

# New York World-Telegram

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## Eagles' Nest U.S.N.



A. P. Left  
Amen, right.

Deck scenes on a carrier. Left, crew men handle 600-pound bombs; above, plink walk to their planes for takeoff.

### How It Feels To Be Shot Into the Air

Lead of a Series.

By MAX B. COOK.

Storpe-Monard Aviation Editor.  
ABOARD USS BENNINGTON, Essex Class Carrier, Somewhere at Sea (Delayed). "Five o'clock, sir!"

It was that orderly again, and we slid out of our cot and suppressed a yell as our bare feet touched the cold steel floor of the admiral's cabin.

Minutes later we were feeding our way down ladders to the ward room, where sleep-eyed pilots were breakfasting. Ham and eggs, fruit juice, pancakes. If you wanted them, great toast, jam and coffee. Things were picking up.

We had asked to accompany early equipment. We wanted to know how it felt to be catapulted from the flight deck of a big carrier, fly over a wide expanse of water and to come in to a fast arrested landing. We had watched the fighters and bombers built take off from the deck and others catapulted from a launching deck. And we had looked at them from underneath as the forceful. We had stood at the stern in the hangar deck, watching them come in with flaps, wheels and landing hook down, and heard them as they thumped to a shockproof, almost instant stop, on the deck here.

#### Rickenbacker's Rescuer.

Breakfast over we strolled up to the second-deck flight deck. The torpedo squadron's ready room where the pilots are briefed.

The torpedo squadron's leader is Cmdr. W. F. Eadie, who entered international fame through his difficult rescue of Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker and his companions in the Pacific. Cmdr. Eadie, flying a small piston naval observation scout plane landed in rough seas and then leaved 48 miles to safety with Rick and another.

Cmdr. Eadie briefed the pilots on the coming day's flight as they waited early in nine-type adjustable seats much like those on the average airliner. At the end of the air-conditioned room was a fairly large screen on which indicated rates of the preceding 24 hours is shown around the clock. Plans can be enjoyed either from a photograph or traced in by hand.

Each seat is equipped with a seat-belt type of holding arrangement. And as each pilot was assigned to his specific job he noted the main deck with pencil.

#### Four Hours of Patroling.

They were to fly the dependable Avenger TB4D torpede bombers in wide arcs over assigned areas of many square miles, covering in all a complete circle about the carrier. Each was given his compass points and was told that he would have a "blinker" ray lighted as a score, but in case, in and adjoining, ready room, red-headed Lt. Cmdr. E. W. Hines of Chincoteague was briefing the fighter pilots for the same patrol and in another briefing was done by Cmdr. E. H. Brown Jr. as his ESG-2 fighter pilots had

a job of their own to do that day. After landing the entire area for about four hours the planes were to come in for a landing. Other bombers and fighters were to take off at 1:00.

As soon general quarters was sounded and every man assigned on the ship had to be at his post. The rumbling sound of bombers and fighters being hoisted to position and the roar of their engines stirred the huge carrier into battle-like activity.

Our patrol was to take off at 6:30 and the deck was swarmed that way rapidly. With the planes wearing pilot Mae West "ice jackets," in case of water landing, and filled with parachute harness, the evening flight began to take an ending.

Remembering ourselves with their coffee, the pilots picked up helmets and parachutes and started to dash to the flight deck, also, a winding wildcat catwalk.

We had met our pilot, Ensign J. P. Ross, of Gosport Point, Mich., a tall, slender young chap, he was assigned by Cmdr. Eadie as one of the best. Together we sought our way against the blast of innumerable propellers to the side of our Avenger.

#### Tarred Toe Swab.

In addition to a pilot, the TB4D carrier is a . . . gunner, who occupies the compartment near the tail of the plane, at the bottom of the fuselage. A rear turret gunner occupies the gun turret directly behind the pilot, facing the tail and atop the fuselage. The turret gunner's seat

was assigned to us, but getting into it with all of our 100 pounds was another matter.

Climbing through a side door into the tail gunner's position, we laboriously squirmed up through the small aperture meant for 110 pounds, bent and found our seats seated in a remarkably small turret. Directly in front of us and too, too close—was a metal gangway. Tightly strapped in, we had a 180-degree view of the entire horizon.

As the starter began whirling his hand and the engine revved up Pilot Ross spoke over the intercom: "Are you all set? No, 'Red, ready? Watch your self—'over."

"Ready," we shouted—and tarped to say "Roger."

Backing our heads over the ship's rigging, we pressed our forehead lightly against them. The starter's arm dropped and, with a soft we also saw the cook out over the bow of the carrier and watched swiftly toward the stern. Destroyer's smoke box, a speck and the carrier added into the distance.

Suddenly, off our portside, a speedy fighter pilot plane appeared from nowhere as our ear. Selecting a spot just off our left, we the pilot smiled and specially waved that overlying wave was okay. We sat back and relaxed.

Some 30 miles ahead of the carrier we encountered rapid squalls. After two hours of storm weather we circled back toward the ship, low over the flight deck and dropped a modified, weighted message advizing of the weather. Other bombers came in

from their flight areas with the same reports and with visibility almost zero we were ordered in.

#### A Sudden Stop.

The landing was even more than had been expected. Circling around to the left, Ensign Ross made his last turn over one of the receiving airframes, some 500 yards off the stern and swung in low, with wheels, flaps and landing hook down. With landing timing he caught the first cable on the flight deck with his landing hook and we almost stopped dead. Barred figures dashed in from the side, unlatched the cable, the engine roared and we flared up deck out of the legs of the next bomber, only seconds away.

Back in the rest room, who were sitting—and wondering, we found that "A. P. Eadie had made in a member of the "Select, Sacred and Regalimentary Society of Ship Residents" and "Seaver" to be proclaimed as an Honorable Bird-of-the-Feather."

What had been a real experience to us in only a part of the one-day existence of the Bennington and news of America's largest aircraft carrier fleet. In or out of battle zones they take to the air and land with regularity, searching the seas for the enemy, whether it be intelligence or carrier or submarines, and in all kinds of weather. It is seldom that these round-shouldered, well-trained fliers and tremendously efficient bombers and fighters meet with accidents on daily routine.

We left them with a wish to see what it would take whatever war's future hands with them. A twenty per cent of the pilots are trained carrier veterans. Some have served on carriers that were sunk. The others are so highly trained that one watching them take off, fly and land can find no flaws. Their leaders are all trained as daily routine.

We flew back over miles of sea with a great carrier power that the good Carrier Bennington will come through with colors flying—glorious landing.

As our thoughts in: Goodbye Japan!