

Great Ships of The U. S. Navy

U.S.S. Yorktown

[It was 67 years ago this month (June) that the famed carrier *USS Yorktown* was sunk in the Battle of Midway. Last year, Robert Ballard topped his discovery of the Titanic by finding the almost intact *Yorktown* sitting upright more than three miles below the surface of the Pacific, midway between Hawaii and Japan. It was the deepest shipwreck ever discovered.]

The third *Yorktown* (CV-5) had been laid down on 21 May 1934 at Newport News, Va. and commissioned on 30 Sep. 1937; Capt. Ernest D. McWhorter her first commander. By May of 1941 she was patrolling the Atlantic, enforcing American neutrality. She was at Norfolk on 7 December. She reached San Diego, Calif., on 30 December 1941 and soon became flagship for Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher's newly formed Task Force (TF) 17. From then on, the action was fast and furious. The *Yorktown* participated in a number of missions, including the Marshalls, the Gilberts, New Guinea, and the Solomons. At the Battle of the Coral Sea, where *Yorktown* helped sink a Japanese carrier and damage another, several Japanese pilots mistook the *Yorktown* for their own carrier and tried to land on her deck! Later, a bomb exploded belowdecks, with 66 casualties.

Then came the fated Midway. Planes from the *Yorktown*, *Enterprise*, and *Hornet* sank three Japanese carriers, but the fourth, the *Hiryu*, managed to launch an attack which found the *Yorktown*. Three dive-bombers managed to hit her. Desperately managing to control fires and other bomb damage, at 1620, June 4, 1942, the *Yorktown* was mortally wounded by two torpedoes. The ship was listing, flood control was

impossible. Capt. Buckmaster ordered the ship to be abandoned....a fate to be shared by the *Hiryu*. *Yorktown*, as it turned out, floated through the night, and an attempt was made to save her the next day, but at 1536, June 5, the Japanese submarine *I-158* fired four torpedoes toward the ship. *Hammann* went to general quarters, a 20-millimeter gun going into action in an attempt to explode the "fish" in the water. One torpedo hit the destroyer and broke her back. *Hammann* jackknifed and went down rapidly. Two torpedoes struck *Yorktown*. Capt. Buckmaster decided to postpone further attempts at salvage until the following day. Throughout the night of the 6th and into the morning of the 7th, *Yorktown* remain-ed stubbornly afloat. By 0530 on the 7th, however, the carrier's list was rapidly increasing. As if tired, the valiant flattop turned over at 0701 on her port side and sank in 3,000 fathoms of water, her battle flags flying.

The *U.S.S. Yorktown* (CV-5) earned 3 battle stars for her World War II service; two of them being for the significant part she had played in stopping Japanese expansion and turning the tide of the war at Coral Sea and at Midway.

