



## NAVY WINGS OVER BERLIN

**A**LTHOUGH TTTT may never appear in any glossary of Navy abbreviations, to the members of VR-6 and VR-8 these letters will long symbolize a grueling but ultimately satisfying experience. For "Ten Tons to Templehof" is the label that Lt. Buergey of VR-6 applied to the daily trips of his squadron's current tour of duty, and the label has stuck.

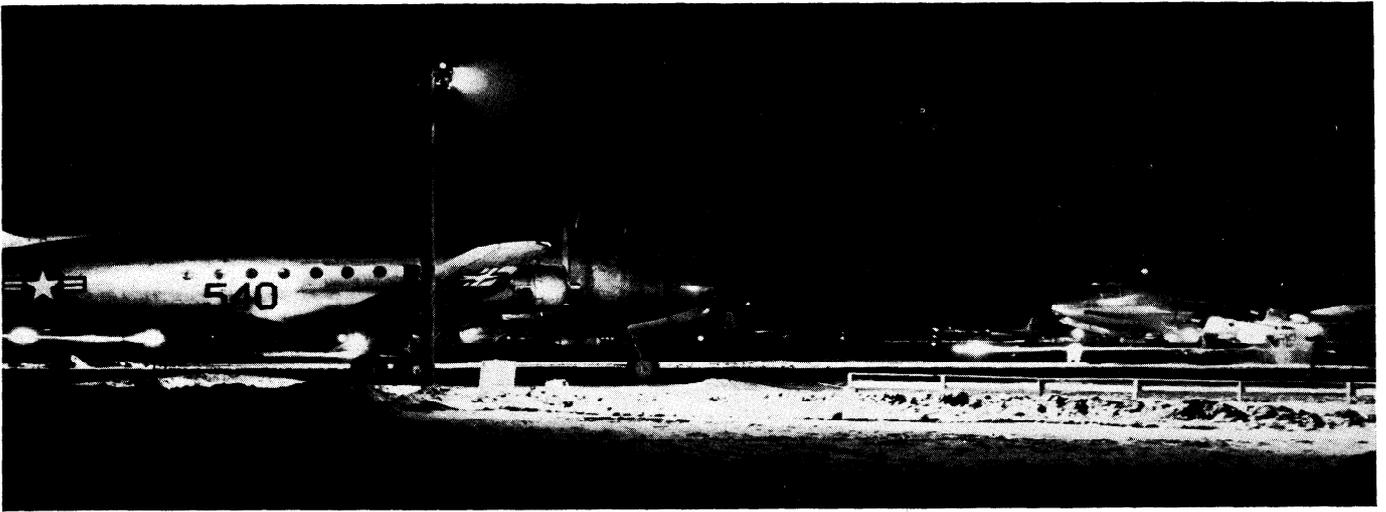
These two Navy MATS squadrons are carrying the banner of naval aviation in the 20th century miracle of air transport, the Berlin Airlift. Under the direction of Cdr. Harry P. Badger and Cdr. James O. Vosseller, the two squadrons each are operating 12 planes from Rhein/Main field near Frankfurt and have made several outstanding contributions to the efficiency of the Airlift.

In their first two months of operations the two Navy squadrons flew 31,621.1 tons of supplies into Berlin in 3036.5 sorties. VR-8's record was particularly enviable. On 16 December the squadron flew 51 sorties to set an Airlift record for number of trips flown by an individual squadron during a 24-hour

period. On that day the squadron's efficiency mark was 222%. The efficiency mark is an indicator of the load a squadron carries compared with what it is expected to carry with the planes and personnel it has available.

Squadron Eight consistently topped its quota, and from 23 December to 6 January inclusive it had a record of 14 consecutive days with an efficiency mark of over 100%. Its average efficiency during this period was 138.3% Eight's habit of showing up at the top of the Rhein/Main ratings keeps Air Force squadrons hopping to prevent its acquiring a permanent lease on first place. Squadrons VR-6 and VR-8 came to Germany to fly supplies into Berlin and they are doing it.

