

Don Lewan

“Commando”

U.S. Navy, Pacific , World War II

Aviation Machinist/ Mechanic 2/c

Donald L. Lewan

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
June 21, 2005**

**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



Niles Public Library
Veterans History Project Interview Transcript

Veteran: Donald L. Lewan

Rank: Aviation Machinist/ Mate 2/c

Branch of Service: United States Navy

Theater: Pacific

Interview Date: 6/21/2005, 1:30-3 p.m.

Place: Large Meeting Room B

Equipment: Panasonic Standard Cassette Transcriber

Interviewer/Transcriber: Neil O'Shea

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted with Mr. Donald L. Lewan. Mr. Lewan served in the United States Navy in the Pacific in World War II. This interview is taking place on Tuesday, June 21st, in the year 2005. The interview is being conducted in the auditorium at the Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois, and my name is Neil O'Shea. Mr. Lewan has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project, and here is his story. (Interviewer's words)

Tape Counter Mark – 008 “overcoming father's objections to entering service”

Mr. Lewan, how did you come, what were the circumstances of your entering service?

On December 7, 1941, I wanted to join, but my father would not let me join. I was only seventeen years old. I was sure that my dad was going to let me in because in World War I his mother had pulled him out twice because he was underage. And he joined, he was standing in line to join a third time, and he was talking to a guy in front of him. And the guy said, “Well, why don't we join as brothers?” So he joined as brothers. The next time Grandma heard from him he was in France, and there wasn't a damn thing she could do about it. I thought sure that my dad would sign the papers for me right away, but I guess dad understood the horrors of war, and tried to delay it as long as he could. Finally, it took a year of sitting at the dinner table and doing a little bit of squabbling back and forth. Finally, my mother said, “Sign the papers; he's going to go anyhow.” When I went at that time, the Navy only had six-year cruises. They didn't have four-year cruises or until the duration so I signed for six years. I went in on December, the 8th, 1942. I got out in December, 1948.

Had you finished high school?

No sir, I quit high school. In this situation with my dad, trying to get him to sign the papers, I had quit high school, and I took on any kind of job I could to make a buck. At home at night we went through the same routine until he finally said “okay, we'll sign the papers.” At that time the Navy would not take a four year enlistment so I went for six and I'm not sorry I did. I made a lot of friends. We still get together. We have our reunions on a yearly basis from the WASP, stood up to a couple of weddings from the guys and the whole bit so I still say once a Navy man, always a Navy man. You're never going to get out of it. You're going to be in the Navy the rest of your life.

Those six years remain a special time in your life, then, no regrets about high school and leaving home on certain terms with your Dad.

No, no, when I finally did get in, I know my dad was very proud of me. I know that. The only regret I have was that after the war I married my sweetheart, and I had to spend 14 months on Guam and at that time in '46 and '47 Guam was still in the throes of Japs running around, they still had a few hold-out Japanese guys, and they'd steal clothes off the clothesline, get in the chow line because they were starving. Stuff like that but that was only the regret I had, that I spent 14 months away from my bride. We are now married going on 60 years.

Beautiful, beautiful, quite a cruise.

Yes.

So where were you inducted then, at Fort Sheridan?

No, I went in downtown and I don't know the name of the building.

And, uh, I don't know if you want to put this in there, but the shades in the place that we were having our physical, the shades were maybe about a foot and half down below the top of the window and all of us guys were standing there in the nude, and the girls in the next building were standing at the windows looking down at us guys.

(Laughter)

My goodness!

Then there was, oh God, I don't know how many guys in the hall that they swore us in. And they separated all of the regular Navy guys and the inductees, they sent them home, and the regular Navy guys, they gave us a broom and we swept the hall and then they put us on the North Shore and we went to Great Lakes Naval Training Center. That's where I spent sleeping in a hammock the first two weeks, lot of broken noses and broken arms, learning to sleep in a hammock. About two weeks later they gave us cots or bunk beds

From there I was transferred over to Navy Pier for aviation machinist mate training, and I had the training there, then, they sent me for two or three weeks aboard the U.S.S. Wolverine on Lake Michigan for further training on flight deck procedures. From there I went to Boston, Mass. I can't think of the name of the building right now, and then I wasn't there maybe two days and they transferred me and about twenty other guys, down to the Fore River Shipyard where the ship was being constructed.

And this was the famous ship, the ...

This is the WASP.

We were right there when she was being constructed. Our duties there were varied. I can't tell why they had us there, but they had us there; there were twenty of us guys.

Anybody you knew from home?

No, no, Total strangers. You'd be surprised how quick you can make friends.
(Chuckle)

The ship was commissioned. We went down to Trinidad for a shake-down cruise. We came back from Trinidad, back to Boston, which was our home port. From there we went right through the canal, from the canal to Honolulu, Honolulu right out into it.

71 – "plank-owners" and Senator Percy

So you're on the WASP all this time and you're part of the first crew

Yes, they call us plank-owners. According to Navy tradition, you are entitled to one section of plank, you own one plank on that ship. And they give you a certificate; I've got the certificate. When they were going to scrap the ship in 1972, I called the local radio guy and told him my story, and he turned the thing over to Senator Percy at that time and Senator Percy turned it over to the powers-that-be. And one day in the mail I got my plank. It's only a small piece of it.

And is it wood?

Yes, it is wood. The flight deck was wood.

Oh, the flight deck on an aircraft carrier was wood?

Yes, now they're steel. When I received my plank, my family was all standing around, and I opened up the package and this beat-up old piece of wood from the deck. And I put it down on the floor and I stood on it and kind of wobbled a little bit and I said, "It's kind of nice being back on board again."

(Chuckles)

Basically that's it. From there it was the Canal Zone, San Diego, Pearl Harbor, we crossed the dateline and then from there on it was the Central Pacific.

86 – war zone

So when did your officers tell you that you were entering the war zone.

They don't tell you. No one had to tell you. You knew. All the routines changed. Everything became more serious with more details and training.

So while the Wasp is making its way across the Pacific after it come through the Canal Zone, was it carrying airplanes?

No, Air Group 14 was waiting for us in San Diego. On the way out to Pearl we qualified our pilots and Airedales, that is, flight deck personnel, to handle landings and crashes and such.

104 – a “plane captain”

So as an Aviation Machinist did you have to service every plane every day, or once a week or ...

No, no when I first came aboard as an AMM, because of my work in the shipyards, I was assigned to the Forward Aviation Gas Pump Room. This was a very lonely battle station well below the waterline and on top of several thousand gallons of High Test Aviation Gas. It was too far from the action, topside. I finagled my way into the V2F division and became a plane captain.

A plane captain is, some people talk about it like being a squire for a knight. You take care of your aircraft. You're assigned one aircraft, and you maintain that aircraft. You take care of that aircraft just like it was yours. You baby it. If she's hurt, you take care of her.

Would the same pilot fly the same plane?

No, no, you have different pilots flying different planes. The only time I had the same pilots was when I had one of the fighter photo planes. They put a camera under the seat of the plane, and then he would go in after the air strikes and take photographs, and he was not supposed to engage in any combat whatsoever, but I had a few of them that...

fired the guns?

Yeah. (Chuckle) All the aircraft had gun cameras, and a couple of times they'd come in and they'd say “Get the film out of the gun camera” so you knew what they were doing. I think I had three pilots. And then later I had the night fighters, but that only lasted a little while because they took one of the smaller carriers, and they made strictly night operation out of that.

128 – WASP's battle group in the “turkey shoot”

Did the Wasp move with a group of other ships around it across the..?

Constantly, constantly. They were a Battle Group, Task Force 38 and Task Force 58. It was the same group of ships. The only thing you traded off was the Admiral. We had Micher, Spruance and McCain. McCain, I thought was the #1 guy He was a salty little guy. In the early part of the war, we would go in at night. When I say going, it meant we were going to attack some island or cover for the invasion of some island. We covered many invasions and strikes against air fields.

On that night you knew you were going in because the whole ship would shake going in at full speed. We would launch aircraft early that day then haul ass our out there to get away from land-

based Japanese aircraft. As time wore on we had pretty much taken over air superiority. At the Marianas "Turkey Shoot" the Japs lost over 400 planes and some of their best pilots. This gave us the edge in the air that we never lost. This was covering the invasion of Saipan. Later we didn't have to do that. We could stay there for a day or so, and towards the end we just stayed right there. At that time there was not too much fear of enemy aircraft attacking.

That didn't mean that they didn't come out after us.

156 – helping the Canberra and Houston

So did you ever come under attack from land-based Japanese planes?

Oh yes, constantly. Anytime that we were in, why we were under attack. One time I think it was October, 1944, for three days we were under constant attack. One day the light cruiser, Canberra, had taken a torpedo. She was maybe a thousand yards in front of us, and she took a torpedo. It slowed her down in the water and so we stayed around to take care of her.

Was that an English or Australian ship?

No, she was an American and we stayed there. Then the next night the Houston was in the same position that the Canberra was in – now I might have these mixed up as far as the names of the ships. Then the Houston took it, a torpedo, so we had to stay around. From what the pilots were telling us they were leaving an oil slick that you could see for 40 miles. We had a long tail behind us so the Japanese didn't have trouble finding us. The best speed these two could get up to was about 8 knots. Because they were part of our flotilla, we stayed with them under constant attack for three days. We stayed with the two cruisers to get them back to Ulithi.

