



COMPOSITE SQUADRON VC-27

THE "SAINTS"

UNITED STATES NAVY

05 November 1943 - 11 September 1945



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The "Saints"

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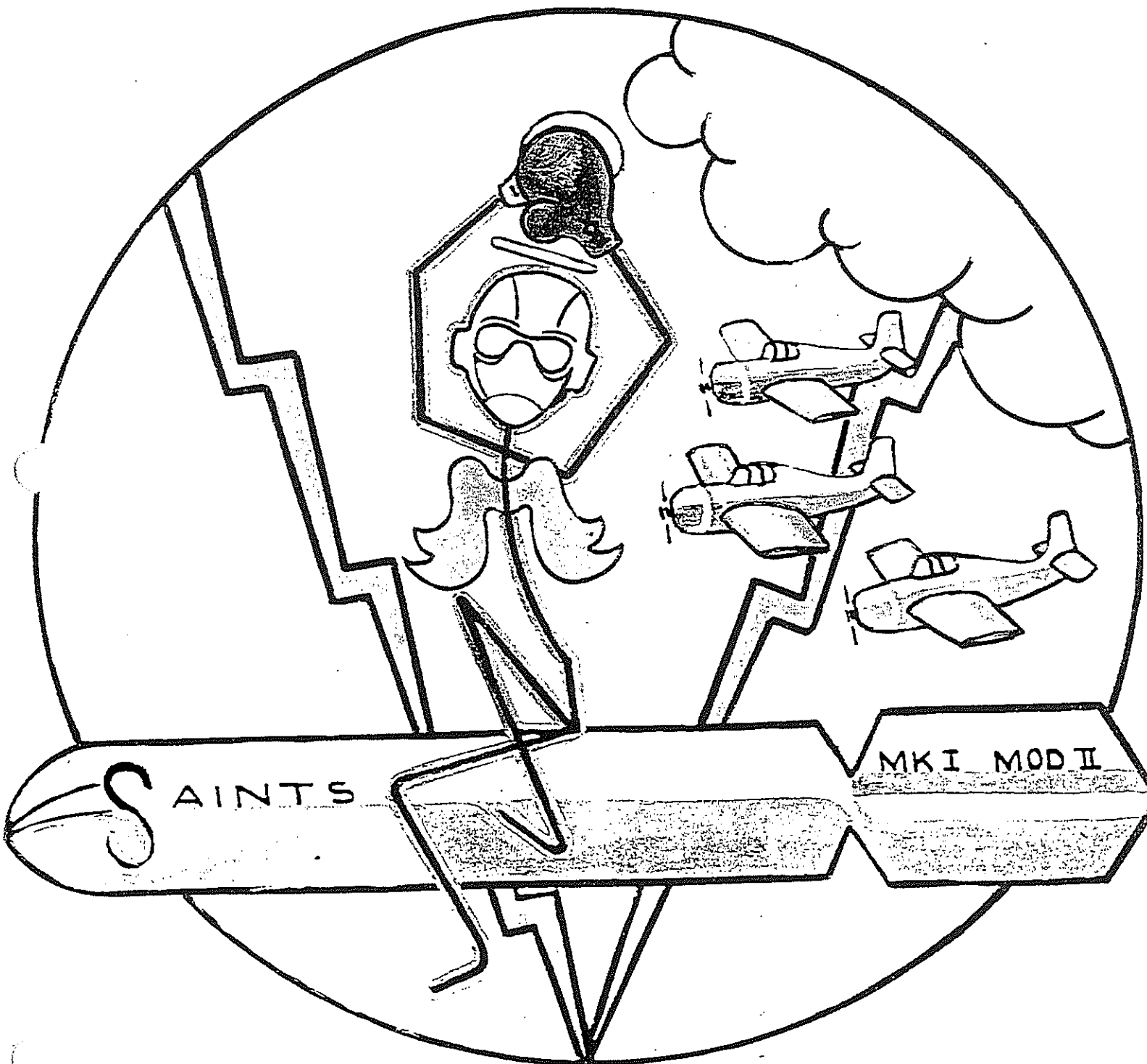
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VC-27 SQUADRON INSIGNIA

THE "SAINTS"

INSIGNIA OF NAVY SQUADRON VC-27
SECOND SQUADRON
FLYING SAINTS MK I MOD II



WE AMERICANS ARE THE BEST INFORMED PEOPLE
ON EARTH AS TO THE EVENTS OF THE LAST
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS; WE ARE NOT THE BEST
INFORMED AS TO THE EVENTS OF THE LAST
SIXTY CENTURIES.

Will and Ariel Durant

GLOSSARY

AMM	Aviation Machinist Mate
AOM	Aviation Ordnance Man
ARM	Aviation Radio Man
ASP	Anti-submarine Patrol
AVENGER	Grumman TBF/TBM Torpedo Bomber
BB	Battleship
BUFFALO	Brewster F2A Fighter
CA	Heavy Cruiser
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CL	Light Cruiser
COMPOSITE SQUADRON	Squadron with mix of TBM Torpedo Bombers & FM-2 Fighters
CVB	Large Fleet Aircraft Carrier
CVE	Escort Aircraft Carrier
CVL	Small Fleet Aircraft Carrier
DD	Destroyer
DE	Destroyer Escort
F2A	Brewster "Buffalo" Fighter
FM-2/F4F	Grumman "Wildcat" Fighter
HELLDIVER	Curtiss Wright SB2C Dive Bomber
NAAS	Naval Auxiliary Air Station
NAS	Naval Air Station
PBY	Convair "Catalina" Flying Boat
SAINTS	Composite Squadron VC-27
SAP	Semi-Armor-Piercing
SAVO ISLAND	Escort Carrier CVE-78
SB2C	Curtiss Wright "Helldiver" Dive Bomber
SS	Submarine
TBM/TBF	Grumman "Avenger" Torpedo Bomber
USS	United States Ship
VC	Composite Squadron Mix of TBM Torpedo Bombers & FM-2 Fighters
VF	Fighter Squadrons
VT	Torpedo Bomber Squadrons
WILDCAT	Grumman FM-2/F4F Fighter

JAPANESE AIRCRAFT TYPES

BETTY	Mitsubishi G4M Navy long range bomber
FRANCES	Yokosuka PIY " <i>Ginga</i> " Navy medium bomber
HAMP	Mitsubishi A6M3 Army/Navy fighter; later called <i>Zeke</i> 32
IRVING	Nakajima J1N1 " <i>Gekko</i> " Navy night fighter
JAKE	Aichi E13A Navy reconnaissance floatplane
JILL	Nakajima B6N " <i>Tenzan</i> " Navy torpedo bomber
JUDY	Yokosuka D4Y " <i>Suisie</i> " Navy dive bomber
KATE	Nakajima B5N Navy torpedo bomber
OSCAR	Nakajima Ki-43 " <i>Haybusa</i> " Army fighter
SALLY	Mitsubishi Ki-21 Army heavy bomber
TOJO	Nakajima Ki-44 " <i>Shoki</i> " Army interceptor
TONY	Kawasaki Ki-61 " <i>Hein</i> " Army fighter
VAL	Aichi D3A Navy dive bomber
ZEKE	Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 [zero] " <i>Reisen</i> " Navy fighter

FOREWORD

My older brother was the commanding officer of the US Navy's Composite Squadron VC-27 "Saints" during in World War II. During the past two years, I have had occasion to revisit some of the press clippings and documents about the squadron's exploits and began to realize that when I am gone, all of my knowledge and memories of him and his famous Navy squadron will be lost. I wanted his children and mine to be aware of the sacrifices made by so many in the Pacific in the fall of 1944.

After being invited to attend a reunion of his former squadron members in May 2002 and listening to their exploits, I was even more convinced that there was a story to be told that might otherwise be lost, so I decided to write about not only the history, but also the background of the events and as many personal reflections as I could gather.

I was fortunate enough to be able to contact many of the surviving members of his squadron who provided me with many, many anecdotes and stories. It is to them that this story is dedicated. Stephen E. Ambrose, in his book *Citizen Soldiers*, said it best: "They were there. I wasn't. They saw with their own eyes, they put their own lives on the line. I didn't. They speak with an authenticity no one else can match. Their phrases, their choice words, their slang are unique - naturally enough, as their experiences were unique."

It is impossible for me to acknowledge everyone's contributions since there were so many, but four stand out whose input was invaluable: my niece (my brother's oldest daughter), Pamela Jackson Everton, of Midlothian, Virginia who provided significant background materials; Lt.(jg) Samuel H. Blackwell, Jr., bomber pilot now of Tucker, Georgia (and unofficial "historian" for VC-27); Lt.(jg) Forrest F. Glasgow, ordnance officer on the Savo Island now of Nashville, Tennessee, both of whom sent reams and reams of data; and Aviation Ordinance Man 1st Class Lloyd J. Le Blanc now of Metairie, Louisiana (ball turret gunner who flew with my brother) who kindly copied his aviator's flight log for me covering the entire year of 1944 and early 1945.

After almost 60 years memories fade and facts get distorted. I'd be most pleased to receive corrections and identification of errors, particularly to the roster in Appendix E.

Robert C. Jackson
Poughkeepsie, New York
4 July 2003

ESCORT CARRIERS - CVE'S

Early in World War II Navy planners in Washington recognized that the strategy of island hopping in the Pacific to reclaim territory lost to the Japanese, and eventually to invade Japan itself, could not be accomplished without air power to cover the ships and personnel of the invasion forces. Large fleet aircraft carriers could do the job, but there were not enough of them to be spared and at the same time fight toe to toe with the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, President Roosevelt had ordered that two C-3 merchant ships purchased from the Moore-McCormack Lines be quickly converted into aircraft carriers to deal with the growing threat of German submarines in the Atlantic. The result was the *USS Long Island* commissioned 2 June 1941, the former *S.S. Mormacmail* and predecessor of the CVE or Escort Carrier; it was 492 feet long and displaced 7,886 tons. The shortcomings of the *Long Island* were improved upon in the conversion of 10 more C-3 merchant ships to the *Bogue*-class of Escort Carriers in 1942. While they were better suited for invasion force support than the *Long Island*, the Navy needed something better and relegated them to the task of ferrying aircraft and personnel in the Pacific. The Navy even had trouble naming this class of ships: initially they were designated Auxiliary Aircraft Escort Vehicles (AVG's); on 20 August 1942 they were redesignated Auxiliary Aircraft Carriers (ACV's); and on 15 July 1943 changed again to their final name, Escort Carriers (CVE's).

In mid-1942 Henry J. Kaiser, a major west-coast shipyard owner, succeeded in getting the President to approve an order for CVE's that would be designed and built from the keel up as escort carriers and would be known throughout the fleet as the *Casablanca-class* of Escort Carriers.^[1]

As these ships became ubiquitous in the Pacific, they acquired many derogatory names such as "Combustible, Vulnerable, and Expendable," "Kaiser coffins", "baby flattops", "jeep carriers" and other names that are unprintable! Kaiser built 50 of these *Casablanca-class* carriers between July 1943 and July 1944 alone (86 in all with some finished after the end of the War) and while all of them were originally named for bays, 25 of them were renamed for famous battles. *CVE-78*, for example, was initially named the *Kaita Bay* but renamed the *Savo Island* just before it was launched on 22 December 1943; (her sponsor was Miss Margaret Taffinder, daughter of Rear Admiral Taffinder, Commander of the 13th Naval District). It was commissioned 3 February 1944 and decommissioned 12 December 1946. They all were 512 feet long with a flight deck of only 108 feet, 65 feet of beam, displaced 10,400 tons and had a top speed of only 17 knots. Armament consisted of a single 5 inch 50 caliber gun on the fantail. These guns could fire regular 5 inch shells at other ships or shore installations, or special antiaircraft shells with proximity fuses so the shell would explode when it came within a certain distance of a solid object, i.e. an aircraft. A CVE also carried eight twin 40mm and twenty 20mm antiaircraft guns. Initially CVEs became well known for their extensive use in the Atlantic sinking German U-boats; planes from the *USS Guadalcanal* (CVE-60) succeeded in disabling the German U-boat *U-505* and the task force captured it intact - one of the best kept secrets of the Atlantic war. (The

U-505 is on display at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.)

In the Pacific the escort carriers were used in roles not assigned to the large fleet carriers or the light carriers. CVE pilots did fly routine combat air patrols, hunted submarines, bombed bridges, or performed routine reconnaissance etc., but sometimes the ship itself was used to ferry replacement aircraft to the larger fleet carriers. Called aircraft carriers, in comparison to the large heavy carriers or even to the light carriers they were light-weights. One-third the size of heavy carriers, they were cramped, unarmed, thin hulled vessels unable to launch and recover aircraft with the ease of the larger carriers.^[2]

AMERICAN AIRCRAFT

Early in the planning it was decided that the aircraft aboard the CVE's would be a nominal combination of 12 torpedo bombers and 16 fighter planes combined into one Composite Squadron designated as VC's.

The torpedo bomber chosen was the *TBF/TBM "Avenger"* designed by the Grumman Aircraft and Engineering Company of Bethpage, Long Island.

(Background: Grumman, today part of Northrup/Grumman and no longer of Long Island, was a major supplier of the Navy's carrier based fighter aircraft during World War II. Late in 1939 the Navy issued a Request for Proposal (RPQ) to aircraft manufacturers for a replacement for the obsolescent Douglas TBD "Devastator" dive bomber. The RPQ specified a three-man crew, 300 mph top speed, internal bomb bay capacity of one 2,000 pound torpedo 22 inches in diameter or four 500 pound bombs, self-sealing fuel tanks, armor protection and a powered dorsal gun turret. Various proposals were submitted, but only two were accepted in the early Spring of 1940 by the Navy: Chance Vought's XTBU-1 "Sea Wolf" and the XTBF-1 from Grumman. Borrowing heavily on their highly successful F4F "Wildcat" fighter design, Grumman came up with a radial engine, all metal, midwing monoplane with a portly fuselage; it met or exceeded all of the Navy's RPQ specifications. The prototype was powered by a Wright Cyclone R-2600-8 engine developing 1,700 horsepower which drove a 13 foot in diameter Hamilton Standard three-bladed variable pitch propeller. It first flew on 1 August 1941.

The pilot faced forward with a 30 caliber machine gun firing through the propeller arc; a similar caliber weapon under the control of the radioman/bomb aimer was placed in the lower rear dorsal position; and finally the ball-turret gunner manned 50 caliber gun facing aft in a electrically power-operated turret. Hydraulics powered the retractable landing gear, flaps, bomb bay doors and outwardly folding outer wing panels. The wing panels folded back laterally along the sides of the fuselage and were completely controlled by the pilot (no ground crew assistance required). This feature was designed to avoid the height problem on carrier decks and contributed to Grumman winning the production contract over the Chance Vought design. The "Avenger" (so named right after Pearl Harbor in December 1941 when the Navy awarded the first production contract) had a wingspan of 54 feet, weighed 10,080 pounds empty, a top speed of 271 knots and a range of 1,250 miles.

Ex-President George Bush (then a Navy Lieutenant (jg)) was flying a TBM-1C "Avenger" from VT-51 based on the USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) on 2 September 1944 and was attacking the Japanese-held island of Chichi Jima when he was shot down. Although he parachuted safely and was picked up by the submarine USS Finback (SS-230), his other two crew members were killed.

The basic design of the aircraft changed very little during the course of its production run which allowed for a large number of "Avenger"s to be built by Grumman over a very short period of time: 2,293 were produced between January 1942 and December 1943 alone. The Navy's demands, however, soon outstripped the TBF production capability of Grumman so the Navy sought out other manufacturers to build the planes. Automotive giant General Motors had ceased automobile production in December 1941 idling four plants and sought to find work manufacturing war materials; it was a natural fit. Through its Eastern Aircraft Division plant at Trenton, New Jersey, GM commenced producing the almost identical "Avenger" designated the TBM in November 1942. GM plants at Tarrytown, New York, Baltimore, Maryland, and Bloomfield, New Jersey provided components and subassemblies for Trenton. By the time their production line closed in June 1945, GM had built 7,546 TBM's, a figure which far exceeded Grumman's own final build figure of 2,293 for a total of 9,839.)^[3] So successful was the aircraft that it remained in service for 15 years.

The fighter plane chosen was the Grumman designed F4F/FM-2 "Wildcat".

(Background: This was Grumman's first monoplane and became one of the outstanding naval fighter planes of World War II. The design, initially as a biplane - the XF4F-1, began in 1935 competing against the Brewster Aeronautical Corporation's F2A-1 "Buffalo", the first monoplane adopted by the Navy. In the design competition fly-off the "Buffalo" won and was ordered in large numbers by the Navy. As a result Grumman completely revised its design to a monoplane, the XF4F-2, which was ordered by the Navy in 1936; its first flight was 2 September 1937. As it turned out, the Grumman design achieved far greater success than its Brewster "Buffalo" competitor.

The "Wildcat" F4F-4/FM-2 was the main Navy shipboard fighter when the United States entered World War II. It was barrel-shaped with angular wings, wingtips and rudder and had a narrow-track undercarriage that was manually retractable by the pilot who had to crank 36 strokes, all the while flying the aircraft! The Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 [zero] codenamed "Zeke") outperformed it, but the "Wildcat" in its final version was well armed with six 50 caliber machine guns mounted in the wings. With protective armor for the pilot and self-sealing fuel tanks, it was a reliable, natural ship-born fighter. It established Grumman's reputation of building very strong aircraft.

In 1942 General Motors, through its Eastern Aircraft Division plant at Linden, New Jersey, won a contract as a second source, for the production of 1,800 aircraft of an almost identical version of the F4F-4 leaving Grumman to concentrate on the design and build of its new F6F "Hellcat" fighter; Eastern's plane was designated the FM-1. When Escort Carriers began to appear in large numbers, an updated version, designated the FM-2, was developed utilizing a more powerful 14 cylinder, air-cooled, radial piston R-1820-56 Wright Cyclone Twin-Wasp engine yielding improved takeoff performance from the shorter carrier decks. This version had a maximum take-off weight of 7,952 pounds, a wingspan of 38 feet, was 28.47 feet long, had a service ceiling of 34,900 feet and a maximum speed of 318 miles-per-hour. The FM-2 was most

Eastern eventually produced 4,127 FM-2's for the Navy and another 340 for Britain where it was named the "Martlet". It became the standard fighter plane for all Escort Carriers during the War and by the end of the War 7,815 "Wildcats" had been produced by the two manufacturers. The FM-2 was one of the first Navy planes with manually operated diagonally hinged wings (operated by the deck crew) that folded back to the sides of the fuselage. This made for storage of a maximum number of aircraft on each carrier.)

COMPOSITE SQUADRON VC-27 ONE – "THE SAINTS"

To meet the rising demand for aircraft squadrons to populate the CVE's, squadron training began in earnest throughout the United States. One of these was Composite Squadron VC-27 that was commissioned 5 November 1943 at the Naval Air Station (NAS) at Sand Point, Washington (near Seattle and officially Naval Station Puget Sound, was opened in 1925 and decommissioned on 28 September 1995). After a short stint as an interim Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Goly R. Henry became the Executive Officer (and a torpedo bomber pilot); Lieutenant Commander Percival W. Jackson USN was named Commanding Officer (and a torpedo bomber pilot); and Lieutenant Ralph E. Elliott Jr. Operations Officer (and a fighter pilot). (As of this writing Elliott, Henry and Jackson are deceased). Aircraft initially assigned were 12 *FM-1* fighters and 9 *TBM-1* torpedo bombers.

The Squadron was nicknamed "The Saints" after a fictional character (Simon Templar, alias "The Saint") created by author Leslie Charteris. According to Ensign Samuel H. Blackwell, a torpedo bomber pilot - now of Tucker, Georgia, "The Saint" appeared in more than 50 of Charteris' novels plus 8 movies. Charteris was asked for permission to use his trademarked character name and insignia for the squadron, and he replied 20 July 1944 with enthusiastic approval: *"It is a great privilege to have received this request, and I hope the Saint will bring you all good luck and good hunting."* Jackson filed the official documents with the Chief of Naval Operations saying in part: *"The significance of 'The 'Saints' as the Squadron Insignia for VC-27 originated through our desire to choose an emblem that would be simple as well as express our desires toward the enemy. It is well known that the Japanese glory in dying for their Emperor. Throughout our training it was our aim to help the Nipponese in realizing their desired goal as 'Saints.' On the other hand 'The Saints' when referring to members of the Squadron's attitudes and actions is a direct satire".*

(It should be noted that although "The Saints" emblem appeared in numerous places it never appeared on the planes themselves. Every Squadron had a distinctive marking applied to its planes, for easy identification in the battle zone, once the squadron left the states with brand new planes. VC-27 had a vertically slanted arrow on the tail running through the plane's number. The number also appeared on both sides of the cowlings primarily for easy identification by all of the crew's working on the plane)

The nickname continued to be used in the Navy; indeed Lieutenant Commander John McCain (now Senator John McCain of Arizona) was leading a squadron of "The Saints"

on 30 September 1967 from the attack carrier *USS Oriskany (CV-34)* when he was shot down over Vietnam subsequently spending six years as a POW.

November was spent mostly with familiarization flights. Training started 2 December 1943 when the squadron was transferred to the Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Pasco, Washington. Rain and fog plagued the training here leaving plenty of time for activities at the Officer's Club, including a visit from a traveling USO show. Despite the weather the fighter pilots were able to engage in familiarization flying, field carrier landings, tactics, and gunnery runs on towed target sleeves. The Ordnance men dipped the tips of the 50 caliber bullets in various colored paints. Not only would there be holes in the long round sleeved cotton tow target, they would be colored. There was no argument as to who hit the target. The torpedo pilots practiced high-altitude dive-bombing, glide bombing, mast head bombing, strafing and navigational hops.

On 23 January 1944 the squadron went to NAAS Holtville, California and, with a significant improvement in the weather, they were able to complete the syllabus for night flying - the beginning of the combat-training in preparation for deployment in the Pacific. Further training in group tactics was conducted in Southern California at NAAS Brown Field starting 17 February.

