

**Elmer Cordray**

**WWII Diary**

**1944 Aboard the USS Essex**

*Keeping a diary was supposed to be a no-no and all of my notes into the diary of our tour had to be done in my bunk with very little light to write. The diary doesn't begin to touch on all of the events and actions that took place.*

Elmer Cordray AOM 1/C  
Air Group 15

## "MY DIARY"

1944

- 2/14 Left pier seven at approximately 8:30 a.m.
- 2/15 Last night, going through Cape Hatteras, we ran into a storm losing fifteen SB2C's. One completely broke loose and went off the fan tail. A couple of fellows were hurt. No flight operations. Hurt my shin and had to see 'Doc.' Laid in my bunk all afternoon.
- 2/16 Operations today.
- 2/17 Passed through West India Isles.
- 2/18 Pulled into the pier at Colone around 5:00 p.m. Planes had left earlier, going to Panama Air Station. On the way Ens. Lippencott was killed in no. 13. A blow to all of us. No liberty tonight.
- 2/19 Pulled out around 4:30 a.m. through the canal. Very warm here. I couldn't do the scenery here justice by trying to describe it. It's beautiful. We had very little clearance going through the locks. Hit port in Balboa in the afternoon. Starboard section got liberty, leaving me to stay aboard.
- 2/20 Left Balboa this morning at approximately 9:30. Pacific very calm compared to the Atlantic. Flight operations.
- 2/21 Saw an SB2C crash after taking off. Pilot got out but gunner went down with ship.
- 2/22 Lost another SB2C. Both got out with few minor cuts. Made the crash on starboard side of ship. Had a 4 - 8 security watch.
- 2/23 Another SB2C crashed about 1.5 miles off the port bow, killing both pilot and gunner. Also headed for San Diego, CA. and today are off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico. Very warm this afternoon.
- 2/24 Reached the lower part of lower California. Starting to get cooler. Planes held a simulated air attack on the Hornet in the afternoon.
- 2/25 Flight operations. Three hops. Another simulated air attack on our carrier. Broke out our jackets. Everything went perfect on flight deck and captain complimented all of us. Still making our way up the coast of California and grows cooler each mile closer we come to San Diego.
- 2/26 No flying. Planes were all taken above on flight deck, except the duds.
- 2/27 Pulled into the port here at North Island, San Diego, CA. at approximately 2:30. I had picked up a ride with another sailor headed for San Gabriel. He took me most of the way and picked up a few more lifts until I finally was ringing the door bell at Aunt Elsie's at 5:30 p.m. She was rather surprised. Got to see Uncle Charles and Dale. Took me to Greyhound bus terminal and caught the 1:00 a.m. bus. Oh yes, I called Virginia and Bob around midnight and got to talk with all of them. Called from Aunt Elsie's.
- 2/28 Arrived at San Diego around 5:30 a.m. from Los Angeles. Ran into Owens and Hoover at the restaurant where I had breakfast. Went over to the Y.M.C.A. and also saw Eppert. Mailed a few postcards and then took liberty boat back to where our ship was docked

- (North Island). Tonight, starboard section had liberty until 2400. During the night, trucks and jeeps were loaded into the hanger deck. About 2,700 Marines came aboard and were scattered throughout the ship, sleeping everywhere. Had the 12 - 4 watch on hanger deck.
- 2/29 Went back to my bunk after coming off watch and when I awoke (8:15) we were already leaving North Island, heading west. Sea was a little rough and several leather necks became sea sick. Chow just twice a day and OH! what a chow line (the food too). Anyway, I hope it won't last long.
- 3/1 Nothing to do but just lie around and read to pass the time away. Tonight in the news broadcast, just before General Quarters, we were informed officially that we were going to Pearl Harbor and rumors told us that we (the whole air group) would get off and train for more combat.
- 3/2 Another day of leisure. Jones and I cleaned the camera lens and taped them up. All pilots were out helping clean their planes along with their captains. Had an 8 - 12 watch. The weather is getting warmer again.
- 3/4 Pulled into Ford Island, Pearl Harbor this evening. Started packing up all of our gear as we're slated to go to Kaneoke Bay, Maui.
- 3/5 Packed all our gear and loaded on truck and drove through Honolulu and up over a high mountain. Mason and Ens. Tarr were with us and Mason described to us how and where the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor.
- 3/9 Packed up again and back to the Hornet for the rest of the squadron gear. Busy late that night packing all our personal gear.
- 3/10 Loaded our gear on an old destroyer, the 'Swan' and sailed all night and what a rough ride. Didn't hardly get any sleep.
- 3/12 Arrived at Kahului Bay this morning. Unloaded and over to Punenene air station in a truck. Saw a lot of sugar cane on the way over.
- 3/12 - 4/30  
After arriving here at the air station we were assigned to a Quonset hut. Part of VT air crewmen bunked in the same hut with us. The weather here is swell. At night you need a blanket. During the day it isn't too hot. Our pilots started operations right away. During our stay here, we lost two pilots. Lt. Grotenhous and Ens. Butler. We didn't get any liberty the first week we were here, but finally one day they broke down and gave us a two day pass. Several of us went to Wailaku, a small town and stayed all night at the Grand Maui Hotel. Back at the base we played several games of softball. In our game with the officers, Lt. Commander Brewer played with them that day. The chow here is really swell. All the ice tea and lemonade at noon and supper. At breakfast, had all the ice cold tomato juice, pineapple juice or grapefruit juice and cold milk we could drink. Ate plenty of ice cream and every day drank my share of cold apple juice. Just ten cents a can and a large can at that. Milo Born made chief yeoman here. Jones and Owens made 1st class, Gikas made 2nd class. Born, Owens and myself went over to trade Winds beach swimming on our day off. A few new pilots joined the squadron. Ens. Butler was killed just after taking off on a pre - dawn hop. We went over to the cane field where he was killed and stood by while they brought the plane back. It was some wreck! Got a camera at Wailaku and took a lot of pictures. Born, Miller and I went through a sugar plantation and saw how sugar was made. Mason was transferred here at Punenene and 'Skip' Harris replaced him.