A month or so later we pulled into Ulithi, and the two cruisers were along side the repair ship Ajax, and going into Ulithi you had one channel that every ship had to go into because it's just a big lagoon. When we got alongside the cruisers, the guys cheered like you wouldn't believe. (PAUSE) It was exhilarating to know we had that comradeship – where, hey guys, we stayed and we helped and we did what we could and we got you home and that was it.

There were other times, another night attack, I remember, one night the New Jersey, the radar tracked this sucker, they tracked him all the way around then the New Jersey popped him with 8 rounds of 40mm and he blew up. It was late at night.

186 – darkness of sea at night

I don't know if you ever been at sea at night. If you go to the darkest place you can ever find, and that's what it's like at sea at night with no stars, no moon. It is black, and, we had cockpit covers that we had to put over the aircraft at night so that there was no reflection. We put that cover on it, and put our aircraft to bed at night and the next morning because it was still black outside when we went to get our aircraft. You went to where you thought your aircraft was, and you found out when it got a little lighter that you were working on someone else's aircraft because it was so dark.

You were a plane captain. What kind of a plane...

F6F Hellcat, in my mind it was the best fighter the U.S. Navy had. It was powered by a Pratt-Whitney engine. The aircraft could do just about anything you asked. She could carry 500 lb. bombs, six five-inch-rockets, three under each wing and a 160 gallon auxiliary tank that sometimes had napalm, a gelatin mixture, as substitute for carrying gasoline. The napalm would burn upon hitting the ground. These aircraft could take punishment. Some would come in so full of holes we would salvage what we could and deep-six the rest.

One of the nice things that they did do, they had these so-called Jeep carriers, and these little carriers carried nothing but replacement planes so if we lost an aircraft, we had another aircraft, of course the one that we got we had to do a lot of work on it to get it ship-shape again, and that's the way we operated.

212 – the Wasp takes a direct hit

Now Mr. Lewan you mentioned that the WASP took a hit?

Several Japanese dive-bombers slipped under our radar. One hit the Franklin and unfortunately for her the bomb exploded on the flight deck or hangar deck while she was fueling aircraft.

The bomb that hit us they say was 550 lb. armor-piercing bomb. It penetrated the flight deck, hangar deck and exploded between the 3rd and 4th decks. It gutted the whole interior of the ship, killing over 100 guys and I don't know how many wounded. The whole interior of the ship was completely destroyed.

We had just secured from General Quarters - battle stations, in the morning. Some of the guys were going down to chow. I was reading a Coronet magazine; it was similar to a Reader's Digest. My aircraft was spotted on a hangar deck, I was sitting in the cockpit of my aircraft, and one of my buddies, another plane captain came by, and he waggled the control surfaces and says “You gonna go down to chow? and I said “No, “let me finish this and then I'm gonna go down.” I never saw him again.

When the bomb hit, I jumped out of my aircraft, and the hangar deck at that location was about 4 solid inches of steel. All the way around that hole there was a glow; it was red hot. I jumped out of my aircraft, and when I got down, naturally there were explosives and fires all over the place. I ran over to the forward catapult sponson and I run into Jack Feeryman, and Jack Feeryman was up there with me, and he said “Commando, we gotta do something.” And I said I know what we gotta do. He said “Well ok, I'll pump the foam, the powder into the foam bucket, and you take the hose, a little two-inch hose, and we'll run it out there and I said “ok.” I ran out there with the hose, and we started pumping some of the foam. A couple of more explosions out there on the deck, and there was another guy coming from the other side, I never saw him, and about that

time, what they have is what they call a water curtain, a wall of water that just goes straight down like Niagara Falls, just goes straight down. And I said that "foam ain't gonna do a damn bit of good here," so what I did was to crawl back through the curtain and went back over to the catapult sponson, and I stayed there until everything calmed down and the fires were out. So then I got back to my aircraft, and I did an inspection on the aircraft and the whole bit. Naturally my parachute, they use a parachute for a seat, was soaking wet. They said, "Take your aircraft topside and check it out." I went topside and checked it all out, and the pilot came running over to me and said, "Is this aircraft ready to go?" And I said, "No, Sir; she needs a parachute, but other than that she's in good physical shape. He said, "Okay," so I ran down to the parachute loft and got a new parachute and gave it to him. I could see why he wanted to get the hell out of there.

The bomb went through my bunk compartment. After the fires were put out and there no more explosions, there was the walking wounded, guys with burns. Their arms and faces just completely out of it. You led them to the Aid Stations at back aft. They were just like little children wandering around. I remember when you got the guy down to the aid station, they gave you an apple. I don't know whose idea it was to give you an apple, but you didn't do it for the apple. You took this guy down; he was hurt; he didn't know where he was at. And an hour after we were hit, we were launching aircraft.

Later we were taking some of the guys that, they weren't bloody or anything, but they were out of it, taking them down to the aid station.

I talked to some of my shipmates that had the job of cleaning out after the hit.

These guys were very non-informative about it... you know when you have to pick human pieces. It's kind of ... not something that you want to do. We did have one guy that stepped into propeller, the way the aircraft are spotted on the deck. There very close as you can see, I'm looking for the picture. (looking at pictures).

In order to pump the water out of the hole from where the bomb hit, we had to build a cage to screen out so that that the pump would be down there. This was something that had to be done.

This date was ...?

The date was March 19, 1945, at 7:00 in the morning. I always remember that day. As you can see here, this was the hole that was made. (pointing to illustrations in the USS WASP history, see photos in Appendix).

And casualties that day were?

Over 100 and some dead, I don't know how many were injured. It was a mess.

They later let us go down to see what we could salvage from our lockers. The locker with my clothes in it, aboard ship you had a locker, the locker was maybe about 20 by 20 or something like that, and you had all your earthly possessions in there. The whole compartment was blown open. My locker door was blown open, and everything was scattered all over the place. The bunk that I had was standing on edge. My locker door and my bunk stood at an angle. I can still see

the body of one of my shipmates. His bunk was about 3 bunks from mine from mine. The body was still in his bunk.

We continued to operate with our Task Group. All of this action was taken off the coast of Kyushu. We were softening the airfields in preparation for the invasion of Okinawa. When we buried our dead that night, no "taps" was played. The sound might have given away our position.

When we got back to Ulithi, a Lt. Commander was sent to Pearl to make the preparation for our repairs. The scuttlebutt was they were going to patch us at Pearl and send us back out again. The officer came aboard. I walked up and asked, "Are we going to be patched here?" His reply was, "No, we're going stateside, son."

295 – "crazy things" like the sand crab initiation and the "sea bat"

But we did do crazy things. We crossed the equator, had the initiation which (Chuckle) is something everybody has to go through. They had a big tank built up on a flight deck, a big water tank, and they had a barber there and he'd cut your hair, and he had an assistant with a bucket of graphite grease, and he'd hit you in the face with the graphite grease, and he had a lever, and he'd just dump you over backwards into this tank of water. I remember Old Chief Parsons got a hold of me, they'd get a hold of you and dunk you back and forth until "what are you? what are you?" and I kept saying "shell back, shell back,") Then they throw you out of the tank into a big, long shillelagh line.

There were times, ... you had good times.

I remember one night - sleep was something that you dearly needed.

The guys woke me up one night, and they said "You gotta come down to the chow hall; they caught a sea bat!" "What the hell is a sea bat?" "You should see it. Its got iridescent green wings and iridescent orange eyes, and, oh man, they caught it up on the focsle." So you get out of the bunk, and you crawl down there in your skivvies, and down there in the middle of the chow hall they got this box, and guys keeping poking at it with a stick. And when you bend over to take a look at it, they got shillelagns. I remember Old Doc Blue; he come walking through. One thing you don't do is hit an officer in the Navy, and he went over to look at this thing and they swatted his butt, and he was bringing the pilots out one-by-one. He was waking them up one-by-one and bringing them down and showing them the sea bat. [Laughter] We did a lot of crazy things.

So he enjoyed it too.

Yeah, oh yeah. You did things. You did all kinds of crazy things. But you had to do something to break it up to relieve the

You were saying the routine ...

Yes, the monotony.

336- "bombs and beans" and Larry Martin's mail

When we'd provision ship, we'd go into Ulithi to provision ship, the biggest part of the time we would, the tankers would come along side while we were at sea, and then they'd fuel us right while we were moving at sea. And on one side would be the tanker and alongside the tanker on the other side would be a destroyer fueling up or a cruiser. And that way we were constantly on the move. We'd only be doing maybe 8 knots. We'd call it bombs and beans. And the nice thing about it was we would get mail call. We'd get our mail. At the beginning, and to this day I can't understand why, they would censor our mail because by the time the mail got home, we were somewhere else but they censored the mail, so we wouldn't write a letter until we heard the tanker was coming alongside and then we'd quick write one.

Did you get ever get V-mail in those days?

No, no. I've heard of V-mail, but we never had it. I could remember the 35th ship's reunion, and the guy sitting at the registration desk, and I said, "Lar-ry Mar-tin, I'll never forget you." I said. "You're the guy that wrote a letter to your sweetheart and mailed it to your wife." And his wife was sitting next to him, and she says "And I'll never let him forget it." (Laughter).

