



A Salute
to the
U. S. S. Lexington



I was aboard The U.S. Aircraft Carrier LEXINGTON on May 8, 1942 when she was attacked by Japanese planes in The Coral Sea. As a result The LEXINGTON was so badly damaged that she had to be sunk by our own forces. I was a QM^{3/c} serving in the flag unit of Admiral A.W. Fitch USN, who was Task Force Commander. When I abandoned ship I was picked up by The U.S.S. ANDERSON (DD 411) after about one hour & a half in The water. The ANDERSON took me to TONGA TABU where I boarded The U.S.S. CHESTER with Com Car Div #1 flag unit for return to U.S. I arrived in U.S. JUNE 4, 1942. Then to R/S for assignment.

H. J. Hansen, QM^{3/c}, USN.

A Salute to
The U. S. S. Lexington
"Queen of the Flat Tops"

A collection of poems written as tributes
to the ship, its officers and men, as received
by the Captain after her loss in the Battle
of the Coral Sea, May 8, 1942.

This booklet is published privately by Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman,
U. S. Navy, as a means of extending his personal condolences to the families
of those who gave their lives in the Lexington and her air groups between
December 7, 1941 and May 8, 1942. They did not die in vain.

November, 1942.

FOREWORD

Since the momentous Battle of the Coral Sea, in which the U. S. S. Lexington came to her glorious end, it has been my great honor and privilege to receive many wonderful tributes to that great ship, her officers and men. In issuing this little booklet, it is my thought to share some of these tributes with those who gave their loved ones to their country's cause when the Lexington was lost.

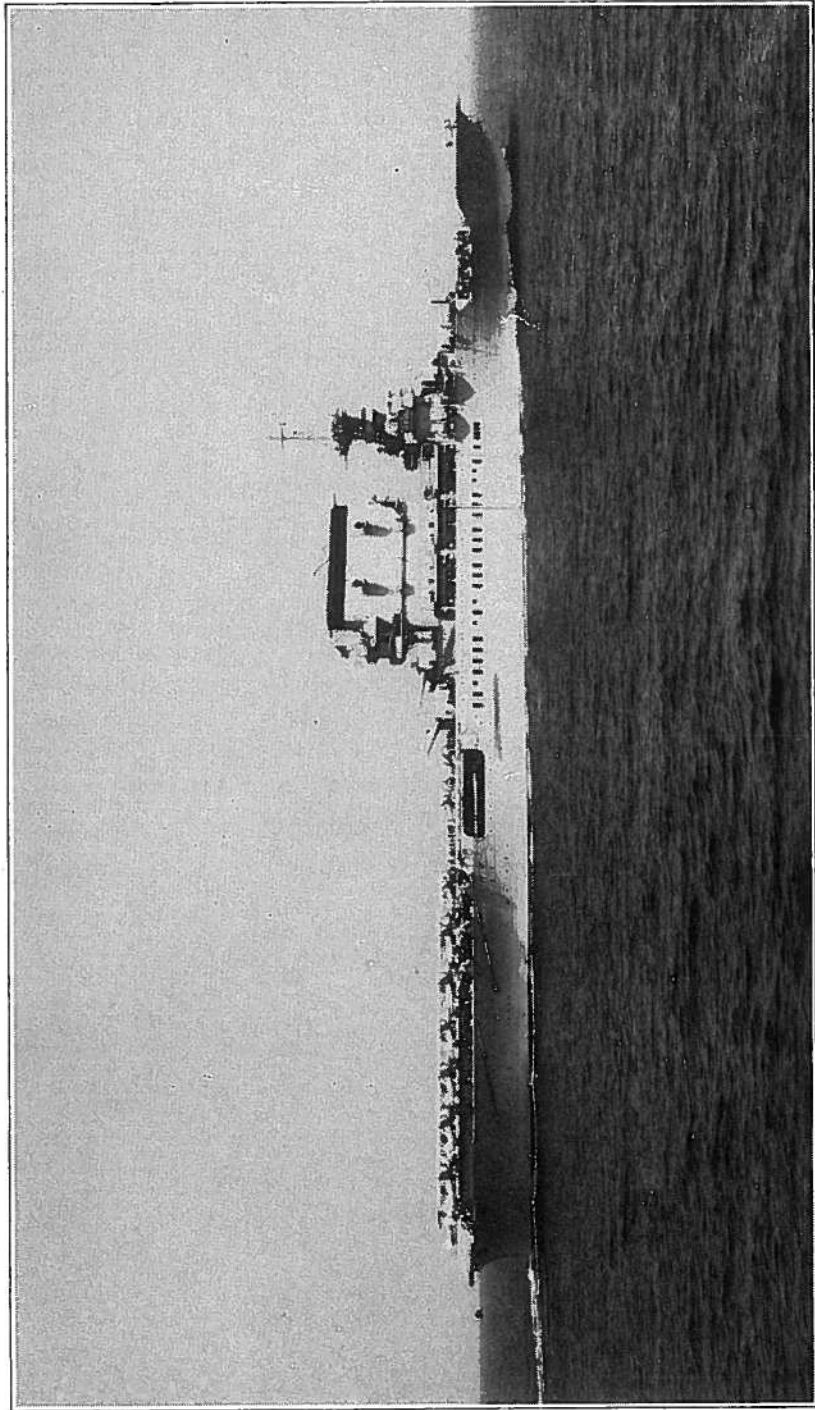
Fortunately, the loss of life was small, compared to the large number embarked on the ship. I realize this does not carry much comfort to the families of those who did not come back. However, the knowledge that these men gave their lives gloriously in a just and vital cause, that the action in which they died was a great victory for our forces, and that by their sacrifice they contributed to this result, may bring some measure of satisfaction to the families of the men concerned.