Lt (jg) Forrest Glasgow, VC-27 V-4 Ordnance Officer (who later became ships company) now of Nashville, Tennessee said the following: *"One of things that amused me about Brown Field: I had not been in the squadron very long, having joined just before Holtville. I was getting my first look at Navy fighter pilots. There was a squadron of Army P-38's ["Lightnings"] at the field also. They were taught to make long approaches for landing. I was told they were trained to land that way because later they would be landing at fields where bombers also landed. Well when a group of VC-27 fighters (like Ashcraft, Davidson, Leighty) would just happen to return when the P-38's were far out on their landing approach the VC-27 guys would use their short carrier approach and cut in front of them and land first. They thought this was hilarious."*

Jackson was a fair but demanding commanding officer. Aviation Chief Ordnance Mate William Moye - now of Lummi Island, Washington characterized him as follows: *"... I was only four years younger than the Skipper but then I thought he was much older. The responsibilities he bore must have made him more mature. Command probably does that to men and that may be why Skippers are usually spoken of as 'the old man'. Moye also provided a good example of the "Skipper's" discipline while allowing time for recreation: " ... One of the younger pilots was getting enough men together for a ball game. He took most of the ordnancemen without asking me and we were short handed when planes came back from gunnery practice. I let the Captain know and he must have chewed out that pilot unmercifully. He could not get to the Ordnance shack early enough the next morning to apologize to me - it never happened again."*

In May 1944 VC-27 received the updated model *TBM-1C* General Motors "Avenger" torpedo bomber. Early in the War the Navy realized that the 30 caliber forward firing machine gun was unsatisfactory so they reinforced the wing structure to accept 50 caliber

Training continued throughout the spring at various locations in California including carrier qualification landings on the *USS Prince William (CVE-31)* in early April; all pilots except one qualified. During the eight months of training for combat, the pilots were subjected to the most comprehensive training conceivable, including war games and firing of live bombs, rockets and other armaments. In late May 1944 the squadron spent four days on a pre-shakedown cruise off San Diego bay in California on a brand new CVE, the *USS Takanis Bay (CVE-89)*, which had been commissioned only a month earlier. Poor weather, however, limited air operations to refresher carrier qualification landings.

The squadron completed the required fleet syllabus, and reported for duty 6 July 1944 aboard the *USS Savo Island (CVE-78)*, commanded by Captain Clarence E. "Swede" Ekstrom USN, at San Diego, California. *(Ekstrom went on to become an Admiral and Commander, Naval Air Forces, Pacific Fleet after the war.)* CVE-78's shakedown cruise took most of the next ten days and pilots trained in catapult launchings, anti-submarine patrol (ASP), combat air patrols (CAP), etc. They departed for Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii on 22 July. No flight operations were performed during this trip because CVE-78 was carrying a deck load of forty Curtiss-Wright SB2C "Helldiver" dive-bombers for delivery to the Fleet pool at Pearl. After further training in Hawaii, VC-27 and the *Savo Island* became part of the US 3rd Fleet and sailed for Tulagi Harbor, Florida Island, in the Solomon Islands on 12 August arriving on the 24th. The ship's motto turned out to be prophetic: "The Japs Will Hate the 78."

(Background: The USS Savo Island was named for the Battle of Savo Island in the Solomon Islands which started on 7 August 1942 when the 1st Marine Division made the first amphibious assault of the War on Guadalcanal. On August 9th the Japanese 8th Fleet surprised and succeeded in dividing the allied naval force protecting the landings. The battle occurred near Savo Island, a small volcanic island several miles off Guadalcanal. It ended in what naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison termed "the worst defeat ever inflicted on the United States Navy in a fair fight". By the end of the battle, the Imperial Japanese Navy had sunk four heavy cruisers and one destroyer killing 1270 men.)^[5]

During the long trip there was time for fun. Just before arriving at Tulagi they crossed both the 180th Meridian (half way around the world) and the Equator and all officers and men crossing for the first time were inducted into the "Imperial Domain of the Golden Dragon" and the "Ancient Order of the Deep", respectively. Parachute Rigger Donald Carlyle now of Lakewood, Colorado, related the following: "... My body was loaded with infection ... they moved my sleeping quarters aft, back towards where the Barbershop was located. Those in charge of the initiation of Pollywogs to Shellbacks [those crossing the equator for the first time] were using the Barbershop to store beer for the after-initiation party. On passing by I noticed some of my fellow shipmates had gotten into the shop, and were drinking the beer as fast as possible. Naturally I stopped in too, and had several beers. However, I was still in pain ... and left before all the beer was gone ... The Master-of-Arms caught them all still drinking beer, and all of them got busted in rank. Luckily nothing happened to me, and I thank all my good buddies for not telling I had been drinking beer with them ..."

THE PELELIU ISLAND INVASION

VC-27's first combat assignment was to support for the landings of the 1st Marine Division and the US Army 81st Division on Peleliu Island, southernmost of the Palau Islands, part of the Caroline Island chain. Capture of this island was considered necessary to support the coming Leyte invasion, but it turned out to be a bloody, protracted battle. No Jap planes were encountered, but the defenders were heavily dug in the ridges pouring withering fire on the Americans. Between 12 and 30 September VC-27 operated with planes from a group of three other escort carriers conducting pre-invasion strafing, direct support of ground forces and patrol missions with the squadron flying a total of 544 sorties.

(Background: This was Task Group 32.7.1 commanded by Rear Admiral William D. Sample USN, and also included the USS Marcus Island (CVE-77), USS Ommaney Bay (CVE-79), and USS Kadashan Bay (CVE-76). It was part of Task Group 32.7 commanded by Rear Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie USN, including six additional CVE's - the largest number of escort carriers yet assembled in the Pacific war.)

According to AOM 1/c Le Blanc's Flight Log Book, damage by the squadron included the destruction of Japanese gun emplacements, bivouac areas, barracks, ammunition dumps, barges, warehouses, airstrips, pill boxes, and strafing and bombing of enemy troops. Much of the support called for bombs 150-200 yards ahead of the troops with the squadron establishing a 4.0 record for pin-point drops; there were no bad drops. Heavy antiaircraft fire succeeded in downing one *FM-2*; fortunately, the pilot was picked up uninjured. Air operations by VC-27 were, however, considerably different from what the Marine and Army invasion forces encountered on the ground. The Japanese fought stubbornly before it was over killing almost as many Americans as died on Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6th!!^[6]

So outstanding was the close air-ground support VC-27 gave, that the Commander Support Aircraft and Commander Land Forces praised its effectiveness. A congratulatory message from Adm. Sample, was posted on the *Savo Island* bulletin board on the 25 September "for the information of all hands": *"YOU HAVE COMPLETED 12 DAYS OF CONTINUOUS FULL CUT COMBAT OPERATIONS A TASK UNEQUALED BY ANY OTHER CARRIER GROUP LARGE OR SMALL X YOU HAVE ALSO PERFORMED ALL PHASES OF YOUR VARIED WORK WITH UNIFORM EXCELLENCE THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN EXCELLED AND PROBABLY NOT EQUALED EVEN BY THE BIG BOYS X THIS PERFORMANCE IS ALL THE MORE OUTSTANDING BY VIRTUE OF BEING YOUR FIRST COMBAT OPERATION X YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED YOURSELVES AS A FIRST RATE FIGHTING OUTFIT WITH A RECORD ALREADY THAT YOU CAN WELL BE PROUD OF AND I AM GLAD TO BE THE FIRST TO GIVE YOU A WELL DESERVED WELL DONE...."* The pilots held up well in this protracted period of continuous operations, and lack of fatigue was probably due to the fact that they were fresh, well trained, of high morale, and eager to do well in their first combat operations. There were no VC-27 personnel lost to enemy action during this campaign.

CHAOS ON THE FLIGHT DECK

The flight deck of an aircraft carrier is a hazardous place to be when planes are taking off or landing. Murphy's Law is constantly lurking in the background, and woe be to the sailor who does not understand this. Storekeeper Jerry Baughman - now of Portland, Indiana, one of the enlisted plane handlers related his experiences: *"On the Savo I was put in the gas crew. We had to start putting gas in planes when the first plane landed and continue until the last plane landed ... day in and day out it was probably more dangerous than the Japs. While filling the planes with gas we had to watch every plane that landed and if they missed the wires and the barrier they could be on top of the plane we were refueling and that happened several times. All you could do was jump down from the wing and I felt that being as close to the landing gear as I could be was the safest place. Lucky for me none of the planes that crashed forward of the barrier ever caught fire. I had many close calls with the gas crew ... then was transferred to the plane handling gang. That was no picnic either. The engines on all the planes were started on command at the same time. The plane handlers, one on each side of the plane, had to remove the tie down lines and chocks and go with the plane to the take-off point. After the plane took off we had to crawl on the deck to reach another plane and remember that the propellers were going at the same time. If you felt yourself being blown a little there were finger fittings you could try to get hold of to keep from being blown into a propeller behind you ..."*

Aviation Ordnance Mate 1st class Tobe Turpen (Lt. Goly Henry's gunner), now of Albuquerque, New Mexico, reminisces: *"I wonder how many times [Lt.(jg) Bill] Diffie [Landing Signal Officer on the Savo Island] had to bail out into his emergency net. God, how naive we were. I never gave a single thought that we might crash on landing. The one time we did miss the cable and tore up several parked planes, we just crawled out and went about our business. I don't even remember discussing the happening with any of our aircrewmembers. What a great attitude to have. I guess it comes with being young and feeling indestructible."*

Lieutenant(jg) Forrest F. Glasgow, now of Nashville, Tennessee, was the Aviation Ordnance Officer aboard the *Savo Island* and a member of ship's company. He relates some of the other chaos that was experienced: *"One incident involved an FM-2 fighter loaded with a 250 pound bomb under each wing. The pilot ... was just moving into take off position after the plane before him had just taken off ... one of my ordnance men came running over [to me] and hollered above the engine noise 'Mr Glasgow is the propeller on the bomb supposed to be spinning?' I should quickly explain that bombs are set off by fuses that are armed by a spinning propeller as the bomb falls through the air. Normally this propeller cannot spin because there is a wire though it that is pulled and stays with the plane when the bomb is dropped. Due to an oversight this wire had not been properly installed. I ran out and looked. Sure enough the fuse was in the fully armed position. You don't really stop to think in these cases. I reached in and unscrewed the fuse and threw it over the side. I don't think the Captain of the ship ever knew, thank goodness because he would have wanted somebody's hide."*

Glasgow continued: *[Another] time a TBM landed and opened its bomb bay doors which was standard practice. A bomb dropped out and rolled across the deck. It had not released when it was supposed to but had dropped out of the rack later after the pilot had closed the bomb bay doors. I'm glad the fuse wasn't armed.*

[One time] one of the fighter pilots forgot to turn off his gun switches before he landed and squeezed off several rounds of 50 caliber almost aimed at the bridge.

Not all accidents happened on the flight deck. Glasgow continues: *On that hectic 25 October morning [see below] my guys were hoisting bombs out of the bomb storage compartment below and let a 500 pound semi armor piercing bomb slip out of its shackle and drop from the hangar deck back to the deck below ... You can be sure the captain never heard about that one either."*

And on 22 September, during a Dawn Alert, the destroyer USS Thorn (DD-647) was struck by a stray 40 mm projectile, courtesy of the Savo Island. There was only slight damage and no casualties.

REST AND RELAXATION ON MANUS ISLAND

On the 30th the *Savo Island* and VC-27 were relieved of combat operations and sailed to Manus Island for nine days of rest and relaxation arriving on 3 October. Half of each group was allowed liberty at a time. They now were part of the 7th Fleet commanded by Vice-Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid USN (Annapolis Class of 1908). While they were here replenishment of armaments took place including replacing all the fighter plane gun barrels, worn out by the strafing in the Peleliu fight.

(Background: Manus is the smallest of the 18 provinces of Papua New Guinea and is located in the Admiralty Island group in the Bismarck Sea 1,565 miles east of the Philippines. Recaptured from the Japanese 18 May 1944, it became a staging area for future operations in New Guinea and the Philippines with thousands of buildings, shops and supply and repair facilities. Its magnificent, deep Seedler Harbor, fifteen miles long and four miles wide, could accommodate more than 600 ships at any given time. Unfortunately, there was only one jetty to service the ferry carriers which had to lie a long way off shore. This meant that replacement aircraft had to be hoisted onto lighters and ferried through the reefs to be unloaded. The Savo Island was anchored in Manus's Seedler Harbor when the ammunition ship USS Mount Hood (AE-11) blew up on 10 November with the loss of 372 sailors missing or dead and 371 injured.)

They sailed on the 12th in a screen of eleven other CVE's, several battleships, cruisers, destroyers and auxiliary vessels of the Leyte invasion force - 738 ships in all. Little did they know that they were headed for the greatest air-sea naval battle in history - the US Navy's Thermopylae!

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

This battle is not one of the better known battles of World War II, but historians view it as really four separate, major fleet actions (Sibuyan Sea, Surigao Strait, Cape Engano and Samar Island) all of them fought over a period of three days off the Philippine Archipelago; they were collectively known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Covering

an area of 500,000 square miles it included, by both combatants, every element of naval sea and air power and weapon systems developed by late 1944: submarine attacks, air-to-air combat, ships attacked by land-based aircraft, ship-to-ship battles and the introduction of a new tactic, the Kamikaze. When it ended, however, the Imperial Japanese Navy was no longer a fighting force. Although there were many major battles to come in the next nine months, the Japanese knew they no longer could hope to prevail.^[7]

(Background: By the third year of the War, the Japanese were aware that the American forces were a markedly superior enemy; however, loss of the Philippines would destroy any hope that they could be victorious. If, however, they could destroy the invading force, perhaps the America would be disheartened and Japan could negotiate a favorable peace rather than unconditional surrender. So with Emperor Hirohito's approval, they devised a desperate gamble (called Sho-Go Dai Ichi or Victory Operation Number One) risking nearly all of the remaining major ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy in an effort stop the invasion. A northern force of four carriers (the fleet carrier Zuikaku, and three light carriers - the Zuiho, Chitose and Chiyoda) under the command of Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa would act as a decoy off Luzon in the Philippine Sea to lure the offensive minded US 3rd Fleet Commander Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey [Annapolis Class of 1904] away from the troop ships. Thus Kinkade's 7th Fleet transports would be easy pickings in the Leyte Gulf. A pincers movement was planned; two Japanese battleship forces would sail for the Philippines. Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita [Japanese Naval Academy Class of 1910], was in command of the potent center force consisting of the battleships Yamato, Musashi and Nagato, while a southern force of the battleships Yamashiro and Fuso was commanded by Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura. The southern force would enter the Leyte Gulf through the Surigao Strait. If Halsey took the bait and headed north to intercept Ozawa, the plan was for Kurita's center force to rendezvous with Nishimura's and destroy the unsupported American invasion fleet off Samar Island.)^[8]

Softening up of the Japanese defenses prior to the Leyte invasion began on 16 October. A wind and rain storm of typhoon proportions prevented flying on the 17th, (and almost everyone was seasick!) but the next day VC-27 struck over the Visayan area furnishing CAP, ASP and reconnaissance searches. Torpedo bombers hit the Dulag airfield several times again during the day and gun emplacements at the town of San Ricardo while the fighters were strafing the landing beach area and artillery emplacements. Le Blanc's Flight Log Book shows the activity on the 18th and 19th: "Bombed and strafed Tacloban airstrip on Leyte Central, Philippines received flack in fuselage - no one hit coordinated attacks on central and eastern Leyte near miss for pilot ..."

The effects of the nasty weather were described by Ens. Blackwell "... During one of our flight operations, the TBM assigned to me was down for engine overhaul. The only plane available and not assigned to another pilot, was Cmdr. Jackson's, so I was told to use his plane on the flight. (A little background information - Cmdr. Jackson's aircrew kept his plane spotless. They waxed it down with Simonize paste wax after each flight to give it an extra knot or two airspeed.) Of course, being the junior Ensign I was extremely apprehensive and said to myself 'Why me?' On the return flight to the carrier the weather was stormy that resulted in the carrier deck being very unstable. So when I landed, the plane hit the flight deck hard, bounced and fortunately caught a cable, and then hit the barrier. The port landing carriage was damaged as it rolled into the catwalk.

Additionally, the propeller was bent. Obviously, I was expecting to be called in for a tongue lashing and/or reprimand from Comdr. Jackson. But it never happened. I'll always remember him for that ..."

On 20 October 1944, under the overall command of General Douglas MacArthur (West Point Class of 1903), the 6th Army commanded by Lieutenant General Walter Krueger staged amphibious landings (code named "King Two") on the beaches of Leyte Island in the middle of the Philippine Archipelago. The Northern Group, X Corps (consisting of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 24th Infantry Division), landed at Tacloban while the Southern Group, the XXIV Corps (consisting of the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions), landed at Dulag about 11 miles to the South. The invasion force of troop-transport and amphibious assault ships was escorted and protected by the gunfire support of the battleships, cruisers and destroyers of the US 7th Fleet plus 18 CVE's. "... also known as 'MacArthur's Navy' [see Appendix D], the 7th Fleet had aging battleships on loan from the Pacific Fleet that were fine for shelling Japanese shore positions, but less well equipped to hold off an attacking fleet"^{126]} Halsey was ordered to cover and support the 7th Fleet; he had at his disposal eight fleet carriers, eight light carriers, six fast battleships, seventeen cruisers and sixty-four destroyers - a formidable force! The primary objective of the Leyte invasion was to provide a staging area for an assault against Luzon Island where most of the Japanese defenses were located. Manila, the Philippine capital, and Corregidor were on Luzon.

Halsey divided the 3rd Fleet into four Task Groups: Vice-Admiral John S. McCain USN (grandfather of the current Senator from Arizona) headed Task Group 38.1 with three fleet carriers, the Hancock, Hornet and Wasp, and two light carriers, the Cowpens and Monterey but no battleships; Rear-Admiral Gerald F. Bogan USN had 38.2 with the fleet carrier Intrepid, light carriers Cabot and Independence and the fast battleships Iowa, New Jersey (Halsey's flagship) and South Dakota; 38.3 commanded by Rear-Admiral Forrest C. Sherman USN had the fleet carriers Essex and Lexington, light carriers Langley and Princeton (subsequently sunk early in the battle of Leyte Gulf) and the fast battleship Massachusetts; last was 38.4 commanded by Rear-Admiral Ralph E. Davidson USN with fleet carriers Enterprise and Franklin, light carriers Belleau Wood and San Jacinto and fast battleships Alabama and Washington.)

(Background: On 15 June 1944 Halsey relieved Admiral Raymond A. Spruance USN (Annapolis Class of 1908) of command of the 5th Fleet and, while all the ships remained the same, it was called the 3rd Fleet. It is interesting to note that "under Spruance's leadership, the 'fleet' refused to be distracted from its objectives and [one] could read its schedule and confidently plot the locality of all its forces at any hour when it went to sea under Halsey, whose staff was splendid opportunists, neither the Japanese nor the Estimate Section [at Pearl Harbor] knew what to expect."^{127]}

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz USN (Annapolis Class of 1905), Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet included in his instructions to Halsey the following: *"In case opportunity for destruction of major portion of the enemy offers or can be recreated, such destruction becomes the primary task."* All his life Halsey had been distracted by his desire to command an epic battle at sea, and Nimitz's instructions gave him the opportunity to fulfill his lifelong ambition. Nimitz failed to understand the scope of the Japanese threat to the Leyte landings; he should have placed both US fleets under one naval command. [Halsey reported to Nimitz while Kinkaid reported to MacArthur. MacArthur's reluctance

to yield any command probably played a roll in Nimitz's decision.] Thus with no unifying commander near the battle and the common superior 10,000 miles away in Washington's Joint Chiefs of Staff, lack of communication between the two fleets later was to be a major contributor to a battle snafu and near disaster.^[10]

The escort carriers were headed by Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague USN (Annapolis Class of 1917) commander of Task Group 77.4. They were divided into three groups of six ship task units called "Taffys" (because of their radio call signs) and their mission was to provide direct air support of the landings and put up CAP and ASP to protect the invasion fleet when the troops went ashore. The 18 carriers hosted a total of 235 fighters and 143 torpedo bombers. Each "Taffy" had a small screen of three destroyers and four or five destroyer escorts. Most men who manned the ships of Task Group 77.4 were reservists who had never seen any major action.

The three "Taffys" were stationed east of the Leyte Gulf on a north/south axis roughly 20 to 50 miles apart. Each one supported one landing force. Sprague himself commanded Task Group 77.4.1 known as Taffy 1 and operated 40 miles southeast of Suluan Island near Mindanao covering the landing on the small island of Panaon by the Panaon Attack Group. (Two CVE's from Taffy 1, the *USS Chenango (CVE-28)* and the *USS Saginaw Bay (CVE-82)*, departed for Morotai, Indonesia southeast of Mindanao on 24 October carrying "dud" aircraft from other CVE's for transfer ashore. They returned with replacement aircraft after the battle.)

Due East of Leyte Gulf Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump USN (Annapolis Class of 1917) commanded 77.4.2, which was Taffy 2, supporting the Southern Attack Force landings near Dulag. It was this group to which VC-27 and the *Savo Island* belonged, together with five other escort carriers - the *USS Natoma Bay (CVE-62)* and flagship of Taffy 2, *USS Manila Bay (CVE-61)*, *Marcus Island*, *Kadashan Bay* and the *Ommaney Bay* together with a screen of three destroyers - the *USS Haggard (DD-555)*, *USS Franks (DD-554)*, *USS Hailey (DD-556)* - and five destroyer escorts - the *USS Richard W. Suesens (DE-342)*, *USS Abercrombie (DE-343)*, *USS Oberrender (DE-344)*, *USS Leray Wilson (DE-414)* and the *USS Walter C. Wann (DE-412)*.)

The northernmost unit was Task Group 77.4.3 (Taffy 3) belonging to Rear Admiral Clifton Albert Frederick Sprague, USN who preferred to be addressed as C.A.F. Sprague but had the nickname "Ziggy" (no relation to the Task Group 77.4 commander), and it was supporting the Northern Attack Force landings at Tacloban as well as ASP east-southeast of Samar Island's southern edge. Samar was a large island northeast of Leyte.

Between 20 and 24 October VC-27 operated much like that in the Peleliu campaign. Le Blanc's Flight Log Book continues: "... *Provided direct air support to MacArthur's troops ... coordinated attacks over San Pablo, Dulas and Ormoc airstrips ... set trucks on fire, bombed, strafed and fired rockets into heavy gun installations ...*" The Log Book also shows that while training flights back in the states usually lasted less than two hours, combat flights were normally 3 1/2 to 4 hours long.

Aviation Machinist Mate 2/c Floyd "Dude" Norman's Log Book showed that on the 24th Lieutenant(jg) William R Peden, with Norman and Radioman S. Ziman aboard, were headed towards Subic Bay when they were jumped by two Jap fighters, a *Nankajima* Ki-43 "*Hayabusa*" (i.e.: peregrine falcon - code named "*Oscar*") and a "*Zeke*", but the crew succeeded in shooting down one of the planes and had a "probable" on the other. Combat of this sort began to take its toll on equipment and pilot's nerves. A couple of planes crashed on the carrier while landing and on the 22nd Lieutenant(jg) August F. Uthoff had an ocean landing with his FM-2 as a result of engine failure. The next day Peden and his crew shared the same fate after their TBM attempted to land on the *Marcus Island* with their engine was shot out. Fortunately Uthoff and Peden and his crew were immediately picked up by air-sea rescue craft.

By the 23rd the island had sufficiently been secured to enable a new Philippine government to be installed at Tacloban on the northeast coast of Leyte; primitive airstrips at Tacloban and Dulag became operational.