When we would write a letter, if the salutation was "Mary" and the address was "Josephine," the censor, the pilots were censoring the mail, they would catch it, and they'd put it up on the board, and you'd go to the ward room and correct it. Well evidently in one of these letters he slipped up and that's what he said.

(Laughter)

360 - "Wait For Me Mary"

Then we had a situation, where our chaplain, when we were in the lagoons, we had our own radio station, W-A-S-P. A guy that was a disc jockey, and we would get records and we could pick up the telephone, call down and make a request. He would play it. And I know when we got hit, Brandon was his name. He was going to get married when he got back stateside. And he went over to the submarine base over at the PX, and he bought all kinds of negligees and stuff, and when we got back to the ship, there on his bunk was a Dear John letter. And Brandon was our DJ and the girl he was going to marry, her name was Mary. And at that time "Wait for Me Mary" was a popular song so naturally we kept requesting "Wait for Me Mary."

Brutal

And we bought up just every record in Honolulu that said "Wait for Me Mary."

383 - the case of the honeydew melons and provisioning ship

But then when we would provision ships, I know that one time I went aboard a supply ship. This guy took three of us guys out, and they took us up to the locker and opened the locker and they had honeydew melon. We hadn't seen a melon in years, seemed like years anyhow. And he said,

“OK guys, take these over. He gave me a case, and that case slipped off my shoulder and it broke so we had to eat the melons that were there. Well, I ate honeydew melon and honeydew melon and honeydew melon. I took two of them, and I hid two of them under a tarp, and then I was trying to figure out how the heck I’m going to get them aboard ship because I gotta go on this LCVP there was no way I was going to do it so I got a couple of guys together and we all ate the honeydew melons. I finally got back to the ship, and the next morning one of the guys comes by, “Hey Commando, for breakfast you ain’t gonna believe what they got– honeydew melon! AAGH!

But while we were provisioning the ship like that, it was nothing to see a guy walking down the deck with a bag of carrots or a head of lettuce, eating it.

One night 54 cases of crushed pineapple – in a case there were six one-gallon cans of crushed pineapple to a case. 54 cases - not one case hit the storeroom. And the Old Chief “Belly-Robber” he was going to put all us on report. Now this was about 3 o’clock in the morning, and he’s got us all lined up on a hangar deck and he’s got 2 yeomen over there taking our names and he’s gonna put all us on report – the whole bit. Somebody said, “Did anybody wake up John?” John Roosevelt was our supply officer, and somebody went down and woke Johnny Roosevelt up and Johnny Roosevelt came up on the deck and he said Chief, “How long has it been since you went to sleep?” He said, I don’t know, about 15,16 hours.” And Johnny Roosevelt says, “I bet you’re tired. Why don’t you go below and hit the sack.” I don’t think the Chief was 2 steps down the ladder when Johnny says “Atten-tion. Dis-missed.” And that was the end of the 54 cases of crushed pineapple.

421- being creative with Spam

But these are the things that we did. I had a case, 48 cans of pork luncheon meat which was SPAM – the Navy called it pork luncheon meat. And I had it hidden down in the forward inner gas room. On Wednesdays they used to make fresh bread so we’d send a guy down to the bakery and he get a couple of loaves of fresh bread, we’d eat the spam. We got tired of eating it that way, and I got the bright idea, well, I got a clothes iron. So I took the clothes iron, and I turned it upside down in a pitcher, an aluminum pitcher. Took my sheath knife and sliced off a couple of pieces and fried it. We were frying it on the clothes iron. We were down in the forward inner gas room, that’s in officer’s country. This one night we were sitting around it like four guys sitting around a campfire. And this one night the Lieutenant Commander stuck his head down the hatch, and he looked, and he said, “I’ll be a son of a bitch. There ain’t nobody going to believe this. Ain’t nobody going to believe this!” And he went, and he never came back. If he had come back, we’d have offered him a sandwich. (Laughter)

Note: Mr. Lewan’s letter of 6/10/1996, to Carolyn Wyman about Spam on aboard the Wasp appears in the Appendix.

These are the things you remember, more than you remember the other things.

We had a locker on the flight deck, and all we had in that locker were our tie-down lines for our aircraft. We had to braid a loop in them. We had to braid it in ourselves so you took real good care of them - maybe once or twice in a combat situation where you had to take a knife and cut

them to get your aircraft out. You didn't want to do it all the time because it cost you a couple of hours making the damn loop in there again.

463 – working as an Aviation Machinist plane captain

A lot of the time during this period you enjoyed being a plane captain. Was that the same as being an Aviation Machinist?

Yes. Being a Plane Captain was the same as being an Aviation Mechanic. You took care of the aircraft. We worked on our aircraft constantly, repairing oil leaks, checking the engine or structures. You made sure that the aircraft was ready to go. You had checks that you had to pull. You pulled the cowling off the aircraft engines. The Pratt-Whitney engines were like the F6F Hellcat – very reliable.

If there was any battle damage, I had one of my fighters come in and the pilot didn't even know he was hit. It blew out his IFF. IFF is "Identification, Friend or Foe." I don't know the technical thing about it, but it shows up as a blip on a radar screen as a friendly. A 20mm shell came in right at the wing root and right up into the cockpit, and he didn't even know it. And we had self-sealing tanks so we were up all night replacing a wing tank. We had to take that tank which was put in when the aircraft is made. Now you got to take this tank and you got to fold it and bend it and tie it and wrap it so that you can get it into this space and when you get into that space, then you cut the ropes and it expands. We finished it in time to go to Battle Stations in the morning and chow.

That's the gas tank?

That's the gas tank so you can understand what you had to do with it. You wanted to sleep all the time. When you launched your aircraft, your aircraft might be gone maybe 2-3 hours and at that time you're going to sleep on the deck. You're going to find a place to sleep. You got to do something because as you can see on the one I showed you, "the Orders of the Day" (SEE Appendix)

521- the "Orders of the Day"

At ten minutes to four they call the Master of Arms and at 4:45 in the morning they call "all Hands." And then General Quarters will be sounded in 15 minutes. You always went to battle stations prior to sunrise and sunset. We were such a big silhouette that at sunset and sunrise, I mean, we were there. On this particular day, we went to General Quarters first. On a normal day we would go to chow first, which would be like two o'clock and then we'd go to battle stations. You can see that you were out a long time, up all the time. Sleep was the thing. But there was always somebody fooling around, something going on.

Did you get a few liberties or recreational periods, or got ashore?

343 – liberty in Guam, Ulithi and a break on Eniwotek

When Guam was supposed to be secured, they sent us on the beach on a beer party. They gave us 3 bottles of Iron City beer in green bottles, and the beer was as green as the bottles or you could get 3 cokes. The Marines were still chasing Japanese all over that island, and you put a bunch of drunken sailors out there, why you've got your hands full. Basically, this was the only liberty that we got, if you want to call it liberty.

And then in the lagoon, what they did in Ulithi, they would shut down the heads on the portside of the ship so you wouldn't discharge any human waste on the portside but you've got all of these ships in there, and you had a swimming party. I swung down off the rope into the water, and I came up with a piece of toilet paper wrapped around me and I got out of there, and I said, "That's enough for me. I am not swimming anymore."

(Chuckle)

I did spend a week on Eniwetok. At Eniwetok the Navy had a replacement pool for navy aircraft down at the end of the runway, and they had aircraft spotted all the way down the runway. Now on these islands you just had one runway in the direction of the wind. Along this runway they had Army aircraft there too. I guess one day a B-24 with a couple of 500 pound bombs didn't make it and landed in the middle of this depot. They took five mechanics from each carrier in the lagoon, and they sent us to Eniwetok. We spent a week there, checking out aircraft, "this one is good; that one is no good." That's what we did there.

And then, is it Mog mog or Kwajanin? I don't remember. McCain decided that he didn't like the SB2Cs; nobody did. They weren't worth a damn.

An SBC2 being a?

a dive bomber. So we were going to take the pilots of the SB2cs and take them on the island and break them in on the Hellcats. The pilots would land, come back and they had to taxi back to take off again. Well, we sit on the wing of this aircraft and we would direct them around the tents to get them back to the end of ... so they could take off again. Then they would take off, come back and go through the same routine so we would do that for almost a week, breaking these guys in, to change them from being SBC2 pilots to being Hellcat pilots.

Side Two

002 - "C" rations and "K" rations

Mr. Lewan, you were saying how you appreciated the change in food.

Yes, the guys on the islands were basically eating what they called "C" ration which was a combination, like a corned beef with peas and carrots in it and the whole bit. We liked it, but the guys on the islands, like anything else, they were full of it. They also had a concoction that you would pour into an aluminum cup which was supposed to be like a lemonade and when you drank it, it felt like it pulled all of the fillings out of your teeth. I mean it was, I don't want to tell

you the name that we called it but it was “tiger something”! (Chuckle) They couldn’t understand why we would want to eat it, but boy we ate it.

Later on the board on ship we had the sandwiches and the soup, now they came up later with just a “K” ration. A “K” ration consisted of nothing but, you could get a can of scrambled eggs in jellied form – cold, pressed dried fruit bar, a little coffee if you could find a can to make it in – You could live on it. It is not something that you wanted to make a steady diet of.

The “C” rations weren’t peculiar to a particular branch of service?

No, no, no. I don’t know what the Army called it. They probably called it what everybody else called it (Chuckle).

