

Flat

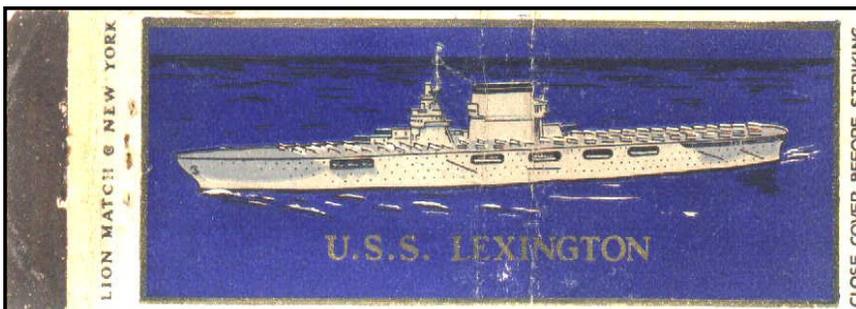
I suppose one could argue which type of craft is the ‘star’ of modern naval history...the sub, the battleship, or the aircraft carrier...but I’d plump for the carrier, certainly since World War II. How the carrier evolved to that position is an interesting story.



On Jan. 18, 1911, Eugene Ely, flying a Curtiss pusher, landed on a specially built platform aboard the armored cruiser *USS Pennsylvania* at anchor in San Francisco Bay. That’s as good a place to start as any. On Nov. 5, 1915, Lieut. Cmdr. Henry C. Mustin made the first catapult launching from a ship, flying an AB-2 flying boat off the stern of *USS North Carolina* in Pensacola Bay, Fla. In 1922, the collier *Jupiter* was converted into a ship specifically designed to launch and recover airplanes at sea — an aircraft carrier — later to be named *Langley*, the Navy’s first aircraft carrier. The unfinished battle cruisers *Lexington* and *Saratoga* were next to be converted into aircraft carriers. On Oct. 17, 1922, Lieut. V.C. Griffin, in a Vought VE-7SF made the first take-off from an aircraft carrier. A few days later, Lieut. Cmdr. Godfrey de Chevalier made the first landing aboard *USS Langley* underway off Cape Henry, VA. The *USS Ranger* (CV 4), the first ship of the U.S. Navy to be designed and constructed as an aircraft carrier, was commissioned 4 Jun, 1934. In 1940, the *USS Wasp* (CV 7) was placed in commission; in Jun. 2, 1941, the *USS Long Island* (AVG 1), the Navy’s first escort carrier, went into service. As the US approached WW II, other carriers made their depute, as well.



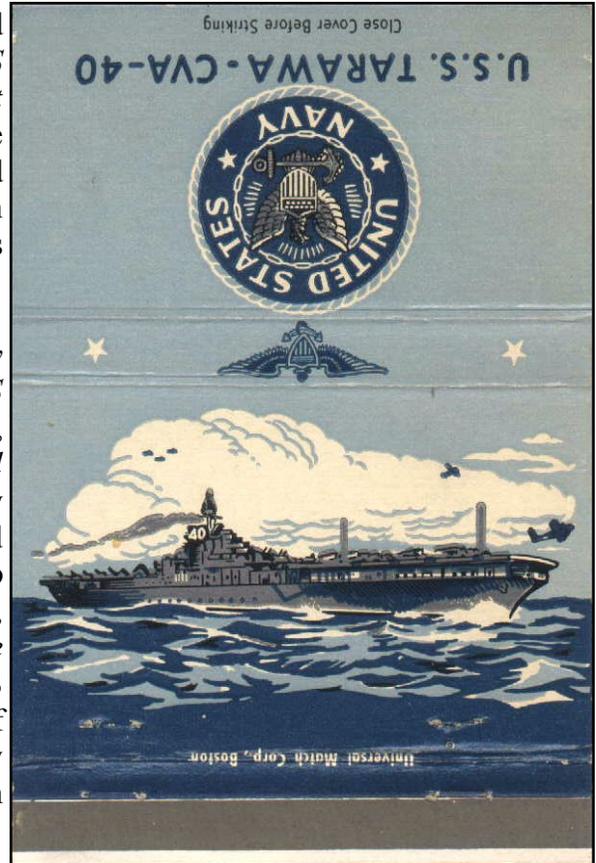
Carriers were the saving grace of the war in the Pacific during WWII, and the fact that they were not present at Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941, eventually helped result in the doom of Japanese forces. In 1942. Task Forces 8 and 17, built around the carriers *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*, attacked the Japanese installations on the islands of Wotje, Kwajalein, Jaluit, Makin, and Mili in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. This was the first U.S. aircraft carrier offensive. In that same year, Army Lieut. Col. James



Top!

Doolittle, taking off from *USS Hornet* (CV 8), Capt. Marc A. Mitscher commanding, bombed Tokyo, the first American air strike against the Japanese homeland. Weeks later, The Battle of the Coral Sea became the first naval engagement of history fought without the opposing ships making contact. The following month, the Japanese attack on Midway was met by a greatly outnumbered U.S. carrier force composed of Task Force 17 with *USS Yorktown* (CV 5) and Task Force 16 with *USS Hornet* (CV 8) and *USS Enterprise* (CV 6). Four large Japanese carriers were sunk, a blow to Japan from which she could not recover. Midway was the turning point of the war in the Pacific, thanks to carriers. Again and again, carriers carried the war home to the Japanese.

In the Korean War, *USS Boxer* (CV 21), *USS Valley Forge* (CV 45), *USS Philippine Sea* (CV 47), *USS Princeton* (CV 37), *USS Essex* (CV 9), among others, served with distinction. On Oct. 1, 1955, *USS Forrestal* (CVA 59) became the Navy's first supercarrier. On May 5, 1961, *USS Lake Champlain* (CVA 39) recovered Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard, the first American to go into space as he completed his *Freedom 7* flight. On Oct. 24, 1962, *USS Enterprise* (CVAN 65), *USS Independence* (CVA 62), *USS Essex* (CVS 9), and *USS Randolph* (CVS 15) took position as part of the Naval Quarantine of Cuba, as imposed by order of President John F. Kennedy following the discovery of offensive nuclear missile on the island of Cuba, placed there by the Soviet Union.



In Vietnam, The Gulf Wars... indeed, in all US conflicts since World War II, the carrier has played a vital role in the defense of U.S. interests around the world.

...And, thanks to Navy Ship covers, we have the matchcovers to chronicle those events and those ships. The full-length carrier covers, especially are some of the most eye-appealing covers in existence (to me eye, anyway). They never fail to evoke awe, nostalgia, and spirited conversations...the Flat Tops!