The story of their participation began last fall when Gen. Lucius D. Clay made his request for more four-engine aircraft to carry the necessities of life into blockaded Berlin during the crucial winter months. VR-6, stationed in Guam, suddenly was torn loose from its coral foundations, and VR-8 traded the sunny skies of Honolulu for the cold fogs of Berlin.



**Flight** operations in the Navy areas are conducted on a 24-hour basis; floodlights recently installed have been a big

help in loading and gassing; view shows the VR-6 operations area at Rhein/Main as R5D's are readied for night *Vittles* run

**T**HE SUDDENNESS of the departure orders came as a blow to every officer and man in the two squadrons. Very little scuttlebutt preceded them. Squadron Eight got the word in Honolulu on 27 October, and on the 29th the first group of six planes bade "aloha" to Diamond Head. On Guam, Six received its orders 30 October, and by 1 November its first contingent of four planes took off for the trek to Germany.

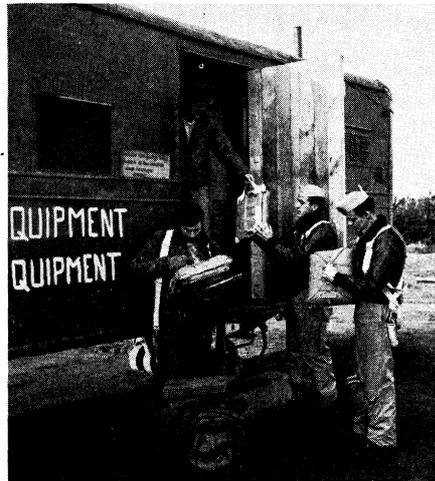
Two days in which to prepare for a move more than half way around the world was not much time, so preparations at both squadrons were conducted at a feverish pitch. VR-8 immediately dispatched an R5D from Hickam field to gather up all detachment personnel and layover crews at Johnston, Kwajalein, and Guam. Lt. Cdr. E. P. O'Brien had his wife and family on Johnston Island and he just managed to squeeze them aboard the plane as it returned.

Lt Chester L. Robertson had spent only two days of his 10-day leave at Hilo when he received a wire: "Return to Oahu immediately!" "I thought some of my buddies were pulling my leg," Robertson said, "so I called Cdr. Vosseller to verify the message. He assured me that it was no joke, and although I had to leave my car, my family and I caught the next HAL plane."

Personnel of VR-6 were even more scattered. When the dispatch reached Lt. Richard D. Beckner's crew members in Shanghai they went on a souvenir buying spree, tried to round up all the squadron's laundry, and said goodbye to the squadron's many friends. Special planes had to be dispatched to Tokyo and Manila to get Lt. Warren's and Lt. Tranbarger's crews, but by 2 November all of Six's eight aircraft had departed Guam for Germany.

Enough personnel were taken by both squadrons to furnish a minimum of

three crews per plane and adequate maintenance personnel. When each plane departed it was loaded to the



Chief E. Trawick checks out flight gear to Davidson, Ens. R. Fuller, H. Madsen



Robert H. Davidson checks the lashings on load of flour, ten tons to Templehof

limit with spare parts, personal gear, men and officers. Knowing that both groups were going from a tropical to a cold winter climate, naval supply both at Guam and at Honolulu did a great job in outfitting the men bound for the Airlift. Parkas, wool sweaters, boots, wool socks, gloves, winter foul weather hats, wool overalls, and winter foul weather jackets were among the items dug up from the supply bins on the islands. Items not available there were picked up at Moffett and Jacksonville.