- 4/29 Packed up all gear and loaded into transport plane to Ford Island. The next day we went over with the rest of the gear in a Curtis Commando to Pearl Harbor. A nice scenic trip. Next day all of us went on liberty to Honolulu. Then, out to Waikiki. Was 'Lei Day' and quite a big celebration here for these people.
- 5/3 About 8.00 a.m. this morning we pulled out of Ford Island along with Wasp. San Jacinto, escorted by two light cruisers and four 'tin cans' (destroyers). Planes came aboard at 11.00 a.m. Skipper of Bombing 15 cracked up on flight deck and plane had to be surveyed.
- 5/4 – 5/8  
Not much important with the exception of arriving safely here in the Marshals. A few patrol hops and one firing hop of all planes. Skipper's plane was assigned to me and the air group commander's was assigned to Jones. Today, the 8th was pay day. We anchored here in the bay at Majuro. Lexington, Bunkerhill and several other converted cruisers were anchored here, besides dozens of heavy and light cruisers, destroyers and bunch of battle wagons. One of them, (60) the U.S.S. Alabama. Went up on flight deck to sleep and about 10:30 p.m. was rained out.
- 5/9 – 5/10  
Rained most all day. Cleaned the guns in Skipper's plane. Hoover and Stafford's names were drawn and got to go over on the island here at Majuro on a swimming and beer party. Went up on the flight deck to sleep and was rained out again.
- 5/11 Sam, Jack, Milo and myself went over on one of the small islands with others from different divisions where names were drawn. Went over in a landing barge. It was suppose to be a swimming and beer party. The officer in charge did not know it was up to him to see that the beer would get over there so there was no beer. Milo and I went swimming. The water was 'swell' and so clear. Found some coconuts and a lot of coral.
- 5/12 Al Hoover and I got permission through Lt. O'Brien to visit some of the fellows we knew on the Wasp. Went over in a small motor launch and what a ride! Saw several fellows I knew.
- 5/13 Jones and I put in the rest of the sway braces. Movie tonight was 'Nine Girls.'
- 5/14 Attended communion services this morning on Mothers Day. In the afternoon, Sam, Stafford and myself went over on the beach here swimming. Saw Hornet pull in today. Also, saw the movie 'Jane Enre' and did it stink!
- 5/15 Left the Marshal's this morning about 8:30 a.m. Supposedly headed for Marcus Island, escorted by more destroyers and cruisers then when we came over. This afternoon, Captain made an official statement over the P.A. system that we were definitely going to Marcus. McCarthy and I slept on the cat walk back by the fan trail (too hot in the sleeping quarters).
- 5/16 Pay day this morning at 10:30 but was working on skipper's plane and by the time I finished, was too late to get paid. Finished checking all planes for pyro - tech ammo. Slept on fan tail again.
- 5/17 Getting nearer Marcus Island. Another simulated air attack was made on our ship by three air groups. Skipper fired his guns and all fired OK. Pilots all anxious to find Friday morning pulling surprise attack on Marcus, the first time in 8 months.

- 5/18 Everyone was on their toes today working on all planes preparing for raid. Cleaned the skipper's guns again. Four of our fighters took off on anti - sub patrol (A.S.P.) with 350lb. depth charges. The first fighter squadrons were to use bombs. It was pretty warm today with scattered clouds.
- 5/19 Up at 3:00 a.m. Ate chow and general quarters at 5:00 a.m. First group left at 6:30 led by Group commander and Lt. Morris. The 'Nips' were surprised to see the first group but were better prepared for the second. Depth charges (350 lbs.) were carried by our fighters. Planes came in all shot up. McCampbell's plane, the 'Monsoon Maiden' had to be surveyed. Ens. Burham was killed after being shot down by anti - aircraft. Bombers lost two bombers, two pilots and two gunners. None have been found but is believed the Japs picked them up. Planes had no air opposition but on way back to ship one of Fighting 14's plane shot down a 'Betty.' It was a rather tiresome day by evening and when we did hit our sacks it felt plenty good. Slept on the fan tail. Wasn't disturbed at all by any 'Bettys.' McNutt of V.T. (gunner) was hit.
- 5/20 Up again at 3:00 a.m. First group took off again at 6:30 and last hop was in around noon. Planes came in with holes shot all over the fuselage. One landing gear was shot away and the other wheel down. Lt. Stearns brought it in on one wheel and made a beautiful landing. Lt. J.G. Kenney had both landing gear shot away and started for the ship to make a belly landing but did not make it. We saw it go in and could not see him get out, but soon later a destroyer signaled to us that he was picked up and was OK. This afternoon we're headed for Wake Island. The water very smooth and glassy like. Slept on the fan tail again. Took the skipper's guns out and gave them a good cleaning.
- 5/21 Sunday - Went to Church in the forward mess hall and was it hot down there! The destroyer that picked up Lt. J.G. Kenney pulled along starboard side and delivered him back aboard our ship. Getting ready to strike at Wake Island.
- 5/22 Just one group went up on combat air patrol (C.A.P.). Everyone busy on planes preparing to attack Wake. Went to bed early.
- 5/23 Up at 3:00 a.m. Loaded 500lb. bombs on fighters. The 'Nips' were quite surprised, more than they were at Marcus. One bomber had to land in water forward our carrier and a cruiser picked up both pilot and gunner after having plenty time to get out. A night fighter pilot from our ship, spun in. No trace was found of him. This evening on last group attack, Lt. Collins was injured over wake and planes all shot up. After just respotting the deck, word came from him for emergency landing and deck had to be respot again. He made a beautiful belly landing with one wheel up and the other about half way down. They carried him away in a stretcher but word was announced over the P.A. tonight that it wasn't too serious. He was hit in the hip. Tonight we're supposedly headed back to Majuro Island.
- 5/24 Things were pretty quite. Destroyer pulled along side to transfer official mail.
- 5/25 skipped
- 5/26 Passed the international date line. Made a dental appointment this morning. Pulled into Majuro here in the Marshalls.
- 5/27 Slept later this morning due to no 'GQ' (General Quarters). McCarthy and I went over on the island and went swimming. Received quite a bit of mail. Had a letter from Ed Hubler telling me Esbell was in a PBM crash and Morris (Kid) had one leg blown off and was trying to save the other.
- 5/28 Cleaned skipper's guns. Took pictures of part of the enlisted men that we could find.

5/29 Owens was hurt this morning, falling from a prop nothing serious.

5/30 - 6/4

Went out for two days. Held group tactics with air groups from Langley and Cowpens. Pay day, the second. Drew \$145.00. Yesterday the 3rd, Eppert, Harrington, McCarthy, Hoover and I, along with Ens. Twelves and Lt. j.g. Hoffman went over to Reta Island to pick up a few supplies for new planes. Went swimming for a while on Reta beach. Owens was released from sick bay.

