

# PART II The U.S. Navy

## Chapter 3 SEAMAN

Upon enlisting in the Navy, Gover and Aunt Mary presented Gordon with a gold ring with GGB engraved on the front. Inside it had the inscription "1941". They also gave him a Swiss watch that was also engraved with "1941".

A few days later, he rode the train to San Diego for Basic Training. On the train he met a girl from Smithfield, Utah who was on her way home to Los Angeles. She knew a lot of his cousins and people he knew. Smithfield is just a few miles from Clarkston. She told him if he ever got in Los Angeles to look her up and gave him her address. He never did anything about it.

Boot camp was an ordeal that he hated going through. He had it in his mind to join the Navy and ride a ship so he wouldn't have to walk. In boot camp they marched everywhere. In October, Gordon got word that Milton's wife, Annabel, had died in childbirth. He asked the chief if it would be possible for him to take leave and go to her funeral. The Chief told him that it was possible but if he did, he would have to finish up in his company that was behind him. He didn't recommend it, so Gordon stayed. One day long about October the company was goofing up and not doing things right. The Chief pulled them over into the shade and gave them a talk. He told them, "You think you're in here just to have fun! Well, you're all going out to the Pacific and fight Japs." Boot Camp lasted six weeks and was not worth remembering.



*Gordon in boot camp.  
Cropped from the picture of  
his company, below.*



After Boot Camp, he came home on a leave for nine days before going back to San Diego. His company was assigned to report aboard the three aircraft carriers in the Pacific Fleet. The three carriers were the Lexington, Saratoga, and the Enterprise. There were sixty men, twenty for each ship. They each got to sign up for the ship they wanted. Gordon and his buddy, Martinez, sat on the running board of a car until everyone else was done and took what was left. They wanted to be on the same ship and didn't realize that one could end up on one ship and the other on another. When they went to sign up, there were two places left for the U.S.S. Enterprise.

From North Island, he departed for Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands where he was to go aboard the Enterprise. When he wrote home to tell his family, he did not even know how to spell Enterprise, (he spelled with a) let alone know what an aircraft carrier was. It took nine days to go from San Diego to Pearl Harbor aboard an old troop ship, the U.S.S. Henderson. He got there on December 4<sup>th</sup>. In three days, his life and the whole world would never be the same again.

In Pearl Harbor, so many miles from home out in a big ocean, Gordon ran into somebody from Burley, Louis Jones. He was stationed aboard the U.S.S. Oglala. They decided they would get together on Sunday when Louie was off duty and the two of them would spend the day together. Until the Enterprise returned from sea, Gordon stayed at the Receiving Ship, a barracks for people in transit.

Sunday he had plans of seeing Honolulu and the rest of the island first hand. He left the Receiving Ship early enough to get a good start. As he left, Gordon paused a moment to salute the flag as he went by. The time was 5:55am, Sunday December 7, 1941. The sky was filled with aircraft from the airfields around the island ... NO! ... They were Jap dive bombers and torpedo planes. In an instant, Pearl Harbor became a mass of confusion, and explosions, and fire, and smoke, and destruction.

Not knowing what else to do, Gordon ran down to 1010~~0~~ where he was to meet Louie. He got there just as the Oglala rolled over. He found Louie on the dock with a 30 caliber machine gun mounted on a tripod next to a little building. Louie immediately put Gordon to work loading the machine gun as he fired at the unannounced enemy.

Eventually, someone came and got Louie because they needed him elsewhere. Gordon was left alone to load and fire the gun himself. There was a Zero (Jap fighter



*This is a painting of the attack on Pearl Harbor as seen from 1010 Dock. In the foreground is the Ogala rolling over. Battleship row is shown in the background.*

plane) circling overhead nearby. Gordon opened fire on it but about all he did was to annoy the enemy pilot. What a target, an inexperienced farm boy behind a 30 caliber machine gun, and down he came strafing all the way. When he was close enough to see the pilot's face, Gordon decided it was time to leave. Down the dock he ran with bullets ripping the concrete at his heels. The plane passed overhead and into the sky already crowded with planes and smoke.

With the Zero off his back, he kept running down the dock passed a square sterned cruiser, the USS Helena. A pickup full of marines picked him up. Where they were going didn't matter, there was no place to go. Another Zero dived out of the sky strafing the pickup. Gordon and the marines all scrambled at once to the bottom of the pickup for cover. Somewhere along the way, they let him off and he ended up out in the harbor on a tug boat fighting fires on the Battleships.

