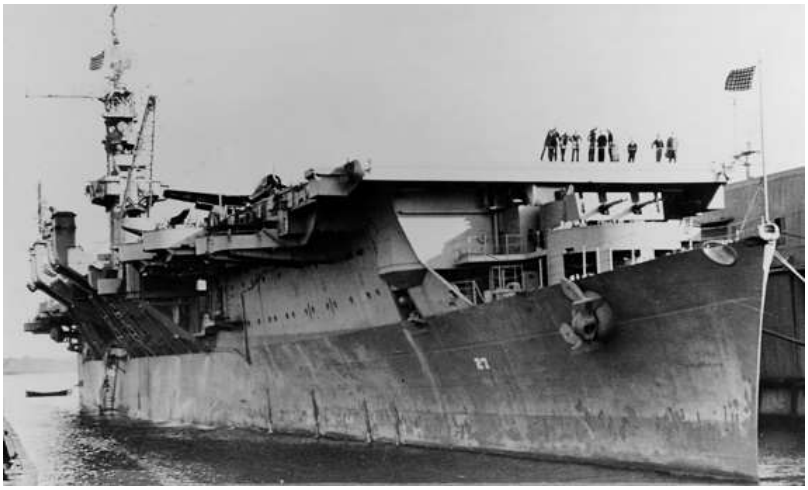
Preface

Turning into wind now,
Ship goes full ahead.
All eyes on the island,
Light's remaining red.
Up pops the Flag, your leader's gone!
Pour on the coal, the thrust so strong!
Off brakes, you navy pilot,
Get up where you belong.

—From the poem *Flight of Angels* by Bill Babbitt.[1]

Photo Preface-1



Light fleet carrier USS *Langley* (CVL-27) berthed in port, location and date unknown. This starboard bow aspect clearly shows that she, and her eight *Independence*-class sister ships, laid down in the same builder's yard, had flight decks affixed atop their cruiser hulls during construction.
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 67579

The sailors who served aboard the US Navy and Royal Navy light fleet carriers, and pilots and aircrews of their embarked Air Groups, undoubtedly shared many common challenges associated with assignment to rapidly-built, no frills vessels, produced only as a result of the exigencies of World War II.

The nine USN 622-foot *Independence*-class light fleet carriers—and their slightly larger Royal Navy cousins, ten 698-foot *Colossus*-class ships—were intended to serve as an intermediate step between the expensive, full-size fleet aircraft carriers and less costly but limited-capability escort carriers. Only four of the *Colossus*-class—*Vengeance*, *Venerable*, *Colossus*, and *Glory*—entered service before the end of the war, and none participated in combat operations. Their eventual duty in the Pacific Theater was set in motion, on 15 January 1945, when the four ships were allocated to the British Pacific Fleet as the 11th Aircraft Carrier Squadron (AC.11).

Photo Preface-2

Port bow view of the British light fleet carrier HMS *Glory* at Melbourne, January 1946. Australian War Memorial photograph 125041

The focus of this book is light fleet aircraft carriers. Because they usually operated as part of task forces in concert with other vessels, some information is provided about their larger sisters as the stories of the light carriers are evolved in this book. *Turn into the Wind* does not offer comprehensive coverage of the histories of other vessels including the large fleet carriers (CVs).

EX-BRITISH LIGHT FLEET CARRIERS CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE RAN AND RCN CARRIER PROGRAMS

Interestingly, some classes of austere war-production vessels, intended by their designers for taxing, but relatively short service, ultimately plied the waters for decades. One such example was US Navy 110-foot World War I submarine chasers which were sold as surplus following the war. Hurriedly built with an expected life span of only four-to-five years, the steel-framed wooden vessels proved to be unusually durable, as well as exceptionally fast.

Their subsequent civilian usage included conversion to Gloucester (Massachusetts) "mackerel boats." Constructed with a pilot house a few feet aft of midship, the sub-chasers offered a long, narrow afterdeck to carry seine nets, space for an adequate fish hold, and room below the fo'c'sle to bunk upwards of twenty fishermen. Those converted and identified by their civilian names included the *Mary W.*, *Frank S. Grinnell*, *Three Sisters*, and *Serafina N.* Two former sub-chasers (most recently the fishing vessels *Whitby II* and *Fidus*) returned to naval service in World War II as the patrol craft *YP-178* and *YP-180*. Faced with the German U-boat threat off America's eastern seaboard and associated need to obtain vessels and crews quickly to patrol coastal waters, the Navy sought regional fishermen and their boats to carry out these duties. On the west coast of Canada, several of these vessels were employed as rumrunners before being converted into fish packers and tugs after Prohibition ended in the United States in 1933.[1]

Admittedly, this example is for a class of ships much smaller than aircraft carriers, but it does serve to illustrate the long-standing value and viability of some vessels hastily built in response to an immediate need. Following World War II, Allied countries were strapped for cash, particularly those with modest populations and national resources. "Top brass" of the Australian and Canadian navies well understood the critical role that naval air had played in achieving victory, and that acquisition of carriers would vastly improve the strength and capabilities of their services. Large fleet carriers were cost prohibitive. Britain, which could no longer afford a massive navy, was ameanable to relinquishing some of its light carriers to its Commonwealth partners and its Allies. Australia, Canada, France, and the Netherlands were recipients who benefited from the transfer, loan, or sale of these capital ships to their navies. Some ex-RN light carriers eventually found their way to Argentina and Brazil, and Britain later transferred a light carrier directly to India.