6/6 Left this morning at 10:15 along with four big task forces. Was heavily escorted. Brought two more fighters and torpedo planes aboard. Rained this morning.

6/7 - 6/10

Nothing exciting is happening as yet. Our great task force is about, if not, the largest in Naval history. A B - 24 shot down a Betty this morning and reported another shot down this afternoon by one of the carrier combat patrol.

6/11 Slept back on the fan tail last night and was not disturbed all night. Captain gave us a speech yesterday. Today we're all on the alert, and anytime, we're expecting the Japs. At 1:00 p.m. we will launch 16 fighters. The weather is good for the Japs as there is a low ceiling. One of the Battan's C.A.P. shot down a Betty this morning. On top side the old sun is bearing down. Owens and I went to church this morning. At 1:00p.m. today, 16 fighters were launched for the first strike against Saipan, along with two SB2C's to act as emergency help, such as dropping life rafts. The total number of fighters from all carriers totaled 206 fighters. The C.A.P. from the Yorktown shot down two Helens this morning. On the return of strike Gable, No. 1, Lt. j.g. Kenny (VF - 15 radio officer) failed to return, flying with commander Brewer both went into dive and Kenny failed to pull out. Very few planes were shot up and many more on the ground. Evidently the Nips were surprised to see them. Morris, Flynn, Rushing, McCampbell and Riggs each shot down a plane each.

6/12 Up at 2:00 a.m. All planes armed and ready. Missed chow. The air group target was a convoy just out of Saipan. Our fighters strafed and sunk a new Jap destroyer in 30 minutes. Besides sinking a few tankers and cargo ships Lt. Roach, one of the best pilots we had crashed after takeoff dead ahead and no trace was found of him. A tough loss to all of us. He was flying '34.'

6/13 Up early again. This time I got chow. The air group concentrated on gun positions, ammunition dumps and etc. Several planes were destroyed on the ground. Commander McCampbell shot down another Betty on his way back to the ship. C.A.P. from the Battan shot down three Bettys to our port side. We could see the smoke from them just over horizon.

6/14 Today is D minus One Day. Tomorrow being 'D' Day when the troops go ashore to take Saipan, Guam and Tinian. NO strikes were carried out through our ships. Only C.A.P. Three pilots went to pick up three new planes off of two converted cruisers. They were transferred by a 'tin' can. Oh yes, Lt. Barry flying No. 7 came in contact with a Betty on the last hop last night. The Betty shot away one landing gear but he made it back to the ship OK. No. 7 was stripped today and hoisted overboard. The total ships this task group sank was eleven Jap ships, which included tankers, one destroyer, cargo ship, one munitions ship and ten probable others which were last seen when burning. All ships refueled this morning and after noon put new barrels in No. 1 plane.

6/15 Today is 'D' Day. This morning early we were just 850 miles from Tokyo. Along with our task group we have the Yorktown, Hornet, Cowpens, Langley and Battan. This afternoon 32 fighters took off for Bonin Island. The weather was very bad for us, especially for the

- pilots. All fighters returned except Jones, A.A. Lt. j.g. He was shot down over the target. Lt. Crittenden was hit in the leg and had to return to ship earlier. One of our bombers failed to return and was also shot down over the target. A TBF, Lenny Lensett and Dudley, air crewman, crashed on one of the runways, killing all the crew. Another TBF was forced down into the water and was rescued by one of our submarines. It rained quite a bit and there was a very low ceiling. The water up here is very rough. Some of the Yorktown planes made an emergency landing on our carrier. Commander Brewer, Lt. Commander Duncan and Ens. Singer each got one plane to their credit. They reported several planes on the ground destroyed. One SB2C, after take off, made a force landing to the starboard bow and both gunner and pilot got out safely and was soon picked up by a destroyer.
- 6/16 Early reveille this morning at 3:00 a.m. Weather very bad. Planes were scheduled to take off but due to bad conditions did not. Word was received here that B29's bombed Japan. We got as close as 450 miles to Tokyo. This afternoon our fighters took off in spite of bad weather led by commander McCampbell. They reported no planes in the air and those on the ground destroyed. Lt. Ivey was hit in the head and an eye shot out. Some of our pilots tried to put him on course but later C.A.P. found an oil slick and dye markers where he had gone in. He was our engineering officer.
- 6/17 Up at 4:30 a.m. Loaded bombs. Yesterday the Jap fleet was reported 750 miles from us coming from the Philippines to the Marianas. This morning they are reported to be 350 miles. We're expecting the 4th of July any minute. This morning flying in a search party Ens. Flynn shot down a Betty and Ens. Duffy shot down a Judy (a dive bomber, carrier based), so the Jap fleet must be near. One of the other task groups have moved in and two other first line carriers are in sight. The cruisers have moved in closer for giving us closer firing protection for the air attack which we're expecting any time. Another destroyer transferred five more Jap prisoners onto our carrier this afternoon.
- 6/19 Up again at 3:00 a.m. Launched an early hop. Lt. Strane shot down two planes on C.A.P. The 'works' have really come. A big strike was scheduled for Guam but right after planes were off, radar picked up a lot of bogies and instead of going to Guam they headed for the bogies. Condition one was set in the gunnery department and a few minutes later found us all with our helmets and flack proof clothing. The Japs were finally on their way and were drawing nearer each minute. Our fighters headed in that direction. Just before the fighters returned, a Judy (Jap dive bomber) came diving down on us while I was on flight deck releasing a bomb and just barely missing the starboard bow of the flight deck. This scared the living \_\_\_\_\_ out of us. When the fighters returned, all returned safely except Ens. Radar. Our fighters shot down 47 Jap planes. Lt. j.g. Carr shot down five. McCampbell also five, Commander Brewer, three. The next group to go out was led by McCampbell. When he returned he had shot down two more, breaking a world record for any carrier based pilot to shoot down in one day. He was really one happy man. Just before he went out on last hop, we changed his gun barrels and did not get to time the port wing. When he returned he said "leave them the way they were, that they're perfect." Commander Brewer led the last group of the day and upon return from Guam, he and Ens. Tarr were both shot down. They had run into an out numbered squadron of Zekes. His loss was a big loss to all of us and very few fellows in the squadron had anything to say at the end of the day, our fighters had chalked up a total of 68 planes besides a lot of probables, breaking a record for any carrier based squadron in any one day. It was late when we went to bed and all of us were dead tired. Went to bed with a headache and woke up with one this morning at 3:00 a.m.
- 6/20 Launched four night fighters and soon later launched our fighters. All returned safely from Guam. Night fighters shot down three planes and had a few probables. It was estimated in yesterday's raid the whole complete task force shot down 300 planes. Our losses for our fighter squadron alone yesterday were three pilots. Today seven new fighter planes

and pilots came aboard. Two new TBF's and crew and three SB2C's and crew also came aboard. Ens. Powers was shot down over the target at Guam this morning. Lt. j.g. Lundquist shot down his fifth plane in last two days, becoming the third ace since the big air battle Monday. Washed some dungarees out this evening as laundry has been closed for over a week.

