. Benny Moore was a fitting relief. The L.S.E.—“Little Short Exec,” as he came to be affectionately known, was admired and regarded as a personal friend by



Here too, there was time for a few quiet moments in the library

every man on the ship. Comdr. Hale now became the navigator.

September 24th, 1944, Rear Admiral Davison's task group, with *Franklin* flagship and guide, set its course to the northwest and the Palau group. Ulithi and the key Caroline islands had fallen, though fanatical Japs still hung on at bloody Pelelieu.

The stage was set for a mighty scene in the Pacific drama. Through the air, like the voice of doom, back over the bloody years since dark Bataan, a knell sounded for the treacherous, cruel Japanese: "I shall return . . ." A vision of bearded, gaunt weary men, standing unafraid, wreathed in the last grey smoke of Corregidor's guns, spurred on the avengers. Every man on Big Ben was proud to be there for his part in the Liberation of the Philippines.

To make secure the beachheads that would be established on Leyte the Third Fleet must drive into the strongest bases of the Empire—into the jaws of the heaviest trap the Japs could close. From Okinawa, on the door-sill of Japan, to powerful Formosa, south through Luzon, hundreds of air bases must be crushed into helplessness. The Imperial Navy must be smashed if it tried to interfere.

For a week in the storm-swept seas east of Palau, Big

Ben's group awaited a rendezvous with the two other sections of the Third Fleet. Long range enemy search planes flew out to reconnoiter. The combat air patrol kept the skies ceaselessly, ignoring the hazardous flying weather. One patrol of three fighters flew into a heavy squall; two fighters came through. Hopelessly the search planes scoured the area, but no trace of Lt. Wade H. Winecoff, a country boy from North Carolina, was ever found.

Chasing a "bandit" through the murky night, Lt. Benny Miles, of Medina, N. Y., and his Japanese quarry suddenly disappeared from the radar screens while 60 miles to the southwest, over the stormy, blacked-out ocean. Though John Wineger called tirelessly through the static and search planes combed the area at dawn, no word was ever heard of night fighter Benny Miles nor of the Jap.

After a week of this depressing wait orders came to move northward. On the tail of a typhoon raging toward Formosa and Okinawa, Admiral William Halsey was preparing to take the seven Essex class carriers, the ten light carriers, seven fast battleships, twenty-five cruisers and a hundred destroyers of his Third Fleet into the teeth of Japan's military might and strike the inner bases of the Empire. Nine thousand miles from the Third Fleet's homeland, in waters



Another combat photo from one of Big Ben's planes . . . Okinawa

that lapped the enemy's shores, would be decided an issue which armchair strategists had declared could have but one outcome. Fleet-based aircraft would meet shore-based aircraft, on even terms. This would be no hit-and-run mission. Carriers would slug it out for days with dozens of bases on shore, pitting their hundreds of planes against thousands the enemy had at his instant command. The stakes would be the lives of a half-million soldiers and the fate of an empire.

Admiral Halsey reckoned on the typhoon which would sweep across the enemy coasts a day before Task Force Thirty-eight's warplanes. He knew it would disrupt communications, ground enemy search planes, make detection of the fleet difficult.

On October 9th, 1944, the Third Fleet steamed in three formidable groups 100 miles south of Okinawa's teeming harbor and airfields, 200 miles east of Formosa. The autumn rains and mist of the Central Pacific shrouded the ominous black and slate grey warships. Half a dozen Jap search planes had fallen to the guardian Hellcats without a glimpse of the fleet.

In the afternoon 200 rocket-firing Hellcats climbed from a dozen flight decks and plunged like a bullet at the heart of the Japanese defense — the airfields and hangars.

What the Japanese called their radar failed again. A few bewildered Zeros were shot down over their own airfields, then hell exploded in front of yellow faces as the American fighters thundered in. Hangars were demolished. Dozens of planes were ablaze on as many air-strips. Revetments were strafed. Barracks flamed. When the fighter sweep landed at sunset the disrupted, smoking defense of the island must have been a headache to the frantic Japanese commander.

Nip radios crackled and whined. Air stations on the home island of Kyushu, 350 miles north, looked hastily to their defenses. Squadrons of replacement planes warmed up on fields at Kobe, Nagoya, Nagasaki, Tokyo. Nervous, slant-eyed pilots trooped to their ready rooms.

Up to this time, in their march across the Pacific, the flat-tops had mostly fought the naval aircraft of the Japanese. Now the Imperial Army Air Force, with its swarms of Betty and Judy bombers, its speedy Zeke and Tojo fighters, was the main foe. Heretofore the carriers had assaulted smaller island bases, with a few airfields that could be swiftly crushed. Now the air bases of the Empire were in position to reinforce each other—only the bases close at hand could be effectively neutralized.

Big search planes, Kates and Emilys, squadrons of Betty



Coastal installations ablaze at Okinawa

torpedo bombers, spent the night looking for the Third Fleet. The Japanese radio, Tokyo Rose speaking, made dire predictions of the doom that was about to befall the rash American admirals and their reckless fleet. Night fighters took to the rain-swept sky above the blacked-out warships. Crystal ball gazers, like Lts. "Ad" Poat, Dave Dunlap, Bob Abell, George Cheney, with their hundreds of radarmen, joined with those others of the fleet's big CIC's, and took over the guard. With all guns manned, the fleet waited through the night like a sprawling monster, ready to flare into action with the dawn.

At sunrise hundreds of carrier planes were in the air. Men on the decks of Big Ben, men standing by their guns, men on every warship in the Third Fleet, watched the squadrons thunder off to the west and disappear.

The harbors of Nansei Shota were full of Jap ships, trying desperately to get up steam and escape. Flak guns were furious in their defense. But nothing could stop the thundering low-level attacks of the deadly eagles that had risen from the ashes of Pearl Harbor. Terrific explosions shook the island as ammunition dumps blew up. Walls of flame and smoke marked where fuel depots had stood. Blazing, sinking cargo ships and tankers dotted the harbor. But warbirds were falling, too. Lt. (jg) Joe Heinrich would never tramp his New York beat again. His Hellcat badly holed, he crash-landed at sea and was never located by his searching comrades. Lt. (jg) T. G. Norek, from the midwestern plains, and his gunner, Harry Steele, a Connecticut Yankee, died in their dive-bomber when it roared down through the flak to crash in flames.

By nightfall a thousand bombers, fighters, and torpedo planes from the carriers had pulverized Okinawa and its installations. Many days would pass before dangerous enemy planes could fly from that quarter.

That night, October 10th, the Japanese were out in force, dozens of bombers crossing and re-crossing the task groups. As they passed within range of the warships' guns, hundreds of naval rifles and heavy machine guns would erupt in sheets of flame. Some Jap planes dropped torpedoes, all of which went wide of their mark. Others circled out of gun range, reporting the fleet's position, with Grumman fighters roaring through the darkness in pursuit.

Task Group 38.4, with Big Ben in the lead, fueled at sea October 11th, then launched a blistering fighter sweep at Aparri seaplane base, on Luzon. All the Japanese planes found there were destroyed, along with their hangars. During that night there were few alarms, the Jap scouts seemingly having lost contact. By dawn the task groups were rejoined and the massed air squadrons left a trail of flame and destruction the length and breadth of Formosa, untouched by war before this day. Now the first signs of organized opposition appeared. A hundred Japanese aircraft, flying northward from Luzon to replace Formosa's decimated squadrons, were intercepted 70 miles away by twenty Hellcats of the patrol, guided from Big Ben by fighter director officer Bob Bruning. The Nips hardly put up a fight as the Hellcats ripped into them. For 25 miles the pursuit continued, the Japs dropping one by one as the fight progressed, until the Hellcats had to turn back from over Formosa itself, as their gas became low.

During the day squadrons of Japanese torpedo bombers came speeding out to attack. The cruiser Canberra was torpedoed and lay dead in the water. Few of the Japs returned to tell of this limited success, but on the Nip radio came fantastic claims of dozens of American warships being sent to the bottom. Fifteen carriers, exulted Tokyo Rose, a dozen battleships, had been sunk. 20,000 American sailors were struggling, drowning, in the cold waters off Formosa. The men of Big Ben grinned sardonically as they listened to these weird lies.

All through that day, while the yellow war-lords made their boastful claims, carrier warplanes were heaping fire and destruction on the major bases that dotted Formosa. But Lt. R. J. Weber's Helldiver did not come home to Big Ben that evening. Weber, a Loyola boy, from Chicago and his gunner, James L. Hall, of Augusta, Maine, were killed in action. And Ens. R. F. "Bobby" Jones, 24-year-old redhead from Climax, Ga., with his gunners, Stanley P. Rajza, Wilkesboro, Pa., and Grier P. Osborne, of Peach Bottom, Pa., who had put their Avenger's torpedo squarely in the middle of a big Jap tanker, died when their plane exploded in mid-air. A heavy flak gun had made a direct hit.

And the cruiser *Houston*, struck by a torpedo from a Betty, lay helpless in the water. After a heroic struggle by her crew she was taken in tow, and, with the *Canberra*, was proceeding slowly southward at two knots, with the small but mighty carrier *Cabot* standing guard. The *Houston*, built at Newport News and completed only a week before the *Franklin*, had many a friend on Big Ben.

October 13th, another day of continued heavy blows at the Jap defenses, dawned rainy and foggy, as miserable as the preceding days. But hunting was still good ashore. With the airfields and harbors in ruins, the bombers were directing their attentions to power plants, fuel depots, supply dumps. Thousands of tons of supplies, vital to the enemy war effort, darkened Formosa with a pall of smoke, faggots on the funeral pyre of an infamous nation. These were the signal fires to the hundreds of massed transports and LST's which were sailing from Manus, destination: the Philippines. But two more of Big Ben's gallant fighters swirled down that day; Lt. (jg) Richard H. "Moose" Bridge, the tall boy with the three Air Medals, died in his Grumman fighter over Formosa, and Lt. (jg) Joseph Kopman, handsome dark-haired fighter pilot, of Detroit, Michigan, did not return to Big Ben. There was little of the usual "kidding" in the fighter ready room that evening.

Throughout Friday, October 13th, enemy planes attempted to slip through the combat air patrol. Several were shot down, others driven away. In the evening, an hour before sunset, they commenced to gather in small groups, hiding in the heavy banks of clouds, scattered low over the water. Through the drizzling rain patrol fighters searched for the enemy but he was hard to find, even with radar's aid.

Two groups of enemy planes, one in the clouds to the northeast and one in the clouds to the south, were about ten miles from the *Franklin's* group. At 5:00 p. m. the bugles called all hands to battle stations, but at 5:22 Admiral Davison secured all battle stations except the gunners when it appeared likely that the Japs would remain in the vicinity for hours. At sunset, five minutes later, Big Ben was landing

the last of eight Hellcats which had been launched during a previous alert when suddenly out of the twilight to the north, four Betties, medium land-plane bombers, appeared over the screening destroyers. Combat information center, busy tracking another group, had not warned of these.

"Here they come!" went the word through the gun stations and about the decks. "Here they come . . ."

A thunderous roar went up from the scores of flashing guns on Big Ben. But on the bridge, where quartermaster first class Mathias stood by the helm, the men who guided the *Franklin* moved with swift calculation, countering the moves of the attackers. The navigator, Comdr. Hale, stood on the port wing of the bridge, coolly scanning the skies to give warning of Japanese approaches from that side. Captain Shoemaker, with no thought of personal safety, moved quickly between the exposed bridge and the helm, calling out orders that would save the carrier.

They came in on the port side, hardly fifty feet above the water, at top speed. Every ship in the formation had them under fire. The first plane was broad on the port beam when Captain Shoemaker ordered "Left, full rudder" and Big Ben swung in toward the attack. Again and again the Betty was

hit; flames poured from his fuselage as he closed the *Franklin*, but he launched his torpedo and roared in, trying to crash the ship. The "fish" missed Big Ben's stern by feet, thanks to the quick change of course. The plane struck on deck, just abaft the island structure, slid across the heavy planking and burst into flames as it rolled off the starboard side of the ship and fell into the water. Flaming gasoline deluged the *Franklin's* side and from the *San Jacinto*, astern, it looked as though the Jap had exploded aboard. By only a split hair had the *Franklin* missed a disastrous fire and many casualties.

The second Betty also came in fast on the port quarter, with every gun on the *Franklin* and *San Jacinto* that could be brought to bear holding it under a murderous fire. Lt. A. J. "Whispering Death" Pope, of Fighting Thirteen—a boy from Atlanta, Ga.—had been circling to land, gas almost gone. Without hesitation he pulled up quickly, dove down through the bursting shells on the bomber and opened up with his six fifty-caliber machine guns. The Jap went blazing into the water. Big Ben shared that one with Lt. Pope.

The third torpedo plane came in well ahead of the *Franklin* and was shot down as it passed through the task group



After prayers by shipmates the body of Harold C. Stancil, AMMLc, killed in action October 13th, is committed to the deep



October 15th, 1944: As Franklin's batteries thundered at Japanese dive-bombers, Captain Shoemaker personally spun the wheel hard left—a moment later a bomb exploded alongside which otherwise would have struck the island squarely.

ahead of the *Enterprise* and the *Belleau Wood*, but the fourth bomber bored in through the flak on Big Ben's port quarter. He dropped his torpedo, hedge-hopped *Franklin's* bow, and went down in flames between the *Franklin* and the *Enterprise*. The torpedo was coming at the *Franklin*, "hot, straight, and true." Again teamwork saved Big Ben from disaster. With seamanship bred by years of training, Captain Shoemaker ordered "Right, full rudder" and personally rang up "Back full" on the starboard engines. Far below, in the domain of the Black Gang, the men who "answer all bells" lived up to their names. Big Ben slowed her forward motion and pulled away to the right, away from the on-rushing torpedo which passed within a few feet of the bow and continued on harmlessly through the task group.

In the mad five minutes of action Harold L. Stancil, veteran aviation machinist's mate, was struck by the plunging Betty and instantly killed. Men on the bridge and gun stations had been struck by some of the hail of flak from guns of the task force, others had been wounded by Japanese machine gun fire. Ten men were hurt badly enough to be taken out of action.

Yet in the midst of danger and tragedy, Big Ben's men remembered it was one year ago to the day, that she was launched. No man had forgotten Captain Shoemaker's words "Thirteen is my lucky number," though it had not been luck. An alert captain, an efficient bridge crew, hard-shooting gunners, a faithful Black Gang, had brought Big Ben through her first hand-to-hand encounter with the enemy.

There was occasion, too, for a smile. During the first moments of the Jap attack, Lt. Dan Winters, landing signal officer, coaching Lt. Pope in to land, glanced up just in time to see the Jap plane coming in for an entirely different kind of landing. Lt. Winters did what men faced by flaming dragons have done before. He ran. Across the deck he raced, the Japanese bomber in hot pursuit. As he dove for an imaginary foxhole in the flight deck, the low-dipping wing of the Rising Sun plane engaged him in a kiss of death, ripping the entire seat from his pants. The exposed anatomy was too much for the Nip. Big Ben's hero muttered a strangled "Splash one" as the Betty crashed into the sea. It is said that a collection was made to have the appropriate Japanese flag tattooed on the conquering posterior, but Lt.



Japanese shipping huddled in Manila Harbor

Dan Winters, a modest man, gratefully declined this recognition of his unique achievement.

Throughout the night after the attack persistent Japs hung about Task Group 38.4 as it swung southward to the coast of Luzon. Radio Tokyo blared even wilder claims, and the Imperial Navy—which seemed to believe the fantastic stories—dispatched a strong task force out of the North China Sea to finish the dozens of crippled American warships littering the water. Actually the *Houston* and *Canberra* were the only casualties and Admiral Halsey, fiercest Jap-hater, lurked just over the edge of the sea with two powerful Third Fleet task groups, eager for battle.

At the last moment, while the northern carriers readied their deadly bombers for the long sought mission of smashing a dozen major Japanese warships, the yellow Admiral became doubtful and withdrew his force at high speed into

safer waters, well out of reach of the “crippled” American fleet.

The fast carrier task forces of the Third Fleet now turned their attention to the Philippines; back to skies over Corregidor and Bataan, came the avengers. Weary, bearded, undernourished Americans in Japanese labor battalions, some long believed dead, raised their eyes to the heavens and hope kindled in shrunken chests. “They have returned,” sang in every man’s heart. Prominent among the avenging planes in those skies was the White Triangle, marking Big Ben’s air group. 150 miles from Manila, on October 14th, *Franklin* and her sister carriers lay, throwing massive blows at airfields with hauntingly familiar names . . . Clark Field, Nichols Field, Nielson . . . Helldiver, Avenger, Hellcat, kinsmen of the Kitty Hawks and first Flying Fortresses smashed by brutal treachery on those fields three years before, were re-



Lt. A. C. Cason, landing signal officer, in action, while assistant landing signal officer, Lt. Daniel M. Winters, stands by



Guns blasting, Big Ben fights back . . . October 15th . . .

turning to exact a debt of blood from Japan's degenerate soldiery.

As the airfields and stations came under the deadly barrage, bomber pilots looked gleefully at crowded Manila harbor, one of the world's largest—jammed with huddled Japanese shipping. Those ships were doomed. As soon as the airfields and air cover had been shattered the bombers would rain havoc on the crowded harbor with its great piers and warehouses, filled with the loot of an empire.

October 15th found Big Ben still hurling knockout punches at the airfield targets. The crew had been at battle stations for hours and enemy planes had been on the screens since dawn. Two had already been shot down by the patrol—and from one of the early strikes Lt. (jg) Frederick A.

Beckman, Jr., who was "Becky" to all hands, did not return with his Hellcat and was marked "missing in action."

About ten in the morning, with thirty bombers over Nichols Field and thirty more poised to take off, a group of enemy planes was discovered closing from the westward, half a dozen patrol fighters on their tail. Three Japs broke through. Two Oscar fighters and one Judy bomber, each with two bombs, flashed into view. They were deadly midges, twenty thousand feet in the air, as they nosed over in their dive.

The screen and Big Ben opened fire simultaneously with every gun. One of the Japs dropped his bombs harmlessly and fled, but the others bored down at the *Franklin*. The first one was a wide miss. Captain Shoemaker swung the

big ship heavily to port and the second bomb went off on the starboard side, close aboard, throwing a column of water over the ship and shaking the decks. The third bomb missed the port side twenty feet and before its concussion had subsided the fourth hit the corner of the deck-edge elevator, hurling hot steel and shrapnel in all directions. One Oscar was shot down by Big Ben's battery as he pulled out of his dive while the other went into a dogfight with the patrol.

Shrapnel from the hit tore through the gallery deck, the island structure, and the mast. Signalman James Rogers, at his station on the flag bridge, was killed. Lt. (jg) Harmon R. Hudson, of the bomber squadron, and seaman William Taylor were mortally wounded. Five other men were seriously hurt and later died; twenty-seven were injured.

Under the direction of Comdr. Smith, Medical Department Head, the casualties were given first aid and the more seriously wounded were rushed to the sick bay. Aided by Drs. Fuelling and Fox and by Titus, Vober, Torneby, Mitchell, Mason, of the Medical Staff, all performed prodigiously that day. At least two men would have died had the surgeon's efforts been too little or too late. George Smith, radarman third class, at his battle station, a hundred feet from the hit, had been struck with a piece of shrapnel that tore through the half-inch steel bulkhead before completely piercing his side. Dr. Fox, without hesitation, working through the ragged hole in the man's side, removed several feet of riddled intestines, joined the ends which the damaged section had bridged, cleaned and stitched the wound. Within two weeks George Smith was back on watch, proud of his Purple Heart.

Lt. Hoy, a torpedo plane pilot, struck in the temple and in the spine with shrapnel, lay dying on his cot in the quiet room that night. Three large blood clots were forming on his brain, beneath the shattered bone. Dr. Fox, who declaimed knowledge of "anything from the neck up," watched the agonized man for five hours when he could take time from the dozens of wounded in the nearby sick bay. Then, when it seemed as though Lt. Hoy had breathed his last, Dr. Fox reached a decision. Into the ship's operating room the pilot was wheeled by anxious pharmacist's mates. Instead of anesthesia an oxygen mask was used to keep the wounded man alive. For two hours the doctor labored, cutting through the damaged bone, removing the deadly clots which he had known must be there, then replacing the trepanned section. Lt. Hoy was alive two weeks later and transferred to a hospital ship, with a fighting chance for recovery.

Fortunately the bomb hit had not knocked the flight deck out of commission. The deck edge elevator could be repaired by Comdr. LeFavour's shipfitters and Lt. Comdr. Greene's engineers. The bomb-laden strikes would continue to pour off toward the doomed Japs on Luzon.

During the afternoon two more attacks were thrown at Task Group 38.4. From the northwest 50 Japanese planes appeared on the radars. A few minutes later a large group came into radar range from the southwest. Lt. Comdr. Bruning scrambled section after section of Hellcats, and the *San Jacinto* air patrol was already moving full speed to intercept the enemy groups. Within ten minutes 30 fighters were closing in on the southern group and 20 fighters on the northern formation. In a precise interception at 50 miles the southern

Japs were brought to battle. Not a Nip escaped. Reports from the airmen came through: "Splash two Zekes." "Splash an Oscar," "Splash a Betty."

The northern group was intercepted at 60 miles while it attempted to execute an encircling maneuver. It fled in panic, Hellcats of the Thirteenth charging in victoriously to knock down a dozen of the Japanese before the formation escaped when American gas ran low.

On Big Ben all hands breathed a sigh of relief and gratitude to the boys of Fighting Thirteen. In CIC Lt. David Allen, Evaluation Officer, was busy until late that night tabulating reports from the other air groups for a final tally of the day's work. 84 Japanese planes had spun into the water, shattered by American steel. Big Ben's guns had accounted for one and her fighters had shot down 29. The *Enterprise* air group had knocked down 27, with the remainder going to the smaller airgroups on the *San Jacinto* and *Belleau Wood*.

Heavy strikes were again launched at the Manila Bay area on October 16th, concentrating on shipping. The Japanese defenders strove desperately to protect the ships which were the life-blood of their Empire. Oscar and Zeke fighters trailed returning strikes, hoping to pick off cripples, or circled above the oncoming formations of carrier planes, striving to draw off fighter escorts so that other Zekes could pick off unprotected dive-bombers and torpedo planes. Sometimes this worked and then the gunners in the Avengers and Helldivers had opportunity to show their mettle. A number of them were credited with shooting down Jap fighters. Yet at day's end the hulks of half-sunken ships dotted the shallow water of Manila Harbor and clouds of smoke poured from the stricken installations.

That night 30 of the *Enterprise* planes striking Manila lost their way in the dusk. They were heard on the radio and finally located, but when they had been directed to the task group it was dark and many had barely enough gas to land aboard. It was urgent to get them down; every carrier in the force advised the Big E that they were ready to commence landing operations. As the tired warbirds came down to the dim-lit flight decks pathetic messages could be heard on the radio: "This is Beaver Two. Am making water landing. Out." "Gas enough for one more circle. Can you give me a flag, please?" One Helldiver, blinded in the darkness, flew full into the side of the *Belleau Wood* and exploded. Half a dozen others crashed in the sea and the indefatigable destroyers commenced searching for survivors.

Big Ben took eight planes aboard; the pilots and aircrewmen stumbled out, exhausted. It had been trying for all hands while those big black planes were bumping down on the flight deck in the dark. The Big E was grateful: "We thank you for your prompt response to emergency Wednesday night. Your close cooperation much appreciated."

On the next day occurred another incident that might have had tragic consequences. Lt. J. B. "Johnny" Johnson, of Fighting Thirteenth, was wounded over the target and the landing gear of his Hellcat so badly damaged that it could not be lowered. He came back with his strike, barely enough gas to make the ship, and requested permission to make a crash landing on deck. Admiral Davison, knowing that might



A Jap merchantman at Manila takes one on its fantail

disable the flight deck and prevent the scheduled strikes from leaving, ordered a water landing ahead of a screening destroyer. The answer came back:

"Right arm wounded. Hatch fouled. Will not be able to open cockpit cover."

Comdr. Taylor spoke quickly to the Admiral. "It's suicide, sir, for that boy to land out there. I'll take the responsibility for the flight deck."

Even as Admiral Davison assented, the cool voice on the radio spoke: "Enough gas for this circle only. Can you give me a green flag?" Franklin's engines churned full speed, and a forty knot gale swept the deck as the captain held her into the wind. The green flag went up. Every man on the ship watched with bated breath for they knew the danger of that landing to ship and plane.

Fire-fighting crews, first aid men, damage control boys stood by. The men on the barriers were tense at their posts. Down glided the Hellcat in a beautiful approach. The tail-hook caught a wire and the plane slid along on its belly to rest gently against the first barrier. Lt. Johnson, with two Jap planes to his credit, emerged shaken but ready to fly again the next day. But that was the day, another of heavy air action over Manila, that Lt. Eric Magnussen, of Virginia, Minnesota, probably the oldest combat pilot in the Navy, was missing in action. "Maggie," after shooting two Zekes down that day, headed his damaged Hellcat for Big Ben but was never seen again.

Now, while the flattops pounded the Japanese bases in the

Philippines, and the tempo increased to the fury of pre-invasion assault, the mighty fleet of transports, battleships, escort carriers, all the Seventh Fleet, drew near Leyte. The historic moment arrived, on October 21st, 1944, as the troops of the Sixth Army poured ashore and the colors of America arose once more over the island where freedom had been crushed for three long years. A promise had been redeemed.

Task Group 38.4 withdrew to refuel on October 22nd, leaving the Luzon post to another force. This message from President Roosevelt to Admiral Halsey was received:

"The country has followed with pride the magnificent sweep of your fleet into enemy waters, in addition to the gallant fighting of your fliers. We appreciate the endurance and super seamanship of your forces . . . To the officers and men of all services who have carried the fight to the enemy—Well Done."

Between October 9th and October 20th the task group had flown 1677 sorties over enemy targets, shot down 182 enemy aircraft, destroyed 197 on the ground, probably destroyed 87. It had lost twenty-three aircraft in combat; seventeen pilots and eleven aircrewmembers were missing in action. It had sunk 37 Japanese vessels larger than one thousand tons and badly damaged 38 others. Of these totals Big Ben's Air Group Thirteen had taken its full share.



"... I'll never forget what the captain told us the other evening; and I guess I won't let my grandchildren forget, either . . . And I don't think many of us will ever forget that Jap named Una, the little yellow pilot that laid his Zeke on our flight deck. But that didn't stop Big Ben . . ."

BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

ADMIRAL DAVISON'S FLAGSHIP, *Franklin*, and the ships of Task Group 38.4 withdrew to the westward on October 22nd to replenish supplies since bombs were low and the supply of torpedoes nearly exhausted. Task Groups 38.2 and 38.3 were now in the seas off Luzon and Leyte, supporting the doughboys of the Sixth Army. Task Group 38.1, with the brand-new carrier *Ticonderoga*, was on a course from Ulithi to the Philippines.

Admiral Halsey knew that the next move was up to the Japanese Navy. The airfields for a thousand miles north of Leyte were out of commission for weeks and the important Philippines' bases were under daily attack from carrier bombers. The vital shipping lanes over which reinforcements must come to Yamashita's soldiers were under constant attack. Within a few weeks new airfields hacked from the Leyte jungles would be havens for the land-based Fifth and Thirteenth Army Air Forces. If the Philippines—and the Empire—were to be saved it was up to the big, black battle-wagons and flat-tops of the Imperial Navy to smash the American Fleet. Their aim must be to isolate the 200,000 invading Yankee soldiers so the defending Nipponese Army could cut them to pieces.

The Japanese plan of battle was simple in conception and held the threat of disaster to the American forces. It was the old pincer movement.

From the northern tip of Luzon to the southern end of Mindanao there are a thousand miles of island-dotted ocean—the Philippine Archipelago. There are two passages by which a fleet might cross the island chain; Suragaio Straits, between Leyte Gulf and the South China Sea; the Straits of San Bernardino, between Luzon and Samar, 100 miles north of Leyte Gulf, where the hundreds of American transports and supply ships now lay.

The Japanese First Fleet, two battleships, half a dozen cruisers and screening destroyers, would force its way through the Suragaio Straits and fall upon the transports. The Japanese Second Fleet, two super-battleships, the *Yamato* and *Musashi*, three older battleships, with a dozen destroyers and ten cruisers would drive through the San Bernardino Straits, and cut Leyte's supply line to Ulithi. The Japanese Third Fleet, two battleships, four carriers, eight cruisers, and six destroyers, would proceed southward from Japan and lay a hundred miles to the west of Leyte, supporting the other two fleets by drawing off any American carrier

assaults. Probably the Japanese admiral expected some assistance from land-based aircraft in the Philippines. It was a desperate gamble of a Navy for an Empire. Weighed against it in the scales of war were the Third and Seventh United States Fleets.

During the night of October 23rd the fateful word flashed to Big Ben's radio room from submarines in the China Sea that the Japanese Navy was on the move and that strong units of the enemy fleet were approaching the Philippines. Task Group 38.4 wheeled and steamed westward, flank speed. At dawn ten search-attack groups, six Hellcats and six bombers to a team, were thrown west. Four of the assault teams came from Big Ben. Over a radius of 325 miles they ranged, covering the island areas and waterways of southern Samar, northern Leyte, Cebu, Negros, and Panay. No major formation of the enemy fleet were sighted, but near Pucio Point, Panay, two destroyers and a cruiser were located. Lt. Dick Harding and Lt. "Fats" Miller joined their attack groups and thundered down to hit the Japs with rockets, bombs, and machine gun fire. The cruiser heeled over and sank. The destroyers were blazing and listing heavily when the attack ended.