The post-World War II service of light carriers in the US Navy, Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy is the

subject of Volume II of *Turn into the Wind*. The last to leave service, HMAS *Melbourne*, was paid off on 30 May 1982.

A PAUCITY OF CARRIERS IN 1942

At the end of 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, the US Navy had only five carriers in the Pacific. Needing to husband them, the carrier admirals were ordered to avoid engaging the enemy fleet directly and were relegated to using their scarce resources to raiding actions against island bases. However, in spite of these intentions, the dearth of fleet aviation capabilities became even more acute following the loss in 1942 of four carriers to combat action:

- USS *Lexington* (CV-2): Torpedoed and bombed by Japanese carrier-based aircraft on 8 May 1942, in the Battle of the Coral Sea
- USS *Yorktown* (CV-5): Torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 7 June 1942, after being disabled by Japanese carrier aircraft bombs and torpedoes, 4 June 1942, in the Battle of Midway
- USS *Wasp* (CV-7): Torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 15 September 1942, while operating in the Southwestern Pacific in support of forces on Guadalcanal
- USS *Hornet* (CV-8): Hit by Japanese carrier aircraft bombs and torpedoes on 26 October 1942, in the Battle of the Santa Cruz islands[2]

HMS *VICTORIOUS* ("USS *ROBIN*") TEMPORARILY AUGMENTS SEVERELY DEPLETED US NAVY PACIFIC CARRIER FORCE

The US Navy's desperate need for fleet carriers, in the interim period between the losses of *Lexington*, *Yorktown*, *Wasp*, and *Hornet*, and when sufficient newly-built *Essex*-class ships could join the Fleet, spurred two significant actions. The first by Adm. Ernest J. King, USN (the chief of Naval Operations), was a request in autumn 1942, for assistance from the British Admiralty. (The second was construction of the *Independence*s.) Following communications between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and despite its continuing heavy operational commitments, the Royal Navy detached the aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious* from the Home Fleet for service with the US Navy. It was a clandestine move at the time and one that is not well remembered.[3]

Photo Preface-3

British aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious* with a Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber about to land on board, circa 1941.
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 73690

Victorious departed British waters on 20 December, and arrived at Norfolk, Virginia, on the last day of 1942. The second of the *Illustrious*-class carriers, she was relatively new, having been commissioned on 29 March 1941, but required modifications and procedural changes to make her compatible for operations with the US Navy. These included: similar communications equipment, new surface and air-search radars, 20mm anti-aircraft guns, and replacement of her obsolete Fairey Albacore torpedo bombers with TBM Avengers and associated aircraft handling gear. While the carrier continued to fly the White Ensign, she received planes with U.S. national insignia. Additionally, Royal Navy personnel were issued US Navy khaki and dungaree working uniforms to be worn in lieu of their British summer whites.[4]

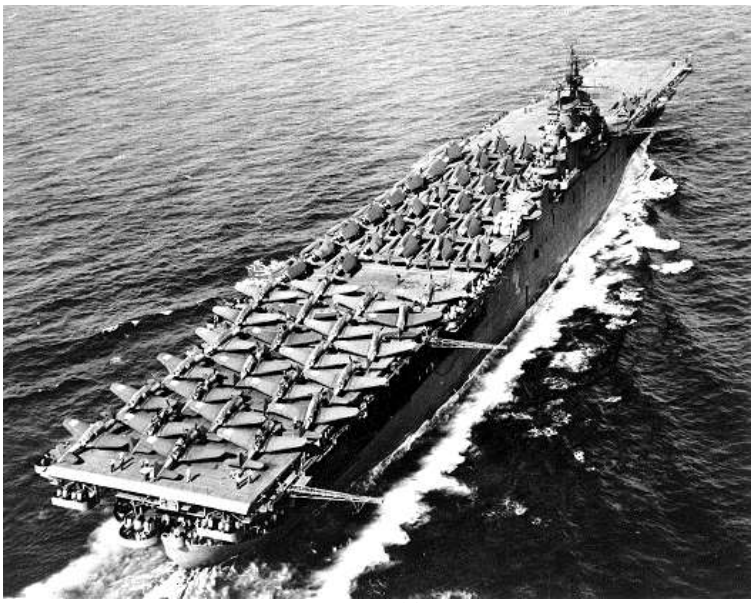
Victorious departed Norfolk, on 3 February 1943, en route to the Pacific via the Panama Canal, and was assigned the US Navy call sign "Robin." Arriving at Pearl Harbor, on 4 March, she was fitted with two additional arrestor wires, and additional 20mm and 40mm anti-aircraft guns. She also received a new coat of paint, her Royal Navy disruptive camouflage pattern overpainted in sea blue, to match that of USS *Saratoga*, with whom she was slated to operate during forthcoming operations in the central Solomons. On 8 May, together with the

battleship USS *North Carolina* (BB-55) and two destroyers, *Victorious* left Pearl Harbor bound for the South Pacific.[5]

On 17 May, *Victorious* reached Noumea, New Caledonia, and joined *Saratoga*, at that time the only operational American carrier in the Pacific. The two ships, as part of Task Group 36.3, left Noumea on 27 June to take part in Operation TOENAILS, the invasion of New Georgia, by providing air cover for the transports and landing force. The task group, after experiencing very little interaction with enemy aircraft, returned to Noumea, on 25 July. By then, the first of the US Navy's new *Essex*- and *Independence*-class carriers were reaching operational status in the Central Pacific. It was decided *Victorious* could return to her Atlantic theatre of operations, and she was detached at month's end to rejoin the British Home Fleet by way of Pearl Harbor and Norfolk, where her US Navy communications, radar, and flight operations gear were removed. She arrived in Liverpool, England, on 27 September 1943 for a lengthy refit.[6]