- 6/21 Up at 4:00 a.m. Launched an early strike of fighters, torpedoes and bombers for a sweep over Guam. All planes returned safely. Lost one bomber this afternoon over the target. The Jap fleet is reported to have been heavily hit by one of our task groups. We're headed back for Guam to help assist the Marines and Army while taking Saipan and Guam and Rota Islands.
- 6/22 Up again at 3:00 a.m. Didn't lose any planes from our carrier today. Lt. Commander Rigg came back after a stay on the Enterprise since the 19th. Cleaned all six guns on No. 1. Helped Jones with his plane.
- 6/23 Up at 4:00 a.m. launched a sweep of twelve fighters. All returned but two planes. Lt Stearns and Lt. j.g. Bruce both were shot down. It's now 12:00 noon and haven't found out officially if they were saved or both killed. Ens. Plant shot down his fifth plane today, becoming another ace in this 'bloody' squadron. Commander McCampbell shot down his eleventh plane since we've hit combat, making a nice record. Received word that Bruce bailed out but no word has been received if he has been picked up safely or not. Lt. Stearns definitely was killed.
- 6/24 Strikes were launched throughout the day. Ens. Singer, while taking shots over Guam was attacked by two Zekes but turned around and finished them both off. Hoover made and gave me a ring he made. A sailor fell off of the gun mount tonight and killed himself.
- 6/25 Just C.A.P. hops today. They buried the boy who fell off the gun mount last night. A TBF made a water landing just off the starboard side of the fan tail. All the crew got out, but the radioman was injured.
- 6/26 Refueled today. Pulled all the guns in No. 1 and cleaned them. Replaced No. 6 barrel. Vice Admiral McCain came aboard today. Just C.A.P. hops today.
- 6/27 C.A.P. this morning. Lt. Commander Lambert and Sudcliff took Admiral McCain, escorted by Lt Commander Rigg and Lt. Morris over to Saipan. Sudcliff brought back a few souvenirs from what the Japs once held in their possession. Received two more new pilots and planes (fighters) yesterday. A Betty was shot down by night fighters tonight around 8:30 from the Enterprise. The fire could be seen from our ship.
- 6/28 At 10.00 a.m. went up before a board of officers consisting of Lt. O'Brien, Lt. j.g. Hoffman and Ens. Slack for an oral examination, ask me by chief Harris for advancement to first class.
- 6/29 C.A.P. and A.S.P. hops only today.
- 7/1 Today, Sour, Gibson, Stafford and myself were notified at a muster of all hands before Lt. O'Brien's office. Sam and Jim made chief and Stafford and I, First Class. Two C.A.P. hops today.
- 7/2 Two hops of C.A.P.
- 7/3 C.A.P. and A.S.P. again today.
- 7/4 Helped rig a bore sight template and marked it. Handed out cigars.

- 7/5 One early hop this morning. Another hop was launched at 9:00 a.m. for a simulated air attack at our ship.
- 7/6 Arrived at Eniwekok this morning around 9:30 a.m. Started bore sighting, Lt. j.g. Symes, Ens. Slack, Skip Harris, Jones and myself. Very hot on the flight deck. Had mail call in afternoon and boy what a scramble!! Received seven letters. The first mail we had received for a month and did it look good. Bombs and ammunition were already being loaded. and men worked all night long.
- 7/7 Skip, Jones, and myself bore sighting again today and was it hot on those wings. Everyone busy bringing on bombs and ammunition.
- 7/8 Bore sighted again today. Received two letters, one from Aunt Anna and one from Eddie Hubbler. Bore sighting almost got me down today. Had quite a headache and quit a little early.
- 7/9 Still bore sighting. Have 19 planes finished. Had a letter from Garfield today. Ships company took over bore sighting this afternoon.
- 7/10 Wrote a lot of letters today and took some pictures of the gang.
- 7/11 Went over on the beach here at Eniwetok swimming on a rotation party with Ferguson and Hoover. Water was swell. Ate dinner over there. Boy! Was it hot over there. Received two V - mails from Doris and a letter from the folks telling me about Ray Lamb's death. The second man I ask about Sam Manley knew him. Saw him for the first time in the mess hall.
- 7/12 Got permission to go over on the U.S.S. Lexington this morning. Went to see a Miller from Floyd Bennett but turned out to be my former division officer, Lt. j.g. Miller Ordinance officer. He was quite surprised to see me. Came back and wrote some letters. Saw a good movie tonight, "Follow the Boys."
- 7/13 Slept on the hanger deck last night. Rained all night and had to get up twice and move. Received a letter from Lena Pewitt and Virginia today.
- 7/14 Left Eniwetok Island this afternoon about 2:00 p.m. U.S.S. Princeton and Langley are with us. Brought on three new F6F - 5's. Pulled last labels off guns on the skippers new plane after chow this evening.
- 7/15 Twenty three cents, I am about worth today. (Birthday)
- 7/16 Gave all the guns a good cleaning on No. 1. Rained most all afternoon.
- 7/17 Captain gave us a speech this morning.
- 7/18 Launched four strikes against Guam today. All planes returning safely except one TBF and all three of the crew got out safely after making a water landing about 12 miles e off Guam. We could see Guam plainly from the flight deck.
- 7/19 Launched four more strikes against Guam today. Had three teeth filled this morning. Two TBF's escorted by Air Group Commander McCampbell went over to Saipan and delivered mail and returned with some. Received one from Virginia, Marjie, Christy's Church, Manus, and one. from Don Singleton's wife.