At one point, he saw someone climbing a ladder up one of the huge oil storage tanks. A nearby Marine raised his rifle and shot the man. Saboteurs had been a major concern prior to the attack. Whatever the reason he was climbing the tank, the Marine wasn't taking any chances.

From Sunday morning until Monday night became one day without any recollection of what he had done. He found himself in a chow line back at the Receiving Ship when someone from his group spotted him. The Enterprise came in Monday night after dark. He just had time to get his gear and go aboard. He was still wearing his white uniform and was a real mess from the smoke and sweat. At this point, Gordon's story and the story of the Big E become in the same.

He went aboard about ten o'clock that night. Gordon remembers walking up the gangway with his sea bag over his shoulder. Once aboard they put the twenty new "boots" in a safe place out of the way on the hanger deck while the ship took on fuel and provisions. The next morning while it was still dark, the Enterprise began to get under way. Gordon could feel the ship moving and walked over to the edge of the ship to watch what was going on. He could see the little tugboats pulling the ship away from the dock. Gordon thought to himself, "Oh my God. It must be helpless if it has to be pulled around by little boats."

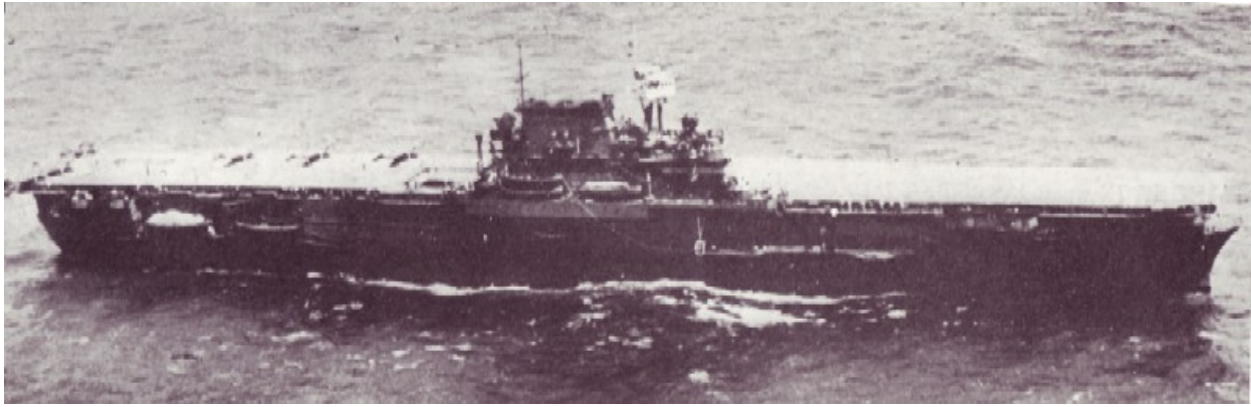
As it got lighter, he looked around and got a worse impression. The size was more than he could imagine. The Enterprise was 824 feet long and 114 feet wide and weighed 20,000 tons. When he looked around and saw all that iron, he knew he was in trouble. Back home, if you throw a piece of iron in the ditch, it would sink!

Meanwhile back in Burley, his folks heard the announcement of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Knowing their son was there, they anxiously awaited word from him telling them he was alright. Instead, they got a telegram from the Department of Naval Personnel stating that Gordon was missing in action. The loss of Ervin was still fresh in their memories, now the fate of Gordon was uncertain. Since he hadn't mustered in when he returned to the Receiving Ship before reporting aboard the Enterprise, no one knew where he was.

He had breakfast Sunday morning before the attack, and didn't eat again until Tuesday morning at sea. By then he wasn't even hungry. Upon reporting aboard he was assigned to the deck division. In charge was a Chief Boatswain's Mate by the name of Holdebe. Before his records caught up with him, he wasn't getting paid, and didn't have any money for a while. After a couple days at sea, Holdebe asked him, "Why don't you clean up'?" Gordon's reply was, "I don't have anything to clean up with." "Aren't you getting paid?" he was asked. "No," he answered. "I guess my records aren't aboard yet." So, Holdebe gave him some money until he got paid.