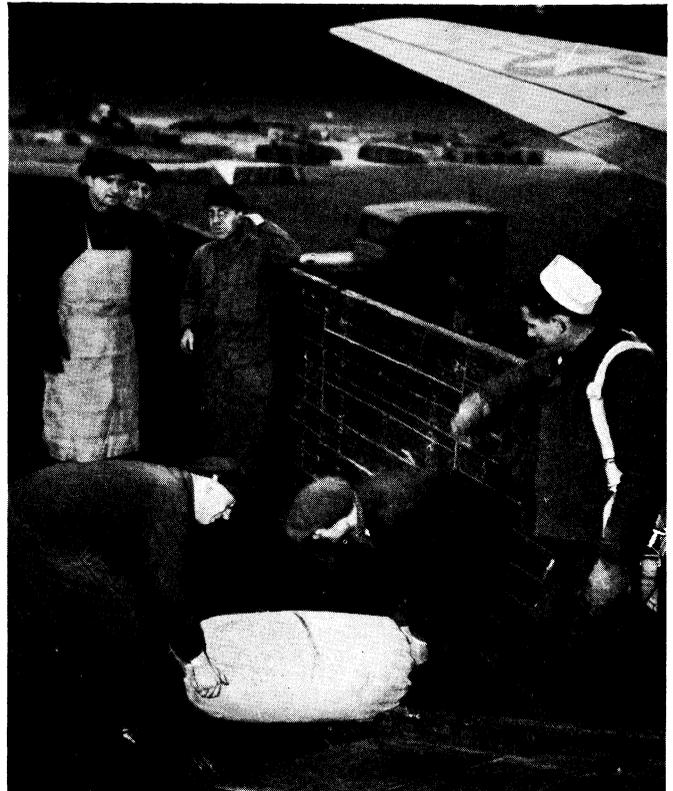
Planes from both squadrons made their first stop in the States at Moffett field. During the exodus from the Pacific, VR-8 traded four of its plush planes to the Marines for cargo jobs, and both squadrons made exchanges at Moffett field in California so that all aircraft destined for Germany were low-time planes. At Moffett 17 officers and 15 enlisted men were sent TAD from VR-8 to VR-6 to make up for the shortage in the latter squadron when it acquired four more R5D's. The magnificent efforts of the Fleet Logistic Support Wing at Moffett were responsible for the speedy and successful dispatch of the 24 planes comprising the two squadrons.

**T**HE R5D's were scheduled from Moffett to Westover field, Massachusetts, as soon as they were readied with gas stops at San Antonio and Jacksonville. At Jax, crews also got a taste of liberty and the planes some special electronic gear. One plane, piloted by Lt. Richard Gerszeuski already had the latter aboard, and it headed straight for Westover from Moffett, landing only at Olathe enroute. This gave him a head start on all the rest.

From the MATS debarkation field at Westover, all planes headed for Rhein/Main in Germany, with planned stops



**Groundcrewmen** of VR-6 thaw out around an open-air stove between engine checks before the ready room hut was built



Civilian unloading crews at the Berlin end of the Airlift hop make quick work of getting the precious cargo off the planes

in Newfoundland and the Azores. After the stop at Lagens field in the Azores, one might have thought they were given the order "Deploy." Some nasty fog and low ceilings clung to the Rhein/Main area and only Airlift planes were being cleared into that field. Navy aircraft were diverted throughout Europe: to Marseilles, Vienna, Paris, Lyon, Munich, and Lyneham RAF base in England.

Because of his head start from Mof-fett, Lt. Gerszeuski was the first to land at Rhein/Main. He landed early in the morning of 9 November and that night he made the first trip for the Navy into Berlin. Two planes were sent up the corridor as fast as they arrived; but after traveling so far, crews and planes had to catch their breath, so Airlift authorities granted them a 24-hour preparation period before making the first trip.

Squadron Eight's last plane arrived on 15 November, while Six waited until 22 November before its last plane arrived after an engine change at Lyon, France. Crews of both squadrons were scheduled out as they arrived, but shortly a rotation system was inaugurated so that they had a definite time off with rest periods intermittently.