- 7/20 Launched five strikes against Guam today. Lost one good bomber pilot and gunner. A perfect day for fighter ordnance men. Only one bad solenoid went bad and no stoppages. A sub was sunk last night in the other group around Guam.
- 7/21 Today is V Day. The Fourth Division of the Marines have landed on Guam and we launched three strikes for helping the Marines establish a beach head. Our fighters strafed while our bombers and torpedo planes carried tons of bombs. A sub was reported near us early this morning and destroyers dropped depth charges. As yet it hasn't been confirmed but that's what almost every one was talking about this morning. Sleeping on the hanger deck, I was awoken by a couple blasts. It was rather warm today with very few scattered clouds. A marine captain who flew with one of our TBF pilots this morning gave us a description over the P.A. system this morning of the landing of the Marines on Guam. Very light opposition was reported, but it's still young yet.
- 7/22 C.A.P. and A.S.P. hops this morning. This afternoon we refueled from a tanker.
- 7/23 Launched a big strike against Tinian Island this morning. Ens. Slack made a water landing upon approach of landing. Got out safely. Two more heavy strikes were launched this afternoon.
- 7/24 Up early again, launched two strikes against Tinian. The other strikes scheduled against Tinian were cancelled and used against Guam as the marines are reported to have met heavy resistance. D.E. Johnson, flying '22' spun in upon approach of landing. Failed to get out. One fighter '3' was forced down at Saipan for emergency landing. Strikes were carried out throughout the afternoon on Guam and Rota Island. We came within good view of Rota Is. this afternoon. Could see the smoke from the bombing on the island by our air group. Guam also was in view. The battleship Colorado was hit. Two 5 inch guns were out of commission. Two officers and thirty some men were killed and many injured. One destroyer was also hit.
- 7/25 Changed the barrels in Commander McCampbell's plane this morning. C.A.P. and A.S.P. was carried out by our fighters and were not used for strikes, as belted ammunition was running short. Men were busy last night and today belting. Bombers carried out strikes along with torpedoes today.
- 7/26 Three C.A.P. hops today and one strike against Guam by our fighters. Bombers carried out three strikes. Some mail was brought aboard by a destroyer. Received a letter from Aunt Anna. Word was announced that within the next couple of days, we would pull into Saipan to reload bombs and what ever provisions were available. The Marines, as reported in the news tonight, have captured a third of Tinian Island and the Marines on Guam are making very good gains.
- 7/27 Two C.A.P. hops by our fighters. Bombers and torpedo planes bombed Tinian and Guam. One torpedo plane was forced down off our starboard bow after take off. All crew got out, but one crewman received a broken leg, the pilot a few bruises. Over their target, two aircrew men were wounded but not seriously. Had a movie tonight "Mr. District Attorney." All planes were moved upon the flight deck tonight because we're scheduled to pull into the harbor and anchor at Saipan.
- 7/28 Anchored here in the bay at Saipan this morning at 6:30 for the purpose of loading bombs and ammunition. Could see dive bombers bombing Tinian Island very plainly. These islands are surrounded by ships. Everything torn to hell looking through a pair of binoculars of Commander McCampbell's. Could see objects on Saipan pretty plainly. Battleship Colorado is anchored on our port side. Jones and I bore sighted A.G.C.'s plane on flight deck. This afternoon Tinian on our right was bombed very heavily could

- see planes diving and bombs exploding. This evening around 6:00 p.m. we started to get underway. Colorado also pulling out.
- 7/29 Launched two strikes against Guam today. Also fighters flew C.A.P. Refueled from Tanker along starboard side this noon.
- 7/30 Owen's birthday (23) today. Launched two hops of C.A.P. this morning. No flying this afternoon. Joined up with another task group today. Worked on and cleaned No. 1 plane this afternoon.
- 7/31 C.A.P. today and a simulated air attack on our ship the best they've put on yet, especially the torpedo planes. This evening they showed a movie "The Gentlemen from Dixie." Ens. Nall and Lt. White both flew over on Guam, the first American planes to land since the Marines have started to recapture it.
- 8/1 Three hops of C.A.P. Later in the evening, an emergency strike of twelve fighters were launched against Guam for support of the Marines.
- 8/2 C.A.P. and strikes against Guam and Tinian fell to the Marines.
- 8/3 C.A.P. and a few strikes on Guam in the morning.
- 8/4 C.A.P. and strikes against Guam. Received some mail this evening from Saipan. One letter from the folks, two from Virginia, one from Mrs. Royar, one from Aunt Anna and one from Andy Wolf and Doris Cramer. Folks informed me that Lena Pewitt was married to Wilbur Kliethemer in Linn.
- 8/5 McCarthy and Owens had it today! Owens getting a broken nose over a friendly card game.
- 8/6 – 8/12  
Planes just flew patrol and a few simulated air attacks on our ship. One torpedo plane crashed, killing whole crew during this exercise air attack. The radioman's body was picked up by a destroyer and brought aboard. They buried him the same day. I attended the services.
- 8/13 Pulled into Eniwetok Island this morning around 8:00 a.m. Did not do much during the day except helped sort mail. Received two packages, one from aunt Anna and one from Virginia. The box of cookies from Aunt Anna were all spoiled. Had a movie tonight.
- 8/14 Bore sighted today. Saw a movie tonight. Carter and Lewis came over to visit us from the Hornet.
- 8/15 – 8/18  
Bore-sighted planes
- 8/19 Hoover, Owens, Stafford, Lt. Commander Duncan, Lt. Overton and myself, along with six bomber pilots went over to Eniwetok Island to break in the pilots for flying fighters. Seventeen miles we went in a whale boat to get there from our ship. The Executive officer of the Essex also was along. We slept in a tent and on army cots. Chow was mostly canned goods. Water was very scarce.
- 8/21 While riding in the back of our truck issued to us, a . tool box bounced on my toe and mashed the 'devil' out of it.

8/22 – 8/23

Came back with Lt. Overton.

8/24 – 8/28

Dr. Manes looked at it this morning (24th) and bandaged it up. Unable to do anything.

8/29 Left Eniwetok this morning along with the Lexington, Princeton and Langley supposedly headed for the Philippines and Peleliu

8/30 Simulated air attacks on ship today. All fighters taking part.

8/31 Another exercise strike today. Tomorrow, King Neptune and Davey Jones are suppose to come aboard. Got my hair cut short this afternoon.

9/1 Got paid today (\$175.00). Crossed the equator today. Initiation this evening. Quite some time! Got out of everything except the paddles.

9/2 Refueled today down around the Admiralty Islands.

9/3 – 9/5

A.S.P and C.A.P.