FAST CARRIER FORCE FORMED AROUND *ESSEX*-CLASS LARGE CARRIERS JOINING THE FLEET

Photo Preface-4



USS *Essex* (CV-9) under way in May 1943. The aircraft on her flight deck include 24 SBD scout bombers (located aft), about 11 F6F fighters (after midships area) and some 18 TBF/TBM torpedo planes (amidships).
National Archives photograph #80-G-68097

In mid-January 1944, as a culmination of its expanding aircraft carrier operations in the Pacific Theater, the US Navy unleashed a powerful new offensive against the Empire of Japan. It involved shifting from defensive battles in the South Pacific to aggressive attacks against Japanese perimeter defenses all across the Central Pacific. The new concept centered around the utilization of waves of fighter and bomber planes, launched from the decks of fast aircraft carriers, to attack Japanese strongholds and soften enemy defenses prior to landing assault forces.[7]

The centerpiece of the Navy's new strategy, following their extreme losses in the vital opening battles of the Pacific war, was the *Essex*-class fleet aircraft carrier. Twenty-four of the 30,000-ton ships were built in American shipyards between 1943 and 1950. As shown in the table, twelve of the carriers were completed in time to earn battle stars in the Pacific Theater in World War II.[8]

***Essex*-class Aircraft Carriers (that saw combat in WWII)**

Aircraft Carrier	Commissioned	Battle Stars
USS *Essex* (CV-9)	31 Dec 42	13 WWII/ 4 Korean War
USS *Yorktown* (CV-10)	15 Apr 43	11 WWII
USS *Intrepid* (CV-11)	16 Aug 43	5 WWII
USS *Hornet* (CV-12)	29 Nov 43	7 WWII
USS *Franklin* (CV-13)	31 Jan 44	4 WWII
USS *Ticonderoga* (CV-14)	8 May 44	5 WWII
USS *Randolph* (CV-15)	9 Oct 44	3 WWII
USS *Lexington* (CV-16)	17 Mar 43	11 WWII
USS *Bunker Hill* (CV-17)	24 May 43	11 WWII
USS *Wasp* (CV-18)	24 Nov 43	8 WWII
USS *Hancock* (CV-19)	15 Apr 44	3 WWII
USS *Bennington* (CV-20)	6 Aug 44	3 WWII[9]

INDEPENDENCE-CLASS LIGHT FLEET CARRIERS

The second significant action to address the Navy's dearth of carriers, prior to availability of the significant numbers of new *Essex*-class ships, was the rapid completion of nine light fleet aircraft carriers of the *Independence*-class in 1943. The driving force behind the conversion of *Cleveland*-class light cruiser hulls already laid down in yards, was President Franklin D. Roosevelt. As a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy (17 March 1913 to 26 August 1920), the president had a keen interest in, and periodically personally directed, naval matters during World War II.[10]

In this case, Roosevelt ignored the warnings of naval architects that the fine lines of the cruiser hulls would preclude a roomy hangar and large island, and make it difficult to position the elevators or support the forward flight deck. Overreaching these arguments was the fact that basic assets were already in-place and the ships could be rapidly completed as carriers. Modifications made to address these issues included: truncating the flight deck, utilizing a very small island resembling those of escort carriers, making do with a rather small hangar, and bulging the hull to maintain stability.[11] The resultant light carriers, all products of New York Shipbuilding, Camden, New Jersey, are identified in the table:

***Independence*-class Light Fleet Aircraft Carriers**

Aircraft Carrier	Commissioned	Battle Stars
Independence (CVL-22)	14 Jan 1943	8 WWII
Princeton (CVL-23)	25 Feb 1943	9 WWII
Belleau Wood (CVL-24)	31 Mar 1943	12 WWII
Cowpens (CVL-25)	28 May 1943	12 WWII
Monterey (CVL-26)	17 June 1943	11 WWII
Langley (CVL-27)	31 Aug 1943	9 WWII
Cabot (CVL-28)	24 July 1943	8 WWII
Bataan (CVL-29)	13 May 1943	5 WWII/ 7 Korean War
San Jacinto (CVL-30)	15 Dec 1943	6 WWII

Possessing the powerful propulsion of cruisers, the light fleet carriers (CVLs) could run with the "big" fleet carriers. A common task group partnered two *Essex*-class CVs (or older class fleet carriers) and one *Independence* CVL. However, the light fleet carriers also undertook some transport and support missions. During the war, the *Essex* carriers were better known to the public than the *Independence*s, and that perception remains today. Interestingly, the light carriers actually garnered more battle stars, on average per ship, than their bigger sisters. One the objects of this book is to help highlight the contributions of these unique 622–foot, 14,751-ton ships. (A comprehensive list of all qualifying actions for battle stars may be found in Appendix A.)[12]

Twelve *Essex*es earned a combined 84 battle stars in World War II, an average of 7 per ship. USS *Essex* (CV-9), the only one of these ships to see action in Korea, later added another 4 in that war. The Nine *Independence*s received 80 battle stars amongst them, averaging 8.9 stars apiece, and *Bataan* (CVL-29) garnered another 7 in Korea—not bad for the products of a War Emergency Program to create light carriers from cruiser hulls.

