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A PRESENTATION GIVEN TO B-17 Crewmen and Wingmen Group in  
South Gate, CA on November 21, 1993 by  
Thomas Wilson Reese, EMC, USN, Ret.

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to be your guest speaker.

I would like to give you some information leading up to my going to the USS HORNET CV 8.

I was stationed on the USS WHITNEY AD 4 in Pearl Harbor prior to September 1941. In June or July 1941 the WHITNEY received requests for personnel to be part of the Commissioning crew of the USS HORNET CV 8 which was being built in Newport News, Virginia. Nine of us volunteered. The last of August 1941 WHITNEY went to San Diego, California, for 10 days leave and recreation.

During that time I met Lee and we were married 8 days later. When I went back aboard ship after our marriage, I reported aboard at 0800. At 0900 I was given my orders to leave at 5 p.m. that evening by train for Newport News, Va. to go aboard HORNET CV 8.

I contacted the other 8 men and got them to agree to delay our stay in San Diego until 5 p.m. (1700) the next day. No question was ever raised by the Conductor.

After the commissioning on 20 Oct 1941 trial runs and tests were made. During the first part of March 1942, two B-25 airplanes were lifted aboard. We went out to sea to see if those B-25s could take off of a carrier. They did, successfully. We then came around to the West Coast, stopping in San Diego a day or two.

From San Diego we went to Alameda Naval Air Station, arriving there on 20 March 1942. We loaded 16 B-25 airplanes and Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle and his crewmen (79) aboard.

On 2 April 1942 we sailed from San Francisco under sealed orders.

At the designated time Captain Marc A. Mitscher, the Commanding Officer of USS HORNET opened his orders. They were to rendezvous with USS ENTERPRISE CV 6 and its supporting ships to proceed to within about 400 miles of Japan where the Doolittle Raiders would be launched for our first attack on Japan.

When Captain Mitscher opened his orders they stated that we may have to be sacrificed to build up the moral of the American people. Mitscher then stated: "I assure you that I will bring you back!"

We got to within 600 miles of Japan when a Japanese patrol

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Boat #23, Nitto Maru spotted us and sent the message to Japan.

Admiral William F. Halsey, in command of Task Force 16, on ENTERPRISE ordered the Doolittle raiders to be launched.

Lt. Colonel Doolittle was the first off, with 467 feet clearance. All 16 B-25s were launched in about an hour & 20 minutes. Doolittle took off about 0800.

At 1445 (2:45 p.m.) our Task Force which was headed back to Pearl Harbor after launching Doolittle's Raiders, we intercepted a Japanese and English/<sup>message</sup> announcing Tokyo was being bombed--Tokyo, Kobe, Yokosuka, and Nagoya were the areas bombed.

We went to Pearl Harbor a week later and received orders to go to The Coral Sea area to assist the USS LEXINGTON CV 2 and the USS YORKTOWN CV 5 in the Coral Sea Battle, on 8 May 1942.

We were within 500 miles of Coral Sea when we received orders to return to Pearl Harbor--that the Coral Sea Battle was over.

The USS LEXINGTON was sunk in that battle and the YORKTOWN CV 5 received a bomb hit.

The Pearl Harbor Navy Yard was given three days to repair YORKTOWN's bomb damage before heading to Midway Island where we engaged the Japanese enemy in The Battle of Midway.

The United States had 23 ships and Japan had 90 plus. We lost YORKTOWN and the Japanese lost four carriers. That battle was June 4-7, 1942, and began to turn the war in our favor.

We returned to Pearl where we received radar equipment and were trained on its use.

On 17 August 1942 we went to assist in the Guadalcanal battle. On 24 August 1942 ENTERPRISE CV 6 got a bomb and on 31 August 1942 SARATOGA CV 3 got torpedoed.

On 15 September 1942 USS WASP CV 7 was sunk. On 24 October 1942 ENTERPRISE had been repaired, and joined HORNET. Two days later, 26 October 1942 HORNET and ENTERPRISE with support ships were attacked by Japanese in the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands. HORNET was sunk in that battle.

HORNET survivors were picked up by USS MUSTIN DD 413, USS ANDERSON DD 411, USS RUSSELL DD 414, USS HUGHES DD 410, USS MORRIS DD 417, USS BARTON DD 599, and USS NORTHAMPTON CA 35 and USS PENSACOLA CA 24. MUSTIN itself picked up me and 336 other survivors. On 27 October we on MUSTIN were transferred to PENSACOLA for transportation to Noumea, New Caladonia.

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We were there for four days before being transferred to SS LURLINE (which had been a pleasure ship) for transportation to San Diego, California.

In San Diego I received orders to go to the USS LEXINGTON CV 16 which was being built in Quincy, Massachusetts. I was part of her crew when commissioned on 17 February 1943; and I served the rest of WW2 on her.

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