

## New Air Group Comes Aboard

The second chapter of the BENNINGTON'S fighting history began recently with the arrival of a new air group to relieve Air Group 82.

Reformed from a famous veteran group in the latter part of 1944, the new group contains many combat experienced fliers. It is led by Commander H. B. Harden, USN. Graduated from the Academy in 1935, the new CAG saw service aboard the CINCUS flagship the USS PENNSYLVANIA. In February, 1937, he participated in the commissioning of the old USS YORKTOWN, serving as Assistant to the Exec. Finishing flight training at Pensacola in July, 1939, he joined Scouting Six on the USS ENTERPRISE, changing to LSO in 1940 and to Air Operations Officer in March, 1942. From December, 1941, to January, 1943, when he was ordered to the States to an Operational Training Command, he saw plenty of action. The ENTERPRISE was the only carrier to go all the way through these dark days of our Naval history, at times fighting the air war practically alone. She took the first Kamikaze hit of the war when a Jap suicide pilot left his wing tip aboard.

The skipper of the new VF Squadron is Lieut. Commander M. C. "Scogie" Hoffman. A veteran carrier pilot, he qualified on the USS LANGLEY, and flew on the USS SARATOGA and the old USS LEXINGTON. He saw combat action in the raids on the Marianas, Wake and the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. His chest hardware includes two DFC's and an Air Medal. He did duty as instructor in the States from March, 1944, until joining the squadron.

Among the forty percent of VF who are veterans are Lt.(jg) E. A. Frink with the DFC and Gold Star, Lt. (jg) E. W. Hansen, Lt.(jg) B. W. Campbell, and Lt.(jg) H. A. Wolf with the DFC. VF claims a record in the fact that all non-flying officers have had sufficient flight training to solo.

The most recent addition to the Air Group is the Bombing Fighting Squadron, formed the first of this year. The VBF skipper is Lieut. E. P. Ross, a veteran of Tarawa, Makin, the battle of the Philippine Sea and the Bonin Islands. He spent a year on our combat command the USS BELLEAU WOOD. He has the DFC, two Air Medals and the Purple Heart.

About one fourth of VBF pilots have had combat experience. Outstanding are Lt. E. L. Wright, Executive Officer, and Lt. J. W. Rowley who have the Navy Cross, and Lt. E. C. Tabler, holder of the DFC. VBF is unique in at least one way - it is one of the few, if not only, CV fighting squadron with all Naval Reserve pilots.

VF's leader is Lieut. Commander H. B. Harden, one of the saltiest pilots of the Group. In the Academy class of 1935, he served aboard the USS COLORADO for a year as Radio and Signal Officer. Service on two DD's followed, a year on the USS CUNNINGHAM as Assistant Gunner Officer, and a year and a half on the USS BARKER as Chief Engineer and Senior Watch Officer. Completing Naval Air training in April, 1943, he became an operational instructor until joining the squadron.

Among a quarter of the VB pilots who are veterans, two have outstanding citations. Lieut. (jg) L. J. Nelson and Lieut. (jg) L. Kuricks, Jr. received the Navy Cross for sinking a Jap carrier in June, 1944, in the battle of the Eastern Philippines.

## A Word From The New Skipper

I am most happy and proud to have been ordered to the command of the USS BENNINGTON. This ship has an excellent reputation as a real fighting team, and such a reputation can be obtained only by the best coordinated effort of all officers and men.

There are many indications that the BENNINGTON and its Air Group have contributed greatly to the war effort; that is killing Japs. It is my hope that an accelerated program by killing more Japs. The faster we kill them, the sooner the war will be over.

As a real-fighting ship, the BENNINGTON will do the job.

It can be done. We will do it.

E. L. Brown, Captain, USN  
Commanding

## Navy News Man Aboard

Chief Specialist F. E. White, designated by BuPers as an enlisted Naval Correspondent, has reported aboard for duty to write newspaper stories on the activities of individual members of the ship's crew. These stories will be sent to the man's home-town newspaper for publication.

It is anticipated that at least one story will be written about every man in the crew.



F. E. White Chief(X)

## Rotation Plan for Enlisted Men

Recently many questions have been asked about the Navy's policy for rotation of sea duty for enlisted personnel. The following information as received from ComAirMac and BuPers is written for your acquaintance:

In order to be eligible for rotation you must have served at least eighteen months outside the continental limits of the United States, unbroken by thirty days leave in the United States, or by the presence of your vessel or unit within a U. S. port for a period of ninety days or more.

For example: if you were aboard the BENNINGTON from 1, January, 1945, and provided you were not granted thirty days leave or spend ninety days in an Uncle Sugar port within the next few months, then you will be eligible for rotation on 30, June, 1946.

Leading the new VT Squadron is Lieut. E. E. Range. A graduate of the Academy in 1941, the VT Skipper had his first duty on the USS PALMER (DMS), seeing action in the African invasion of November, 1943. In January, 1943, he took flight training at Dallas, followed by additional time at Pensacola and Miami. After graduation he remained at Miami as instructor until given command of VT.

About half of the Torp Squadron pilots are veterans, with Lt. E. T. Mahoney, a member of the original Air Group and VT, a holder of the Navy Cross and Air Medal.

All hands in the BENNINGTON'S ships company give a hearty welcome aboard to our new air group and look forward to helping them write another glorious chapter of our history.