TWO FUTURE U.S PRESIDENTS GAINED COMBAT EXPERIENCE ON LIGHT FLEET CARRIER DUTY

> *There's no question that it broadened my horizons. And there's no question that today it has a real impact on me as I give advice to the President [Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States].*
>
> —Vice President George H. W. Bush, commenting on his combat duty in World War II as a fighter pilot aboard the light fleet carrier USS *San Jacinto*, an experience which gave him a "sobering understanding of war and peace." (Bush succeeded Reagan, becoming the 41st president of the United States.)[13]

With the exception of Army veteran Ronald Reagan's eight-year presidential term from 1981 to 1989, the US Navy could boast it had veterans in the nation's highest office, from 1961 to 1993. John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, James E. "Jimmy" Carter, and George H. W. Bush all previously served their nation wearing the Navy blue and gold uniform. Of these six men, all were World War II veterans, except Jimmy Carter, who received his commission, on 5 June 1946, after graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy with distinction.[14]

Of the five presidents who served in the Navy in World War II, the service of two were aboard *Independence*-class light fleet carriers.

George Bush joined the Navy following high school, enlisting on his 18th birthday, 12 June 1942. Ten months later, having graduated pre-flight training, he was commissioned as an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve a few days before his 19th birthday, making him the youngest naval aviator at the time. Following additional flight training, he was assigned to Torpedo Squadron (VT-51), which was based on USS *San Jacinto* (CVL-30).[15]

In 1944, Bush flew 58 combat missions for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals, and the Presidential Unit Citation awarded *San Jacinto*.[16]

Photo Preface-5

George H. W. Bush as a pilot, sitting in the cockpit of an aircraft.
US Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.

Gerald Ford, a graduate of the University of Michigan (1935) and Yale University Law School (1941), received a commission as ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, on 13 April 1942. He reported to the pre-commissioning detachment for USS *Monterey* (CVL-26), in May 1943. He served aboard her from ship commissioning, on 17 June 1943, through the end of 1944. Ford's duties aboard *Monterey* included those of assistant navigator, athletic officer, and anti-aircraft battery officer.[17]

His assignment as athletic officer was not surprising. Ford had won all-city and all-state football honors in Grand Rapids, Michigan, during high school. While earning three varsity letters in college, he was a member of the University of Michigan's undefeated national championship football teams of 1932 and 1933 and, playing center, was named Michigan's most valuable player in 1934.[18]

Photo Preface-6

Undated file photo of Lt. Gerald R. Ford taken during World War II.
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #ID 1043698

US NAVY AND ROYAL NAVY CARRIER AIRCRAFT

Before progressing into an overview of *Turn into the Wind*, some readers might benefit from reviewing Appendix B, which offers descriptions of the carrier aircraft employed. American CVLs embarked fighters and torpedo planes only, having insufficient space for dive bombers, which the larger CVs operated, along with their fighter and torpedo planes. Royal Navy carriers of the British Pacific Fleet boasted both British- and American-manufactured aircraft, having obtained the latter via Lend-Lease arrangements between America and Britain. A listing of aircraft for both navies is shown below:

- Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter aircraft
- Vought F4U Corsair fighter aircraft
- TBF/TBM Avenger torpedo bomber
- Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber
- Curtiss SB2C Helldiver scout bomber
- Fairey Firefly fighter aircraft
- Vickers Supermarine Seafire fighter aircraft

THE ACTION BEGINS

Chapter 1 takes readers into the heart of combat, on 2 September 1944, with aircraft from the light carrier *San Jacinto* flying strikes against targets on Chichi Jima, in the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands. That day likely marked high and low points of the war for future president Lt. (jg) George H. W. Bush, USNR. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, but tragically lost both his crewmen, when the TBM Avenger torpedo plane he was piloting was shot down. Plucked from the sea by the submarine *Finback* (SS-230), Bush joined the "Silent Service" until delivered to Midway Atoll on the morning of 30 September. After making his way back to the *San Jacinto*, Bush resumed flying duties as one of her combat pilots.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LIGHT CARRIERS (CVLS) AND THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR COMBAT OPERATIONS

Chapter 2 provides details of the nine *Independence*-class light carriers and their construction, and two *Saipan*-class CVLs, completed too late for service in World War II. Following the construction of a ship, and assembly of her crew, comes much training, examination, and a "shakedown" period or cruise, before assignment to a fleet and, during war, likely combat operations. Chapter 3 outlines this process for a newly-commissioned light carrier—in this case, the *Monterey*—aboard which future president Lt. Gerald Ford, USNR, was serving.

EARLY ISLAND RAIDS

Chapters 4-11 describe the early operations of the light fleet carriers. These began with a raid on Marcus Island, in which *Independence* earned the first of eighty battle stars which she and her sister ships would collectively garner during the war. In Chapter 4, we meet Lt. Comdr. Edward "Butch" H. O'Hare the recipient of the Medal of Honor. He was killed in action later in the war. O'Hare Airport in Chicago, Illinois, is named after him.

Light carriers *Belleau Wood* and *Princeton*'s first operations were in support of the Allied occupation of Baker Island. (Nearby Howland Island hosted an airstrip constructed in 1937 to provide Amelia Earhart with her navigator Fredrick Noonan, a refueling stop between New Guinea and Hawaii for their round-the-world flight attempt. *Belleau Wood* and *Princeton* earned their first battle stars for an assault on Tarawa, which followed the Baker Island occupation.