They were both nutritionally equivalent? They were just different?

Yeah, yeah. The difference being that one was warm and the other one was cold. You’d open a can of say bacon and eggs, and it was just a little round can, and you’d open up, and it looked like well, how would you say, like a small, yellow, rubber hockey puck.

K rations were cold.

Yes, the thing that I liked about the “K” ration was the pressed, dried fruit bar. I used to trade anything for that, because it was delicious. You had the cracker in there, and other than that, you survived. I joined the Navy I weighed 124 lbs, and I came out 6 years later, and I weighed 132 – so I put on a lot of weight. I talked to a lot of guys; they went in at 132 and came out at 172, just depending on what you want to eat and how often you want to eat it.

I’m wondering now as the war in the Pacific approaches conclusion, is the WASP getting closer and closer to

Yes, now we’re going in and we’re staying. We’re not running in and running out, running in and running out. We’re in the area, and the very fact that we are staying we are coming under more constant attack, midnight attack. We’re chasing the Jap fleet and we launched aircraft late in the afternoon, knowing full well that these guys were at the extreme range of their gas. They went out; we launched about a third of our aircraft.

How many would that have been?

Well, we had a 105 aircraft on board. That night these guys were coming back, and they said turn on the lights so they can find us. If the Japanese would had a submarine out there, they could have sunk half of us. But we were lit up like a Christmas tree so that we could find these pilots. We had aircraft coming in from every carrier, in other words, you didn’t look for your own carrier. We had guys coming in; we had crashes on deck where, just get the pilot out, and get the crew out and then dump it. Make room, because you got another guy coming in. We never had SBDS, a little dive-bomber, the wings never folded on it, and sitting up in the cockpit we’d brought it down on the hangar deck and I’m looking all over to fold the wings up, and the guys

are shaking this aircraft, and looking for it, and finally somebody come by and said "The wings don't fold on that sucker." (Laughter) We would have folded them one way or the other. The next morning, then we sorted out all the aircraft but we lost about a half of the third we sent out, but we got the pilots back. They were scattered all over the Pacific. We just went back in there and picked them up.

58 – last kamikaze

Did you have to sail into Tokyo Bay?

No, prior to the end of the war, when the last kamikaze came down on us on August, the 9th, 1945.

Where were you?

We were off of Kyushu, and I don't believe this guy was a real (kamikaze) because when he hit the water, he didn't explode. I came out on deck. I heard machine gunfire. And I saw two aircraft up there, and one firing at the other one. And I thought "What the hell is the F6 firing at that Corsair for?" When he did a wing over, I saw the "meatballs," and I knew he wasn't one of ours. Our guns opened up and when they opened up, the F6 pulled away. I don't know what the pilot's name was. He pulled away; this Jap was already flaming, and I looked up and I could see him coming down, and I wanted to run but I didn't know where to run, because I had seen guys run into it. You don't know what to think. By that time a 5" shell hit him and blew him up, and he showered the whole flight deck with debris. He veered off just enough to fall off on the starboard side of the ship, and then all of these pieces come fluttering down, and I ran over and I picked up a piece, I had a piece of his navigational chart board. I picked it up and "Well, let me have a piece," "let me have a piece," and everybody took a piece so when I finished up, I had just a little square. But the whole damn war then must have fought for souvenirs.

Today out in Southern California where the Hornet is there is a museum ...

Yes, in one of the compartments. Aboard ship you call it a compartment. As a civilian you would call it a room so it is one room that is set side for mementoes for the WASP because we were so-called sister ships. There's always been a WASP or a Hornet in the U.S. Navy

They give us one compartment on the Hornet USS Hornet Aircraft Carrier museum at Alameda Point in California. The hull badge that I had, and all the information that I had I sent down to them and I even sent them the piece of chart board that I had. And just recently in our newspaper somebody was asking questions about the last days of that pilot, that kamikaze - the Japanese guy, and I said "yeah," I gave them the information that I had I walked on the deck and that I had seen it. I saw him coming down, and there wasn't a hell of a lot I could do about it. This is on August 9th, the war is over, supposedly.

88 – typhoon

When the time came to get into Tokyo Bay, we got caught in the typhoon, and we lost 30 feet of flight deck. It just folded over. When you're 60 feet above the water, that's 6 stories above the water, and you see the waves breaking over the top; they're high! The way the ship was constructed, now they've changed the construction of the ships now, but when she went up, she would come down and would slam down, she'd keep perpetually slamming down, and as a result, it would just fold the deck over so we lost 30 feet of flight deck, that was the second time we lost it. There was no way they were going to take us into Tokyo Bay as a cripple so they sent us back to Pearl. We went to Pearl. Pearl patched us. They sent us to the Canal; we went through the Canal right back to Boston. We were one of the first ships back, and I left the ship in Bayonne, New Jersey, because I was an Airedale, and at that time they were preparing her for "a magic carpet" to take the guys back from Europe so that was the last time I saw her.

So you left the WASP in Bayonne, New Jersey but she sailed on for years after ...

Oh yes, all the way through, until 1972, and then they scrapped her in '72.

105- Navy service after the WASP and marriage

Then when I left the ship, they sent me down to Opa Loca, Florida, and I worked on the old DC-3s down in Opa Loca, Florida, and then they were looking for a volunteer. This guy had two kids. He was 2nd Class Mechanic, and he had to go to Guam. He was going to pay me to take his place. "I am single, what-the-hell." He was going to pay me. I said, "Ah, forget it. I'll go." That way I went in his place, and he stayed in the states with his family. When I got to Guam, the Chief over there asked me, "Do you know anything about automobiles"? I said, "I've been working on automobiles since I was 8 years old." He said, "Well, I need somebody to work in the squadron garage. You work in the squadron garage for me until I can get a Chief Petty Officer to take your place, and I'll send you back to our R5D school in Moffat, California so I said, "fine." They got a Chief Petty Officer to take my place, and they sent me down to Moffat. I went down to Moffat and went to school there. My mother and father and she were out there visiting, and while we were all there, I said "Why, don't we get married?" She said, "ok." The war was over now, and everything was fine. I graduated from R5D school, then I sent a cablegram to Guam for 30 days leave. They granted me 30 days leave. I came home; we got married, and I went back to Guam for 14 months. (Chuckle)

You had known your wife from back ...

Oh, yes. Our first date was February 17th. That was my first day out of boot camp. That's why we always remember it. We went roller-skating.

That was a bit of challenge. The war is over, and you're still completing your service requirement for another...

two years, almost three years. When I completed my tour of duty on Guam, then they sent me to Patuxent River, Maryland, which is an air base that you hardly hear anything of.

Still going is it?

Oh, yes, it's big. I was discharged from there. The fact that I was discharged from Washington, DC meant they paid me \$38 and some odd cents for train fare because I enlisted in Chicago and they paid me the train fare to go back. I still have the telegram that I sent my wife, and I said, "Honey, I'm out. I'm coming home."

139 – finding a civilian job

So the fact that you were married, how difficult was it to transition into civilian life after being in the war and having a common purpose?

I went in and I had just turned 18. I went in it free and easy. Now for the next almost five years Uncle Sam is taking care of me, if that's what you want to call "taking care of me." (Chuckle) Now I come out; I'm a married man, and I have a son. I am 24 years old. I went to the airlines to see if I could get a job at the airlines. This is almost three years after the war is over. All of the guys that were trained in the military in aviation mechanics, they're all gone – they've got their jobs. Yeah, I can get a job at American Airlines, move my family to San Francisco. I'll get a buck sixty an hour. It just ain't gonna work. The only thing that I could do was go out and get a job. I worked as a truck mechanic. I went to work in a bakery, maintaining packaging machinery. I drove a bus, I drove street car in the city of Chicago. From there I educated myself a little bit and went to sales. I sold cold drawn steel, and then, believe it or not, I went to work for a Japanese company. My brother had started a chain company, roller chain – similar to conveyor chains, bicycle chains. He said, "Well, come on and work with me" so I worked with him for 15 years, selling Japanese chain. He retired from that job. I retired from that job at 65. He had started a business because of the rapport he had with the Japanese. He started a Japanese bearing business, selling Japanese bearings. Naturally, I went to work for him so I worked for another 15 years so I'm 80 years old going on 81 years old, and I just retired last January.

The only thing I regret is that I didn't save enough money to give me a half-way decent pension. The money that I was able to accumulate and save, this is the money that I am living on plus the Social Security. That's the way things go, but other than that, why I don't think I had any problem adjusting.

My big problem was adjusting to family life; I'll say that. That was a big step because, let's face it, you're not married when you're in there. But as far as that went I had no problem acclimating to it. Maybe it was my heritage, maybe being Polish, that makes you want to, I know my wife wanted me to take time out and get myself adjusted, I said "I got a family to feed." I'm not going to depend on her father or my father to feed us.

187 – medals received

Mr. Lewan, the medals you received during the war, could you read those into the record for us?

Well, I got the Good Conduct Medal!

You seemed to have, on all fronts!

I even got my name on the back of it. And I got the World War II Victory Medal and the American Theater, and the Asiatic Pacific – that one is kind of mute, because they say there's 5 battles that we were in and basically there's 9 battle stars on the ribbons and also you get the Philippine Liberation with 2 battle stars. I don't know if there combining the 9 battle stars. I always call them "glory bars," I wore them, I think, twice, and then the Navy Unit Citation. In the papers there is a notice on the operations for which the Battle Stars are authorized. (See APPENDIX for "Operations for which Battle Stars Are Authorized.")

