17 June, 1945

Dear foe

Our ship today is celebrating the second anniversary of its commissioning. This letter is a brief recapitulation of some of the

things she and her crew have done.

You probably know how we came to be a light carrier. You've read how a Camden, N. J. shipbuilding company had contracted to build nine light cruisers for the Navy. The Monterey was laid down, for instance, as the payton, but the Navy's heavy carrier losses in the early days of the war created a terrible emergency. We are children of that emergency. Instead of six-inch gun turrets, the nine cruisers got flight decks. The first one finished was called the "Independence," and gave her name to the class. We don't mind being called ugly. But we do not like to be called "baby carriers." We may be small as carriers go but we have been playing on the varsity in every game on a rugged schedule. Buby carriers as we know them are escort carriers, some of which were converted from tankers and cargo ships. They have performed magnificently at ferry, convoy, anti-sub, and covering work. But they never have been fast enough to travel, as we have traveled, with fast carrier task forces, carrying the war right to Japan's front porch.

Most of the crew that came aboard two years ago was fresh out of "boots" at Sampson, N. I. Many of that original crew have been transferred to other ships or shore stations but about 200 are still with us. Together, they put the Menterey through her paces on a shakedown cruise to Trinidad. Along the way, they took aboard the first of three air groups that have operated off the flight deck. It was called Air Group Thirty. The Monterey showed off for the Pacific by way of the Panama Canal on 20 September, 1943. She dropped anchor in Pearl Harbor about a month later. We don't claim the rest of the Navy waited for us to get out here before it felt capable of going on the offensive. We merely point out that the offensive began when we arrived and has been going on steadily ever

since.

. Captain Lester T. Hundt, USN, served as our first commander. He left the Monterey to become Communder of the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Fla. A few weeks after his transfer came through, Captain Hundt received the Legion of Merit award for his work aboard here, and we felt we shared in the commendation. Captain Stuart H. Ingersoll, USN, succeeded Captain Hundt. We fought under him at Hollandia in New Guinea: at Truk in the Carolines: in the first and second battles around the Philippines; at Formosa and in attacks on the Bonin and Volcano Islands. Captain John B. Lyon, USN, took over from Captain Ingersoll. We are fighting under him now.

After the Gilberts we shoved off for one of our most dangerous missions, a high speed run to Karling on New Ireland. Our planes made a survise raid on Kavieng Harbor early Christmas morning. We sank several ships and got out fast under attack. Anti-aircraft gunners got their first sure kill there. The plane they hit passed a few feet over the flight deck forward, and crashed on the other side. We went straight back to Kavieng New Year's Day and this time torpedoed a heavy cruiser and chunked a bomb into a light cruiser. Again we got out under furious attack but were back again four days later for the last time. Our planes sank a destroyer and set

another afire. Seven planes chased us and our fighters shot them all down.

The Monterey put into Espiritu Santo at zero hour for the classic Marshalls operation. Our planes worked over Ewajalein and Eniwetok, destroying more than a score of enemy planes. After the Marshalls, we helped make the first raid on Truk in the Carolines. Getting away after a good day's strike in the Truk Lagoon, the Monterey passed close to a sampan drifting along in the trade winds. A destroyer went over to have a look and uncovered 17 Japs hiding under a tarpaulin about the size of a postage stamp. The can took all 17 prisoner and sank the sampan. We were off next for the Marianas. Ships, planes, and other targets of opportunity on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam got their customary burden of fire. After that, Palau.

Captain Hundt left us after Palau. Our first chore under Captain Ingersoll was to help General Douglas MacArthur secure Hollandia, New Guinea. Then we went back to Truk, and got an unpleasant surprise. The Japs came out after us with skill, speed and numbers. Gunfire splashed one torpedo bomber between us and a big carrier, another went down off our fantail, and a third came in and let go a torpedo at point-blank range. The ship spun in its own wake and the tin fish missed by scant yards. That same strike, two

of our Avengers helped a destroyer depth charge an enemy submarine.