Gordon was assigned a bunk in the crew quarters below decks. Having witnessed first hand what a torpedo can do to a ship, he didn't want to be down there on the waterline and have one hit the ship. He wanted to be where he could get off. So he found an army cot and some lockers up on the hanger deck level (or the main deck) near his battle station and that was where he bunked.

It wasn't long before he found out how "all that iron" could maneuver. During the week



*The USS Enterprise - late 1941*

that followed Pearl Harbor, the Enterprise patrolled the waters around Oahu for enemy submarines. There were plenty of sightings, and dive bombers from Enterprise sunk one on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The first Japanese ship to be sunk during the war.

There were plenty of false submarine sightings as well. Gordon's battle station was on the five inch antiaircraft guns. One of these false sightings was a whale that surfaced right close to the ship and to some scared sailors it looked like a submarine surfacing. They opened fire with the five inch guns, getting a direct hit on the unsuspecting whale. A destroyer could see what was going on and began signaling to call attention to the fact that it was only a whale. The Ensign over the gun crew was going to put them on report for opening fire without orders. When Admiral Halsey heard about it, he dismissed the charge by stating, "We'll shoot first and ask questions and figure out what ~~was~~ later."

On the five inch guns Gordon learned how to perform all the duties pertaining to their operation. It took a crew of several men for each gun. The five inchers were arranged around the ship in groups of two. They were located fore and aft on both sides. The ship had eight of these big antiaircraft guns along with sixteen 1.1 inch antiaircraft guns in four mounts, two forward and two aft of the island structure. There were also twenty-four 50 caliber machine guns that were arranged in batteries along both sides of the flight deck.

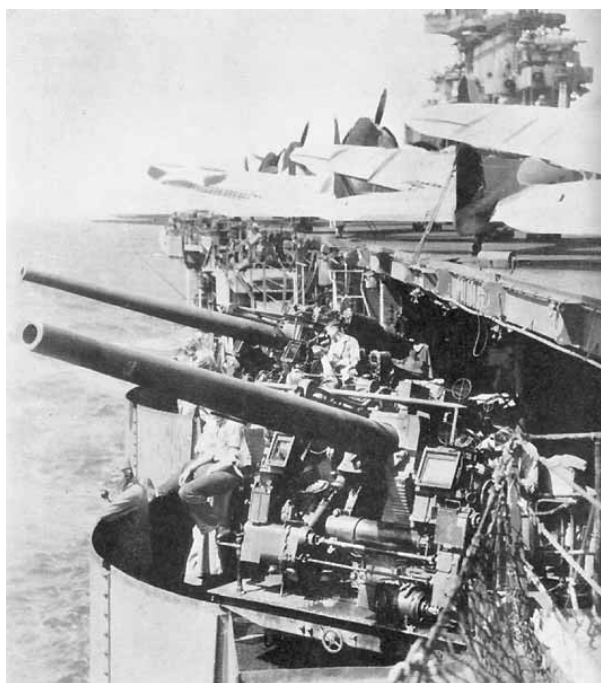
To operate the five inch guns, it took a man to turn the cranks that elevated and rotated the barrel. One to load the powder shell, one to set the fuse on the projectile, another to load it into the gun. Then the gun captain "rammed it home" and fired the gun. A man with big asbestos gloves caught the empty powder can as it was ejected from the barrel after it was fired. There was also a man who was in communication with sky control in the island structure, who told the gun crew where to aim and fire. The five inchers had a range of thirteen miles.

The main battery on an aircraft carrier was its air group. The Enterprise carried between eighty and ninety planes. There was a fighter squadron consisting of two or three dozen fighters. They were the first line of defense in defending the ship and the task force against enemy air attack. There were always several in the air on combat air patrol. They also accompanied the the bombers and torpedo planes on missions.

The Enterprise carried two squadrons of dive bombers, one was designated as a scouting squadron. These plane carried either a five hundred our a one thousand pound bomb under their belly. Behind the pilot sat the rear seat gunner with a thirty caliber machine gun. The remaining squadron consisted of between fifteen and eighteen torpedo bombers. They were capable of carrying either a torpedo or two bombs.

With the war in the forefront of everyone's consciousness, everyone was uncertain of their futures and the prospects of facing battle. The twenty new boots had something the seasoned veterans did not have, battle experience. They were often asked what it was like to be in battle. In the months to come, they would all find out.