9/6 A sixteen fighter sweep, led by Commander McCampbell was launched this afternoon over Palau Island. All returned safely.

9/7 – 9/8

Another day of strikes against Palau. Today the 8th, Mike Cohen and Mike McGram were killed when their T.B.F. crashed. Pilot bailed out. Burnett and his crew made a water landing and was picked up by one of our submarines. This evening we're headed for Mindanao Island. Ens. Hamlin was shot down over the target at Palau.

9/9 – 9/10

Launched 5 strikes against the southern part of Mindanao. Lt. Barry was killed passing too low over a Jap ship that he was strafing and exploded. Lost Lt. Dick Davis and Ens Green. Our fighters shot down eight planes during the three day operation.

9/11 Refueled today. Brought on seven new fighters, two T.B.F.'s and one bomber. Five new fighter pilots. Helped Lt. Hoffman itemize Lt. Barry's personal belongings tonight.

9/22 Lost Ens. Plant and Lt. j.g. Henning today in the Philippines Islands. Our fighter squadron shot down 27 Jap planes in the air.

9/13 Another big day. This morning during G.Q. a couple of Jap planes tried to get in and one did pass forward of our bow but no damage done. Fighters shot down a total of 37 planes for the day here in the central Philippines. McCampbell has to his credit this date, 17 1/2 Jap planes shot down in the air.

9/14 Today was the last day striking against the central Philippines.

9/15 Refueled destroyers today 'D' day on Palau.

9/16 Refueled from tanker today. Also bore sighted a couple of planes.

9/17 – 9/18

Bore sighted more planes. Getting ready for the two days strike on Manila and Luzon. Gibson was 'busted' down to first class and transferred to another ship.

- 9/19 All planes were put in 'tip top' shape ready for our biggest strike yet.
- 9/20 Planes were loaded this evening with bombs ready for early launching tomorrow morning.
- 9/21 Four strikes and four C.A.P. were launched. Heavy ack - ack was reported. All planes returned from over Luzon safely. Rained practically all day. Shipping was hit. A couple of Jap planes tried to get in early this morning but failed. One was shot down.
- 9/22 Launched two strikes and C.A.P. this morning. All planes returned safely. Not a single plane in air group fifteen was lost during the two day operation. McCampbell shot down his 18 1/2 plane this morning. Early this morning, more Jap planes tried to get into us. All ships were open fire, but as usual, they failed. Other strikes were cancelled due to a report of a typhoon approaching.
- 9/23 One C.A.P. today.
- 9/24 Launched strikes against several small central Philippine Islands. Lt. j.g. Gover was killed.
- 9/25 Launched one C.A.P. this evening. Headed for Palau to re - arm.
- 9/26 Refueled today. One C.A.P. this afternoon.
- 9/27 Pulled into Kossel Passage this morning about 7:30 (Palau Island) and loaded bombs and ammunition. Bore sighted two planes.
- 9/28 Bore sighted A.G.C.'s plane. Rained most of the day. Pulled out for overnight.
- 9/29 Pulled back into Kossel Passage this morning about 6:30. Loaded bombs and ammunition.
- 9/30 Pulled back into Kossel Passage. Just stood by.
- 10/1 Pulled into Rossel Passage this morning. Left in the evening. Soon afterward the Passage was raided by the Japs. A few ships were strafed and some men killed.
- 10/2 An early C.A.P. hop this morning. This evening we pulled into Ulithi Island, a number of small islands to take on stores. Saw a movie.
- 10/3 Had to pull out this morning because a storm was approaching. Ran into storm this afternoon. All stream lined personnel started standing watches on flight deck.
- 10/4 Stood watches throughout the day. Storm letting up some but the sea still rough.
- 10/5 Pulled back into Ulithi this evening.
- 10/6 Left this evening.
- 10/7 Weather getting rough this morning. Listened to World Series. Ran into another storm this afternoon. Sea very rough.
- 10/8 Storm over. Refueled today. Four plane C.A.P.
- 10/9 Making speed run. Eight fighter C.A.P. today. Weather getting cooler.

- 10/10 Launched four strikes and one fighter sweep. Fighters got 12 more planes. A gunner in VT had to have an arm amputated this evening. Helped Jones change barrels in A.G.C.'s plane.
- 10/11 Refueled today. A lot of mail was brought aboard.
- 10/12 One large sweep and four strikes were launched against Formosa. The Japs were ready with 90 Zekes in the air. Pilots reported heavy air opposition and heavy anti-aircraft. Some of our pilots were forced to make water landings, but no deaths are known yet. One TBF made a forced landing between Formosa and the China coast. Lt. Symms flew coverage over them until a sub was in range of them to recover them. Our fighter pilots knocked down many planes and the total number has not been counted as yet. A couple of our pilots made forced landings on other carriers. At 6:55 p.m. this evening, torpedo defense sounded and all night the Japs tried to get in. Saw three Bettys go down burning. Smoke screens were laid and the Japs dropped flares all around us.
- 10/13 The Japs kept trying to get in at us all night long. Our carrier was firing all night long. Yesterday I saw a dispatch from Admiral Halsey saying we were to be relieved sometime after the twenty fifth of this month. Air Group Four to relieve us. Launched a fighter sweep and three strikes against Formosa. Lost one bomber crew and Lt. j.g. Flynn of fighters made a water landing just off of Formosa. Torpedo defense sounded about the same time it did last night. Four planes were shot down. The cruiser, Camp Bura received two 'fish' and is being towed by another cruiser. One of the carriers, believed to be the Hancock, received a near miss.
- 10/14 Launched a big sweep and strike against Formosa this morning. This afternoon about 2:45 p.m. the ship went. 'G.Q.' A few Jap dive bombers dove on the Lexington. We launched four fighters afterwards. Then several from 'G.Q.' later. About 5:30 p.m. Jap torpedo planes came in at us. Two torpedoes just missed us on our starboard quarters. The plane crashed on the fan tail of one of our cruisers. Planes strafed and about 14 men wounded, two seriously. One plane went over our bow, the other one crashing near our fan tail on port side. About 44 Jap planes were believed to have been shot down by this task group force. Compton of the Torpedo squadron was hit in the leg. They strafed men on the hanger deck and flight deck both.
- 10/15 Gave No. 1 a good cleaning today. Launched a C.A.P. Refueled this evening late. Jap fleet believed to be out.
- 10/16 Launched search planes to find the Jap fleet. Our fighters intercepted several Jap planes and shot down 3 or 4. The Jap fleet was located tonight about 350 miles northeast of us. The cruiser, Houston, was torpedoed and we got reports that the crew was in the process of abandoning ship.
- 10/17 Heard today through the Exc. Officer that Houston was being towed to port. Refueled today.
- 10/18 Bore sighted today.
- 10/19 Standing by for invasion of Leyte Island.
- 10/20 Two search hops today. Army landings on central Philippines.
- 10/21 Launched two strikes and a sweep in the central Philippines. Commander McCampbell shot down two more planes bringing his total to 21 planes.

