

And all the while the Big "B" roamed the Kamikazi Kampus giving out diplomas with a lavish hand. We weren't a bit particular. All any 'divine wind' specialist needed to graduate was the foolhardy lack of good judgment that brought him within range of our guns. A couple were more clever than the rest and got so close we could see the 'meatballs on their wings. One graduate potmarked the water along our port side, another snuck close enough to have his engine blow back up on our flight deck when he exploded in the water, before actually receiving their one way tickets to Nirvana. Because our Skipper believes in preparedness, because our gunners are that sharp-eyed, the Big "B" built for herself the

record of which we are so proud. You can be sure we won't relax. We'll be in there doing our best to help the heroic land-based Marines and Army pull the noose of Victory around the last Axis threat to world freedom and security.

Day in and day out we roam the Pacific. And, as you must know, there is plenty of it. Someone once figured out that the Pacific Ocean is two hundred fifty-eight (258) times as big as Texas, thirty-three (33) times as big as the whole United States. In fact, it measures some 68,634,000 square miles.

But we don't use too much of it any more. We almost crossed it. In fact, if we had gone much farther we would have been able to smell the joss sticks smouldering away in the Shinto Shrines of Hakkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Pearl Harbor used to be the front line. But it isn't anymore. With the Correspondent who wrote "My Beat is the Pacific" we can say the same thing. Up and down, back and forth, zigging and zagging we went for weeks without seeing even a sign of land, until one bright Saturday afternoon we came in sight of a little Jap-held Island and actually cruised within five miles of the beach. And you should have seen the land-lonesome sailors as they lined the flight deck and the open spaces along the hangar deck: The Bennington looked like an Excursion Boat heading out past Boston Light or the noon boat for Albany, as the boys feasted their eyes on the little pin point of Coral. The Chaplain and the A.C.I., officer collaborated on a thumb-nail sketch, the A.C.I., officer giving out with the 'dope' and the Chaplain repeating it over the 'bullhorn'; the name, it's position, it's use to the Japs etc., etc., etc. Seeing land after all those days was really a treat. But the land is for others, the sea for us. And cover it we do!

It isn't any wonder the Rose of Tokyo talks about us so much and tries so hard to second-guess the activity of this mighty Fast Carrier Task Force. It is a constant thorn in the Sun of Heaven's side and he never knows where the dern pesky thing will stick him next.

Just recently we heard that his fleet was getting brave and ventured out into the deep waters of the East China Sea. Better it should've stood someplace else! For UP went our heavy bombers, torpedo planes, covered by our swift, darting, keen-eyed fighters and DOWN went the famed Yamato, a couple of Cruisers and some Destroyers sent along to protect the pride of the Jap Navy. I can't tell you the real story of the Yamato because only the boys who flew that mission know the blood chilling, heart-pounding thrills they experienced as they nosed over their planes and dove into that bursting inferno of flak and tracers which that mighty floating arsenal threw at them. It isn't any wonder the Japs fear the Airmen of America. Despite all the hell and destruction they sent up, these pilots and air crewmen dive thru it and blow them into the land of their ancestors, instead. Their's is a tale of glory and we of the Big "B" bask in their reflected glory. May be someday you will have an opportunity to see their score card on the Captain's Bridge of this mighty floating air facility. We hope you do for more than one reason. The second one we'll let you guess at. It's only a two dollar question but it would mean the jackpot for us.

