

CARRIER WARFARE IN THE PACIFIC

The HENNINGTON is homeward bound after a long hard year at sea, the greater part of which was spent in combat operations.

For many of you this is the last cruise, for all of you it means seeing once more your loved ones, home and friends.

In the months to come you will be in close contact with people who are interested in the part you played in the great Pacific war. As time passes and memories dim, you will have occasion to explain what the Navy contributed to winning this war.

No single branch of the military service can claim full credit for winning the war in the Pacific, or any war for that matter, but from the bitter beginning at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 to the dramatic day of Japanese capitulation on August 15, 1945, the war in the Pacific has been the Navy's particular responsibility and, unlike most major struggles between nations, the Pacific war has been essentially a naval war with the operation of the Fleet's Air Arm in a manner not previously envisioned by our people.

The world was psychologically unprepared for the precipitate rush of events that marked the sudden cessation of hostilities. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6th followed by Russia's entrance into the war against Japan two days later, may be considered anti-climaxes to a fight already won by the Navy.

We now know that the Japanese sought peace as early as mid-July while our Third Fleet was in the midst of its sustained assault on the Japanese Homeland. Naval Air, Surface and Submarine forces had long since broken Japan's vital supply lines; her Navy, or what was left of it was in hiding, heavily camouflaged, in homeland ports; her airplanes, shorn of their vaunted power, were also hidden, camouflaged and widely dispersed in outlying airfields and villages throughout the homeland; her active submarines, all eight of them, were playing the defensive role in a hide and seek game with our Naval forces in the Pacific.

The picture on August 15th was in sharp contrast to that which was presented to the world at Pearl Harbor 3 years, 290 days before. A gigantic fleet now cruised at will in the Pacific, daring the enemy to come out and fight; Naval transports were carrying thousands of troops into the island bases on which Navy landing craft had already landed Marines, Seabees and advance army units and from which the enemy had been exterminated or subdued. From island bases, secured by Naval forces in quick succession, thousands of land-based planes corted constantly against the enemy and last, but by no means least, from a vast armada of "Fighting Ladies", carrier aircraft in awesome strength struck the enemy at will in the very heart of his homeland.

On that memorable day when strike Charlie #2 was recalled from Tokyo, the Navy had just cause to be proud. In true American fashion, the underdog at Pearl Harbor had come out on top with colors flying high.

Like the woodman who "couldn't see the forest for the trees", it is conceivable that you who have been so integral a part of this history-making saga, have lost sight of your Navy's heroic accomplishments. Therefore, this story of the carrier warfare in the Pacific has been prepared for you.

On the last day of peace in the Pacific, December 6, 1941, Japan's Navy was already stronger than the combined Pacific fleets of the nations she was to make her adversaries.

By noon of December 7, Pearl Harbor time, Japan was without dispute the ruler of the Pacific, at least temporarily. Actually, Japan's domination of the Pacific lasted less than 6 months.