At the beginning the Navy received considerable kidding from their Air Force colleagues for their peculiar nautical terminology. The Air Force soon

learned, however, that the runway is the deck, left is port and right starboard, a C-54 is an R5D, and that a latrine is a head. It was Lt. Ormand C. Fowler who learned that the Air Force does not consider "wheels" to be an automobile.

He was taxiing into his "hard stand" or parking ramp at Rhein/Main after a flight to Berlin and called the tower, requesting that a "set of wheels" be sent out to the plane. The tower "rogered." When Fowler cut his engines, he looked out to see-not the crew pickup as he had expected-but a set of wheels for the R5D. "Wheels" in the Air Force are wheels.

The Navy was new to Western Germany and conversely few Navy personnel had seen this part of the world. The Germans didn't know just exactly what the officers were in their aviation greens. Shortly after arriving, Lt. Cdr. Eugene L. Lowrance of VR-8 was sight-seeing on the Bahnhof in Frankfurt one afternoon when he noticed a couple of Germans eyeing him critically.

"Finally I heard one of them whisper to the other, 'Russkie'," Lowrance said. "I didn't want them to keep that impression so I got out my ID card and showed them where it said US Navy." Their frowns turned to grins.

The two squadrons soon got accustomed to their new assignments. VR-8 was placed in the 61st Troop Carrier Group on the south side of the Rhein/

Main strip and VR-6 was integrated into the 1422nd Air Transport Group across the strip from Eight. The 1422nd was later redesignated the 513th T. C. Group.

The urgency of the Airlift was apparent immediately in the way loads of flour, coal, and other supplies were started aboard at Rhein/Main before the engines were cut and crew could leave the plane. They were unloaded so swiftly at Tempelhof that a mobile snack bar and jeep-equipped aerologist were supplied so crews would not leave the vicinity of their planes.

**W**INTER weather lived up to predictions. It became routine to fly east and west on the corridor on instruments and to make GCA approaches at both Tempelhof and Rhein/Main. All the Navy crews were thankful that they had been required to make all their approaches on GCA while with NATS.

When the GCA minimums of 400 feet and a mile existed at Tempelhof, the approach to runway 27 left was particularly interesting. Lt. Robert C. Haggerton, his copilot Ens. J. Richard Eaton, and plane captain AD3 Louis Marconi were on the final a half mile from touchdown when Marconi cried, "My God! I just saw someone's house go by!"

A few moments thereafter they broke out and made a perfect landing. The



LT. M. CARVER, PERSONNEL OFFICER, GREETES CREW WITH 'PAPER WORK'



FOOD AND AEROLOGY READY AT TEMPELHOF; BRIEFING JEEP MEETS CREW

final takes the aircraft right down between two rows of six-story apartment houses, and it requires a sharp GCA outfit to keep them out of the chimney pots. The GCA operators on the Airlift are probably the best in the business, for they bring their aircraft in safely when the soup seems thick enough to cut.

**I**N THE month of December alone the Airlift had 5,750 GCA landings. Of this total, 699 were in weather below the IFR minimum; 4,353 were actual GCA landings under IFR conditions; 694 were practice, 4 emergencies.

With the fog and rain of winter came the mud. Both squadrons had taxi ramps and hard stands made of perforated steel plating, but soon these areas as well as those around the operations huts became a sea of mud. The 70,000-pound planes would force the steel plating right into the earthen base.



THE ONLY ENLISTED PILOTS FLYING VITTLIES

Cdr. C. C. Howerton, who directed the operations of VR-6 until Cdr. Badger took over on 12 January, mentioned to a visiting Air Force officer one day that one of the machinist's mates lost a carburetor in the mud one day and spent eight hours locating it again. There was a twinkle in his eye, but it seemed possible.