Later in the day main units of the Japanese Second Fleet were sighted moving through Tablas Straits, 150 miles from



A Jap destroyer, hit, is shaken by a close one from one of Big Ben's search-attack planes . . . October 24th

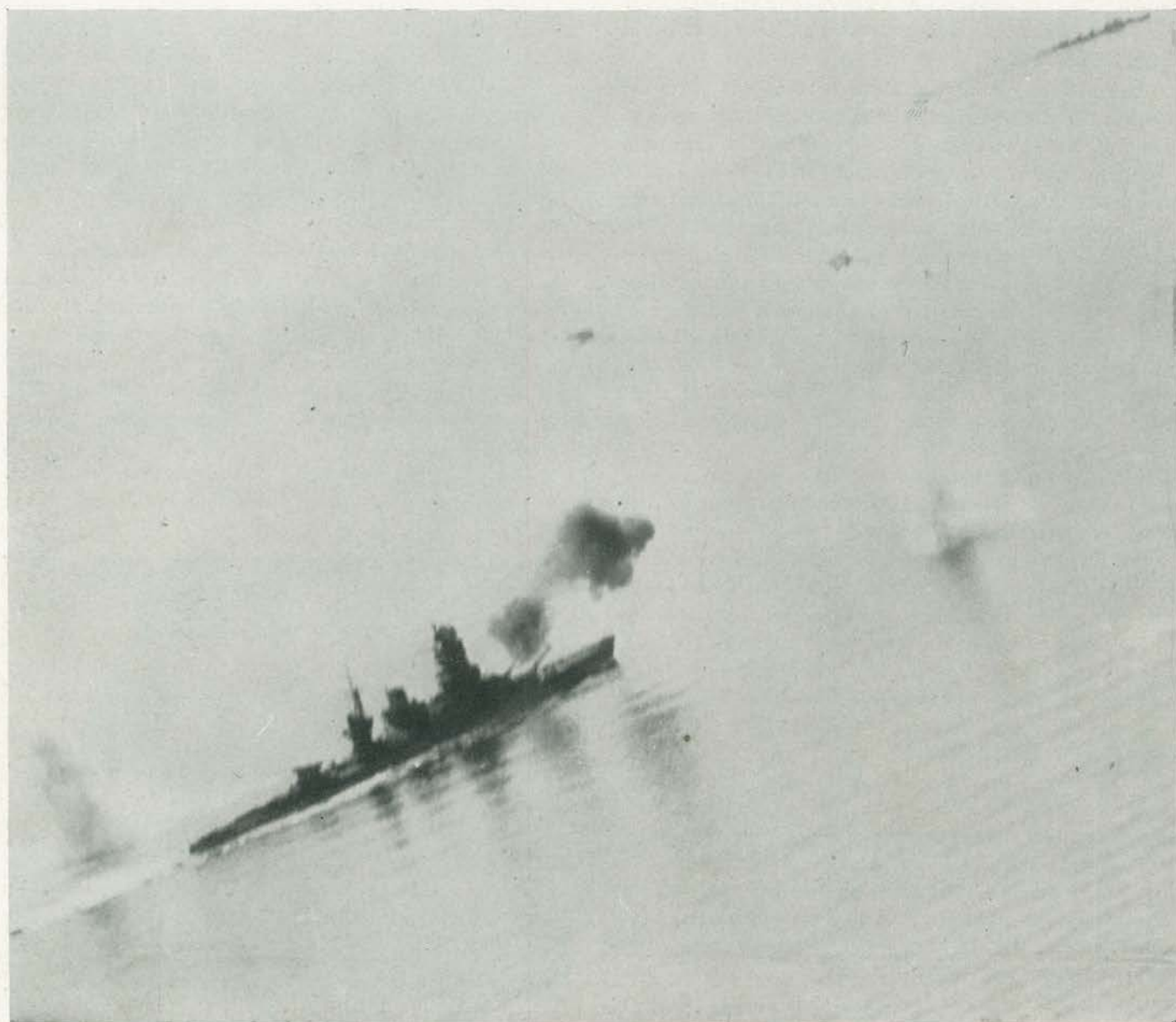
San Bernardino. There were at least five battleships, nine cruisers, and a dozen destroyers. Immediately, at 1:30 p.m. a heavy deckload—twelve bombers, ten torpedo planes and ten Hellcats—armed with rockets and bombs, sped off to attack. From 14,000 feet the *Franklin* planes sighted the enemy, moving in two groups about eight miles apart, south of Sibuyan Island. The northeast group, in compact formation, was steaming westward at top speed. The southern group of ten or twelve warships, was milling in circles as though under air attack.

Comdr. Richard Kibbe, who had recently become Air Group Thirteen's commander, directed the attack at the battleships of the northern group. In the face of a heavy flak barrage thrown up by the enemy, who was firing even his sixteen-inch guns, Big Ben's warplanes thundered down. The battleship *Musashi*, hit by two heavy bombs, staggered out of line, smoking. After many hits later during that day, the *Musashi* sank. The battleship *Yamato*, also hit, twisted and turned to dodge the armor piercing missiles. Two cruisers were hard hit and one was left dead in the water. A light

cruiser, struck by a single torpedo, dropped by Lt. (jg) R. Q. Ransom, exploded violently and sank in seconds. That was one of the luckiest hits of the war. Lt. Ransom, under a hail of fire, was dodging in on a Jap battlewagon when he dropped his fish. A light cruiser, whipping along at 30 knots, ran in between and took it squarely. A magazine must have exploded because it sank almost instantly.

Of the 32 attacking planes, two were shot down and fourteen damaged. Ens. Robert Freligh and his gunner, Sam Plonsky, were later reported safe in the hands of friendly Filipinos, after the crash of their shell-torn bomber. Lt. (jg) Marshall D. Barnett, lad from dusty Texas, and a poet of stature, was lost in action with his gunner, Leonard Pickens, of New Concord, Ohio. Their Helldiver went down near the Japanese fleet.

While this attack was in progress reports arrived of a powerful enemy carrier force, the Japanese Third Fleet, moving southward from 200 miles east of Cape Escarpado, on the north tip of Luzon. *Franklin's* group was passing Leyte Gulf, standing north to join Task Groups 38.2 and



Jap super-battleship Yamato, firing all guns, twists wildly to escape.

38.3, both of which were now under heavy air attack from the Japanese Third Fleet's planes—in this action the light carrier *Princeton* was lost.

Admiral Halsey had decided quickly. He was hurrying the task groups of his Third Fleet northward to engage this new threat, leaving the seven old battleships with their escorting cruisers and destroyers, along with Admiral Kinkaid's baby flat-tops, to protect the shipping in Leyte Gulf.

So in the evening of October 24th, *Franklin* and her comrades were speeding northward, past the escort carriers cruising 50 miles off the entrance to Leyte Gulf, for a rendezvous with the other groups. During the night two more new battleships joined her screen—now boasting the super-battle-wagons *South Dakota*, *Alabama*, and *Washington*.

That night the search planes kept contact with the Jap carrier task force until 3:30 a.m. An hour before dawn the bugles called battle stations; the Japs were somewhere to the north, about 100 miles away. Half an hour later a sixteen-plane combat air patrol was launched; at 6:30 twelve bombers and eight torpedo planes took the sky to fly northward.

They had orders to circle at a distance of 50 miles from Big Ben while awaiting word from the search planes which were now combing the ocean. Meanwhile, a second deckload of bombers and fighters was armed.

At 7:30 the Japanese Fleet was sighted, 30 miles east of *Franklin's* circling bombers. There were four carriers, the *Zuikaku*, *Chitose*, *Zuiho*, and *Chiyoda*. Two battleships with flight decks, the *Hyuga* and *Ise*, steamed with them, surrounded by a dozen cruisers and destroyers. The orders were flashed out for attack. Hellcats from another air group hurried to the scene to cover Big Ben's airmen as they hurtled in. Seventeen enemy fighters were in the air over their carriers and they fought desperately to save them. An Avenger piloted by Ens. Thomas P. Brooks, Jr., of Concord, Mass., with aircrewman Harold J. Shane, of York, Pa., and Francis J. Ploger, of Grand Rapids, Mich., spun down to the sea in a fatal water landing. But the bombers bored in. A few minutes before 8:00, Comdr. Kibbe's voice on the radio said: "We are going down on a big carrier. Looks like it's trying to turn into the wind to launch." The voices on the radio



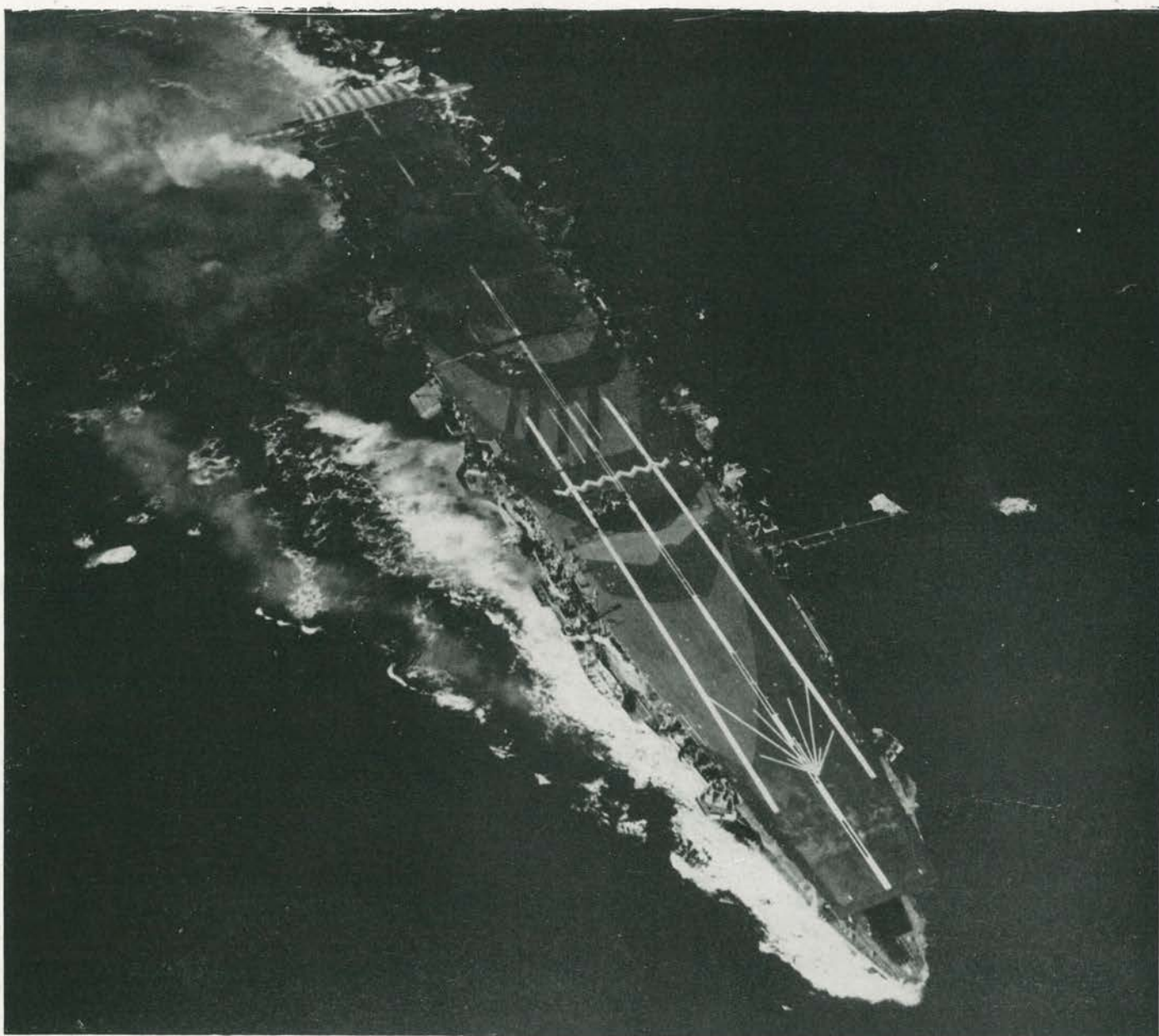
The Japanese Third Fleet, under heavy air attack, throws up flak . . . The carrier to the left is hard hit



faded as the bombers went into their dive. Tense minutes passed. Then pride leaped in every heart as a voice from the radio said: "Check off one big flat-top that just spun in." Later, back on the ship, Comdr. Kibbe, in one of his reports to *Franklin's* crew, told how Lt. Skinner, Lt. Swede Halstrom, Lt. Broach, Lt. Hoyt and half a dozen other dive-bomber pilots had scored direct hits on the big carrier. For a few minutes it had seemed indestructible. Then, almost too suddenly, the *Zuiho* sank.

Over the radio came reports from the south. The old battleships and destroyers of the Seventh Fleet, aided by PT boats, had nearly annihilated the Japanese First Fleet, of two battleships, some cruisers and destroyers that had been engaged while trying to force the Suragaio Straits during

The Japanese carrier Chitose, just before she went down . . .
 ◀ *Big Ben's Bombers helped sink her*

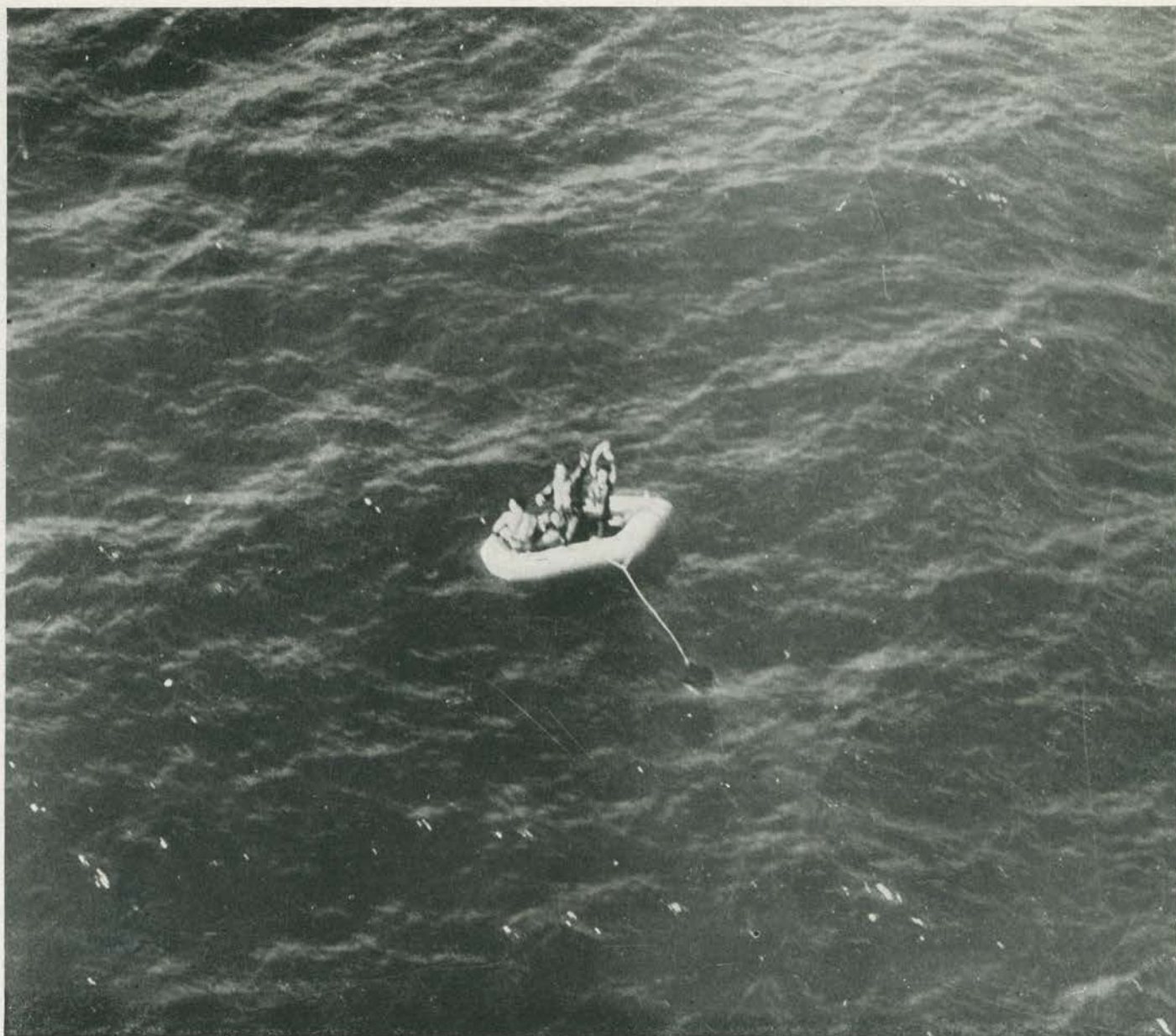


The Chitose was sunk by planes from Big Ben and other air groups from the task force . . . This picture was taken by plane from Enterprise, shortly before she was struck on starboard side, aft, by another torpedo . . . Two bomb hits may be observed in deck and another hit aft, with fire hose in use

the night. Few Japanese warships survived this action. But the Japanese Second Fleet, that had been pounded by aircraft from Big Ben and other flat-tops the preceding afternoon, came on through the Straits of San Bernardino — minus a battleship and several cruisers — and was now drawing within gun range of the lightly protected escort carriers. The baby flat-tops, with only destroyers in the screen, few planes aboard, and low on bombs, were in a desperate position. The heavy guns of the battleships could sink a dozen small carriers in as many minutes. Admiral Halsey dispatched Task Group 38.1, which was nearing the Philippines, to their aid. Word was soon received that an attack had been launched against the Jap battlewagons which would hit the Nips at about 1:00 p.m. In the meantime, the



Near miss on Jap destroyer, while a light cruiser swerves frantically, all guns blazing . . . Fifteen minutes later the destroyer was sunk by one of Franklin's bombs, delivered by Lt. (jg) Harding, of Bombing Thirteen ▶



These three lads, shot down near the Jap Third Fleet, were not found when rescue planes reached the scene

destroyers and the few planes of the escort carriers were putting up one of the most heroic battles of the war.

Three of those destroyers and two destroyer escorts went to their deaths in the unequal struggle, but they did not die in vain. Months later, after the surrender of Japan, Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita, commander of the Japanese Second Fleet, confessed that, incredible as it may seem, his enemy fleet of two dozen major warships was turned back at 11:00 a.m. by damage suffered from the torpedoes of seven American destroyers escorting the baby flat-tops and bombs from the escort carrier's planes—as well as the fear of further attacks.

Assault groups from other flat-tops of the Third Fleet were now over the stricken Japanese carrier group 300 miles north of Leyte Gulf, and 75 miles from Big Ben. By the end of an hour every carrier in the force was hard hit, burning, or on



Comdr. W. M. "Wild Bill" Coleman, hard-flying skipper of Fighting Thirteen

the bottom. Cruisers were flaming; the two old battleships and one cruiser were steaming frantically northward. The destroyers milled around aimlessly, some trying to pick up Japanese sailors, now floating in the sea by hundreds. The seven fast battlewagons of the Third Fleet, detached from the carriers, were straining ahead at thirty knots, eager to bring the Japs to a battle which could have but one conclusion.

At 10:00 a.m. came radar warning of a large flight of enemy aircraft approaching, 100 miles to the south. These, it was learned later, were the Jap carrier planes that sent the *Princeton* to the bottom off Luzon the day before. They had landed on Luzon and were flying out to rejoin their carriers. 30 Hellcats roared south to meet them, but the Jap planes were evidently in radio contact with their fleet. Before the Hellcats sighted them, they reversed course and turned south out of range, apparently informed of the disaster to their floating bases.

At noon, 30 more bombers and fighters took off from Big Ben's flight deck to add to the destruction. But now the calls for aid from the south were urgent. Admiral Halsey turned the heavy new battleships, then only 40 miles from their quarry, with the carriers and destroyers of Task Group 38.2 to aid the embattled baby flat-tops of the Seventh Fleet.

At 1:30 *Franklin's* fourth strike cleared the deck. The Japanese ships were in a panic-stricken condition. Undamaged vessels steamed desperately at high speed, on independent courses, in any direction to get out of range of the bombers. Damaged ships, listing heavily, circled wildly, all guns firing, with no effort at mutual support. Here and there two or three destroyers, or a destroyer and a burning cruiser, steamed in formation using their guns to best advantage. It was a wild, desperate, confused battle. And it cost the dive-bombing squadron from Big Ben heavily, for Lt. John H. Finrow, a University of Washington boy, who had flown 31 missions, went down in his Helldiver with his gunner, Henry E. Borja, the lad his shipmates called "Hank." Lt. (jg) D. A. McPhie, recommended for the Navy Cross and two Air Medals, died that day with his gunner, R. D. Chandler, a boy from old Alabama. It would have been "Mac's" last mission, had he returned.

Yet there was one thing certain about that battle. Squadron after squadron of America's finest air groups kept filling the sky above the fleeing Japanese. As soon as the air group of one carrier had delivered its attack, the planes of another would come flashing down to attack. Through the afternoon the battle continued. Even Comdr. Coleman, of Fighting Thirteen, could only shake his head in the wardroom that night and say, "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't been there. I don't know half what happened and I was there all day. They'll never get all of this one in their history books."

As evening drew near, two cruisers and a destroyer—one cruiser limping—were all that remained of the force. The two battleships, one damaged, with no destroyer escort, were 100 miles north, fleeing at their best speeds. They would run the gauntlet of a dozen American submarines posted in their path. That night a submarine reported five torpedo hits on one and when last seen it was dead in the water.

Admiral Davison asked for any carrier with a dozen fighter planes and a clear flight deck to volunteer for a rocket-armed sweep to get one of the cruisers. Big Ben's flight deck was crowded with the last returning strike, but the *Enterprise* volunteered. Half an hour later the proud voice of the strike leader from the Big E could be heard over the radio: "Hello, Badger. This is Dodger Four. Break out the beer. We just sank a cruiser." Badger was Admiral Davison's radio call.

The Admiral answered personally: "This is the Badger, himself. Great going. We'll have the band waiting for you."

Now, as the sun dipped into the sea on the Japanese Imperial Navy's last day on the Pacific, cruisers from the Third Fleet drew near to finish the cripples. The Air Coordinator, still flying over the scene, directed them to the targets. His voice could be heard on the radio, though the cruisers were not audible. The airman's voice was clear and cold. "Can't see 'em, eh? Do you see me?"

"Well, watch these black bursts now . . ."

"See 'em? . . . That's the way to the cruisers, boys . . ."

He was flying down over the Japs, drawing their fire, and the bursts of flak in the evening sky directed the American warships to their targets. A brave man was Rocket 77.

Before the moon rose the last Japanese warship of the group was on the muddy bottom of the Pacific, smashed by cruiser gunfire. As the task group steamed south, Jap destruction complete to the north, the captain spoke solemnly and proudly to Big Ben's tense crew:

"You will never forget today. Today, October 25th, 1944, we have defeated the Japanese Navy in one of the decisive sea battles of history . . ." Then he turned the speaker over to the fliers who had climbed from *Franklin's* deck. When the men off watch that night rolled into their bunks they were as proud as Captain Shoemaker — they had put those planes in the air and kept 'em there . . .

October 26th was spent in contacting the tanker group and refueling. Meantime complete reports were pouring in of the far-flung Battle for Leyte Gulf. The Japanese Second Fleet, attacking Vice Admiral Kinkaid's escort carriers, withdrew at the last moment, after sinking the *Gambier Bay*, two destroyers, and three destroyer escorts. The Japanese admiral had reached his decision at 11 a.m. and steamed north to San Bernardino, passing through the strait at midnight, every ship in his squadron damaged by destroyer torpedoes or air attack.

As the fast battleships of the United States Third Fleet passed the straits at 1:00 a.m. only one crippled Japanese cruiser lagged behind. It disintegrated so swiftly under the sixteen-inch guns of the super-battleships that not until some of the stunned survivors were pulled out of the water was it known to be a cruiser and not a destroyer. To pursue the group of enemy warships into the heavily mined straits would be imprudent, so Admiral Halsey contented himself with launching heavy air assaults over the escape route through the islands.

The Japanese force beaten in the Suragaio Straits had truly been annihilated. Only one crippled battleship made its way back into the Sibuyan Sea and it was sunk by air attack before Admiral Kinkaid could "take a picture of the darn thing."

As a fighting force the Imperial Japanese Navy had ceased to exist. MacArthur's beachheads were secure and no power on the face of the earth could stop America's reconquest of the Philippines.

Franklin and Task Group 38.4 steamed back to the Leyte area the next day, furnishing combat air patrol for the transports in the Gulf, and launching search sweeps for Japanese warships still trying to escape. Sixteen Hellcats, each armed with a 500-pound bomb, located a cruiser of the Aoba class with two destroyers, south of the island of Mindoro. Four direct bomb hits and fourteen rockets were slammed into the cruiser. It was left blazing, leaking steam, and listing heavily to port. The two destroyers were damaged. Half an hour later another fighter sweep, launched by the *Enterprise*, arrived to finish them off. The two destroyers were still there, one already abandoned by its crew. The cruiser was never seen again, almost certainly sent to the bottom by Big Ben's strike. The airmen from the Big E made strafing runs over the destroyers, leaving them both sinking.



Lt. J. B. Johnson, coming through hatch on the Flight deck of the Franklin . . . Johnny's experiences were so numerous and unusual that Quentin Reynolds wrote him up in a Collier's article

During the 28th and 29th of October heavy calls were placed on the Fleet's fighter squadrons by MacArthur's embattled forces. Combat air patrol was flown over Leyte, and searches were conducted off the island of Samar for carrier pilots shot down in the previous actions. The Hellcats shot down eight Oscars and one Zeke which were trying to attack the transports in Leyte Gulf. Weather was rainy and the newly constructed airfields at Dulag and Tacloban on Leyte were in poor condition. Crack-ups were frequent on the muddy fields, and often grounded pilots were under bombing attack as the Japs continued to slip in groups of bombers to strike the invasion forces.

On the evening of the 28th, six of *Franklin's* patrolling Hellcats attacked twelve Jap fighter planes at dusk. When the Oscars had been driven away, Big Ben's airmen were forced



Flight deck crews arming a deckload . . . Note rockets being loaded on Hellcats . . . Air Group 13 was one of first to use this weapon against Japanese

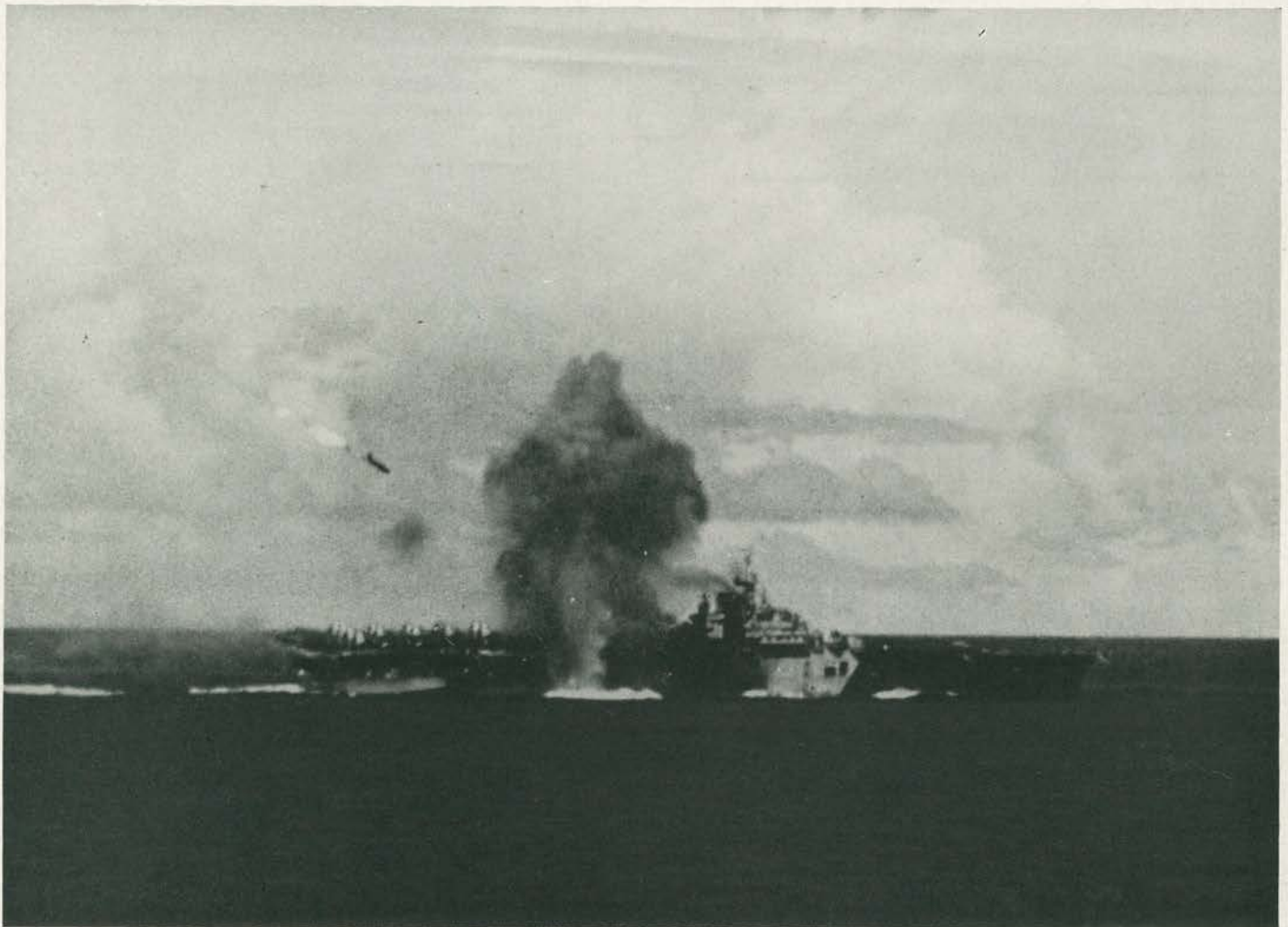
to land as best they could on the airfield at Dulag while it was under attack. Later all made their way back to the ship, except Lt. (jg) Robert F. Brooks. One wheel of his Hellcat had been shot away; he bailed out over Leyte Gulf near land, but was not found. It took twelve of them to get Bobby. . . . The same day, a sad one for Big Ben, Lt. Raymond B. Cook's Helldiver failed to return. Ray Cook, of Palmyra, N. Y., and his gunner, William B. Butler, of Cincinnati, Ohio, were marked missing. Also night fighter Warren Wolf, of White Plains, N. Y., on being catapulted into the darkness to intercept a Jap bomber, spun directly into the sea. Warren, a handsome, cheerful boy, who grinned at danger, was carried under the water by his plane; of Lt. Wineger's three night chicks only one was left now—Tony Martin.

A message from General MacArthur to the fleet on October 29th said that the Army now has established its air forces on Leyte and would assume all responsibility for bombing island targets. Navy planes would attack island targets only when permission had been obtained from the Army. However, during the following morning, there were numerous reports of enemy aircraft and the combat air patrol had been busy. None had closed within 30 miles of the task group, but the double watch was set on the guns. At 2:00 p.m. the radio room reported a fleet tanker force 50 miles away under air attack; *Franklin* at once launched twelve Hellcats to go to its aid. Hardly had they left the

deck when a small group of Jap planes, which the combat patrol had been chasing for the last half-hour, appeared near the formation. They had originally been detected 75 miles to the northwest, high in the air; the combat air patrol, guided out to intercept, failed to spot the deceptively camouflaged Japanese planes. All the way in to the ship the fighters had flown within a mile or two of the enemy, but unable to register a "Tallyho." Now, at ten miles, they were visible to the task group, three or four thousand feet in the air.

The destroyer *Bagley*, fueling alongside, cast off at 2:17 p.m. The cruisers and destroyers of the screen closed in tight around the carriers, *Franklin*, *Enterprise*, *Belleau Wood*, and *San Jacinto*. The course was changed ninety degrees to the left, putting the attack on the sterns of the flattops. Now, at six miles, every five-inch in the formation opened up and the black bursts of exploding shells began to spot the sky around the Japs. One minute later, two miles away, the six enemy planes nosed over in their dives. Two hundred forty mm. muzzles took up the battle and pepper-like dots covered the western sky. Finally the twenty's opened as the Japs whipped close.

A Judy bomber, in flames, dove at Big Ben and missed, crashing in the water amidships, starboard. His bombs and plane exploded on impact with the water and the big flattop shook with the concussion. Now a Zeke came slanting



A suicide plane that missed has just exploded in the water by Big Ben . . . Another, in flames, that will not miss, hurtles down at the flight deck, with Franklin's gunners slugging at him every inch of the way.

down in a suicidal plunge, at over three hundred miles an hour. Big Ben's gunners hung grimly to their mounts, firing to the last. Flaming, the pilot dead at his controls, tracers ripping holes in the plane, nothing seemed able to stop it. Down into *Franklin's* flight deck it dove, beside the after end of the island. A terrific explosion shook the ship and she lurched in agonized protest. A mighty cloud of smoke and fire shot up from the thirty-foot crater in the flight deck, flames licking swiftly at the nearby planes on the hangar and flight decks. Gunners at their stations were blinded by the fumes, scorched by the flames; two dozen men had already died.