The Enterprise returned to Pearl Harbor on the 14<sup>th</sup> at that time Gordon's records caught up with him. Even though his records were brought aboard, it was about six weeks from the time he went aboard until he got paid. Gordon received twenty-one dollars a month for his wages. His family then got another telegram from the Navy, this one stating that Gordon was alive and well.



*The aft port 5" gun mount - February 1942*

The ship was only in Pearl Harbor for a couple of days before heading back to sea to patrol the area west of Oahu and provide support to the failed attempt to relieve the Marines on Wake Island. By the the time they returned to Pearl Harbor on the last day of the year, Gordon pretty much had his sea legs under him. Now that the Navy was operating under war conditions, the carriers didn't stay in port very long. Of the three carriers, only one was in port at a time in case the Japs returned

for another attack. The Enterprise and her escorts departed again on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January so the Lexington could come in. The Big E spent the next four days conducting training exercises north of Oahu.



*The Royal Hawaiian Hotel and Waikiki Beach behind barbed wire*

While in port, the crew was granted shore leave. During these times Gordon finally got to look around Honolulu and parts of the island. Waikiki Beach had lost its peacetime appeal as it had barbed wire was strung along the otherwise beautiful sandy beach. The sun bathers had been joined by soldiers on patrol.

After another brief stay, the Enterprise put to sea on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, surrounded by the screening vessels, and set course for the South Pacific to provide cover for the reinforcement of Samoa. That same day, the US carrier force was reduced by one as the Saratoga had been torpedoed off Oahu. She would be out of commission for the next six months while being repaired on the west coast.

Four days after leaving Pearl Harbor, the Enterprise and her task force crossed the



*The flight deck full of planes (Dive bombers in the foreground and torpedo planes with their wings folded in the background.) - About December 1941*

equator. Traditionally when a ship crossed the equator, an elaborate celebration was held by the shell backs to initiate the polliwogs who had not yet crossed the line. Because the task force was on heightened alert, the ceremonies were canceled. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Gordon was promoted to Seaman 2<sup>d</sup> Class. A few days later, the Enterprise rendezvoused with another task force centered around the Yorktown, which had just come from the Atlantic. Together they patrolled the area around Samoa as the Marines went ashore.

With Samoa secured, the Enterprise and Yorktown were ordered to carry out the first strikes against the enemy in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. As they sailed northwest, they recrossed the equator as well as the International Date Line. The two groups separated and took up their positions.

On February 1, 1942 the Enterprise air group attacked the Japanese held islands of Wotje, Roi, and Kwajaleim in the Marshall Islands. The strategy was to go in and attack and retreat and attack another island and retreat again, thus keeping the Japs guessing as to the American's strength and position. During the raid the Enterprise was in range of attack by Jap land based bombers. Later in the day a formation of Betty's (twin engine bombers) attacked the Enterprise and her escorts.

Gordon was the first shellman on the gun crew, the one who loads the shell. The process was for the first shellman to touch the first powderman once the shell was loaded. He would in turn touch the gun captain and he would then fire the gun. Evidently, someone must have bumped the gun captain. The gun captain began to "ram it home" before Gordon had his arm out of the way. When Gordon felt the powder rammer bump his arm, he hurried and jerked it out of the way before his arm ended up in the barrel or even worse, out the other end. He could have been seriously hurt.

Gordon filled about every position in the gun crew. They were rotated around so everyone knew everything about the gun mount. During one of these early engagements, the Ensign who was the gun captain got scared and panicked. An experienced 1<sup>st</sup> Class Bosun's Mate took his head phones and told him to sit in the corner out of the way. As the firing continued he told the Ensign to get up and help pass ammunition. Later the Ensign thanked his much wiser subordinate.

Of the fifteen bombs dropped by the formation of Bettys, all missed the ship, but one went off in the the water only thirty feet away which started a small fire and caused minor



damage. The last bomber in the formation had been hit and fell out of formation in an attempt to crash dive into the Enterprise. All guns in the task force focused on the plane as it kept coming. The Captain ordered a sharp turn to avoid being hit but the desperate pilot maneuvered to keep the fast moving ship before him. At the last minute, one wing of the bomber sliced through a dive bomber parked on the flight deck as it continued on its way and crashed into the sea. Seconds later it sank as the ship passed the wreckage. With her mission completed, the Enterprise returned to Pearl Harbor on February 6