Next came a raid on Wake Island (taken up in Chapter 6), a trial under combat conditions, to determine whether a multi-aircraft carrier task force (comprised of both CVs and CVLs), could prevail against Japanese land-based naval aviation with its torpedo-carrying night-attack aircraft. To provide context, the fall of Wake Island, on 23 December 1941, to a Japanese special naval landing force is included.

In November 1943, *Princeton* and *Independence* graduated to raids on the powerful Japanese base at Rabaul, New Britain, in the Bismarck Archipelago (Chapter 7). These light carriers were working with Adm. William Halsey's Third Fleet. Chapter 8 describes the occupation of the Gilbert Islands, which began, on 20 November, with amphibious landings on Makin and Tarawa Atolls, supported by CVs and CVLs of Vice Adm. Raymond Spruance's Central Pacific Force. (The force would later become the Fifth Fleet.) Hit by an enemy aircraft-dropped torpedo during these operations, *Independence* suffered many men killed, and significant ship damage, mandating drydock repairs at Hunter's Point in San Francisco, California.

Strikes on Japanese shipping at Kavieng, on the northwest tip of New Ireland in the Bismarck Archipelago, followed (the subject of Chapter 9). Supporting this operation were CV-17 (*Bunker Hill*), and CVL-26 (*Monterey*) with Gerald Ford aboard. Ford later commented on the operation at a ship's reunion in 1975:

> I recall us going with the *Bunker Hill* down to Kavieng and Rabaul on Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and a few days after New Year's Day—that was thought then as one of the most daring

> operations at the time as far as the Navy was concerned. We lost some very fine people, but we survived.

In late January 1944, Fifth Fleet CVs and CVLs moved into the Marshall Islands to begin attacks leading to the occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls by U.S. forces. In addition to these events, Chapter 10 acquaints readers with Ens. Cornelius Nicholas, who would become a triple Ace during the war. Nicholas' final score was 19 enemy aircraft destroyed during his tour with Fighting Squadron VF-31, aboard light carrier *Cabot* and, later, aboard *Belleau Wood*. *Cabot*'s voice call sign was "Mohawk" and her battle cry, enjoining pilots to get up in the sky and strike enemy targets, or engage planes in aerial combat, was, "Up, Mohawks, and at'em."

Photo Preface-7

Painting on USS *Cabot*'s deckhouse illustrated the light aircraft carrier's battle cry, "Up, Mohawks, and at'em," based on the word "Mohawk," the ship's voice call sign. USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) Unit History

Chapter 11 brings readers to late February 1944, when planes aboard Spruance's CVs and CVLs struck several enemy targets, at a host of locations, as a prelude to further movement by U.S. forces across the Central Pacific toward Japan. These air strikes included a raid on Truk, and strikes on the Mariana Islands, and Saipan-Tinian area, followed by raids on Palau, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai.

While participating in a fighter sweep over Peleliu Airfield in the Palau Islands, *Cabot* Hellcat pilot Lt. (jg) John Lewis Wirth accounted for three of the enemy aircraft downed in aerial combat. Wirth and Hills

(mentioned below) followed diverse paths to becoming a Naval Aviator. Wirth had enlisted in the US Navy in 1934. After initial duty as a machinist's mate aboard the carrier *Ranger*, and subsequent naval service, he became a Naval aviator, on 21 March 1942. Wirth was credited with fourteen aerial victories during his war service, receiving the Navy Cross, Silver Star (two awards), Distinguished Flying Cross, and three Air Medals.

In a separate action over Truk, Lt. Comdr. Edward C. Outlaw led a division of eight F6F Hellcats from the *Langley*, to engage a formation of enemy planes. In ensuing dogfighting, their eight pilots downed twenty-one Japanese Zeros. Outlaw obtained five kills that day, and would retire from the Navy as a rear admiral. One of the other pilots in that action was Lt. Hollis Harry Hills. Although an American citizen, Hills had gained combat experience in Europe as a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, before becoming a naval aviator. During an interview years later, the, then retired, commander made reference to his unique service, noting, "I am the only fighter pilot who flew in the two greatest air battles of the war: Dieppe in 1942 and the Great [Marianas] Turkey Shoot in the Pacific in 1944."

CAPTURE OF THE MARIANAS AND SUBSEQUENT BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

Movement into the Mariana Islands, discussed in Chapter 12, preceded the capture of Guam, Saipan, and Tinian, and spurred the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Adm. Soemu Toyoda (the commander in chief of the Combined Fleet) had warned his commanding officers on 4 May 1944:

> The war is drawing close to the lines vital to our national defense. The issue of our national existence is unprecedentedly serious; an unprecedented opportunity exists for deciding who shall be victorious and who defeated.

Heroism was found in abundance among U.S. naval aviators launching from Fifth Fleet carriers in finding and attacking Vice Adm. Jisaburo Ozawa's First Mobile Fleet, while engaging in aerial combat with Japanese aircraft sent against American forces.

Particular fighter squadrons gained fame during the war, documented by articles and, in some cases, entire books devoted to them. Others came and went performing their duties with little fanfare. Squadron VF-25—established on 15 February 1943, and disestablished on 20 September 1945—was one such, little noted squadron. In combat action, on 19 June, eight of its Hellcats from the light carrier *Compens*,

shot down nine enemy fighters and torpedo planes, and probably destroyed three more.

One of the pilots in that action, Lt. (jg) Donald J. McKinley, USNR, was the squadron's only Ace. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroic actions in the Battle of the Philippine Sea (termed the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot"). The American victory was so complete, and enemy losses of experienced pilots so great that Japanese military commanders would have to turn to the use of suicide (Kamikaze) planes to force their attacks through the American defenses and onto their ships.

