

THE SECOND carrier in the Korean conflict, the *Philippine Sea*, is living up to her fighting name, memorial to two great naval battles in 1944. Five days after her arrival in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, on 31 July 1950, she was sending her fighters against the enemy.

Making her debut after World War II, the *Philippine Sea* was put in commission in 1946. Very shortly she embarked upon a series of tours, an appropriate introduction to naval society for a fighting lady.

She stepped into her starring role as flagship of RAdm. Richard E. Byrd and rendezvoused with *Operation High-jump* at Antarctica 2 January 1947. On the 29th of the month, Adm. Byrd and his party were flown from the *Philippine Sea* to make their polar explorations. It was the first time R4D's had ever been launched from a carrier.

Returning to the United States the end of the year, the big carrier operated in the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Early in 1948 with Air Group Nine aboard, she headed for the Mediterranean to join Adm. Sherman's Fleet.

Flying the flag of ComCarDivFour, RAdm. Ralph Jennings, the *Philippine Sea* carried out the diplomatic task of showing the American ensign in France, Greece, Tunisia and Sicily, and the men learned something of foreign finance. After visiting Tangiers, they reported the lesson this way: "We changed pounds for francs, francs for lires, lires for drachmas, drachmas for pounds, and in the end, we had bought nothing, but had lost \$11.50."

The end of 1948 found the *Philippine Sea* exploring the lower rim of the Arctic Circle in cold weather operations designed to test equipment.

In January 1949, she was off to the Mediterranean again with Air Group Seven embarked.

Early autumn brought the ship once more into the Caribbean, this time with CVG-1 aboard. Later she went to Quonset Point, but as spring approached, she went to the Caribbean to make demonstration cruises with guests of the Secretary of the Navy—the Armed Forces Industrial College, the Air War College and the Armed Forces Staff College. As host to VIP's and guests from other services, the *Philippine Sea* won the sobriquet of *Showboat*.

On 31 May 1950, the *Phil Sea* passed through the Panama Canal, her officers and men little dreaming that she was on the first leg of her journey into battle.

By 31 July, she reached Buckner Bay and joined the *Valley Forge* which had been the only U. S. carrier in the opening weeks of the Korean conflict.

On 5 August, as flagship of RAdm. E. C. Ewen, Com-CarDiv One, the *Philippine Sea* became a fighting lady in fact when she launched her first strike.

FIGHTING 'SHOWBOAT'

This is the third in a series of brief carrier histories and takes the USS Philippine Sea through her first tour in the Korean conflict.

From that day to the 13th of August, the *Phil Sea* conducted combat flight operations against enemy forces that were trying to break through the United Nations' Pusan perimeter lines. From the 16th to the 20th of August, carrier fliers gave air support to the UN ground forces and bombed key bridges in the Seoul area. One bridge that went was the Han river bridge, the destruction of which was called for by the Supreme Command.

FROM THE start, aggressive attack characterized the fighting record of the *Showboat*. Strike after strike, her airborne forces sent down a rain of bombs. As many as 140 strikes a day were launched from her decks by CVG-11.

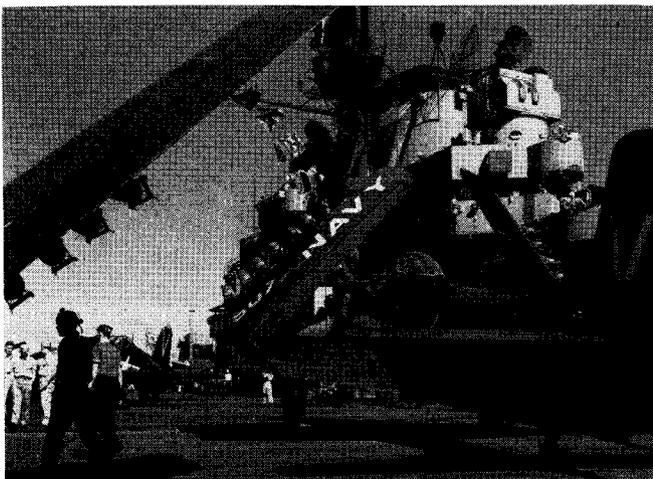
In her cruise book, the *Philippine Sea* bills Inchon, the big landing in September, as the place "where the impossible didn't take any longer," and reports "Adm. Ewen's End Run" as follows:

"The *Showboat* played a major role in the first Korean amphibious operation. In the days before D-Day, it was our job to search out and destroy all enemy troops in a position to relieve the Seoul garrison. Our pre-invasion sweeps and strikes kept the North Korean reserves pinned down away from the invasion area, and made nearby airfields inoperative.

"When the Marines stormed the beaches at Wolmi-Do and fought their way into Seoul, our planes furnished close support. Time after time we hit road blocks and other strong positions within a stone's throw of our advancing troops, without any 'friendly' troops being hurt. This was close support in the true sense.

"The successful invasion, plus the occupation of strategic points immediately afterwards, trapped hundreds of thousands of enemy troops along the 'Pusan Perimeter.' It was the Commies' turn to fight for their lives."