After a week in port, the Enterprise set out once more on the 11<sup>th</sup> orders to attack the enemy on Wake Island on the 24<sup>th</sup>. With that accomplished, Admiral Halsey received orders to take his ships deep into Jap waters to attack Marcus just a thousand miles east of Tokyo on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. The raids on Wake and Marcus were carried out without counter attacks from the enemy. All the while, the ships were at full alert and Gordon was at his battle station almost continually. With the mission accomplished, they returned to Pearl Harbor on 10



*Gordon on shore leave*

On this stop over at Pearl Harbor, Charles A. "Tommy" Tomilson came aboard and was also assigned to the deck division. He and Gordon became close friends. While in port, the ship took on provisions for its next mission. At this time, the Enterprise got a fresh coat of dark sea blue paint. Being part of the deck division, Gordon no doubt got in on the paint job. The 50 caliber machine guns were replaced by thirty six of the more capable 20 millimeter anti-aircraft guns.

Reprovisioned, repainted, rearmed, and well rested after a four weeks in port, the Enterprise with two cruisers, four destroyers, and a tanker set sail on April 8 on a secret mission. For four days they steamed northeast into the stormy North Pacific. As the task force went north, it became very cold. It wasn't very comfortable sleeping in his improvised quarters so moved back down below for the duration of the cruise. Hearing the water sloshing against the hull was unsettling. His fear of torpedoes didn't make it any better, but at least it was warm down there.

As the ship continued north, fog, clouds and rain shrouded the task force. It was so cold that the men dressed in foul weather clothing to stand watch. If there had of been anything out

there they wouldn't have been able to see it for the fog. One day while standing watch, as he gazed out into the gray his thoughts turned to home. His daydreaming was interrupted when Ensign Crocker came along. He asked Gordon "What are you looking at, Buttars?" Gordon figured a dumb question deserved a smart answer. So he replied, "Mermaids!"

On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> another small task force was spotted coming over the horizon. Soon the Enterprise was joined by the the Hornet, two more cruisers, four destroyers, and another tanker all of which had just come from the Atlantic. Gordon and his shipmates marveled at the sight of the sixteen twin engined Army B-25 bombers aboard the Hornet. They weren't capable of operating from an aircraft carrier. The scuttlebutt aboard the ship was that there mission must be to deliver the army planes somewhere in the Aleutians.

With the two task forces joined as one, they headed straight west. Day after day the came closer and closer to Japan. Watching their compasses and the speed of the ships, they decided that if they didn't change course soon, they would be unloading them in Tokyo Bay. How right they were! The skipper announced ~~that~~ they were to deliver Colonel James Doolittle and the sixteen B-25's to within five hundred miles from Japan itself for a raid on Tokyo. At the word, Gordon cheered along with the thousands of other sailors on the sixteen ships.

Three days from Tokyo, the tankers refueled the carriers and cruisers. The destroyers and the tanker fell behind and the task force plunged deeper and deeper into Jap water until the morning of April 18, 1942. That morning the wind was blowing right out of Tokyo. As the two carriers headed into the wind, and Tokyo, the Enterprise launched her planes first to provide air cover over the task force. Air cover was always a necessity in the war zone. After the combat air patrol was established by the fighters and the dive bombers were on patrol, the Hornet began launching the B-25's, which were never designed for carrier operations.

Gordon watched from the port forward five inch gun battery as one by one the B-25's lifted off the Hornet's flight deck. It seemed as though it took forever to get them all airborne. Every minute brough



*B-25 Taking off from the Hornet*

them closer to Tokyo, and certain death if they were discovered. As soon as the last bomber left the deck, the Hornet brought her air group up from the lower deck and began launching her planes to add to the air cover. The small task force turned around and got out of there as fast as they went in. The term was "Haul out with Halsey." A couple days later they rejoined the waiting destroyers on their way back to Pearl Harbor. The Japanese homeland had been dealt its first blow of the war. The damage was slight but the boost to American morale was tremendous. When the ships returned to Pearl Harbor on the 25<sup>th</sup>, they were not permitted to say where they had been as the mission was a well guarded secret. So much in fact, that when asked where the bombers took off from, President Roosevelt responded, "From our secret base in Shangri La." Shangri-La was a fictional place described in the 1933 novel Lost Horizon.