The first contact with enemy planes by the fighters was made on 24 October. Initially four "*Oscars*" from the Japanese Fourth Air Army appeared over the Gulf and were intercepted by four "*Wildcats*" but the ensuing dogfight ended with the "*Oscars*" retreating by outrunning the "*Wildcats*" who could not keep up because of the drag of their wing tanks; there were no "kills" by either side. The "*Wildcats*," having broken off the pursuit, then intercepted a large group of *Yokosuka PIY* twin-engine medium bombers (codenamed "*Frances*".) Lt. Elliott and his wing-man, Ensign Fred J. Moelter of Terre Haute, Indiana attacked with Elliott shooting down two of the planes immediately. Although they were flying without fighter cover, the Japs did not break formation and continued on their mission that was to bomb friendly surface forces in the Leyte Gulf. Elliott, realizing that one of the bombers was on a suicide dive on one of the American transports, tried aggressively to shoot it down but it was not to be; the plane crashed into one of the transports. Concerned that he might be a victim of the ship's anti-aircraft fire since he had followed the "*Frances*" all the way down, Elliott did a flip turn and succeeded in getting out of range before getting hit.

Lieutenant(jg) Frank Leighty and his wingman, Ensign William Pinson, the other two fighters involved in the dogfight mentioned above, tore into the "*Frances*" formation as well. Leighty picked off the lead bomber that crashed on the island. At this point, Pinson, who had jettisoned his wing tanks, was low on fuel and had to return to the *Savo*. Although he was alone, Leighty managed to pick off two more of the few remaining bombers plus one more probable before returning to the CVE.

At 1000 six "*Wildcats*" were launched for direct support work to the Leyte land forces. Before they arrived at their destination, however, they were diverted to head off an attack by ten "*Zekes*" and three Mitsubishi A6M3 "*Zero-Sen*" fighters (codenamed "*Hamps*" - later called "*Zeke*") in several waves. And so it went for several hours, but before the day was over VC-27 pilots achieved their best hunting day of the war. Lt. Elliott was credited with three and one-half, Leighty with four, and Lieutenants Robert C. Ashcraft, George H

Davidson, Donald A. McPherson and John T. Ross each got one.^[11] Additionally, AMM 2/c Norman shot down a "Zeke" with his 50 caliber machine gun from his *TBM* ball-turret. It was a slaughter. Ensign Ralph A. Mayhew from Heber, Utah also shot down two, but had his engine cut-out while making a slow turn into the *Savo's* traffic circle. His *FM-2* crashed on its back into the sea sinking immediately and, sadly, he drowned. This was the only American causality of the day.

THE BATTLE OF THE SIBUYAN SEA

Meanwhile, Adm. Kurita had departed from Brunei, Borneo on 18 October with his 1st Diversion Task Force (5 battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers and 15 destroyers) and started navigating the Palawan Passage in the South China Sea heading towards the San Bernardino Strait north of the island of Samar. Palawan Island was on his starboard side – it was "a long thin island only 20 to 30 miles wide where the Japanese kept (and abused, starved and eventually incinerated) American prisoners of war."^[27] By late 1944 American aircraft and ships were all over the western Pacific including two US fleet submarines, the *USS Darter* (SS-227) and the *USS Dace* (SS-247) on patrol in the Palawan Passage. Kurita's ability to find submarines was handicapped before he left by being ordered to send all but four of his thirty-two floatplanes to the Philippines. These were seaplanes stored on the stern of cruisers and battleships, and when launched served as the fleet's eyes over the horizon to spot enemy ships.^[28] The Passage was difficult to navigate because of dangerous shoals causing Kurita to sail with five parallel lines of ships in a straight line rather than the normal zigzag course used to avoid submarines. Together, the two subs ambushed Kurita's force as the sun rose on 23 October; this was the beginning of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The *Darter* struck first, from less than 1000 yards, torpedoing the heavy cruiser *Atago*, the Japanese Central Fleet's flagship, with Kurita on board. The ship sank rather quickly so that Kurita ignominiously ended up in the ocean, was picked up by the destroyer *Kishinami* and transferred to the battleship *Yamato* which, at 1540, became the flag for the task force. *Darter's* second target was the heavy cruiser *Takeo* and while she did not sink, she was damaged sufficiently to be forced to return to Brunei. Meanwhile, the *Dace* had picked off the heavy cruiser *Maya* that blew up and sank almost immediately. Kurita's task group was wounded. The two submarines dove to deep water to avoid depth charges. After they later surfaced to leave the area, the *Darter* unfortunately ran aground on a coral reef called the Bombay Shoal and had to be abandoned. *Dace* picked up her entire crew and headed back to Australia.

Kurita's problems had not ended. The *Darter* had radioed the position of the Japanese fleet and Halsey now knew where it was located. As Kurita's center force rounded Palawan Island through the Mindanoro Strait, it had to endure six furious attacks by American carrier-based aircraft from Halsey's 3rd Fleet. During Halsey's air attacks on Formosa (an island 200 miles north of Luzon now called Taiwan) from the 12th to the 14th of October, the Japanese land-based air force had lost 500 aircraft, severely hampering their ability to provide air support to Kurita. What few did challenge were quickly shot down! So when Halsey first attacked at 1026 on the 24th, Kurita had to grin and bear it!

The Task Force 38's aircraft concentrated on the super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi* (the only two battleships in the world with 18 inch guns; ours were all 16 inch) and while they did receive many bomb and torpedo hits, their armor protected them greatly. The

Musashi, however, was finally sunk by the onslaught of 250 Curtiss-Wright *SB2C* "Helldiver" dive bombers, Grumman *F6F* "Hellcat" fighters and General Motors *TBM* "Avenger" torpedo bombers. The heavy cruiser *Myoko* was sufficiently damaged that she also retreated back to Brunei.

"Kuita's fleet had lost three heavy cruisers, including his flagship, the *Atago*, to American submarines in the Palawan Passage. He had been humiliated and unceremoniously plucked from the sea and placed on a new flagship with only half his original communications personnel still alive and able to carry out their duties. He had endured a succession of air attacks during the day, while repeated pleas he sent for air cover went unanswered. Furthermore, he had watched as one of his two most valuable assets - the battleship *Musashi* - disintegrated before his very eyes."^[12] With that, he radioed the Japanese Combined Fleet Headquarters that he was reversing course and heading west at 1555.

THE BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT

Far to the south in the Leyte Gulf Adm. Kinkaid had prepared his 7th Fleet battleships (the *USS California* (BB-44), *USS Maryland* (BB-46), *USS Pennsylvania* (BB-38), *USS Tennessee* (BB-43) and the *USS West Virginia* (BB-45) - older ships that had been sunk or damaged at Pearl Harbor in 1941, raised and repaired (plus the *USS Mississippi* (BB-41) which had not been at Pearl on 07 December) to do battle with the smaller southern Japanese force under Adm. Nishimura. Nishimura was not known to be the most imaginative of all the Japanese admirals, but he could be counted on to carry out his orders to the fullest extent even if it meant his own destruction. When his ships entered the narrow Surigao Strait (between Mindanao and Dignat and Leyte and Panaon) with his 2 battleships, 1 heavy cruiser and four destroyers, he ordered his force to proceed single file because of the water's shallow depth. Late in the night of 24 October US torpedo boats unsuccessfully attacked the formation but in the early morning of the 25th, Kinkaid began the attack first with his destroyers. In less than two minutes twenty-seven torpedoes had been launched at the advancing Japanese ships reeking havoc with the column. Then Kinkaid's cruisers started shelling the enemy followed by the battleships.

Finally at 0315 on 25 October Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf USN, in command of Kinkaid's battleships, "crossed the 'T'" with his battleships and succeeded in nearly obliterating Nishimura's entire force. (*Background: Crossing the 'T' is a centuries old naval maneuver permitting every gun on every ship on the top of the 'T' to bring its guns to bear on all the ships on the base of the 'T'; those ships can only use their bow guns. The maneuver provides a huge advantage and almost always assures victory.*) Nishimura's flagship, the *Yamashiro*, went to the bottom carrying the Admiral with it. For all intents and purposes, the Battle of Surigao Strait was over as the remnants of the Japanese force retreated. The old battleships had avenged Pearl Harbor and when the *Mississippi* fired her last shot, it turned out to be the end of the battleship era in naval warfare. (While battleships would be used in later actions to bombard enemy shore positions, there never again would be a ship-to-ship battle between these giants.)

A second Japanese force of ten ships, the largest being a light cruiser, appeared an hour behind. It was tactically independent in the Leyte operation and under the command of Vice-Admiral Kiyohide Shima who, while not involved in the planning for Shoichi Go, was ordered at the last minute to "cooperate" with Kurita and "coordinate" with Nishimura. The Japanese plan was not helped by the fact that Shima and Nishimura had a personal conflict which significantly strained their relations; they did not communicate during the battle. When Shima discovered what had happened, he turned and retreated. This was such a major defeat for the Japanese that neither figured in the planned pincers attack with Kurita.

THE BATTLE OFF CAPE ENGANO

The northeastern tip of Luzon Island is known as Cape Engano. The Spanish word *enganar* means "to fool" and the literal translation of Cape Engano might be "Cape of Fools". Northeast of this Cape was where the Japanese planned to execute their decoy maneuver.^[13]

In response to questions about his intentions, Halsey sent a message to Kincaid at 1512 on 24 October: A task force "*will be formed as TF 34 under V. Adm. Lee*" to support the Leyte landings, but he didn't say when. It would consist of the battleships *USS Alabama (BB-60)*, *USS Iowa (BB-61)*, *USS New Jersey (BB-62)* and *USS Washington (BB-56)* plus two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, two destroyer divisions, but no carriers. The ships would come from Task Groups 38.2 and 38.4 and would be under the command of Vice-Admiral Willis A. Lee USN aboard the *Washington*. Kincaid, MacArthur and Halsey's boss in Hawaii, Adm. Nimitz, assumed that Task Force 34 had been formed when in reality it was only a potential plan. Halsey never implemented the plan because he thought it wasn't necessary!

As Halsey prepared to continue to do battle with Kurita mid-afternoon, 76 aircraft from the northern Japanese force attacked revealing Ozawa's position. Since he knew Kurita was now headed west away from the San Bernardino Strait, Halsey saw a chance to destroy a major portion of the enemy fleet so he called off the attack and took his 3rd Fleet north late on the 24th to seek and annihilate Ozawa's decoy force 1 heavy carrier, the *Zuikaku* – the only Japanese carrier remaining afloat from those that attacked Pearl Harbor, and 3 light carriers with a total of about 116 aircraft aboard, 2 hermaphrodite battle-carriers (the aft turrets had been replaced with short flight decks) but no planes, 3 cruisers and 9 destroyers. They were 180 miles east of Cape Engano. The decoy had succeeded. Thinking offense instead of defense, Halsey left the escort carriers supporting the landings unguarded and vulnerable. While he sent a message that evening stating that he was going north, Halsey's text was sufficiently vague that Kincaid was unaware that he was left alone in the Strait. After all, Task Force 34 would be protecting him or so he thought!

Land based Japanese planes from Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome's Second Air Fleet continued to attack Halsey's ships and most all (at least 150) were shot down but a lone

Japanese dive bomber, a *Yokosuka D4Y Suisei* (code named "*Judy*"), dropped a single bomb on the light carrier *USS Princeton* (CVL-23) just as her planes were refueling and the resulting fire consumed the ship which sank.

Even without Adm. McCain's Task Group 38.1 of five carriers which had been dispatched to Ulithi Atoll for supplies, rest and relaxation, Halsey's group of 64 ships was just too powerful for the Japanese who had only 26 ships. At 0800 on 25 October Halsey's planes launched the first of five air strikes on Ozawa's northern force. By late afternoon the Japanese Northern Force was a scattered, depleted fleet having lost all of Ozawa's carriers - the fleet carrier *Zuikaku* (the only Japanese carrier remaining afloat from those that attacked Pearl Harbor) and three light carriers, the *Zuiho*, *Chiyoda* and *Chitose* - only 12 of his ships were still afloat. Ozawa's plan, however, was to sacrifice his task force to ensure Kurita's success farther to the south and, to his credit, he had succeeded!

Once Halsey went north to meet Ozawa's challenge, (sometimes derisively called the "Battle of Bull's Run") the air attacks on Kurita stopped so at 1715 he decided to change course again, turned his battleships around and headed back toward the Leyte Gulf through the San Bernardino Strait. Admiral Toyoda at the Japanese Combined Fleet Headquarters in Japan was pleased with Kurita's decision and radioed: "*With confidence in heavenly guidance all forces will attack*" It was disaster in the making as the powerful 3rd Fleet got farther and farther away from Leyte Gulf.

THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR ISLAND

Ironically, "October 25th was the anniversary day of the Battle of Balaclava (1854) in the Crimean War - the epic blunder memorialized in Tennyson's poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade". October 25 1944 deserves to be remembered, like the Charge of the Light Brigade, not only for its errors and foolish waste of life but also for great acts of courage and sacrifice"^[29]

At dawn on the 25th Taffy 3 was on ASP and antiaircraft duty off Samar Island supporting the beachhead. "By now more than 114,000 troops and 200,000 tons of supplies have been put ashore on Leyte, and most of the great amphibious fleet has cleared the Gulf."^[14] The CVE's had just launched CAP to cover the remaining ships and troops. The deck crews were having breakfast when a pilot on ASP reported by radio that he was being fired upon by a force of battleships, cruisers and destroyers. Adm. "Ziggy" Sprague's order "*Check identification*" was immediately confirmed when Kurita's force started shelling Taffy 3's escort carriers with projectiles from their battleships. Since the escort carriers were not armored, many of the Jap armor-piercing shells passed right through the CVE's without exploding.

One can imagine the surprise, probably on both sides, in which they found themselves!! No naval plan existed for a group of "jeep" carriers to fight a battle fleet. All of their training had been designed to support the amphibious assault teams of the Army and Marines with bombing, strikes, CAP and ASP, but they had not been trained to engage in a major naval battle against capital ships nor were their ships equipped with the proper ordnance.^[15] Sprague, however, rose to the occasion and made the correct decision to hurl his tiny force against the Japanese. His tactic, which at the time he must have viewed as sacrificial, worked out far better than he could have expected. Intermittent rain

squalls in which the CVE's could hide helped Taffy 3 launch all remaining aircraft but since it had never been intended that they would take on battleships, the carriers had no armor piercing bombs. The first planes were loaded with torpedoes and when these ran out (there were only nine on each CVE) the quota of twenty-four 500 lb. SAP (semi armor piercing) bombs were dropped. After that the planes were loaded with 500 lb. GP (general purpose) bombs. Shortly after 0700 Kinkaid sent out three plain voice messages to Halsey calling for help and Taffy 2 immediately launched all remaining flight-worthy aircraft.

Taffy 1's aircraft, together with Oldendorf's battleships, were still attacking what was left of the Japanese southern force. Unfortunately, because of the dual command structure, Kinkaid's messages had to go through MacArthur's headquarters on Manus with the resulting delay that Halsey didn't get them until Kurita was about to let Taffy 3 off the hook. This was the beginning of the battle off Samar Island into which VC-27 was thrust.

Sprague had three 2,100 ton Fletcher-class destroyers and four even smaller destroyer escorts as part of Taffy 3's screen and at 0716 he desperately ordered them to counterattack. *"... These destroyers and their smaller cousins, the destroyer escorts, fought such a battle that the words 'courage', 'gallantry', or 'audacity' can only begin to describe their qualities."*^[16] "This naval version of the Charge of the Light Brigade, though it didn't stop the enemy force, threw it into confusion and forced the Japanese to make poorly organized attacks. Also, instead of being concentrated on the vulnerable CVE's, much of the enemy's fire had to be turned against these snapping and snarling terriers, the DD's and DE's. Time, valuable time, was bought at terrible cost to these ships."^[17] The USS Johnston (DD-557), the USS Hoel (DD-533), and the USS Samuel B. Roberts (DE-413) were sunk and two others severely damaged.

The "jeep" carriers, however, only made 17 knots at top speed which made them too slow to escape from the Japanese force even though they turned south and made smoke as they ran. The early morning haze, however, magnified the appearance of Taffy 3 to the lookouts on the Japanese advancing battleships so that Kurita was never to realize what a fantastic opportunity had been given him. Fortunately for the Americans, the Japanese were not familiar with the recognition characteristics of the Casablanca-class CVE's. Kurita thought he was up against five to seven big fleet carriers escorted by the same number of cruisers. This misidentification played an important role in the Japanese battle logic and tactics. During the time the Japanese Admiral believed that his battleships were locked in a fight with the Halsey's 3rd Fleet carriers of Task Force 38, Halsey was actually some 300 miles due north. As a result, Kurita fumbled the ball by ordering "General Attack" rather than "Battle Line" so it was every Japanese ship for herself. In the resulting chaos this disordered attack pitted his ships piecemeal yielding a distinct advantage to the fleeing American ships.^[18]

(Background: Vice-Admiral Kurita was one of the most experienced and actively employed flag officers in the Imperial Japanese Navy. He attended Etijima Academy in Japan's Inland Sea where he was taught loyalty, discipline and total conformity. Promoted to his present rank in 1942, he was in charge of a cruiser division at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, and led

battleship divisions both in the Guadalcanal campaign in the fall of 1942 and Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944 where he commanded the Imperial Japanese Navy's 2nd Fleet. Because of his training, Kurita had a weakness, typical of many of the officers in the Imperial Japanese Navy, for ultraconservative tactics. Further, he had a tendency to always doubt the potential success of any mission. His command style was that of trepidation, uncertainty and vacillation. For example, at the Battle of the Philippine Sea, he was one of the first senior Japanese naval officers to advocate retreat. Despite an extensive combat record he had not a single victory to his credit. This command style would haunt him during the battle for Leyte Gulf)^[19]

Early that morning VC-27 was readying the launch of ten *TBM's* each loaded with four 500 pound GP bombs for direct support work for the troops ashore. Thirteen *FM-2's* were already airborne for CAP when the word came of the Jap attack. Then the order came to remove the bombs and replace them with torpedoes, one to each plane. The deck crews scrambled like mad to make the change and the first *TBM* was launched at 0816. Captain Ekstrom announced from the *Savo's* bridge: "*Your mission is to cripple as many of the enemy's ship as possible, don't waste time for a kill.*" More *TBM's* from the *Marcus Island* joined up since all *TBM's* with torpedoes from the Task Unit 77.4 had been called out.

Lt. Goly Henry was the flight leader and he directed the *Savo's TBM's* to attack the first cruiser or battleship and the *Marcus's TBM's* the next cruiser or battleship in line. After hiding in cloud cover at 8,000 feet, Henry, Lieutenant(jg) Claude C. Nathan and Lieutenant(jg) John Yeaman followed by Lieutenant Soule T. Bitting and Ensign Robert H. Wand peeled off and broke through the cloud cover at 3,000 feet. Their target was the lead ship, a *Tone*-class cruiser. The attack, being the first of all torpedo planes and coming from cloud cover and down sun, apparently was a complete surprise to the Japs - there was no anti-aircraft fire encountered until after the release of the torpedoes and the cruiser made no evasive movements. All five torpedoes were released at 0845, all aimed at the cruiser.

Anti-aircraft fire started at this time making it difficult for the pilots or aircrew to follow the path of the torpedoes. One passed astern of the cruiser but shortly thereafter there was an explosion on a destroyer that had been flanking the cruiser. Two others hit the stern of the cruiser and the whole stern seemed to blow up with huge columns of black smoke rising. The *TBM's* passed over the cruiser and began violent jinking and maintained low altitude to avoid the anti-aircraft fire. Only one plane was hit causing minor damage, and as they left the scene the destroyer was dead in the water and the cruiser moving very slowly in a tight circle; it sank shortly thereafter. First blood for VC-27 on the enemy surface craft!!!

VC-27's captain, Lt. Cmdr. Jackson, had already been airborne at 0530 flying his *TBM-1C "Avenger"* torpedo bomber loaded with ten 100-pound general purpose bombs and rockets - not great ordnance for bombing ships. His mission was to act as air coordinator for a strike of several *TBM's* and *FM's*, all from another *CVE*, on Japanese

forces in the Surigao Straits. But before his squadron could do anything to aid the troops, he was told by radio to lead his pilots against the enemy ships.

After surveying the situation, the "skipper" sent his group in to attack but stayed behind at 7,000 feet pondering which ship to attack. Suddenly a Japanese *Aichi E13A* reconnaissance floatplane (code named "*Jake*") came out of the clouds and he gave it a burst from his wing guns; the "*Jake*" was enveloped in flames subsequently crashing into the sea. Then he spotted two heavy cruisers below. He swooped down at a steep angle and at 2,500 feet released all his hundred pound bombs with an intervalometer spacing of 50 feet. Most of them missed astern, but two landed squarely on a *Mogami*-class cruiser's stern causing an explosion and starting several small fires. Just prior to his release, the cruiser opened up on him with its anti-aircraft guns. Shells were bursting in every direction. Just as he moved out of the range of the enemy fire, aircrewman ACR Snider the dorsal gunner, sighted an enemy submarine under them. Seeing the periscope of an "I" class submarine just below the surface, the pilot launched his full load of eight rockets at the periscope from an altitude of 600-800 feet and a range of 800 yards, at least six rockets exploding around it. All this in less than 10 minutes!

By 0845 two more *TBM*'s from the *Savo Island* had been readied with torpedoes with Ensigns L. E. MacFawn and Peden the pilots. AMM 2/c Floyd Norman, (gunner aboard Peden's *TBM*) - now of Dayton, Ohio - remembers it well: *"There were 13 American torpedo bombers who joined together from various other baby flattops. As we reached an altitude of 12,000 to 13,000 feet it was a sight to behold: below 4 battleships, 8 cruisers and 16 destroyers"*. After joining up with bombers from other *CVE*'s, they attacked a battleship of the *Kongo*-class about 1015. The evasive maneuvering of the ship, since the Japs now expected the attacks, caused them both to miss their target. Anti-aircraft fire was intense at this point but they flew through it back to the *Savo*.

Lt.(jg) Forrest Glasgow, the *Savo Island*'s Aviation Ordnance Officer, relates what happened next: *"By 0940 we had one more TBM loaded with a torpedo and ready to go. This one was flown by Ens. Harms, and was probably the gutsiest of all the torpedo attacks. By now each CVE was launching TBMs as fast as they could get them loaded without waiting to organize flights from each ship in the normal manner. Thus Harms took off by himself and joined up with two planes from another ship. One of the other pilots was senior and thus in charge."*

After circling the Jap force at 8,000 feet, the leader moved over in a steep dive. When they broke through the cloud cover at 1,500 feet they were almost over the [Japanese] battleship ISE. The other two TBMs released their torpedos and climbed back into the clouds. Ens. Harms quickly realized that he was too directly over the target for any sort of torpedo release. He wasn't going to waste his torpedo so he pulled across the ISE and back up into the clouds for another run.