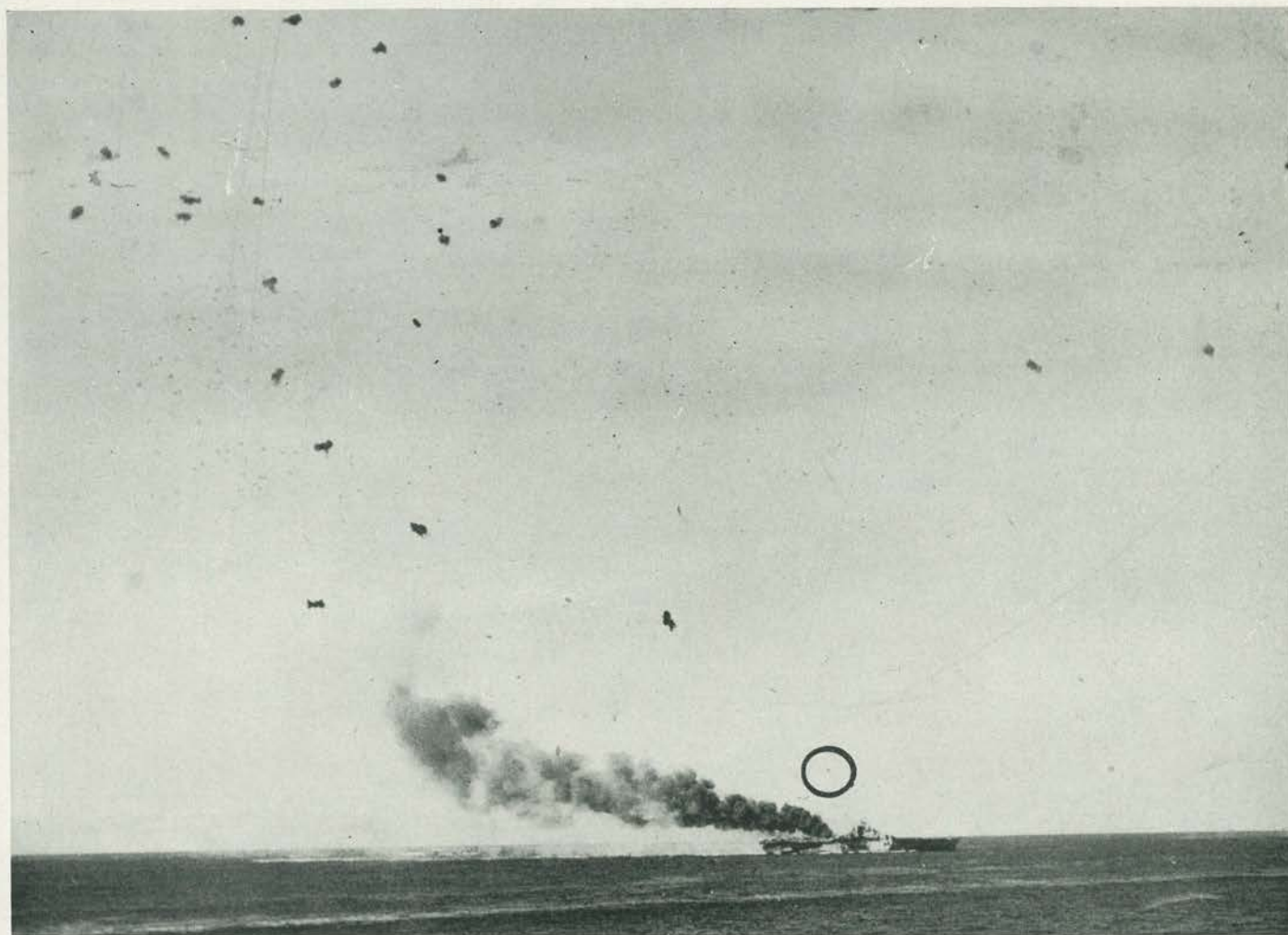
A third plane, another Judy, swept low over Big Ben, dropping his 1000-pound bomb, but this one missed—missed the island by feet and exploded in the sea. The Jap, still under heavy fire from Big Ben's forward batteries, swerved his plane to the left and crashed on the flight deck of the *Belleau Wood*. Two more suicide planes dived at the *San Jacinto*, but both missed. The final Jap aimed at the *Enterprise* but was blasted by Big Ben's gunners and the ships of the screen, exploding in mid-air.

Thus ended the first Kamikaze "suicide" attack on major United States warships.

On the *Franklin* gunners stood doggedly by their mounts, choking in the thick gray smoke, awaiting the next attack. CIC was out of commission, but the crew stood by, while Lt.

Vic Buhl and his technicians fought through darkened confusion to get the vital radars searching again. Electricians labored over their control boards, trying to clear them of faults. Under the cool direction of Comdr. Benjamin Moore and Comdr. Le Favour, the Damage Control Department, assisted by hundreds of willing hands, sprang into action. Hoses appeared magically on the flight and hangar decks. Sprinkler curtains erected walls of water on the hangar deck, isolating the burning area. Foam extinguishers and fog nozzles in the hands of the fire-fighters, beat back the flames. Flight deck crews jettisoned dozens of planes, before fire could reach their hundreds of gallons of gasoline. Fire marshals Caldwell and Graham, with the officers and men of the repair parties, ignoring all dangers, had the fire under control after forty-five minutes of desperate fighting.

Twenty minutes after the explosion, while courageous parties of men were groping through the smoke and water that had gained access to the lower decks, searching for trapped comrades, trying to clear the passages down to the engineering spaces of water, another awful explosion wrenched the decks. Gasoline from wrecked planes on the flight and hangar decks, leaking through a damaged bomb elevator, had reached the third and fourth decks. Vaporizing, it had exploded. The second explosion warped and twisted steel bulkheads, hurled men helter-skelter, killing many by concussion alone. So perished Joseph Esslinger, machinist's



Flack bursts dot the sky, as a third suicide plane, over Franklin, drops his bomb—it missed by feet—before he dives into the Belleau Wood's deck

mate first class, of Baltimore, Md., who went back into the flooded machine shop to help his friends. Musician Drew Widener died in that blast, as did Robert N. Orr, shipfitter first class, who had earned Captain Shoemaker's first commendation award while on the shakedown cruise, for putting out a dangerous fire. Bob Orr died because he was too brave to live. He rushed forward fearlessly into the spreading flames with an inadequate hose. Chief Machinist's Mate Riddle, pressing into the smoke and water on the third deck, was caught in this second blast and badly burned, as were many of his fellows in the Engineer Repair Party, under Lt. Fitzgerald. Others, like Lt. (jg) Thomas McIntyre, soft-spoken dentist of Minneapolis, with his pharmacist's mates and stretcher bearers, had died at their battle stations, directly in the path of the Kamikaze. Scores were painfully burned; many dangerously wounded.

Big Ben listed to starboard under the weight of the water being thrown on the fires from scores of high pressure hoses.

Damage Control Central Station fought a losing battle to keep her on an even keel. Stretchers loaded with men burned agonizingly, but uncomplaining, were gently carried through the dim, murky passageways to the battle dressing stations in the island and the wardroom where Comdr. Smith's Medical Department labored.

Overhead, slim P-38's from General MacArthur's airfield, sent out to cover the task group, provided against further attacks. The *Belleau Wood* and *Franklin* were still fighting fires whose columns of smoke could be seen from the nearby land. The *San Jacinto* and *Enterprise* stood by with combat air patrols; the battleship *South Dakota* and cruisers *New Orleans* and *Biloxi*, with the destroyers of the screen, lay in close with their hundreds of guns slanted upwards. With CIC again in commission, reports were coming of other enemy planes closing the task group but they failed to reach their objectives, being turned back or shot down by patrol planes.

When dark came, hundreds of men had distinguished



Cruiser gunners watch tensely, Franklin and Belleau Wood in flames, awaiting further attacks

themselves by their work in conquering the damaging fires. Fifty-four men were dead, three more would not live through the night; sixty wounded filled the dressing stations. The flight deck had a thirty-foot hole; the after elevator was warped by the force of the explosion. Large areas of the second and third decks were covered with water two or more feet deep, trapping Lt. Comdr. Greene and his hundreds of engineers for more than five hours. The third and fourth decks amidships were twisted and broken; steel plates were buckled and torn; stout doors and bulkheads were crumpled. The entire ship, spotlessly clean that morning, was covered with a thick film of black soot. Men worked all night pumping water out of flooded spaces, salvaging equipment, making Big Ben habitable again. After many hours of effort, with the ship on an even keel again, the task group joined the tanker fleet on October 31st and refueled.

The next day, with 13 Hellcats, 15 Helldivers and 4 Avengers aboard and still operational, *Franklin* and the *Belleau Wood*, escorted by destroyers, retired to Ulithi for repairs that would fit them for further operations. Admiral Davison transferred his flag to the *Enterprise*.

When Big Ben steamed slowly into the choppy waters of Ulithi Harbor, where hundreds of warships lay at anchor, to drop her hook a few hundred yards from the hospital ship *Solace*, the crew of a fighting comrade, the *USS Wasp*, manned the rail and gave three cheers, the highest compliment that one man-o'-war can pay another. The carrier *Nassau* sent the following despatch:

"Deem it an honor to be anchored in the same harbor

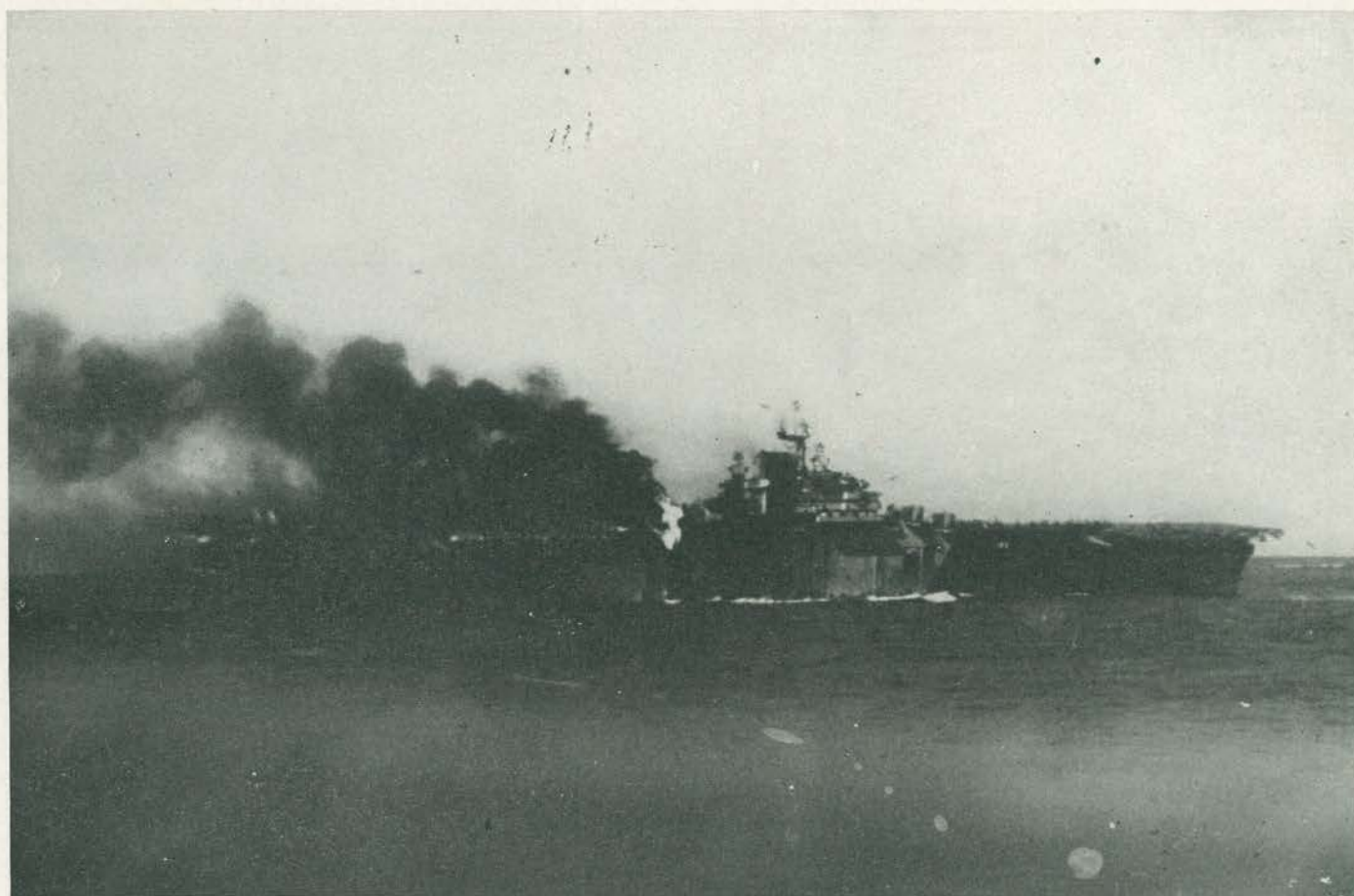


Fighting flames on flight deck

with *Franklin*. Congratulations on 'one swell job.' All our best wishes for the future."

From Admiral Nimitz to the U.S. Pacific Fleet: "It can be announced with assurance that the Japanese Navy has been beaten, routed, and broken by the Third and Seventh Fleets."

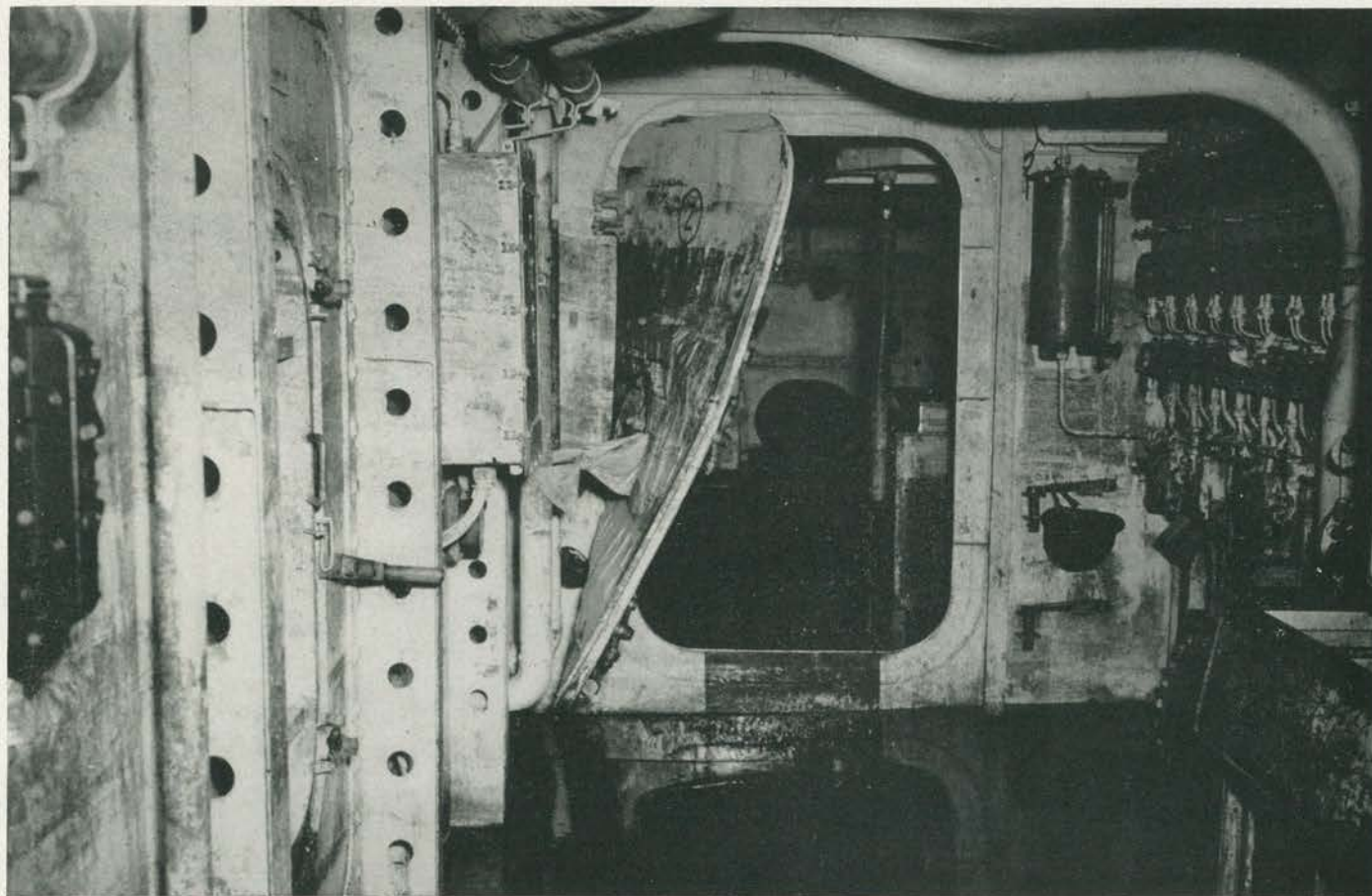
Men lifted off their sooty helmets, washed their grimy, blackened faces; spoke sadly but proudly of comrades who had died at their battle stations.



Flames roar on Franklin's deck . . . Fortunately planes, though gassed, were not armed



Fire still smoulders in the gallery deck . . . Through hole in the flight deck, fire-fighters pour on more water



Force of the gasoline explosion wrenched steel doors; lower decks were flooded to depth of two feet

"... I stepped on to the dock and just looked at those big, blue mountains. Kopec, the big Slav mech behind me, said it for all of us: 'Jeesus, don't it look beautiful!' ..."

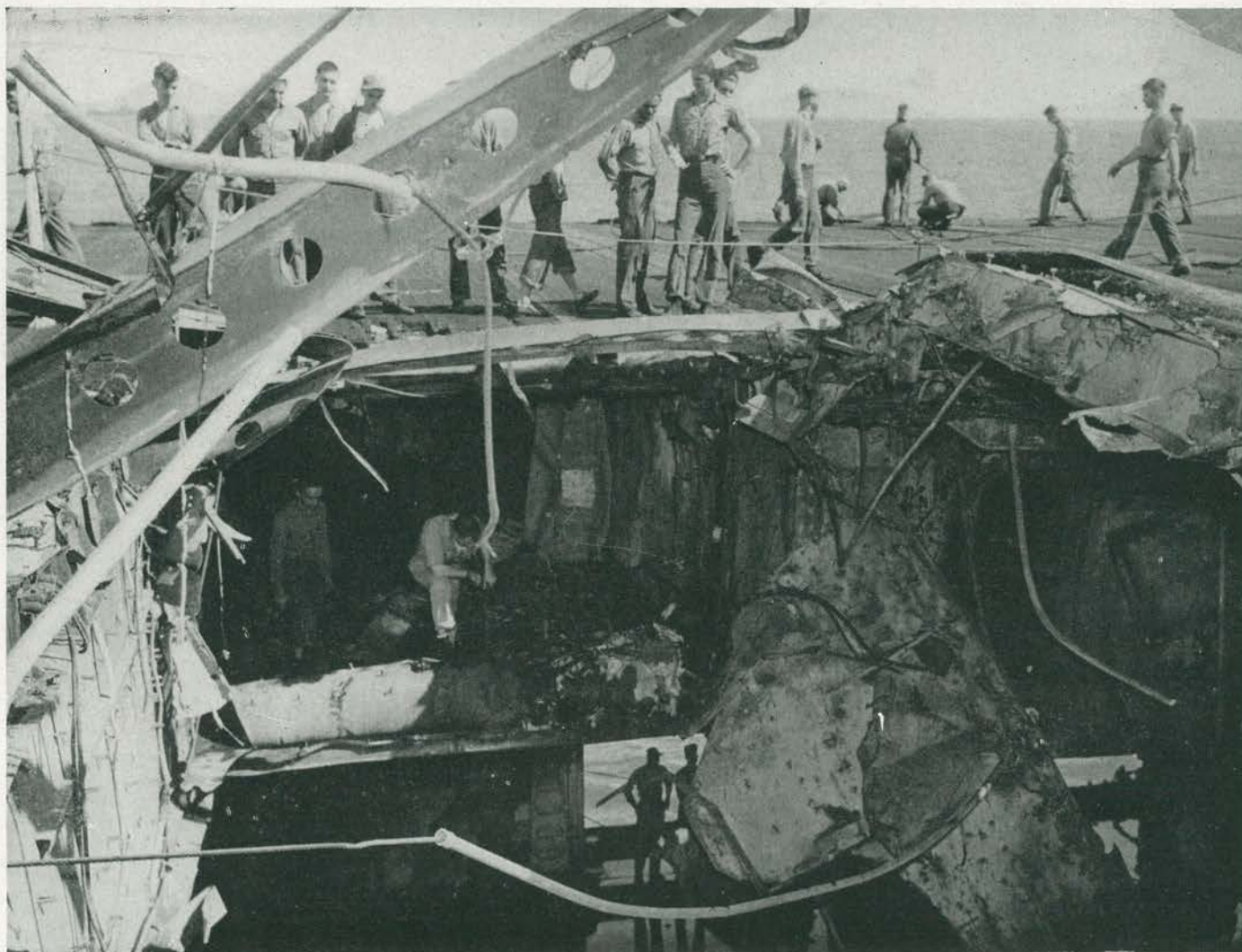
"There was real milk, and real girls—American girls ... We were home, just for a little while, until the navy yard patched us up, but home ..."

BIG BEN SPENDS CHRISTMAS AT HOME

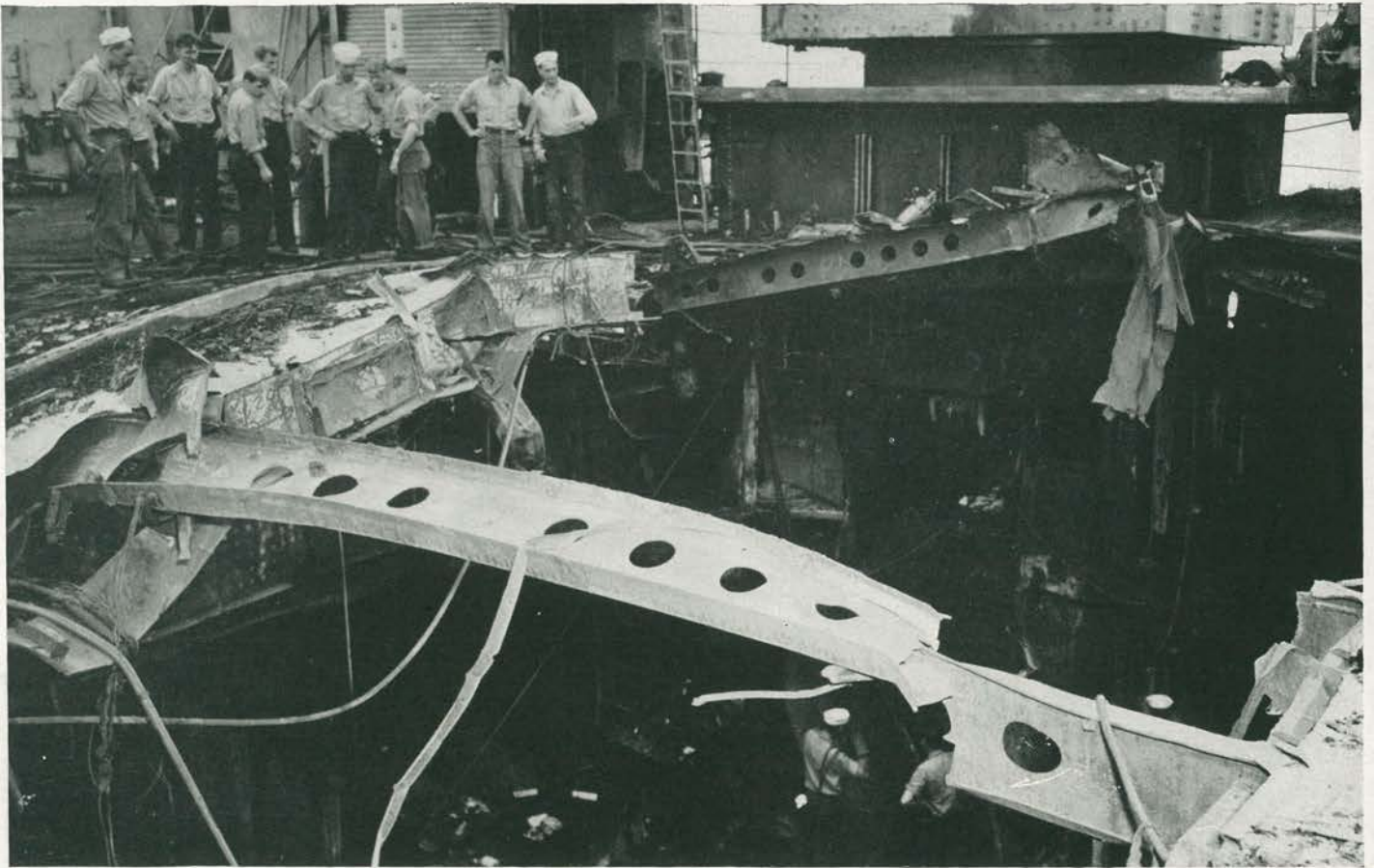
BIG ESSEX CLASS CARRIERS, bearing the brunt of the sea war, were desperately needed in the Third Fleet. If repairs to the flight deck could be made by the hull repair ship, *Jason*, Big Ben could operate for several months before returning to Pearl Harbor or the United States. As soon as the big auxiliary could get up steam she came alongside, bringing dozens

of crack repair crews to survey the wreckage, and repair the damage.

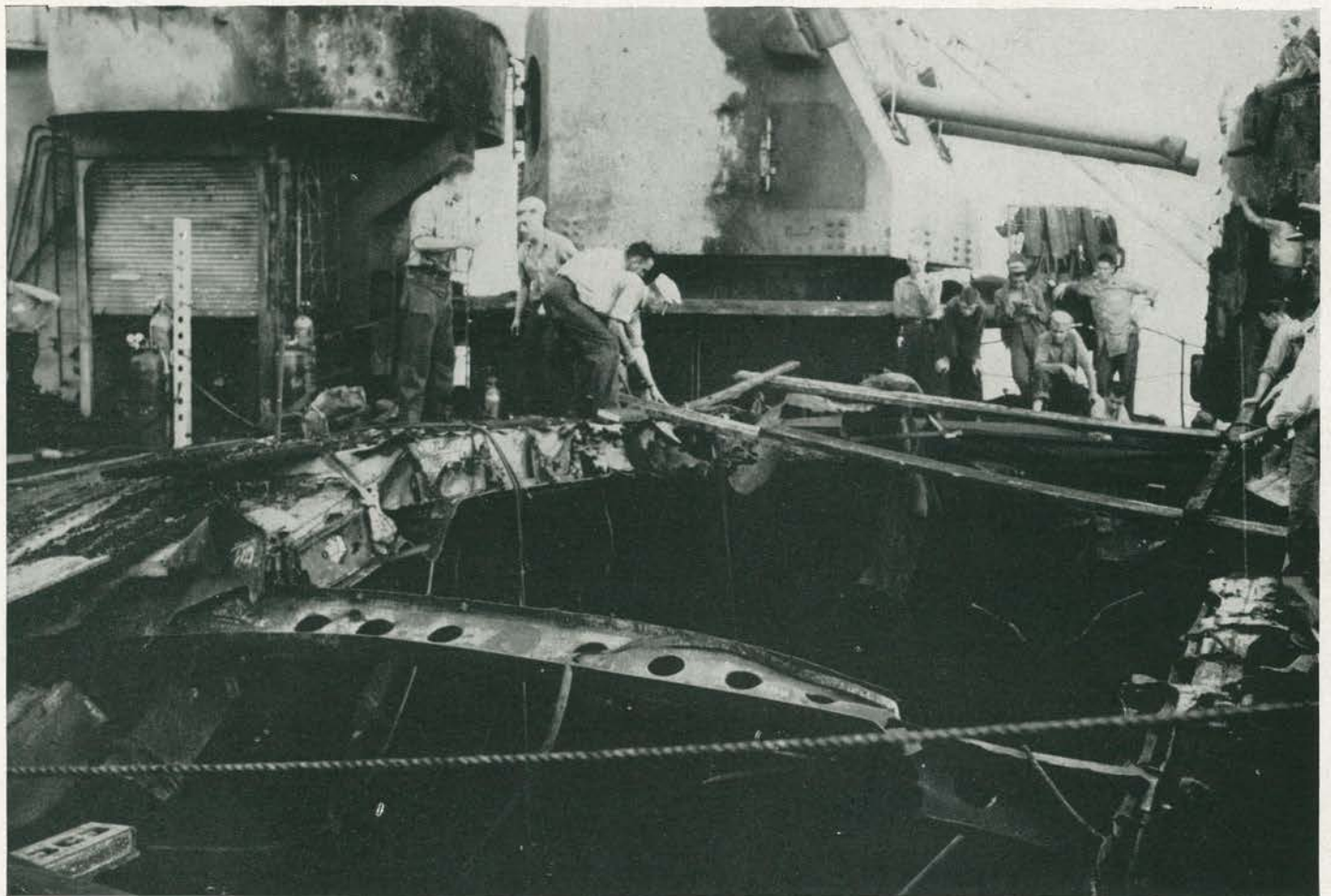
Captain Lesile E. Gehres reported aboard November 2nd, 1944. In the temporary rank of Commodore he had directed all naval air units in the Aleutian campaign, during two years' service in the North Pacific theater, as commander of



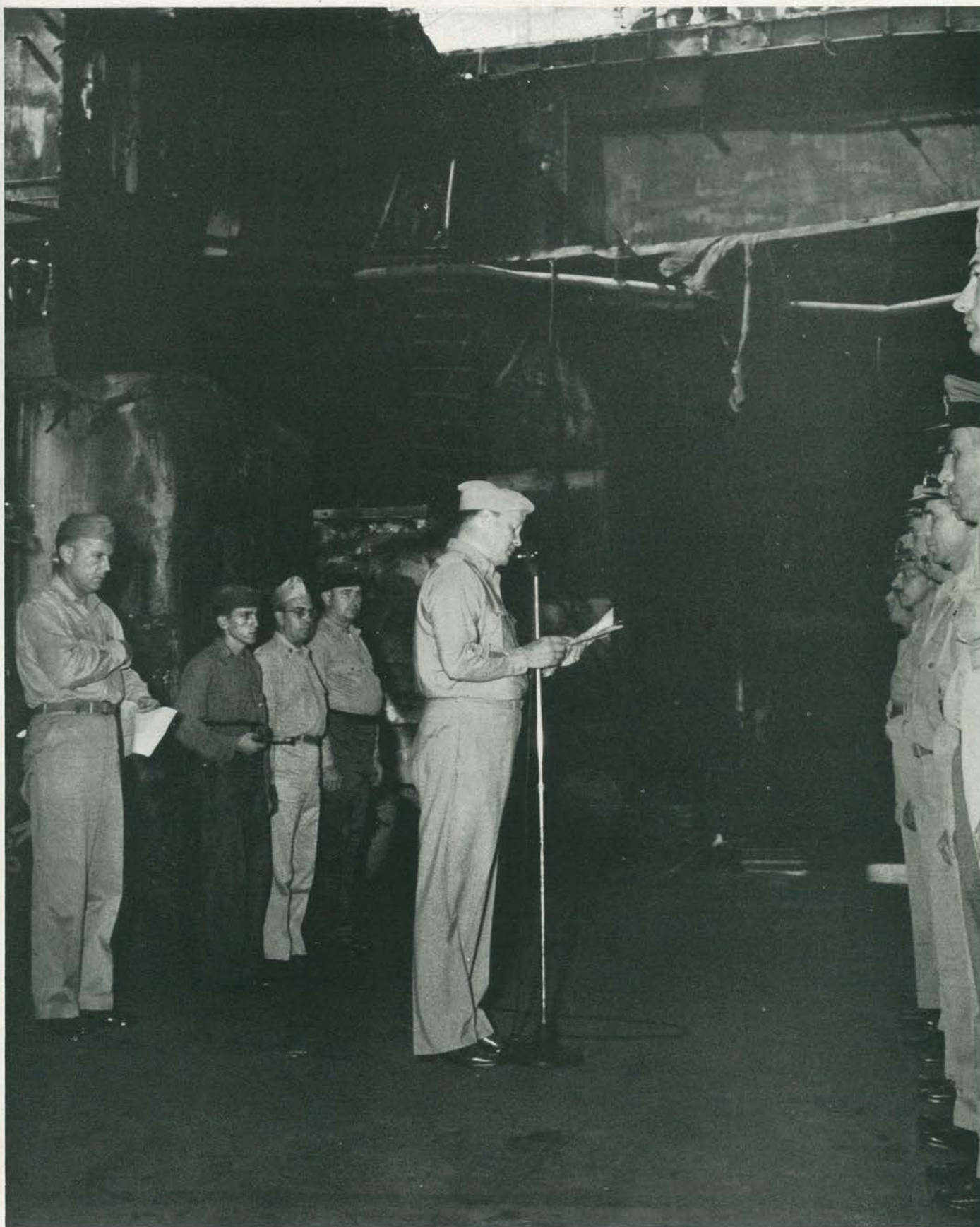
The crashing Kamikaze suicide plane blasted a huge crater in the flight deck



This was too big a job for the limited repair facilities at Ulithi



The gunners who manned these badly scorched mounts fired to the last, as the Kamikaze flamed in



Captain Shoemaker, left, sadly relinquishes command of Big Ben to Captain Gehres (at Microphone)

Patrol Wing Four, With service in the Navy since 1917, a naval aviator since 1927, he had climbed from enlisted rank to command by sheer ability. When opportunity offered he cheerfully gave up his temporary rank of Commodore that he might command the *Franklin*, hardly a year old—the first

skipper to rise from the ranks to the command of a first-line carrier.