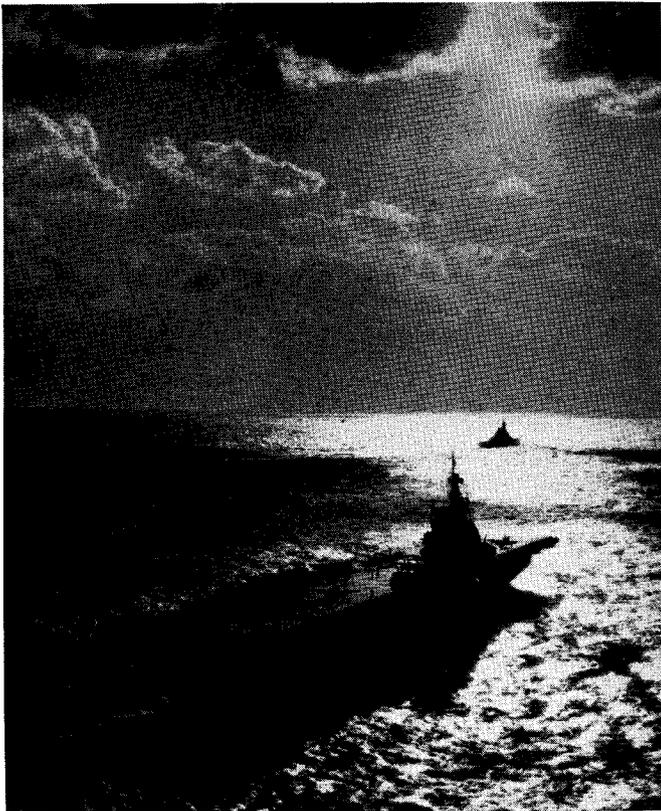
Two months later the Chinese Communists surprised the



FLIGHT DECK CREWMEN WALK BETWEEN PLANES PRIOR TO KOREAN STRIKE



PANTHER JETS ARE COVERED WITH SNOW WITHIN ONE HOUR OF TAKE-OFF



U.N. ground troops with a smashing drive south, down the middle of the peninsula. Planes from the *Phil Sea* dived through snow and sleet to hold back the Red hordes.

It was a red letter day for the carrier on 9 November when LCdr. W. T. Amen, CO of VF-111, flying a *Panther* jet shot down the first MIG-15 jet fighter ever to check out at the hands of a US Navy pilot.

Battle Report, Vol. VI, describes it this way: "The *Philippine Sea's* decks resembled Mardi Gras and New Year's Eve when the first jet landed with the news that Tom Amen had knocked off a *Mig*. There hadn't been anything comparable to this since World War II. The Admiral would write a citation and the cook would bake a cake."

The Marine Corps has participated in hundreds of history-making battles, but their midwinter drive from the Choshin Reservoir to Hungnam will be one of the most famous of her stubborn, valiant, battle-starred career.



1000-LB BOMBS ARE READIED FOR LOADING ON DOUGLAS SKYRAIDERS

Throughout the long retreat from the Yalu river, the *Philippine Sea's Panther* jets, *Skyraider* attack bombers and *Corsair* fighter planes blasted the path for the trapped Marines. Hill after hill was cleared all the way to Hungnam where the *Phil Sea* and other carriers of Task Force 77 sent up a virtual aerial umbrella. Hundreds of carrier planes swarmed over the tiny evacuation perimeter from which 150,000 troops and civilians came to the sea.

Putting into Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, in late March for rest and repair, the *Philippine Sea* exchanged Air Group 11 for Air Group 2 from the *Valley Forge*. CVG-11 had earned the trip home.

From the Sea of Japan in April, the *Philippine Sea* led Task Force 77 and other elements of the Seventh Fleet down through the Formosa Strait and the South China Sea.

In the Formosa Strait, planes from the *Showboat* paraded over the China mainland and the island of Formosa in an attempt to bolster Formosa's will to resist. The force steamed back to Korea three days later, in time to provide close air support to the ground forces.

Every Red offensive of the spring of 1951 brought to the enemy staggering losses in men and equipment, and the *Showboat's* planes did their part.

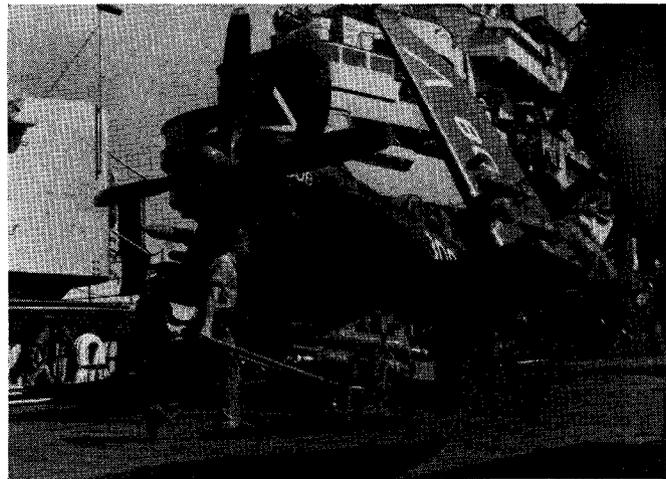
THE BIG carrier could look back on its ten months in the Korean theater with great pride. She had been away from her home port of San Diego for 342 days, just 23 days short of a full year. During this period she had been underway a total of 261 days and steamed over 104,736 nautical miles, approximately 4 1/3 times around the world.

Her planes had flown over 12,000 sorties. They had delivered the heaviest ordnance load ever flown from the deck of an *Essex*-class carrier and launched the heaviest ordnance load ever carried in combat with a single-engine airplane.

Racing home from the Korean war, the *Philippine Sea* set a new Pacific crossing record, breaking the *Boxer's* mark by five and a half hours. The *Showboat* made the run from Yokosuka to San Francisco in 7 days, 13 hours.

With a gigantic homeward bound pennant waving astern, the *Philippine Sea* steamed under the Golden Gate bridge at 12 noon on 9 June 1951.

In presenting a report for the archives of the U. S. Navy, it is pointed out that the men of the ship and its embarked air groups "feel they have performed exceptionally valuable and enduring service in the present conflict." There follows another sentence: "The pardonable pride of these officers and men in their accomplishments is fully shared by the Commanding Officer."



ROBINSON, AO2, WHEELS 100-LB BOMB PAST PARTIALLY-LOADED F4U