

Radio communications with key personnel in the docking crew enabled the move to be a smooth one, devoid of any incident.

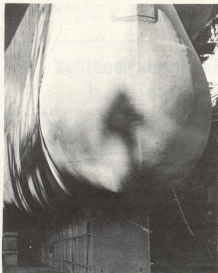
Yardworkers and teams of line-handling Navy men moved along the walkway at the top of the dock, periodically coiling their lines around bollards to tightly control the ship's progress.

Earlier, the giant dock cranes had assisted in the placement of concrete and wood block supports on the bottom of the drydock. Placement of the blocks was determined by the shipbuilder's plans of Bennington.

The tugs gently nudged the carrier back into the stall to a predetermined point where progress halted. Yardworkers then moved the caisson back into place and flooded its ballast tanks, causing it to sink...and to plug the entrance. Pumping operations were then started, and Benn began to settle as the water level fell. Shipwrights using surveyor's transits lined up the ship lengthwise over the blocks, still far below. Benn had a port list of about 1½ inches, so calls went over the ship's communications system urging all personnel on board to move



Yardworker George A. Vogel shoots on a coat of red lead primer.



...Or would you rather be a fish?

to the starboard side in an attempt to correct it. The list was still there, so it was decided to set the ship down about one inch to the left of center on the blocks to compensate and consequently to correct the list. Minor adjustments of the ship's position were made throughout the entire procedure. Finally, the call came over the yardworkers' communication system confirmed that the stern had touched down. Several minutes later the bow touched down. Then the crane began dropping the bows.

Nearly all the water was gone by 10:30 that night. It was low enough so that yardworkers could slosh out into the sandy floor and pluck captured fish from the drain gratings.

One yardworker recalled an incident that occurred in Drydock Two two years ago. The workers landed a seven-foot sturgeon which had swum in while the dock was flooded.

"We had put one carrier in Drydock One a couple years ago," the same man said. "When the water drained out, a lot of sailors went down onto the floor and began catching the stranded fish. We couldn't figure out what they were going to do with them until a little later when the sailors began throwing the fish at us from the flight deck."