This time when he broke through the clouds the ISE was about 2,500 yards ahead of him moving very slowly. He dropped down to 300 feet and began his torpedo run. Since he

was only one making a run on the ships, the ISE plus every ship close by began firing at him. Just before his torpedo release he was hit in the left wheel well by heavy AA [antiaircraft fire], probably a 5 inch 50 caliber, causing a terrific explosion in the left wing. He also took 40 to 50 20mm hits on his plane. He released the torpedo and it was only through a combination of skillful evasive movements and good luck that he succeeded in pulling out of the overall pattern of the AA fire. He returned to the ship safely but his plane was so badly shot up that it was pushed over the side. Both of his aircrewmembers: Aviation Radioman 2/c James Dunn and turret gunner Aviation Ordnance Mate 2/c Russell Ripley received several shrapnel wounds, but they were not serious."

Aviation Ordnance Mate 3rd Class Rolland Robillard from the *Savo Island*, now of Fort Edward, New York, remembers Harms' return to the ship: *"... As I recall, I was standing on the catwalk, at mid-deck, waiting for the planes to come in. The engine was on fire, and ready to fall off. There was a 5 foot hole in the left wing. The plane itself had so many holes in it, it looked like a sieve. It was a miracle that no one was wounded. If you remember the song 'Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer', that was the way it looked."*

Glasgow continues: *"When people hear this story they always ask: 'Did the torpedo hit the ship?'. Recently Harms said: 'You refer to my mission as gutsy which it probably was, but what happened to the torpedo? The bomb bay doors opened and I could 'feel' the torpedo drop out. I didn't hang around to witness its destination. What happened has bothered me a lot."*

The Taffys continued the attack. After returning to the *Savo Island* the *TBM's* were refueled and rearmed. The "skipper" was given another *TBM-1C*, and was airborne at 1115 with the last of the *Savo Island's* torpedoes while the other *TBM's* were each armed with three semi-armor piercing (SAP) bombs. Led by the "Wildcats," he and nine other "Avengers" were attacking anything they could find on the water even though they were taking heavy, intense anti-aircraft fire even at 13,000 feet. At 1215 he sighted Kurita's battleship force and picked out one of the *Fuso* or *Kongo*-class battleships and began his torpedo run from 4,500 feet. At this time he, too, was making a single-plane attack so the Jap ships started concentrating all their anti-aircraft firepower on him including their large caliber weapons. Even the gargantuan 18 inch cannons could be depressed and fired into the sea against low flying torpedo planes in the hope that the enormous geysers formed by their splashes would rise in the paths of planes and bring them down. He was aware that the Japs knew the capabilities of his airplane; consequently, he went into a steep dive to increase his airspeed to 265 knots (rated top speed for a *TBM* was 250 knots) pulling out just before launching his torpedo 600 feet off the ocean's surface and 1500 yards from the ship. Waterspouts from the Jap guns rose behind him. The torpedo ran straight and true catching the ship just as it was completing a circle; he scored a direct hit on the starboard side. A flash and a column of dirty water obscured the ship's aft main battery. Unfortunately, although a single aerial torpedo can do tremendous damage, it cannot alone normally deliver a crippling blow to a heavily armored battleship. He successfully returned to his ship with only a jagged hole in the starboard side of the fuselage.

The other bomb-laden *TBM's* (Lt's Henry, Bitting, Lt.(jg)'s Albert R. Douglas, Claude C. Nathan, and Ens's Blackwell and Peden) selected a *Mogami*-class cruiser as their target scoring three hits, one forward of the bow battery and two in the stern, with the SAP's. Nathan then found a "*Jake*" and maneuvered his *TBM* so that his turret gunner, Aviation Machinists Mate 2/c Noel J. Bussey could fire a long burst at it. (At 2,000 feet a *TBM* will overtake a "*Jake*" at full throttle although the "*Jake*" can turn inside; the *TBM* can also outdive the "*Jake*".) Douglas received a number of hits on both wings from enemy guns, but the damage was minor.

At the same time Lt.(jg) Yeaman and Ens. MacFawn scored three hits in the same places on a *Fuso* or *Kongo*-class battleship in the middle of the Japanese formation. During his recovery Yeaman spotted a "*Jake*" and gave chase; his turret gunner, Aviation Ordnance Mate 1/c L. C. Weiner, fired a short burst and the smoking "*Jake*" flew into a cloud bank. Yeaman picked on another "*Jake*" causing the "*Jake*" to crash into the sea after several bursts from the *TBM's* wing guns. Yeaman and Lt.(jg) Bertram L. Lewis then teamed up picking out a *Nagato*-class battleship that had been neglected and got two hits amidships. Lewis, too, attacked a "*Jake*" which also headed for the clouds.

It is noteworthy that at no time during the battle was there any fighter protection for the Japanese ships. Hardware attrition played a large part since they had lost so many aircraft in earlier battles, and their aircraft production facilities strained to produce replacements. But part of this can also be explained by the differences in training and length of service in combat for the pilots. American naval aviators didn't get to fight until they had had two years of training and once committed got rotated back after six months at the front. The Japanese, however, never got rotated with the result that most of their experienced pilots had been killed in earlier battles. Replacement pilots got only a few months training and lack of fuel further exacerbated the problem so that replacements had even less actual flying experience. All of this resulted in an inferior adversary for the Americans.

In his later Action Report on Tactics the Captain wrote: "*The success of our [torpedo] attacks we attributed to using plenty of altitude in the attack (10,000 feet or above) with a high speed approach, a steep dive, and a low, fast jinking recovery, along with the element of surprise. The ring tail torpedoes were admirably suited to this type of procedure due to permissible speeds of drops up to 275 knots and the height of drops up to 800 feet.*"

(Background: Early in the War the standard Navy aerial torpedo was the MK 13, but it was slow and unreliable. Further, it was limited to drops under 100 feet and airspeeds less than 100 knots, putting the torpedo bomber crews at great risk. At the battle of Midway in June 1942, the MK 13 torpedoes were extremely ineffective with the result that *TBM's* were used mostly as glide or skip bombers for the next two years. Tactics for attacking a ship called for dropping a "stick" of four bombs using an intervalometer to control the spacing between the bombs being dropped. Under control of the radioman/bomb aimer, it practically guaranteed a hit on a ship by spacing the bombs 60 to 75 feet apart. VC squadrons started using torpedoes again in June 1944 after the California Institute of Technology came up with a solution: a 10 inch tail shroud ring welded

to the torpedo's fins significantly improving reliability, drop altitude and aircraft speed. It was designated the MK 13-1A.)^[20]

The Action Report also says: *"During these flights Snider and LeBlanc, the aircrewmembers, performed noteworthy service in being extremely alert and giving pertinent information to the pilot."*

Lt.(jg.) William L. Diffie, Jr., who was the *Savo Island's* Landing Signal Officer, and now lives in Memphis, Tennessee, says: *"...after the 'Skipper' had used up all his ordnance on the Japanese ships, he continued making 'dummy' runs on these ships, drawing their fire so that his shipmates would have a better chance of survival while making their attacks. That's what I call HEROISM!...."*

While all this was happening Halsey finally received Kinkaid's calls for help about 0830. Puzzled by what was going on, he tried to respond by recalling Adm. McCain's Task Group 38.1 of fleet carriers to head for the Leyte Gulf at flank speed. It was not meant to be - McCain did not arrive back to the Leyte Gulf until the battle was over. At 0911 Kurita decided to break off the engagement, regroup his disorganized ships, assess the damage and attack again. Then he received a radio dispatch from Admiral Shima that he was retreating so that the planned pincers movement on the troop ships would not happen. Kurita didn't want to tangle with Oldendorff's battleships and also feared a land-based American aircraft attack from the captured Tacloban airstrip. Confused and staggered by the intensity of the attack by the planes from the CVE's who swarmed over his ships like angry hornets protecting their nests, harrassed by the small ships [destroyers and destroyer escorts] charging in again and again to loose torpedoes and rake his ships with gunfire, concluding that he could not force his way into the Leyte Gulf and, even if could, would find it empty of ships,^[21] the Japanese commander lost his nerve, snatching defeat from the jaws of victory, and at 12:36 headed back to the San Bernardino Strait to try to avoid the American forces. Once he cleared the Strait he would be in the relative safety of the South China Sea. Apparently he didn't know it, but at the time of his withdrawal his ships were within 10,000 yards of the CVE's covering the invasion force. This was the most unlikely victory in World War II!!

(Background: As noted above, the Japanese naval command during the War was noted for it's ultraconservative tactics, and Kurita certainly subscribed to that principle whether he knew it or not! So it should not be a surprise, therefore, that he was already prepared to retreat given his lack of air cover and the intense American attacks from air and sea during the battle.)

In late morning in response to questions about his location from Nimitz, Halsey ordered the formation of Task Group 34.5 under the command of Rear-Admiral Oscar C. Badger USN to break off the attack on Ozawa's northern force off Cape Engano and proceed south. 34.5 consisted of the battleships *Iowa* and *New Jersey*, three light cruisers and eight destroyers. At the time, Halsey's force was 350 miles from Taffy 3 and wouldn't arrive off Samar until 0100 on 26 October. The rest of the 3rd Fleet continued to pound Ozawa's dwindling force.

But VC-27 wasn't done for the day as yet! At 1500 seven *TBM's* armed with three 500 pound general-purpose bombs and eight rockets each were launched. (All torpedoes and SAP's were gone.) With the Captain again the flight leader, they were joined by 21 *TBM's* from other CVE's and 15 *FM-2's* with the mission to search for the crippled and fleeing enemy fleet. Picking up an oil slick on the water and following it north, they found the Japs off the northeast tip of Samar headed for the San Bernandino Straits. The Japs were on the alert and as the planes came into range, every gun on every ship burst forth with every color of the rainbow. Some were flaming incendiaries and others produced long glaring white streamers of phosphorous. The Captain later commented that "*it was the damndest bunch of fireworks*" he had ever seen. Enemy ships were twisting and turning in every conceivable evasive maneuver.

After directing the *TBM's* to make their individual runs, the Captain selected a *Nachi*-class cruiser, started his run alone from 6,000 feet, and nosed over at a 45° angle, fired his eight rockets, two of which hit the superstructure amidships and causing considerable damage. Unfortunately, his bombs failed to release. He regained altitude to 8,000 feet and was joined by Ens. Harms and two VC-81 *FM-2's* from the *Natoma Bay*. Together they made another run on a second cruiser of the *Nachi*-class. With the fighters ahead strafing, Jackson pulled out of his dive at 2,500 feet releasing his three 500 pound bombs. He obtained one hit on the port side aft. Harms, meanwhile, passed over the cruiser attacked by Jackson and put his eight rockets into an *Atago*-class cruiser on the other side of the *Nachi* and scored two hits aft just at the waterline.

Bitting, Douglas, Ensign Charles W. Iverson and Wand selected a *Mogami*-class cruiser and succeeded in getting two hits on the cruiser's starboard bow. Bitting was the first plane over the cruiser and, followed by the others, then attacked a large destroyer firing his eight rockets at it as did the other pilots. Four were scored on the destroyer amidships ranging from the waterline to the superstructure. Explosions were noted but due to evasive movements in recovery, the damage could not be ascertained.

At 1643 land based Jap planes attacked but the *FM-2's* were ready for them shooting down eight of the *Nakajima Ki-44 "Shoki"* (i.e.: demon) single-seat interceptor fighters (codenamed "*Tojo*") who were trying to protect a flight of *Aichi D3A* two-seat dive bombers (codenamed "*Val*"). Lt. Elliott got two more, Lts. Andrew T. Price and Charles M. Vehorn one apiece and Lts. Davidson and Ross each added another to their tally as the slaughter continued. By now, so many of the "*Tojo*"s had been destroyed or damaged that the rest turned tail and fled. The "*Val*"s, after losing their fighter coverage, also retreated; some jettisoned their bombs in the water as they fled.

Lt.(jg) Glasgow describes what happened to Lt.(jg) Ashcraft in the melee: "*During the ... old fashioned dogfight Ashcraft was unable to jettison one of his two disposable wing gas tanks. This slowed his speed down and he began to drop behind the group. A couple of Jap fighters, seeing their opportunity, jumped him and put his engine out of commission. He was able to land in the water safely. Ensign Wilton O. Stubbs, his wingman, went down to protect him and circled until he began to run low on gas. He saw him get out of*

his plane safely and into his little one man inflatable rubber life raft. Neither Stubbs nor Ashcraft came back with the fighter group and we were afraid we'd lost them both. When Stubbs showed up alone and reported what had happened to Ash we all felt better.

So there is Ashcraft floating around in the water with no one to pick him up since our whole task force is headed south at top speed getting further and further away from him. He was shot down about 20 miles north of where we originally were. While he was floating around he realized that he had a packet of a dozen post card sized Jap decals, the kind the pilots stuck on their planes to indicate how many planes that they had shot down. So, in typical Ashcraft fashion, in order to while away the time and probably take his mind off his plight since it was starting to get dark, he began sticking the decals on the side of the rubber raft.

He floated in the water all night. In the meantime part of Halsey's fleet rushed back to try to catch part of the fleeing Japs. One of their destroyers spied Ash in the water the next morning. They came alongside but when they saw the flags they thought they had themselves a Jap pilot. Ash told how they came alongside him and he looked up at all these American sailors pointing submachine guns at him. But when they picked him up they realized who he was. They radioed Halsey's flagship that they had picked up a downed pilot from one of the CVEs. Halsey was anxious to get a first hand account of what had happened. Ash told later how he 'talked to Adm. Halsey' and how the Admiral said 'Son, we're going to send you back to Pearl Harbor.' He spent several days at the Mauna Loa Hotel on Wakiki beach being interviewed by stateside reporters, etc, etc. After about a week they decided that Ash had had enough of the 'etc' and that it was time to get back to his ship. Ashcraft showed up aboard the Savo Island about three weeks later with all his big stories. We were certainly glad to see him."

The results of this battle can also best be summed up from the Action from the Navy archives, when VC-27's commanding officer wrote the following: *"The planes returned at varying times from 1815 to 1850. Many of the pilots retired immediately, completely worn out by the day's work. They were to awake with the realization that for the first time in the Annals of Naval Warfare, a slow carrier force, without assistance from any surface units of the friendly fleet, other than the screen of destroyers and destroyer escorts (all of whom, incidentally, performed valiantly) had met a large enemy task group of battleships, heavy cruisers, light cruisers and destroyers, and had succeeded not only of saving itself from annihilation, but in diverting the hostile force from its main purpose, namely to destroy the transports and fire support units in the Leyte Gulf who were supporting the main landing forces of the Army on the east coast of Leyte Island."*

The commander of Taffy 3, Adm. C.A.F. Sprague, who commanded his ships with courage and resourcefulness during the fierce attack, later described how he felt: *"Nothing like this had happened in history. I didn't think we'd last 15 minutes. What chance could we have - six slow, thin-skinned carriers each armed with only one five-inch pea-shooter against 16, 14, 8 and 5 inch broadsides of the 22 warships bearing down on us at twice our top speed. The failure of the enemy body to completely wipe out*

all vessels of the task unit can be attributed to a our successful smoke screen, our torpedo counterattack, continuous harassment of the enemy by bomb, torpedoes, strafing air attacks, timely maneuvers, and the definite partiality of Almighty God".^[22]

Had the Japanese continued, they would have wiped out the entire American invasion force. As it was, two Taffy 3 "jeep" carriers were sunk, the *USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73)* sunk by the Japanese cruiser *Chikuma* and the *USS St. Lo (CVE-63)* along with the light carrier *Princeton*, two destroyers and a destroyer escort. On the other hand in the four separate theaters of the Leyte Gulf action, the Japanese lost 10,000 airmen and sailors together with two of Nishimura's battleships (the *Yamashiro* and the *Fuso*), one of Kurita's (the *Musashi*), Ozawa's fleet carrier (*Zuikaku*) and his three light carriers (the *Zuiho*, *Chiyoda* and *Chitose*), six heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and nine destroyers at the cost of less than 3,000 American lives and less than 200 American aircraft. VC-27's Ensign Sterling P. Ross, from Ravenwood, Missouri failed to return from his mission and was listed as missing in action. "The war correspondent Fletcher Pratt wrote of Leyte in 1946, '*this was Trafalgar; it was Tsushima and La Hogue and Aegospotami and Salamis and all the other utterly crushing victories, after which an entire war is changed. Seldom enough in history before had an entire navy been brought to battle. Never before had an entire navy lost so great a proportion of its strength as the Japs had done.*' "^[30]

Direct support of the troops on Leyte began again at 0745 on on the 26th. *TBM's* found some enemy ships, however, planting bombs on a light cruiser of the *Kuma-Natori*-class and rockets into a destroyer of the *Terutsuki*-class. This turned out to be the last contact with Jap surface forces in this conflict. At 1030 Lt. Elliott (with Lt.(jg) Frederick W. Barnett as his wing-man, and Lt.(jg) Leighty and Ensign Thomas S Mackie) led his four-plane group of *FM-2's* to their assigned CAP station over the American beachhead on Leyte Island. Elliott and Barnett both got good shots at a "*Zeke*" which crashed and burned. Their patrol was so long, however, that they encountered fuel problems. Mackie had to land at Tacleban airfield and the other three headed for the *USS Petrof Bay (CVE-80)*. Barnett was dangerously low on fuel and attempted a forced landing on the *Petrof*, it was unsuccessful and he landed in the water but was picked up by a destroyer. Elliott and Leighty landed on the *Petroff* where they spent the night, returning to the *Savo Island* the following morning.

At 1400 nine *TBM's* were launched from the *Savo Island* on a mission to seek, attack and destroy a Jap battleship that had been seen in the Tanom straits between the Cebu and Negros Islands west of Leyte. They rendezvoused over the task area with four VC-81 torpedo bombers from the *Natoma Bay* and eight VC-75 fighters from the *Ommaney Bay* with the "skipper" again as the flight leader. Although they did a thorough search of the straits, the southern Visayan Sea, and the west coast of Negros Island, they could not find the battleship. The "skipper" then selected the harbor facilities at Cebu City as an alternative target. In this case he allowed the pilots to pick their own targets with the result that a large warehouse was left in flames and severe damage was inflicted on the docks.

A certain amount of normalcy returned on the 27th as the *Savo Island's* executive officer put out a memorandum urging all personnel to participate in the "*Pearl Harbor Day Sale of War Savings Bonds*" effective through 7 December, "*a timely opportunity ... to purchase [them] as Christmas gifts for family members*". Never-the-less, fighters on

CAP were busy during the afternoon, intercepting and destroying four "Val" dive bombers about 1645. Of these Lt. McPherson added two to his total; Elliott and Davidson each got one when the Jap formation turned and tried to make a run for it. Ens. Mackie had to make a water landing with his FM-2 and was rescued OK, but it took him several days to get back to his squadron.

At 0815 on 28 October two of the FM-2's, Davidson and Ens. Pinson, intercepted and destroyed a "Judy" dive bomber. The Aircraft Action Report says: "It was an easy kill, for the "Judy" showed no real aggressiveness or fighting spirit." The following day the *Savo Island* said in its posted daily bulletin: *"The following dispatch from Commander Task Force 77 relative to CVE operations on 25 October is quoted for the information of all hands: 'FOR A PERFECT PERFORMANCE IN ALL DEPARTMENTS OF A DIRECT AIR SUPPORT ... TG 77.4 HAD WON MY HIGH RESPECT AND ADMIRATION ... FOR YOUR MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE OF TODAY MY ADMIRATION KNOWS NO BOUNDS. YOU HAVE CARRIED A LOAD THAT ONLY CV'S [large fleet carriers] SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO CARRY. WELL DONE. KINKAID'"*

On the 29th take-off problems developed. Ens. Charles W. Snyder from Battle Creek, Michigan drowned when his engine cut off shortly after take-off and he couldn't get out of the sinking plane. Ens. R. H. Dorman had a close call when he went over the side on take-off hitting a 20mm gun mount; providence must have been with him because he cleared the water by about a foot and came back around to land aboard with a blown tire and a damaged right wing.

It is interesting to note in his Action Report from the Navy archives, VC-27's commanding officer wrote the following: *"The Japs have a lot of respect for our 50 calibers [machine guns], and will not bore in if we start our noses toward them ... Time and time again the Japs showed their unwillingness to fight us on even terms. Even when they outnumber us, they would not attack unless they had a definite advantage."*

From 13 October through 29 October 1944 VC-27 flew 366 operational sorties; 611 hours by TBM pilots and 814 hours by FM-2 pilots. The squadron suffered two operational fighter pilot fatalities. Enemy planes shot down one torpedo bomber but the pilot was rescued. The archives go on to say: *"The many months of careful training under the superb and inspirational leadership of [the Commanding Officer] ... had definitely paid dividends; and were in a large measure responsible for the great success of this squadron in this engagement."*

Congratulatory messages started to pour in to the Seventh Fleet. On 31 October the *Savo Island's* bulletin board posted laudatory messages from Admirals King, Nimitz, Halsey and Kinkade as well as General Krueger, Sixth Army Commander and General MacArthur. MacArthur's posting said: *"... I SEND MY HEARTIEST COMMENDATION OF THE MAGNIFICENT NAVAL VICTORY OF THE SEVENTH FLEET IN THE LEYTE GULF BATTLE X UNDER HEAVY ATTACK AND ADVERSE ODDS THEIR INDOMITABLE DETERMINATION SPLENDID EFFICIENCY AND OUTSTANDING*

COURAGE OVERCAME ALL OBSTACLES AND TURNED A CRISIS INTO A ... SUCCESS X IT WAS OUR NAVY AT ITS BEST ..." All this was followed on the bulletin board by: *"LOST: One Shaeffer Lifetime fountain pen; finder please return to the Executive Officer's Office."!!!*

BACK TO PONAM ISLAND FOR R AND R

The *Savo Island* and VC-27 remained off Leyte until 30 October, when they sailed east to for a well deserved two week rest on Ponam Island in the Manus Province of Papua, New Guinea. *(Background: Ponam was 19 miles NNW of Manus, was only 1 1/2 miles long, 400 yards wide, had only 4 miles of roads and was completely surrounded by a coral reef. Its airstrip, which was only completed in August 1944, was a single strip of bright white coral. Because of this, the sun's heat caused a buildup of hot air above the runway. This, supposedly, provided extra lift on takeoff which disappeared once the plane left the end of the runway and flew over the sandy beach and the cooler air over the ocean water. Once the extra lift disappeared planes began to sink lower and lost airspeed; crews sometimes felt they would end up in the ocean! Ens. Blackwell, however, says he doesn't remember ever experiencing this phenomenon with his TBM.)*

Ponam was a fine rest center; pilots lived in comfortable Quonset huts, were served a variety of healthy meals, enjoyed the facilities of the Officer's Club and enlisted mess and thrived on good motion pictures, band concerts, swimming and athletic games. It had almost all the equipment and facilities of a functioning naval airfield - there were workshops, a small hospital, a cinema, church, and a cookhouse.

