

at a time, therefore, their planes were launched from the carriers in small groups. Our fighters with radar assistance tackled each group as it came along and the results were as follows:

- (a) Enemy planes sighted - 545.
- (b) Enemy planes shot down - 402.
- (c) Our losses - 17 planes.
- (d) Our damage - The SOUTH DAKOTA was hit by one bomb but damage was minor. The WASP and BURNER HILL received minor shrapnel holes from near misses.
- (e) In so far as is known, no enemy planes reached either Guam or Tinian. It must be presumed that the planes which were not shot down went into the drink and therefore were lost.

On 20 June, our task groups headed west at high speed to find the enemy carriers and other ships which were now shorn of all air power. In the late afternoon, a scout located the enemy at extreme range to the west. In this ill fated venture of the Japs they lost: three carriers, one battleship, three cruisers, one tanker plus many damaged units. Our planes were forced to return to our carriers after dark and with a scant margin of safety in fuel, in fact many planes ran out of gas before they reached their carriers. We thought we were the first ships to turn on lights, during September 1945, but the Task Groups on the night of 20 June 1944 turned on everything they had to get their planes back. A large number of planes were lost due to the fact that they had to make water landings in the dark after running out of gas, and the loss of life was small. The area was scoured for days afterwards to locate survivors.

The first Battle of the Philippine Sea, broke the Japanese effort to reinforce the Marianas, and the occupation of these islands was completed with the constant protection and support of our fleet.

During the occupation of the Marianas, our fast carrier task force made several attacks on the airfields and defense installations in the Bonin and Volcano Islands south of Japan.

Following closely upon the capture of the Marianas, Fleet Admiral Nimitz's forces moved west and south to attack the Western Caroline Islands.

Admiral Halsey, Commander Third Fleet, commanded the operations in the Western Carolines. Additions to the Pacific Fleet from new construction - particularly several new CV's - made an even larger force available to strike the Western Carolines, and the "Nip" was being "whittled" down by each of our operations. Vice Admiral Mitscher was again in Command of the fast carrier force.

Prior to the landings in the Western Carolines, wide flung air and surface strikes were made to divert and destroy Japanese land and sea forces which might interfere. During the latter part of August 1944 and September 1944, Chichi Jima, Haha Jima, Iwo Jima, were bombed by the fast carrier forces planes and bombarded by our surface units. Concentrated attacks were also made on Palau where the first landings were to take place.

On the 9th and 10th of September 1944, our carrier planes attacked the Philippines and achieved tactical surprise. Enemy losses were 200 planes and 32 freighters.

Landings were made in the Eastern Carolines on 15 September and succeeded with the close and constant support of a vast naval force.

It was here that we suffered our first naval loss - the sinking of the DE SHELTON by an enemy sub - since December 1943.

In need of an anchorage for the large Pacific Fleet a combat team was sent on 21 September to occupy our famous little - no beer atoll, no women atoll, no nothing atoll - better known as Ulithi Atoll.