



*Crash—F6F No. 90*

Two days later, now a unit of Task Group 58.1, one group of the already famous Fast Carrier Task Force 58 operating with the 5th Fleet, we were on our way to Tokyo. Leaving Ulithi gave us all a real jolt, because from here on we would be in the enemy's front yard, challenging the Japs on their home fields. This was what we had been thinking about for a long time—our first combat mission. We knew we had a good ship, and a fighting ship, and we knew we were ready, but still we gave pause in our tasks this day in realization of the events now to come upon us. These were to be the first "strikes" on Tokyo since General Doolittle's raid, and the first carrier strikes against the Jap homeland. The objectives of these first carrier offensives were to be Japanese planes, shipping, aircraft installations on the ground, airplane engine plants, etc., and to keep planes or reinforcements from reaching Iwo Jima where landings were to be made a few days later.

When Flight Quarters and General Quarters were sounded on the early morning of 16 February 1945 we were 80 miles off the Japanese coast, and our gun and plane crews tumbled topside to find the weather worse than unfavorable. It was biting cold and the rain added to our discomfort. The temperature was 47 which was quite a change from the tropical climate we had recently left. At 0630 the ceiling was ragged at 800 feet. At 0810, Strike Able, all fighters, reported over the target area. At 0812, Radio Tokyo went off the air. At 0825 we were advised that the States had



*Photographer on U. S. S. Bennington Shoots U. S. S. Hornet Under Attack*