You brought an interesting book with you ...

Yes, it takes the WASP from the very beginning, from the shipyard, from the commissioning, all the way through to the last time I saw her. And there are photographs of all the departments.

And there's an organization based on the WASP which continues to this day?

Yes, to this very day. This here is the WASP Spirit. It's a quarterly publication of the U.S.S. Wasp, the CV, the CVA, the CVFs, 18 and incorporated. It was founded in 1943 and for all who served aboard any of the WASPS. It is a non-profit organization, licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. If anybody wants any further information on it, I can get a hold of Vince at P.O. Box 248 in Woburn, Massachusetts. That's Mr. Politio and the zip on that is 01801-0248. It'll cost you \$15 to belong to it, and you'll get a quarterly letter, and it keeps bringing everybody up-to-date as to what's going on with the shipmates and with the ships, our reunions. We have a reunion every year, and it brings back a lot of memories.

Thank you for sharing so many of them with us this afternoon. Thank you for a very generous and detailed and colorful interview.

246 – Mr. Lewan's nickname "Commando"

I can remember one instance. We had a gentleman aboard ship. In the military, I don't care where you're at; they have a habit of hanging a tag on you. Unbeknownst to me when I was going through Navy Pier for mechanics school, they had an obstacle course, and I used to love to run that obstacle course. There were 300 guys in the company, and what I would do is, I would work my way up to the front of the company and I'd run that thing and then I'd go and wait in the back, and then I'd run it again so I'd actually run it twice a day – so they tagged me with "Commando."

And that's how I got that name. I'll get a phone call every now and then, "Hey Commando, is that you"? We had another guy. His name is Gordon. I never knew what his first name was; he was always "Flash."

I can remember we were loading ammunition. They had a 1600 pound armor-piercing bomb. We had it on these little skids, a "coming" a little truck-like (roller). You were supposed to put a strap across to hold them down. We never did. A guy was bringing this thing in, and they had a little ramp over the cone. You know how a hatch is on board on ship? It doesn't go down all the way to the deck so they got a little ramp to go over that little thing. This guy comes up with this "coming," and he hits the hatch with the coming and when he hits it, this 1600 pound bomb –

now they aren't armed so you don't have to worry about them, slides across the deck, and Flash Gordon is standing over on that side of the deck. He sees this thing coming. He closes his eyes and puts his fingers in his ears and raises his knee like, "ooh." Every time I see him. I tell him "Hey, Flash, I remember the time; I'll never forget it – because if that sucker went off, he'd never have known it!

I can leave this book (about the WASP) with you and you can take a look through it. It would give you an idea.

Yes, I might be able to scan a couple of pictures out of there.

The one thing that I did take out (Pause) was a list of the guys that were killed.

When you come in to pick up your transcript and copy to do the proofing, I can give you the book back to you at that time.

Sounds good.

And if there's anything more you want to add to the interview at that point, it's ok. I think you've done a very good job today. Thank you very much.

It's hard to believe that it was sixty years ago that all this happened. We still get together but there's fewer and fewer of us.

It's great that we were getting an account down here.

The biggest thing there was monotony, monotony and sleep.

I can sleep real good now, and my wife always says I sleep too much.

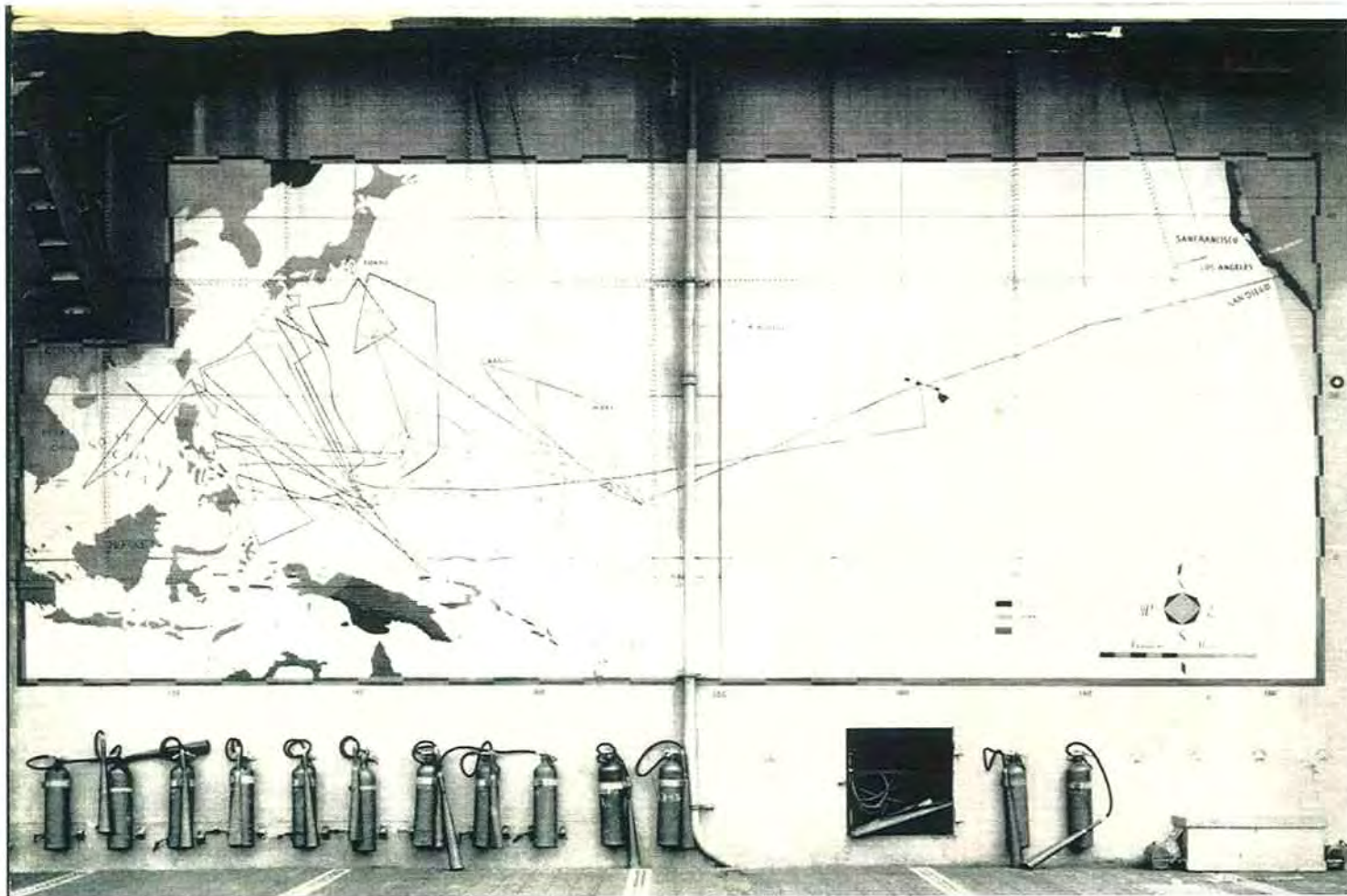
On that note (chuckle), thank you Mr. Lewan.

Thank you.

Interviewer's Note:

4 pages of illustrative photographs, scanned from the USS Wasp follow as well as a photocopy of a photograph of "the Last Kamikaze."

Photocopies of Navy documents, personal letter and articles provided by Don Lewan can be found in the Appendix which follows the photographs.



Map aboard the U.S.S. WASP, marking the movement of the aircraft carrier during the war in the Pacific.