- 10/22 Refueled. went to church. Got mail this evening, pictures from Stuart Garfield, letter from Virginia and the folks.
- 10/23 C.A.P. today. Sun bathed on flight deck this afternoon. Eppert and I had watch. Late in the night before they got all planes secured, part of the Jap fleet was sighted by one of our task groups.
- 10/24 Up early. About 7:00 a.m. we were under attack by everything the Japs could throw at us and throughout the day, up until about 5:30 p.m. The Princeton was hit by a dive bomber and was smoking furiously. Could see tremendous explosions. We left Princeton. All afternoon planes came in at us and received very near misses. Saw several explode. Commander McCampbell and six others in his group intercepted between 50 - 60 Jap planes and out of these, they knocked down 25 and the others hauled ass. Commander McCampbell shot down nine in this one group. Lt. j.g. Rushing got six. At the end of the day our fighters had shot down a total of 44 Jap planes. McCampbell broke a fleet record and practically tied the Army record of 30 planes to his credit. Torpedo planes got 11 hits with torpedoes. Lost two planes. Bombers lost two planes and one crew got out after making a water landing along side of the Essex. Three CV's plus a large number of cruisers and destroyers were spotted about 150 miles from our disposition tonight.
- 10/25 Launched a big strike against Jap fleet. Our planes going for the Jap carriers. Torpedo defense sounded at 2:00 a.m. this morning but planes did not get in. Launched five strikes against the enemy fleet. Five carriers were spotted close by and some battlewagons, cruisers and destroyers. All carriers were sunk, battlewagons heavily hit and sinking. Fighters shot down five more planes. Lt. Strane was forced to bail out about five miles from one of the Jap battlewagons and as yet, no word has been received concerning him. Elsewhere today other task groups were hitting other task units of the Jap fleet and been sending them to the bottom, right and left. Everyone thrilled with the results of the day. Refuel tomorrow and then head southwest to polish off remainder of Jap fleet.
- 10/26 Launched A.S.P. and search today. Refueled this morning. Changed barrels in No. 1.
- 10/27 Lt. Strane came aboard from 'Tin' can. Was picked up at 9:00 p.m. the night after the same day he had to bail out.
- 10/28 C.A.P. today. A movie tonight. Headed back for Ulithi island.
- 10/30 Pulled into Ulithi Islands this morning about 6:30 a.m. Started taking on bombs, ammo. and provisions. Received mail: The new Ticonderoga carrier was here. Air Group 14 getting relieved by air group 81.
- 10/31 Bombs and more ammo brought aboard and provisions. Refueled today. New replacement pilots came aboard temporarily assigned.
- 11/1 Thirty new fighters brought aboard. Working parties very busy bringing on supplies. Left Ulithi Island this evening. About 4:30 p.m. headed for Manus Island in Admiralty group. Men worked all night taking supplies below deck.
- 11/2 In the news this morning, the executive officer told us we received a dispatch late last night for us to change course and head for the Philippines, that some of the Jap fleet was around. Launched A.S.P. checked new planes.
- 11/3 C.A.P. and A.S.P. The Ticonderoga joined us sometime last night or early this morning.

- 11/4 The Reno Cruiser was either hit by a torpedo from enemy sub or hit a mine last night. Caused a terrible explosion. Lexington thought it was us. Reno left our task group, escorted by four 'tin cans' and headed for Ulithi. C.A.P. Strikes against Luzon tomorrow.
- 11/5 Up early this morning. Launched a fighter sweep and five strikes plus C.A.P. and a scramble against Manila. This afternoon, about 2:15 p.m. we were under attack. The Lexington was hit on the signal bridge and several were killed and injured. The Ticonderoga received a near suicide crash. Our ship downed one plane. Everyone about scared to death. All planes returned safely except one TBF and its, turret gunner, Dean, was killed. A sight I'll never forget. His head was completely shot off. His body was left in turret and plane and buried late this afternoon. Comdr. McCampbell shot down two more planes bringing his total to 32 planes. Our fighters shot down 13 planes in all bringing a total of 283 planes in the air. At about 7:00 p.m. the ship went to G.Q and remained there throughout the night. Crapped out in the ready room. Not much sleep.
- 11/6 Up about 3.00 a.m. Launched a fighter sweep plus strikes and C.A.P. Went to G.Q.'s several times and planes over head but none dived on us. Other ships opened up fire. One of our new pilots made a water landing and got out safely. Manila was the target and some ships.
- 11/7 C.A.P. today. Replacements brought aboard. Lexington on its way back for repairs. Refueled today.
- 11/8 Ran into storm and started standing security watch.
- 11/9 Was notified today that we were being relieved and headed for Guam. Bore sighted three planes today.
- 11/10 Last night we changed course and started a speed run for Leyte again. 'Dug out Dug' (General McArthur) spotted a Jap whale boat and needs the aid of the whole navy.
- 11/11 Launched C.A.P., search and relay. Lt. Carr spotted Jap convoy and relayed message back to ship to launch strikes. Four 'AK' troop ships were spotted along with five heavy destroyers and one 'D - E:' All ships were sunk before they reached Leyte Island. Lt. j.g. (sweed) Thompson was killed making a run on a destroyer. Bombers lost two crews and three other planes made water landings. Smitty and Graham were both killed. One bomber gunner shot down a ? and smoked another. Comdr. McCampbell shot down his 33rd plane. Several enemy planes were in the air. Our pilots reported army planes (Japs) flying about 30,000 ft. and wouldn't come down. Brave fellows. Stime shot down a Judy this evening on C.A.P. about 50 miles from our disposition. Fighters shot down twelve more planes in the air. One bomber was forced to land on Leyte and wounded gunner was picked up by Army ambulance and rushed to hospital. Pilot returned later. Condition one in the gunnery department was set once but miles was the closest they got in. Two fighter pilots (one new one and a fighter bomber pilot, Deming) made water landings. Lt. Collins came back in flying no. 1 all shot up.
- 11/12 This morning we were 280 miles N.E. of Samar Island. Refueled this morning.
- 11/13 Launched fighter sweeps strikes and C.A.P. Fighters shot down six more planes in the air. Bombers lost their Exc. officer and radio gunner over target. Fighters had three crash landings on flight deck, pilot OK! One torpedo plane, piloted by Beach made a water landing and is believed to have been picked up safely by friendly natives. Japs attempted to reach them by motor boats but our fighters soon put a stop to that by making a run on them. Went to G.Q. twice but closest any Jap plane got was on the horizon and he was shot down. Shipping and dry docks were given a terrific bombing in Manila Bay and harbors.