Around Christmas the weather improved a little and crew spirits im-

proved right along with it. On an occasional clear, crisp, cold day, pilots often broke the monotony with an occasional quip over the radio. Once, when giving his position over the Fulda beacon, the following flowed from a naval ensign:

*All Big Easys from one-one-two,  
I have a short message for you.  
Stand by one, while I give you a fix!  
We're over Fulda at twenty-six,  
Cruising six thousand and in the clear.  
Sure am glad nine of you guys are here.*

A *Big Easy* plane is one headed east over the corridor, while a *Big Willie* is one flying west. A *Big Fat Willie* is one returning west with a load.

Although they were far from their homes and families, Christmas found the squadrons not lacking in Christmas spirit. They jointly adopted the Steinheim Orphanage near Offenbach and contributed a truckload of clothing, food, candy, and toys to the 70 children living there. On 22 December representatives from the squadrons, including Lt. (jg) Karl L. Henn, Lt. Donald Allison, Lt. Maurice B. Jackson, ADC W. H. Stevens, ADC Earl L. Hockey, and AD3 William F. Bowser, delivered the food and toys to the orphanage and were an audience to a Christmas play presented by the children. Following the play, the Navy men passed out toys



MURPHY AD1 HELPS BRING CHRISTMAS TO KIDS

to the youngsters. Bedlam broke loose momentarily, for to many of the children it was the first such Christmas.

On Christmas Eve Lt. (jg) Henn, Lt. Allison, Lt. Cdr. L. H. Reagan, and Lt. Cdr. J. A. Morrison assembled food which they had purchased and any candy and nuts which they could "scrounge" from the BOQ into nine Christmas packages. These they delivered to destitute German families whose addresses had been secured from the German Youth Association.

When basketball season rolled around, Squadrons Six and Eight combined their talents to form the Rhein/Main *Tars*. Although work came first and they often had difficulty in rounding up enough players for a game, the *Tars* were soon a threat in the Northern USAFE Basketball League. The *Tars'* roster included Ens. J. R. Eaton, SN Leland G. Hampton, AD3 Louis Marconi, AN Robert C. Schwartz, AM2 Robert P. Burns from VR-6, and YN-2 Vernon Bronson, AM3 Richard M. Nesbitt, AD1 Robert J. Stein, AL3 Leo G. Walchuk, AT3 James F. Paschall, and AA Thomas Pollet of VR-6.

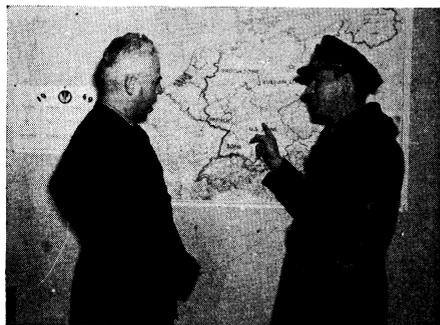
On 22 December WAVE Lt. Margaret Carver reported to VR-8 as personnel officer, becoming the only WAVE on duty east of the Azores and the first one to see service in Germany. Lt. Carver was one of the first women to be commissioned in the regular Navy last fall, and she came to duty in Germany from the VR-8 detachment at Fairfield-Suisun field in California.

**S**QUADRON Eight boasted not only the sole WAVE, but also the only enlisted pilots flying the *Vittles* run. Shortly after they arrived with the squadron, Chief Aviation Pilot Wesley T. Christianson was checked out as a plane commander. Aviation Pilot First Class Joseph A. Popp has been flying as copilot with the group in the airlift.

Engineering officers and personnel in the two squadrons had their hands full in their endeavors to keep the R5D's operating continuously. Heretofore they had been accustomed to aircraft lay-overs between hops in which to correct minor discrepancies and make minor inspections. In Airlift operations tires had to be changed, oil leaks fixed, plugs changed, etc., just as soon as the planes taxied into the hard stands and very often in sub-freezing weather.

