

Chapter XXX

Fast Forward

July 29, 1932 – May 12, 1938

Captain Brason had lost all track of time as he had been engrossed for hours in reminiscing. He had crossed the Great Plains and could see the mighty Mississippi River below. That told him that he was two thirds of the way across the country and would be landing in Norfolk in a few hours. He wondered if it would be possible to delay reporting to his new command by one day and make a quick side trip to Roanoke.

As he adjusted himself in his seat, he turned his thoughts back his memories. Those were some interesting times. The depression had really hit hard. 1932 began with an unemployment rate of nearly sixteen percent and rising. Fortunately, Curly was secure in his naval career. Times were hard and things were hard to come by. A lot of people were in a bad way and one didn't have to look very far to find those who where were adversely affected. Geannie found a new outlet for compassionate service. She volunteered one day a week in a soup kitchen to help feed the hungry and homeless who had been displaced from their jobs and homes by the depression.

Sheffield still had ten years of memories to go through. Unfortunately he was running out of time and had to fast forward through the next few years.

It had been more than two years since Charles Emmet had come and gone. A lot of healing had taken place during that time. Curly's assignment in Washington had been good for them. He did not have to leave for extended periods of time, and he was home in the evenings and on weekends, which allowed them to be together as a family. That, and being so close to home was also a contributing factor to the healing that took place.

Geannie had recovered from her emotional breakdown and was her old self again and life was good. As Curly's two year assignment drew to an end, they looked forward with eagerness to what new adventure awaited them. Geannie had stayed in close contact with Ramona during that time. Her letters told of all of the wondrous things that Paradise had to offer. Geannie mentioned more than once that it would be great if he was sent to Hawaii, but in her heart she really hoped that they would still be relatively close to home.

In thinking about the future, he was anxious to get back to flying. But looking further ahead, he realized that the day would come when his active flying career would come to an end for one reason or another. The way he saw it, when that time came, he had three options; one was to leave the Navy. If he stayed in, his career path would take him one of two directions, administrative assignments like the one that he had just completed or command assignments.

In talking it over with Geannie, she encouraged him to stay in. "You love the Navy." She told him. "It's your life." She went on to say, "I know that it takes you away from home from time to time, but when I married you, I knew that was the way it would be and I was square with it. I reckoned that's just the way life was. All of those years that Daddy served in the State Assembly, he was often away, sometimes for two or three weeks at a time. Then when he was home, he was sometimes tied up with the bank until late in the evening. But when he was home, he gave us his full attention, just like you do when you're home."

That satisfied him as far as staying in the navy. Although he had enjoyed his two year assignment with the Bureau of Aeronautics, he couldn't see making a career of administrative work. He wanted to pursue the path of command. "You're a born leader." Geannie had told him. "I can see you go along ways and I'll support you all the way."

Sheffield knew that if he was to be seriously considered for command assignments, he needed some specific training. So at that time he applied to attend the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

In the spring, as his assignment with the Bureau of Aeronautics was nearing an end, he was notified that he had been selected and had orders to report at the end of August, which meant another move for the family.

After spending a month in Roanoke, Curly and Geannie moved to Newport. Since the Scouting Force had been transferred to the Pacific earlier in the year, housing around the Newport Naval Station was fairly easy to come by and they rented a three bedroom house in Jamestown, a small town on Conanicut Island in Narragansett Bay. The only connection to the mainland was by ferry, as it had been in Coronado.

When they moved in and got settled, they became acquainted with their next door neighbors, the Halseys. Captain William F. Halsey and his wife Frances had also just moved in and he too was there to attend the Naval War College. Bill and Fan were older than Curly and Geannie; the Captain by sixteen years and she by eleven years and they had two grown children.

Almost immediately, Geannie volunteered to work for Herbert Hoover's re-election campaign headquarters in Newport, having personally met the President. President Hoover's unpopularity and tough opposition from Governor Roosevelt from New York proved to be a losing campaign.

