

# BENNINGTON : Past... Present...

Officers and men of the USS BENNINGTON have been extending a "Welcome On Board" to friends and guests like yourself since the first USS BENNINGTON, a gunboat, was commissioned way back in 1891.

Your visit today gives us another opportunity to say "Welcome" and to tell you of the Big BENN's most formidable record as part of America's fighting fleet.

BENNINGTON's most recent assignment was a Western Pacific cruise lasting seven months. With the famed Seventh Fleet, BENNINGTON was ready in the South China Seas when the conflict in Laos nearly came to a boiling point early in 1961. During this period the ship took part in detailed exercises designed to perfect BENNINGTON's new mission--Anti Submarine Warfare. As an ASW aircraft carrier, BENNINGTON no longer carries jets as her fighting arms. Rather her mission is to form an offensive or defensive screen across the ocean to locate, identify and destroy enemy submarines. She does this with S2F's, AD5W's, and helicopters. Round-the-clock operations are often necessary to accomplish this mission.

In the Far East BENNINGTON visited such ports as Subic Bay and Manila in the Philippine Republic, Hong Kong, and Yokosuka, Japan. These visits gave the crew opportunities to meet the people of each country, sight-see, souvenir shop and relax. In May the Big BENN returned to the United States and her home port of San Diego.

The USS BENNINGTON has always had an en-

visible record. The first BENNINGTON, named for a Revolutionary War battle fought Aug. 16, 1777, near Bennington, Vt., is noted for taking Wake Island in January, 1899. The ship you are on today was commissioned at the New York Naval Shipyard Aug. 6, 1914. After a shakedown cruise off the North coast of South America, BENNINGTON pointed her bow west for the war in the Pacific. Her first heavy encounter with the enemy came Feb. 19, 1945, when its air group flew continuous beach-head support strikes over Iwo Jima, where invasion landings were in progress. Then on March 1 at Okinawa, BENNINGTON's air group attacked the Japanese ground installations while the ship itself attacked several medium sized ships.

Two days later, in an attack lasting three days, 57 enemy planes were destroyed and another 35 planes were counted as damaged by BENNINGTON aircraft. On the morning of March 23, a small convoy of three cargo ships and two destroyers was spotted heading for Okinawa by the Big BENN's planes. The entire convoy was sunk later that day.

The worst damage BENNINGTON suffered during wartime was not at the hands of the Japanese. The ship was struck by a typhoon at daybreak on June 5. High winds and waves flooded the forward passageways and living spaces; powerful seas buckled a 35-foot section of the flight deck, and both catapults were put out of commission. Despite the damage, BENNINGTON launched a fighter sweep over a Japanese airfield June 6 before heading