Captain Shoemaker had orders to proceed to the Philippines where he would command all Naval Air Bases in the liberated area.

On November 7th, on the battle-scarred hangar deck, in the gray light from Ulithi's cloudy sky, that filtered down through the bomb crater, Captain Shoemaker sadly relinquished command of Big Ben, with a word of farewell to the men who had served with him, Captain Gehres, a tall, handsome, powerfully-built man, of erect military bearing, accepted his grave responsibility with modesty and determination. The crew stood in ranks while the new commanding officer made his first inspection.

Other battle-tired warships of Task Group 38.4 anchored in Ulithi during the next days. Battles for control of the Philippines sky still raged and two task groups were fighting alongside MacArthur's newly-arrived air forces to stem the menace of Japanese Kamikaze planes—suicide dives were now an accepted method of attack. During the brief period after October 29th when the Army had assumed all responsibility for air control, 30,000 Japanese troops had landed on Leyte to reinforce Yamashita's men. The Navy was brought back into the fight.

Crews from the repair ship, after assessing the shattered decks, decided that it would require all available steel stock and more than a month to put Big Ben temporarily back in the fighting line. Ulithi's limited facilities must be kept available for quick repair of ships which would return to

action in weeks. *Franklin* must go back to Pearl Harbor.

Admiral Halsey, with officers of his staff, visited Big Ben before she sailed. Men eagerly thronged the deck to glimpse this legendary warrior, in his crumpled khaki uniform, shirt open at the throat, with the four silver stars of a full Admiral on his cap. Comdr. Moore showed the Admiral over the torn decks for an hour, and talked of the ship. When Admiral Halsey departed he had the highest praise for the conduct of *Franklin* and her men, in battle and after. His autographed photograph inscribed: "To *Franklin* and her splendid crew," became a ship's treasure.

The night before Big Ben sailed for Pearl, sad news came from the fleet. The carrier *Lexington*, flagship, had been hit by a Kamikaze, which crashed on the bridge, killing scores. The carrier, *Intrepid*, fighting off attack, was struck by another suicide plane that flamed into a row of machine guns and killed twenty-five of the men behind them. Neither of the giant carriers were damaged seriously enough to come out of the line but crew replacements were urgently needed. *Franklin* would not be in combat for some time so Comdr. Moore must reluctantly pick three officers and 103 men to reinforce them. It was a hard choice. Ens. Wynn and Lt. (jg) Mathieson, communicators, and Lt. Mike Finlay, photographic interpreter, with 103 men, were regretfully



Captain Gehres, accompanied by Cmdr. Moore, the "Exec," inspects his veteran crew for the first time

selected. Sad groups were standing by the gangway at dusk, their friends around them, waiting for the boats that would take them away.

One young seaman hid on the fantail for hours until the perspiring boatswains mate delivered the unwelcome orders. None wished to leave the ship they had come to love; and on the eve of her possible return to the States, it was doubly bitter.

Recreation parties visited the island of Mog Mog. It was at Mog Mog that *Franklin's* men enjoyed their own band, played in the sand, swam, drank their rations of beer and came back to the ship in the evenings, sunburned and relaxed. The island was a dot of palm-covered sand in the Ulithi Atoll, with the thatched houses of its original inhabitants—several hundred South Sea Islanders—still intact. The natives had been removed to a larger island for the duration, and rental was paid them for the use of Mog Mog as a recreation area.

Twenty-six years after the last gun ceased firing on the Western Front in that earlier World War, November 11th, 1944, *Franklin* and her two destroyer escorts stood east for Pearl Harbor. The Air Group men were definitely going home. Big Ben might be repaired at Pearl or she might go to a West Coast Navy Yard.

The lads of the air squadrons, combat tension relieved,



A liberty on Mog Mog . . . LEFT TO RIGHT: Joseph Lafferty, Y2c, wounded 19 March; Chad Howes, Y3c, Charles Eder, Y3c; Roland Datzman, Y3c, killed in action 19 March

enlivened the ship by producing a show. Abetted by that polished master of the "touch rococo," Lt. (jg) "Uncle Joe" Stilwill, of the dour countenance and gay heart, the tanned



Accompanied by a staff officer, Admiral William Halsey visits Big Ben; Comdr. Moore (right) is chief host



STANDING: Ens. Barney Talbott, Lt. E. V. Osborne, Ens. G. Higgins, Ens. Bill Dorie, Ens. J. M. Robbins, Lt. Joe Maguire, Ens. Tom Lawton, Lt. (jg) Dick Huxford. SECOND ROW: Ens. Bob Hungerford, Ens. Jim Carpenter, Ens. J. Kehoe, Ens. John McKinney, Lt. (jg) Joe Stilwell, Lt. (jg) Jim Pope, Lt. Cdr. W. "Duke" Slater. FIRST ROW: Lt. Red Harris, Lt. Knute Weidman "Maud," Lt. (jg) Bill Parsons "Mable," "Saxy" Dowell

young men whose most frequent appearances for months had been on the flight deck or over enemy targets, assisted by fun-loving Saxie Dowell, brought down the house — a hangar deckful of cheering sailors.

"Uncle Joe" himself, with his droll advertisement of a too-well-known brand of tinned meat, his humorous chatter; the Gray-Bass Trio — Lts. Bill Dorie, "Ozzie" Osborne, and Joe Maguire — sang an old favorite with new words: "I



The Warrant Officers

Experts in every department, these men had a lot to do with getting those flags painted on Big Ben's island structure

wanted wings, until I got the doggoned things." "Jumbo" Watson, the only musician in the world who played a bull fiddle under his chin; Lt. Lawton as a Jap prisoner, captured in a beer barrel at the Mog Mog Officers' Club; Knute Weidman and "Deacon" Parsons, chorus girls extraordinary; and finally, "Honeyboy" Fred Harris, with dozens of others in the "Fightronian Glee Club", filled the evening with laughter. Soulfully, to the music of "Old Man River," Honeyboy sang of "Old Man Taylor," a left-handed tribute to Comdr. Joe Taylor, the Air Officer, who laughed as heartily as any of the appreciative plane-pushers.

Franklin arrived at Pearl Harbor, November 21st, 1944. The navy yard, after a quick inspection, decided Bremerton Navy Yard was better equipped to make repairs. Details were radioed ahead and even as Big Ben steamed westward by Diamond Head the next day, machine shops of the Puget Sound Navy Yard were preparing for their task.

Memorial services were held Sunday, November 26th, on the hangar deck, for the men of the Air Group and of the ship who had given their lives during the cruise. The rites were simple and impressive. Hymns were reverently sung, led by Chaplins Chamberlin and Harkins. A prayer was offered for the comrades who had fallen in battle and were not coming home. The roll of their names was sadly called; three volleys were fired over the Pacific in their honor. After a silent prayer, the final hymn was sung.

At Orchard Point, near Bremerton, after brief ceremonies, the Air Group and passengers left the ship. Fighting Air

Group Thirteen and the men of the *Franklin* had been comrades for nearly a year. Comdr. Dick Kibbe, speaking for the Air Group, recalled the days together and said "Thank you and good luck, *Franklin*!" Captain Gehres, for the people of Big Ben, praised the group's brilliant combat record and wished the men who had been such splendid shipmates many happy landings.

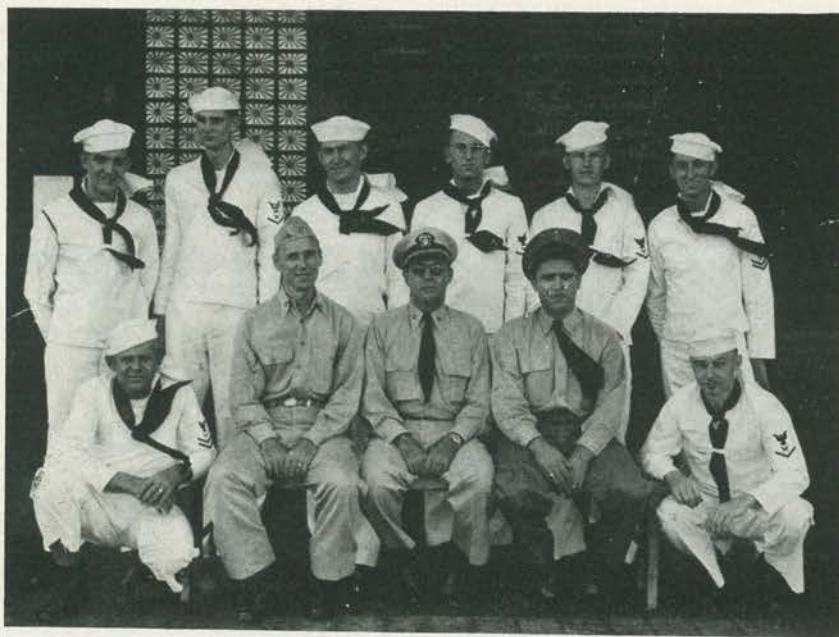
Since their first combat operation of July 4th, in the whirlwind tempo of the Pacific War, Air Group Thirteen had made an enviable record. They had destroyed or damaged at least 338 enemy planes, against a loss of 53 of their own. They had sunk 60 merchant vessels for a total of 155,000 tons; damaged another 66 for 158,000 tons more. They had sunk 15 Japanese warships for a total of 57,950 tons and damaged 19 others totaling 254,500 tons. The group had lost 36 pilots, 30% of the original complement; it had lost 27 aircrewmembers, 27% of the original complement. It had flown 3,971 combat sorties against the enemy.

Customs inspection was brief; there had been little foreign trade on this cruise, except in bombs and bullets. The last airman was off the ship by dark and all hands looked forward sleeplessly to the morrow.

Early in the morning tugs were moving the *Franklin* to the navy yard. It was hard to warp the huge ship into the drydock, with the wind and tide whipping her out of position and it was late in the afternoon when she rested on the blocks of Drydock 5.



USS *Franklin* in Drydock Five, Bremerton Navy Yard, for repairs. The USS *Bunker Hill* (on the right) receives repairs also



FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: John Streck (killed in action 19 March); Lt. (jg) George Leitch; Lt. Comdr. Paul Speer; John Formichella; Donald Price (wounded 19 March); BACK ROW: James Klick; Charles Eder, Jr.; William Tyree (wounded 19 March); Richard Hand; Rolland Datzman (killed in action 19 March); Joseph Lafferty (wounded 19 March)

Chief "Mike" Gibbons and Chief Newman were head-bartenders at the CPO's party in Bremerton



Chief Otis Lee Corbett (with glass) tells another tall one

*Lt. (jg) Ritz, noted trencherman,
visits the Warrant's party*



*Lt. Comdr. Greene (LEFT) and
Chief Boatswain's Mate Gentry (RIGHT)
show the ship's company
some real "jitterbugging"*



*Ship's cook, "Butterball" Morrison,
and some of his satisfied clients
at the CPO party*





Chief Photographer Luke Durante poses for one of himself

Shore leave was granted at once. Men marched in formation to the gate, dispersing swiftly to dash for the nearest telephone, telegraph office or place of refreshment. The next day, half the crew — fifteen hundred men — left the ship for twenty full days of relaxation; every man had the opportunity to visit his home.

Puget Sound Navy Yard has one of the finest reputations for efficiency of any naval shore establishment. The men were moved off the ship to live in barracks and thousands of workmen were busy aboard, night and day. With half the crew on leave there was much for the remainder to do: fire-watches — standing by for hours to see that a welder's spark did not cause a conflagration; working parties — tons of stores to be removed or carried aboard; security watches — long hours of patrolling deserted decks. But the barracks were a pleasure for the men; regulations were enforced by ship's officers and petty officers, considerate of the men they knew so well. Food was served in the cafeteria, which fed 9,000 men daily and it was a liberal menu, with the green food, fresh vegetables, and milk, that men on sea service crave so much. Two entire mess halls were set aside for Franklin men, and the cooks who prepared the food often remarked to inspecting officers from the ship that it was a pleasure to serve those boys from Big Ben — a more orderly, cheerful, well-mannered outfit had never been billeted there. No pushing, no shoving, no complaining; the happiest, scrappiest crew of them all.

There was a farewell party for Comdr. Benny Moore, the Executive Officer. Every man aboard was sad to see him leave. Lt. Comdr. Paul Speer, his pleasant and efficient aide, was also detached, to be relieved by Lt. P. E. Hathaway. Comdr. Joe Taylor became the Executive Officer and Comdr. H. H. Hale the Air Officer.

Christmas and New Year's Day, 1945, were the only days during Big Ben's stay that the chipping hammers, riveters



Dr. George W. Fox (CENTER) seems to have accidentally exchanged jackets with Chief Signalman Harry Reese (LEFT)

and machines of the repair forces were stilled and as the middle of January approached repairs were almost finished. When the last leave party returned two gala farewell parties for the crewmen and their friends were given by the ship at Craven Center. As usual, the lads of the band shone, and between the music, refreshments, and pretty girls, the dances were memorable affairs. The chief petty officers and warrant officers had farewell parties of their own — pictures tell the story better than words.

On January 27th, Captain Gehres thanked the navyyard for a superb overhaul. He was speaking for every man on the ship when he said "Our fighting efficiency has been increased by your skill; in turn our every effort will be dedicated to the complete destruction of the remaining strongholds of the enemy." The captain had used every moment to prepare for the battles ahead; with Comdr. Taylor and the department heads he had been vigilant to see that every detail of repair was thorough. Every man and officer that could be spared had two day's fire-fighting training at Manchester, Washington; radar operators and officers refreshed at CIC schools; gunners were kept in trim; engineers overhauled their machinery. On January 28th, when Big Ben steamed slowly away from the navyyard to anchor at Sinclair Inlet for final tests and calibrations she was as ready to fight as her captain could make her.

There were a few liberties left — times for last good byes — during the next days. Farewells were bid to wives, boarding trains for the other side of the continent; girl friends in Seattle and Bremerton were treated to farewell dinners. As the last ship's boat returned through the foggy Sound on January 30th, Big Ben had said "adieu."

The sea was rough as Franklin plowed southward for Alameda, California, on January 31st. She was on a speed run, and the new men aboard were recalling promises of their shipmates: "the old girl rides like a feather bed." Even



TOP: Don Forsyth, Lt. P. E. Hathaway, (both killed in action 19 March) and Chief Frajman enjoy dinner



ACOM Carl Orndorff as mess cook



Gentry and Ulma assist Ed Procaccio



Chiefs: Unknown; Frajman, Aja (KIA); Petty; MacLane (KIA); Parsons; Tyree; Kraft; Procaccio; Routson (KIA); Howard Paul; Orndorff; Unknown; Unknown.

a 30,000-ton carrier can pitch and roll when she is traveling at 30 knots through heavy seas. Big Ben was off the Golden Gate at daybreak, February 2nd. Oakland suburbanites, riding trains across the bridge to their work in San Francisco, were given the spectacle of a big flat-top, crew in ranks on deck, proudly steaming under the Oakland bridge. Before noon she was moored by the Naval Air Station in Alameda.

Air Group Five, under Comdr. E. B. Parker, Jr., U. S. N., was welcomed aboard. Some months before it had returned home after a long combat tour and was again on its way to the wars. Instead of Hellcats the pilots of Fighting Five, under Lt. Comdr. MacGregor Kilpatrick, flew swift Corsairs. Though the Corsair is somewhat faster than the Hellcat, and its gull wings give it beauty, it is a sore subject among fighter pilots as to which is the better plane. Torpedo Five, commanded by Lt. Comdr. Allan C. Edwards, flew Avengers; Bombing Five, under Lt. Comdr. John G. Sheridan, manned Helldivers. Nearly half of Air Group Five's pilots were of the U. S. Marine Corps, the first marine aviators aboard a large carrier for many years.

By the mysterious grapevine among Navy wives, many were in San Francisco, scorning the scarcity of hotel rooms, for a last goodbye. Every officer and man that could be spared was granted shore leave February 6th. There was something fateful about that last evening; many who lost friends or loved ones on Big Ben have spoken of an overpowering feeling that these goodbyes were final. Some of the letters written home by men on the ship revealed the same premonition. The next day, February 7th, 1945, *Franklin* and her escorts stood west for Pearl Harbor.

In the Chief Petty Officer's quarters, on the third deck, just abaft the sickbay, a traditional ceremony was performed while Big Ben plowed west. Doctor Fox, long an honorary member of the Chief's Mess, and Lt. Philip Hathaway, himself an ex-chief, with yeoman Don Forsythe, a press correspondent, helped initiate a dozen brand-new chief petty officers. The ceremony ended only when the new chiefs were ready to return to the ranks. Beyond this, it was an uneventful crossing, and *Franklin* arrived in Pearl Harbor on February 12th, 1945.



The Men Who Kept Fighting Squadron FIVE in the Air

FRONT ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: B. T. Flanagan, Y2c, C. Upton, AOM1c; L. A. Willett, PR3c, C. W. Jones, AOM1c; C. C. Chelette, AOM1c, R. W. Waskiewicz, AMM2c; W. L. Wilson, AMMH1c, J. A. Knowles, AMM2c; R. O. Ruehle, AMM2c; SECOND ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Unknown—R. W. Hogue, ARM1c; I. Light, ARM1c, Unknown—Unknown; M. Kilpatrick (C.O.) C. G. Knight, Y1c; Unknown—Unknown—W. J. Johnson, AMM1c; C. F. Laws, AMM1c; THIRD ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: J. M. McCollum, ACMM, L. G. Miller, CPhoM; P. P. Day, ACOM, N. Trepashko, ACRT; J. W. McCoy, ACM, C. T. Hamilton; F. Christianson, ACEM

CHAPTER TEN

" . . . we could have left her there, I guess . . . By all the rules they use in this game she should be sleeping now on the bottom off the coast of Japan. But some people don't believe in all the rules . . . Our captain didn't . . . "

THE SHIP THAT WOULDN'T BE SUNK

THE VICIOUS BATTLE for Iwo Jima was subsiding — the Japanese commander had sent his last message to the homeland: "I expect to die here." Superforts, in massive formation, were roaring through the stratosphere over the battered cities of the Japanese home islands. Once again news reports

of the mighty task groups of the Fifth Fleet were lacking during one of the brief periods of inactivity that portended awful consequences for the once-arrogant yellow men.

Big Ben daily expected orders to up anchor and steam westward, flank speed, to join the fleet. With the Philippines



Captain Leslie E. Gehres, USN, Commanding Officer, USS Franklin, November 7th, 1944, to June 30th, 1945



A Corsair takes a "wave-off" as others circle to land

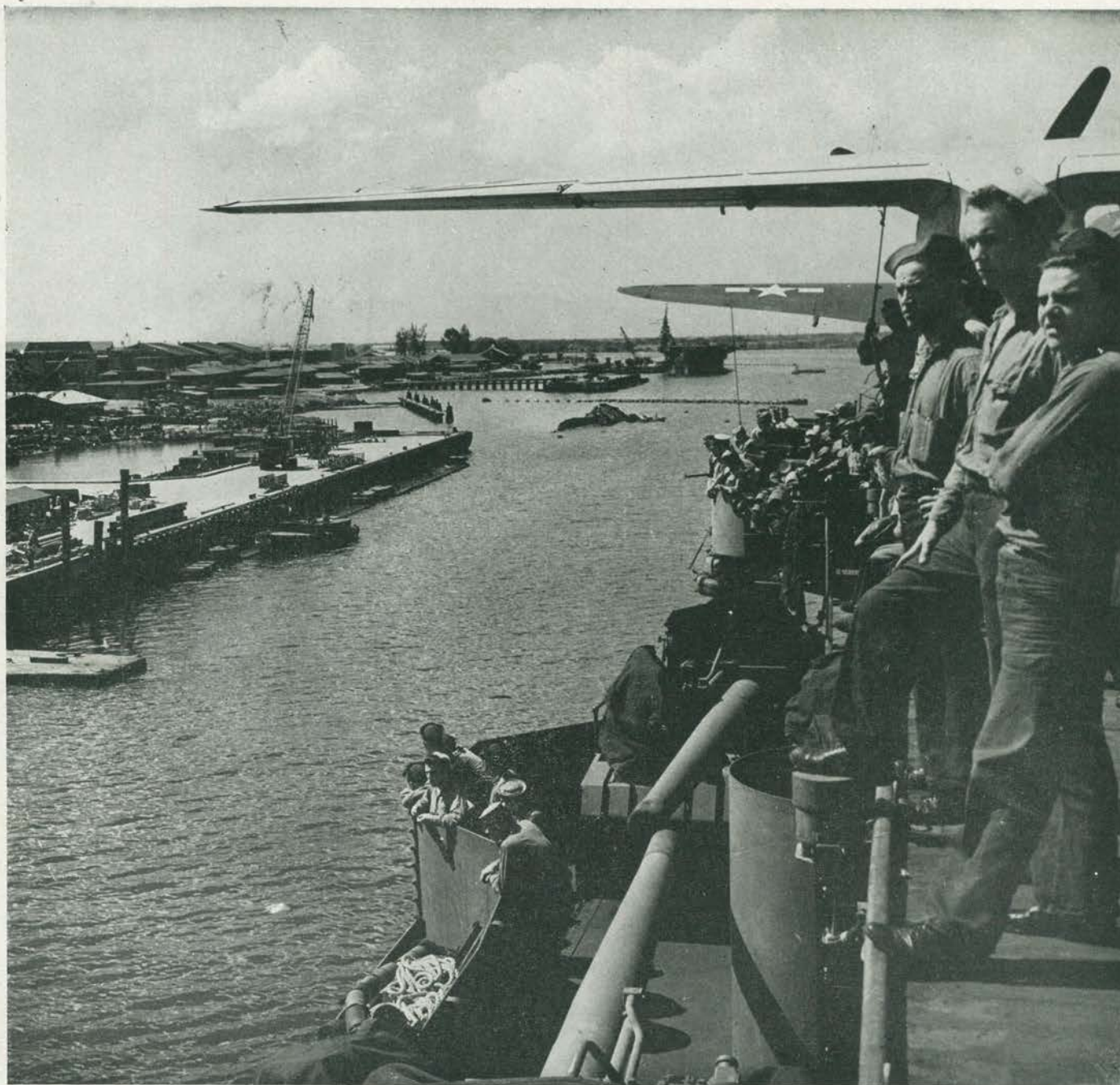
firmly in control of American armies; with every major island port in American hands; with the surviving Japanese surrounded in the barren mountain ranges; with Iwo Jima, only six hundred miles from Tokyo, bloodily collapsing in death, the next move would be close to the main islands of Japan. By the familiar pattern of amphibious warfare it would find the fast carrier forces neutralizing the air bases of Japan proper, followed by a terrific fleet bombardment of the next doomed stronghold. Then the Marine and Army divisions would pour ashore, under an umbrella of sea-borne airpower. Every flattop in the fleet would be needed!

The expected orders did not come immediately. There would be three weeks of operation in the Hawaiian area to further qualify the fliers of Air Group Five in carrier landings, as well as the pilots of another group, Air Group 87. Those weeks passed swiftly. The airmen trained hard, much as the pilots of Air Group Thirteen had trained here nearly

a year before; day landings, night landings, simulated attacks, formation flying.

During the days *Franklin* practiced vigorously with her guns, with damage control problems, first aid drills, physical exercises to put the men in peak condition. Every man now knew the seriousness of combat and the importance of striving for high battle efficiency. Comdr. Taylor and Captain Gehres frequently addressed the crew at quarters, instilling the determination to make Big Ben the best and toughest ship in the fleet.

As the refresher training ended, the painstaking care with which the Navy and its officers strive to be forehanded and provide for every possible contingency was impressed upon everyone. The productivity of America's assembly lines was making itself felt on the fighting front: accessories that men once counted as luxuries were commonplace. Every man had a sheath knife, life jacket with pin-on lamp, gas mask, steel



Big Ben's men take a farewell look at Pearl Harbor

battle helmet, plastic whistle, waterproof flashlight, protective clothing and cream to prevent flash burns from explosions; first aid boxes and lockers were located at dozens of strategic places. Life rafts and life nets, fully equipped with survival kits, were plentiful. Every emergency that human ingenuity could foresee was provided for in the elaborate systems of damage control, fire-fighting and repair. Comdr. H. S. Cone, Supply Officer, and Comdr. W. R. LeFavour, Damage Control Officer, both of whom had worked wonders on the Franklin, were detached at this time and Lt. Comdr. D. V. Wengrovius became supply chief while Lt. Comdr. R. L. Downes took over Damage Control. Big Ben's mission was assigned and she steamed westward on March 3rd, 1945, ready in every respect.

Eventually Big Ben's mission was assigned and she steamed west on March 3rd, 1945. She was ready.

Accompanying her were the usual destroyer escorts and

the mighty new battle cruiser, *Guam*. A stream of westbound warships moved with her, separated by distances of 50 to 100 miles. The push was on!

The task group arrived in Ulithi Lagoon March 13th. Here the stay was short. Full of transports, foreshadowing invasion, the wide anchorage made men marvel at the prodigality and power of their country. These hundreds of warships, undreamed of when war shattered the Pacific peace; these tens of thousands of soldiers then unmustered, were here at a newly conquered base, trained to perfection and ready to strike a foe who had been preparing twenty years for this war. Ready to strike him on his doorstep, for this would be the long awaited Okinawa operation.

Franklin departed Ulithi, the flagship of Task Group 58.2, with Rear Admiral Ralph Davison's two-starred flag at her truck. Also aboard, as passengers, were Rear Admiral Bogan

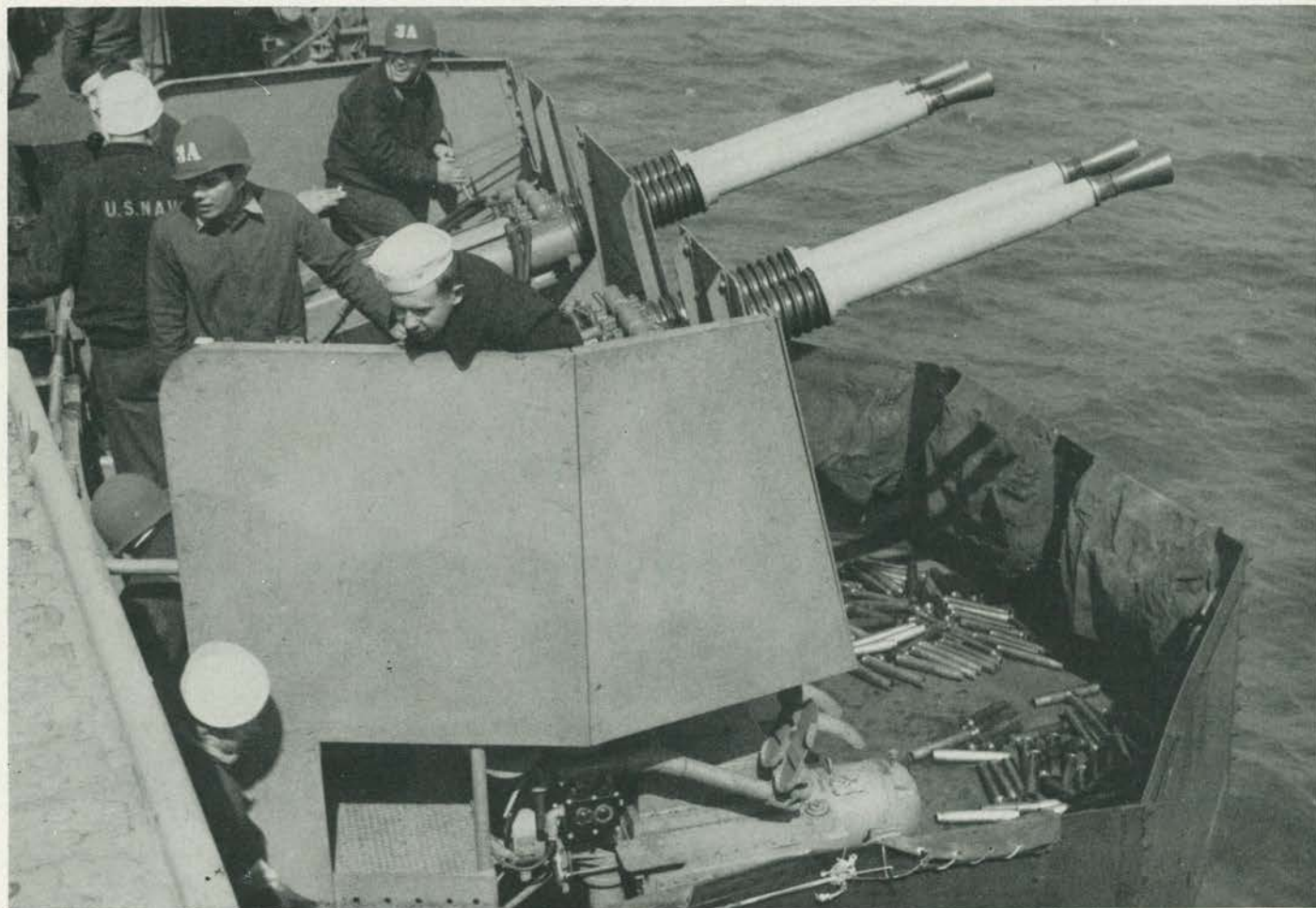


ABOVE: Chief Petty Officers, March 12, 1944 . . . BELOW: Warships of the Fifth and Seventh Fleets, massed at Ulithi Harbor for a blow against the Japanese Empire





ABOVE: *Old Glory* flies over a combat air patrol of Fighting Five's Corsairs, being readied on Big Ben's deck . . .
BELOW: *A forty mm. quad gun crew, ready on their stations, after throwing a few rounds in target practice*



and his staff, and Captain Arnold Isbel, who was to command the carrier *Yorktown*. Admiral Bogan would relieve the veteran Admiral Davison sometime after the next operation.

As the harbor dropped from sight behind the warships, the captain announced: "We are sailing northward, a part of Task Force Fifty-Eight, bound to strike the home islands of the Japanese Empire for the first time!"

Four powerful task groups rendezvoused at sunset March 15th, to become Task Force Fifty-Eight, of the dreaded Fifth Fleet, with Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher in command. The mission of the task force was to neutralize the air bases and shatter the supply ports of Kyushu and Honshu, main Japanese islands. Any remnants of the Japanese Navy were to be destroyed.

On April 1st the United States Sixth Army and a Marine force would invade the beaches of Okinawa, with the Fifth Fleet covering them from the air. If the men of the Navy did their job, the men of the Army would be able to accomplish theirs.