The drinking water was terrible, but two cans of beer were allocated daily during "beer call"; consequently those who didn't drink were very popular! Sometimes the beer was warm, but an enterprising sailor figured out that CO₂ bottles could be used to cool it. Toilet facilities were unique; they were like four-holer outhouses built on stilts over the sea which is where the waste ended up.

Repair, maintenance, overhaul and replacement of aircraft took place during this 10 day rest period and ten replacement pilots were integrated into the squadron. Lt.(jg) Robert C. Shape - fighter pilot now of Sun City Center, Florida relates: *"... I was one of the replacement pilots assigned to the squadron after the Leyte Gulf activities ... but [the captain] saw to it that we were accepted and assimilated as no less equal in squadron standing than those who had been there from the beginning ... Before joining VC-27 I had been a member of a Corsair [F4U] squadron [VF-302] commanded by a completely ineffectual C.O. While in the New Hebrides [things were so bad] that we were decommissioned before receiving any active assignment ... [and I was assigned to a "replacement pool". After joining VC-27,] I've often reflected on what a GREAT assignment that was - to have been in a squadron with no respect for (or confidence in) its C.O., then to have been shuffled all over the ocean awaiting worthwhile orders, and finally being assigned to VC-27 with its superb esprit de corps was like awakening from a bad dream ... the camaraderie became apparent to me as soon as I arrived."*

MINDANAO

They flew back aboard the *Savo Island* on 19 November spending Thanksgiving at sea on the 23rd. From then through 27th of November they served with two other escort carriers (the *Petrof Bay* and the *Marcus Island*) in a patrol and escort assignment protecting the convoys heading to the Leyte Gulf. There were no enemy surface or air sightings and the duty proved somewhat monotonous to the veterans of the Leyte campaign, but excellent use was made of the time to indoctrinate the new pilots who had come aboard at Manus.

With the ship subsequently replenished in the Kossol Passage in the northern part of the Palau Islands 300 miles east of Mindanao, they proceeded to the Sulu Sea via the Surigao Straits with five other CVE's (the *Natoma Bay*, and *Manila Bay* under the command of Rear Adm. Felix B. Stump USN, the *Kadashan Bay*, the *Marcus Island* the *Ommaney Bay* plus the *Savo Island* under the command of Adm. Sample. This was Task Force 77.12.7) where VC-27 was to support the amphibious landings on Mindanao, the southernmost large island in the Philippines starting on 10 December. As a result of the kamikaze threat, five additional *FM-2 "Wildcats"* from VC-76 on the *Petrof Bay* were added to VC-27's aircraft complement to augment its fighter strength for this particular operation. To free up space on the carrier three *TBM's* flew off the carrier to the Peleliu airstrip to remain until the squadron's return.

The squadron's assignment was to provide cover for the bombardment group during the approach and then direct air support over the beaches similar to what they had done on Leyte. From the 10th to the 19th they added to an already impressive total of destroyed enemy aircraft - nine destroyed in the air (seven "*Oscars*", one "*Jake*" and one *Nakajima JINI "Gekko"* (ie: moonlight) two-seat, twin-engined night fighter (codenamed "*Irving*") - and seven on the ground (four "*Jakes*", two "*Judys*", and one "*Val*"). VC-27 continued to be the top ranking squadron in achievement among the four squadrons of Carrier Division 27.

On the 15th VF's were trying to keep the attacking Japanese suicide bombers away from the ships and in the ensuing battle Ens. Moelter from Terra Haute, Indiana was apparently shot down, possibly from "friendly fire". He was seen to bail out but never found in the ensuing search and declared missing in action.

They were relieved by the Army Air Force on the 19th and the *Savo Island* with VC-27 aboard left for replenishment at Manus Island dropping anchor in Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, the morning of the 23rd. On the 20th the three *TBM's* temporarily on Peleliu Island flew back on board with the five *FM-2's* of the *Petrof Bay* returned to Pityilu Island for permanent duty with VC-76.

Christmas was spent quietly aboard the *Savo Island* with high morale caused by the arrival of 30 sacks of mail! Captain Ekstrom arranged for a midnight mass complete with hymn singing, New Testament readings and a sermon by the *Savo's* Chaplain, J.A. Dolan. In his Christmas message to the ship's personnel, Ekstrom said in part: "... Hold fast to

your happy memories of home and take comfort in the fact that you are fighting a war to insure a way-of-life which allows you and your loved ones a joyous Christmas in the future. With the help of God, I hope this will be the last Christmas you will need to spend away .." Naturally, there was little Christmas spirit, for the squadron now realized only too well that fighting the Japs was grim business. On the 26th three new *TBM* pilots came aboard increasing the pilot roster to 18. The replenishment period was short lived for the carrier and its airgroup were reassigned on the 27th to Task Force 77.4.2 under command of Rear Adm. Stump and left Manus Island for the Mindanao Sea and its next combat assignment.

MINDORO AND LUZON AIR SUPPORT

Starting in early January 1945 the *Savo Island* and its air wing, together with five other CVE's (the *Natoma Bay*, *Manila Bay*, *Ommaney Bay*, *USS Wake Island (CVE-65)* and the *USS Steamer Bay (CVE-87)*) sortied and prepared to perform similar duties during the invasion of Luzon in the Lingayen Gulf.

The Japanese had begun using suicide tactics with the battle of Leyte Gulf and it intensified as the days progressed. The concept of someone committing suicide while, at the same time, trying to kill as many others as possible was hard for Westerners to understand, yet terrifying at the same time. Even if it was a ship off in the distance being hit, one would wonder "Are we next?". Morale suffered as a result. These suicide planes were generally known as "Kamikazes" (or Divine Wind - the name applied to the typhoon that in 1274 saved Japan from invasion by scattering Kubla Khan's fleet).

The Kamikazes were a last minute desperate attempt to stop the American forces. As early as 15 October Rear Admiral Masabumi Arima flew from a Philippine airfield and made one of the first suicide dives. When Vice Admiral Takijiro Ohnishi took over command of the First Air Fleet on 17 October, he had only 100 planes at his disposal and made the following address to his air group commanders: *"The fate of the empire depends on this operation ... our surface forces are already in motion ... The mission of our 1st Air Fleet is to provide land based air cover for Admiral Kurita's advance ... To do this, we must hit the enemy's carriers and keep them neutralized for at least one week. In my opinion, there is only one way of assuring that our meager strength will be effective to a maximum degree, and that is for our bomb-laden fighter planes to crash-dive into the decks of enemy carriers."*^[23]

On 4 January the kamikazes scored big with the sinking of the *Ommaney Bay* and the next day it was almost the *Savo Island's* turn. Fortunately the *Savo's* gunners were accurate and that, together with Capt. Ekstrom's evasive maneuvers and use of the ship's 24-inch searchlight to attempt to blind the pilot, caused a Kamikaze to exact minimum damage. Wobbling and weaving, an "*Oscar*" sheared off its wing on the CVE's superstructure knocking out the ship's radar and scattering wreckage all over the flight deck but fell free of the ship exploding in the water and riddling the skin of the hangar

deck with fragmentation. These were the moments that tried the souls of the ship's and squadron's personnel!

The Luzon invasion was one of the greatest of all amphibious operations in World War II when major elements of the US Sixth Army went ashore on the starting on the 9th. In addition to providing air support to the San Fabian Attack Group, VC-27 provided air coverage to Adm. Oldendorf's Task Group 77.2, a large melange of battleships and cruisers bombarding the invasion beaches.

It was during this action on the 12th that the "skipper" had a bazaar happening. He was flying a routine bombing patrol looking for targets when he saw what appeared to be a Japanese hospital with a large red cross painted on its roof northeast of Pozorrubic. But he thought it strange that there seemed to be no activity around the building and large tire tracks from heavy trucks in the surrounding mud indicated something was amiss. Since he had been forewarned that the Japs were noted for storing weapons in hospitals to conceal them, in violation of the Geneva Convention, he decided to take a chance; he'd be a hero or a scapegoat! As he was making his bombing run, it occurred to him that if there was ammunition stored there he'd be blown out of the sky in the ensuing explosion, so he went around again making his approach from a higher altitude. Good decision - it was an ammunition dump and he said it was the biggest explosion he had ever seen!

Ens. Frederick (Fritz) T. Vocke - Fighter Pilot now of Hagerstown, Maryland - related the following: *"... The 'skipper' was flying his TBM as forward air observer and coordinator during one of our air strikes. As was his custom he flew low altitudes and selected targets of opportunity, for those of us circling to attack those targets, that he would mark with a stream of tracers. Somewhere that day he picked up some small arms fire that disabled his [tail] hook mechanism ..."*

Without his arresting tailhook he was not able to land aboard his carrier because they had run out of barrier wires. He ditched in the ocean and he and his crew were fortunate enough to be picked up by the destroyer *USS Hall (DD-583)*.

The chief hangar deck mechanic, Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class Carl L. Hawk, now of Albuquerque, New Mexico relates: *"I remember everything about it because I had serviced the tail hook the night before during a routine maintenance check."*

The day of the water landing they announced over the ship's PA system that Commander Jackson could not get the tail hook down and he would be making a water landing along the starboard side of the ship. They also announced that if your duty permitted, you could watch the water landing.

My first reaction was, 'I worked on the tail hook on Commander Jackson's plane - what will happen to me?' In my mind I went over the whole procedure and couldn't think of anything I had done wrong, but still???

I went up to the flight deck with hundreds of others to watch. [The "Skipper" was] coming in low, with flaps down, and skimming the water a short distance from our vantage point. The TBM touched the water and came to a stop. [The pilot] and two crewmen climbed out on the wing, barely getting their shoes wet. A TBM will float nicely with the top of the wing above water if the sea is calm.

A destroyer immediately had a whaleboat in the water and [they] got into the whaleboat and were taken to the destroyer. All three came back aboard our carrier by breeches buoy. As soon as the first aircrewman touched the deck, I grabbed him and asked: 'Why wouldn't the tail hook come down?' His answer: 'It was shot up.' I let out a sigh of relief knowing that it was not my fault. When [the "Skipper"] realized that he couldn't get the hook down, he asked the crewman to hack through the bulkhead to see if they might be able to push the hook down. When they made a hole using an emergency ax and looked in, they saw that there was no hope of pushing the hook down ... This track and hook were all damaged either by flack or a direct hit."

AOM 1st Le Blanc, the "Skippers" ball-turret gunner, confirmed that they hardly got their shoes wet but complained: *"Radioman Snider and I had spent the previous night Simonizing the plane in the hopes of getting a few more knots of airspeed, but here we were in the water knowing that we were going to lose the plane on which we had worked so hard!"*

Ens. Vocke continues: *"... I remember the self-conscious smile [the "Skipper"] had coming back aboard and how glad we all were to have him back safely (he felt the same way, I'm sure)..."* He and his aircrewmen were immediately installed in the "Goldfish Club" (members of aircraft crews forced down and fished out of the sea).

During this campaign the squadron suffered no loss from combat but tragedy struck when a TBM crashed into the sea while preparing for a carrier landing; the pilot, Lt. Maurice A. Coleman of Salisbury, North Carolina, and two aircrewmen, AMM 2/c Joseph Prusacowski of Perth Amboy, New Jersey and ARM 2/c Anthony T. Servalli of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, were killed. Strong gusty winds and heavy swells, however, caused hazardous operating conditions resulting in the loss of five FM-2's and another TBM when a TBM pilot, during the pitching and yawing of the decks, overshot the barrier and landed in the middle of a large group of planes parked on the flight deck. Vocke observed as he was waiting to land his FM-2: *"... I saw debris fly through the air; two FM-2's go splashing into the sea off both the port and starboard corners of the flight deck and one nose up on the prow where it stayed ... there were no casualties in the crew of the TBM or deck handlers, fortunately ..."* There were, however, no VC-27 personnel lost to enemy action during this campaign.

Ensign Robert H. Cackle, (replacement fighter pilot who joined the squadron in November 1944 after the Battle of Leyte Gulf) now of Sun City West, Arizona related how bad things could get *"... [Flying CAP] most of these totally boring flights [seemed to be] left up to those of us who were new to the squadron. Some 4 hours was needed so it*

was a boring time. No bathroom, hotter the H%&^* with the sun pouring down on you, and trying to save gas to get back to the carrier ... and there was always the possibility that the carrier had to go into action and MIGHT NOT be where it was supposed to ... [after a CAP where we supported Army Air Corps B-24's bombing Corregidor Island], we headed back to the carrier ... we saw that there were tremendous swells on the sea, and that the carrier would plunge into the swells taking green water over the flight deck, then point its bow upward with the stern dropping down. First time I had seen the deck like that. The TBM made the first landing pass, and was waved off as the ship dived into a swell. I made the second approach and thought I was to get a wave off. Instead it was a CUT, so I chopped the throttle. The nose of the ship was going down, and I did not catch any of the landing wires with my tailhook. All I remember was a sudden stop, and all of a sudden I was upside down on the deck. I had flown into the one-inch steel cable landing net that served as a barrier for the planes parked up forward. I immediately released my 4-point safety shoulder and seat belt as I was afraid the plane would catch fire (We sat on top of the gas tank). As I released I fell out of the plane and hit the deck with the top of my head ... I had just gotten away from the plane when the deck crew came and pushed the wreckage of the plane overboard. The TBM had not landed and the deck had to be cleared for him ... A normal day in VC-27!! Seeing Corregidor, with the Japs still on it, watching the Army Air Corps bombing the island, coming back to the ship and wrecking a Navy airplane!!!! ... As a follow up to my crash landing: Nobody ever said a word to me!!! Whether right or wrong I cost the Navy probably \$100,000 worth of airplane."

Never-the-less, VC-27's performance continued to be outstanding with a total of 25 Jap planes destroyed (11 "Zekes", 7 Kawasaki Ki-61 "Hien" fighters (code named "Tony"), 3 "Vals", 2 Mitsubishi Ki-21 twin-engined, five-seat heavy bombers (codenamed "Sally"), 1 "Jake" and 1 Nakajimi B6N "Tenzan" (i.e.: heavenly cloud) torpedo bomber (codenamed "Jill"). In addition a submarine of the R-100 class was sunk by rockets from Lt.(jg) Robert Wand's TBM. Fighter pilots Barnett, Mackie, and Ross ganged up on a 1500-ton troop ship and succeeded in sinking it.

VC-27's battle weary spirits were lifted at the end of this campaign by Admiral Stump's congratulatory message to the squadron: "YOU DID A MAGNIFICENT JOB OF TAKING MORE THAN YOUR SHARE YESTERDAY. I CANNOT EXPRESS IN WORDS MY ADMIRATION FOR THE ENTIRE SAVO OUTFIT ... AIR GROUP AS USUAL OUTSTANDING. I CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON YOU"

Proceeding on the *Savo Island* to the westward side of Mindoro Island between the 17th and 29th of January, VC-27 as part of Task Group 77.4 (the *Natoma Bay*, *Steamer Bay*, *Marcus Island*, *USS Tulagi* (CVE-72), and *Petrof Bay*) provided a defense to the Mindoro garrison against enemy surface attack. Their final air support, before being relieved, occurred with the Luzon landings at LaPaz, San Miguel, San Antonio and Grande Island the east side of the Subic Bay peninsula at the end of the month.

The *Savo Island* left Luzon on 31 January via the Leyte Gulf to Ulithi Atoll for repairs where VC-27 was replaced by a fresh new squadron, VC-91, since the squadron had served for five months in the western Pacific. (*Background: Ulithi is a coral atoll 335 miles east of the Palau's in the Western Carolines and site of the forth largest lagoon in the world. It was a Jap seaplane base until a US invasion in September 1944 and is currently part of the Federated States of Micronesia. Its islets have a total land area of 1.75 square miles.*)

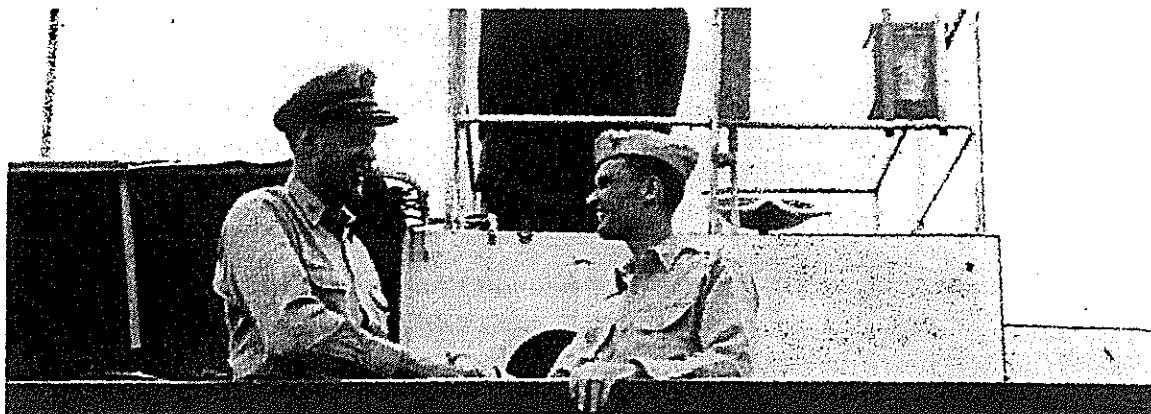
Lt.(jg) Shape remembers his concern when he found that the squadron was going home: *"The question among those of us who had arrived as replacements and therefore hadn't put in as much combat time as the original group was: 'How does this affect us?' The Skipper's answer was immediate and went something like this: 'Listen, you guys were good enough to come along when we needed you and you've done your job just as well as the rest of us bastards, and you're damn well good enough to go home with the rest of us too!'"*

On 15 February VC-27 boarded the *USS Barnes (CVE-20)* for transportation to Pearl Harbor and subsequently to San Diego; they departed on leave 9 March.

VC-27's COMBAT RECORD

A front page article in the Poughkeepsie New Yorker in its Sunday edition 18 March 1945 reported in the headline: *"Jackson, Leader of Famous Navy Squadron, Returns Home"* and went on to say: *"... disclosing the unit's return, the Navy reported it brought with it a record believed to be unmatched by any escort carrier squadron according to the Associated Press"* The pilots of VC-27 had, indeed, compiled the most outstanding combat record for all escort carrier air groups in the entire War. All told VC-27 shot down 62 Japanese planes (twice that of any other CVE based squadron) and destroyed 18,650 tons of enemy shipping including a heavy cruiser and two destroyers. (See Appendix "B" for Statistics)

Furthermore, one of the fighter pilots, Lt. Ralph Elliott, now of Jacksonville, Florida was the top *FM-2 "Wildcat"* ace for all escort carriers in the entire War with 9 confirmed "kills". VC-27 had another *"Wildcat"* ace in Lt.(jg) George Davidson with 5.5 "kills" (Davidson scored his first "kill" in 1943 flying with VF-21 in the Solomons battle, and was the only "composite" ace having flown both *F4F's* and *FM's*). Incredibly, three other VC-27 aviators each claimed 4.5 victories, (Ensigns Thomas Mackie, Robert E. Pfeiffer and Wilton O. Stubbs) giving the *Savo Island* five of the top nine places among CVE fighter pilots in the entire war. In March 61 officers and crew from escort carrier air groups received citations, 27 of which were from VC-27. In addition a Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to the crew of the *Savo Island* and shared by VC-27. (See Appendix "H") Jackson continued a career in the Navy attaining the rank of Rear-Admiral before retiring in 1972 after 37 years of active duty. (See Appendix "I")

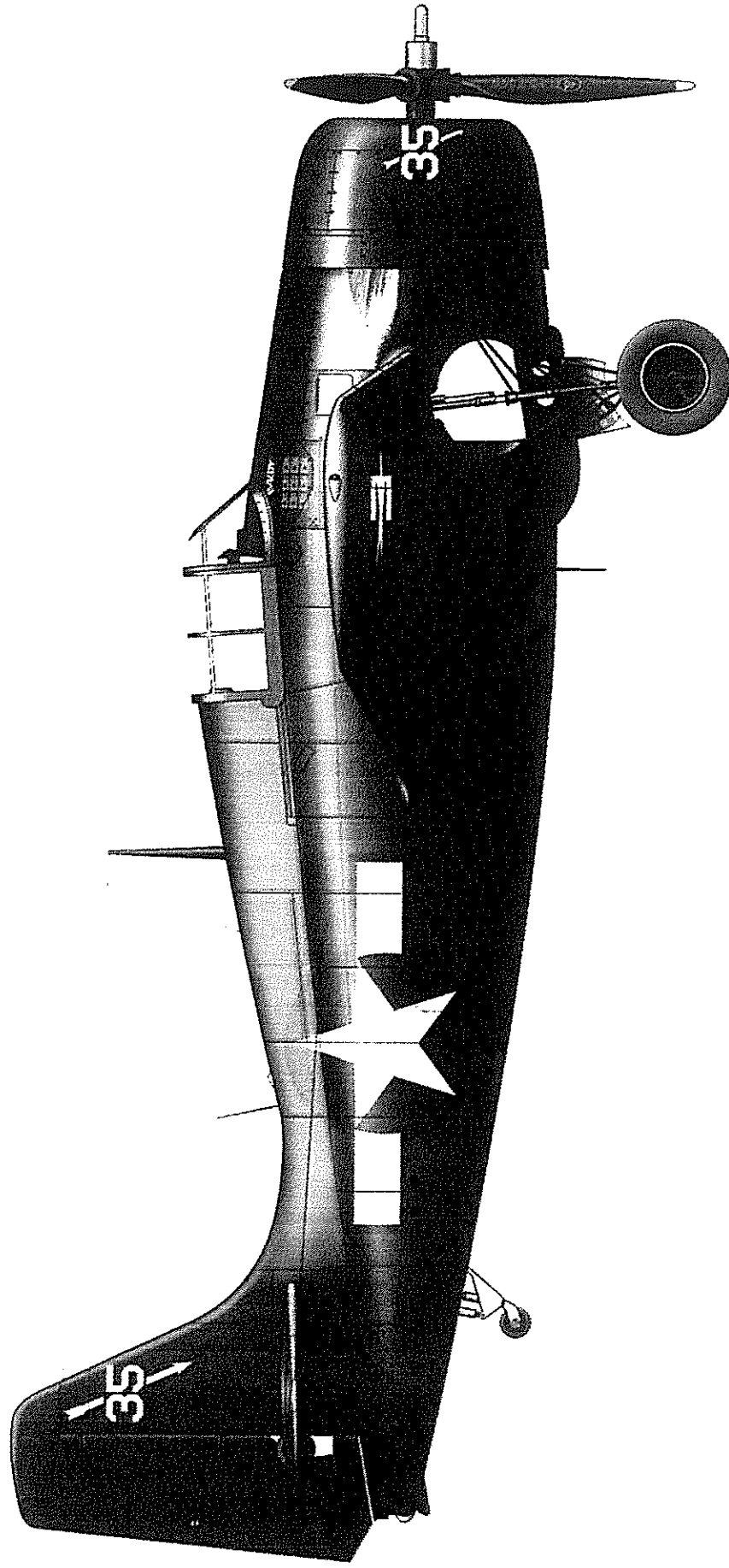


THIS IS THE SCORE BOARD OF THE SQUADRON
ON THE BRIDGE OF THE
USS SAVO ISLAND - CVE-78

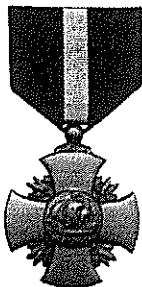
(Left to Right)
Captain Clarence E. Eckstrom, USN (USS Savo Island's skipper)
Lieutenant Commander Percival W. Jackson, USN (VC-27 I's skipper)

1/48th Scale Model of Lieutenant Ralph E. Elliott Jr's FM-2 "Wildcat"

"Baldy"



THE NAVY CROSS – The highest medal for valor that can be awarded by the Department of the Navy, and second only to the Medal Of Honor



The following members of VC-27 received the Navy Cross:

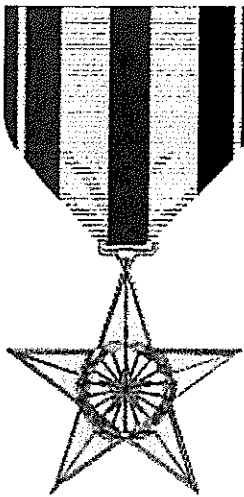
Lieutenant Commander Percival William Jackson

Lieutenant Soule Tryon Bitting

Lieutenant (jg) Claude Clarence Nathan

Lieutenant (jg) John Mark Yeaman

THE SILVER STAR – The third (third only to the Medal Of Honor and the Navy Cross) highest medal designated solely for heroism in combat that can be awarded by the Department of the Navy

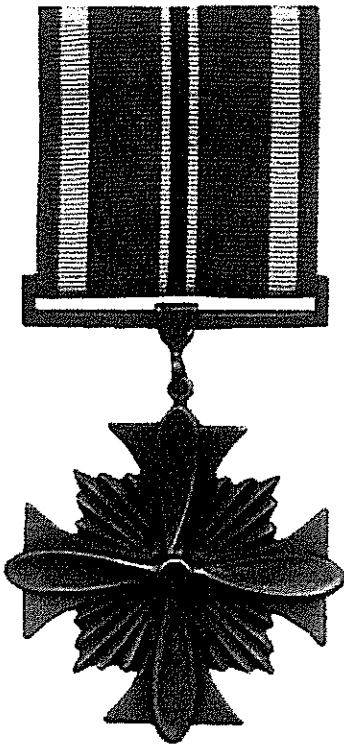


The following members of VC-27 received the Silver Star

Lieutenant Commander Percival William Jackson

(Note: There may be others but no records were kept of recipients)

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS – awarded by the Department of the Navy “for heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial combat”.



