

and enemy shipping. AA fire was intense over the various targets. One "Frank" was shot down on the return trip from the morning Kure strike on the 24th. There were several bogies during the day, but none came within firing range of the ship. There were also several bogies on the late afternoon of the 25th, and three enemy planes were shot down over the Task Force.

On 28 July our ship was in an area approximately 100 miles south of Shikoku, and our strikes were directed against Jap shipping targets including an Ise Class battleship. Three hits were also observed on an Amagi Class carrier moored to the dock at Mitsuko Jima, causing explosions and fires on the flight deck. Many airfields were also strafed during the operation. On 30 July, strikes were maintained against the Kobe-Nagoya area. Hangars were damaged, and planes destroyed on the ground. In addition, bombing and strafing attacks were made on revetment areas. A bogey was shot down 63 miles from our formation during the late afternoon.

From the second to the fourth of August, we were south of the refueling area to avoid a typhoon. After one experience, we were anxious to stay completely clear of them. We were successful too, and the following day were once more underway for additional offensives against Honshu. On 8 August we were in a position about 100 miles off the coast of northeast Honshu. Many bogies were reported in the morning, but none were shot down. Two bogies were splashed at a distance from the ship in the afternoon. During the 9th and 10th we launched strikes and sweeps against airfields and shipping in northern Honshu, flying support missions on the 9th for the bombardment of Kamaishi. On 13 August we were 150 miles east of Tokyo, striking in the Mito area. One bogey was reported nearby in the forenoon, many more were reported in the area, and during the afternoon planes from our ship downed a Jap "Judy". Bad weather dampened the full effect of the day's strikes, but factories, locomotives, airfields, warehouse areas, etc. were among the targets damaged or destroyed.

It was now more than 8 weeks since we had commenced this operation, and the constant routine had long since begun to wear on our nerves. Little did any of us dream that this was destined to be our last combat offensive, and our visions hardly dwelt on more than a mythical date in the future when the fanatical enemy would be beaten completely. Then things began to happen with a bang. Our equilibrium was disturbed-punctuated by a series of happenings which shook our roots-but wonderfully. News that Russia declared war against Japan reached early on the morning of 9 August. Almost immediately, the mind-staggering atomic bombs were let loose on the Nips' homeland. Surrender rumors began to be heard on radio news programs.

August 15 was a hectic day. After days of digesting and analyzing the "scuttlebutt" about the Jap surrender, we went up to our battle stations before dawn with the feeling that portentous things were imminent. Our hopes were justified. From the time, early in the morning, when our second strike launch was recalled, until we had the news in ALLNAV 194 that the Japs had officially accepted the Allies' surrender terms, we had been in a state of "nerves". However, we were still on the alert, as our Captain wanted us to be, and for good reasons. A Jap plane was shot down over a nearby Task Group late in the morning, and many other bogies were showing on our radar screen. The ship of course, stayed in an alert and ready condition and every man was tense. At 1301, Admiral Halsey broadcast news of the Jap surrender, and we got it over the ship's loudspeakers. A few minutes afterwards, a Kami-kaze was seen and immediately shot down by our air patrol. The tenseness kept up all the rest of the day, even though it was fated to be the last day of active combat for our ship. During the afternoon, all the ships in the Group broke out their battle flags signifying the cessation of hostilities. The BENNINGTON also broke the two star Admiral's Flag for our Admiral in command.

Except for the knowledge that the fighting part of the war is over, and the fact that we can now at least tangibly count on getting back home within a reasonable time, life aboard goes on uninterrupted. Pending final signing of the surrender terms by the Japs, we're maintaining usual readiness and are staying alerted for anything that may happen. We still remember Pearl Harbor. Our ship, together with other combatant units, hovers off the Empire coast and is providing needed air support for the occupation landings. Our job goes on, and while our hearts are more than ever back home with our loved ones, our efforts and immediate thinking are still with and for the Lady Bennington. We still have much to do, and are doing it with everything we've got.

*Your Daddy
Bowie*