During the first months of the war, Japan had advanced in the Pacific area, rapidly expanding their holdings. The United States was strictly on the defensive. All there was between the Japanese and the west coast of the United States were a handful of unmercifully outnumbered ships. Japan was increasing their holdings in the Pacific and Asia. With their eye on cutting off the lifeline to Australia, they planned to mount an invasion of Port Moresby on the southern coast of New Guinea. The Yorktown and Lexington were in position to counter the Japanese moves. The Enterprise and Hornet quickly reprovisioned and on the 30<sup>th</sup> April departed Pearl Harbor to join the anticipated battle.

As they rushed south, Gordon crossed equator again on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Again there was no time to celebrate. While enroute, news of the Battle of Coral Sea was received aboard the



*The Enterprise - Spring 1942*

Enterprise and the other ships of the task force, which were only a day away from the scene of battle. The Lexington had been sunk and the Yorktown was severely damaged. The Japanese had been turned back and were retreating. Coral Sea was the only battle that the Enterprise missed. The Enterprise and Hornet operated in the South Pacific until the 16<sup>th</sup> when they received orders to return to

Pearl Harbor with all haste. After joining up with the Lexington's former escorts, they set course for Pearl Harbor. The return trip was Gordon's fourth crossing of the equator.

The quickly expanding Empire of Japan had plans that would bring the Americans to surrender. In June of 1942 they planned a massive strike at Midway Island, about one thousand miles from Pearl Harbor. Their plan was to capture Midway and establish a base. From there, their plan was to destroy the remains of the American fleet and capture the Hawaiian Islands. From Pearl Harbor they would have access to the entire west coast of the United States. The only thing to stop them was the Enterprise, Hornet, and the quickly repaired Yorktown.

After returning to Pearl Harbor on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, the Enterprise and Hornet went to sea again only two days later on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The Yorktown was quickly patched up and she sailed two days after that. And stop them the Japs they did. On June 4, 1942, four of Japan's finest carriers were sunk in one day. That morning, the Japs launched their first wave against Midway. In the



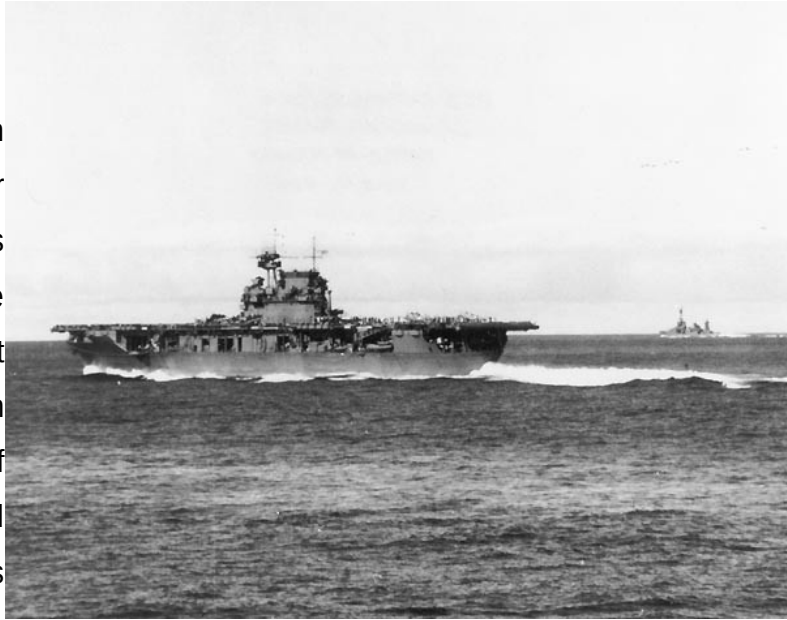
mealtime, their carriers were found by U.S. patrol planes, and an attack was launched immediately from the Enterprise, Yorktown, and Hornet. Shortly after the strike was launched, the Japs found the Yorktown and attacked, leaving her seriously damaged, claiming that it sank.

The torpedo squadrons were the first to attack the Jap carriers... or rather to be slaughtered. When the dive bombers attacked, the enemy's carrier decks were loaded with armed and fueled planes ready for an attack on the American carriers. They dove out of the sun on three of the unsuspecting carriers, blowing them out of the water.

Planes from the remaining Jap carrier followed the Yorktown's planes back to the ship. She had put out her fires and was under way again. Claiming that the Yorktown had been sunk, they thought they were attacking the Enterprise. Again, they heavily damaged her and left claiming the Enterprise as sunk. (They first claimed to have sunk the Enterprise at Pearl Harbor when they sunk the old Utah. The Enterprise was supposedly to have been sunk six times

earning the title of "The Galloping Ghost.")

