

# New York World-Telegram

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## Eagles' Nest, U.S.N.



### Flying at Sea Is Hazardous And Thrilling

Fourth of a series.

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Staff-Board Aviation Editor.

ABOARD USS HENNINGTON, Essex-Class Carrier.

Somewhere at Sea (Delayed).

—Far out at sea, gunners dashed to their positions. Pilots scrambled into Mac West's and parachute harness, threading their way out of Ready Rooms onto the catwalk alongside the flight deck.

The order to battle stations had

been given. Flashes in vari-colored jerseys streamed onto the flight deck. Red sweaters signified flight-ops. Yellow was for starters and traffic men. Plane handlers wore navy blue jeans.

Big elevators began coming up with fighters and bombers, propellers already whirling. A siren whistle signaled the rise or fall of each elevator.

Small, motorized plane-puffers spun along the deck at high speed, their drivers raising propellers and wing tips by inches, never hitting. Aviator TIM took two bombers, SDC's Helldiver dive-bombers and Bristol Buff fighters were pulled back in approximate lines at the stern end of the deck. As fighters swarmed up, yellow-

grouped traffic men motioned one after another forward, passing each plane along to the traffic man up ahead.

#### Plane Motor Falls.

At a starting point so near to the bow that inexperienced observers could not see how any plane could take to the air, each plane was halted. Blue-jacketed crew handlers placed wooden chocks around the wheels as the pilot revved up his engine. The right arm of the starter, standing in view of the pilot whirled rapidly to indicate engine power. As his arm dropped and pointed toward the bow, the chocks were removed, the pilot released his brakes and the plane, gaining speed at every yard, sped over the deck and soared out over the water. It turned as it reached one of the soaring destroyers.

The Captain kept the carrier turned into the wind which, plus the ship's speed, added greatly to the lifting power of the headwind. Moments later another took off—another and another.

A powerful SDC Helldiver dive-bomber, engine roaring, started up the flight deck of this carrier.

Halfway to the ship's bow the engine spluttered. It was too late for the pilot to attempt using the brakes for his momentum would have carried it tumbling over the deck's end, in destruction against the steep prize.

Nursing the throttle the pilot gained the best speed possible, but not enough.

While officers and men, with cloudburst hats, tried through glasses to see the plane, it got the bumper into the air. It took off, sank gracefully and slowly, starkly plunging into the sea.

#### Barely Clears Ship.

"He got his wheels up," shouted a lookout. And that had been an example of superquick thinking on the pilot's part. He also had the presence of mind to kick right rudder and swing the falling plane to the right of the bow. It cleared the ship by only a few feet as the carrier's stern Capt. J. H. Spear swung the bow away.

As the carrier sped by, the rear gunner lay slightly stunned in the rear cockpit. The pilot quickly climbed to the wing, grasped the gunner under the wings and swung him out of the seat. The gunner made a perfect dive into

the sea where he pulled the two valves on his Mac West life jacket, inflating it. Meantime, the pilot pulled out the plane's life raft, inflated it quickly and inflated his own Mac West.

Stepping into the life raft, he found the cars and rowed to the floating gunner nearby, row fast, recovered and even grinning. As the carrier's officers and crew watched breathlessly, he swam onto the raft and waved to the watchers.

Some 400 yards to the rear an escort destroyer speeded to the rescue and, without further incident, picked up the two fliers and their raft.

#### Crew Works as Team.

That was Episode I in a rescue at sea. Episode II came late this afternoon when the destroyer came alongside and a light line was shot across her bow. A heavy line then was pulled across, made fast and a boatman's chair was swung over one at a time, without touching the sea, the two rescued airmen were brought across to the carrier. In exchange, three hundred boxes of first aid cream and a movie reel for a special picture show went back to the destroyer while the rest observed. The pilot's only injury was a slight cut in the back of his head. The gunner's injuries also were superficial.

This type of experience, however, occurs rarely when compared

to the thousands of takeoffs and landings from the deck of any one carrier. The entire ship's crew works as a team and with the perfect co-ordination of the finest trained football squad. In any kind of an emergency each man knows what he has to do—and does it so quickly that it appears automatic.

This also is true of the pilots. Two Helldiver fighters, circling in to land. Both had been waved away by the alert landing signal officer, who stands on the catwalk on the port side of the stern. One call is low over the stern and started to climb. His pilot did not see the other Helldiver swinging in just above his tail.

With a ripping, tearing sound, the two fighters came together. The propeller of the top Helldiver cut through the other's tail surfaces and then ripped through its right wing close to the fuselage. Then the three swung apart, pilots gunned engines and they sped in a tight circle off the carrier's stern. Landing Signal Officer Lt. R. A. Bell waved the damaged fighter in and shrank the other plane to circle over again. Both pilots made the flight deck safely, saving themselves and the planes. A few more works installing a new propeller on one and patching up the other and they were again ready for action. Neither plane was hurt.

"And that," said a veteran pilot,

"is what I call flying."

Witnesses: Catalogued from the Carrier.

It's bustling here aboard the carrier.

A U. S. Navy Grumman Avenger swoops low over the ship and the plane's sister planes as the handlers scuffle about to get ready for a landing somewhere on sea.

U. S. Navy  
Bene Hennington

