



Aviation mechs tune up TBM on hangar deck.

vasion of Lingayen Gulf. They did it, too, handling the many duties with skill and finesse. They bombed and strafed; they carried artillery observers and spotters; they photographed the enemy far behind his lines, and ran long searches and submarine patrols. Tired, often with their planes torn with bullet and shell holes, they returned to their carrier after every hop as if drawn by a magnet and set the planes down on the heaving deck with

surprisingly few accidents. After twelve days the carriers pulled out and returned to Ulithi for rest and replenishment.

The lazy port routine was pleasant. Mornings were spent reading or writing a letter or two. In the afternoons there was always plenty of sun to bask in or a basket-ball or volley-ball game on the hangar deck. At night one could see the picture show. Liberty came frequently enough to be sufficient.

One day a group of high ranking Naval and Marine officers came aboard and all pilots were called to the wardroom. It was the briefing session for Iwo Jima. The visiting officers made it clear that Iwo Jima was expected to be a tough nut to crack; no alternative was left except for a frontal attack. The Marines were banking on the escort carriers for air support. There was silence in the wardroom except for the crisp tones of the briefing officers as they sketched the plan of attack and outlined the duties of the pilots. They all felt the weight of responsibility that comes when men's lives are at stake. It was not long after that that the anchor was weighed and the Division of carriers steamed out of Ulithi for the next show.

Iwo Jima turned out to be tough, but not too tough for the Squadron. For the first time they ran into an enemy that shot back in force. The island itself was a hell on earth, covered with smoke and constantly torn by explosions.



Our plane guard returns one of our pilots after emergency landing "in the drink."