From one of the five inch guns on the "BigE" Gordon watched the smoke filled horizon as the Yorktown fought for survival. The Jap planes returned from the torture of the Yorktown and prepared for yet another strike. Again, American dive bombers appeared out of nowhere and set the deck load of fueled and armed planes ablaze and the fourth enemy carrier began sinking.



*The Enterprise at Midway*

All there was to do for the vast Japanese armada was to do was to withdraw, with the Enterprise and Hornet in pursuit. The Yorktown once again put out the fires and began to repair the damage while being towed back to Pearl Harbor. Unfortunately she was sunk by torpedoes from a Jap sub three days later. The Enterprise and Hornet never were attacked during the



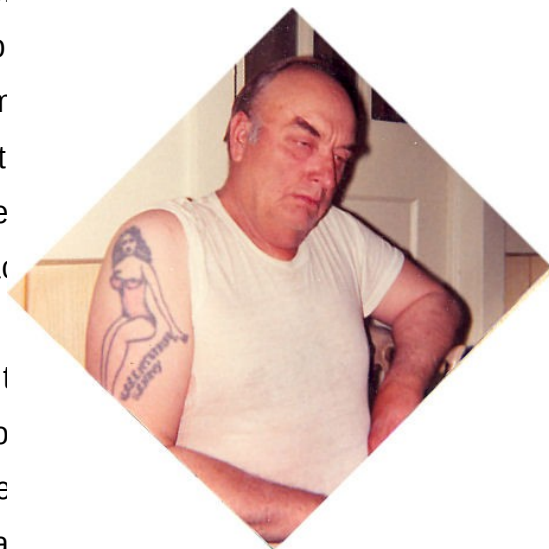
*Gordon - June 1942*

battle, however their air groups contributed greatly to the victory. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June the victorious Enterprise sailed into Pearl Harbor. The tide of the war had been turned and the Americans would soon be on the offensive.

The picture at the left was taken of Gordon just after the Battle of Midway. While on liberty in Honolulu he saw a photography studio and decided to go in and have his picture taken. When he went back to sea he had forgotten all about the picture. Nearly a year later while in port again, one of his shipmates walked past the same studio and saw Gordon's

portrait in the window. Recognizing his buddy, he went in and got the pictures and took them back to the ship for Gordon. A copy hung in his Grandmother Buttars' home until her death in 1952. Another copy hung in Gordon's home next to a large photograph of the "The Big E"

About this time, while on liberty in Honolulu, Gordon got a tattoo on his right arm. It was a woman wearing a red bathing suit setting above the name of the ship. While on liberty, Gordon lived the fast life which included drinking and women. He wanted to get as much as he could of both before going back to sea. After all he might not be coming back.



*The tattoo. This picture was taken many years after the war.*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, the Enterprise sailed out of Pearl Harbor. Just out of the channel, she was joined by two cruisers and a brand new battleship as well as the familiar destroyers of the task force. Once they set course for the South Pacific. The thing that was different about this mission was that this time they were on the offensive. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July the Enterprise dropped anchor at Nufualofa Roads, Tonga for a brief stay. The harbor was crowded with transports and cargo ships loaded with men and supplies for the invasion of Guadalcanal. Later the same day the Enterprise and the invasion force departed Tonga and joined other elements of the fleet on the 26<sup>th</sup>. After consolidating forces, Enterprise became part of a larger task force that included the



*The 20 Millimeter anti-aircraft battery Gordon was at during the Battle of Santa Cruz. This picture was taken a few months earlier.*

recently repaired Saratoga and the Wasp which was fresh from the Atlantic.