**The following members of VC-27 received the
Distinguished Flying Cross**

Lieutenant Commander Percival William Jackson

(with a gold star awarded in lieu of a second DFC)

(Note: There may be others but no records were kept of recipients)

Note: During its tour of duty, VC-27 lost four more pilots in addition to the above for a total of eight (plus the above two enlisted crewmen): Lieutenant Edwin J. Bain from Jackson, Mississippi; Lieutenant Maurice A. Coleman from Salisbury, North Carolina; Ensign Jack Bridges from Spartanburg, South Carolina; and Ensign James T. Spivey, from Windsor, North Carolina. Aviation Ordnance Mate 2/c Troy A. Bond now of Arcada, California described his feelings: "*... From the time I was a kid until I joined the navy, I had a hobby of racing pigeons. I liked to win races, but of more importance to me was always to see all my pigeons return home from many of their long races ... Now to my aboard ship experience ... being an Aviation Ordnance Mate, much of my working time was spent on the flight deck. I will always remember the great feeling I had when all of our pilots and airmen returned from their battles to the deck of the Savo Island. It was the same good feeling I had when all of my pigeons arrived home safe. I felt a big loss when some planes did not return as I did when some of my pigeons did not arrive home. The pilots and airmen of VC-27 have always been and always will be my heroes.*"

COMPOSITE SQUADRON VC-27 TWO

On 17 April 1945 VC-27 was reformed at NAS Seattle, Washington with Lt. Elliott of Milford, Illinois named Commanding Officer. Familiarization flights began immediately for the 16 FM-2's and 12 TBM's. After the squadron was transferred to NAS Pasco, Washington on the 28 April flying began in earnest in order to complete the required syllabus in preparation to return to the Pacific war. Accommodations were good at Pasco and wives could be quartered nearby. Lieutenant Donald W. McMeekin joined the squadron as Executive Officer.

Ens. Bob Cockle remembers that "*... about one-third of the pilots had served overseas, about one-third former flight instructors, and the remainder just out of Pensacola and Corpus Christi ... generally the flight instructors with no sea experience were of higher rank, with the experienced returnees next in rank [15 returned from VC-27 One], and the boot Ensigns. As divisions and sections were formed, rank ruled. We had Stearman instructors named as division leaders and experienced returnees as the tail-end charlies of a four plane division. After a few flights, changes were made but often the experienced returnees were expected to teach division leaders operational procedures. The boot Ensigns were often confused as to whom to take orders from ... flying weather was just about perfect. Pasco was a virtual desert ... we had a range for bombing and strafing about 15 miles wide and some 30 miles long with various targets. Rockets, bombs (practice) and strafing were practiced constantly.*"

Several accidents occurred - forced landings, running out of gas, etc. Ens. Frank Vukovich had to make a forced belly landing in his TBM when the engine failed during a field carrier landing; although the plane was a total loss, the pilot was uninjured. Tragedy struck on 11 July when the starboard wing of Ens. William R. "Duke" Windsor's FM-2 broke off during a glide-bombing run. Ens. Frank Heffelfinger explained: "*All the FM-2 pilots took turns spotting the bomb hits and calling the results back to the pilots. A jeep*

with a steel A-frame roof drove around a track, so the pilots had to gauge the speed of the target and then drop a small bomb with an explosive like a shotgun shell that emitted smoke so the spotter could tell where it hit." According to Ens. Dewitt Freeman: " ... [Windsor] was pulling some pretty heavy G's after firing and when the wing left the plane, it rotated so rapidly that it was impossible for him to leave the cockpit ... " He was killed instantly.

With the constant training, pilots got bored and the result was high jinx. Cockle continues: " ... *We had a practice mission one day with three fighter divisions. Returning to the base and knowing the CO was out of town, it was decided to land 12 fighters at one time on the runway. We staggered the planes, and it was a fairly wide runway with nothing but sand on either side. The lead flight flew almost to the far end of the runway to land and the last flight just made the runway. All landed safely, however number 6 to land (NO NAME) had a plane with a weak left brake. After landing his plane started to veer to the right, and unable to correct with the brake, he gave it throttle, veered off to the sand, and ground-looped ... [Not much damage but] unfortunately, the CO's wife and the wife of the Commanding officer of NAS PASCO ... were watching all this happen ... at the next Squadron meeting we caught all kinds of HELL."*

Cockle explains that entertainment at Pasco was self-made since: " ... *Liberty was not a great deal in Pasco ... so Saturday night was the big hit for parties at the Officers Club. Dinner and Dance was the agenda. With only a few of the fellows married, and almost no local girls to date, the wives were in great demand as dance partners. Drinking was a high priority and toward midnight some of the parties really got exciting ... some of us had cars, and we could get away for three days up in the Wallowa mountains, the home of the Nez Perce and Chief Joseph. Gas was rationed but the maintenance crew always saved gas from planes under repair in drums outside the Ready Room. We could fill the tanks, take along couple of extra five-gallon cans and take off ... Softball teams were organized and a league formed. The games always started out well, but as the game went on and the beer consumed, they became a little disorganized.*

Bob and his wife " ... *lived in a home owned by an engineer who was engaged in a SECRET PROJECT in a government city 20 miles out in the desert from Pasco ... After the Atomic Bomb was dropped ... we finally found out that the Hanford Plant was operated by DuPont and was making Plutonium used in the second Bomb. (The first bomb contained enriched Uranium produced in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.) This really was a well kept secret, as we had gone up to where the plant was several times ... and flown over the area for 3 months without knowing what was going on."*

Having completed the training syllabus at Pasco, most of the squadron was transferred then to NAS San Diego and subsequently to NAAS Twenty-Nine Palms, California arriving on 28 July. On the 20th, however, 20 pilots were detached to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to take close-support training in preparation for the intended invasion of Japan. The train had a 5 or 6 hour layover in Los Angeles and someone remembered that Leslie Charteris lived there. Ens. William B. Brower Jr. an FM-2 pilot now of Troy, New

York related what happened: " ... *The author had given permission for the first squadron to use the stick figure as its motif though some were less than saintly. In an indiscreet moment he had also given out the address of his office, then in Beverly Hills, and invited members of the squadron to drop in at any time ... we took a cab to seek the creator of our patron saint .. it was on the ground floor ... done in the style of a Hawaiian garden, with an elegant bar. Charteris was a little shocked to see us at the door, but quickly recovered his aplomb, made us all a drink, and after some cordial conversation we had the good sense to depart ...*"

Twenty-Nine Palms had great flying weather and accommodations hastened the training process. By September the squadron had completed eighty-three percent of the training syllabus and Ens. Frank Heffelfinger remembers that their planes were being loaded on the USS Lunga Point (CVE-94) when the War ended. They were that close to going to sea when they were decommissioned on 11 September 1945.
(See Appendix "G" for Instrument of Surrender)

VC-27 “The Saints” In Memoriam

Men of VC-27 who did not return gave their lives so that others might live in freedom.

VC-27 I

Lieutenant Edwin S. Bain, USN, Jackson, MS on 01 September 1944 crashed in training exercises in San Diego.

Lieutenant Maurice A. Coleman, USN, Salisbury, NC on 13 January 1945 spun in while on the final approach to land on the carrier.

Ensign Jack Bridges, USNR, Spartanburg, SC crashed in training exercises in San Diego.

Ensign Ralph A. Mayhew, USNR, Heber, UT on 24 October 1944 returning from a mission after shooting down 2 or 3 Japanese aircraft, did a victory roll beside the carrier and spun in.

Ensign Fred J. Moelter, USNR, Terra Haute, IN on 16 Dec 1944 while flying CAP, was hit possibly from “friendly fire”, was seen to bail out but never found in the ensuing search and was declared MIA.

Ensign Sterling P. Ross, USNR, Ravenwood, MS on 25 October 1944 failed to return from a mission and was listed as MIA.

Ensign Charles W. Snyder, USNR, Battle Creek, MI on 29 October 1944 had his engine cut out shortly after take from the carrier and couldn't get out of the sinking plane.

Ensign James T. Spivey, USNR, Windsor, NC crashed in training exercises in San Diego.

AMM 2c Joseph Prusakowski, USNR, South Amboy, NJ was a member of Lt. Coleman's crew.

ARM 2c Thomas Seravelli, USNR, Philadelphia, PA was a member of Lt. Coleman's crew.

VC-27 II

Ensign Elmer R. Daffer, USNR, crashed in training exercises in 1945.

Ensign William R. Windsor, USNR, was practicing dive-bombing on 11 July 1945 when his right wing came off and he crashed.

This was written by Winfield Sluyter, an Aviation Mechanics Mate 2c with VC-27 who later became ship's company.

The Specialists

by Winfield J. Sluyter

We had many. They perfected what they did to a fine point. Split seconds were critical in some jobs. When we had planes coming in to land the specialists were everywhere. The LSO (Landing Signal Officer) stood off to the port side aft and with his paddles he directed the planes coming aboard.

A plane would come in, land, and as quickly as the unhookers released the hook from the arresting cable; the pilot was signaled to taxi forward to the parking area. A man assisting the LSO would announce the deck clear and the next plane would land. Only seconds transpired between the landings. If the deck was not clear the next plane got a wave-off. It took only a few minutes to land the four planes on sub patrol.

But let me tell you about the two men in the asbestos suits. They stood there next to the barriers and if a plane made a bad landing and was on fire, those two were there within seconds to get the pilot and crew safely out. They were well-trained experts at their job, and they were ready for the worst. Two others that also were on deck were the two that were there as soon as the plane came to a stop to unhook the plane from the arresting cable. They dove under the tail and grabbed the cable and the hook and separated them, sent the hook up into its storage area and were ready for the next plane, which would come in only seconds later. The unhookers and the fire rescue team were the only ones on the deck landing area during the landings. It was a very dangerous job with planes coming in, propellers spinning, arresting wires snapping back into position for the next plane. Accidents, planes out of control and all the unexpected things that can happen during flight operations, often in rough seas add another level of the danger involved. These four men are only a few feet from landing aircraft, day after day during all landing operations, and those hooks and cables were a dirty, greasy mess to handle.

Of course, LSO was also in a very dangerous spot off to the side of the deck but those planes on rough days and also on wave-offs often would pass so close to the LSO that he would have to dive head first into a big safety net around his platform. An example of what could happen was when one anti sub patrol was out they flew through a cloud and one plane's propeller sliced into another plane's tail. Everything functioned properly, so they came in for a landing after checking all functions in the air. When the sliced plane came in and caught the hook, the tail pulled off the fuselage, causing all the cables to the tail control surfaces to sever and snap up into the cockpit, tangling the controls to full throttle and causing the pilot to be tangled and trapped in the cockpit. The plane zoomed up the deck out of control and at full power went over the side. A destroyer escort was on station following close behind our ship for just such situations and was there within seconds with rescue team climbing aboard the Wildcat and quickly got the pilot loose from the tangle of cables. He was soon returned safely to the carrier but for a ransom of

"gedunk". His next exciting exploit was the breeches buoy return to the carrier. More on this at another time.

The landing area of our flight deck had nine cables stretched across it spaced about 30 feet apart. When the planes were landing these cables were elevated a few inches above the deck so the tail hooks could catch onto them. A plane landing would hook onto a cable and the resistance on the cable would bring the plane to a stop in a very short distance. If they caught the first cable the stop wasn't so abrupt, but catching the 9th cable stopped the plane very quickly. Just forward of the nine cables were three more cable assemblies that were called barriers. If a plane missed all nine cables, it would be stopped by the barriers. At least two of the three barriers were up in position for each landing. An operator controlled each barrier, which could be instantly raised into position or snapped down flat to the deck so the planes could taxi forward to be parked and the barriers instantly were snapped up into position for the next landing. Those newer carriers with the angled decks could have saved a lot of this precautionary cable operating but they didn't exist in those days. The barrier operator was one of the specialists that had an amazing split second timing function that saved us many a propeller, landing gear, or a whole plane when the landing was so close to a crash but got the hook, and the operator then instantly flipped down the barrier before any damage was done to the plane. I was always amazed at the reflexes of the barrier operator. The differences between a good airplane and a damaged one were only a fraction of a second difference

After all planes from a flight landed the deck had to be respotted because we had to always be ready to launch aircraft when in dangerous waters. There were crews of men that would physically push all the planes from forward to aft on the deck, one plane at a time, till all were closely spotted aft. One member of each crew always jumped into the cockpit and steered the plane by the brakes while the rest pushed. Then the plane was chocked and lashed down by the crew and plane captain while the crew ran forward for the next plane. Within an unbelievable short time the planes were spotted at the ready for the next flight. The actions on the flight deck were a well-rehearsed chorus of many, many specialists doing their job.

Often added to this mix of activity, as if it wasn't already too much for such a small space was the added confusion that a damaged plane would cause, the operation of the elevators, creating a giant hole in the deck to maneuver around or the damage to the deck done when a wreck occurred, or the conditions caused by a stormy sea, or Kamikaze attack, or enemy action. Flight operations often took place when we were taking on fuel from one of those giant oilers that appeared out of the murk from time to time. They would refuel the carrier plus a destroyer or two, or the destroyer escorts. Flight operations went on regardless. It had happened enough that the unusual conditions almost appeared routine. These carriers that were thought to be able to operate with 21 aircraft aboard were now routinely operating with 36 aircraft and occasionally if a not so routine situation happened such as aircraft from other carriers that needed a place to land for fuel, or fouled decks on their assigned ship, came in and they were handled "almost" routinely because there were so many specialists doing their job. You couldn't help being amazed

at what occurred on these tiny 480' long flight decks. The only way you would believe it is if you actually saw it. All this was done in spite of the regulations and soon what was done became the regulation way.

I've always intended to write all this down.- after 60+ years I hope I remembered it as it happened. Forgive me for the things forgotten in time.

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APPENDIX B

STATISTICS

		PALAU INVASION 9/12-30/44	LEYTE INVASION 10/17-30/44	CONVOY ESCORT 11/22-26/44	MINDORO INVASION 12/10-19/44	LUZON INVASION 1/3-31/45	TOTAL
1. No. of Planes Destroyed in Air		28			9	25	62
2. No. of Planes Destroyed on Ground			1		7		8
3. No. of Planes Damaged in Air		8				1	9
4. No. of Planes Damaged on Ground							
5. No. of Planes Probably De- stroyed in Air.....					1		1
6. No. of Planes Probably De- stroyed on Ground.....			1		1		2
7. No. of Ships Destroyed.....		3				3	6
8. No. of Ships Damaged.....		12				3	15
9. No. of Barges and Small Craft Destroyed			2		2		4
10. No. of Barges and Small Craft Damaged						3	3
11. No. of Bomb, Torpedo, Rocket hits on Jap Men-O-War....		67				2	69
12. No. of Submarines Sunk.....						1	1
13. No. of Submarines Damaged..		1					1
14. No. of Bridges Destroyed or Damaged		28			9	25	62

STATISTICS

	PALAU INVASION 9/12-30/44	LEYTE INVASION 10/17-30/44	CONVOY ESCORT 11/22-26/44	MINDORO INVASION 12/10-19/44	LUZON INVASION 1/3-31/45	TOTAL
15. No. of Buildings Destroyed or Damaged	36	4			12	52
16. No. of Oil and Storage Dumps Destroyed or Damaged.....	12	4		1	13	30
17. No. of Ammo Dumps Destroyed or Damaged.....	4	1			6	11
18. No. of Vehicles Destroyed or Damaged	1	45		1	8	55
19. Other Installations Destroyed or Damaged. (Pill Boxes, Gun Emplacements, Etc.)..	43	12			1	56
20. No. of Flying Hours.....	1899	1425.4	622	660.7	2638.3	7245.4
21. No. of Sorties.....	544	366	186	195	759	2050
<hr/>						
Enemy Shipping Destroyed (tons)						18,650
Enemy Shipping Severely Damaged (tons).....						40,900
Direct Hits Scored but Damage to Ships Undetermined (tons).....						129,092

APPENDIX C

JAPANESE AIRCRAFT^[25]

In the early days of World War II Japanese aircraft were far superior to anything the Allies or the US Navy could launch, and it wasn't until after the Battle of Midway in June 1942 that American aircraft of comparable performance began to make their presence known. The recognition characteristics of Japanese ships and aircraft were, therefore, highly important to American pilots, but Japanese names were so unfamiliar that codenames were developed in mid-1942 for use by the Allies to identify Japanese aircraft. These provided a simple, easily pronounceable means of referring to a type. Thus, the Mitsubishi A6M "Reisen" Type 0 [zero] fighter became the "Zeke" to the Allies.

The following Japanese aircraft were those encountered by VC-27 (codename listed first):

"Betty" - Mitsubishi G4M twin-engine land-based Japanese Navy long range bomber. It was a cantilever mid-wing monoplane capable of carrying one 1,764 pound torpedo or 2,205 pounds of bombs. Like most of the Japanese planes until late in the war, it had no armor or self-sealing gas tanks to protect the crew often making it a flaming inferno when hit by American aircraft. Consequently, it was sometimes referred to derisively as "One Shot Lighter" or "Flying Cigar". Maximum range was 2,694 miles with maximum speed 292 mph. Mitsubishi built 2,416 which were in service the entire war. These planes sank the British battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* and the battle-cruiser *HMS Repulse* three days after Pearl Harbor. The breaking of the Japanese code by the US alerted the Allies that the Commander-In-Chief Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, would be aboard a "Betty" inspecting Japanese troops at Bougainville in April 1943. It was shot down by American Lockheed P-38 "Lightnings" and he was killed - a major blow to the Japanese war effort.

"Frances" - Yokosuka P1Y "Ginga" (i.e.: milky way) twin-engine medium bomber with a crew of three. It was a cantilever mid-wing Japanese Navy monoplane capable of carrying one 1,764 pound torpedo or 2,205 pounds of bombs with a maximum range of 3,337 miles. It made its first flight in August 1943 and had the potential of being a formidable weapon. It was, however, plagued by maintenance

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problems and saw limited service through the remainder of in the war. Only 1,098 were built.

"Hamp" - Mitsubishi A6M3 This aircraft had squared off wingtips which cause the Allies to think it was a totally new. When it first flew in June 1941, it was called "Hap" after US Army Airforce Chief-of Staff General Henry "Hap" Arnold. He was not amused. The name was then changed to "Hamp" until the Army realized it was a modified version of the "Zeke" at which time it was renamed "Zeke 32". Mitsubishi built 343 "Hamp"s with additional production by Nakajima at Koizumi, Japan.

"Irving" - Nakajimi J1N "Gekko" (i.e.: moonlight) twin-engine, two-seat night fighter or escort fighter capable of speeds up to 315 mph and a maximum range of 2,348 miles. It was a cantilever low-wing monoplane operated by the Imperial Japanese Navy; 479 were operational during the war, including those used in kamikaze attacks late in the war.

"Jake" - Aichi E13A two-seat long range naval reconnaissance twin-pontoon seaplane capable of a maximum speed of 233 mph and a range of 1,299 miles. During the Pearl Harbor attack, "Jake"s flew reconnaissance patrols and, being operated both from ships and shore, served throughout the Pacific war. Aichi, Watanabe and the Hiro Naval Arsenal built a combined total of 1,418 of which some were used in kamikaze attacks.

"Jill" - Nakajima B6N "Tenzan" (i.e.: heavenly cloud) low-wing two-seat, single-engine carrier based torpedo bomber capable of carrying one 1,764 pound torpedo (or equivalent weigh in bombs). Maximum speed was 298 mph. Heavily used by the Japanese navy during the last two years of the War as a replacement for the "Kate", it also saw action as a kamikaze. Nakajima produced 1,268 copies.

"Judy" - Yokosuka D4Y "Suisei" (i.e.: comet) two seat, single-engine, carrier-based dive bomber capable of carrying up to 1,235 pounds of bombs with a range of 910 miles at a maximum speed of 342 mph. A planned replacement for the "Val" since it had retractable landing gear, it was a low-wing cantilever airplane of all metal construction. Three manufacturers (Yokosuka, Aichi and the Hiro Naval Arsenal) produced a total of 2,038, but lack of armor protection and

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self-sealing gas tanks made this aircraft easy pickings for Allied pilots.