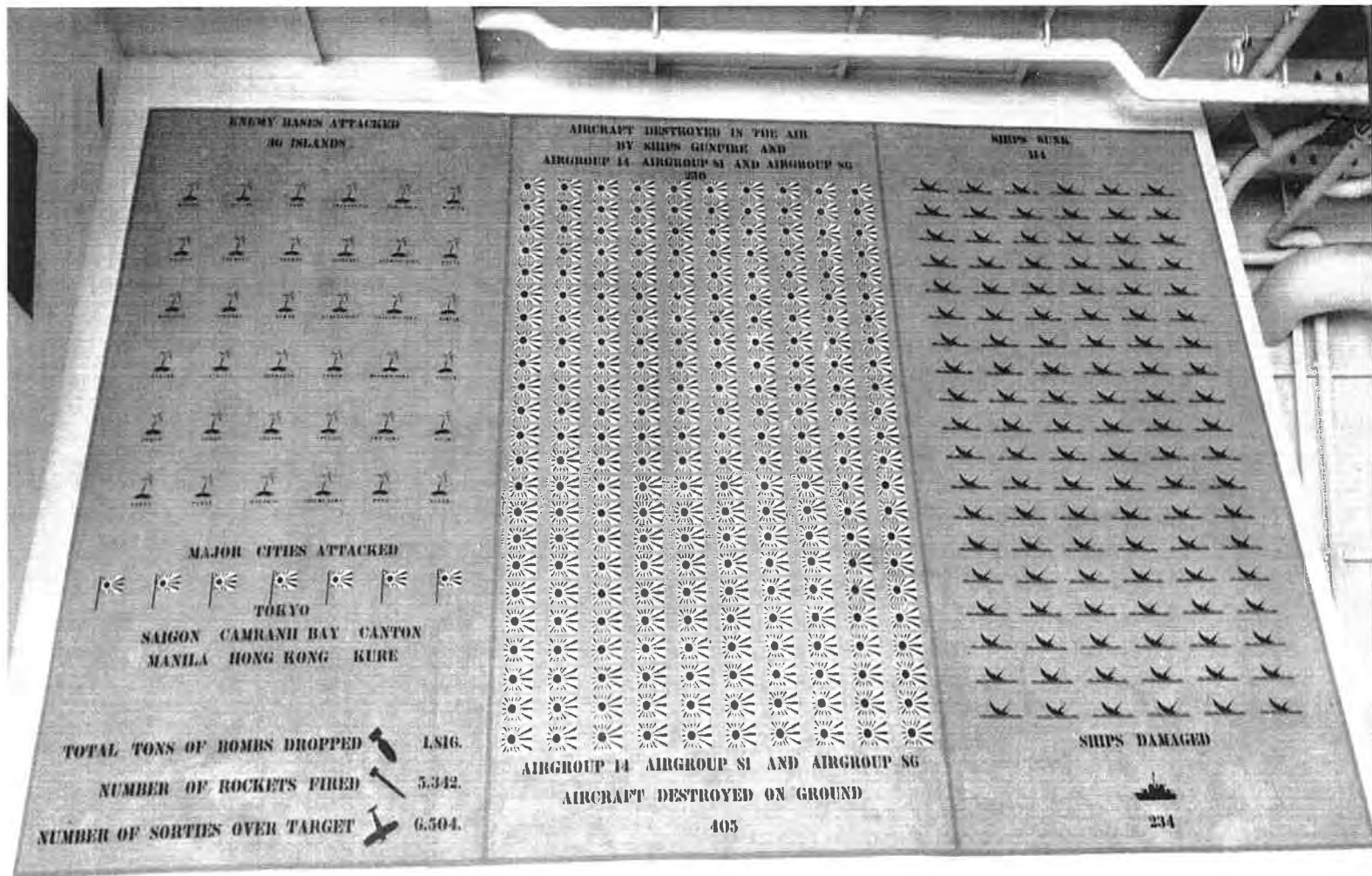
“5 ½ times around the world”

Scan taken from page in the USS WASP, the World War II ship's history, provided by Don Lewan.



Aftermath of direct hit by Japanese bomber on the
U.S.S. WASP, March 19, 1945.

Scan of page from the USS WASP , its World World II history,
provided by Don Lewan.



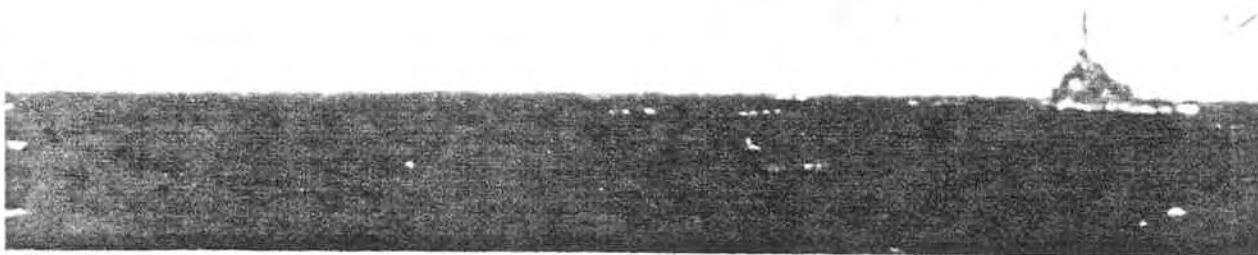
Actions against the enemy as tallied on board the aircraft carrier, U.S.S. WASP.

Scan taken from page in the USS Wasp, the ship's World War II history, provided by Don Lewan.



Last kamikaze of World War II downed by WASP pilots
on August 9, 1945.

Scan taken from page in the USS Wasp, the ship's World War II history,
provided by Don Lewan.



LAST KAMIKAZE DIVE ON WASP, AUG. 9, 1945

APPENDIX

Photocopies of Navy documents and articles provided by Don Lewan appear in the following order:

“Standard Statement of Service” for Donald Luke Lewan

“Plan of the Day, U.S.S. WASP, Wednesday, 21 March 1945”

“Spam letter” sent by Don Lewan to Carolyn Wyman,
June 10, 1996

“Carrier WASP Stars As Pacific Drama Closes”
by Ben White, Y1c, USNR, Naval Correspondent

“Navy Unit Commendation Awarded the U.S.S. Wasp

“Operations for which Battle Stars are Authorized” for United
States Ship “WASP,” issued 1 August 1945

“USS Wasp (LHD-1) Continues ‘Stinging’ Tradition”
by Art Giberson

STANDARD STATEMENT OF SERVICE

NAVPERS-566 (NEW 3-47)

PCR

REPORT PERS-82-7

1. SHIP OR STATION U.S. Naval Receiving Station				2. PLACE OF DISCHARGE Washington, D.C.		3. DATE OF DISCHARGE 12- -48	
4. SERVICE No.		5. SURNAME (First) LEWAN, (Middle) Donald Luke				6. CSC No. None	
7. RATING AD2	8. JOB CODE No. 52552-04	9. DESIGNATOR None	10. LIMITED DUTY SYMBOL Qual.	11. BRANCH AND CLASS OF SERVICE USN		12. GCT MARK 60	
13. DATE OF BIRTH 9-13-24		14. PLACE OF BIRTH Chicago, Illinois		15. PLACE OF ENLISTMENT Chicago, Illinois		16. RECOMMENDED FOR REENLISTMENT? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
17. CITIZENSHIP U.S.		18. LEGAL RESIDENCE N. Kilbourn Ave., Chicago, Illinois.					

SERVICE SUMMARY	19. ENLISTED IN RATING OF AS		20. ENLISTED FOR (Years) Six (6)		(A) DATE(S) 12-14-42 12-13-48	(B) YEARS 06	(C) MONTHS 00	(D) DAYS 00	
	21. EXTENDED ENLISTMENT		22. OTHER SERVICE (Act. 6-16-42)		/ / / /				
	23. If enlistment NOT extended, or extended only 1 year, net time served in enlistment and extension, if any		24. If enlistment extended 2 or more years, net time served in extension only		12-14-42 12-8-48		05	11	25
	25. SKMC		26. PERMISSION TO MAKE UP TIME LOST (Check one)		27. AOL		/ / / /		
	<input type="checkbox"/> WAS GRANTED		<input type="checkbox"/> WAS NOT GRANTED		28. AWOL		/ / / /		
	29. NPDI		30. NET SERVICE COMPLETED IN ENLISTMENT JUST ENDED AND EXTENSION, IF ANY		12-14-42 12-8-48		05	11	25
	UPON DATE OF DISCHARGE		31. TOTAL NET NAVAL SERVICE COMPLETED (including block 30)		12-14-42 12-8-48		05	11	25
		32. TOTAL NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES (block 31 plus block 22)		12-14-42 12-8-48		05	11	25	
33. DEPENDENCY STATUS WDC		34. CHARACTER OF DISCHARGE Honorable		35. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR DISCHARGE CG, Art. D-9104(4)(e) BuPers Manual.					
36. TRAINING COURSES COMPLETED AND MARKS ASSIGNED None									

37. SERVICE SCHOOLS COMPLETED AND MARKS ASSIGNED
Aviation Machinist 85.

38. MEDALS AWARDED AND/OR RIBBONS AUTHORIZED
Good Conduct Medal, World War II-Victory, Asiatic Pacific, American Theater, Philippine Liberation.

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF SERVICE

39. CHANGE ABBR.	40. SHIP OR STATION	41. DATE	42. RATING	43. NAVY JOB CODE No.	44. No. OF MONTHS DUTY COMPLETED		45. Proficiency in rating	46. CONDUCT	47. DAYS' LEAVE
					SEA	SHORE			
ENOB	NRS, Chicago, Illinois.	12-14-42	AS						
TRAN	NTS; Great Lakes, Ill.	12-14-42	"					4.0	
RSTD	" " " "	12-14-42	"						
CRA	" " " "	2-16-43	S2						
TRAN	NTS, Chicago, Ill.	3-11-43	"			3		4.0	
RSTD	" " " "	3-11-43	"						
CRA	" " " "	9-2-43	AM43						

49. FINGERPRINT

(Continue on reverse, if necessary, over signature of officer authorized to sign)



RIGHT INDEX
(If possible, otherwise state finger)

CERTIFIED TO BE CORRECT

(Signature of Alex Furkin)
ALEX FURKIN CMC5LK USN N
Discharge and Official Record Office

51. DATE 12-8-48

(Signature of officer authorized to sign)

NOTICE: Retain this form. It provides a record of your Naval service and will serve as basis for payment of entitlement allowance, crediting longevity pay, etc. Upon reenlistment it will establish an official record for 16-51052-2

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF SERVICE (Cont.)