SHARED USE OF FAST CARRIER FORCE, ESCORTS

As MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces moving westward along the New Guinea shore, and Central Pacific forces began to converge, it was necessary to establish a Marianas-Palau line toward the Philippines. This action was designed to cut off intervening enemy bases and create an unbroken front between Central Pacific Forces and Southwest Pacific Forces, prior to movement into the Philippines.

Chapter 13 describes carrier operations against western Caroline Islands—Peleliu, Angaur, Ngesebus, Ulithi—from August through October 1944, and reorganization of the Pacific Fleet to accelerate the tempo/frequency of operations of the Pacific war. Its overall commander, Admiral Nimitz, decided that Halsey and Admiral Spruance would share Pacific Fleet (3rd and 5th Fleet) assets, with one commander planning and training, while the other executed the fighting. Once planning for a forthcoming operation was completed, and the one in progress concluded, their roles would reverse. This practice would result in little rest for the Fast Carrier Forces. The CVs and CVLs, and most of their gunfire support ships (Task Force 58 when under Spruance's command, and Task Force 38 when put under Halsey), would operate almost continuously.

The US Navy's Fleets operate as task organizations, which are explicitly set forth by associated operation orders or operation plans. Assignments are not permanent, and may be altered for a variety of reasons, including changes in geographic area of operation, military tasking, or tactical situation.

Task forces are constituted for the purpose of conducting broad naval warfare missions. The US Pacific Fleet's Fast Carrier Force was identified by a two-number designation. When under Spruance's command, it was designated Task Force 58 to reflect that it was a part of the Fifth Fleet. Comprising Task Force 58 were subordinate task groups, with numbering such as TG 58.1, 58.2, and 58.3. Below the task

group level were task units. The numbering of a task unit (one or more ships or military units) followed the convention of its parent task force and task group: Task Unit 58.3.1 is an example. The commanding officer of TU 58.3.1 would report to the task group commander (TG 58.3), who in turn would report to TF 58. The task force commander was answerable to Admiral Spruance, commander, Fifth Fleet, or when assigned to the Third Fleet, Admiral Halsey.

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS CAMPAIGN

Five chapters, 14-19, are devoted to Fast Carrier Force operations in the Philippines, beginning with air strikes on Japanese airfields on the island of Luzon and shipping in the Manila area. In one action, sixteen F6F Hellcat fighters from the *Princeton* destroyed thirty-eight enemy planes in the air. Of this group of Squadron VF-27 pilots (led by Lt. Comdr. Frederick A. Bardshar), three individuals would ultimately achieve the distinction of becoming Double Aces (10 or more kills) during the war, and four others, Aces (5 or more victories).

In a strike on Clark Field, Hellcats of VF-31 from *Cabot* shot down sixteen enemy planes in the air, and damaged an undetermined number on the ground. For his considerable part in this effort, Lt. (jg) Arthur Hawkins received the second of three Navy Crosses (second only to the Medal of Honor in precedence) awarded to him in the war.

Chapter 15 covers Fast Carrier Force strikes on strongly defended Japanese aircraft staging bases in the Nansei Islands, and on Formosa (today Taiwan). These actions were part of an effort to establish control of the air over the Philippines in preparation for planned Allied landings set to begin, on 20 October, at Leyte. Over a six-day period, the task force claimed the destruction of 807 enemy aircraft, and 26 ships, while substantially degrading aviation facilities in the Formosa area.

Described in Chapter 16, assault forces landed at Leyte, relatively unopposed, but what followed was a series of naval actions between Japanese and American carrier forces in what was collectively termed, the Battle for Leyte Gulf, that effectively saw the end of Japan's carrier aircraft threat. In the first of these actions, the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea, Comdr. David McCampbell, USN, took to the air from *Essex* in his Hellcat fighter, to repel an enemy raid. Assisted by only one other plane, he and his wingman, Lt. (jg) Roy W. Rushing, intercepted and daringly attacked an approaching formation of land-based aircraft. McCampbell shot down nine Japanese aircraft (setting a U.S. single mission aerial combat record), and his wingman destroyed six. For their actions that day, McCampbell was awarded the Medal of Honor, and Rushing

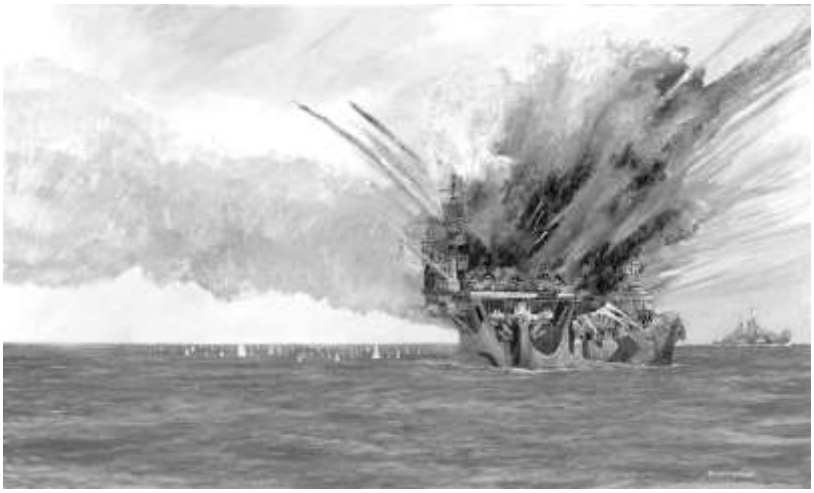
received the Navy Cross. McCampbell finished the war as the highest-scoring US Navy "Ace" of all time, with 34 kills in the air.