As for Curly, he began his post graduate course at the Naval War College, which was established nearly fifty years earlier in 1884 as the "Home of Thought" for the United States Navy. The college was divided into two classes, the senior class for Commanders, Captains and Marine Corps officers of equivalent rank.

The junior class program intended for Lieutenants, Lieutenant Commanders and Marine Corps

officers of equivalent rank, emphasized tactics and minor strategy. After the initial organizational meeting, the forty two officer students settled down to orientation work in tactics. Their studies required examination of a range of pertinent publications and operating problems. A considerable portion of the course was directed toward understanding the rules of war gaming and working on a variety of tactical problems. Nearly all of the scenarios involved fleet engagements between battleships with only a limited contribution from naval aviation. Nevertheless, Curly benefited greatly from the lectures that he attended and the material that he read. The fact that Japan had occupied Manchuria in 1931 lead to some discussion of the possibility of war with Japan and how such a conflict might unfold. By the end of the course, Adolph Hitler and the Nazi party has seized power in Germany, but was not recognized as the global threat that it would become.

During their time at there, Curly and Geannie became good friends with the Halseys, despite the difference in their ages and rank. On several occasions they had dinner together at one of their homes or the other. Captain Halsey loved to entertain guests and was always a gracious host. Each day Curly and Bill took the ferry together over to Coasters Island where the Naval War College was located.

Once a month Curly road the train the sixty five miles to the Naval Reserve Air Station at Quincey, Massachusetts to get in some flight time to keep his flight status active. During the fall they took a trip through the New England countryside to take in the fall spectacular, one weekend they took a sight seeing trip to Boston and of course they went home for both Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Curly had a short Easter break in which they took the train to New York City to spend a three day weekend. He had been there two or three times, but this was Geannie's first time and she throughly enjoyed the sights and sounds of the big city. One of the highlights of their trip was a visit to the Empire State Building at Fifth Avenue and West 34th Street in downtown Manhattan, that had completed only two years earlier. From the observatory of the tallest building in the world 1,224 feet above the street, they looked down over the entire city. They also visited Central Park, the Statue of Liberty, and other attractions. One of Geannie's favorite places was Radio City Music Hall, which opened only four months earlier. She would love to have attended a Broadway play, but there was no one to watch the kids.

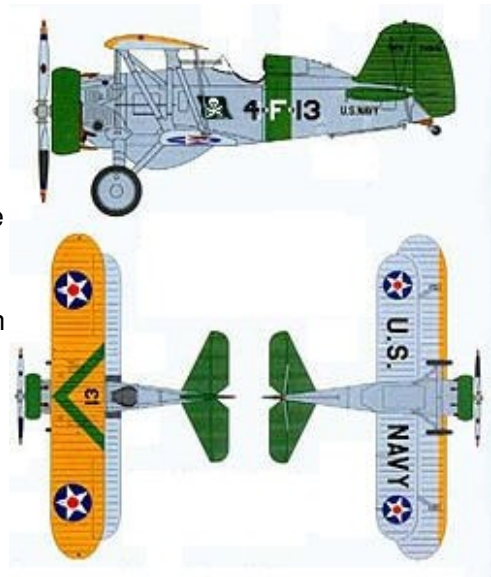
The academic year passed quickly and in the spring, Curly graduated form the course with a new found ability for tactical thinking and strategic planning. Being a logical thinker to begin with, these new skills came easily to him and were bound to pay off in the future, wherever he might go from there.

His new orders were to report to Fighting Four stationed in Norfolk after a thirty day leave. They had their household items, including Geannie's piano, shipped directly to Norfolk where they had them placed in storage.

They packed up the car with the rest of their belongings and drove to Roanoke, stopping off in Baltimore, which was a little more than half way, to spend a of couple nights with Geannie's Aunt Jane. Jane was her father's youngest sister. Aunt Jane had been married once for only three months until it was discovered the man she was married to already had a wife and a family. It was long enough for her to get pregnant and as a result had a daughter. Geannie's cousin Valarie still lived with her mother while she was going to school. Aunt Jane had never remarried and was a successful business woman, which was uncommon for a woman at the time.