"Kate" - Nakajima B5N three-seat cantilever low-wing carrier-based torpedo bomber capable of carrying one 1,764 torpedo (or equivalent weight in bombs). Yokosuka, Aichi and the Hiro Naval Arsenal produced a total of 1,149 before production ended in 1943. This plane distinguished itself in the Pearl Harbor attack where 40 were carrying torpedoes and 103 carrying bombs. In early battles "Kate"s sank the US carriers Hornet, Lexington and Yorktown. It's maximum speed of 235 mph made it obsolescent by early 1944 when high-performance American aircraft became dominant.

"Oscar" - Nakajima Ki-43 "Haybusa" (i.e.: peregrine falcon) single-seat, cantilever low-wing Army fighter/fighter-bomber capable of carrying up to two 551 pound bombs. It's maximum speed of 329 mph, outstanding maneuverability and operational range of 1,988 miles made it a terror in the early Pacific battles, but it's shortcomings of no armor protection or self-sealing gas tanks became apparent as more capable American aircraft became operational. This airplane remained in service from the beginning to the end of the battles including kamikaze attacks, Numerically this was the most important Japanese fighter of the War with a total of 5,919 built by Nakajima, Tachikawa and the Army Air Arsenal at Tachikawa.

"Sally" - Mitsubishi Ki-21 Type 97 five to seven-seat cantilever, mid-wing, twin-engine land-based Army heavy bomber of all-metal construction. It could carry up to 2,205 pounds of bombs at a maximum speed of 300 mph and a range of 1,678 miles. Its performance caused it to be rated as the best bomber used by the Japanese Army in the early years of the war even though it was already obsolescent. As American aircraft became dominant, however, losses of this aircraft increased to the point where it was ineffective as a bomber and in the last years served as a transport plane. It carried the distinction of being the longest in-service Japanese aircraft; its final use to carry the Japanese VIP's to negotiate the surrender. Mitsubishi and Nakajima built a total of 2,064.

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"Tojo" - Nakajima Ki-44 "Shoki" (i.e.: demon) single-seat Army interceptor fighter capable of a maximum speed of 376 mph and a range of 1,056 miles. This was the only liquid cooled in-line engine aircraft employed by the Japanese; all others had been air-cooled radials. Japanese pilots disliked the plane because of its high landing speeds and questionable maneuverability, but it was effective in attacking American B-29 heavy bombers raiding Japan. Production ended in late 1944 after Nakajima had produced 1,225 aircraft.

"Tony" - Kawasaki Ki-61 "Hien" low-wing, single-seat Army fighter capable of speeds up to 348 mph and a range of 1,181 miles. It appeared to be a copy of the German Messerschmitt Bf-109, but not as effective. Although it was formidable competition for Allied fighters when first introduced in the New Guinea campaign in April 1943, it was hard to maintain and had recurring engine problems which limited its effectiveness.

"Val" - Aichi D3A two-seat, single-engine, low-wing carrier or land-based dive-bomber with fixed landing gear. It's range was 913 miles with maximum speed of 239 mph and it could carry only 816 pounds of bombs, but there were 129 of these dive-bombers used in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Used from then until Japan surrendered, including kamikaze, the "Val" was an effective weapon. Aichi built 1,495.

"Zeke" - Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 [zero] "Reisen" (i.e.: auspicious star) was probably the most famous of all Japanese aircraft. It was a single-seat, cantilever low-wing Japanese Navy carrier-based fighter of all metal construction. Fast (maximum speed 346 mph), highly maneuverable, and a range of 1,118 miles, it far outclassed anything the Allies could offer from the Pearl Harbor attack, where it inflicted tremendous damage, until mid-1943 when the Grumman F6F "Hellcat" was operational in large numbers. Early versions were vulnerable, however, since this plane had no armor protection for the pilot nor self-sealing gas tanks until late 1944. Mass produced, 10,449 were built. A damaged "Zeke" was captured on Akidan Island in Alaska in June 1942; rebuilt and tested by the US, it was a great intelligence find.

APPENDIX D

Doug MacArthur's Navy ^[24]

Oh, we're the boys in the CVEs,
A little bit shaky in the knees.
Our engines knock and cough and wheeze
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

We operate where it's hot as hell,
Move in close to ring the bell,
Prime targets for a Zeke or Nell
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

While Jeeps are not dependable,
Their actions are commendable,
But gosh, they are expendable
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

They sent us out to the Philippines,
Shuffled supplies behind the scenes,
And all that was left for us was beans
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

To make the Leyte show complete
They let us tackle the whole Jap fleet,
While the big shots sat in a grandstand seat
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

Next they sent us to the Inland Seas,
Screened by cruisers and old BB's,
Giving cover by CAP's
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

For the biggest show of the whole campaign,
We entered the Sulu Sea again
And the Jap attacks were thick as rain
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

We survived the trip intact (almost).
Near to Lingayen took up our posts,
Our fannies exposed to the China Coast
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

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Said Halsey to his big CV's
This time we'll trap those Japanese.
We'll bait the trap with CVEs
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

Oh, we'll bait the trap with CVEs.
Those ships sure look like a lot of cheese.
And all that we could say was "Jees"
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

When the war is over I'll tell it true
We took whatever the enemy threw.
Weathered it - and MacArthur, too,
In Doug MacArthur's Navy.

by Lt. Hamilton Lokey, USS Natoma Bay's
(CVE-62) Air Combat Intelligence officer

APPENDIX E

VC-27/CVE-78 Personnel						
Lt. Cmdr.	Percival	W	Jackson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Captain VC-27 I	VC-27 I
Lt.	Goly	R	Henry	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Executive officer	VC-27 I
Lt.	Ralph	E	Elliott Jr	FM-2 fighter pilot	Operations officer	VC-27 I
Lt.	Gwilyn	B	Lewis	Flight surgeon		VC-27 I
Lt.	August	C	Miller	Air combat intel officer		VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Mason	A	Butcher	Radar officer		VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	William	L	Diffie	Landing signal officer	Ship's company	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Forrest	F	Glasgow	V-4 ordnance officer	Ship's company	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Ed	E	Ludeman	Ass't landing signal off.	Ship's company	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Robert	A	Pope	Administrative officer		VC-27 I
Lt.	Edwin	J	Bain	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in training	VC-27 I
Lt.	Roger	J	Mulcahy	FM-2 fighter pilot	Material officer	VC-27 I
Lt.	James	L	Naftzger	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Lt.	John	T	Ross	FM-2 fighter pilot	Gunnery officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Robert	C	Ashcraft	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't photo officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Frederick	W	Barnett	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't communication	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	George	H	Davidson	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't operations officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Frank	M	Leighty	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Donald	A	McPherson	FM-2 fighter pilot	Bldgs & grounds officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Joseph	J	Miller	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Andrew	T	Price	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't materials officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Robert	C	Shape	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Benjamin	T	Smith	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't gunnery officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Wilton	O	Stubbs	FM-2 fighter pilot	War bond officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	August	F	Uthoff	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't parachute officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Charles	M	Vehorn	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't welfare officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Paul	J	Barrow	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Ens.	Jack		Bridges	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in training	VC-27 I
Ens.	Robert	H	Cockle	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Ens.	R	H	Dorman	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't engineering officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Thomas	S	Mackie	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't navigation officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	James	J	Manfrin	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Ens.	Ralph	J	Mayhew	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in action	VC-27 I
Ens.	Fred	J	Moelter	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in action	VC-27 I
Ens.	Robert	E	Pfeifer	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't materials officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	William	S	Pinson	FM-2 fighter pilot	Log officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Hallie	F	Roberts	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Ens.	Sterling	P	Ross	FM-2 fighter pilot	Missing in action	VC-27 I
Ens.	Edward	J	Schalk	FM-2 fighter pilot	Ass't materials officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Charles	W	Snyder	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in action	VC-27 I
Ens.	James	T	Spivey	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in training	VC-27 I
Ens.	Frederick	L	Vocke	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 I
Lt.	Soule	T	Bitting	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Torpedo flight officer	VC-27 I
Lt.	Maurice	A	Coleman	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Killed in action	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Sam	H	Blackwell	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Athletic officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Albert	R	Douglas	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Navigation officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	L	D	Egan	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 I

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Lt.(jg)	Harold	B	Harms	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Parachute officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Bertram	L	Lewis	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Photographic officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Laurence	E	MacFawn	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Engineering officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Claude	C	Nathan	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Communications officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	William	R	Peden	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Education officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	Robert	H	Wand	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Welfare officer	VC-27 I
Lt.(jg)	John	M	Yeaman	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Communications officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Carroll	E	Aldrich	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Ass't photo officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Charles	W	Iverson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Ass't parachute officer	VC-27 I
Ens.	Richard	W	Mansfield	TBM torpedo bomber pilot	Ass't education officer	VC-27 I
Lt.	Ralph	E	Elliott Jr	FM-2 fighter pilot	Captain VC-27 II	VC-27 II
Lt.	Donald	W	McMeekin	FM-2 fighter pilot	Executive officer	VC-27 II
Lt.	Herman	K	Moore	Flight surgeon		VC-27 II
Lt.	Jack	G	Webster	Personnel officer		VC-27 II
Lt.	August	C	Miller	Air combat intel officer		VC-27 II
Lt. (jg)	Mason	A	Butcher	Radar officer		VC-27 II
Ens.	James	J	Gramich	Landing signal officer		VC-27 II
Lt.	Scott	S	Rogers	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Robert	C	Ashcraft	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Robert	H	Cockle	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Harry	A	Crawley	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Dewitt		Freeman	FM-2 fighter pilot	Retired 9/75 as RearAdm	VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	George	R	Hennessey	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Donald	A	McPherson	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Joseph	J	Miller	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Hallie	F	Roberts	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Benjamin	T	Smith	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Roy	M	Suddith	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	George	W	Webber	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Doyle	A	Bell	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	William	B	Brower Jr	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	William	J	Clark	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Walter		County	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Elmer	R	Daffer	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in operations	VC-27 II
Ens.	Frank	T	Heffelfinger	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Joseph	W	Jewell Jr	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Eugene		McDonough	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Robert	E	Pfeifer	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Frederick	L	Vocke	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Harold	A	Warrior	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	James	R	Wheatly	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Robert	C	Williamson	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	William	R	Windsor	FM-2 fighter pilot	Killed in training	VC-27 II
	H	H	Warrier	FM-2 fighter pilot		VC-27 II ,
Lt.	Robert		Linwick	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Richard	M	Hand	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Harold	B	Harms	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Bertram	L	Lewis	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Edward	R	Masterson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II

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Lt.(jg)	Richard		Miller	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Robert	H	Wand	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Lt.(jg)	Sam	H	Blackwell	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Frederick	H	Brandt	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Hugh	R	Immel	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Charles	W	Iverson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Charles	R	June	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Vern		Korum	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Walter	E	Lewis	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	George	J	Munson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	John	E	Musolf	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Armand	W	Muth	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Joe	E	Reynolds	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Robert	R	Robson	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Austin	J	Schoeneman	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	John	R	Shone	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Robert	E	Smith	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Frank		Vukowich	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	Nels	P	Watz	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
Ens.	John	H	Wilmoth	TBM torpedo bomber pilot		VC-27 II
						VC-27 II
			Derring	Pilot		VC-27 II
			Jarvis	Pilot		VC-27 II
			Stedman	Pilot		VC-27 II
Capt.	Clarence	E	Ekstrom	1st Savo Island CO	Ship's company	CVE-78
Capt.	W	D	Anderson	2nd Savo Island CO	Ship's company	CVE-78
Capt.	Ralph	R	Humes	Last Savo Island XO & CO	Ship's company	CVE-78
Lt.	Wally		Hook		Ship's company	CVE-78
Ens.	Allen ?	H	Brunsele	V-2 hangar deck officer	Ship's company	CVE-78
Ens.	Joseph	I	Heidotting	Assistant Paymaster	Ship's company	CVE-78
	Percy	H	Hill	Communications Officer	Ship's company	CVE-78
AEM 1c	J	J	Trenka	Aviation electrician	Ground crew	VC-27 I
AEM 1c	Leonardo		McKee	V-2 Aviation electrician	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AEM 2c	Raymond		Hurst	V-2 Aviation electrician	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AEM 3c	Jack	C	Lovett	V-2 Aviation electrician	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AEM 3c	William	H	Smith	V-2 Aviation electrician	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACMM	Owen	N	Coffee	V-2 Hangar deck Chief	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACMM	Carl	L	Hawk	V-2 Hangar deck Chief	Squadron/Ship Cartoonist	VC-27 I
ACMM	Frank		Quintel	V-2 Hangar deck Chief	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACMM	Nickolas	E	Spies	Flight deck Chief	Ground crew	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	Adolph	R	Cario	V-2 Plane director	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	G	A	Dalton		Ground crew	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	Don		Hull	Jackson's plane captain	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	C	H	Ingham	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	J	T	Jackson	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	Anton		Lambos	V-2 Carburator specialist	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	Bob		Ridgeway	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	Vernon		Schumacher	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 1c	M	S	Sinkiewicz	Aircraft mechanic	Gound crew	VC-27 I

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AMM 2c	Noel	J	Bussey	Nathan's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Louis	J	Dinnocenza	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Ray		Estervig	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Carlton		Johnson	MacFawn's plane captain	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Floyd	G	Norman	Peden's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Don		Pike	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Joseph		Prusakowski	Coleman's Airman	Killed in action	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Dan		Rado	V-2 Flight deck director	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	William		Renner	V-2 Flight deck mechanic	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Harold	E	Roache	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Mike		Sabocik	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Jack	E	Scholl	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Winfield	J	Sluyter	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 2c	Allen	A	Staley			VC-27 I & II
AMM 2c	Wayne	H	Watling	V-2 Hydraulic specialist	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Leon		Bonney	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Louis		Dunnocengo	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Ken		Fooley	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Edward	J	Hunt	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Ship's company	CVE-78
AMM 3c	Glea	L	Hyland		Ship's company	CVE-78
AMM 3c	Gene	J	Kahle	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	John		Lottey	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Robert	A	Richards	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	D	M	Sawyer	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AMM 3c	Pete		Wallace	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S1c AMM	Arthur		Gaylord	Landing signal ass't	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AM 2c	R	W	Kelly	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AM 2c	William	W	Moore	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 II
AM 2c	Vincent	A	Staley	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AM 3c	Wayne	J	Henrie	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACOM	George	E	Denoma	V4 Ordnance Chief	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACOM	William	A	Moye	Ground crew Chief	Ground crew	VC-27 I
AOM 1c			Geiske	V4 Ordnance Mate	Killed in auto accident	VC-27 I
AOM 1c	C	P	Jacobson	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 1c	Lloyd	J	LeBlanc	Jackson's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 1c	Thomas	J	Onachilla	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 1c	Tobe	A	Turpen	Henry's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 1c	L	C	Weimer	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Troy	A	Bond	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Troy	S	Evans	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Douglas	T	Hamilton	V4 Ordnance Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
AOM 2c	Harry	A	King	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Henry	C	Larsen	Blackwell's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I & II
AOM 2c	G	A	Lewis	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Wilfred	J	Luecht	Wand's Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	R	L	Morrison	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	R	F	Phillips	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	Russell	H	Ripley	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 2c	James	L	Williams	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Frederick	E	Allen	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I

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AOM 3c	Richard	L	Anderson	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	German	S	Bass	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Collis	P	Bosworth	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	James	L	Boysen	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Robert	F	Camden	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	James	E	Dyer Jr.	V4 Ordnance Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
AOM 3c	Harold	L	Evans	V4 Ordnance Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
AOM 3c	Jack	H	George	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	John	F	Hafner	V4 Ordnance Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
AOM 3c	Roy	H	Lightner	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Robert		Lynch	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	W	W	Perkins	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Victor		Prusky Jr.	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Rolland	J	Robillard	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Robert	A	Roessie	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	D	H	Simmons	Airman	TBM Turret gunner	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Ray	C	Stover	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Gilbert	R	Sullivan	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
AOM 3c	Robert	O	Tucker	V4 Ordnance Mate	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
ACRM	R	H	Snider	Jackson's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 1c	R	E	Dobyns	Henry's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 1c	Jimmie	W	Dunn	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 1c	A	A	Wilson	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 2c	Lionel		Arceneaux	Bert Lewis' Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 2c	Francis	E	Daly	MacFawn's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 2c	William		Deadrick	Korum's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 II
ARM 2c	Wesley	W	Hill	Bitting's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 2c	S	C	Jones	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 2c	Anthony	T	Servalli	Airman	Killed in action	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	G	W	Blessinger	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	Roy	G	Eselman	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	R	D	Heiling	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	C	S	Hogan	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	Harry	E	Johnson	Blackwell's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I & II
ARM 3c	R	J	McCrary	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	William	P	Simmons	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	Worley	C	Spain	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	G	H	Turner	Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	Phillip	J	Yoder	Douglas' Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ARM 3c	Stephen		Ziman	Peden's Airman	TBM Radioman/gunner	VC-27 I
ART 1c	T	J	Cymmer	Aviation Radio Tech	Ship's company	CVE-78
ART 1c	Soren	E	Peterson	Aviation Radio Tech	Ship's company	CVE-78
ART 1c	Vernon		Peterson	Aviation Radio Tech	Ship's company	CVE-78
ART 1c	P	H	Walker	Aviation Radio Tech	Ground crew	VC-27 I
EM 1c	Loren	S	Basher	V-2 Hangar deck mech	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
EM 3c	Peter		Chippi			
					Ship's company	CVE-78
F 1c	Ralph		Finker	Fireman	Ship's company	CVE-78
F 1c	Alfred		Schlumbrecht	Fireman (2nd man)	Ship's company	CVE-78

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GM 2c	Arthur		Wall	Gunners Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
GM 3c	James		Garrett	Gunners Mate	Ship's company	CVE-78
MM 2c	Richard		Davidson	Engine room mechanic	Ship's company	CVE-78
MM 2c	Robert	F	Jorgenson	Boiler mechanic	Ship's company	CVE-78
MM 3c	James	E	King	Engine room mechanic	Ship's company	CVE-78
PR 1c	W	J	Pickett		Ground crew	VC-27 I
PR 2c	Don		Carlyle	V-2 Parachute rigger	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
RDM 3c	William	L	Parker		Ship's company	CVE-78
RDM	Norman		Miller	Radarman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 1c	Dennis		Brown	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 2c	Wesley	F	Henry	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 2c	William	S	Keller	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 3c	Richard	J	Braun	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 3c	Thomas	W	Foley	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 3c	Donald	C	Henderson	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 3c	Paul	B	Knight	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
TM 3c	Joseph		Urbanczyk	V4 Torpedoman	Ship's company	CVE-78
SK 1c	Ed		Kroichick	<i>Power</i>	Ship's company	CVE-78
SK 3c	Jerry	J	Baughman	V-1 plane handler	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
SMC 3c	Cliff	L	Bailey	V-1 plane handler	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
SMC 3c	Kenneth		Donnenwirth	Signalman	Ship's company	CVE-78
SMC 3c	Olds	M	Hylton	Instrument specialist		
S 1c	Richard		Binder	Seaman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	John		Bray		Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	Rich		Carroll	V-1 plane handler	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 1c	Irving		Damitz	Seaman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	Kermit		Dotson	V-6 Catapult Specialist	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	Elwin	J	Fontenot		Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	Arthur	P	Manhart	Seaman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	N	F	McDonald	V4 Ordnance Seaman	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 1c	James		O'Brien		Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	L	F	Tillery	V4 Ordnance Seaman	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 1c	Thomas	V	Wendling	V4 Ordnance Seaman	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 1c	Owen		Westberry	Signalman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 1c	W	E	Wilson	V4 Ordnance Seaman	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 1c	Robert	C	Winn	V4 Ordnance Seaman	Became ship's company	VC-27 I
S 2c	Orville	J	Gladen	Seaman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S 2c	Fred		Zuppa	Seaman	Ship's company	CVE-78
S	Richard		Perrin	Flight deck rescue		VC-27 I
Y 2c	Bill		Baldwin			VC-27 I
Y 2c	Bill		Garofalo			VC-27 I
Y 2c	P	C	Warner		Ground crew	VC-27 I

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	William	F	A'Hearn		Ship's company	CVE-78
	Bennie		Alberson		Ship's company	CVE-77
	Joseph	H	Boucher	<i>GPA 30</i>	<i>4 4</i>	CVE-78
			Harlan			
	Ross	P	Johnson		Ship's company	CVE-78
	James	H	Lindsey			VC-27 I
	John	S	Lucas		Ship's company	CVE-78
	Jack	C	Nold		Ship's company	CVE-78
	Raymond	J	O'Neil		Ship's company	CVE-78
	John	E	Robbins		Ship's company	CVE-78
	Thomas		Ward		Ship's company	CVE-78
	William		Young	<i>Kodjona (Skinner)</i>	Ship's company	CVE-78

APPENDIX F

HISTORY OF THE SAVO ISLAND (CVE-78) AFTER VC-27 LEFT AS REMEMBERED BY FORREST GLASGOW V-4 DIVISION OFFICER

The following account is based on my memory but more so on an account entitled History of the USS Savo Island (CVE-78) from the Office of Naval Records and History Ship's Historical Branch Navy Department. This document was "re-stenciled on March 1950". Judging from the yellowed pages it seems to be something that I have had for a long time but I don't remember where I got it.

On 17 January 1945 the U.S. Army Air Forces relieved the U.S. Navy patrols at Lingayen Gulf where they had been providing air cover for the Army landings on Southern Luzon for the drive to Manila. On the 19th the Savo proceeded into Mangarin Bay, Mindoro Island for replenishment. That afternoon, Captain W.D. Anderson, USN, relieved Captain Clarence E. Ekstrom, USN, as Commanding Officer of the USS Savo Island (CVE-78)

The ship returned to the area the next day, and operations were resumed with the covering group until the San Antonia landings which called for strike and covering missions. On 31 January the Savo Island with others, was ordered to retire to Ulithi anchorage for replenishment. After arrival in port on 5 February the Savo was ordered to report to Commander Service Squadron 10 for repairs.

On 14 February 1945 VC-27 was detached from the ship for transportation to the U.S. for rehabilitation and further assignment of its personnel.

Shortly thereafter VC-91 reported aboard for duty. Beginning on the 19th training exercises were conducted for the new squadron off Ulithi. On 28 February the Savo reported to the Fifth Fleet for duty. Additional training for VC-91 was conducted off Ulithi until 4 March at which time the Savo in company with the USS Marcus Island (CVE-77) and escorts departed for Leyte Gulf to prepare for the Okinawa campaign. *(An interesting sidelight is that Commander John R. Dale who had been the skipper of VC-20 aboard the Marcus Island during the Battle of Leyte Gulf became our new Air Officer on 24 November 1944 replacing Lt. Commander Lowell S. Price who had been promoted to Executive Officer replacing Commander Thomas E. Gillespie. I ran into John Dale in New York's Grand Central railroad station in the summer of 1953. He was a Captain with Pan American Airways flying New York to London.)*

One thing that didn't exactly endear the new squadron VC-91 to all of the guys in the Air Department was that Captain Anderson (who hadn't been aboard when VC-27 shot down its 62 planes and sunk its several ships) had all of the Jap flags painted off of the Bridge. He said "*We don't want to give the new squadron an 'inferiority complex'.*" After VC-27 no more planes were shot down and when we finally returned to the states (without VC-91) he was persuaded to paint all of the flags back on the bridge. I can remember that we tied up at the main pier at North Island San Diego the first day. The ferry from San Diego that brought all of the civilian workers and Navy personnel docked just ahead of us

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and they all had to walk by the ship on their way to work. I remember the pride I had in looking down and seeing them pointing, obviously expressing admiration for the job we had done. At that moment I wished that the VC-27 guys could have seen it but they were all well into new assignments by then.

