

LIFE



WORLD'S BEST:
U.S. NAVY'S NEW DIVE BOMBER

MARCH 31, 1941

10 CENTS

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$4.50

LIFE'S COVER

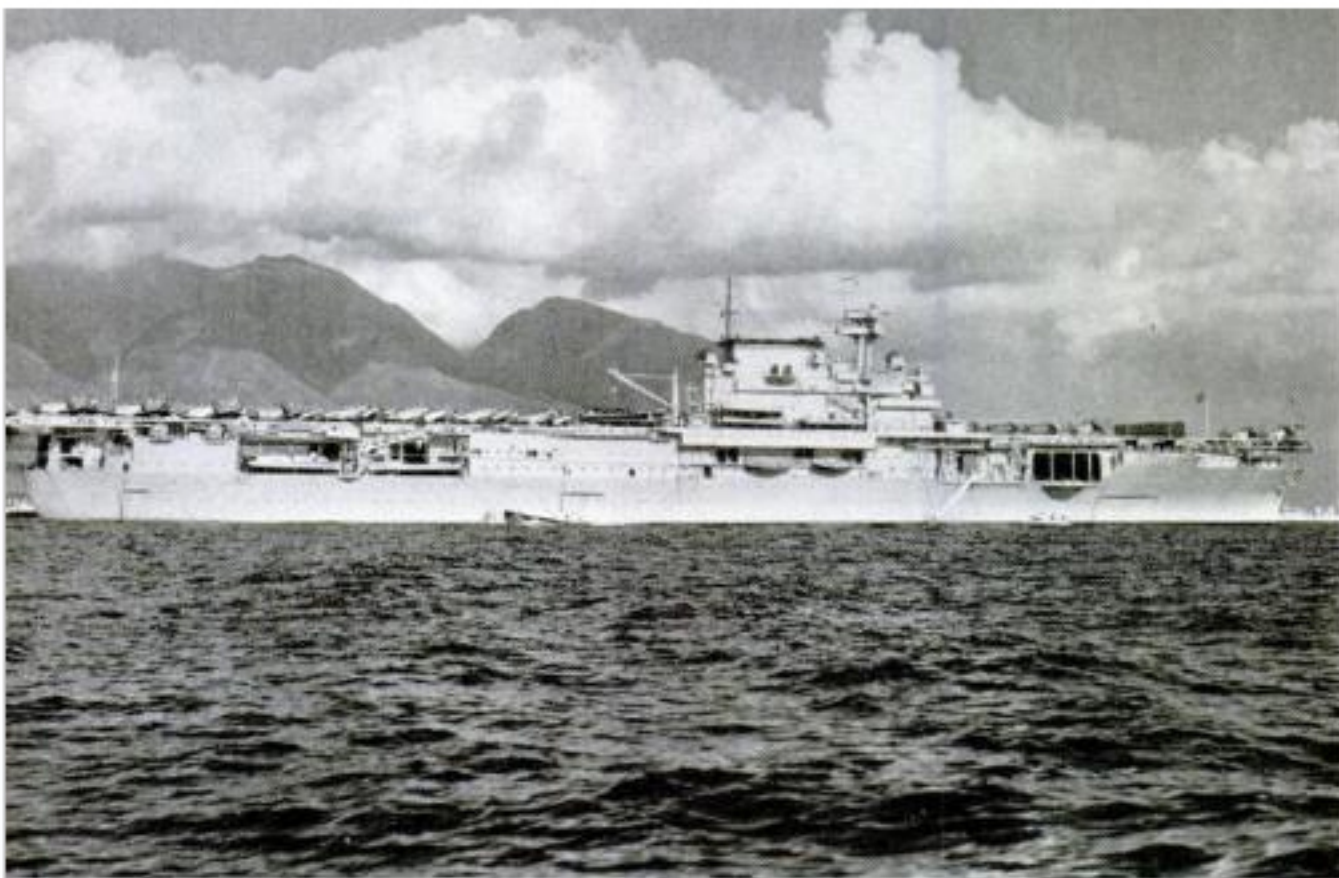
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The U. S. Navy has just ordered \$50,000,000 worth of the dive bomber shown on the cover, the new Curtiss XSB₂C-1. X stands for "experimental," SB for "scout bomber," 2C for second scout bomber built by Curtiss, 1 for first model of this bomber. Its speed is 100 m.p.h. higher, range 600 miles greater and striking power far more deadly than that of any dive bomber in the world. It will be stationed aboard aircraft carriers like the *Enterprise* (see pp. 58-60).