The Battle of the Coral Sea marked an epoch in Naval History. It was the first battle in history between aircraft carriers as the principal participants and it opened a new era in naval warfare. It was as significant as the Battle of the Monitor and Merrimac in the Civil War. It was the first major defeat the Japanese Navy had ever encountered. The Battle of Midway showed it was not to be their last. It paved the way for the later operations in the Pacific.

With this background, I extend my deepest sympathy to the families of those officers and men who gave their lives in the Lexington and her air squadrons. May they take such comfort as they can in the knowledge that these men gave their lives valiantly and freely in one of the great battles of history and accomplished a great victory in the cause of freeing the world from oppression and tyranny.

Fredrick C. Sherman

*Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy,
November 5, 1942.*



U. S. S. Lexington—"Queen of the Flat Tops"

THE LEXINGTON SAILS ON

They tell us the Lexington is gone—
Sunk in a blast of flame
But I'll let you in on a secret,
She is only playing a game.

The most beautiful ship on the ocean,
As she proudly sailed the sea,
As she slowly came into Port
A Giant, she seemed to be.

And as she lay in the harbor,
There was dignity in her lines—
And visitors strolled on the Flight Deck,
Back in those peaceful times.

When the Big Fight started—
The Lex was in the fray,
She Mothered her Boys and her planes
And fought on day after day.

Then came that fateful morning—
The enemy planes in the sky,
The old Lex gave, and, took it—
Not knowing her time was nigh.

In those long, last hours of struggle,
Her men so true and brave
Went over the side—and saluted,
As she gently slid under the waves.

But the old Lex still sails on!
Sails west with a noble crew—
She sails on into the sunset—
Starting a life anew.

As you look out in the twilight,
A ghostly ship sails by—
'Tis the Lex with her crew of Heroes,
Sailing into the western sky.

And that is as it should be,
For those who give their all—
Protecting this land of yours and mine.
"GO WEST" to the great Roll Call.

*Dorothy Riggs,
28 Searle,
Bremerton, Wash.*

UNTITLED

West of the blue horizon,
Under the tropic sun,
A hush lies over the tradewinds
For men who have died so young.
Heroes in line of duty,
Faith in a cause to be won;
Wrapped in a shroud of glory,
They're guarding the Lexington.

*William Doughty,
Curtiss-Wright, New York.*

(In memory of George J. Hofstra, age 18,
Bugler, U. S. S. Lexington.)

**A TYPICAL LETTER FROM THE MOTHER OF ONE
OF THE BOYS WHO DIDN'T COME BACK:**

2822½ Arline St.
Artesia, Calif.

Lt. Cmdr. Markle,
U. S. Navy.
Dear Sir:—

Your kind letter reached me and gave me much comfort. To inform me that my son went down with his ship holds no terrors for me, for being the daughter of an old sea captain, also the granddaughter of one and the former wife of a chief commissary steward on the U. S. S. Leviathan in the last war, the sea is our first love. I, myself, have longed to be buried in the sea as I was partly raised on it.

I am sending you some memorials written for my son, which will express our thoughts for the boys and the Lexington.

NOTE—Would it be asking too much if you would give a copy of each to the brave captain of the Lexington for me?