The most powerful armada of warships in history was an awe-inspiring sight as it steamed northward. Sea-air power incarnate, it was a force worthy of the proud battle colors streaming from every ship, a living symbol of the most powerful nation on earth. For 50 miles across the ocean stretched the task force, each group with four big carriers in the center, a screen of fast battleships and cruisers, circled by a score of destroyers. Each task group a combination of air and surface fire-power, born in war's crucible of far-flung Pacific distances, streamlined and modern as a jet plane. Overhead dozens of Hellcats and Corsairs circled, the combat patrol. For 100 miles in every direction the Helldivers scouted the ocean. Submarines posted over the sea would flash reports of any enemy motion beyond the aerial screen; hundreds of radars unceasingly scanned sea and sky, alert for the first enemy shadow. This was "the Fleet that came to stay."

On March 17th, as the force neared Japan's coast in full battle order, exploding numerous drifting enemy mines as it proceeded, Nipponese search planes were encountered for the first time. The combat air patrol protected the force by day and "snoopers" were hunted at night by Grummans from the carrier *Independence* — a night fighter flat-top. In darkness the fleet closed to 100 miles of the Empire and nearly an hour before dawn on the 18th the first twenty of Big Ben's warplanes were roaring down the flight deck, to join groups from all the other carriers. The targets were aircraft, airfields, and hangars at Kagoshima and Izumi on Kyushu Island. Throughout the day strikes thundered into the northeast. Eighteen enemy planes were shot down in the air by fighters of Air Group Five alone and many more were destroyed on the ground. Hangars were destroyed, buildings and some small boats set ablaze. Four Corsairs were lost, three to enemy flak, one operationally. The pilot of one was rescued by the "life guard" submarine, just offshore.

The Japanese reacted violently. A dozen enemy planes were shot down almost within sight of Task Group 58.2. One plane plunged down vertically at the carrier *Intrepid*, missing its target by feet. Pilots who witnessed the dive said the Jap must have started from 30,000 feet—five miles up. It was

a day of continuous alarms, with men tense at battle station for many hours. The combat air patrol scoured the skies, chasing enemy planes—a search made difficult by the cloudy, overcast weather, which favored the Jap, who was throwing in his planes singly. Often a plane pursued for miles would be discovered to be friendly. Big Ben, as flagship for the group, had aboard the Fighter Officer of Admiral Davison's Staff, Lt. Comdr. Francis L. Winston, a veteran of three years in the Pacific Theater. He was to be relieved by Lt. Howard Fleming, of Admiral Bogan's staff. In CIC, throughout the day, there was tense action as Winston, Fleming, and Jim Griswold, the ship's fighter director, teamed with the radarmen and plotting officers to direct dozens of interceptions.

All of the alarms and dangers did not come from the air—during the afternoon a floating mine was passed at a distance of about five hundred feet. It was exploded by gunfire from Big Ben.

At sunset, the *Franklin's* last plane landed aboard, but the task group next in line was under attack and Big Ben's men were at battle stations until nearly midnight. The respite was short. Just before 1:00 a.m. "Torpedo Defense" on the bugle called all gun crews to their posts again. A Jap flew over the formation dropping flares, to be taken under fire by gunners of the battleship *North Carolina*. The Marine gun crew of Big Ben's battery hurled a few rounds after him as he fled.

Shortly after 3:00 a.m. the piercing notes of General Quarters on the bugle brought all hands to battle stations. Two groups of enemy planes were on the screens, night fighters on their trail. Half an hour before dawn *Franklin* swung into the wind and launched 30 Corsairs armed with special heavy rockets—"Tiny Tims"—to attack Japanese naval units at Kure.

Finally, at-dawn, with the radar screens clear some of the crew were secured from their battle stations at 6:10, a slightly modified condition of security being set by opening one hatch in the armored hangar deck so that men might have access to the mess halls for breakfast. Guns, however, were fully manned, men going below to eat in small groups and returning to their stations when finished. The distribution of hot meals to battle stations on an operating carrier is a practical impossibility, although it had been possible to distribute sandwiches the night before. For twenty-four hours there had been almost continuous alerts; rearming and maintenance crews had worked steadily all night long. Despite every effort to feed the crew, most of the men of the Air and Gunnery Departments had eaten only one hot meal since the 17th. Alerts sometimes lasted for days and lack of hot food was a serious handicap to efficiency; it was customary, when no enemy planes were known to be in striking distance, to secure from battle stations in this manner at mealtimes.

On the hangar deck, lines of men were waiting for breakfast as Lt. Fred Stalcup's crews worked feverishly gassing and arming the next strike, scheduled for 7:00 a.m. The Air Operations Officer, Lt. "Dick" Angell, was busy checking the lists of pilots and planes designated for the sweep. At 6:45 Big Ben turned northeast into the wind and came up to 24 knots to launch the first heavy strike of the day; at 6:55 the launch commenced.

The *Hancock*, a thousand yards away, was also launching

her first heavy strike. Astern was the light carrier *Bataan*, ahead was the *San Jacinto*. At 7:03 came a radio message from the *Hancock*: "Enemy plane closing on you from ahead . . ."

Captain Gehres quickly asked CIC on the interphone if they had contact with the enemy plane. The answer was negative. They had been searching for a Jap just reported twelve miles away, near another task group, in addition to their regular search. It was later believed that the enemy plane ahead had been mistakenly identified as friendly on all radars in the formation; the *Hancock* had spotted it visually as it flashed into a cloud.

The captain alerted all lookouts and gun control stations, cautioning them to heed particularly the sector ahead where a bank of clouds floated two thousand feet in the air and a thousand yards away from the ship. The watch on the bridge doubled its vigilance.

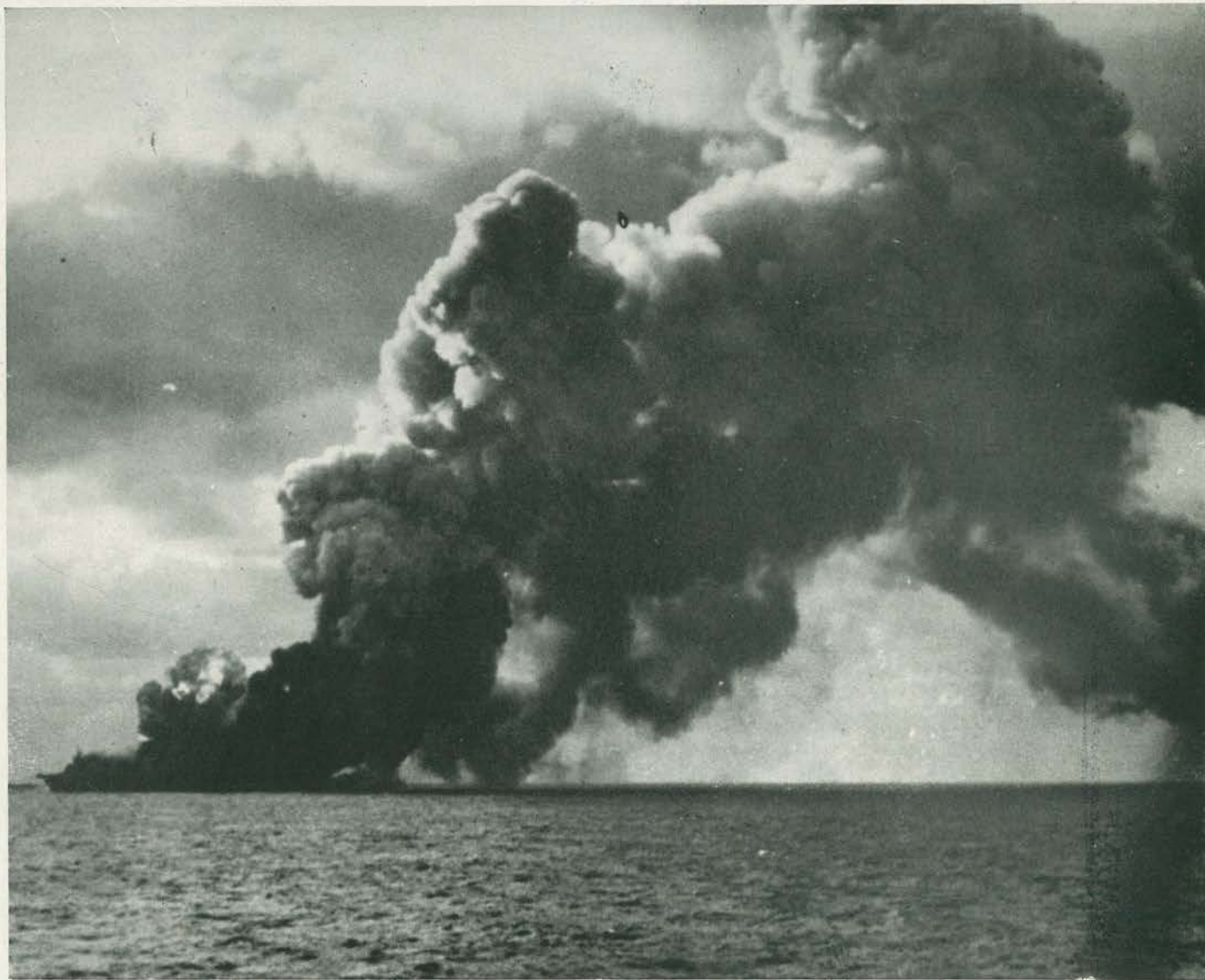
Comdr. Hale, the Air Officer, had just received a report from Lt. Stalcup on the hangar deck: "Everything is ready to go here," and Lt. Fred Harris, the Flight Deck Officer, was winding up the seventh plane of the launch as the Japanese, a twin-engined Judy, hurtled from the clouds on a low, level, bombing run. The attack developed so suddenly

that even the alerted watchers on the bridge did not see the plane as it flashed in, though the forward twin five-inch mounts and a forty quad on the island took it under fire belatedly. Comdr. Jurika, the navigator, saw two bombs spin down, as the Jap—hardly fifty feet above the deck—pulled up and climbed away. He was shot down a few moments later by Comdr. Parker, leader of Air Group Five.

The first bomb that struck, a 500-pound armor-piercer, exploded on the hangar deck at frame 75 and blasted a great hole in the 3-inch armor plate, setting fire to the gassed and armed planes. The second bomb struck aft, crashing through two decks and exploding on the third, near the chief petty officer's quarters. The Helldiver just taking off was blown over on its back; its pilot climbed out and made his way to the side.

A column of black smoke poured from the forward elevator well, and as Captain Gehres regained his feet from the explosions a huge sheet of flame was erupting from the forward starboard edge of the hangar deck. Thinking the fire was forward, he quickly slowed speed to sixteen knots and turned to starboard. This placed the wind on the port side, keeping the fire away from the heavily armed planes aft.

Pilots, aircrewmembers, plane captains, were scrambling wild-



Sixty miles from Japan



ABOVE: *Flaming rivers of gasoline pour over the hangar deck, trapping men aft . . .* BELOW: *Firefighters duck, as another big explosion goes up . . . The flying airplane engine narrowly missed the captain when it fell*



ly for the side as their planes caught fire. Propellers, still spinning, and exploding ammunition, made theirs a deadly journey. From the bridge there was no indication as yet that there had been a hit aft. In fly control, Comdr. Hale repeated again and again: "Jettison the planes with the Tiny Tims first. . . ." Those were the last words that came over the speakers.

Now a mighty column of smoke rose from the stern of the ship and the captain saw there had been a hit aft. Swiftly he turned the ship with full left rudder into the wind and again came up to standard speed, bringing the wind broad on the starboard bow, to keep the fire from the undamaged part of the ship. By this maneuver, during the next two hours, it was possible for the survivors to organize fire-fighting parties and work aft from bases in the unharmed focs'l to bring the fires under control.

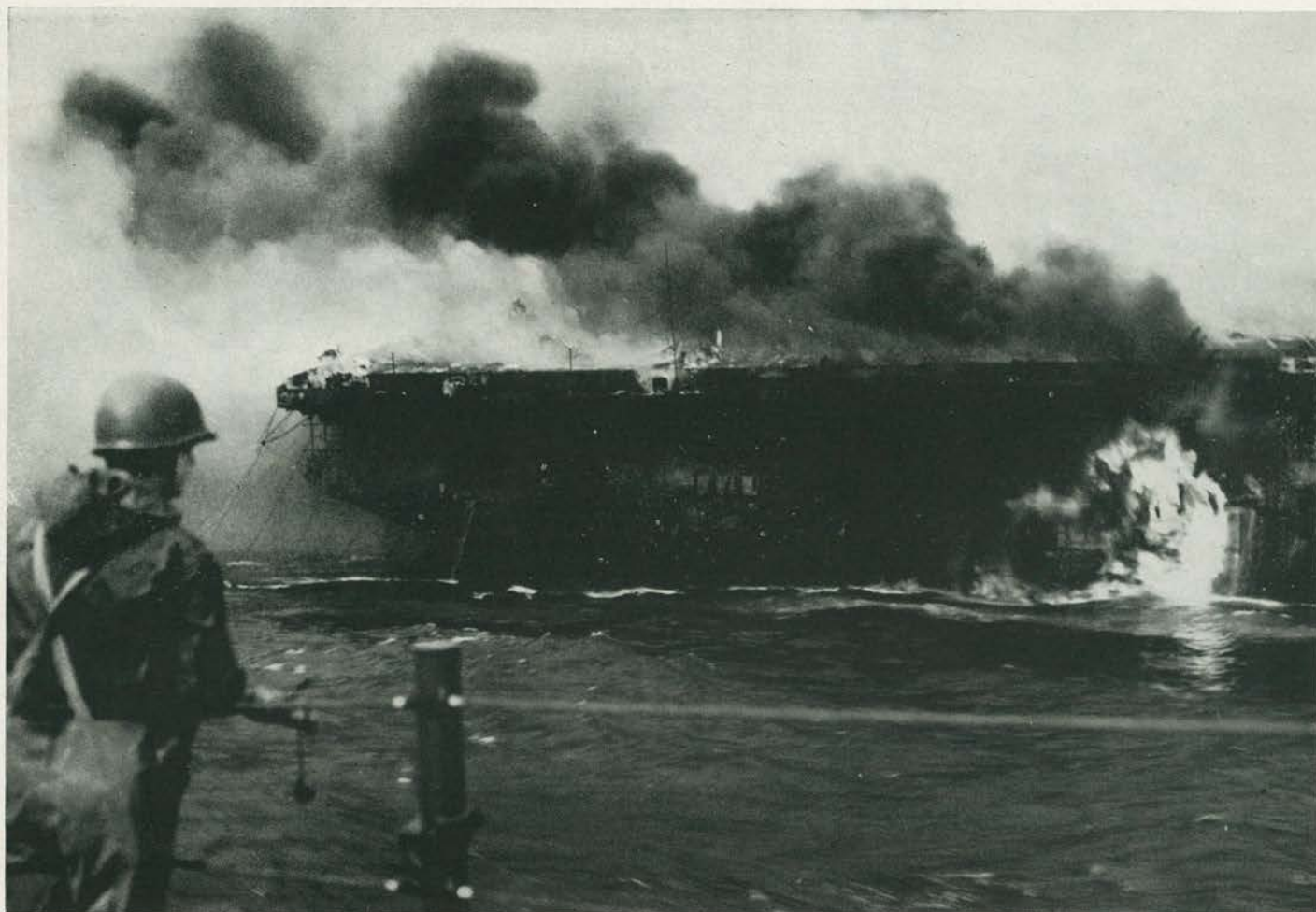
Little more than a minute passed before the sheets of fire spread over the five bombers, fourteen torpedo planes and twelve fighters, all heavily armed, on the flight and hangar decks. Then a terrific series of explosions commenced, the violence of which can only be imagined. The inferno was increased by the detonations of ready ammunition lockers on the topside, filled with rockets, with shells for five-inch, forty mm., twenty mm., and fifty-cal. machine guns. Men died by the scores on the flight and hangar decks, or were trapped in CIC and the crowded gallery deck workshops. The entire gallery deck, sandwiched between flight and hangar decks, was a death trap. Offices and berthing compartments on the second and third decks were torn by

explosions and swept by fire that spread from the hangar deck. Over thirty tons of high explosive were on the planes alone and countless other tons were in the lockers and ready magazines.

Smoke began to pour into the engine rooms below and men donned gas masks or rescue breathing equipment. Number Two Fireroom, its uptakes blasted by explosions, went out of commission, the fires under its boilers snuffed out by the first blasts. All communications on the ship were lost except for one line between the bridge and steering control aft, thence to main engine control. As long as quartermaster Davis, and his crew — William Hamil and "Smoky" Gudbrantzen, manned the steering control room the captain could give orders to the engines.

Comdr. Hale was dispatched from his station in fly control to take charge of fire-fighting on the hangar and flight decks. Comdr Taylor was still groping through smoke across shattered decks, trying to make his way to the bridge. The gallant destroyer *Miller* came recklessly alongside from the screen, bringing her puny fire hoses to bear on the great conflagration that raged on the hangar deck aft, where 40,000 gallons of aviation gasoline were contributing to the fires. On the focs'l Fire Marshal Stanley Graham yelled to the men who were making their way clear from the smoky, blazing, compartments: "Boys, we got pressure on the lines, we got hoses, let's get in there and save her!" In a few minutes a dozen hoses were working aft on the flight and hangar decks, into the flames. Men with fire axes chopped holes in the flight deck planking to let water into blazing gallery

Santa Fe moves in, fire hoses ready, as flames move closer to men trapped on hangar deck



deck compartments. Into the spreading fire moved the men, continuous explosions of every type of ammunition in the catalogue reverberating around them. Seven big 500-pound bombs and two smaller ones were rolling about on the flight deck, so hot they were painful to the touch.

Lt. Comdr. Stone, with helpers like Chief "Bull" Orndorff, Bill Fowler, Robert Boyd and Jacobs, rolled them over the side. Comdr. Hale stopped one young seaman, who was playing a hose on a big bomb. Just in time—the stream of water was spinning the arming vane and explosion was imminent. Pilots from Air Group Five fought alongside ship's officers, seamen, and colored mess attendants.

At 7:25, hardly twenty minutes after disaster had struck, Admiral Davison conferred with Captain Gehres on the bridge. The Admiral advised the Captain to pass the word to prepare to abandon ship.

Flames a hundred feet high were shooting up past the island; the roar of exploding shells was deafening. A column of smoke rose a mile above the clouds. Perhaps up there the spirits of the brave *Lexington*, that died in the Coral Sea, and the *Yorktown*, that perished at Midway, were waiting for the captain's words, bidding him speak.

Captain Gehres, a determined commander, told Admiral Davison that if he would provide air and surface support *Franklin* would be saved. The *Miller* was signaled to come forward from her position on the starboard quarter. An Admiral's responsibility comes first to his task group; he must transfer his flag and get on with the war. For an hour

the *Miller* lay under the huge, listing island, her hoses playing on the hangar deck fires as the Admiral's staff was transferred.

Order was coming out of confusion; men forward on the flight and hangar decks had halted the flames. As they fought aft on the hangar deck they by-passed white-hot fires where magnesium bombs glowed on the armor plate in the ashes of the planes that had borne them. Men below on the second and third decks, or trapped on the hangar deck aft, were making their way to safer zones. Dozens had been blown over the side; others, hopelessly trapped, were forced to leap over, many without life jackets. For hours little groups struggled to the fantail, where they fought the fires with every means at their command, leaping into the water only when their position became unbearable.

In the ship's hospital ward, beside the smashed chief's quarters, were Dr. Fox and eighteen men, eleven of them patients. The doctor and his seven pharmacists mates fought a brave little battle to save their shipmates and themselves. The ward was intensely hot, from the raging fires above; thick smoke was pouring over the port quarter where the sickbay was located. Air was foul, the door tightly closed to keep out the suffocating smoke and the flames. Two small holes in the ship's side, overboard discharge connections leading through the side of the ship, were opened. Hospital Corpsman John Epting and his comrades placed wet towels across the faces of the patients; the oxygen tent was used until the flasks were empty. Chief Shipfitter Durrance, a



The after five inch twin mount gave Santa Fe hoses a big job

patient, struggled through wreckage to a nearby repair locker, donned a rescue breather, and with an emergency cutting outfit was preparing to burn an escape hole in the starboard side of the ship when a blast more terrific than the others took his life.

Three days later, when search parties made their way down and pumped the water from the blackened, flooded passageways, the mute evidence of the gallant, futile fight met their sad eyes. Dr. George Fox, and his corpsmen, calm in death, lay beside the men they had served.

Men with rescue breathers: Dr. Smith, Lt. Bill J. White, Electrician Philipps, Machinist's Mates Gugliemo, Lapore, McAllister, Wellman, Greitner and others, were stumbling through the heavy smoke on the third deck, hauling unconscious men from the engineering spaces. They worked for hours and routed at least thirty men safely forward, through a hatch near the deck-edge elevator which had been cleared by Machinist Ede. Lt. Donald A. Gary, who had been violently shaken by the first explosions, seized a rescue breather and started forward from his Repair Party battle station toward the source of the smoke. He found, after making his way through two shattered compartments, that a solid wall of fire sealed off his path. Smoke growing worse by the minute, he made his way back to the mess hall amidships on the third deck, passing hundreds of rockets and bombs already assembled for use that day and needing only a single explosion to set them all off in a monumental blast. Attracted by his light dozens of men commenced to gather in

the mess hall. As the compartment filled, the doors were dogged down to keep out smoke and opened as others arrived. Five minutes later there was not room to sit down. When the doors were closed for the last time nearly 300 men were trapped in that small compartment. Unexploded bombs, with the fire sweeping nearer, were forward; aft, a wall of fire blocked off all escape. As mighty explosions shook the ship men realized their mortal peril and panic shook them. Dr. Fuelling, who was working over a seriously wounded man, calmly addressed them. He told them to rest quietly and conserve the limited supply of air and to pray; he led them in prayer.

In the dim light of battle lanterns which would not penetrate the heavy gray smoke, trapped by fire in a compartment beside hundreds of live bombs, men prayed — many for the first time in their lives — while others read aloud from prayer books.

Buried in a compartment near the keel of the ship was the Central Damage Control Station. After the explosions began, the lights flashed red—showing all main magazines to be on fire, erroneously, due to damaged wiring. All communications were out except with the forward repair party, as Lt. Billington, who was on the scene a few moments after the hit, soon discovered. Veteran Chief Electrician Hoffner stood by the boards, clearing damaged circuits by switching them open, while the damage control man fought to contact the repair parties. When the ship began to list badly and smoke poured in, with all communications out, Central Dam-



The fight goes on; fire parties work into flames; men handle line to Santa Fe

age Control was abandoned. Hoffner located an escape trunk which led up to the third deck and helped the men through it, to join the fire-fighting parties forward. Electrician's mate Zeller went up through the hatches, carefully closing each of them behind him—an invaluable service, because it kept fire from the main magazines, located below.

Groups of men like Shipfitter First Class Burd fought fire amidships until their rescue breathers were exhausted, then made their way to the side of the hangar deck and dropped into the water. Burd had been in the after mess hall when the bombs hit. He broke out a fire hose and wet three hundred rockets, rendering them harmless. Then, with rescue breather, he collected and led at least sixty men back to the fantail.

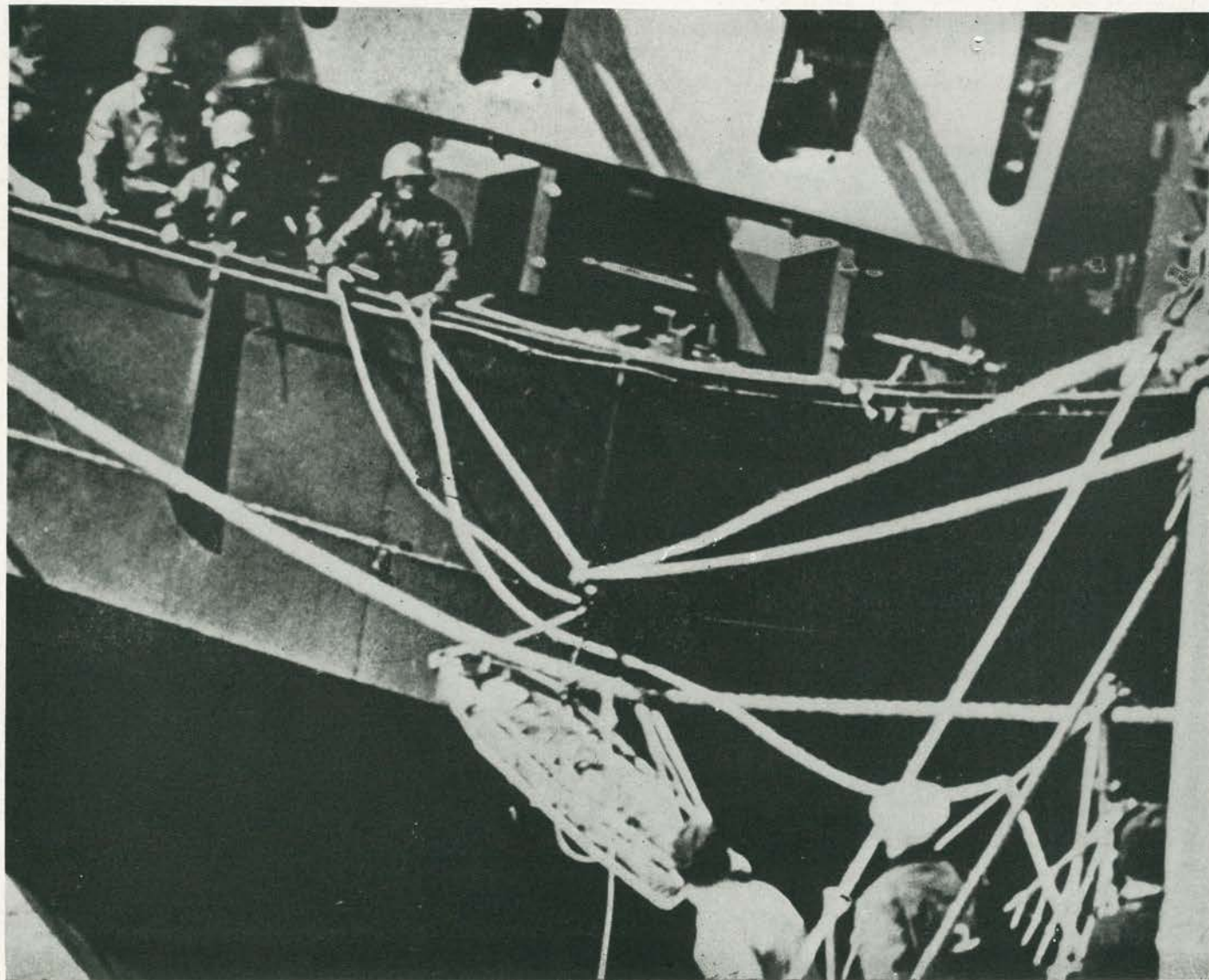
When he went back to look for others he found himself trapped by new explosions aft, forcing him to locate another escape route. This time he was forced to the hangar deck, where he leaped over the side. For five hours he floated in the cold water on a raft with Chief Tony Hungaro, seaman Dennis Kolek, and shipfitter Kirkman, before being picked up by the carrier *Hornet* of another task group. Many a man like Burd did his valiant deed before he was overwhelmed in the elemental forces of the catastrophe, or

was forced over the side. The number of heroes will never be known.

With a group on the fantail, Gentry, chief boatswain's mate, kept all hands fighting fire until a series of violent explosions occurred. They put life jackets on the wounded and lowered them in the water before dropping in themselves.

Seaman "Red" Skelton, a gunner, and his buddy were standing side by side. An explosion blew his buddy to bits and catapulted Skelton into the water. Homer Cecil, standing in his unlaced shoes, was blown completely out of them and into the sea. Lt. Fitzgerald, assistant engineering officer, and dozens of men in separate groups, made their way to the safety of the fantail, only to be forced off. Chief petty officers Austin, Sheppard, Gregg, Batticke; seaman Russo, private Kane, barber Antanasoff . . . their number will never be known. Yeoman Brown and Cavello leaped into the water together. Cavello, who could not swim, had no life jacket. His comrade, Brown, gave him his. Brown was not rescued. And Gunnery sergeant Truax, who, with a handful of Marines, had manned the guns on the fantail to the last, handed his life jacket to a young seaman who could not swim. The sergeant was missing in action.

Now, at 8:30, amid destruction and confusion, Number



A seriously wounded man is lowered to destroyer Hickox from fantail . . . Every man on this station was forced off ship by flames and explosions

One Fireroom went out of commission, leaving only the two after firerooms and the after engine room operative. Lt. Artz, Ens. Tucker, Ens. Hayler, Machinist Ensign, and their Black Gang crew could not hang on much longer. Smoke was growing intolerable and only a handful of rescue breathers were available. Hayler and Ensign, of the after plant, were trying to find escape routes for the men below. Ens. Tucker had been sent to the third deck to ascertain the extent of damage to the uptakes. Lt. Artz collapsed and machinist's mate second class Nott took charge of the forward plant. Captain Gehres, informed of the desperate plight of the men below, ordered the throttles set at eight knots and the engine room abandoned, when they could no longer be manned, but the firerooms never received the order.

The smoke tortured, agonized crews climbed the ladders and somehow fought their way forward. The last word on the fireroom speaker was: "Will someone with a breather report to forward engine room. Trapped . . ."

Lt. B. J. White and Lt. Bostain made their way forward and rescued Nott and the three remaining engineers in the forward engine room. Baker, machinist's mate second class, set the after engine room controls at eight knots.

But water tenders Barry and Reese, in charge of the after

firerooms, did not leave. Those fires had to be tended at all costs. They stayed until the end, their ship listing heavily, all communications out and smoke blocking vision, keeping their crews at their posts until 9:30, when the boilers lost feed water suction and there was no further need to remain. Then, and only then, did they fight their way upward. Barry and his men, "Tony" Godleski, Cliff Farmer, Jimmy Collum, "Shorty" Wilson, and "Tiny" Rials, came out on the hangar deck and were forced to leap over the side. Reese and his crew, "Don" McRae, "Wendy" Doll, "Buck" Buckner, and Jim Harris, made their way forward.

Gunner Stoops made a painstaking effort to flood the main magazines. Hundreds of tons of explosives, in the bowels of the ship, must be covered with water. He carefully turned the valves but—though this was not learned until long after—the water mains were ruptured and the ammunition remained dry.