But back to the story with VC-91. After reporting to Commander Amphibious Group 7, Rear Admiral I. N. Kiland, USN for duty, the Savo engaged in preparatory exercises for covering amphibious landings.

Commander Fifth Fleet, Admiral R.A. Spruance, USN was in command of all forces participating in assault and occupation of the several islands of the Okinawa Gunto, Nansei Shoto. As in previous operations, SAVO ISLAND was assigned to the first group of ships to proceed to the landing area. A preliminary phase of the operation called for a small force of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers to seize the islands of Kerama Retto to provide an anchorage and base for the landings on Okinawa, twenty miles to the east. Task force 58, the fast carrier groups, and a British task force of similar capabilities, but less extensive in size, conducted air neutralization and surface force operations for protection to the whole operation.

Following the successful occupation of Kerama Retto on 26 March 1945, VC-91 along with squadrons from other small carrier groups provided direct air support for the main landings at Okinawa. It was a tough operation because the Japs were well dug in just as they had been at Pelileu. There was lots of direct support work of bombing and strafing with bombs, 50 cal machine gun ammo and rockets. In addition there were many days of combat air patrol, searches and reconnaissance flights, and anti-submarine patrol spent off of the southern tip of Okinawa. Enemy aircraft confined their increasingly persistent suicide attacks to the support shipping in Kerama Retto but especially the gallant destroyer pickets to the west and north of Okinawa. It was during this period that some of the large ships like the carrier Franklin were hit hard. We got a good taste of what it would have been like had we invaded Japan. VC-27 II was lucky that the war ended before they had to go back out. At two different times we entered Kerama Retto to replenish bombs, rockets and 50 cal ammo but each time had to withdraw before the job was completed because of suicide air attacks which were developing against the anchored shipping.

By then we had a new and super secret weapon for anti- submarine work called a FIDO (acronym for what I don't remember). It was a small torpedo like weapon with an electrically driven propeller. It was to be dropped near a submarine sighting and it would home in on the sub's propeller noise. We loaded them but never dropped one. Along with the FIDOs came an Ensign and a five man crew to take care of them. They put them in V-4 division and I immediately put them in bomb loading crews. No sitting around for them. They had been instructed to work behind a tarpaulin hung up on the hangar deck to keep them hidden from "prying eyes". The V-4 guys, especially the torpedo men, kidded them a lot. Finally they gave up and abandoned the tarp and things got better.

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On 7 April we joined the replenishment group steaming to the east of Okinawa and remained with that group to provide air support in the event of attack. Curiously enough, no air attacks were pressed home against this extremely vulnerable group. On 18 April Savo rejoined the support of ground troops.

On 27 April Savo joined with other carriers and destroyers to make a neutralizing sweep against Sakishima Gunto the following day. Every installation on the island was given a thorough overhaul by bombing, rocketing and strafing. Enemy aircraft showed up but failed to press home attacks. As the formation sailed north for Okinawa, enemy aircraft shadowed the retirement course of the formation that night and the same planes are believed to have included the kamikaze, which hit the hospital ship USS Comfort (AH 6) steaming to the northwest of the formation.

On 29 April the ship entered Kerama Retto and transferred VC-91 to the USS Makin Island (CVE-93). VC-84 came aboard from the Makin Island for transportation back to the United States. The Savo Island, the Marcus Island (CVE-77) and the USS Saginaw Bay (CVE-82) were ordered from the forward area to San Diego for overhaul. Hallelujah, we were going home. Of course I remember the trip back to the states but I truly don't remember VC-91 leaving and being replaced by VC-84 for the trip. The three ships proceeded to Guam where we unloaded our ammunition and spares. Dud aircraft were loaded aboard for transportation to San Diego. We arrived in Pearl Harbor on 14 May.

We were in Pearl only two days but I remember two rather amusing things. The officer who was in charge of the Officer's Mess thought it would be a neat idea to have some fresh pineapple while we in Hawaii. So he took a jeep and went out to one of the pineapple farms. When he explained what he wanted he was told that they only sold it by the ton. He started to walk away but then he turned and asked "How much is a ton?" He was told \$22. This was too much of a bargain to pass up so everyone in the in the Officer's Mess as well as all of the crew had plenty of pineapple for several days.

The second thing was the movie and this was very funny. We used to have movies aboard ship on the hangar deck almost always when we were in a harbor at anchor out in the Pacific. The guys who hadn't seen a woman in quite awhile had pretty much gotten into the habit of making comments and cat calls at the screen during the movies. At times these would grow pretty risqué especially when there was a love scene on the screen with lot's of advice to the male actor. Well, while we were dockside in Pearl Harbor several of the senior officers invited several ladies, Wave Officers and Navy Nurses to visit the ship. They had dinner in the Officer's wardroom and then were invited to stay for the movie. They sat on the front row. It must have been a steamy movie because the catcalls from the guys in the back telling the guy on the screen what to do were hilarious. As I remember no one got angry but it was pretty funny and I don't think that these ladies were too embarrassed.

We left 16 May taking a bunch of extra passengers filling all available space including army cots on the hangar deck. We arrived in San Diego about 22 May and docked at the

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Naval Air Station North Island. This is when the "Flags on the Bridge" incident which I have already described took place. The next day we sailed across the harbor to the shipyard where the ship went into dry dock. The bottom was scraped and the whole ship repainted. This time it was a solid gray not camouflaged as before. Radar had made ship and plane camouflage irrelevant. Lots of changes were made to the ship, mostly minor, but some major such as removing completely the flight deck planking and replacing it with thinner planking to reduce topside weight. The bomb storage spaces were modified to improve the storage for rockets. I think that a new improved radar system was installed along with other changes like this that I don't remember.

Everyone got three weeks leave and headed home in shifts. People also made weekend trips to places like Los Angeles. The work was completed and we left the yard on 5 July and headed across the bay to the Naval Air Station North Island to load ammunition and supplies. Post repair trials in the San Diego area were concluded and the ship reported to Commander Carrier Transport Squadron Pacific for duty.

On 11 July the Savo sailed for Pearl Harbor with 54 aircraft and 28 passengers. After discharging cargo and passengers on 18 July, the ship loaded aboard two aircraft and 203 passengers for Alameda and sailed the following day. Upon arrival at Alameda Air Station, San Francisco, on 25 July, we prepared for another ferry trip. Instead we were reassigned to Commander Carrier Division 23 for duty with five other carriers and supporting destroyers for assignment to combat duty with the North Pacific Force. Partially winterized aircraft were brought aboard and winter clothing was loaded for the entire crew. On 6 August VC-3 reported aboard for duty. They were a squadron like VC-27 II, which had been in the Pacific before and contained both veteran and new pilots.

We sailed from San Francisco on 5 August not knowing where we were going. Once we were at sea we learned we were headed for Adak Alaska. We didn't know what was up but we became aware that there were some Russian Interpreters aboard. What was this all about? We had been at sea three days when my room neighbor Lt. Q. B. Nichols, the ship's Communications Officer, met me on the stairs. He said "Glasgow you won't believe what just came in on the wire?" I said "What?" He said "We just dropped a bomb on Japan equal to 20,000 pounds of TNT." Since I was the Aviation Ordnance Officer I thought that I knew something about bombs. What did this guy know? I said "That's impossible." Pretty soon we all knew that he knew what he was talking about. I have remembered that incident all of my life. From it I realized that just because you can't comprehend something doesn't mean it isn't so.

We arrived at Adak Alaska and tied up at the dock on 14 August. The same day that we received the news that Japan had surrendered. With the status of the ship, squadron and passengers unknown as the result of this sudden but welcome turn of events the Savo left the dock and anchored in the bay. The picture of the ship without camouflage anchored at bay, which everyone has seen, was made at this time. Our six carriers were the first carriers to have ever entered this Aleutian base.

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On 20 August passengers were transferred from the ship and the cold weather clothing distributed to the remaining carriers, in preparation for duty with the North Pacific Fleet. A carrier, cruiser, and destroyer force was formed under Vice Admiral F.J. Fletcher, USN and attendant supply and minesweeping vessels joined the force. It was then revealed that we were slated to provide air support for the Russians when they landed in Northern Japan as per the agreement at Yalta. I read much later that one of the things that influenced President Harry Truman to go ahead and drop the bomb when he did was to forestall the Russian landing. Can you imagine the postwar mess if the Russians had landed because they would have surely laid claim to participation in the occupation of postwar Japan.

On 31 August, the North Pacific Task Force sailed for the Japanese home islands to effect the occupation of Northern Honshu and Hokkaido. Flight operations enroute were rendered difficult or impossible because of heavy fog. Upon arrival in the waters to the east of Taugaru Straits, between Honshu and Hokaido, the carriers and covering destroyers were detached to conduct flight operations to cover the entrance into Mutsu Wan of Commander North Pacific and his occupation forces and to make a show of force over the surrounding area. Vice Admiral Fletcher accepted the capitulation of the Japanese in a ceremony aboard his flagship anchored off Ominato.

On 10 September the Savo transferred its aircraft to the USS Natanikau (CVE-101) and received Natanikau's aircraft in return in anticipation of a complete interchange of VC-3 and VC-65. As directed by Commander in Chief Pacific, the exchange was completed the following day and the Savo prepared to sail for Pearl Harbor for further forward routing to join the Fifth Fleet. Prior to departure, passengers were loaded aboard and the ship sailed from Ominato on 15 September.

Upon arrival at Pearl Harbor the Savo received a change in orders, which called for the removal of VC-85 and assignment to transport duty in connection with returning members of the Armed Forces from the battle zones. Several members of the crew including three enlisted men from the V-4 division Troy Bond, Victor Prusky and Bob Roeselle were transferred to Pearl Harbor for reassignment. Steaming to San Francisco for operational repairs and to pick up a load of replacements and occupation forces, the Savo returned home once again. By this time the Navy's point system for release from the service was in full effect. Thirty-five or so reservists qualified immediately and left the ship for Separation Centers. Many, especially those in the Air Department, were transferred to other assignments.

I was transferred to the Naval Ordnance Laboratory at the Navy Yard in Washington D.C. I worked there until I had enough points to be released from the Navy on 25 June 1946. The most significant thing that happened to me during my stay at NOL was that I met and married my wonderful wife Gretchen on 4 May 1946. We had a wonderful life with two fine children. We were two months shy of celebrating our Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary when she passed away with Cancer. I had gone to work for the Dupont Company and was with them 36 years when I took early retirement in 1982.

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In San Francisco triple deck bunks were welded to the deck in every available space on the hangar deck. During the four months (October through January) that the Savo sailed with the Magic Carpet, she made three major voyages; one to Guam, one to Pearl Harbor and the last to Okinawa. Arriving at San Diego upon returning from the Okinawa junket, the carrier moored at North Island and awaited orders.

On 22 February 1946 the Savo stood out to sea under orders to report to Boston, Massachusetts for inactivation. Transiting the Panama Canal on 2 March, she sailed up the U.S. eastern seaboard and reached Boston on 16 March. There she was inactivated and on 12 December 1946 she was decommissioned and put in the Boston group of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, out of commission in reserve. She was redesignated as a Helicopter Escort Carrier (CVHE 78) on 12 June 1955 and then Redesignated as an Aviation Transport (AKV 28) 7 May 1959, both while in reserve. On 1 September 1959 she was stricken for disposal, sold to Comarket, and broken up in Hong Kong in June 1960.

Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump, under whom the carrier had operated most of her career, had cabled at the cessation of hostilities "*Savo and Air Group as usual outstanding. I can always count on you. Any Officer and Enlisted man can be proud of having served on the Savo Island.*"

WE CERTAINLY ARE.

INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

We, acting by command of and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept the provisions set forth in the declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the United States, China and Great Britain on 26 July 1945, of Potsdam, and subsequently adhered to by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which four powers are hereafter referred to as the Allied Powers.

We hereby proclaim the unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese armed forces and all armed forces under Japanese control wherever situated.

We hereby command all Japanese forces wherever situated and the Japanese people to cease hostilities forthwith, to preserve and save from damage all ships, aircraft, and military and civil property and to comply with all requirements which may be imposed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by agencies of the Japanese Government of his direction.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters to issue at once orders to the Commanders of all Japanese forces and all forces under Japanese control wherever situated to surrender unconditionally themselves and all forces under their control.

We hereby command all civil, military and naval officials to obey and enforce all proclamations, orders and directives deemed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to be proper to effectuate this surrender and issued by him or under his authority and we direct all such officials to remain at their posts and to continue to perform their non-combatant duties unless specifically relieved by him or under his authority.

We hereby undertake for the Emperor, the Japanese Government and their successors to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith, and to issue whatever orders and take whatever action may be required by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by any other designated representative of the Allied Powers for the purpose of giving effect to that Declaration.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters at once to liberate all allied prisoners of war and civilian internees now under Japanese control and to provide for their protection, care, maintenance and immediate transportation to places as directed.

The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be vested in the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate these terms of surrender.

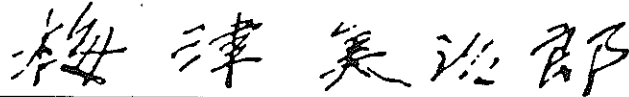
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Signed of TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 09047

the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945



By Command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan
and the Japanese Government.



By Command and in behalf of the Japanese
Imperial General Headquarters.

Accepted at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 09087

on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945

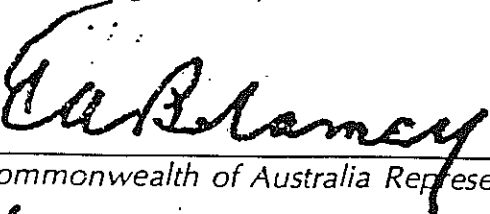
for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in
the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan.



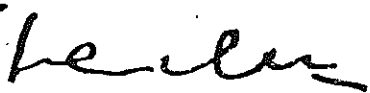
United States Representative



United Kingdom Representative



Commonwealth of Australia Representative



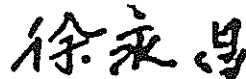
Provisional Government of the French
Republic Representative



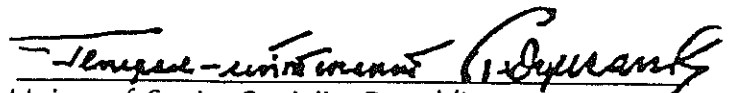
Dominion of New Zealand Representative



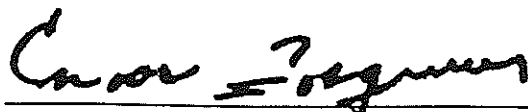
Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers



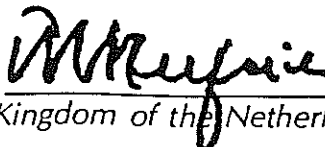
Republic of China Representative



Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Representative



Dominion of Canada Representative



Kingdom of the Netherlands Representative

APPENDIX H

Presidential Unit Citation for the USS Savo Island (CVE-78)

"The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting Presidential Unit Citation to the United States Ship SAVO ISLAND and her attached Air Squadrons participating in the following operations:

VC-27 Western Caroline Operation: 6 September--12 October 1944
VC-27 Leyte Operation: 12 October --3 November 1944
VC-27 Luzon Operation: 12 December--18 December 1944
VC-27 Luzon Operation: 4 January--18 January 1945
VC-91 Okinawa Gunto Operation: 17 March--29 April 1945

for service as set forth in the following citation:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, ashore and afloat. Boldly penetrating enemy-controlled waters, the USS SAVO ISLAND and her attached air squadrons struck fiercely at her targets despite determined Japanese air and sea opposition, destroying or damaging hostile warships, aircraft, shore batteries and other installations vital to the enemy. As one of the southern carrier group which received the brunt of Japanese land-based plane attacks in the historic Battle for Leyte Gulf, the SAVO ISLAND fought her guns fiercely against enemy dive bomber and suicide planes, at the same time, maneuvering radically to avoid damage to herself. While under attack, she launched her fighters and her torpedo planes to strafe and bomb Japanese Fleet Unit with damaging results to the enemy. During the Mindoro assault, the SAVO ISLAND aided in covering the operation successfully despite hostile airfields surrounding the Sulu Sea. Her air power protected our invasions and land offensives and covered our ships during their advance and retirement. By her own readiness for combat, implemented by the skill, courage and fighting spirit of her officers and men, the SAVO ISLAND contributed essentially to the defeat of the Japanese Empire, thereby enhancing the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President

John L. Sullivan
Secretary of the Navy
5 January 1948

APPENDIX I

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JACKSON'S CAREER, POST-VC-27

Jackson returned from the Pacific, leaving VC-27 I, and enjoyed a well-deserved 30-day leave. He was then assigned to NAS Fallon, Nevada where he took command of the veteran Fighter Squadron 11 (VF-11 Red Rippers) on 21 April 1945. They were equipped with the Navy's great new fighter, the Grumman F8F "*Bearcat*". VF-11, which was supposed to be assigned to combat duty on the *USS Yorktown* (CV-10), never returned to the Pacific since the War had ended. When he left VF-11 in May 1946, he was promoted to full Commander.

He spent the next year as a student at the Navy's General Line School, Newport, Rhode Island. In May 1947 he moved to the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland serving for the next two years as Planning and Operations Officer, Armament Test, flying a large variety of Navy advanced fighter planes. In May 1949 he was detached from Patuxent River to serve as Air Officer on board the aircraft carrier *USS Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVB-42) whose homeport was Norfolk, Virginia but the ship was assigned to duty in the Mediterranean. Naples, Italy, Palermo, Sicily and Cannes, France were among ports of call in the winter of 1950/51.

In July 1951 he reported as Ship Training Officer on the Staff of Commander Naval Air Force Atlantic Fleet based at Norfolk, Virginia. A year later he was reassigned to become the Executive Officer at the Naval Aviation Ordinance Test Station, Chincoteague, Virginia. After serving in that capacity until July 1953, he became the Commanding Officer of NAAS Chincoteague as well as Executive Officer of Chincoteague's Naval Aviation Ordinance Test Station.

In July 1954 he returned to the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island where he took advanced studies for almost two years. Starting in June 1956 he again joined the Staff of Commander Navy Air Force Atlantic Fleet based at NAS Norfolk, Virginia as Force Plans Officer. This assignment, however, earned him a promotion to Navy Captain. Then, a year later in June 1957, he was Operations and Plans Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division Fifteen based in Norfolk, Virginia serving in this capacity for the next two years.

He was then reunited with his old boss, Clarence E. Ekstrom, (who was now a Vice-Admiral and commander of the Pacific Fleet Navy Air Force) in May 1959 as he became commanding officer of the *USS Orca* (AVP-49), a small seaplane tender. Seaplanes were phased out of the Navy's inventory shortly thereafter, however, so he was reassigned in June 1960 as commanding officer of an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) support aircraft carrier, the *USS Kearsarge* (CVS-33) - homeport Long Beach, California but deployed in the western Pacific. He told me about the games he used to play with Russian submarines. Obviously his mission was to search out and destroy the enemy, but in peace time (even though the Cold War was on) no armament was used. Instead when they found a sub, they would ping it with sonar day and night. Inside the sub the noise was deafening and when the Russian captain gave up, knowing he couldn't shake off the attackers, he would surface - end of exercise - but this might go on for days!

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In June 1961 he served on the Staff of Commander Operational Test and Evaluation Force for a little over two years. Then, for a year starting in August 1963 continued his Navy education at the National War College at Fort McNair in Washington, DC graduating the following June. The last entry in his flight log was at that time when he stopped active flying after 27 years as a pilot. He was then 49 years old and had amassed almost 5,800 hours of flight time.

He was then named Head of the Western Hemisphere Plans Branch followed by Assistant for Joint Chiefs of Staff Matters in the Strategic Plans Division, Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. Although he was now a full Navy Captain, he had been passed over twice for promotion to Admiral and he told me he expected to retire with a Captain's rank. He was, however, promoted to Rear Admiral in October 1966 that was the final rank he obtained in the Navy (a considerable achievement considering that he had not attended the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland).

In June 1966 as a Rear Admiral, he assumed command of Carrier Division Fourteen, an ASW task force in the Atlantic consisting of an aircraft carrier, the *USS Wasp* (CV-18) his flagship, and a mix of ten other ships: destroyers, destroyer escorts and attack submarines. His flag was on the *Wasp* for one year but he then transferred to the *USS Enterprise* (CVS-9) for four months, an assignment that took them on a good-will people-to-people cruise to 13 ports in western Europe where he was feted lavishly. He then returned to the *Wasp*.

The *Wasp*, with my brother in command, also served as a recovery ship for NASA's Gemini 12 space program picking up astronauts Captain James A. Lovell USN and Major Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin USAF on 15 November 1966 when, after orbiting the earth 59 times, they splashed down in the Atlantic 600 miles east of Cape Kennedy.

A next tour of duty which he said he did not enjoy started in the Pentagon in Washington, DC December 1967 as Director of Personnel, Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was about this time in the late 1960's he and his wife bought a 40 acre farm with 1,700 feet of waterfront on the North River at Ware Neck, Gloucester County, Virginia called "Dunham Massie". The plantation came with a pedigree; it was the manor house of the Civil War Confederate Major General William B. Taliaferro who had served under Stonewall Jackson. Here he was in his glory fishing and geese and duck hunting with his dog, "Joe", when he was on leave and his wife was able to bring out her sizable collection of antiques that they had collected over the years.

In his final assignment with the Navy, he was Deputy-Commandant of the National War College at Fort McNair in Washington, DC from July 1970 to July 1972 reporting to Air Force Lieutenant General John B. McPherson. Courses there were graduate level inquiry into military, political, economic and social factors that influence planning and conduct of national security.

When he decided to retire on 1 July 1972 after 36 years of active duty, I asked him why he was leaving. His reply was: "*I am recognized by the Navy as an anti-submarine*

APPENDIX I

warfare expert, and yet my decisions can be overruled by a 25 year old systems analyst in the Pentagon who has had no military experience. It's no fun anymore!"

Unfortunately, his retirement was cut short by a brain tumor and he died in Walter Reed Memorial Hospital, Gloucester, Virginia on 2 January 1986. He was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. His widow, Virginia Ohm Jackson, now lives in Roanoke, Virginia.