The month at home was an enjoyable vacation and happened to coincide with the magical month of June. They had spent a lot of time at home during the last three years. Now with Curly stationed in Norfolk, that would continue for the foreseeable future. Curly and Geannie took a few days during his leave and road the train to Norfolk to look for a place to live. As in Coronado, they found a three bedroom duplex in the officer's housing complex just outside of the air station. They went ahead and moved in before going back to Roanoke to spend the rest of their vacation, which included the Austin/Brason 4th of July picnic. Since the cabin was no longer in the family, it was held in their adjoining yards. At the end of the week, they loaded up the car and drove to Norfolk. It was just like coming home, since everything was ready and waiting for them.

Curly picked up pretty much where he left off with Bombing Two. Being the third senior pilot, he was the division officer of the third division. The newly commissioned squadron flew the reliable Boeing F4B-4s, which all bore the new identification colors that he had helped devise. In addition to the yellow wings, each plane bore a willow green tail and the brightly colored section makings. Being the section leader of the fifth section, his aircraft had a willow green band around the fuselage with the F of 4-F-13 superimposed over it. The 4- and -13 in black and the F in white. On the top of the upper yellow wing was a willow green chevron facing forward with the number 13 in the center. The cowling had a full willow green band around it. The wingtips each sported a white star with a red disc in the center superimposed over a blue circle. Between the stars on the bottom of the lower wings "U.S. Navy" was spelled out, with "U.S." and "Navy" separated by the fuselage. Each plane in the squadron, known as the Buccaneers, wore a skull and cross bones on a black flag.



Fighting Four was to assigned to the new Ranger, which was still under construction, which guaranteed that the squadron would stay close to home until the ship was operational. From time to time

they engaged elements of the Training Squadron made up of the old training battleship Wyoming and a handful of destroyers in exercises. At the time, they were only ships that remained in the Atlantic, as the Battle Fleet and Scouting Force were both in the Pacific. Fighting Four spent a lot of time engaging the Army Air Corps as well. It was during these exercises that Curly made his fourth confirmed simulated kill.

During one of these exercises, Curly met up again with his old Army pal from Hawaii, Harvey Morrison, who was then a captain assigned to the 33rd Pursuit Squadron at Langley Field just across Hampton Roads. On occasion Curly and Geannie got together with Harvey and his wife Phiona and their two boys.

In the fall of that year, Austin started school and Geannie went back to school that year as well. It had been ten years since she had a classroom of her own. She took a teaching position at the same school where Sandy and Austin attended. Austin was in the first grade, Sandy was in the third grade and Geannie taught fifth grade. Geannie discovered that she was having difficulties with her eyes and ended up with a pair of glasses that she needed for reading.

The timing couldn't have been better. Soon After Geannie started school in the fall of 1933, President Roosevelt cut military salaries by fifteen percent as part of a plan to reduce federal spending. Geannie's salary more than made up for the cut in Curly's salary. In early 1934, Curly was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and became the executive officer of Fighting Four, which made up for some of the difference.

With the Ranger nearing completion, Fighting Four finally had the opportunity to conduct carrier qualifications for two days in May of 1934 when the Lexington, Saratoga and Langley passed by on their way to New York. For some of the pilots, it was their first experience of landing aboard a carrier.

The Ranger was placed in commission on June 4, 1934 but was not yet ready to conduct flight operations. Until then, Fighting Four had more opportunities to conduct flight operations aboard the Lexington, Saratoga and Langley while they lingered at Norfolk before returning to the Pacific.

Curly, Geannie and the kids spent a month at home in Roanoke from the first of July through the first of August. Then Curly spent the first full week of August at sea aboard the Ranger. It was the first time that he had spent any time at sea in four years.

On the second day at sea, Curly found himself in the drink for the second time during his career. He had just cleared the forward end of the flight deck and was banking to port as he gained altitude. Then all of a sudden, his engine stalled. He had just enough altitude and speed that he was able to prepare for a water landing as he glided toward the surface of the ocean. As the waves grabbed his wheels, the plane lurched and began to settle. Curly quickly unstrapped his safety harness, inflated his Mae West life jacket and got out of his sinking plane.