When the *Miller* cleared the side with Admiral Davison and his staff at about 8:30, the *Santa Fee* was signalled to come alongside. Captain Harold C. Fitz, a brave commander, asked only one question "Are your magazines flooded?" Back came the answer from Captain Gehres: "I have ordered them flooded and believe they are." *Santa Fe* came



Father Joseph O'Callahan, chaplain courageous, administers extreme unction to a wounded man on the flight deck



Wounded are evacuated to Santa Fe

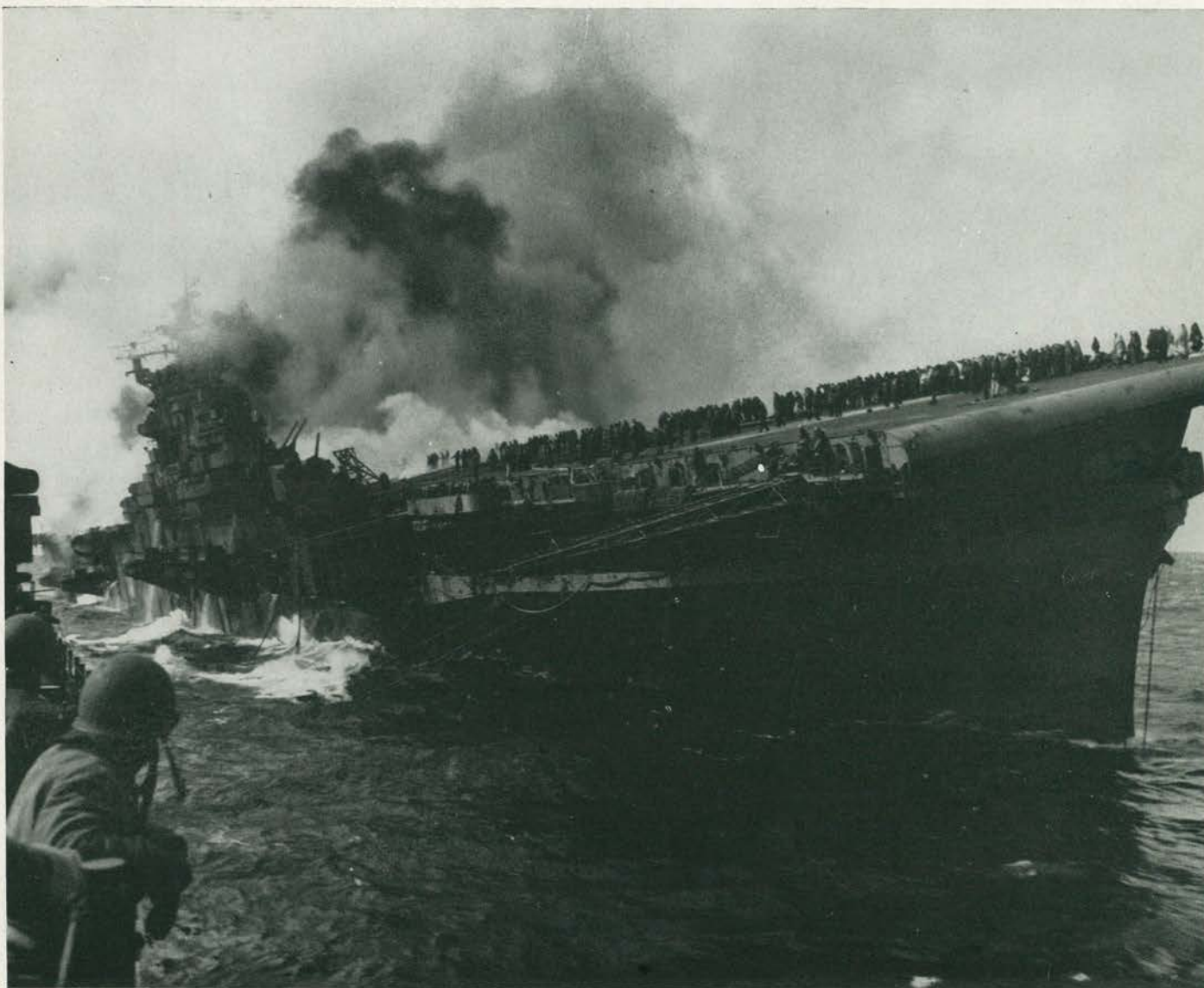
alongside and held a course fifty feet away, all hoses pouring water on *Franklin's* flaming decks. A trolley was swiftly rigged and Comdr. Hale, with Major Elliot of the Marines, Father O'Callahan, men of the hospital corps, and volunteers, commenced the difficult task of moving the wounded to the cruiser. Lower and lower *Franklin* listed into the water. Father O'Callahan, a man of dauntless courage and supreme faith, gave extreme unction to the dying on the flaming flight deck, calmly unheeding the explosions and confusion.

At 9:30, as steam ceased to flow from the boilers, the great screws were stilled and Big Ben lost steering control. 50 miles from Japan, the nearest any American surface warship had approached the islands thus far during the war, the *Franklin* lay dead in the water. The *Santa Fe*, unable to hold her position, backed away rapidly, snapping the lines that held her. Already Comdr. Taylor was hurrying forward to assemble the equipment and lay out the lines for a tow by the cruiser *Pittsburgh*, an incredibly difficult task amid the confusion on the crowded forecastle.

When Big Ben lay on a steady heading, drifting with the current, *Santa Fe* came in again boldly, with magnificent seamanship. Captain Fitz slammed his cruiser into actual contact with the gallery deck of the *Franklin*, now close to

the water, as the stricken carrier listed heavily. He held the *Santa Fe* there by the force of her engines, using the forward gun turrets as fenders against the overhanging decks. Comdr. Hale had orders from the captain to evacuate the wounded, the men of the Air Group, and highly trained personnel from any department who would not be needed to save the ship. Destroyers plodded through the icy water, picking up men on rafts, or swimming. The chill March air made exposure an ordeal. Men on the ship were soaked to the skin from tending fire hoses, and shivered under blankets while they rested.

What a precarious situation this was! The little group of warships was almost immobile, the cruiser *Pittsburgh* stopped, busy with her boats over the side passing a messenger line to the *Franklin*; the cruiser *Santa Fe* alongside the blazing *Franklin*. However the five destroyers of Division 104, the *Hunt*, *Hickox*, *Marshal*, *Miller*, and *Tingey* steamed slowly in a circle around the heavy ships, picking up survivors as they went, ready to defend the group. Enemy planes were again approaching the formation and there were alarms, but as yet no attacks. Being within less than 100 miles of major Japanese air bases, it was considered but a matter of time until enemy bombers would return. The *Franklin* had one



Footing becomes slippery on Big Ben's listing flight deck for men awaiting their turn on fire hoses

forty mm. quad forward, manned by a volunteer crew, and it could fire only under local control. A dozen twenty mm. machine guns on the forward port side, commanded by Lt. Jess Albritton, Ens. Lightfoot, and boatswain's mate Fuller, completed the battery.

Like Father O'Callahan, who distinguished himself in the desperate actions on the flight deck, where fire and explosion reigned, Lt. Donald Gary, still trapped in the doomed messing compartment with those three hundred men, had a flash of inspiration. Nearly two hours they had been packed in, expecting every moment to be their last. A memory flashed to him of a possible means of escape.

Through the smoky murk, which the strongest light would not penetrate, stumbling over rockets and bombs, with an almost exhausted rescue breather, he began his search for the door to the air intake space leading up to the stack structure.

He was accompanied by machinist's mate "Snuffy" Kramer. Groping through intense heat, where the bulkheads burned through thick gloves, he soon located the entrance to the space surrounding one of the huge uptakes—smoke-stacks—leading up from the boilers, through which fresh air passed for the fires. By climbing painfully up five decks, then through a hole blasted in the uptakes, the two men

found light and air. By dropping down on the outside they could reach a gun platform and make their way forward to safety.

But Lt. Donald Gary did not go forward to safety, or even to ask aid for the men trapped below. Knowing that momentarily the bombs might explode and the men could not live much longer in the smoke, he descended alone into that hole, where a slip meant death, to bring his shipmates out. He refused to let Kramer, who was exhausted, accompany him. In his words: "I broke my flashlight knocking on the compartment door as a signal to the men inside. When I stepped through the door there was a look of hope and anxiety on each man's face that I shall never forget. All were oblivious to the sound of exploding ammunition, waiting for me to speak. I explained that I had found a way out and, although they would have to breathe some smoke, it wouldn't hurt them if they kept their heads and followed instructions."

Slowly, painfully, Lt. Gary guided the men to safety. Three trips he made, each a little faster than the last, the knowledge of the bombs and rockets close to the flames, spurring his efforts. Lt. Gary and Dr. Fuelling were the last to leave; the wounded man had died. Today nearly three hundred men—almost half of those who brought Big Ben



Edsel West, a boy from Mississippi, was one of hundreds who had to swim in the icy water

back—thank Donald Gary and Doctor Fuelling for saving their lives.

The list of the ship was now nearly sixteen degrees, Comdr. Jurika coolly recorded, as he maintained his post on the bridge with the captain, the officer of the deck, Melvin Tappen, and the bridge force. Lt. Comdr. Kramer, the communication officer, had a portable radio operating on the flight deck, assisted by Technician Stone, Radio Electrician Modeen, and Lt. Close. Reports of radar warnings of enemy planes were coming in.

Lt. Comdr. Robert Downes' Damage Control Department, though its ranks were shattered, fought fires, labored to keep pressure on the water mains by closing off ruptured branches. They were assisted by the engineers. All water for fire-fighting now came from a tiny diesel pump forward, which machinist's mate, Al Collins had started at his battle station and tended all morning. One of the *Santa Fe's* hoses, stretched to the *Franklin*, was ruptured by fragments of debris, thrown up in an explosion. Without hesitation, seaman George S. Smith crawled into the dangerous gap between the great steel sides of the two warships and replaced the damaged section. The fight went on.

At noon Captain Gehres conferred with the engineering officer, Lt. Comdr. Greene, and procured three additional rescue breathers from the *Santa Fe*, for an attempt to get back to the engineering spaces. Until this time it had been impossible, due to fires and smoke, but now the explosions were diminishing in violence and the hangar deck fires were being brought under control. If the engineers could get the

screws turning there might yet be hope for Big Ben—if the Japs didn't get her first.

Nearly eight hundred men were on the *Santa Fe* by 12:30; hardly that many remained aboard the *Franklin*. Captain Gehres ordered the cruiser to clear the side, but not before the *Santa Fe* had furnished invaluable aid to Big Ben by assisting in getting her under tow, using the powerful winches on the cruiser's focs'l to pull the line aboard from the *Pittsburg*. Thirty sweating steward's mates and forty sailors, under Boatswain Frisbee, were helping Comdr. Taylor with this operation.

Hardly had the cruiser cleared the side than the long expected Japanese attack came. Just before 1:00 p.m. a Judy bomber slipped past the combat air patrol and came in on a fast glide-in run, headed straight for Big Ben. *Franklin's* remaining guns fired desperately; the ships of the screen opened up their batteries. His bomb dropped, a big one, that exploded short on the starboard quarter, 200 yards away. The combat air patrol shot down that Jap in sight of the screen.

The towing line was finally connected; Chief Carpenter Eddins and shipfitter Locke had cut loose one of *Franklin's* anchors with the last acetylene on the ship and ninety fathoms—540 feet—of heavy chain was paid out to the *Pittsburg* with a two-inch steel hawser on the end. Shortly after 2:00 p.m. the *Pittsburg* succeeded in getting *Franklin* underway and headed south, at three and one-half knots—at that rate Big Ben would be a landmark in Japanese waters for a week to come.

But the engineers were working, under the direction of



One of the hundreds of wounded; Seaman Joe Pennington, in the *Santa Fe's* sickbay

Lt. Comdr. Greene. Lts. Gary, White, Ellis, and Tiara, Machinists Macomber and Green were the first men to struggle past the still blazing compartments on the third deck and gain entry to the forward auxiliary room and Number One Fireroom. While the electrical officers, Tiara and Ellis, aided by electrician's mates Lindberg and Valloni, attempted to bring lights and ventilation to the spaces, Macomber and Green, with machinist's mates Gillis, Klieber and Heck, investigated the forward firerooms and engineroom. Lt. Comdr. Greene set up headquarters in the warrant officer's mess—the closest spot to the engine spaces that men could live without masks—and directed operations with experience born of fifteen years naval service, much of it below decks.

The electricians found the forward emergency diesel still running. Expertly they disconnected all damaged circuits from the main distribution board, then connected the diesel-driven generator to the panel. Lights flashed on in some of the smoky spaces. Ventilators commenced spinning, though it was still so hot that men gasped for breath. In the evaporator compartment, beneath the generator platform, on which six men lay dead, seven others were trapped with their faces in the bilges that they might breathe. Lt. Gary, in

charge of the space, wearing a mask, finally made his way through and assured these men, now trapped for five hours and believing the ship abandoned, that he would get them out when the fires that blocked escape had been brought under control. It was 5:00 p.m. when they breathed their first fresh air after ten hours of hell.

At 2:30 p.m. another Japanese plane came roaring in to attack but he was driven off by anti-aircraft fire and the patrol shot him down several miles away. By 5:00 p.m. Lt. Comdr. Greene knew it would be impossible to get the forward engines working, since Number One and Number Two firerooms were hopelessly damaged. The boilers of Number One were flooded with salt water and the uptakes of both firerooms were damaged by explosions. The only hope was to get the after engines steaming from Firerooms Three and Four.

By 6:30 the electrical gang had penetrated aft and were sweating to get power to these spaces. By seven p.m. they had succeeded and, as the fires had been brought under control, it was possible to go anywhere on the third deck. By 9:00 p.m. Lt. Gary, "Pop" Turner, "Speedy" Brumfield, R. Barry, "Chubby" Scott, Heck and Machinist Green were at work lighting off Boiler Five in Fireroom Number Three.



Santa Fe's guns are trained into the sky as alerts continue; Franklin survivors rest on her deck

The after engineroom appeared intact and Lts. Swanson and White, assisted by yeoman Kidwell and several machinist's mates, lit off when steam pressure was obtained. By midnight, with steam up on one boiler, warming-up of the main engines was commenced. Dozens of engineers resumed their stations and continued the work. By dawn another boiler was in operation and cut in on the main engines. With two shafts doing 56 r.p.m. Big Ben was going ahead six knots, but still under tow, and about 85 miles from Japan.

It had been a rough night. The first food in nearly twelve hours was served to the men on the foc's'l at dark. One slice of bread and tinned sausage with a little water to wash it down, but to all hands it was manna. After dark the Japs were again out in force, dropping flares on the horizon, evidently looking for Big Ben. Instead, they encountered other task groups, and a continuous battle was fought all night, ten miles away. Forty Japanese planes were shot down by ships and night fighters. Between the fires that intermittently broke out, a muster was held and 75 officers and 200 men were found fit for duty. However, at this time, many were away on fire parties, or below decks, and could not be counted. It was imperative that the fires be kept

under control. Any light from the ship and the Japanese bombers, only ten miles away, would write a quick end to the story. Parties under Lts. "Red" Morgan, Gordon Hassig, Lewis Davis, Bob Thayer, and many others, fought the smoldering embers. Twice destroyers from the screen were alongside to assist. The *Miller* drew up at 8:00 p.m.; at midnight the destroyer *Bullard* pulled close to the fantail and fought for two hours against a particularly stubborn fire. One lad of the ship, directing destroyer's hose from a dangerous perch on a jagged, out-thrust strip of metal, was unable to regain the deck until morning.

During the day hundreds had distinguished themselves. Nearly every man aboard had contributed something; tossing away hot ammunition; hanging on to fire hoses; helping wounded comrades to safety; working on the tow lines; starting the engines; serving food and water. Doctors Sherman, Smith, and Fuelling had labored tirelessly. Chaplain O'Callahan had earned the respect and admiration of every man by his fearless conduct, a vital spark that kept men going on when they felt like lying down to die.

By dawn, March 20th, 85 miles from the coast of Shikoku, the captain's bulletin board had a cheering message: "We are under our own power and will be making fifteen knots



Fires still burn aft as men jettison a charred plane, clearing a path through the hangar deck spaces



Big Ben lists heavily to port, as Pittsburg tows

by noon!" Lt. Jackson Taylor, mess manager, and Pay Clerk Sheppard of the supply department, assisted by Severson, Dugan, and the few others aboard, had located provisions. There was hot coffee and a swallow or two of a strange stew; the men were heartened for the day ahead. Everyone sat in the wardroom, now clear of smoke, still in life jackets and helmets, faces and hands grimy. There was little water on the ship; the only drinkable water was obtained from a small soda fountain set up in the wardroom which was connected to an unruptured fresh water line.

While fire fighters still searched out smoking compartments and engineers labored over an ingenious device to operate the forward engines from the after firerooms, other groups jettisoned debris from the flight and hangar decks and commenced burying the shattered bodies of the dead. Colors on all ships in the formation were half-masted, and though there could be little formality in the sad duty, respectful dignity and sorrow were plain in the actions of every man.

Now the Admiral considered the *Franklin* worthy of two new battlecruisers and additional destroyers: The *Alaska*, *Guam*, *Ballard*, and *Kidd*, had joined the screen. It was a group with fire power aplenty that moved slowly southward.

Of the 105 officers and 386 men that mustered that morning, the heroes of that day were the engineers. With the two after engines in use the ship could make a doubtful fifteen knots. If some method could be found to operate the forward engines, speed could be increased to an easy twenty-three knots. Steering Control had been obtained by 9:00 a.m. when Electrician Philipps, with Elsey and Gudbrantzen made slight repairs and started the steering motors again.

So, with enemy planes searching the vicinity and amid frequent alerts, the grimy engineers toiled on. Lt. Comdr. Greene had thought of a scheme: the hot steam at 600 pounds pressure from the after firerooms could be led forward through the auxiliary steam lines to the Number Two turbo-generator. This generator was connected to work from either the main or auxiliary steam lines. By routing the auxiliary steam into the main steam lines and blocking off the pipes that led to the forward boilers, the life-giving steam would flow into the forward engines. None of the engineers could think of any reason why this plan would not work, though, as far as was known, nothing like it had been attempted before on Essex class carrier engines. Laboriously the valves were closed and the connections made. It worked! By 10:00 a.m. the speed was up to fourteen knots, and a tow was no longer needed. By noon the towing lines had been cast off, and Big Ben was making 15 knots under her own power with four boilers on the two after engines and the two forward engines turning over slowly. It began to look as though the giant carrier would escape . . .

At 2:30 enemy planes again closed the group. Gunners waited doggedly by the last undamaged mounts. The battlecruisers drew in close, the destroyers narrowed their circle. One more hit would undoubtedly send the *Franklin* to the bottom. The patrol shot down most of the Japanese planes, one only a few miles away, but through their screen came one Judy bomber. For some reason his run was unopposed by flak, until he got in close on his run. *Franklin's* gunners, manning the last few twenties and the forty quad, opened

up with a fast and accurate fire. The guts of those men, hanging on to their guns to the last, the only ones shooting at that diving bomber, probably saved the ship. The surprised Jap swerved to escape this sudden stream of lead just as he dropped his bomb. It missed narrowly, exploding little more than a hundred feet from the port quarter. Below, the engineering officers, feeling the concussion shake the ship, decided to throw caution to the winds and really pour on the power. Cutting in more steam to the newly connected system, the forward engines commenced furnishing power perfectly and in a few minutes Big Ben was making seventeen knots. The doubtful superheaters were lit off, promising even more speed.

Again and again, until dark, the angry Japs threw bomber after bomber out, but each time the twelve Hellecats from Admiral Davison's task group, 30 miles away, raced off and intercepted them. When the red sun dropped into the Pacific, over the islands of the Empire, Big Ben was 170 miles away and steaming at better than 20 knots.

Messages were received during the evening from warships and commanders. Captain Fitz, of the great cruiser *Santa Fe*, spoke for the men of his ship when he said: "Congratulations on heroic work and outstanding efficiency of yourself and men in getting ship underway and saving her. It is an example we will never forget." From the stout-hearted commander of the man of war this was a high tribute, indeed.

Comdr. Highet, of the untiring destroyer *Hickox*: "Our sympathy and congratulations on your superb courage."

Admiral Low, commander of the little group, told the captain: "My compliments on your fine performance and bringing your ship through."

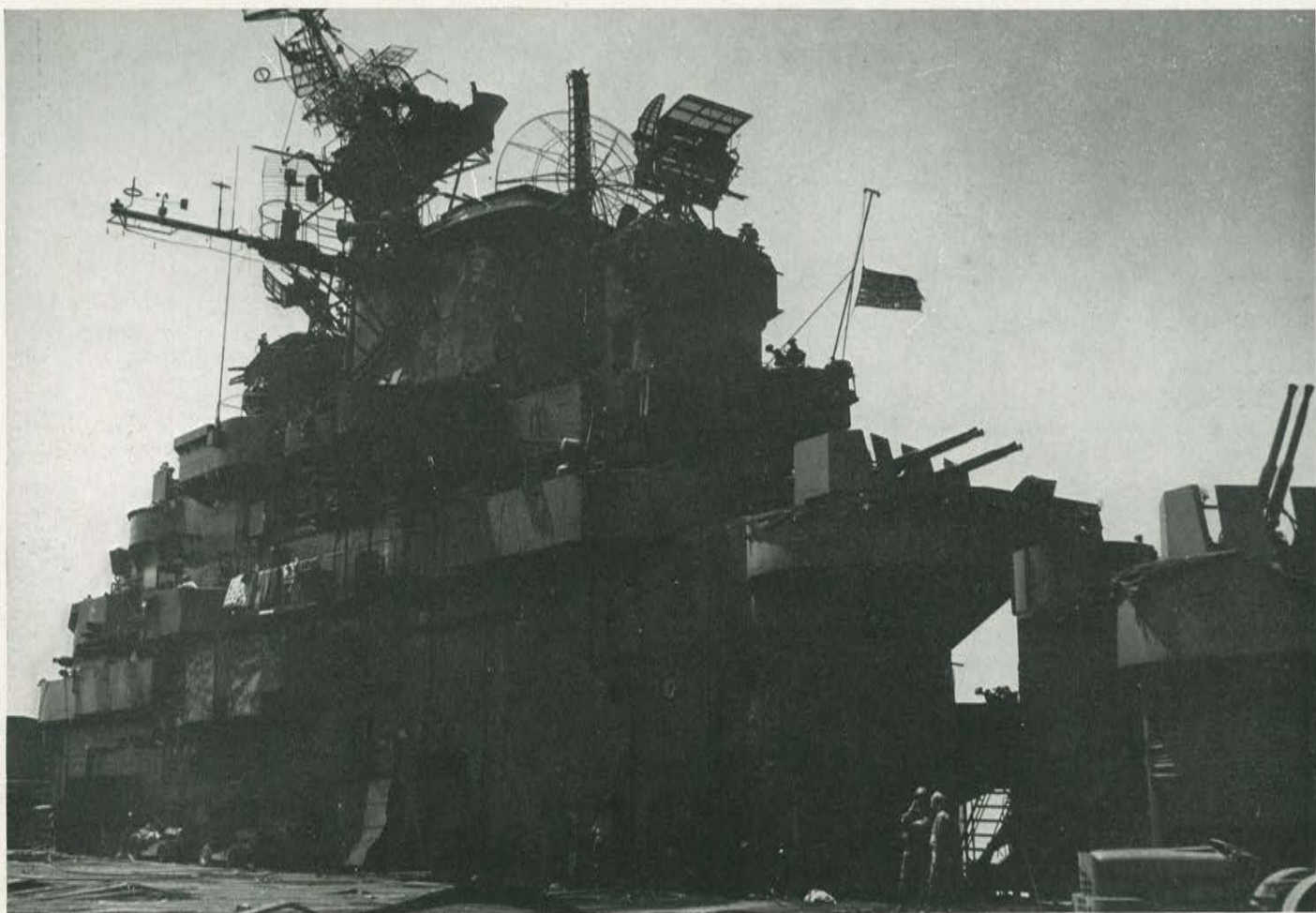
Later there was a message from Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, Commander of Task Force Fifty-Eight: "You and your historic crew cannot be too highly applauded for your historic and successful battle to save your gallant ship, in spite of the difficulty, the enormity of which is appreciated. Deep regrets for your losses, which we feel as our own."

Captain Gehres answered, for Big Ben: "My ship's company and I thank you for your message and for the protection received in our worst hours."

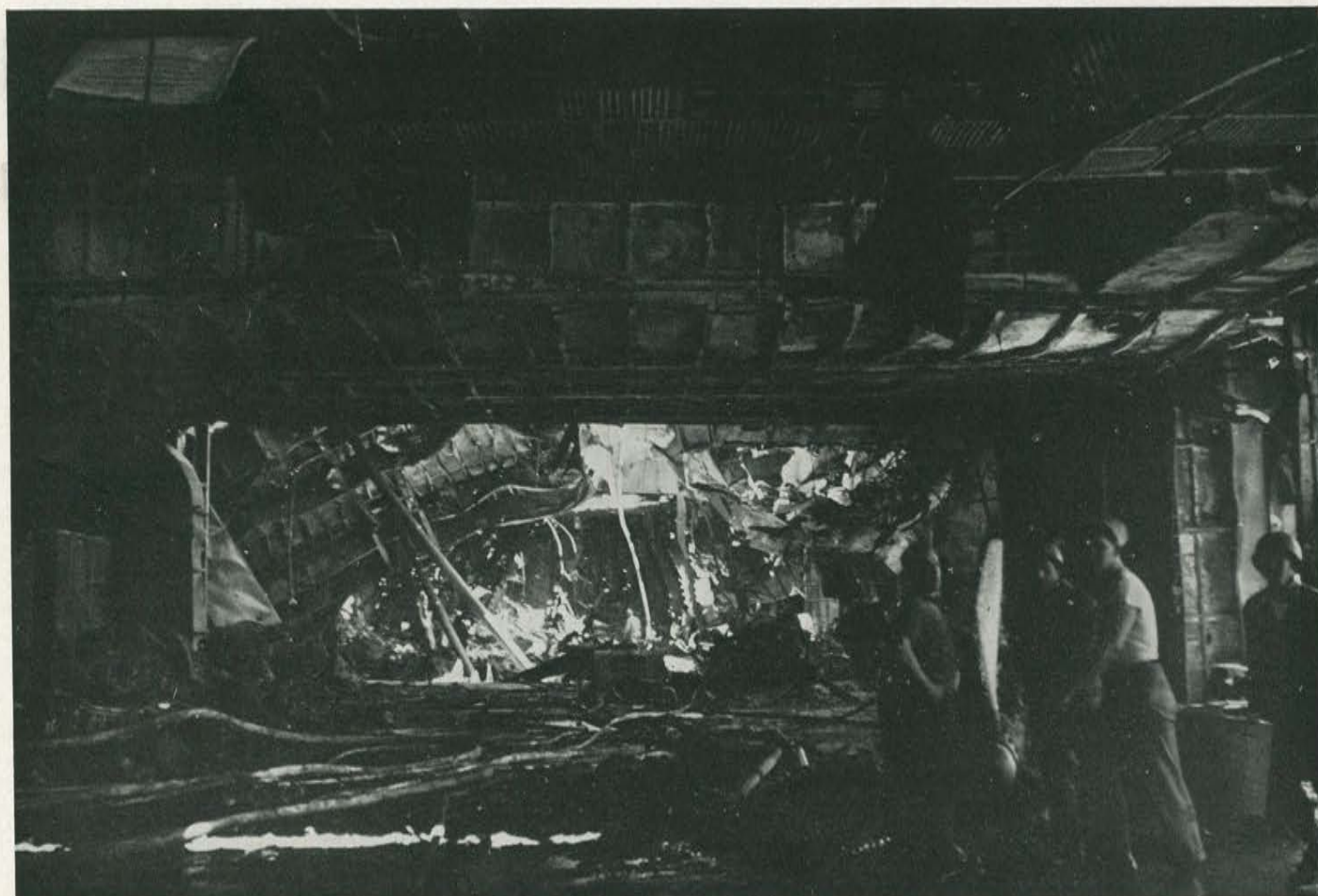
By dawn, March 21st, *Franklin* was 300 miles away, though enemy planes still searched the area. The group joined Task Force Fifty-Eight, which had withdrawn to fuel. That evening she contacted Admiral Davison's Task Group 58.2, which was retiring to Ulithi, with the carrier *Wasp*, also hard hit. With the destroyers *Miller*, *Marshall*, and *Hunt* in her screen, Big Ben steamed south as an independent unit, in sight contact with Admiral Davison's new command. There was a message from the doughty Admiral, himself: "I am on a stranger's doorstep but I claim you again with pride. Battered though you may be, you are still my child. Great Work! Davison."

Rear Admiral Gardner, commander of Carrier Division Seven sent a message to the captain: "Congratulations on booting home the long shot. To you and your great gang we touch our scorched forelocks. Gardner."

