

Excitement started to build up as we neared Sydney. The "wireless" was humming with the news of our arrival and we were wondering if our welcome would be as hearty as the "old timers" claimed it would. The Air Group took off the day before we got in to fly over the city in formation. Movie and still cameras were clicking aboard ship and in the air that day too, and we saw our 'Big Benn' on TV and in the newsreels when we went ashore.

Sydney was wonderful. Everyplace we went there were people anxious to show us a good time. The whole city smiled and held out its hand -- and you should have seen the crowds that came aboard for a look at the ship! Seventeen-thousand in one day -- during the seven days a total of 53,182 men, women and children. The way they took us into their homes, showed us around the town and even sprung for drinks was almost more than we could believe. We know now that there's at least one country in the world we'll never have to face in a scrap.

After a week of the most terrific hospitality we've seen in the last seven months we cast off. Hundreds of our new friends jammed the pier to wave goodbye and exchange cheers. We hated to leave and if it weren't for the fact that we were bound home there'd be many a long face aboard ship.

On the way to Pearl Harbor half of the crew woke up one morning to discover that the date was Sunday, May 12 while the rest of the men were smack in the middle of Saturday, May 11. At exactly midnight of May 11 the ship reached the International Date Line and we began to steam straight north, straddling the line all the way to the Equator. This made it Sunday on the port side and a second Saturday on the starboard (right) side, which had crossed the line. When we reached the Equator, I automatically became a "Golden Shellback", by entering both the domain of the Golden Dragon (Date Line) and the realm of Neptunus Rex (Equator).

Today we are in Pearl Harbor and the Continental Limits are only a hop and a skip. We'll pull into San Diego, flags flying and band playing, on the 22nd. It will be great to be back.