This time he was only in the water for a few minutes before he was fished out of the sea by the plane guard destroyer. Later in the day he was returned to Ranger by high line when the destroyer came along side. Unhurt and no worse for the experience, a plane was drawn from the reserves and he got right back into the air

The Ranger put to sea on the morning of August 17, 1934 for her shakedown cruise. Later that morning, Geannie and the kids went to the air station to see Curly off as the squadron took off and flew out to the Ranger. He would be gone for six weeks; the longest he had been away in four years.

Once the Ranger had recovered her planes, she and her plane guard destroyer set course for the South Atlantic. Curly found the smaller Ranger to be not as cramped as the larger Saratoga. She had her disadvantages as well. She was not as well protected, slower, and couldn't carry as many aircraft.

On the 24th the ship crossed the equator and conducted the traditional initiations for the first timers, which included many of the ship's company and nearly all of the air group. On the 30th, the ship stood into the fog shrouded harbor at Rio de Janeiro. This was Curly's second visit to Rio. His first was on the world cruise in 1922. As then, Curly sent Geannie a letter describing Rio along with picture post cards to share with the kids and her fifth graders.

During the first week of September the ship conducted flight operations in the South Atlantic and returned to Rio on the 5th. On the 7th the Ranger participated in Brazil's independence day celebration. Two days later she weighed anchor and ventured farther



into the South Atlantic arriving at Buenos Aires on the 12th. Curly had also visited Buenos Aires in 1922 and again he sent home a detailed letter and picture postcards. On the 18th the Ranger left Buenos Aires and made the ten hour passage to Montevideo, Uruguay where she stayed until the 24th. This was his first visit to Montevideo and again Curly sent yet another packet home.

After visiting three South American Capitols, the Ranger set a course for Norfolk. conducting flight operations all the way. As the Ranger neared Norfolk on the 4th of October, she launched all of her aircraft, which flew ashore. Being a Sunday, Geannie and the kids were able to met him at the air station.

The Ranger herself didn't come into Norfolk until the 8th. After a few days upkeep, the Ranger received orders to join the fleet in the Pacific in San Diego, which meant that Curly and Geannie would be

moving back to San Diego. At the last minute Fighting Four was dissolved and Miles Browning's Fighting Three B absorbed many of Fighting Four's aircraft and several pilots. They sailed with the ship on the 12th.

Curly was surprised when he received orders to Pensacola as a flight instructor. Given two weeks to make the move, they had a decision to make. Do Geannie and the kids wait until the semester is over and join him later, or do they move in the middle of the year? It turned out that a replacement for Geannie was readily available so they took the kids out of school and moved.

Geannie was excited to be back in Pensacola. They had some good times there while while Curly was in flight training. They found another three bedroom duplex in the officers housing complex. Sandy and Austin fit right into their new school, but Geannie had to wait until the beginning of the next semester when she took over for a teacher who's husband had been transferred out. She enjoyed her early morning run on the Florida beaches with the warm gulf water much more that the cold Atlantic water of the beach at Norfolk.

Curly wouldn't be leaving on maneuvers while stationed there, which guaranteed that he would be remaining close to home. Sandy celebrated her tenth birthday in the place where she was born. She had learned to play the piano and was developing the same passion for it as her mother. She was a good student and was doing very well in school as she was a very bright child. Her athletic preference was swimming. She especially loved swimming in the ocean on their outings to the beach.

Austin had just turned seven a couple of months before moving to Pensacola. Even though Geannie had given him lessons too, he just didn't connect with the piano. He did however love to sing and was getting pretty good at it for a child his age. His athletic preference was baseball, a love he picked up from his mother, who coached him on pitching and batting. He was a great asset to his little league team. Austin was bright as well, but struggled in school. Geannie recognized what he needed and worked with him at home to help him stay caught up. He was just happy to get a B.