39. CHANGE ABDR.	40. SHIP OR STATION	41. DATE	42. RATING	43. NAVY JOB CODE No.	44. No. OF MONTHS DUTY COMPLETED		46. Proficiency in rating	47. CON- DUCT	48. DAYS' LEAVE
					44. SEA	45. SHORE			
TRAN	USS WOLVERINE	9-4-43	AMM3	-	-	66	-	4.0	-
RSTD	" "	9-4-43	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRAN	USS WASP	9-18-43	"	-	-	-	-	4.0	-
RDUT	" "	11-24-43	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
MKS	" "	12-31-43	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
MKS	" "	6-30-44	"	-	-	-	2.5	4.0	-
MKS	" "	12-31-44	"	-	-	-	3.5	4.0	-
MKS	" "	6-30-45	"	-	-	-	3.6	4.0	-
CRA	" "	9-1-45	AMM2	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRAN	R.S. Brooklyn, N.Y.	11-12-45	"	-	26	-	3.6	4.0	24
RFFA	" " " "	11-14-45	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRAN	VR-7	12-14-45	"	-	-	-	-	4.0	-
RDUT	" "	12-16-45	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
MKS	" "	12-31-45	"	-	-	-	3.5	4.0	-
TRAN	Air Trans Ron 10	5-9-46	"	-	-	5	3.8	4.0	-
RDUT	" " " "	5-18-46	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
MKS	" " " "	6-30-46	"	-	-	-	3.8	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	9-30-46	"	-	-	-	3.5	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	12-31-46	"	-	-	-	3.8	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	3-31-47	"	-	-	-	3.7	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	6-30-47	"	-	-	-	3.7	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	9-30-47	"	-	-	-	3.8	4.0	-
TRAN	Air Trans Ron ONE	12-8-47	"	-	18	-	3.8	4.0	-
RDUT	" " " "	2-24-48	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
CRNC	" " " "	4-2-48	AD2	-	-	-	-	-	-
MKS	" " " "	6-30-48	"	-	-	-	3.8	4.0	-
MKS	" " " "	9-30-48	"	-	-	-	3.9	4.0	-
TRAN	R.S. Washington, D.C.	12-6-48	"	-	10	-	3.9	4.0	85
RSEP	" " " "	12-6-48	"	-	-	-	-	-	-
DISC	" " " "	12-8-48	"	-	-	-	-	4.0	14

CERTIFIED TO BE CORRECT

[Signature]
 By direction of *[Signature]*

Discharge (Signature, rank, and title of officer authorized to sign)
 By direction

RESTRICTED

U.S.S. WASP

PLAN OF THE DAY

WEDNESDAY - 21 MARCH 1945

CARRY OUT ROUTINE

WORKING DIVISION - 1st.

Air Operations in accordance with Air Department Plan-of-the-Day.

- 0350 - Call Master-at-Arms Force.
- 0445 - Call all hands.
- 0450 - Pass word "Gen Qtrs. will be sounded in 15 minutes.
- 0505 - (about) General Quarters. Respot Deck.
- 0605 - (about) Secure from General Quarters.
- 0615 - Breakfast for cooks, bakers, messmen, and laundrymen.
- 0620 - Breakfast for officers. Mess gear for breakfast will be sounded 15 minutes after secure from General Quarters.
- 0800 - Post Plan-of-the-Day. Pipe sweepers. Turn to. Four men from the 1st div. report to the Provision Issue Room.
- 1030 - Dinner for cooks, bakers, messmen, laundrymen, band, and barbers.
- 1130 - Dinner for crew. *Lunch for officers.
- 1300 - Pipe sweepers. Turn to.
- 1430 - Two men from the 1st div. report to the Duty Censor in the Wardroom.
- 1600 - Supper for cooks, bakers, messmen, and laundrymen.
- 1630 - Pipe sweepers.
- 1700 - Supper for crew.
- 1800 - *Dinner for officers. Pipe sweepers.
*pass word.

-NOTES-

1. The following despatches were received on the 19th & 20th of March:

FROM: CTG 58.1 (Rear Admiral CLARK)
TO: CTF 58.
INFO: U.S.S. WASP.

STRONGLY COMMEND WASP AS DESERVING OF HIGHEST PRAISE IN CARRYING ON THE FIGHT WITH SCARCELY NO INTERRUPTION IN SPITE OF BATTLE DAMAGE INCURRED XXXX

FROM: CTG 58.1 (Rear Admiral CLARK)
TO: U.S.S. WASP

AM VERY PROUD OF THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF YOUR FINE SHIP IN CARRYING ON DESPITE HEAVY DAMAGE AND WITH HARDLY AN INTERRUPTION CMA EVEN THOUGH SUFFERING GRIEVOUS LOSS OF PERSONNEL X MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY FOR YOUR LOSS AND TO ALL HANDS MY PROFOUND ADMIRATION FOR CONTINUING THE BATTLE UNDER TREMENDOUS ODDS X ADMIRAL CLARK XXXX 191321

FROM: U.S.S. MOORE.
TO: U.S.S. WASP.

CAPTAIN AND CREW EXPRESS HIGHEST ADMIRATION TO A GREAT CARRIER XX

2. The following despatch was received 20 March 1945:

FROM: U.S.S. BELLEAU WOOD.
TO: U.S.S. WASP.

OUR SYMPATHY THAT YOU WERE HIT X CONGRATULATIONS ON EFFECTIVE WAY YOU NULLIFIED OTHER ATTACKS AND HIGHEST ADMIRATION FOR GETTING BACK IN FIGHTING CONDITION SO QUICKLY X FROM HERE THE FIRE BELOW LOOKED BAD X MY CREW THINKS YOUR CREW MUST BE TOPS XXXX 192247

3. Due to flooding of the storeroom containing office supplies there is a serious shortage of mimeograph paper. Accordingly, the press news will be limited to fewer copies until an adequate supply of paper can be obtained. All other mimeograph work will be reduced to the barest minimum. The Plan-of-the-Day will be limited to 75 copies. In this connection attention is directed to Article 103-4(b) Wasp Organization Book.
Daily Press News will be broadcast over the RBO System, station W-A-S-P, at 1145 and at 1745 daily if circumstances permit.

4. At 0800 and at 1200 - 75 hand working party, 7 PO.s and 1 CEM report to First Lieutenant.

W.J. Slattery
W.J. SLATTERY,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Executive Officer.

AIR DEPARTMENT PLAN OF THE DAY

21 March 1945

- 0505 (About) General Quarters. Respot Deck.
0605 (About) Sunrise. Secure from General Quarters.
0740 Pilots of DCAI #2 and TF SNASP #2 manready rooms.
(L)0840 LAUNCH: *DCAI #2 - 12VF Normal (2 standby)
TF SNASP #2 - 4 VFB Normal (2 standby)
*VFB86 Keep 8 pilots in condition 11 during patrol period.
(R)1205 RECOVER: DCAI #2 (12VF) and TF SNASP #2 (4VFB).

- NOTES: (1) VFB86 have 3 pilots ready from General Quarters on to go via DD to obtain replacements. Pilots should have extension cords and chutes.
(2) Be prepared to spot for fueling, if ordered.

E.K. Shanahan
E.K. SHANAHAN,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Air Officer.

June 10, 1996

Carolyn Wyman
15 Crecent St.
Middletown, CO 06457

Dear Miss Wyman,

Many of us guys that spent our youth in the service are now reliving some of the good times?? we had back in the good ole days - like S.O.S. for breakfast, beans on Wednesday, and good ole Spam (pork lunchmeat). That's what it said on the olive drab cans!

I think many civilians have the impression that war was a constant battle. Sure there were days of battles, but there were more dull days of just boredom. The repetition of daily routine. At times like these you would do anything to break the tension of day to day existence.

Your next concern was food - again the repetition of daily routine. Every so often we would pull into a lagoon to resupply the ship. At that time all hands would put to - put to get any type of food you could find to stash away while you were at sea.

It came to be that I stashed away a case of - you guessed it - Spam (pork lunchmeat). We hid it in the forward inert gas room - "officer's country" down on the third deck. While at sea we would go down to the galley and borrow some bread to go with our Spam. However, I was getting really tired of eating Spam this way, and got the idea of frying the Spam. By inverting my clothes iron in a pitcher we could fry two slices of Spam at a time.

One night while we were sitting around a campfire frying our Spam, a full commander stuck his head down the hatch, took one look and said "I'll be a S.O.B. ain't nobody will believe this" and left. We never saw him again.

Just thought you would like to hear the story of fried Spam and the way it helped a few guys through a rough time.

CARRIER WASP STARS AS PACIFIC DRAMA CLOSES
By Ben White, Ylc, USNR: Naval Correspondent

Aboard the USS WASP, in the Pacific, off Tokyo--- As the curtain was rung down on the drama of the Pacific War, the aircraft carrier WASP, star of many scenes in the spectacle, again hove into the spotlight with a couple of famous "lasts"--- it was a WASP pilot that shot down the last Jap plane of the War, on August 15, and it was the Old Stinger that the reeling Nips made the target of their last, fanatical Kamikaze attack.

However, a fighting ship to the very end, the WASP'S gunners and a Hellcat pilot from the carrier combined to send the Kamikaze into the sea, its Rising Sun sinking, symbolically, beneath the blue Pacific, hard by the flat top's starboard bow.

The Kamikaze was first spotted by Lieut. Armind T. "Holy Joe" Holderman, USNR: of 160 Covina St., Long Beach, Calif., about 7,000 feet above the carrier.