The "Enterprise," which was commissioned in 1938, lies at anchor in Lahaina Roads, off the Hawaiian island of Maui, her planes lined up on

deck. She carries scout bombers, torpedo bombers, fighters, which take off and land either at the bow or the stern, always flying into the wind.



In the ready room, pilots get instructions. The Enterprise carries a complement of 2,072 men. Because of multitude of jobs, carriers have bigger

complements than any other warships. Below: the elegant wardroom. Ship officers and flying officers eat in same room but at separate tables.



AIRCRAFT CARRIER

WARSHIPS LIKE THE "ENTERPRISE" MAY BE THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN NAVAL COMBATS

The aircraft carrier is a brand-new battle device. It has never been used in any big naval engagement although planes from a British carrier last November grievously wounded the Italian Fleet lying at anchor in Taranto.

But though it has little past to look back on, the aircraft carrier may have a history-making future. Command of the air can be the decisive factor in modern naval engagements. Fleets whose planes can scout and harass the enemy will have an immediate superiority over a fleet whose air strength is inconclusive.

The aircraft carrier is, in effect, a seagoing landing field. The U. S. Navy's *Enterprise* is a 19,900-ton 34-knot warship. Only destroyers and some light cruisers are faster. She carries 81 planes. In combat she would be stationed well behind the main line of battle but her planes would be well out in advance, her fighters trying first to knock out the enemy's planes and then her bombers and torpedo planes attacking. Lightly armed and armored, the carrier relies for protection on her speed and a warship screen.

The U. S. now has six carriers with a dozen more building. Britain has eight effective. Japan probably has seven. The U. S. Navy has the best carriers and air arm in the world. Its equipment will be vastly improved when newer planes, like the Curtiss XSB2C-1 shown on the cover, come into use.

The present margin of U. S. superiority is measured by its carriers' ability to get more planes into the air in less time than any other fleet. The U. S. led in introducing arrestor landing devices which stop planes quickly on deck. Other fleets have similar devices but they still lack the superb "know-how" of U. S. carrier crews.



Navigator of the *Enterprise* is Commander T. P. Jeter, here shown watching wind velocity dial (top) and wind direction dial (bottom). For best flying conditions he must keep the wind just off the bow (note dial pointer) and maintain a uniform airspeed.



Off on a bombing rehearsal, a group of Douglas TBD torpedo bombers head off the *Enterprise* toward Diamond Head, Hawaii. This is just practice for a mock attack but, if the facts were turned about, they might be enemy bombers from an alien aircraft carrier coming in to attack

the great Pearl Harbor Base which lies just the other side of Diamond Head. Equipped with the Navy's famous bombsight, these TBD's are horizontal—not dive—bombers operating efficiently from high altitudes. They have yellow wings to aid quick location if forced down at sea.



The crew of the "*Enterprise*"—machinists, fuelers, handlers, directors, etc.—huddles together before a big day's work like a football team and gets a fight talk from a deck officer. Rivalry among the different carriers is constant and intense, each ship trying to outdo the others in

efficiency, set new marks for speed in getting planes into the air or stowed away on board. The carrier crews are good because they have to be good. Many seamen consider work on carriers the most active and exciting in the Navy so the carriers have no trouble at all getting good men.