He loved airplanes. He and Curly were always talking about them. Austin could recognize an airplane simply by the sound of its engine. He could tell you about all of the parts and what they did. He loved to watch the planes take off and land and go through their maneuvers. He decided at a young age that he wanted to be a pilot just like his father. To give him incentive, Curly told him that he had to do well in school.

Curly saw flight school from a whole different perspective. He hoped that he hadn't given his instructors the scares that some of these kids gave him. The Navy needed more and more pilots and relinquished the requirement that candidates for flight school have two years of sea duty before being accepted for flight training. Most of these kids were right out of the Academy. Even some enlisted men

were being trained.

The old Curtiss Jennys that Curly had learned to fly in had long since been replaced by the Consolidated NY-2s. Even they were now being replaced by the new Stearman NS-1. The Stearman was great airplane. It was a conventional biplane of rugged construction with a large, fixed undercarriage tail wheel, and accommodation for the student and instructor in tandem open cockpits. The Stearman's had a distinctive sound that stood out from other similar aircraft. The Navy's NS-1s were all painted bright yellow which contrasted beautifully with the blue sky.



They were able to go home to Roanoke each year for a month during the summer and for two weeks at Christmas. Walt and Sarah even took a rare vacation and came to spend a week in Florida. While they were visiting, Curly made arrangements at the Pensacola Municipal Airport to check out a Stearman Model 75, which was the civilian designation for the NS-1. One at a time, he took Walt and Sarah and each of their kids up for a ride along with Geannie, Sandy, and Austin. That ride set Austin's heart squarely in his father's footsteps. More than ever, he too wanted to be a naval aviator.



While in Florida, they traded there 1928 Chevrolet National for a 1934 Chevrolet Standard Phaeton. Rather than buy a new car as they had in the past, this one was a year old when they bought it. Unlike a convertible, a phaeton is open without side windows that roll up and down. Chevrolet only produced a limited number of this style, which worked out quite well in Florida.

Over the years, Curly and Geannie had stayed in touch with their old friends. Shorty was the executive officer on the Langley, Freddy commanded his own squadron assigned to the Lexington. Cowboy was a section leader in the old squadron on the Saratoga and Scoop was a section leader in Fighting One B. He and Veronica were married shortly after Curly and Geannie left San Diego. As for Ramona, she was still in Hawaii and had never remarried. She reported that in her spare time she was taking classes at the University of Hawaii in pursuit of her masters degree in nursing.

During the mid 1930s the jazz era of the 1920s had given way to swing and the big bands. Curly and Geannie preferred it for both their listening and dancing pleasure. As a birthaversary present, Curly had bought Geannie a new RCA Victrola with an automatic record changer and an electronic radio tuner. It sounded much better than her old Electrola. By 1937, the depression began to ease somewhat which made life much more bearable. One downside to the times was that prohibition had been repealed in 1933.

When they went out for an evening of dining and dancing, they had to put up with the drinkers, who sometimes could be obnoxious.

In May or June of 1937, Captain Charles A. Blakely, the commander of the Pensacola Naval Air Station was succeeded by Captain William F. Halsey. Curly was happy to be serving under his old friend from his days at the Naval War College. Captain Halsey wasted no time in hosting a dinner party in which to get acquainted with the officers under his command. Curly and Geannie were invited to sit at the same table as Bill and Fan and during the course of the meal, they reminisced of the time they lived next to each other and got caught up on the four years in between.

A few days later, Captain Halsey summoned Curly to his office. After little casual chit chat, the Captain got to the point. "Commander Brason," he said holding up an envelope, "I have here transfer orders for you. I have to tell you that I have a mind to countermand them and keep you here with me. You are the kind of man I want serving under me. I would really like to make a place for you on my staff."

Curly sat and listened as his commanding officer and friend continued. "But I'm not going to. I can't deny you the opportunity these orders afford you."

"What are they, sir?" Curly asked.