Air Group 28 relieved Air Group 30 in August, and we sailed out to help cover the bloody Marianas landings. Here the main Jap Fleet came out to fight. Squadron 28 cut its battle teeth at what is now known as " the Marianas Day Turkey Shoot." Our pilots caught hundreds of Jap planes which had taken off from carriers coming in to land and refuel on Guam. The carnage was awful. Fliers from the Monterey came back to report they alone had surely destroyed 13 planes, plus six probables. Our men went in on the Marianas every day for almost a week, softening up the islands. The ship came in so close to shore that lookouts could see the bitterly contested land under clouds of smoke and dust. Then the Jap Fleet struck in the battle of the Philippine Sea. On 19 June, carrier-born Jap planes made attack after attack and the Monterey went to General Quarters seven times as the enemy kept coming in. Interceptors caught many of them at extreme altitude and only vapor trails and smoke marked those engagements.

Next day, search planes spotted the enemy fleet in mid-afternoon about 200 miles away. Carriers launched their planes even though they knew it would be a long run and a late home coming. The Monterey managed to get four of her Avengers armed and gassed. They roared off and joined the flight, later reporting that their bombs had hit the flight deck of a Jap carrier and set it aftre. But that would be long tense hours later. At 8:30 P. M., lead planes began trickling back. The last of them turned into the landing circle at 11:30. Ships of the force audaciously turned on their lights, and men who had spent so many equatorial nights in utter darkness will always remember how the ocean glowed then like a carrival city. Not even this bold maneuver could save all the homing planes, many of which had used up their gas getting to the target and back. They sat down in the water by the dozen, their gas tanks empty, before their turn came to land. Three of the Monterey planes made it, but the fourth hit the water alongside a destroyer

which picked up the crew.

Our task force next raided the Volcano Islands, and got back in time to join the Leyte expedition. We helped cover the early landings there, swung around to hit Luson, and then steamed on up to Formosa, an important junction on the Tokyo Express. We had an experience there that few of us will ever forget. Jap bombers made repeated attacks on us as their fleet sortied out under the false impression that our force had been seriously crippled. We let them come, hoping for a showdown fight. During the vicious attack, a pair of bombs straddled the Monterey, and a torpedo plane came in, made a pass at us, then wheeled and planted its fish in an escorting cruiser. Another cruiser moved up to take her place, confidently blinking to us that we could relax now. Within a few hours she too was hit and dead in the water. The Jap fleet discovered its error in time and scurried back to shelter. We were glad to get out of a situation that had kept us at general quarters for 24 straight hours.

The Monterey was headed back for Guam when the Japs struck in Leyte Gulf, heavy units of their fleet bringing some of our papy carriers under direct fire. Planes from our group caught parts of the Jap Fleet, and had them under attack as they fled northward. Not long afterward, a typhoon roared into the task force. While the Monterey bucked a 90 kmot wind, she caught fire when a plane broke loose on the hanger deck. The crew turned to fight this new enemy. A negro Steward's Mate with a sheath knife in his teeth scrambled up a stanchion to cut ropes on auxiliary gas tanks. Topside, tremenduous waves broke over the flight deck. A chief Petty Officer fighting the fire fell overboard but the waves were such that he washed back again. Three brave men lost their lives but at the end of two hours the fire was out. Men said afterward they thought little about abandoning ship. They didn't believe they could,

anyway.

We put back to Bremerton, Washington, for repairs. We had been in the front line for more than a year. Our screws had driven us through more than 150,000 miles of dangerous ocean. Our planes and guns had destroyed more than 100 Jap planes. Our bombs had fallen on about 25 enemy ships and dozens of his shore defenses. On November 30, Admiral William F. Halsey presented Captain Ingersoll with the Navy cross and Legion of Merit. In the plan of the day, Captain Ingersoll called it "Your Cross" to acknowledge the part his men had played in the award. All of us were glad to see the States again, and to see you and the rest of the people and things we had thought about ever since we left. Now we're out again. We have a new air group aboard. Probably we won't get back this time until there's no further use for us out here. All of us hope that won't be long.



