

Inklings (cont.)

them. The trains can be counted on to be either early or later ...but rarely on time!

There are many sights to see and top-notch tours are arranged for those interested. One spot to see is the zoo which has a real, live kangaroo from Australia on display. An interesting and entertaining tour, with variety to please everyone is the trip to Tijuana, Mexico...an exotic full day spent south of the border. Outstanding for those who like bull fights, tequila, et cetera. Another worthwhile tour is to near-by Las Vegas...the center of many fine R&R hotels providing comfortable accommodations for personnel starting at the economical price of \$35 per day (without meals).

In the food line you will easily find many outstanding places to delight your appetite. The better known restaurants will usually display a Duncan-Hines sign (similar to the Grade-A). You may not find rice and dried fish on too many menus but a full assortment of fine steaks, chops, frankfurters and hamburgers will give you a good idea of American food. The beer is comparatively weak and comes in small bottles. Sake is hard to find, better known is a similar liquid in color and power called gin.

So it all boils down to... 'There's no place like home,' and it's wonderful to be back!

WESTPAC (cont.)

part in a large-scale fleet training exercise known as Operation 'BEACON HILL' in the Philippine area during the last weeks of March and the beginning of April 1957. A joint Navy-Marine Corps amphibious assault, 'BEACON HILL' was performed with the full cooperation of the Republic of the Philippines and was the largest and most extensive fleet operation conducted in that area since WW II.

Before returning for a last look at Japan we dropped anchor once again at Buckner. RADW T.J. Hedding, Commander Carrier Division THREE. Enroute to Japan, Rear Admiral Pittsburgh Lee flew aboard to assume command of Carrier Division FIVE. The formal change of command ceremonies took place as we steamed up Tokyo Bay on April 6.

Moored once again at Piedmont Pier, the ship had a 12-day yard period that afforded the crew a final look at the now familiar sights and sounds of Japan. RADW Lee, who had spent the previous two years in Japan as Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific, invited a group of distinguished Japanese military and civilian officials on board for an afternoon tour of the ship.

We left Yokosuka on 18 April and set a course for Australia. After one day of flight operations we settled down for a leisurely cruise through the warm waters of the Philippine Sea, past such famous landmarks

of the Second World War as Iwo Jima, Guam, Saipan, Truk, Hougsville and Guadalcanal. Crossing the line was an all-hands evolution -- for some an all-hands-and-knees evolution -- as we paid due respect to King Neptune and his court.

The ship then entered the Coral Sea, scene of the air/sea engagement between the Japanese fleet and the combined U.S.-Australian fleets that halted the Japanese advance toward Australia and the South Pacific in 1942. A memorial service for the men who died in that battle took place as the ship passed over the spot where the aircraft carrier USS LEXINGTON was sunk at the end of the fighting.

For seven days BENNINGTON sailors were at the mercy of the friendly, hospitable Australian people as we participated in the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea. A firm bond between two free and independent nations was strengthened during days and nights of visits, receptions, parties and balls, both aboard ship and ashore. During the afternoon general visiting periods over 53,000 Sydneysites toured the ship.

As thousands of people crowded the pier at Garden Island to wave farewell, the ship left Sydney on May 7; heading for Pearl Harbor and home. Some final figures on the cruise were collected, showing a total of 10,821 air hours logged by ATG-181 whose planes made 4,382 arrested landings on our flight deck.

FROM

DIVISION

USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20)

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