As he handed him the envelope, Captain Halsey explained. "You are to report to the Norfolk Naval Air Station at the end of the month and take command of Fighting Eight B, a brand new squadron being organized."

Curly listened as he read the orders for himself. In addition, he was to take seven men with him who were just completing their advanced training.

Before he could say anything, Captain Halsey went on. "Yes sir, this is just what you need. It's what you have been trained to do and I know that you'll do a damned good job. So I'll just bide my time and let you get some seasoning and some command experience, then one day when you least expect it, I'll come calling for you. You'll be worth a lot more to me than you are now, and let me assure you, as it is, you are worth a hell of a lot."

"Thank you for your confidence in me, sir. But for right now, it looks I've got a lot of work cut out for myself in organizing a new squadron from nothing more than a handful of green pilots. The orders don't say anything about aircraft."

"That shouldn't be a problem for you Curly, I know you have what it takes. You'll do great. Now get the hell out of here and go get your loose ends tied up so you can be on your way. I must say, Fan and I will miss you, Gannie and the kids."

"Thank you, sir." Curly said as he stood and saluted his boss and added, "We'll miss you to, sir."

"Oh and by the way Commander, before you go, we'll have you over for dinner, just like old times."

"We'll look forward to it, Captain." he said as he left the office.

Curly came home early that afternoon to tell Geannie about his orders. She was excited to be closer to home once again. Since school was out, moving wasn't a problem for her and the kids. Just before moving, they had dinner with the Halsey's in the commandant's quarters. Fan was the witty and gracious host that she had been back in Rhode Island. Geannie once described Captain Halsey as toasted marshmallow; crusty on the outside, yet warm and gooey on the inside. As much as he liked Curly he was equally fond of Geannie.

Curly and Geannie spent three wonderful years at Pensacola. Once again the family packed up for yet another move. Their household items were shipped to Norfolk and put in storage until they could find a place. Curly, Geannie, and the kids packed up the car and made the trip to Roanoke. Curly could only stay a couple of weeks before reporting to Norfolk, while Geannie and the kids stayed through July.

On the 30th June, Curly and his men assembled at the Norfolk Naval Air Station and Fighting Eight B was organized. Also present was what was left of Fighting One B along with their Boeing F4B-4s. The squadron became orphaned when the Langley was converted into a seaplane tender. Fighting One B was dissolved and its men and aircraft were absorbed into the new squadron, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Sheffield Brason. The very next day, Fighting Eight B became known as Fighting Six, in a move to align squadron names with hull number of the carrier to which it was assigned to. Therefore all existing squadrons were renamed at the same time.

Fighting Six was assigned to the USS Enterprise which was under construction nearby at Newport News Shipbuilding. At the same time, the other three squadrons assigned to the Enterprise were also organized. She was the second of the Yorktown Class carriers, the very class that Curly had been involved with during the design process during his assignment at the Bureau of Aeronautics. The Enterprise had been launched the previous October and was at that time in dry dock at Newport News.

Curly's new squadron assumed the Shooting Stars designation that had belonged to Fighting One B and adopted their insignia, a blazing red comet racing across the heavens. Initially, the squadron consisted of dozen aircraft and fifteen pilots, including Scoop. Curly took 6-F-1 with red section markings as his mount. The tails of all the aircraft in the squadron were repainted true blue.

Curly's right wingman was Lieutenant (junior grade) Carl "Red" Bishop of Fighting One B from St. Louis, Missouri. His left wing man was Ensign Jud "Spud" Collins from Alamosa, Colorado who came with him from Pensacola. Scoop was the division leader of one of the other divisions in the squadron.

Curly had a lot of work in organizing the new squadron. During the month of July, things began coming together. Geannie came to Norfolk on the train to spend a week with Curly. It was like the

rendezvous they used to have during his days on the Wadsworth.

At thirty nine, they still had a lot of passion for each other and took advantage of every moment that they had alone together. They were getting older as they were nearing forty. Curly's name hardly fit him any more. He was bald on top but still had curls around the sides. The hair at his temples, sideburns, and mustache showed a fair amount of gray.