- 11/14 Up at 4:00 a.m. Launched a strike against Manila Bay. Comdr. McCampbell shot down an Oscar, his 34th plane tying Major Bong's record. Lost a bomber pilot and gunner this morning. Launched other strikes and C.A.P. this evening.
- 11/15 Launched two big C.A.P.'s today.
- 11/16 Headed for Ulithi Island. C.A.P. and A.S.P. today.
- 11/17 Pulled into Ulithi this morning about 6:30 a.m. Last night a dispatch came in notifying us officially that Air Group 4 would relieve us here. Everyone excited and happy as a lark. A movie last night. Bunker Hill suppose to pull in this evening. Bunker Hill pulled in this evening about 6:00 p.m. Started packing this afternoon. Up on the flight deck a large number of pilots and crewmen were awarded medals.
- 11/18 Moved over on Bunker Hill this afternoon in an LCT.
- 11/19 Sun bathed this afternoon. Nothing to do except to pull out for Pearl Harbor tomorrow morning.
- 11/20 Early this morning a sub got through into the lagoon here about 6:30 a.m. and torpedoed a tanker which was anchored ahead of us. About an hour later she sank. It made terrific fire and a lot of smoke. 'Tin' cans immediately started dropping depth charges all around us trying to find the sub. Rumors said that two or three Jap subs were blasted but no official word was given to us. About 2:00 p.m. this afternoon we left Ulithi along with a Liberty ship and a destroyer that had a damaged screw and the best time we could make was 17 knots at the most.
- 11/21 C.A.P. and A.S.P. again today. More sun bathing. What a life! Passed near Truk Is.
- 11/23 – 11/28  
Flew A.S.P.
- 11/29 Ship held gunnery practice all morning. At 3:30 p.m. today we pulled into Ford Island, Pearl Harbor. A beautiful sight after being away several months. Only officers got liberty. Ens. Brex and Ens. Borley were here waiting for us.
- 11/30 McCarthy, Ferguson and I went into Honolulu and did a little shopping. Came back and soon Christmas packages were waiting for us. Received one from the folks, one from Aunt Anna, and one from Christy Church. All in perfect shape.
- 12/1 Left Pearl Harbor this morning.
- 12/2 – 12/5  
No. A.S.P. All planes were taken off at Ford Island. Brought passengers from Pearl.
- 12/6 Pulled into the Sound this morning. Anchored and went aboard a ferry for Seattle and then out to Sand Point Naval Air Station. Went ashore tonight and called Virginia.

end

# HUGE CHICAGO VOCATIONAL SCHOOL



THE CHICAGO VOCATIONAL SCHOOL, EIGHTY-SEVENTH ST. AND ANTHONY AV., WHICH WILL

## Turn Trade Schools to Army and Navy

While the navy today prepared to take over the Chicago Vocational School as a mechanical training center, indications today were the armed forces would "move in" on a large part of the Chicago public school system.

Both the army and navy, it was learned, are investigating the possibility of taking over the facilities of other large public schools, particularly those equipped with shops and machinery.

Among schools with such equipment are Lane Technical High School, Crane and Tilden Tech and Austin High.

### CONFIRM "SCOOP."

Announcement that the Chicago Vocational School, Eighty-seventh st. and Anthony av., would be taken over next month by 5,500 navy trainees, confirmed an exclusive story in The Herald-American last April 28. Of the 5,500 men, 4,000 will be taken over by the navy, and 1,500 civilians taken over by the army. The American story also disclosed that the army would use Burr and Spry Elementary schools where men will be trained as machinists and for groundwork.

William H. Johnson, superintendent of public schools, stated today contracts involving the three schools have been signed with the army and navy.

The army will occupy about one floor each at the Burr and Spry schools. The Chicago Vocational School will be renamed the Naval Training School for Mechanics. Completed last Fall at a cost of \$3,500,000, it is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

### PREDICTS 10,000 TRAINEES.

After the program gets under way, Johnson indicated, as many as 10,000 trainees may be sheltered there. A \$500,000 addition will be constructed for sleeping quarters.

The 850 vocational students, with teachers and machinery, will be transferred to the Westcott branch of Calumet High School, where classes will be resumed in the Fall.

Some 30,000 men already have

been trained for war industries in night and day defense classes at the vocational school.

Johnson also said that day and night classes will continue through the Summer at Jones Commercial School and other schools, where men and women are being trained as mechanics, welders and for other jobs important to the war effort.

140

U. S. Naval Air Base, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N. Y.

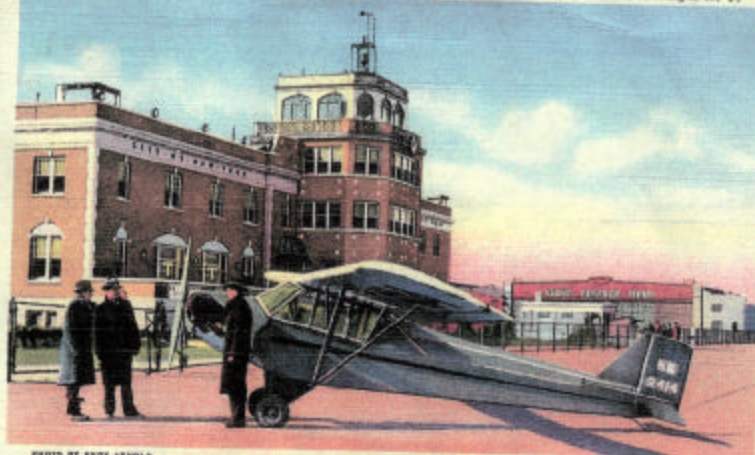


PHOTO BY BOB ARNOLD

74-8754