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Air Group Reports Ready For Duty

It was a day to record in the ship's history and a bright clear morning when the first plane came out of the landing circle, steadied down in the groove astern and made a perfect landing.

In what seemed an amazing short time the entire group had followed and become shipborne. The Air Group Commander made the first landing, leading the entire group to their new ship. With veteran-like precision each squadron in turn filed into the landing circle and came aboard. As would happen many more times, the squadrons were led in by their commanders.

It did not take long for the Group to demonstrate its competence. It reported well trained, excellently equipped, ready for carrier duty. The ship's company was happy to have them. Their arrival meant that all were now ready to go, and the performance of the Group quickly demonstrated that what is to be done will be well done.

Officers and aircrewmembers of the Group included veterans of many engagements in the far-flung theaters of war. To external experiences as they walked down the decks in flight gear, they were not unlike pilots, gunners, radiomen. Not uncommon among them were those who received the Navy's highest decorations. There were those who

news stories. One squadron commander became widely known for a spectacular sea rescue. Another commander had returned to his carrier in the Battle of Santa Cruz to find it helpless, and later had landed on the ENTERPRISE, to continue the struggle there and at Guadalcanal. Others who had flown combat missions by the dozen. Many had come recently from months of flight training and some had come up with years of experience first as aircrewmembers, then as pilots.

Pilots, administrative officers, aircrewmembers, mechanics and group personnel did not take long to shakedown and fit into members of the team. Soon each one, whether hangar deck or flight deck, Ship or Group, knew and did his part and all was working smoothly as if it had happened many times before.

The Air Group was aboard. The fighting team was now complete and the BENNINGTON was ready to carry out its designed mission.

NOTE: Pictures in this column show activities of the Air Group.