Geannie was as gorgeous as ever. Thanks to her devotion to her exercise routine of running, she was in terrific shape. Her figure was still the same as it had always been. Overall, Geannie was aging very well. She was the mature woman the wives of the younger pilots came to look to as she had once looked to Mrs. Ellison.

While Curly was busy organizing his squadron, Geannie set about finding a place to live. As it turned out, the very duplex at 320 Beechwood Avenue that they had moved out of three years earlier was available and Geannie made the arrangements to move in. She also went to the school district office that she had worked for and was able to get a teaching position at the same school, this time teaching sixth grade. Over the weekend, Curly and Geannie moved their belongings from storage back into the duplex. On Monday, Geannie caught the train back to Roanoke.

Curly and the other squadron commanders assigned to the new carrier were given a tour of the incomplete ship. Curly was impressed. The design had improved since he last saw it on paper. It had the makings of a great ship. She was roomy, fast, maneuverable, and could carry nearly as many aircraft as the larger Lexington and Saratoga.

At the end of July, Geannie brought the kids home from Roanoke, It was almost as if they had never moved. Austin celebrated his tenth birthday that summer. After Labor Day, Geannie and the kids started school. As a family, they attended the same church where they had attended before.

Fighting Six transitioned from their Boeing F4B-4s to the brand new Grumman F3F-2s in November of 1937, with Curly getting the first one. The Grumman's were a vast improvement over the F4Bs. Among other features, they had enclosed cockpits, retractable landing gear, and a three bladed propeller. They were bigger, faster, and could fly higher. The F3F, like its predecessor, the F2F were referred to as the "flying barrel" because of the shape of their fuselage.



By this time, the squadron was at full strength consisting of eighteen aircraft, twenty one pilots, and one hundred twenty enlisted men who maintained the aircraft. After working up in their new aircraft, the squadron finally had the opportunity for carrier operations. On the 10th of December Fighting Six along with

Scouting Six, Fighting Five, and Scouting Five were hoisted aboard the Yorktown, Enterprise's sister ship. The Yorktown went to sea on the 12th and conducted carrier qualifications in the Southern Drill Grounds off the Virginia Capes until the 15th.

Curly had been fascinated with night flying since early in his career and experimented a little with it. He took his squadron up before dawn on several occasions. Other times he would keep them up until after sunset before bringing them down. The Commander of the air station frowned on it and thought it to be risky and irresponsible, so it didn't last very long. Perhaps some other time, someone would see the potential and he could try it again.

Now that Curly was the squadron commander, he could finally do something about the smoke filled ready room. Without saying a word, he pinned a red "Baker" flag to the bulletin board. One of the meanings of the Baker flag was no smoking during fueling and arming procedures. His squadron got the message and honored his unspoken request.

After going home for the holidays, Curly continued the training regiment for the Shooting Stars during the winter and spring of 1938 . On May 12nd, he and his men participated in the commissioning ceremony for the Enterprise, although she would not be ready to conduct flight operations for several more weeks.

* * * * *

William F. Halsey did attend the Naval War College during the 1932 – 33 academic year and lived in Jamestown as described.

The Naval War College was as described at the time but has evolved over the years.

Fighting Four is a fictional squadron, as a squadron with that designation did not exist at that time.

The military salary cuts were part of the Economy Act of 1933

The Training Squadron was as depicted.

Fighting Three B actually participated in the Ranger's shakedown cruise.

The Saratoga, Lexington and Langley were on the east coast during the period depicted.

William F. Halsey assumed command of the Pensacola Naval Air Station sometime in May or June of 1937.

Fighting Six came about as pretty much as described, except for the men fresh from flight school. The first commanding officer was Lieutenant Ward C. Gilbert who served as such until about July 1938; the exact same time period as Sheffield in the story.

The other Enterprise squadrons organized at the time were:

VB-8B renamed VB-6 with the Curtiss BFC-2

VS-8B renamed VS-6 probably with the Vought SU-4

VT-8B renamed VT-6 with the Martin BM-2