

annals of the *Franklin* but in history itself. A strongly-built, determined man; black-haired, in aviation greens, his words were brief but packed with punch as he addressed his men on a bitter-cold day:

"Gentlemen, I have been ordered by the Bureau to be the first Commanding Officer of the *U.S.S. Franklin*, CV Number Thirteen. We will put the *Franklin* in commission and bring her to the firing line faster than any carrier in history. Six months from now you will have seen what your first Jap looks like. *Thirteen is my lucky number*. Good hunting!" It was more than a promise, for it was a fact.

The going was rugged at Newport but there were bright spots as well. The first day at quarters Comdr. Day introduced Saxie Dowell, famous orchestra leader who was to lead *Franklin's* band. The band, whose leader had composed "Three Little Fishes," "Playmate" and other popular songs, was popular with the ship from the start. Most members were well-known musicians in their own right: "Jumbo," the massive master of the tuba . . . "Red" James, the boy who did things with men's hearts when he bore down on his trombone; Dean Kinkaid, arranger for Dorsey. The first selection that Saxie and his men played was one of his own composition, "Big Ben the Flat-top." There may have been significance in the manner in which the words and music reveal the spirit that animated the crew of the *Franklin* and of every other carrier in the fighting months to come.

Every man had to take swimming practice, contradicting the old and false legend that sailors are the poorest swim-

mers in the world; these swimming lessons saved many a life in the tempestuous days which were ahead.

Fire-fighting instruction was given—another lesson which came into use on Big Ben. Gun crews studied their weapons and learned how to use them by actual firing practice. Engineers studied the maze of valves, pipes, intricate wiring systems—together with the machinery and auxiliaries—that were the nerves, the muscles and almost the brains of the ship.

Heads of Air, Gunnery, Engineering, Communications, Damage Control, Navigation, Medical, and Supply Departments—the whole works—sweated constantly over perfecting the million-on-one details which must be figured down to the proverbial gnat's eyebrow before a major warship is ready to fight, or even put to sea.

"Big Ben the Flat-top, mistress of sea and sky . . .

With every ounce of strength we'll help our fighting aces fly;

*As from her decks those motors roar and rocket out to sea,
We'll give a mighty heartfelt cheer for those wings of Victory."*

Officers, men—even the men behind the bass drum and the clarinet—were already instilled with the knowledge that a carrier's function was to get Navy fliers in action, to get them to the spots on the ocean wastes where they could do the most damage to the enemy; and, with every ounce of energy and sacrifice, to bring them back if human effort and endurance could manage it.



Saxie Dowell and the men on Big Ben knew they had the best band in the Navy