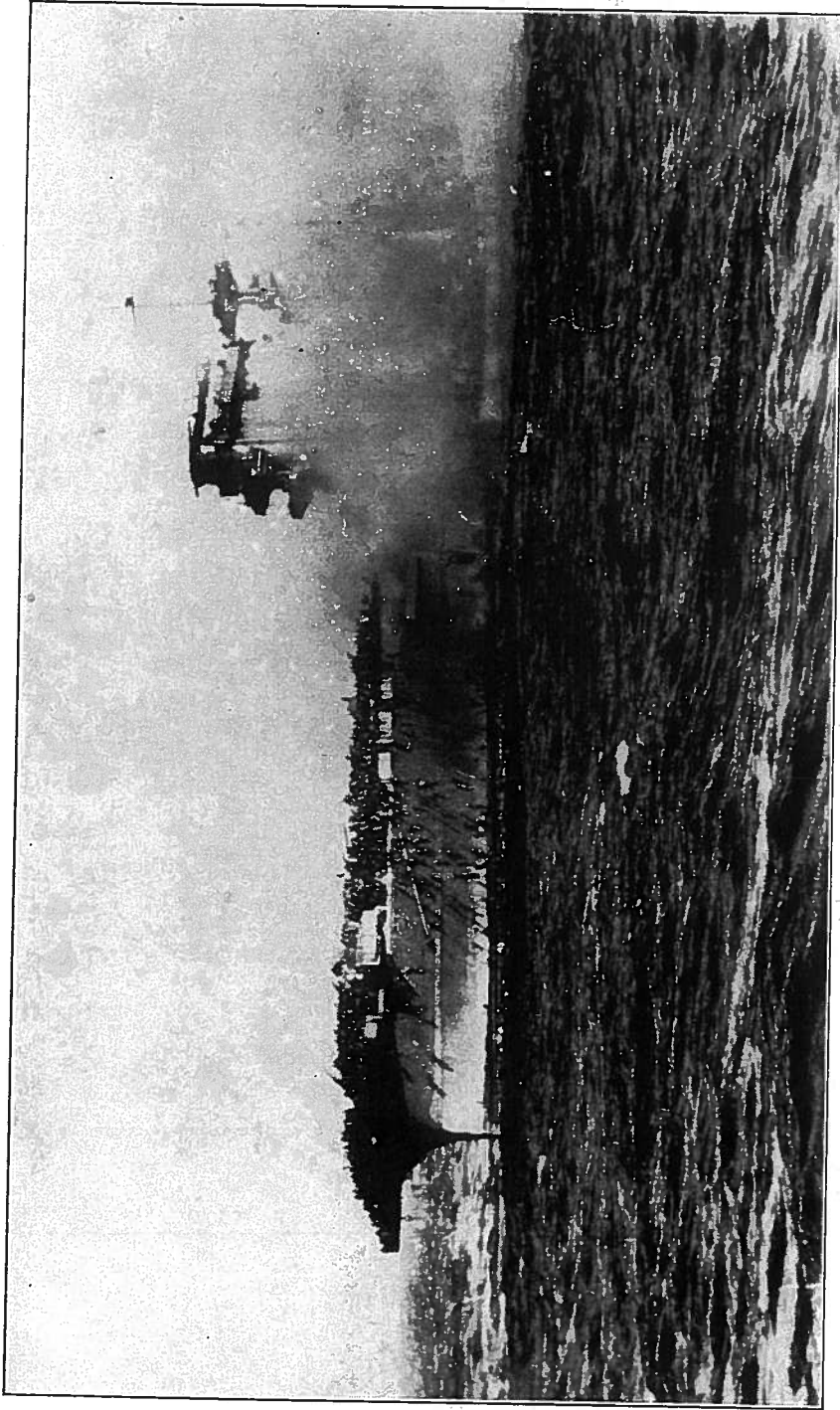
My humble contribution to such gallant men and such a gallant ship, is my only way of telling all of them that although George was my only child I am heartbroken but proud! I wish I could find the boy my son was in the C. C. C.'s with who was his buddy aboard ship. If he is living I would like to hear a few lines from him, or someone who knew him, but I suppose that is a lot to ask and it is hard on the boys, too.

Your letter was so greatly appreciated.

Very gratefully,

ETHEL L. HOFSTRA.

N. M. C. A. No. 19, Los Angeles, California.



"The Thunder of Her Planes Is Stilled, Her Glorious Destiny Fulfilled"

U. S. S. LEXINGTON

The noise of battle ceased. The weary crew
Relaxed, and wiped away the oily sweat
And grime from blistered hands,
Before the orders came to clear the decks,
Repair the damage wrought
By splintered steel of bursting bomb and shell.

The fighter planes, as to a magnet drawn
Returned; to rest awhile upon her deck.
Girding themselves anew for future flights.
The crews with splendid fortitude had fought
This crucial battle of the Coral Sea
With dauntless courage, hour by hour
Had poured their steel tipped rain of death
Upon the enemy. And now the foe dispelled
These warriors of the sky, sought well-earned rest.

The Carrier plowed the waves toward her base,
A mammoth steel cased Airdrome of the sea.
Battered and scarred by enemy attack
She slowly steamed toward her destiny.
Deep in her bowels destructive stealthy fumes
Were seeping upward to a danger spot.
And suddenly the air was rent in twain
By thunderous shocks, and sounds of rending steel,
Twisting her vitals, blasting her apart.
The men forgot their weariness and pain,
And fought like demons to subdue the flame.