Just at sundown a surface search radar was placed in complete operation, after the difficult task of salvaging a heavy antenna from the broken foremast, that rested perilously atop the tripod. That night, with communications and



ABOVE: *Big Ben's battered Island . . .* BELOW: *The once-trim hangar deck*





ABOVE: Many a man died a heroic death in Franklin's wrecked compartments. Men like Boatswain's mate Warren Fish, of Whitman, Mass., who worked a porthole open in the agonizing smoke that his men might escape — but Warren was missing in action . . . BELOW: Big Ben, on an even keel, heads for home





*Some of Big Ben's officers and one of the portable pumps—
"handy-billy" used to clear flooded decks or to fight fire*



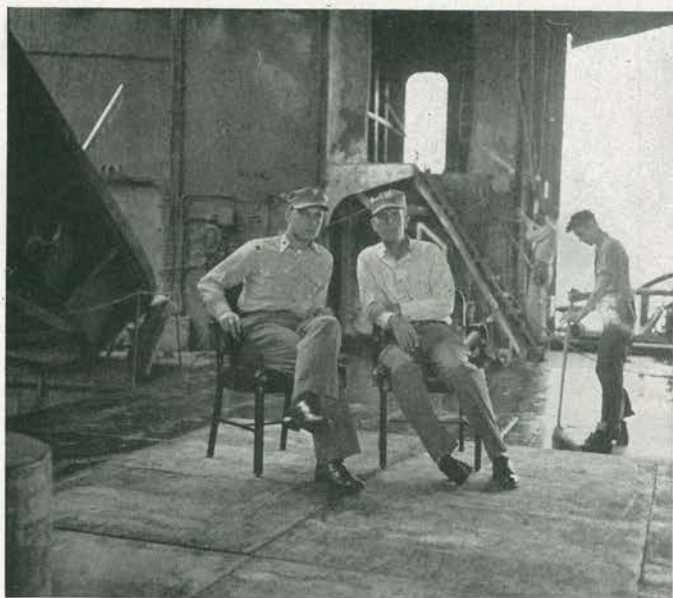
*The photographers who took many of these pictures.
V-4 Division (Air Department)*



V 4 - L (Lookout Division) Air Department



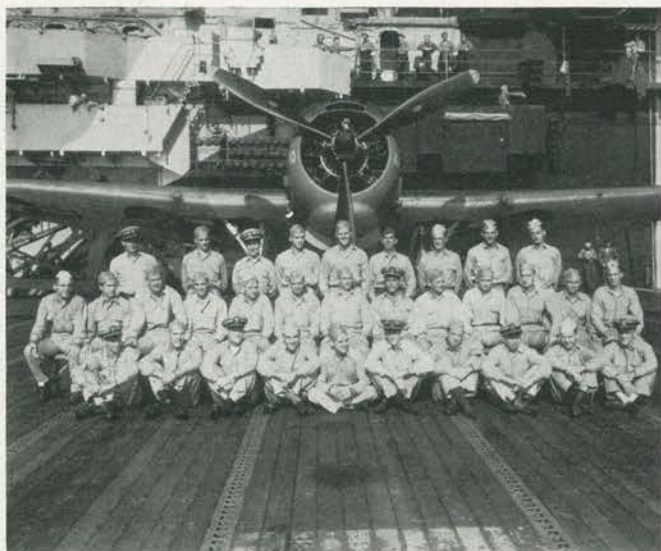
Arresting Gear Gang (Air Department)



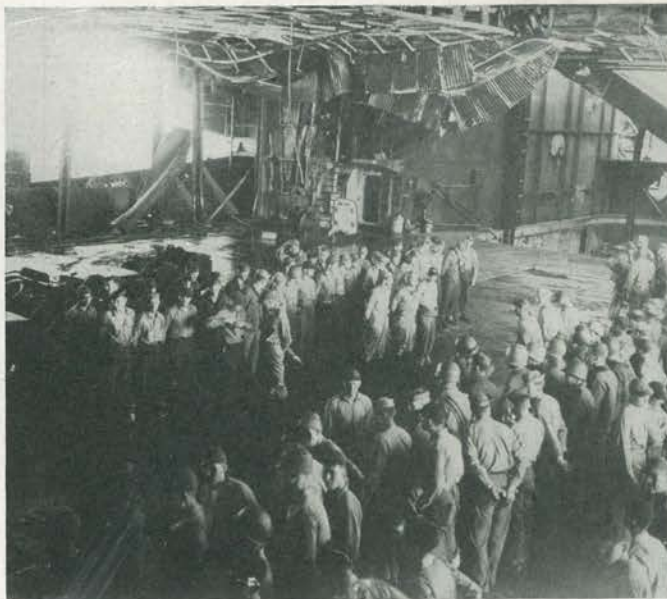
Doctor Fuelling and Lieutenant Gary



Saturday afternoon



Heads of Departments



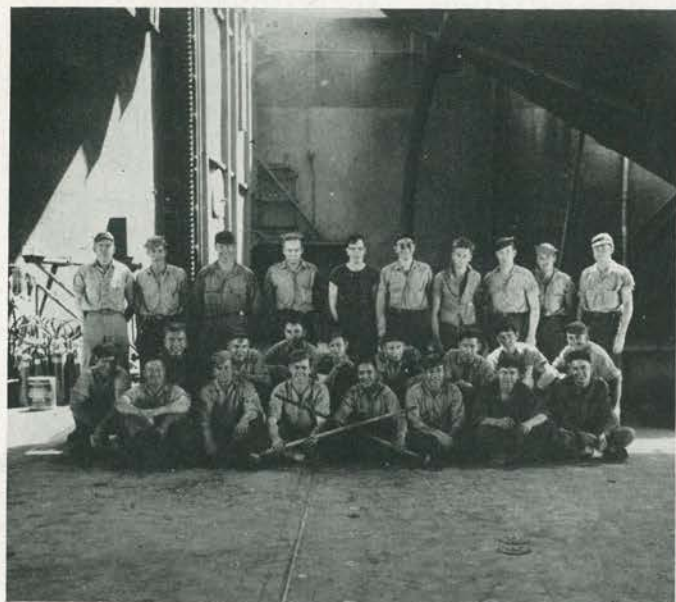
Morning quarters on the hangar deck



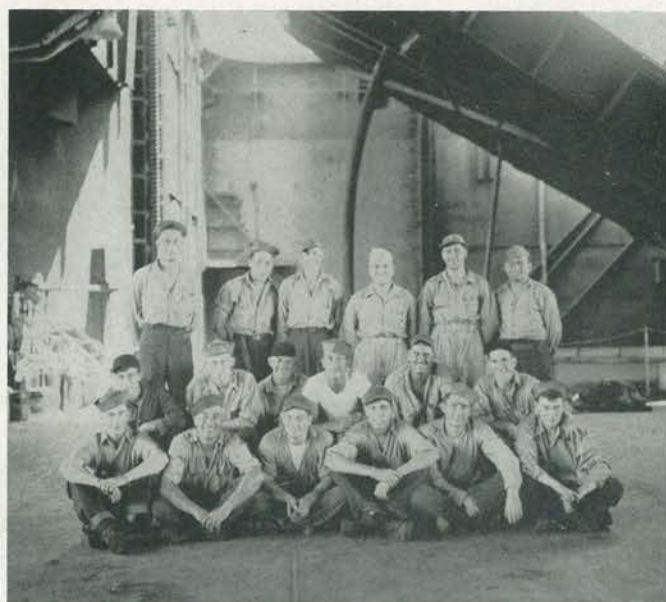
S-one division



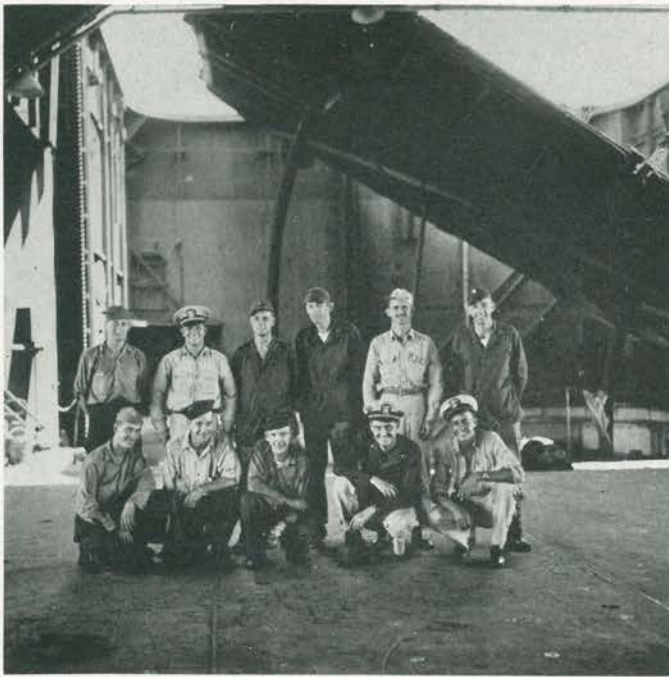
"F" Division (Gunnery Department)



First Division (Gunnery Department)



V-5 Division (Air Department)



V-4 Division (Air Department)

radar restored, Big Ben moved confidently, her deck watch officers again at their post. Captain Gehres, for almost the first time in three days, slept.

On March 24th Big Ben dismissed her screening destroyers, to take her own proud place in the column of warships steaming into Ulithi Lagoon. The captain of the *Miller*, speaking for his crew, sent: "Please permit me to express the unbounded admiration of all hands on board *Miller* for you and your gallant ship. We are proud to have been associated with her. Lt. Comdr. Johnson."

The destroyer *Stephen Potter*, who had been in the screen the 19th, sent: "Our hats are off to you. The Japs can't beat the spirit you have displayed."

Captain Gehres answered both messages: "Thank you both for your messages, which have been read to the crew. We think you are stout fellows, too. Thanks for your protection."

Big Ben steamed into the lagoon with her crew in straight ranks, chins up, heedless of the drizzling rain, living proof of the courageous words:

"A ship that will not be sunk cannot be sunk"—Captain Leslie E. Gehres, U. S. N.



CPO's March 26th, 1945



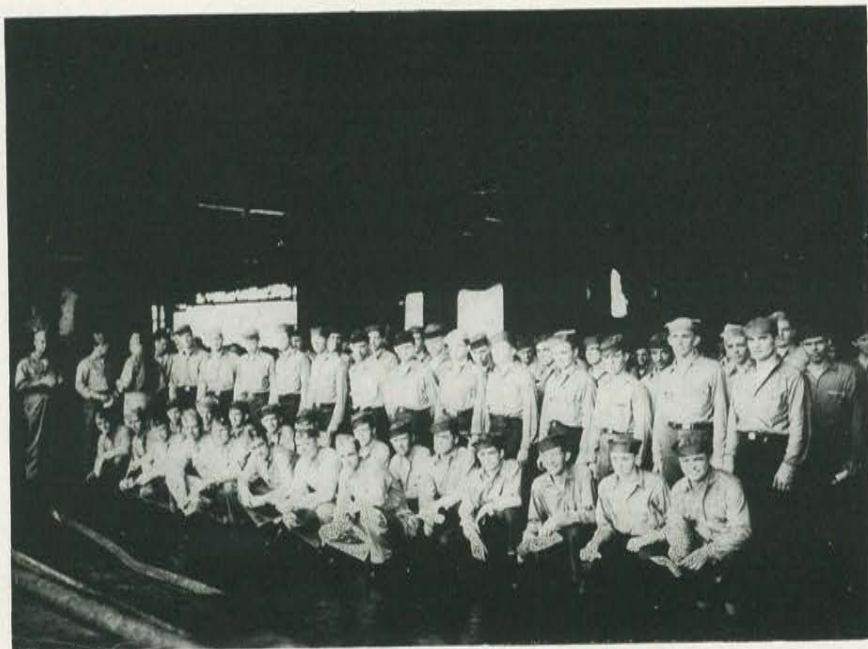
▲ *S-One Division*



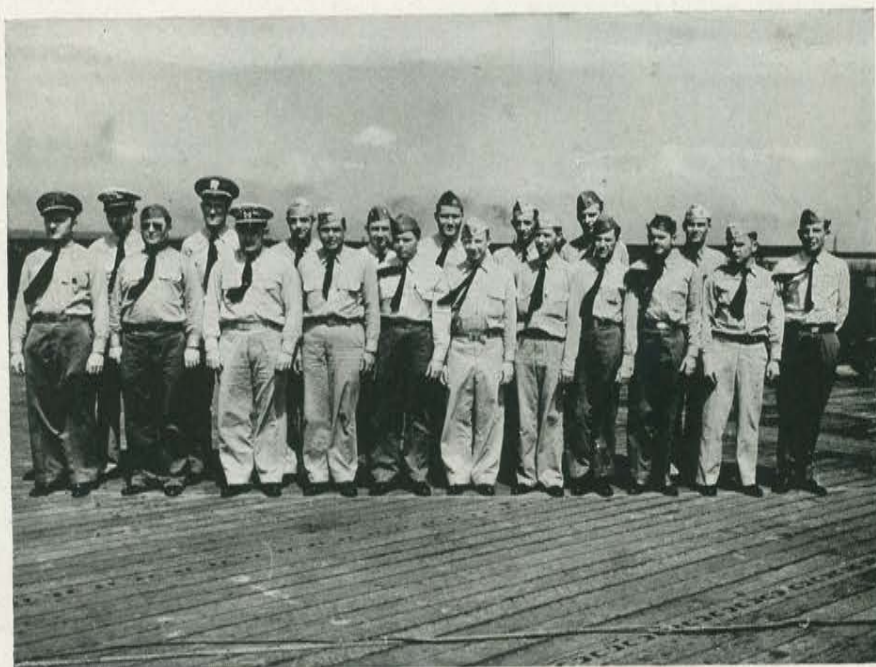
◀ *Communication Department*

▼ *S-Two Division*

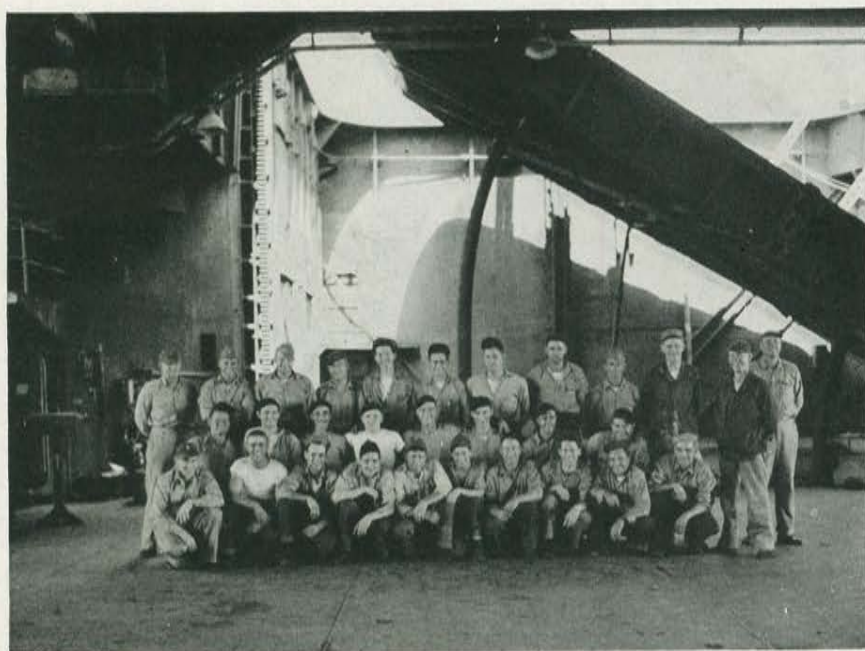




Damage Control Department

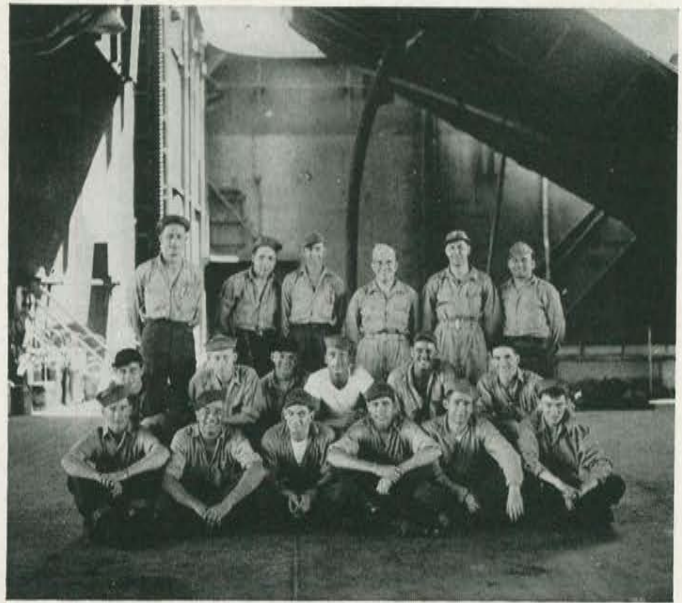


Engineer Officers



*Electrical Division (standing)
Machinery Division (sitting)*

6th Gunnery Division



8th Gunnery Division



*Marine Detachment
(7th Gunnery Division)*





2nd Gunnery Division



3rd Gunnery Division



4th Gunnery Division

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"... I'm sure he heard us, that gray Sunday morning, as we knelt on the deck and prayed for the buddies who wouldn't be coming home ... they were very close to us that day ... they always will be close ..."

BIG BEN COMES HOME

SADDENED BUT UNDAUNTED, determined to fight again, the torn, fire-blackened flattop anchored at Ulithi. Sunday, March 25th, 1945, mass of Thanksgiving on the flight deck was led by Father Joseph O'Callahan; Protestant service of Thanksgiving was led by Charles G. Weldon Gatlin. Most men attended both services; some wept openly during the humble, sincere prayers.

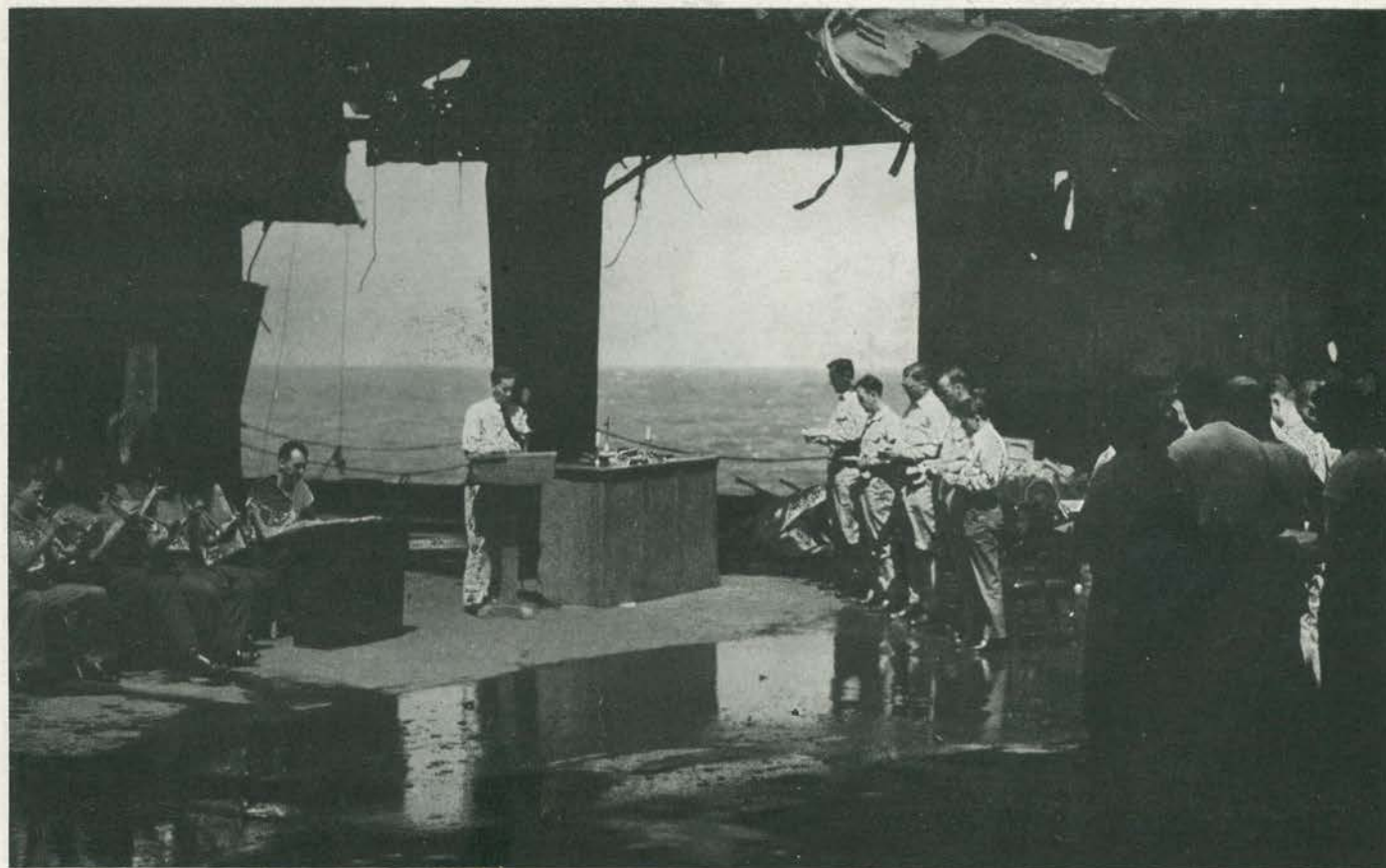
"And since it is of Thy mercy, O gracious Father, that another week is added to our lives; we here dedicate again our soul and our bodies to Thee and Thy service, in a sober, righteous, and godly life; during the week we made new resolutions and in these, do Thou, O merciful God, confirm and strengthen us; that, as we grow in age we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray ..."

The services closed with the Navy's hymn, "Eternal Father."

*"Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep,
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea ..."*

The Thanksgiving services were followed by Memorial Services for the dead. On the flight deck, in the fitfully falling rain moving across the harbor in sheets, the men of the *Franklin*, led by Father O'Callahan, assembled to the mournful strains of a dirge softly played by the surviving bandmen. In a beautiful, heart-touching talk, the priest recalled to the men that their comrades had died on Saint Joseph's Day — Saint Joseph, the patron saint of a merciful death — that their death, though tragic, had been in merciful circumstances, with every man having a brief moment for a last prayer.

Protestant Memorial Services on Franklin's hangar deck ... Chaplain G. Weldon Gatlin conducting





ABOVE: *Catholic Memorial Services on flight deck . . . Father O'Callahan conducting . . .* BELOW: *Salute to the brave*



And while their sad loss could never be forgotten, those who lived must never forget they had died proud deaths, in the service of their country, fighting for God's cause against bloody oppression.

A Psalm was read and men bowed and prayed for the souls of their shipmates.

The Marine squad fired three volleys and men stood in salute, honoring their fallen comrades.

* * *

Monday evening the hospital ship *Bountiful* sent its talented entertainment group to the *Franklin*. Amid debris and fire-swept steel, with a bomb-blasted elevator for a backdrop, their performance did much to brighten men's spirits.

All salvageable equipment was given to other ships or to the repair force. A "Tiny Tim", which had lain in a dangerous position on the second deck and defied all efforts of the ship's personnel for days, was carefully carried topside and lowered into the water, by volunteers under the direction of a bomb disposal officer from the repair force.

Tuesday, March 26th, accompanied by two destroyer escorts, *Franklin* and *Santa Fe* were underway at sunset for Pearl Harbor. Under the personal direction of Captain Gehres every officer and man labored throughout the days. The debris must be cleared away and the ship made habitable; the personal effects of more than 2000 men must be collected, inventoried, and packaged. With water, lights, and manpower at a premium these tasks required weeks to accomplish.

There was little of laughter or gaiety on the shattered decks as men found surcease from tension and memories in the exhaustion of toil. They were proud that *Franklin* still sailed; proud to have brought her from the jaws of death; sad in the absence of their friends.

Another dispatch arrived from the commander of the Fifth Fleet, Admiral Spruance, to the *Franklin*, and to every ship in the Fleet, as well as to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Ocean Area, Admiral Nimitz:

"The courage, fortitude, and ability of you and your crew in saving and bringing back *Franklin* for future use against the enemy cannot be too highly praised."



"Jumbo" Watson, does his "hat trick"

Spirits lifted some. Captain Gehres, at a little show on Wednesday afternoon, where a makeshift band played, using old kettles, bottles and combs to fill in the harmony, addressed the men informally. The determination of this fighting captain was never more plainly evident than in his words: "We are going to take this ship back out and get even with the little yellow scoundrels. I, for one, am going to be the first volunteer to take her back."

Big Ben, with *Santa Fe*, steamed slowly into Pearl Harbor on April 3rd, 1945. In the words of one of the men, "On March 3rd we had sailed from Pearl—so clean, so proud, and in such fighting trim. On April 3rd we were returning, in such a wrecked condition that it was almost unbelievable. A group of fifty WAVES and the station band were on the dock to greet us, singing 'Aloha'. Some of our crew cried unashamedly, as did many of those who came to greet us at the dock."

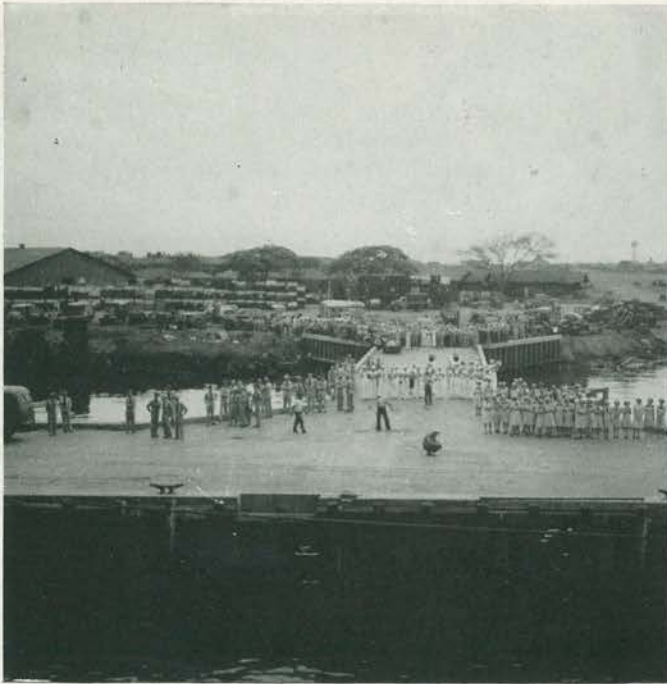
The seven hundred and four men who were coming back to Pearl Harbor on Big Ben were drawn up in thin ranks on the undamaged part of the flight deck. Saxie Dowell's makeshift band struck up a tune and *Franklin's* men showed the world they could still sing. The captain, himself, had written their song, and it was to the tune of the "Marine Hymn":

From the Jap isle of Kyushu
To America's shining shore
We've brought our ship, the *Franklin*,
To be fixed to fight some more.
Oh the Japs they thought they'd sunk us
As they came and came again
But they couldn't get the shot in
That was marked to sink Big Ben.

From the Shores of Jap Kyushu,
By Ulithi's steaming strand,
And the isles of Aloha Nui
We all come to our own land.
Many shipmates sail not with us
But their spirit shall not die;
When our bugle sounds "To Stations"
We will answer for them "Aye."



Franklin's band lost its instruments, but not its spirit



At Pearl Harbor, waiting to greet Big Ben, sailors and WAVES watch with silent awe as the bomb-blackened flat-top returns from battle



Colors flying, band playing, crew erect and singing. Big Ben comes back to Pearl



Most men are somber, between songs . . . these are the boys that brought her back

Seven hundred and four enlisted men and thirty-nine officers had given their lives for their country. Seven hundred and four officers and men were aboard her as she came home.

After five days in Pearl Harbor it was decided by the Navy Department that Big Ben would return to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for repairs. Brooklyn promised to have her back in action by the first of the year—eight months.

On April 9th she sailed east for Panama and passed through the canal on the 17th. With covering airplanes overhead to guard against submarines she was underway from Colon for New York on April 19th, steaming through the Caribbean for the Windward Passage. As Big Ben neared Cuba a German submarine sank a merchant ship less than 100 miles away. Men who knew what one torpedo would do to the battered carrier breathed more quickly for several

days, but on April 28th she arrived off Gravesend Bay, New York.

On April 30th, 1945, proud but battered, *Franklin* stood by the Statue of Liberty, all hands at salute, and into Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Journey's end . . . thirteen thousand miles from the coast of enemy Japan.

The crew moved ashore to barracks and prepared for rehabilitation leave which Captain Gehres was in Washington trying to obtain for every officer and man. The navy yard worked day and night, cutting away entire sections of blasted decks.

On May 17th the first awards for valor were presented to men of the crew on the deck of the ship they had fought to save.



Home at last . . . journey's end

CREW MEMBERS AT END OF REPAIR PERIOD



NAVIGATION — *1st Row:* SHERWOOD, E. B.; *Second Row:* SPEER, K. C., NEILL, J. J., MARRIN, J. E., SANTORA, C. E., ACQUAVIVA, N. P., KEEFER, H. D.; *Third Row:* PENNINGTON, R. M., SMITH, F. J., COLLINS, W. H., WALSH, E. T., GRIFFITH, D. M., HULANDER, C. W.



SECOND DIVISION — *First Row:* FRYBERGER, H. C., DAWSON, R. A., MINTKIN, P. G., TROUBLE, E., McCUTCHON, D. A., GRIGGS, D. O.; *Second Row:* PUMA, C. J., YAKLEY, A. W., SMITH, A. F., MANGOLD, F. T., SEARS, W. P., SPROAT, J. R., LEEK, W. E., YARDLEY, M. L., MAYER, J. D., BARASCH, I. J., HAMILTON, R. J., McILVAINE, F. G.; *Third Row:* McINERNEY, H. M., BROWN, L. W., McCLURE, R. J., MURRAY, J. E., AYSUE, F. G., FRANKO, A., HUDSON, D. G., GRADIN, R. L., GALLENA, J., STOVER, L. W., LLOYD, R. K., STASIEWSKI, A. F., BALDYGA, F. F., LAW, G. W., BRADLEY, A. T.



E. AND M. DIVISIONS — *First Row:* JANSEN, E., BRICKNER, C., BUSEY, C. W., JAROCK, N. J., VALLONI, T. J., NATT, W. J.; *Second Row:* URGO, V., VALLINA, L., PEATTIE, C. N., COMPO, J., RHODES, W., CLARK, W., ELSEY, G. J., D'ORIO, V., CASTLE, R. M., SCHWEICLER, R. S.; *Third Row:* HAYDEN, P., FRANKS, E., BAKER, J., RIDALL, C., BILLING, G., MULLER, R., BROWN, D., LEERMAN, B., WEST, H. W., MCBRIDE, D. A., MANSFIELD, C. F., WARREN, A. W., MACLAREN, R. C.; *Fourth Row:* MILLER, W., WAGNER, R., KAUFFMAN, W., MAPHIS, J., HORGAN, W., YAUGH, F. B., MCLUCKIE, J., CHRISTIAN, D., ZIGER, J., NIGHTINGALE, W., JACKSON, K.



FIRST DIVISION — *Front Row:* TOWMEY, J., SLAPPER, R. M., NICOLLE, W. V., BARTLETT, C. C., TOWNLEY, F. J., BLANCO, J. E., JR., DOLLAR, J. M., FUNTES, R. J., WOODALL, W. W., FREEMAN, B. A., ALYWARD, J. J.; *Second Row:* GABRIELSON, N. C., BILANCIA, D. A., MORAN, J. A., YOUNG, M. L., DWYER, F. J., HARNICK, H. S., HARMON, H. P., JOHNSON, W. F., YOUNG, L. E., HENKEL, O. M., JENSON, F. D.



SUPPLY AND MEDICAL DEPARTMENTS — *First Row:* FRITZ, J. E., MERRITT, J. K., TEDFORD, O. F., BUSER, O. G., STINE, A. D., WHITE, J. F., MOLER, J. H., CROWDER, J. C., WHEELER, J. E.; *Second Row:* MEDEIROS, E. R., SHILLING, R. J., EDELMAN, H., WOLF, L. H., ANGEL, I. Q., SMITH, D. E., MEDEIROS, T., BASSETT, U. J., SHEA, F. P., BRIGG, P.; *Third Row:* SCHULTZ, D., BIRMINGHAM, D., ELDTRECE, V., MANNING, D., SUGAR, J., BASKIN, S., GOLDMINTZ, I., MONELL, M., MEDEIROS, M., DEBERNARDO, J. A., VINCENT, T. M.



F-DIVISION — *First Row:* ALT, G. E., SEYMORE, J. R., RICKS, B. M., VINCENT, B. C., LANGAM, R. L., WINGET, R. E., KLUTTZ, F. L., McAVOY, J. F., PERRY, J. W., BAKER, H. L.; *Second Row:* SMALARZ, W. P., RUSSELL, C. A., ANDERSON, J. H., HAVILCHAK, W., WHITEHEAD, N. W., LABORSKY, J. E., AYERS, R. W., BARTMAN, E. L., MAFFUCCIO, F. D., MULLINS, J. J., SIROTA, I., MARTIN, R. W., NOGA, A. J.; *Third Row:* BARRETT, M. J., ROACH, O., BEECH, R. F., JUMP, T. J., O'NEILL, R. E., COY, C. C., BISESI, S. P., FOSS, D. M., KIRK, A. S., MOORE, L. D., NAPIER, L. R.



A DIVISION — *First Row:* SCHILLER, W. L., HOPPER, E., EDE, G., PRATHER, A. M., STITES, J. T., NIQUETTE, E. G.; *Second Row:* MILLER, R. S., BIRD, R. E., POLITO, R. F., MOORE, O. J., McMANUS, B. F., ADAMS, J. E., HAAS, W. H., POLINICHKO, M., SKEAN, W.; *Third Row:* WRAITH, G. A., ROBERTS, T. F., ZWERGEL, B. F., ROSENBLUM, H., GIACOLONE, J. A., NORRIS, D. F., EPSTEIN, H. H., MAUDER, W. J.



B DIVISION — *First Row:* WASLIEWSKI, V., STEWART, R., HALL, S., MACOMBER, W. E., GLEBER, J. A., BRUMFIELD, J., McCAFFREY, J., DAVIS, D., BERRY, R.; *Second Row:* ALFONO, C., LENAHAN, G., FINNEGAN, E., NEMIER, J., MELFI, M., DUTCH, R., McRAE, D., ZABONIK, E. J., ROSA, S., KYLLONEN, A., ALBERTI, W., McLEAN, W.; *Third Row:* VICARIO, A. J., MOMAN, C. L., PITTS, J. T., KING, T., MARTINI, J., LAPINSKY, E., CHURCH, B., ROUSSEAU, R., GILL, S., WILLIAMS, E. D., MCCARTNEY, W., ZINGERLINE, W., AGUREDAKES, E.; *Fourth Row:* BROWN, E., McALEER, G., KENNEDY, J., NICOLL, W., WYCHULES, P., HOUGH, T., LOYD, J., WATSON, R. W., SCOTT, E. S., WAETZEL, K., LEON, M., VENTURA, A. P., BREEDLOVE, G.



704 CLUB — *First Row:* BOWMAN, M. K., NOBLE, C., ORNDORFF, C. S., BRUMFIELD, J. I., McCAFFREY, J. W., BARRY, R., VOLLINI, T. J., COOK, R. M., HALL, S. D., TIARA, J. B.; *Second Row:* KING, T. N., GILL, S. A., PITTS, J., McRAE, D. E., SKEAN, W., BLANCO, J. E., DOLLAR, J. M., PITTS, P. F., DAY, R. W., KYLLONEN, A. F., SPEER, K. C., SCOTT, E. S.; *Third Row:* FISHER, C. M., JUMP, T. J., MINTKEN, P. G., ELSEY, G., McCUTCHON, D. A., NICOLLE, W. V., FRANK, D. C., WALSH, E. T., MILLER, H. F., CLAYBURN, F. L., PETRILL, F. G.