Just as the suicide bomber nosed over for its death run, Lieut. Holderman roared after it, pouring lead into its left wing. A trail of smoke and flame filtered out of the Jap "Grace," as it screamed down at the WASP. The carrier's gunners took over then, and, when it appeared that the Kamikaze must certainly plow into the ship, their deadly firing told and his right wing disintegrated, causing him to veer sharply and narrowly miss the WASP's island structure.

On the afternoon of August 15, after the fleet had been told that the war with Japan was over, the still-cautious command sent up a Combat Air Patrol. Two pilots from Fighter Squadron Eighty-Six, the WASP's Air Group, were pinch hitting for two of their colleagues. Flying at about 25,000 feet, some 40 miles from the formation, Lieutenant (jg) Mahlon Jack Morrison, USNR, of Everett, Washington, spotted a Jap plane and Tally-Hoed it to his teammate, Lieut. Comdr. Cleo J. Dobson, USNR, of Coyle, Okla.

Dobson, the Squadron Commander, couldn't see the Nip from his position so he instructed Morrison to make a run and he would follow him.

Morrison pushed over and tore down on the Jap. His bursts entered the Judy's right wing and fuselage and smoke slithered from the right side of the ship. Dobson, making his run directly astern of the Jap, pumped his tracers into the left wing and fuselage and instantly, flame enveloped the enemy. The Judy rolled to the right and started its death spin. He plummeted into the sea and the two WASP pilots, according to Dobson, "circled the scene, watching the Son of Heaven go to Hell."

In reply address not the signer of this letter, but Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington 25, D. C.

Refer to No.

Pers-10

NAVY DEPARTMENT
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



11 FEB 1947

To: Mr. Vincent James Pastore, Ex-MM2, 711 49 31, USNR sjp
16 Summit Ave.
Roslyn, New York

Subject: Navy Unit Commendation awarded the U.S.S. Wasp.

1. On 11 June 1946, the Secretary of the Navy awarded the U.S.S. Wasp and her attached Air Groups the Navy Unit Commendation for outstanding heroism displayed by her crew in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War Area during the periods indicated below:

May 19 to 23, 1944, Wake, Marcus; June 11 to July 27, 1944, Marianas, Bonins, Palau; September 6 to November 6, 1944, Philippines, Palau, Yap, Ryukyus, Formosa, Luzon: AG-14 (VF-14, VB-14, VT-14, Part of VFN-77).

November 14 to 19, 1944, Luzon; December 14 to 16, 1944, Luzon: AG-81 (VF-81, VB-81, VT-81).

January 3 to 22, 1945, Philippines, Formosa, China Sea, Ryukyus: AG-81 (VF-81, VT-81).

February 16 to March 1, 1945, Japan, Bonins, Ryukyus: AG-81 (VF-81, VT-81, VMF-216, VMF-217).

March 18 to 21, 1945, Japan; July 18 to August 15, 1945, Japan: AG-86 (VF-86, VBF-86, VB-86, VT-86).

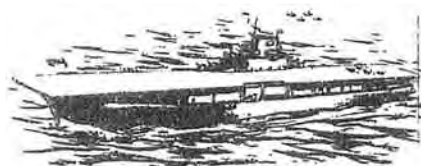
~~2. By virtue of your service in the MSP or attached Air Groups during one or more of the periods mentioned above, you are hereby authorized to wear as part of your uniform a Navy Unit Commendation ribbon, one of which is transmitted herewith.~~

3. This authorization has been made a part of your official record in the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

By direction of Chief of Naval Personnel:


Assistant to Director,
Navy Department

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



CV-18/P15

UNITED STATES SHIP WASP

1 AUG 1945

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S NOTICE #45-45.

Subject: Operations for which Battle Stars are Authorized.

1. The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, has recently authorized the wearing of operation and engagement stars on the Asiatic-Pacific area service ribbon as shown below: (Only those operations in which the Wasp participated are listed):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (1) MARIANAS OPERATION: | 10 June - 27 August 1944 |
| (Only one star for participation in one or more of the following:) | |
| Neutralization of Japanese Bases in the Bonins, Marianas and Western Pacific | 10 June - 27 August 1944 |
| Capture & Occupation of Saipan | 11 June - 10 August 1944 |
| Battle of Philippine Sea | 19 - 20 June 1944 |
| Third Bonins Raid | 3 - 4 July 1944 |
| Capture & Occupation of Guam | 12 July - 15 August 1944 |
| Palau, Yap, Ulithi Raid | 25 - 27 July 1944 |
| (2) WESTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS OPERATION: | 31 August - 14 October 1944 |
| (Only one star for participation in one or more of the following:) | |
| Capture & Occupation of the Southern Palau Islands | 6 September - 14 October 1944 |
| Assaults on the Philippine Islands | 10 October - 16 December 1944 |
| (3) LEYTE OPERATION: | 10 October - 16 December 1944 |
| (Only one star for participation in one or more of the following:) | |
| Battle for Leyte Gulf | 24 - 26 October 1944 |
| Third Fleet Supporting Operations | |
| Okinawa Attack | 10 October 1944 |
| Northern Luzon & Formosa Attacks | 11 - 14 October 1944 |
| Luzon Attacks | 15, 17, 19 October 1944 |
| | 5 - 6, 13 - 14, 19 - 25 November 1944 |
| | 14 - 16 December 1944 |
| Visayas Attacks | 20 - 21 October 1944 |
| | 11 November 1944 |

- | | |
|---|--|
| (4) LUZON OPERATION:
(Only one star for participation in one or more of the following:
Third Fleet Supporting Operations
Luzon Attacks
Formosa Attacks
China Coast Attacks | 12 December 1944 - (date to be announced later)

6 - 7 January 1945
3 - 4, 9, 15, 21
January 1945
12, 16 January 1945 |
| (5) IWO JIMA OPERATION:
(Only one star for participation in one or more of the following:
Assault & Occupation of Iwo Jima
Fifth Fleet Raids against Honshu and the Nansei Shoto | 15 February - 16 March 1945

15 February - 16 March 1945

15 February - 16 March 1945 |

2. Personnel who have served aboard the U.S.S. WASP continuously since its original entry in the combat area are thus authorized to wear five stars (bronze) on the Asiatic-Pacific area service ribbon. Personnel who reported aboard the Wasp at later dates are authorized stars only for those operations in which they actually participated.

3. Proper entries will be made in service records of all personnel indicating those operations for which they are authorized to wear bronze stars.

4. In addition to the above, personnel who served aboard the U.S.S. WASP prior to 25 January 1945, and participated in the liberation of the Philippine Islands, are authorized to wear the Philippine Liberation Bar (ribbon). Personnel who were serving on board prior to 1 December 1944 are authorized to wear two stars on the bar. Do not confuse the Philippine Liberation Bar with the Philippine Defense Bar; you are not entitled to the Philippine Defense Bar unless you participated in action against the enemy in 1941 during the defense of the islands.

5. This notice may be mailed home.

J. C. Clifton
J. C. CLIFTON,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Executive Officer.

USS Wasp (LHD-1) continues 'stinging' tradition

by Art Giberson

Some 300 former crew members of the USS Wasp (CV-18) and their families will gather in Mobile this weekend for a reunion. The World War II vintage carrier sailed under three different designations during its active service—CV, CVA and CVS.

In addition to paying homage to their former ship, the veteran Wasp sailors will make a side trip to Ingalls Shipyard at Pascagoula, Miss., for the christening of the eighth naval vessel to bear the name Wasp. The newest Wasp, LHD-1 is the first of a new class of amphibious assault ships.

The first Wasp was an

eight-gun schooner in the Continental Navy before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Wasp numbers two and three sported 18 guns each and were built in 1806 and 1813 respectively. Wasp number four was an iron side-wheel steamer formerly named Emma Henry purchased in 1865. Number five was a steel-hulled steam yacht purchased in 1898. Wasp number six was commissioned in 1940 and sunk by a Japanese submarine on Sept. 15, 1942. The most famous "stinger" was Wasp number seven, CV-18, commissioned Nov. 24, 1943.

Within six months of her commissioning, the carrier was revenging her namesake with devastating attacks on the Japanese-held Marcus and Wake Islands. The "sting" of the Wasp was next felt during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. On June 19, 1944, the Wasp and her embarked air group downed



U.S. Navy photo

The USS Wasp (CV-18) as she looked at the time of her commissioning in 1943. CV-18 replaced an earlier Wasp sunk by a Japanese submarine on Sept. 15, 1942.

a total of 17 enemy aircraft. The sting of the Wasp had become a painful thorn in the side of the Japanese Navy.

After dealing out punishment for more than a year, the sting of the Wasp was briefly curtailed on March 19, 1945, when a lone Japanese plane darted out of the clouds and dropped a 500-pound bomb which exploded in the ship's galley. The resulting damage was enough to cause the battle-weary

veteran to return to Pearl Harbor and eventually the states for repairs.

Repairs completed, the carrier returned to the Pacific in time to receive credit for shooting down the last Japanese plane of the war on Aug. 7, 1945.

This weekend, these and other Wasp battles will be relived as the Wasp Stingers gather in Mobile for their annual reunion.



Ingalls Shipyard photo

The USS Wasp (LHD-1), the Navy's newest amphibious assault ship, passes the USS Jacinto (CG-56) en route to an outfitting berth at Ingalls Shipyard. Both ships are being built by the Pascagoula, Miss., shipyard.