

On 9 January 1942, Admiral Halsey, flying his flag from the ENTERPRISE was told what he was to do - sail up to the muzzle of the gun pointed at the American-Australian lifeline and blast that threat away. He was to raid the Southern Marshall and Northern Gilbert areas. It was a large order.

On 1 February, planes from the two carriers made their attacks and the first bomb was dropped on Japanese territory. The mission was a success. With insignificant cost of life and material, the 2 carrier fleets had destroyed an enemy naval base and naval airbase; sunk 73,000 tons of enemy ships; blasted two airfields, destroyed thirty-five Jap aircraft and, in doing all this, had successfully completed a laboratory experiment that was to develop into a new kind of war at sea; the task force erected on the aircraft carrier.

One result of the Marshall - Gilberts raid was a tremendous surge in morale of the United States and all the allies engaged in what was still a losing war.

On February 23rd Admiral Halsey's task force attacked Wake, launching planes from the ENTERPRISE. The raid was a success in every way.

Marcus Island, 975 miles from Japan, was attacked by Halsey's Task Force on February 28th.

During the time of Halsey's raids, a new task force, constructed around the carrier LEXINGTON, had gone to sea. On 20 February, while proceeding northward from Australia to attack a concentration of enemy shipping in Rabaul, the magnificent harbor on the northeastern tip of New Britain, this task force was attacked by nine twin-engine Jap bombers. Only one of the enemy bombers escaped damage. Soon after, all but two of the LEX's planes had either been taken aboard for refueling and rearming or were in pursuit of the first wave of enemy planes, a second wave of nine bombers bore down on the LEX. When the guns of one of the two jammed, only one American fighter, piloted by the now famous Lt. "Butch" O'Hare, stood between the enemy bombers and the task force. This individual action was characteristic of the pilots attached to carriers because they realized that the success or failure of a mission rested solely in their hands.

Admiral Brown, Captain Sherman and many others witnessed the brilliant performance of this first of the Navy's long line of aces as he attacked time and again. In four minutes O'Hare had shot down five enemy bombers, had scored hits on three others and was credited by Admiral Brown with saving the LEXINGTON.

Although the mission was considered by the Navy to be unsuccessful, it cost the Japs two four-engine flying boats and sixteen twin-engine bombers with all crews, at a cost to our force of two planes and one pilot.

On 10 March, 103 planes from the LEX and YORKTOWN flew inland over the 13,000 foot Owen Stanley Mountains to attack the enemy shipping at the bases of Lee and Salamua on Eastern New Guinea. Two Americans killed were our only losses in this operation, which cost the Japs heavily and checked them in their drive to occupy Port Moresby. This, then, marked the end of the Japs southward march and began the long process of attrition which made it so difficult for the Japs to service their far-flung and over-extended forces.

The Navy and, more particularly, her air arm, had turned the tide against the enemy who had toppled our land bases like cards and pushed our troops out of every one of our Pacific possessions except Midway.

18 April 1942 brought the cheering news to the people of the United States, sickened by the Army's recent surrender of Bataan. Army fliers, led by Lt. Col. Beoolittle had come out of nowhere from "Shangri-la" to bomb the Newland of Japan from Tokyo to Kobe. The world now knows that this famous flight of sixteen B-25's was launched from the Navy's newest carrier, the HORNET.