

## CHAPTER I - HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The first notable date in the rebirth of the U.S.S. BON HOMME RICHARD (CV-31) was January 15, 1951. On that day, after five years of decommissioned inactivity, the ship rejoined the active fleet from the Reserve Fleet at Puget Sound Navy Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington. ComPacResFlt had directed the return to action for the BON HOMME RICHARD in August 1950, just one and one half months after fighting had begun in Korea. The ship was recommissioned in an impressive ceremony with speeches by FADM Chester W. Nimitz, VADM George D. Murray (Commander Western Sea Frontier), Captain Thomas D. Wilson (Commander, Bremerton Group, Pacific Reserve Fleet), and Captain Cecil B. Gill, the Commanding Officer.

The BON HOMME RICHARD was hastily reactivated in the sense that five years of parasitical corrosion had to be cleaned from her decks and bulkheads in a short period of time. The crew could never have the initial ease that goes with moving into the most modern type of ship for this reason. Thus, it was a handicap from the beginning for the men to serve on the ship of another war. On the other hand, the hard work of rebuilding made the workers more appreciative of what their hands molded. During the thirty days of shipyard availability that followed, new and old equipment was moved to the spaces provided and the ship was made ready for shake-down.

It was a satisfaction to see the BON HOMME RICHARD become alive again. The experienced eyes of Captain Gill and CDR Leeman could foresee, somewhat, the problems that would face them, yet along with the rest of the ship's company, they saw a new ship being built for a new future. Those men who helped rebuild her took a great amount of pride in what was achieved. On February 16, the acceptance tests were begun with the Captain on the bridge, and the following day he officially accepted the BON HOMME RICHARD.

The days that followed in training off the shores of California were interesting days for the crew. Each day brought a new drill that would soon be monotonous and efficient routine, but the newness was interesting; and there was always the satisfaction in learning to do a job well. On 7 March the crew and ship performed smartly as the ComFltTraGrp watched them undergo the initial battle problem. On 15 March all eyes turned to watch CDR. H.N. FUNK make the first aircraft landing on board since recommissioning. Fifteen days later, Lt. J.H. Phillips of VF 781 attracted attention with landing number 1,000.