In that same air battle, the pilots of twelve Hellcats from Squadron VF-27 aboard *Princeton* collectively shot down thirty-five enemy planes. Four of the pilots, each accounted for five or more planes.

LOSS OF *PRINCETON*

Chapter 16 also covers the only loss of a US Navy light carrier in the war, which occurred on 24 October, when *Princeton* was hit by an enemy aircraft-dropped bomb. Following heroic efforts by her crew to fight resultant raging fires, assisted by other ships in the task group, flames detonated 400 bombs stowed in the torpedo compartment. A huge explosion blew off the entire stern of *Princeton* aft of frame 120, and the structure above the main deck from frame 120 forward to frame 105.

Photo Preface-8



Painting by Richard DeRosset of the loss of USS *Princeton* (cover art for this book).

Nearly everyone that had not been previously evacuated from *Princeton* was killed or injured. Aboard the light cruiser *Birmingham*, which was close aboard the carrier assisting with firefighting, the carnage was almost beyond comprehension: 229 dead and 420 injured. With no way of fighting the fires, *Princeton*'s commanding officer gave the order to the few remaining to abandon ship. Following orders from the task group commander to destroy *Princeton*, the light cruiser *Reno* fired two torpedoes into her, the carrier's bomb magazines forward detonated, and the ruined light carrier sank in less than one minute.

KAMIKAZE HITS ON OTHER CARRIERS/TYPHOON

Chapters 17 and 18 cover continued action in the Philippines. Throughout November, Task Force 38 (then a part of Halsey's third Fleet), carried out strikes against Luzon. Three carriers—CV *Hancock*, CV *Intrepid*, and CVL *Cabot*—were damaged by Kamikaze attacks. The task force was back in action off Luzon in December, "blanketing" air fields with strikes to destroy enemy air power, in support of an Allied amphibious invasion of Mindoro to commence on 15 December 1944. Then disaster struck. On 18 December, the track of Task Force 38 and path of the "Great Typhoon of 1944" converged.

Ships reported gusts encountered as high as 115 to 120 knots, as fleet units rolled excessively in the violent seas. Three destroyers—*Hull*, *Spence*, *Monaghan*—capsized and sank. The poor sea-keeping qualities of the *Independence*-class light carriers (on account of their hasty build on light cruiser hulls) became quickly evident—all rolled severely, *Langley* 70-degrees, at one point. Planes broke loose; some were washed overboard; others were the source of fires as a result of damage to aircraft gas tanks. *Monterey* suffered three personnel killed, and thirty-four injured; *Independence* and *Compens* had one death each.

INVASION OF LUZON AND ODE TO NIGHT CARRIERS

Chapter 19 takes up the Allied amphibious landings at Luzon, Kamikaze strikes against the task force off Formosa, and introduces the use of "night carriers" and their operations. Fighter pilots launched from the *Independence* (and later *Enterprise* and *Saratoga*) flew by instruments in the gloom, seeking to destroy "snoopers," enemy aircraft attempting to locate and report the location of American naval forces. Also discussed is the grave damage done to the carrier *Hancock* with associated loss of life, as a result of a bomb(s) falling from a torpedo bomber, after it had landed safely aboard.

IWO JIMA AND OKINAWA

Task Force 58 supported the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa (Chapter 20), fleet command having shifted from Halsey to Spruance. Some reorganization occurred, including *Saratoga* replacing *Independence* as a "night carrier," in order that the latter ship could undergo a brief overhaul. During her preceding duty, *Independence* produced the Navy's only two VF(N) night Aces—Lt. Comdr. William Henry and Ens. Jack Berkheimer—and established a legacy that would be lived up to, but not surpassed, over the remainder of the war.

While operating in support of the American landings at Iwo Jima, *Saratoga* was crashed by multiple Kamikazes. Extensively damaged, and

with large numbers of personnel killed, missing, or injured, she had to withdraw for repairs. The escort carrier *Bismarck* (CVE-95) fared worse. Hit by two suicide planes, with gasoline-fueled fires out of control and ordnance exploding, her commanding officer ordered the crew to abandon ship. After many explosions and while still aflame, the "baby flattop" rolled over and sank.

Three destroyers and three destroyer escorts toiled for twelve hours to find and recover survivors. However, rough seas, frigid water, and Japanese strafing caused the loss of 318 of those gallant sailors who had made it off the sinking escort carrier, and into the sea.

The successful invasion and occupation of Okinawa, from which bombing strikes could be launched on the Japanese home islands, came at a very high cost. Of the total 12,520 Americans killed, just over 4,900 were Navy personnel. Ship losses and damage at the hands of the "Divine Wind" (successive waves of Kamikaze aircraft sent to attack the fleet) were also considerable. Fleet Admiral Nimitz reported losses for the period 26 March to 30 April, as 22 ships sunk, another 100 with major damage, and 112 with minor damage.

Of the carriers assigned to Task Force 58, almost all suffered damage—some very substantial—and loss of life and/or wounded as a result of Kamikaze strikes.