For the first few-weeks aircraft were flown to the Air Force base at Burtonwood, England for their 200-hour checks, but soon it became evident that checks could be pulled in the improvised nose-bays at Rhein/Main just as efficiently and in much less time. Engineering officers Lt. W. H. Jones of VR-6 and Lt. Cdr. E. P. O'Brien of VR-8 soon had their crews pulling checks in as little as 24 hours.

**R**IGHT along with the engineering difficulties of cold weather, mud, and shortage of personnel were those of Supply. Supply's biggest headache was parts procurement. During operations one night Ens. W. L. Reinhard of the engineering department of VR-6 temporarily solved the problem of a missing bungee string anchor bracket for one of the R5D landing gear. Just as soon as one plane went out of com-



CDR. BADGER RELIEVED CDR. HOWERTON, VR-6

mission he would scavenge this part for use on a plane going back into commission. On another night fluorescent lights were switched from plane to plane to keep them flying.

Perhaps the heaviest load of the entire operation fell upon the Medical Department. Lt. (jg) R. D. Nauman of VR-6 was the only doctor to come with the two squadrons, and before long he and his staff of six pharmacist's mates had their hands full. Common colds were particularly numerous, and at one time it was estimated that 80 percent of the Navy personnel had the sniffles. "Doc" Nauman set up his dispensary in the Betts Barracks area where, as the only medical activity, he served 2400 Airlift personnel.



TEMPELHOF AIRPORT IN THE SUMMER; NAVY CREWS HAVEN'T FOUND VISIBILITY SUCH AS THIS

On 19 December Lt. O. C. Fowler tried to relieve the food shortage in Berlin all by himself. When Fowler boarded his R5D he found that his cargo of flour had not been secured by tie-downs. The reason, he discovered, was that the flight clerk had gone for 50 more bags of flour. Apparently he had found the load short. When the load was complete Fowler found that the plane took excessive power for take-off and required more than the normal settings to maintain position on the corridor. He noted the count of bags as they were unloaded at Tempelhof. Instead of the normal 21,000-lb. load, he delivered to the beleaguered city 297 bags of flour, weighing a total of 26,730 pounds. He had flown almost three tons more than his normal load.

Rhein/Main is the busiest of the Airlift fields, with six Air Force squadrons of approximately 12 aircraft each



EVEN THE COSTUMING (R) SHOWS UNIFICATION

and the two Navy squadrons operating from it. In addition to these, five Air Force squadrons from Weisbaden use the corridor to Tempelhof. Flight operations, consequently, are complex.

Airplanes are cleared for take-off at Rhein/Main at intervals of from three to five minutes, depending on the

weather. They climb to their assigned altitudes along a path of homing-beacons and range stations. On the eastern trip all pilots report their time and altitude over the Fulda beacon, thus enabling them to correct their intervals before entering the Russian Zone.

**T**RIPS in the Russian Zone have been uneventful for Navy pilots except for an occasional Russian plane in the distance. Forty minutes out of Fulda, aircraft report to Tempelhof airways and are taken over for their let-down and landing approach by the Tempelhof controllers. Because maintenance of proper airspeed is so important, Air Force control planes often fly formation with the Airlift R5D's to make certain that their airspeed indicators are calibrated properly. The return corridor from Berlin follows a northerly route with the primary reporting station being the Braunschweig beacon in the British Zone. After passing Fritzlar beacon, Frankfurt control takes over for the descent and landing at Rhein/Main. Airlift planes rely heavily on homer beacons, and proper "bird dog" operations is a must in all aircraft.

Aircraft departing from Weisbaden for Berlin are sandwiched into the Rhein/Main traffic by means of "block" control. That is, Rhein/Main aircraft are held on the ground until the Weisbaden planes have a proper interval.

Many of the crews have taken advantage of their rest leaves for sight-seeing, visiting such places as Paris, Switzerland, Denmark, Holland, and Luxembourg. After their long trip from the Pacific and this opportunity to see most of the countries of Western Europe, the members of VR-6 and VR-8 are convinced there is truth in the slogan. "Join the Navy and see the world."