The sleeping Japanese on Guadalcanal were awakened on August 7<sup>th</sup> by the shore bombardment from the cruisers and destroyers off shore while planes from the Big E, Wasp, and Saratoga provided air cover during the invasion of Guadalcanal. By then Gordon had been transferred from the five inch guns to the 20 millimeters. His new battle station was Battery



*The Enterprise on fire*

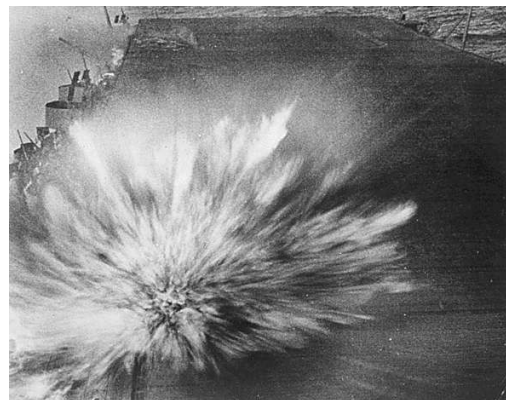
guns went silent while the gunners got back on their feet. Thirty seconds later, the second bomb hit only fifteen feet from the first. The five inch gun deck Gordon had just been transferred from three weeks before was demolished, killing forty-three men. Thick black smoke poured from the listing ship with only three-fourths of her guns still firing.

Two minutes after the first bomb hit, a third bomb blew a ten foot hole in the flight deck putting the Number Two elevator out of order. By 5:17 the attack was over but the battle continued as the crew fought the fires and brought them under control. When the fires were out, the gaping holes in the flight deck were patched up and an hour and a half after the first bomb, the air group began coming aboard. Twenty-five planes had landed before the ship lost steering control. The planes still in the air landed aboard the Saratoga while the steering was being repaired. Without steering control, the ship was a sitting duck as another wave of Jap planes appeared on radar. Fortunately they never found their target.

When the ship was damaged like this, the battle goes on long after the last of the enemy planes leave. The fires have to be brought under control, the wounded tended to, and the damage patched up good as can be. Then there the debris to clean up. One time Gordon found a

Twelve, located along the island structure.

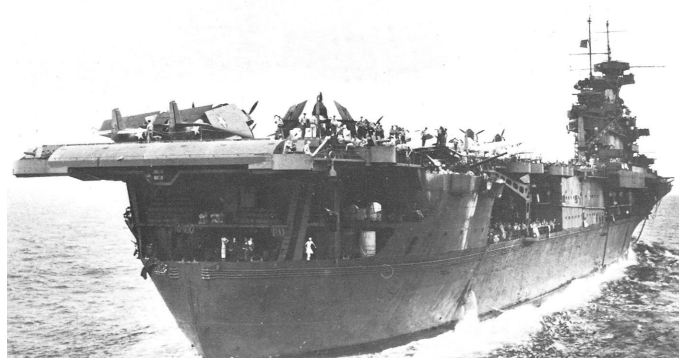
After being caught off guard, the Japs launched a counter strike against the American carriers on August 24, 1942. They found the Enterprise. At 5:14 p.m. Three minutes later the first bomb smashed through the aft elevator and exploded five decks below. The big carrier shuddered at the first blow and the crew was thrown off balance. For an instant the



*Enterprise hit by the third bomb in two minutes, Near the aft end of the deck, smoke can be seen from the first bomb hit, which obliterated a starboard 5" gun mount and its crew.*

piece of a cog among the debris that he recognized as part of an International mower. It even had "International" stamped into it. He kept it for a while and showed it off. The cog had been packed into the bomb casing to be hurled as shrapnel when the bomb detonated. He figured it must have been in some scrap metal that the Japs bought from the United States before the war.

The Enterprise was so badly damaged that she had to go back to Pearl Harbor for repairs. The Enterprise and Saratoga had stopped a major drive to recapture Guadalcanal. The Enterprise was detached from the area and stopped off in Tonga on August 30<sup>th</sup> and sailed again on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. She returned to Pearl Harbor on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The trip back was Gordon's sixth crossing of the equator.



*The Enterprise enroute to Pearl Harbor for repairs.*

Shortly after the battle, Gordon received the following citation from the Captain:

From: The Commanding Officer

To: Buttars, Gordon G. Sea2c. U.S. Navy

Subject: Commendation

1) The commanding officer takes pleasure in commending you for your efficient and untiring performance of duty during and after the action against the enemy off the Solomon Islands on August 24, 1942. As a gunner and loader on 20 MM Battery No. 12, you performed your duties in a particularly cool and efficient manner, thereby contributing materially to the excellent performance of your battery in shooting down enemy aircraft. This display of courage and zeal, and your exceptional performance of duty during this emergency, is considered to be worthy of special commendation.

2) A copy of this letter will be filed with your service record and suitable notation will be made there in.

A.C. Davis