SUPPORT FROM THE BRITISH PACIFIC FLEET

American naval losses at Okinawa would have been even greater, were it not for the valiant efforts of the British fleet carriers HMS *Indefatigable*, *Indomitable*, *Illustrious*, *Victorious*, and *Formidable* and their escorts. Covered in Chapter 21, the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) was temporarily assigned to the U.S. Fifth Fleet during the Battle of Okinawa. Designated Task Force 57, the British carrier group was responsible for neutralizing Japanese air bases, in the Sakishima Islands to the southwest of Okinawa and on Formosa, which were a constant threat to the Allies.

Sometimes referred to as "the Forgotten Fleet," and well before Okinawa, the BPF had begun making important contributions to the Allied effort in the Pacific Theater. These included (while still under independent Royal Navy operating command as British Task Force 63), January 1945 air strikes on Japanese oil refineries south of Palembang in Sumatra (today Indonesia). These strikes, eliminated the bulk of the enemy's supply of aviation fuel, comprised the largest operation conducted by the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm in World War II, and was, perhaps, its greatest contribution to Allied victory in the Pacific.

BPF EXPERIENCE PROVES INVALUABLE DURING FUTURE KOREAN WAR AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN CARRIER FORCES

Among the composition of the British Pacific Fleet were a number of ships from other Commonwealth countries (Australia, New Zealand, and Canada). Aboard the British carriers, in addition to those of the Royal Navy, were pilots and air crews of these countries as well as from South Africa and the Netherlands.

The British carriers, having armoured decks, did not suffer the same degree of damage as did American carriers when crashed by Kamikazes. However, personnel casualties aboard ship resulted, and pilots and aircrews were lost during strikes against Japanese airfields and shipping. One of those killed in action was Canadian Lt. Robert Hampton Gray, RCNVR, a Corsair pilot aboard *Formidable*.

Gray, one of the last Canadians to die in the war, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross (the highest medal for valor in the British Commonwealth), on 13 November 1945. His was only the second Victoria Cross earned by the Fleet Air Arm in WWII. The other was awarded Lt. Comdr. Eugene Esmonde, RN, posthumously, after leading an attack on German battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and the cruiser *Prince Eugen* as they dashed from Brest, France, up the English Channel to the safety of the North German port of Brunsbuttel, in 1942.

ROYAL NAVY'S LIGHT FLEET CARRIERS

Four British *Colossus*-class light fleet carriers—*Vengeance*, *Venerable*, *Colossus*, and *Glory*—completed in time for war service, were dispatched to join the British Pacific Fleet. Their eventual duty in the Pacific Theater was set in motion, on 15 January 1945, when the new ships were allocated to the BPF as the 11th Aircraft Carrier Squadron. None participated in combat operations, but they did perform important post-war duties. Described in Chapter 22, these included: involvement in the formal surrender ceremonies of Japanese forces, provision of air cover during the landing of occupational forces, policing ashore by ship's force personnel during the repatriation of Allied prisoners of war, and the transport of POWs home.

POSTSCRIPT

The postscript recaps the importance, of the British Pacific Fleet operations in World War II, to future Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy carrier operations in the Korean War (1950-1953) and beyond through decades of the Cold War.

While larger USN carriers plied deeper waters of the Sea of Japan off the east coast of Korea, British, Australian, and American light carriers operated in the Yellow Sea off its west coast. Sweltering, humid weather in the summer, and bitter, icy cold conditions in the winter (accompanied by snow, and often fog precluding flight operations) added to the challenges already associated with warfare. American carriers boasted air conditioning. Aboard Royal Navy and Australian carriers, conditions below decks in the summer were almost unbearable.

As previously recounted, *Princeton* was lost in World War II. Of the remaining eight USN CVLs, seven took part in Operation MAGIC CARPET, to transport home former POWs during the immediate aftermath of the war. *Independence* participated in nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in 1946. Her ruined, radioactive hulk was towed to San Francisco and, following study, later sunk off the Californian coast. The remaining seven light carriers were laid up in 1947. *Bataan*, *Cabot*, and *Monterey* were returned to service, and ultimately *Cabot*, *Langley*, and *Belleau Wood* were transferred to Allies. The other *Independence*-class CVLs remained "mothballed" in backwater Reserve Fleets until struck from the Naval Vessel Register.

With this overview of *Turn into the Wind, Volume I*, in our wake, it's time to progress into the heart of the book: ship and aircraft operations. Before standing out to sea and taking flight (vicariously) with the light carriers and their air groups, an introduction to brevity code used by aircraft and their controllers aboard ship is in order.

NAVAL AVIATOR BREVITY CODE

Military brevity code provides no security, and has as its sole purpose the shortening of messages rather than concealment of their content. Definitions of code used in the book follow. "Tally-ho" of World War II usage has been replaced today by "Tally." Adopted from British pilots, Tally-ho originated as a huntsman's cry to the hounds on sighting a fox.

- Angels: Height of aircraft in thousands of feet
- Bandit: An aircraft identified as an enemy
- Bogey: A radar or visual air contact whose identity is unknown
- Scramble: Takeoff as quickly as possible
- Splashed: Target destroyed
- Tally-ho: Target in sight
- Tally-hoed: Sighted a target

- Vector: Air traffic controller directing a pilot to fly a specific heading to intercept a radar contact

Finally, it's also important to understand clock-hand positions, used by pilots to describe the relative position of enemy planes to their aircraft. Picture a clock orientated horizontally, with the twelve o'clock position always aligned to the front/flight path of the reporting aircraft. "Six o'clock, low" meant that an enemy plane was below, and on "the tail" of the reporting aircraft. The title of the famous movie starring Gregory Peck, "Twelve o'clock High," conveyed that an enemy was in front of, and above the aircraft reporting a contact.