R-1 DIVISION — *First Row:* NOBLE, C. M., WILSON, R. W., KLEIFIELD, J.; (*Hull*) *Second Row:* HODGES, G. F., LAGACE, L. A., NIBBLETT, E. E., BUCOLO, J., AUDETTE, R. J., MITCHELL, A., CLOAR, J. C., BROWN, M. L., KINSELLA, T., KLEIN, M., JARVIS, P. P., FRANK, D. C.; *Third Row:* MILES, L. T., MILLER, H. F., GRANTHAM, R., IMMINK, C. L., BLACK, P., NEWMAN, A. S., NEWMAN, P. C., WADOSKY, L., KOVAC, J. R., WUTHRICH, P., O'CONNOR, J. *These men were not present when photo was taken:* BAKER, H. G., McGEE, J. E., IVORY, T. J., HAUKE, C. L., MILLER, A. E., KNIVAC, A., MANLIN, G. E., MINACH, R. E., SCHLEGEL, R. J., BROWN, W. H.



K DIVISION — *First Row:* DAVIS, H. C., POOL, L. J., BOWMAN, M. K., CHANEY, J. W., COOK, R. M.; *Second Row:* HOFFMAN, D. N., BORLAND, R., ILDERTON, F. C., DAY, R. W., MORRIS, C., MCCOY, R. A., JONES, R. W., GUARIN, A. F., HANNA, E., HUNT, P. B., KIRK, E. S., PERRY, G. H.; *Third Row:* MURRAY, F., PETRILL, F. G., HEALEY, W. A., RITTER, D. L., STEVESON, G. E., VIARD, K. F., LEECH, R., BENNETT, R. V., MERRYMAN, R., MUELLER, D., MCGRANE, W. P. *These men not here at that time:* CRAIG, J. T., MARTIN, W. E., BACA, R.



OFFICERS — *First Row:* LCDR CLARK, J. M., LCDR PATTERSON, J. D., CDR GREENE, T. J., CDR DAVIS, L. F., LCDR GARY, D. A., LT MAYER, J. F.; *Second Row:* MACH EDE, G., APC MOHLER, J. H., LT HUSTON, J. E., LT GRIFFITH, C. L., LT JG DILLON, J. W., LT JG BUSEY, C. W., LT JG TIARA, J. B., LT SPEAR, R. G., LT BOWMAN, M. K., ENS FRITZ, J. E.; *Third Row:* CPC CROWDER, J. B., CHGUN HODGES, L. V., LT JG HOYT, R. E., ENS PURTZER, J. W., ENS TOWNLEY, F. J., ENS SHERWOOD, P. B., ENS GLEBER, J. A., LT JG WHEELER, J. E., ENS POOL, J. L., MACH YECK, H. J., BOSN MONTY, J. A. R., ENS MERITT, J. K.; *Fourth Row:* ENS WINGET, R. E., LT JG WRIGHT, L. R., CARP WILSON, R. M., ENS TRAUBE, E. B.



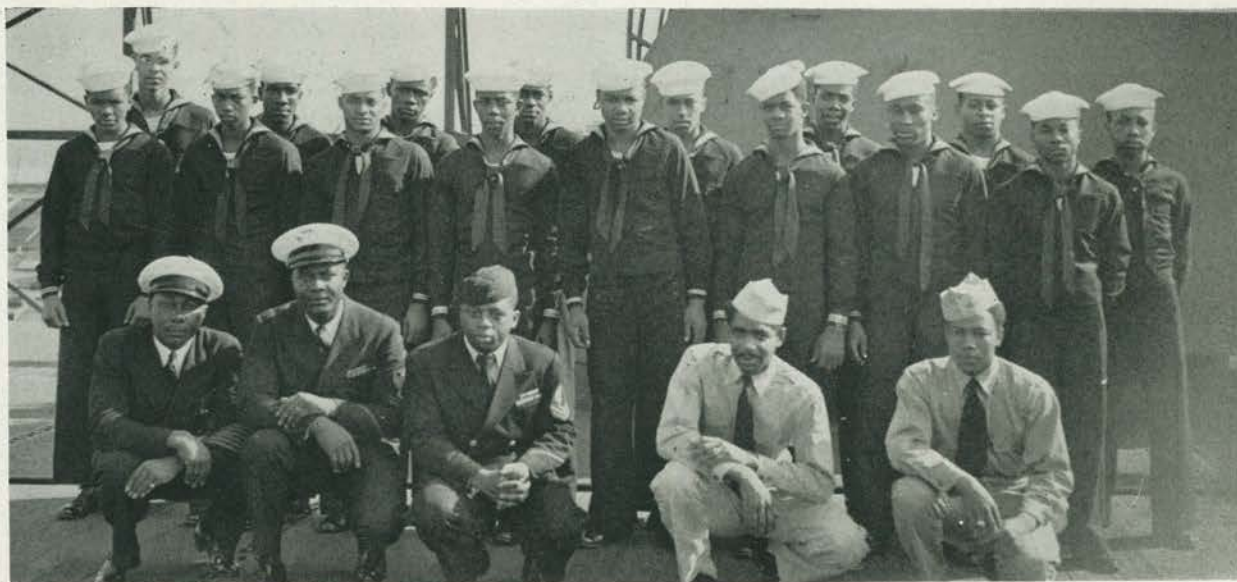
V-1 AIR DEPARTMENT — *First Row:* KNIGHT, J. B., HOIT, R. E., HUSTON, J. E., MONTY, J., DILLON, J. W.; *Second Row:* DUHAIME, A. J., LIEBONOW, R. W., WAFFORD, E. W., MANGHAN, P. J., McIVER, J. J., MYERS, H. W., FLAHERTY, J. T., NEWMAN, C. B., MIDLOW, J. P.; *Third Row:* ZIMMERMAN, Q. M., FEDOREK, T., HILL, R. K., MILLER, C. E., HENDRICKSON, D. E., MURRAY, N. I., HOFFMAN, C. H., COOPER, L., THEROUX, E. J., VERBEL, E. A., MUSICK, F. A., McNAUGHTON, E. W., SIMOULES, R. J.



V-4 GAS AND ORDNANCE — *First Row:* McDUFFIE, E. H., YECK, H. J., GRIFFITH, C. L., DAVIS, L. F., ORANDORFF, C. S.; *Second Row:* DOWNEY, M., NEIGHBORS, C. W., McKERNAN, J. E., PAPPAS, G. E., O'CONNELL, E. J., HILL, T. J., OSTROLL, H., MULLEADY, F. C., NEILSON, W. E., MANCUSO, E.; *Third Row:* HENSEL, A. E., YORK, D. R., HARTBERGER, C. L., KORSKAARD, J., HUSHION, W. C., FEDDEN, C. C., HOWARD, V. G., O'LEARY, D. T., SEVENSKY, R., THARP, S. L., WALLEN, A. L.



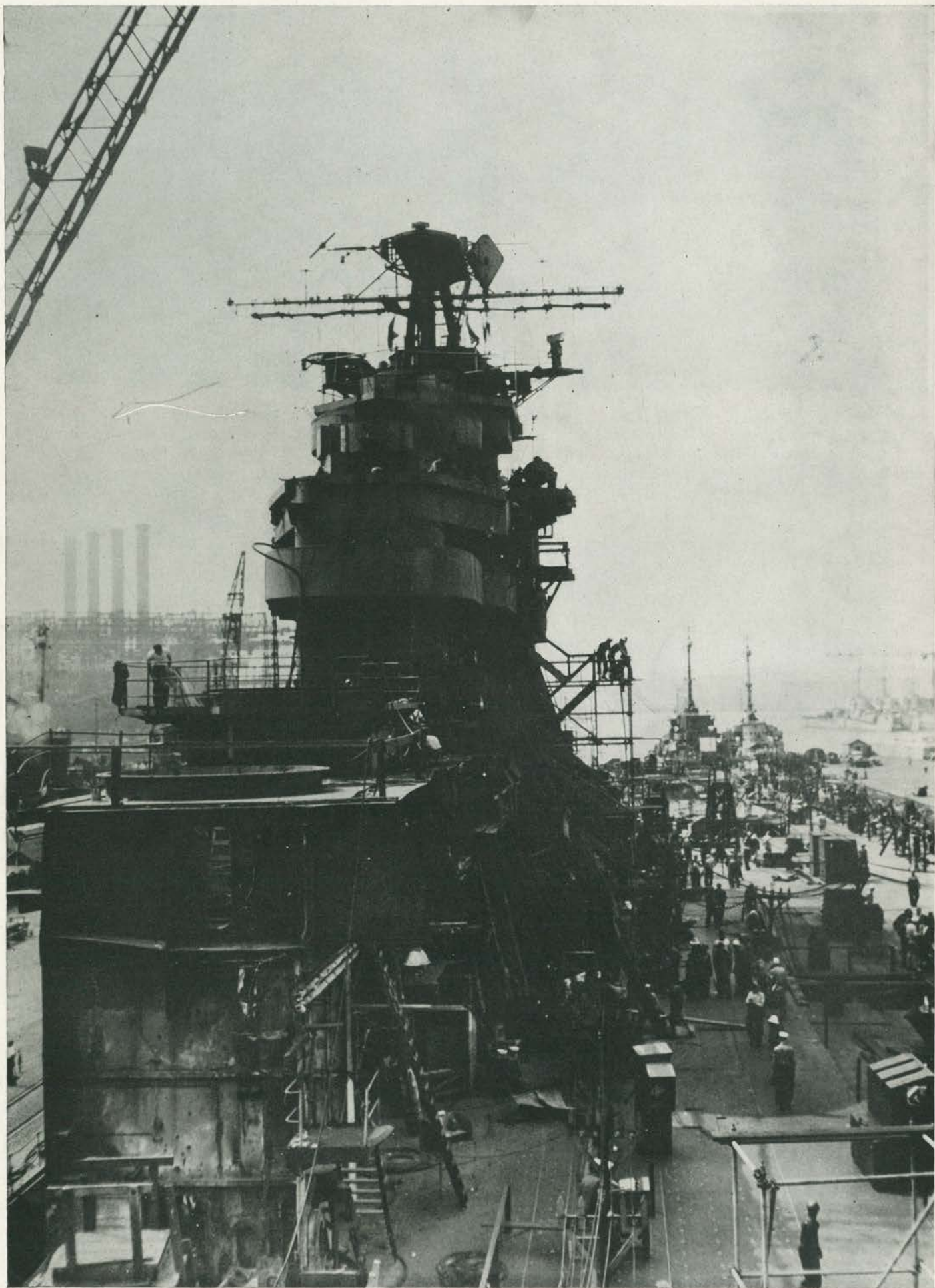
MESS COOKS — *First Row:* RUSSEL, L. G., LaROCCO, P.; *Second Row:* MARSHALL, C. E., HAGSETT, H. E., ROYLANCE, L. D., CHAPMAN, C. B., RASEBLACK, M. C., ALBERTSON, P., HURLEY, J. B., NICHOLS, O. E.; *Third Row:* SMITH, E. D., YASINSKI, E. P., LEONARD, G. J., JOHNSTON, D. V., SCHAEFER, J. E., HEBDA, A. S.



STEWARDS MATES—*First Row:* PETTISON, L., TURNER, G. G., STEGER, F., HAMILTON, A. L., WASHINGTON, C. C.; *Second Row:* GORDON J., CANNON, H. L., SMITH, M. C., STEWARD, R., BAKER, L. R., ALSTON, F., SAVAGE, E. J. REYNOR, R.; *Third Row:* KELLEY, A., BAITY, D., WEAVER, M., HARPER, J., DAVID, G. T., HALL, W., BARKINS, E., WHITE, W. J.



COMMANDER C. E. DICKINSON
Commanding Officer, 9 June 1946 to —

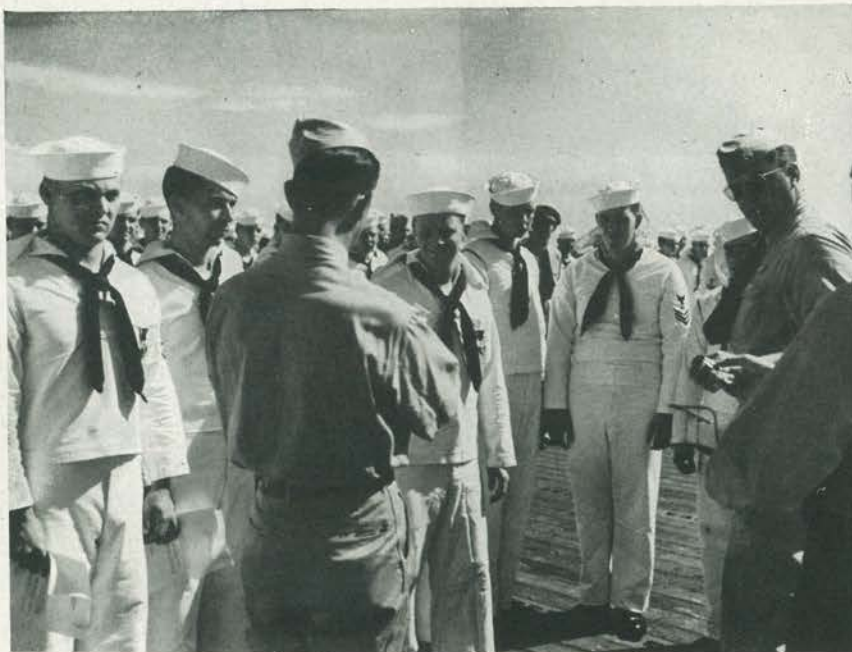


The entire flight deck removed, except for the forward 150 feet, the biggest repair job in naval history is underway.

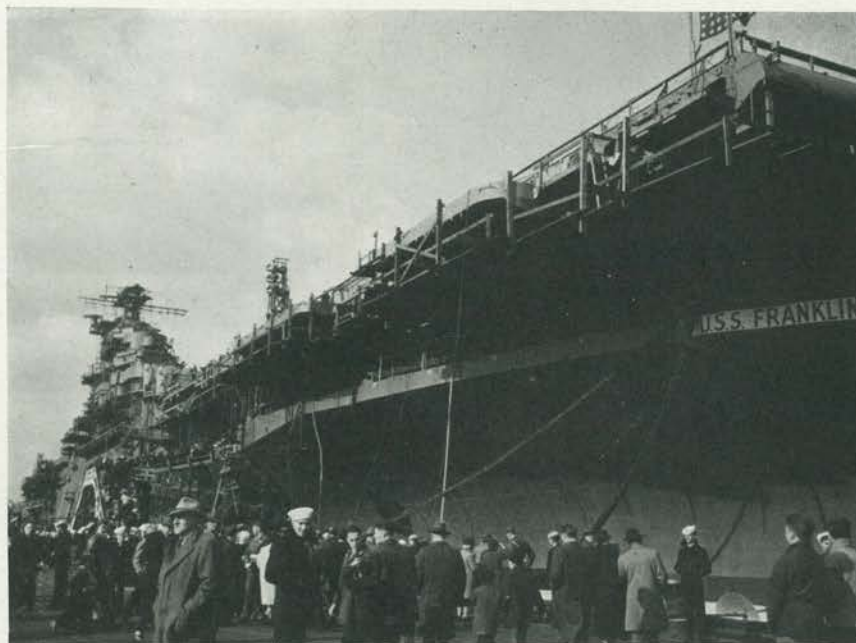


ABOVE: *Big Ben's* officers and men pay tribute to America's war dead, in Rockefeller Plaza . . .
 BELOW: Captain Gehres, Comdr. Taylor, Father O'Callahan, and Comdr. Hale, stand in salute as taps is sounded





*Captain Gehres presents
the Purple Heart
to Fireman Dan Cummings*



*Some of the twenty thousand
visitors who were aboard the
Franklin on Navy Day,
October 27th, 1945*



On Memorial Day, May 31st, the *Franklin's* crew stood at attention in Rockefeller Plaza, by the model of The Fighting Lady—an Essex class carrier—while Father O'Callahan, on a nationwide radio broadcast, held memorial services for the gallant men who would not come back from the battlefields and ocean wastes over which World War II was fought.

Some of the men commenced thirty days' leave in June. Three hundred new men had been sent by the Navy to take over ship's duties while they were away. As "X" Division, these youngsters worked hard through the summer; they held promise of being real sailors when Big Ben sailed again.

Some of them had friends who had died on the *Franklin*. One lad, Henry Syrek, newly enlisted, remembered his brother Frank Syrek, aviation ordnanceman, who died on her decks three months before.

On June 20th the remaining rewards were presented. Ten days later, June 30th, Captain Gehres was detached to become the commander of the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California. Comdr. Taylor was detached to be the commander of the Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Me., Comdr. Henry H. Hale became the new commanding officer.

In July, as the navy yard worked ceaselessly, and Big Ben began to look like her trim self again, the men of the ship were hard at work preparing for their next cruise. Hundreds of men were away at Damage Control School, at fire-fighter school, at schools fitting them for more responsible positions.

But in August, 1945, the little yellow men who thought to rule the world begged for mercy.

With peace and demobilization the men of the "704 Club" faded away; they were men with long sea service whose hearts were still in the homes they had fought to preserve. New faces, young men from the training stations, came to take their places.

On Navy Day, 1945—October 27th, thousands of visitors were shown over Big Ben. The new carrier, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, across the pier, being commissioned by President Truman, was not so crowded as the veteran of the Pacific.

On January 23rd, 1946, in Washington, D. C., Father Joseph O'Callahan, chaplain courageous, and Lt. Donald A. Gary, received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Harry Truman. Lt. Gary, still on Big Ben, was proudly greeted when he returned by shipmates who were happy that he had been accorded this fitting recognition.

Father O'Callahan was no longer aboard, now serving on the *USS Franklin D. Roosevelt*, but his old shipmates on the *Franklin* are still proud to have served beside him.

As repairs neared completion in April, 1946, and officers and men alike began to look forward to the shakedown cruise and joining the Fourth United States Fleet, disappointing news came. Due to the reduction of naval appropriations it was necessary to transfer the *Franklin* to the inactive 16th Fleet,—for "Operation Zipper" and the preservation process that prepares warships for deactivation during the peace-time years. After she arrived at the U.S. Navy Yard Annex, Bayonne, N. J., Commander Hale was detached on June 8th for duty at the Naval Ordnance Depot, Inyokern, California; the Commander could look back on an eventful cruise since the day he reported aboard in August, 1944, through the months as Navigator when he hardly left the bridge in some of the tensest actions of the war, the succeeding months as Air Officer (busiest and most hectic job on a carrier), and finally a year of command while the biggest repair assignment in naval history was being accomplished by the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. This repair job, it might be noted, was under the supervision of Ship's Superintendent J. M. McMullen, Lieutenant Commander, U.S.N., and was completed on 15 June, 1946.

The new Commanding Officer, Commander Clarence E. Dickinson, U.S.N., was a veteran combat pilot at 33, with a brilliant record of "firsts" and holder of three Navy Crosses: pilot of the first naval aircraft to shoot down a Japanese plane—a Zero at Pearl Harbor, on December 7th, 1941; three days later on December 10th, 1941, he roared down in his Douglas Dauntless (SBD) divebomber to a subsequently confirmed kill of the first major Japanese submarine in the war—the I-170, barely 125 miles off Pearl Harbor. His third Navy Cross was won in a daring attack on the Japanese cruiser Kaga at Midway, in which he registered three direct hits. Under Commander Dickinson, an officer thoroughly familiar with the value of preparedness, and the cost of its lack, preservation measures were carried out with characteristic Navy thoroughness, despite the dwindling numbers of the crew.

On about November 1st, 1946, when the last hatch will be sealed tight, and the last line made secure, a skeleton crew of seventy men and six officers will take over their watch. There she will wait beside the dock—still the United States Ship *Franklin*, "Big Ben the Flattop," a proud fighting ship of a fighting Navy.

SO THAT IS HER STORY . . .

Perhaps a new generation of sailors will man her decks; sailors of a newer day, following in the gallant pathways of the departed men who fought aboard her. She will take them all to her heart; again her spaces will echo to noise and laughter and the sound of men at work.

But in the evenings, where she looms dark and grim against the sky, alongside the wharf in a quiet, peace-time navy yard, men who love ships will look at her brooding bulk and know that Big Ben is remembering . . .

Remembering those boys, so gay and brave, who sailed her into battle . . . their voices, their laughter, their tears. They became a part of her, as she became a part of them.

The years are long and memory is short; the world will soon forget.

Big Ben remembers . . .

In reply address not the signer of this letter, but Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington 25, D.C.

Refer to No.

Pers 328-DN-ILK

NAVY DEPARTMENT
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



17 July 1945.

To: Commanding Officer, U.S.S. FRANKLIN.

Subj: Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio -
Forwarding of.

1. The Chief of Naval Personnel takes great pleasure in forwarding the subject Resolution, passed by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio and presented to the U.S.S. FRANKLIN and her men in recognition of their gallant action in saving their ship and returning her safely to port.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. A. Koch".

R. A. KOCH
Captain, U. S. N. (Ret)
Special Assistant to Chief of Naval Personnel

To fighting men and a fighting ship—the glorious crew and the inspiring sight of the staunch aircraft carrier, U. S. S. Franklin, as it steamed past the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

WHEREAS, The accomplishment of the U. S. S. Franklin, the 27,000-ton airplane carrier, which in the face of almost unsurmountable difficulties, and when practically sunk, refused to go down, but fought a thrilling battle, sixty miles off the Japanese coast, indelibly carved its name on the scroll of the many illustrious and thrilling sea battles which adorn the pages of American history; and

WHEREAS, The U. S. S. Franklin limped back to port under its own power, still flying the Stars and Stripes, and in spite of Japanese bombs, with their accompanying fires and explosions, returned fourteen thousand dangerous miles, though badly damaged, with hundreds of her crew killed or wounded, to the Brooklyn Navy Yard; and

WHEREAS, Captain L. E. Gehres, the ship's commander, in the immortal words of Captain Lawrence, declared: "I'll not abandon this ship," and in sticking to his decision added another episode of unforgettable glory to America's sea fighters, saved his ship and two-thirds of her complement of twenty-five hundred men; and

WHEREAS, High on the roll of honor for heroic service in the face of fire, is the name of Lt. Commander Joseph O'Callahan, chaplain of the U. S. S. Franklin, whose brave action in moving around a burning and exposed deck, administering to the dying, recruiting damage control parties and leading officers and men into flames to jettison hot bombs and shells, wet down ammunition magazines, etc., made one of the ship's senior officers remark: "He was the bravest man I ever saw"; and

WHEREAS, Hundreds of Purple Hearts were earned, as men from all walks of life, and race, color, creed, many from the State of Ohio, fought side by side against deadly flame, smoke, bombs and explosions to bring the U. S. S. Franklin home with flags flying; therefore be it

RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, That in recognition of this seemingly impossible task of achievement that this resolution be adopted by a rising vote and a copy be spread upon the journal as a testimony of the accomplishments of the American people under fire and the real significance of lasting victory and its fruition in a permanent peace, when an age of reason will supplant an age of war, when a philosophy of life will supplant a philosophy of death and destruction exemplified in the devotion of the American people to the ideals of the brotherhood of man, liberty and justice and the right of every man to live in dignity and freedom as his conscience dictates; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the clerk of the House of Representatives send an authenticated copy of this resolution to James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy; Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, and to Captain L. E. Gehres, of the U. S. S. Franklin.

/s/ OTIS R. JOHNSON
Clerk



CITATION

On Awarding the Gold Medal for Valor
to
The U.S.S. Aircraft Carrier Franklin, Officers and Crew

Boorman, Marvin K.
T.A.R.

IN THE MORNING OF MAY EIGHTEENTH, NEWS CAME THAT THE GREAT AIRCRAFT CARRIER FRANKLIN HAD BEEN STRUCK. WITH SADDENED HEARTS WE FOLLOWED THE FACTS ONE BY ONE AND LEARNED OF LOSS, CARNAGE, FIRE, EXPLOSION, AND DISASTER. "BIG BEN," AFFECTIONATELY SO CALLED AFTER OUR FIRST GREAT AMERICAN, HAD BEEN CRIPPLED. MANY WERE THEY WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE AND "GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN SHOWN." THE PROUD CARRIER, LESS THAN TWO YEARS OLD, HAD ALREADY RECEIVED ITS BATTLE SCARS IN A PREVIOUS ATTACK. WE PAY HOMAGE TO OUR NAVY; WE GLORY IN HER PROWESS; WITH FAME SHE IS ADORNED. WE SINGLE OUT FAVORITES AND ADOPT THEM AND FOLLOW THEIR CAREERS WITH PRIDE AND AFFECTION. ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO REVERE THE NAME OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, "BIG BEN" IS OF SPECIAL CONCERN. IT COULD NOT THEN BE OTHERWISE THAN THAT AS FOLLOWERS AND STUDENTS OF FRANKLIN "WITH SADDENED HEARTS, WE FOLLOWED THE FACTS ONE BY ONE."

PERMISSION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE CAPTAIN TO ABANDON SHIP; BUT THE CARRIER FRANKLIN WAS NOT DESERTED. CAPTAIN GEHRES AND HIS GREAT CREW, MADE OF STERNER STUFF, WERE DETERMINED NOT TO ABANDON. THEN AS WE LEARNED MORE THERE CAME TO US THE THRILL OF VICTORY, FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE HAD BECOME THE FACT AND THE GREAT CARRIER JUST WOULD NOT GO DOWN. A MIRACLE WAS DONE, FOR THE FRANKLIN THAT HAD GONE DEAD LIVED ONCE AGAIN! NOT IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY HAS THE TRADITION OF FORTITUDE AND HEROISM EXCELLED THAT OF THE OFFICERS AND CREW ON THE DAY AND AFTER THE CARRIER WAS BOMBED.

NEVER IN THE ANNALS OF NAVAL HISTORY HAS GLORY BEEN BESTOWED AT ONE TIME ON SO MANY AS ON THAT MARCH NINETEENTH WHEN OUT OF THE SKY DASHED THE ENEMY INTENT ON DEATH AND TOTAL DESTRUCTION. IT WAS THEN THAT EVERY MAN DID HIS DUTY; IT WAS THEN THAT THE NOBLE CAPTAIN WAS EQUAL TO HIS GREAT RESPONSIBILITY; IT WAS THEN THAT OFFICERS AND CREW RALLIED AND WORKED AS A GREAT UNIT, SAVED LIVES AND SHIP, AND BROUGHT THE CRIPPLED FRANKLIN SAFELY HOME OVER A COURSE OF TWELVE THOUSAND LONG MILES. IT WAS ON THAT DAY THAT THE NAME "FRANKLIN" TOOK ON ANOTHER GLORY FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE NAME.

SO, CAPTAIN GEHRES, THE INTERNATIONAL JUNIOR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SOCIETY WITH CHAPTERS EXTENDING FROM MONTREAL AND MASSACHUSETTS TO CALIFORNIA, SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SOCIETY, JAMES WRIGHT BROWN, PRESIDENT, RECOGNIZING THE BRAVERY AND HEROISM OF THE OFFICERS AND CREW OF THE U. S. S. CARRIER FRANKLIN, ASKS YOU TO ACCEPT A MEDAL FOR VALOR TO BE PLACED ON THE CARRIER AS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF GREAT DEEDS WHICH WILL EVER BE AN EXAMPLE TO THOSE TO WHOM IS GIVEN GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

WILL YOU BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE THE MEDAL AT THE HAND OF JOSEPH AGNELLO, PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF THIS SCHOOL AND MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL JUNIOR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SOCIETY, CHAPTER 8, WHICH IS ONE OF SIX CHAPTERS ORGANIZED IN THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF PRINTING.

GIVEN IN NEW YORK THIS
TWENTIETH DAY OF JUNE
NINETEEN HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

The International Benjamin Franklin Society, Inc.

J. Henry Holcom
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Date Due

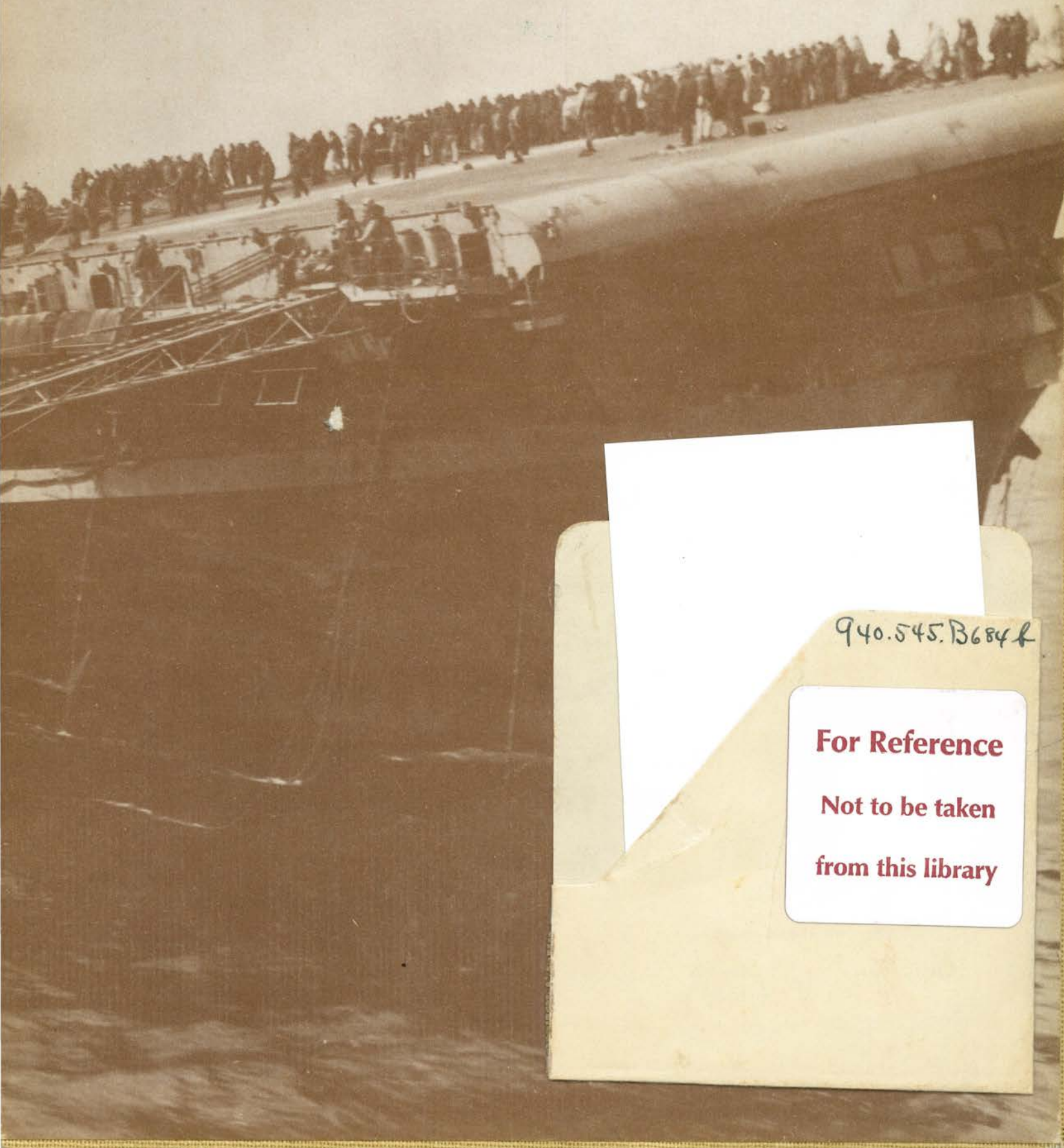
Bangor Public Library, Bangor, Maine



BANGOR PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 5109 00658148 0



940.545.B684f

For Reference

Not to be taken

from this library