Her doom was told in orders from the bridge,
The Captain's voice, "All hands abandon ship."
Then o'er the blackened bow, the seamen swarmed,
Hand over hand, down ropes, into the sea.
To rafts and rubber boats that drifted clear,
While waiting ships stood by to rescue them.
The dauntless crew of the Great Lexington.
The grim faced Captain, last to leave his ship,
Had scarcely reached the safety of the sea,
When one last deep explosion rocked her hull,
A living, throbbing, creature of the sea,
She shuddered in her last extremity;
Her fight was finished, and she sank to rest.
And gallant lads grew into tight lipped men,
Their tear filled eyes, a tribute to her worth,
A death salute to a most valiant friend.

Gertrude S. Hassell.

TO THE U. S. S. LEXINGTON

Old Lexington, all that you've done
At Salamaua and Lae,
At Bougainville and Coral Sea—
Will live again some day.

And "Scoron Two," who led the rest
Into the battle's roar—
The deeds you've done—the battles won,
Will live forevermore.

In history books of future years
And in the hearts of men,
Though time and tide erase all trace,
We know you'll live again.

What matter water, wind or fire?
What matter shot or shell?
We know that you have done your best,
You've served your country well.

Sail on, Old Ship, across the sea
Where sky and water meet!
Sail on and on—with flags unfurled!
Your victory is complete!

Brave ship, we now salute you!
We are proud of what you've done.
And all the world will sing your praise
When once this war is won.

For though you're gone, Old Ship of ours,
And gone is "Scoron Two"—
You'll live forever in our hearts!
And we will win—for YOU!

THE LEXINGTON

Proud ship to bear a glorious, bright
name
That sang of freedom, down the Coral
Sea
She forged, the Lexington, toward
destiny.
Her swift brood was a-wing. Like wasps
they came
Upon the craft of Nippon, bearing
flame
And punishment for blow of treachery,
They struck and struck again to set
men free
From greeds and lusts that freedom
would defame.

What though, a victor, she sustained a
blow
That, at the day's dusk, brought her
own brave death?
The manner of her passing can portend
But one victorious outcome. In the glow
Of her own fires, gallant to last breath,
She earned her heroes' "Lady to the
end!"

Reginald M. Cleveland.

Reprinted from New York Times.

THE LEXINGTON AN EPITAPH

Beneath the skies her planes have flown
She lies majestic, proud, alone.
The seas hold her in their embrace,
A whitecap marks her resting place.
The mighty wind and roaring tide
Will mourn their friend who bravely died.
A gallant ship in victory,
Full worthy of her pedigree,
Even in death, how proud she fell,
How beautiful her blazing shell.
The thunder of her planes is stilled,
Her glorious destiny fulfilled.

*H. B. Shonk,
Ensign, U. S. N. R.*

NOTE: Ensign Shonk served on the Lexington during her last days and wrote this poem immediately after her loss. He was a survivor on one of the accompanying cruisers during this period.

CONCLUSION

Farewell address of Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman, U. S. N., to the officers and men of the Lexington upon the occasion of his detachment June 15, 1942, at San Diego, Calif.

In giving up my command of the LEXINGTON, I wish to express my appreciation for the fine loyal service you have all given to me. Many things have happened to us since I took over command two years ago today. We have been through a great deal together, especially since the 7th of December. In all that time your conduct has been of the highest order and an inspiration to me. I can say today as I did a year ago, that in my opinion the officers and crew of the LEXINGTON including the Air Group are the finest body of fighting men in the world today.

This is an air war as you all very well know. In manning the world's finest carrier you have been in the fore front of the fighting in the Pacific since the seventh of December.

You have received the highest commendations it is possible for any group of men to receive. I will not repeat them here. I have recommended that a new carrier be named the LEXINGTON and that as many as possible of you men be kept together to man that new carrier and to carry on the traditions and spirit of the old LEXINGTON. How many of you will be so assigned I do not know. But I do know wherever you may go you will carry with you the spirit that inspired us on the LEXINGTON. We have made a grand start of defeating the enemy but there is much left to do. I do not need to tell you what we are fighting for—you know. Our way of life, our freedom from slavery, the sanctity of our homes are all involved. We are showing our enemies what kind of people we Americans are.

Since the beginning of the war, the LEXINGTON has engaged in three battles; all of them great victories for our forces. The LEXINGTON alone has sunk or damaged 17 enemy ships, has shot down 67 enemy planes, and has killed or drowned an estimated 900 Japanese officers and 8,000 Japanese men. In doing this she steamed a total of 43,311 miles. This is a record of which you can all be proud.

I have loved the LEXINGTON during my period in command and it is with the deepest regret that I say farewell. To each and every one of you I say good luck and may we meet again.



To Extend My Deepest Sympathy and Share These Tributes

Frederick C. Sherman

Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy.