

# USS BOXER PROVES HERSELF A CHAMPION



CORSAIR fighter-bombers return from a combat mission and circle the carrier while Panther jets are being launched. Rescue helicopter which saved many pilots after dunking, hovers over the Boxer



This is the fifth in a series of brief carrier histories and takes the USS Boxer through her second combat tour in the Korean conflict. An article on her 1952 exploits will appear in September issue of NANews.



THE BOXER has lived up to her name. With some of the fanciest roadwork any fighter ever engaged in before a major bout, the big carrier distinguished herself for speed, staying power and carrying capacity in July 1950 when just those qualities were urgently needed.

At the beginning of the Korean hostilities, the *Boxer* had just returned from a six-months good-will tour in the West Pacific for a scheduled yard overhaul. But supplies and men were now urgently needed in the Far East. Working around the clock, the *Boxer* embarked 145 F-51 *Mustangs* and six L-5 observation planes for the Air Force as well as 19 naval aircraft, 1012 passengers and approximately 2000 tons of cargo.

Departing Alameda 14 July, the *Boxer*, with orders to proceed at best sustained speed, reached Yokosuka, Japan, in record time—just eight days and 16 hours. On her return, she broke her own record.

THE LINE of the *Boxer* begins 140 years ago in an appropriately American way—with overseas ancestry. During the War of 1812, the United States captured a British man-of-war bearing that name. The first U. S.-built *Boxer* was a 470-ton brig built in Connecticut and launched in May 1815.

Since then and up to the present ship, CV-21, there have been three ships of the name, a schooner, an iron sidewheel steamer, and a brigantine built as a training ship in 1905.

The USS *Boxer* (CV-21) is the thirteenth of the *Essex*-class carriers. She was launched 14 December at Newport News, Va., and commissioned 16 April 1945 at Norfolk.

In September 1945, the *Boxer* relieved the USS *Antietam* as a unit of Task Force 72, operating in the Yellow Sea, to cover our occupation of China and Korea. From 11 October to 1 November, the *Boxer* was used as home base for CVG-93 pilots who were participating in "show of force" flights covering our occupation forces in the areas of T'singtao, Taku, Tiensin, Chinwangtao and T'ang-shan—the North China coast from the Great Wall south to Taku.

Early in 1950, the *Boxer* was back again in the Far East on a similar mission. Adm. Forrest Sherman, CNO, was determined that the Navy must be ready for a shooting war. He ordered the Seventh Fleet, particularly in its airpower, to be strengthened and sent it on a show-the-flag parade. Adm.

Arthur W. Radford, Pacific Fleet commander, enthusiastically concurred.

No sooner said than done—the *Boxer* was ready in nine days. Capt. John B. Moss had to accomplish everything quickly: 400 members of his crew whose enlistments were due to expire had to be replaced; old aircraft had to be off-loaded, new types put aboard, and hundreds of stores procured and stowed. Again and again the *Boxer* was to be pushed for time.

It was later to prove dramatically appropriate that the *Boxer* which had engaged in a show-of-strength aftermath to hostilities in 1945 should step into that role once again in what proved to be a prelude to hostilities in Korea.

The *Boxer* with her escorts set out at once on a long tour which included Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Indo-China and Yokosuka. On 5 April, the most significant stop was made—Inchon Harbor, Korea—though its significance had to be lighted up by later events. There President Syngman Rhee made the visitors welcome: "You are our friends. Come again, come often and stay longer."

TWO MONTHS, 19 days later, the *Boxer*, now under the command of Capt. Cameron Briggs, was back, this time with the weapons so desperately needed to hold Pusan. It was on this trip that the *Boxer* made a carrier speed record of crossing the Pacific. In September, the *Boxer* was back again for the rendezvous at Inchon. She had a time getting there, sparring for three days with Typhoon *Kezia*.

But the *Boxer* finally made Sasebo late the evening of the 14th for a brief refueling stop, then raced for her appointment and made it on time! At noon D-Day, September 15, the *Boxer* with Air Group Two was part of the might of Task Force 77 supporting the Inchon landings.

Launching her first strike, even before joining the formation, the *Boxer* stepped out in fighting trim to deliver her quota of lethal loads on the defenses of Inchon and bombarded enemy reinforcements on the road to Seoul.

Throughout the next two weeks, the *Boxer* was a free-wheeling warrior, knocking out bridges, railroads, vehicles, and making strikes on all manner of Red-held targets.

On 15 October, for the first time since World War II, four fast carriers—the *Valley Forge*, the *Philippine Sea*, the



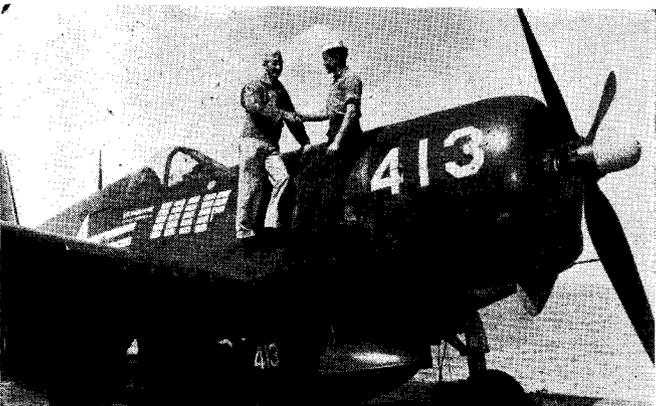
ADM. H. M. Martin, Commander Seventh Fleet (center), confers with LCDr. A. Y. Sturdivant (left) and Cdr. J. M. Connel, ACI



PANTHERS have packed a real punch in the air offensive. Here a line of the F9F's is being fueled in preparation for a strike



LT. JOHN H. Toler shows three other pilots their next targets on a grid-map aboard the USS Boxer during operations off Korea



LT. R. D. Vanasse and R. L. Fields, plane captain, stand on the wing to congratulate each other on 120th mission of their F4U

*Boxer* and the *Leyte*—were sailing together. The big event was signalled by administering a heavy drubbing to the enemy. In the all-out offensive, 392 planes were dishing it out over 6,000 square miles of territory.

Early in November with the race for the Yalu River in full progress, the *Boxer* was released from her support role to return to the United States for her long overdue overhaul. The *Busy Bee* was heralded as the first carrier to return from the Korean War, and her welcome was one of the warmest. But her stay home was not for long—the Chinese Communists had entered the war; so all work was speeded up to ready the *Boxer* for a return bout.

On 26 March 1951, she once again joined TF-77. She was greeted with unconcealed joy on the part of the *Valley Forge* whose relief she was.

The *Boxer* brought with her "the modern Minute Men," Air Group 101, the first all-Reserve air group to go into battle in the Korean conflict. The Reserve squadrons came from the Naval air stations at Glenview, Dallas, Olathe and Memphis. Bad weather jinxed operations for the first three days with the Task Force, but beginning the 30th, a full schedule was in order—close air support, recco, strikes against railroads and bridges, CAP, anti-submarine patrols and gunfire spotting.

After topping off on the afternoon of 8 April, the Task Force proceeded south for special air operations off Formosa designed to remind the Chinese Reds that a formidable naval force was within striking distance.

With only brief rest periods between rounds, the *Boxer* continued to deliver telling and staggering blows on her Communist opponents. She came out of her corner to counter the Communist spring offensive. Dropping thousands of frag bombs and expending millions of bullets as well as bombs and rockets, the *Boxer* delivered punches that helped to send the enemy reeling.

Just after the middle of June and a short rest between rounds, the *Boxer* took advantage of fine flying weather in air support operations; flights were cancelled only one night.

WITH JULY came a special opportunity. CTF-77 had planned special fireworks for the Fourth of July for the North Koreans and the Chinese Communist forces at Wonsan, but it had to be postponed until 6 July. Delay did not affect its deadliness and the drubbing reduced the usefulness of Wonsan to the enemy.

During late July and August, the *Boxer* was back "on the line" delivering hammer blows in support of the U.N. ground forces in Korea.

September was a "rolling stock and bridge breaking" month. Track breaking at intervals of about one mile overtaxed the ability of the Communist forces to repair them. It was a great outdoor sport.

The blood appeal was answered by the *Boxer* in strength twice. On 2 October 1951, just before she returned to the States, 2,377 pints of blood were collected with an additional 400 pints pledged. Previously, during the overhaul period, a response by the same high percentage of the crew to an appeal for blood made them the greatest single group of donors on record.

The next day the *Boxer* set out for Japan and from thence to points east, arriving in San Diego on 24 October 1951. Such a large number of families were on hand, including the more than 100 children born to *Boxer* families who were there to meet their fathers, that special bleachers had been erected.

It was a great day for a great carrier. Swift, ready, eager, willing, the *Boxer* had carried the battle to the enemy. In valor, she had proved herself a worthy champion of the Fleet.