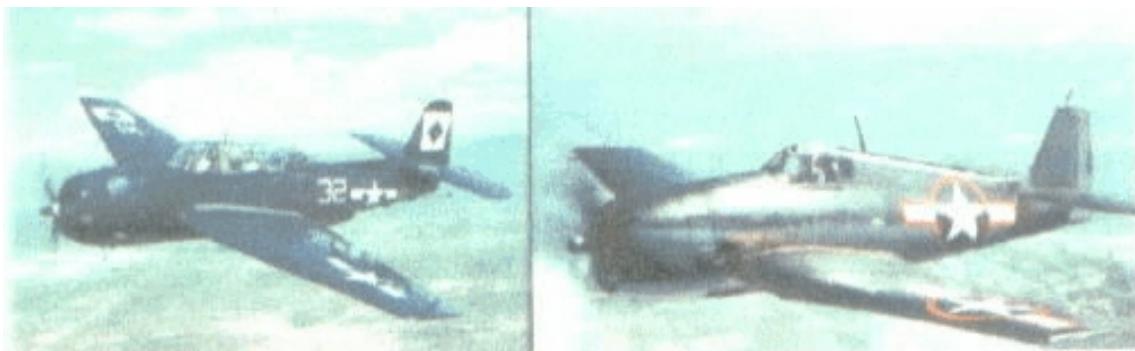


USS Sangamon (CVE-26)

by

Donald T. Schroeder



U.S.S. SANGAMON

(CVE 26)



11-07-04 Update -1.

This is a history of the U.S.S. Sangamon written in 1997 by me using the following as my references:

U.S.S. Sangamon: Published in 1945 by Army and Navy Pictorial Publishers, Baton Rouge, LA.

15 volume History of U.S. Naval Operations in WWII: By Samuel Eliot Morison, Published by Atlantic Monthly Press Book, Little Brown and CO. Boston Massachusetts.

The Little Giants, U.S. Escort Carriers against Japan, by William T. Y' Blood, Published by Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland.

Sangamon Evening News Ships paper
Speed Victory, Norfolk Navy Yard Paper
The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, Norfolk VA
Kansas City Star
Diary and memorabilia that I saved.

Copy of USS Sangamon deck log from the US Navy Archives from March 1, 1944 when I went aboard to Oct. 25 1945 when it was decommissioned.

In November 2000 I obtained a copy of the rest of the ships log and made some additions and some minor changes. Later made some additions as I found out about them from former crew members.

Having been a quartermaster in the navigation department, I had the opportunity to know on a daily basis what was going on and where we were. All the charts and invasion manuals were in the chart room or on the bridge where we stood watch. After the captain read the radiograms he received they usually were out in the open. I could also overhear a lot of conversations about what was going on, or what was going to take place.

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HISTORY OF USS SANGAMON CVE 26

"QUEEN OF THE CVE's"

This is the story of a tanker that sprouted wings. It is the history of a ship, which, through the experience of war, became an aircraft carrier and whose achievements earned her the name "Queen of the CVE's."

The first Sangamon was built in 1862 at Chester, PA. As a "Passaic-class monitor" and was used on the James river and the blockade off Charleston, SC, After the Civil War she was re-commissioned in 1898 and renamed "Jason" and used for coastal defense during the Spanish-American War. It was decommissioned in 1904.

As early as May 1927 the Light Aircraft Carrier was discussed by LCdr. Bruce Leighton as a possibility in the US Navy as a substitute for the light cruiser. From 1939 to 1941 the idea of converting merchant ships to light carriers was discussed by the President; Adm. Halsey and CNO to transport planes to England, to train pilots and to escort convoys.

On Dec. 26, 1941 the Sec. Of The Navy approved the conversion of 24 merchant hulls. In 1942 he approved the conversion of cruiser hulls, which became the CVL's. There were only 20 merchant hulls available. The remaining 4 were converted from Cimarron class fast fleet oilers, which had been taken over in the late 1940's from Standard Oil. Their size was considerably larger and was able to accommodate 2 squadrons. They could carry enough fuel for 30days for themselves, 4 destroyers and a light cruiser. Being tankers, they had many compartments, which made them less vulnerable to torpedoes. Work was rushed on them so they could be ready for the North Africa invasion along with the USS Ranger. The Santee left the yard on a shake down cruise with workmen aboard still working on the conversion.

The ships were the Sangamon CVE 26, Santee CVE 29, Suwannee CVE 27 and Chenango CVE 28. They were all named after rivers. The Chenango was used for taking a load of Army P-40's to North Africa.

The second Sangamon started as a merchant tanker (T3-S2-A1) when launched on Nov.4, 1939. It was one of 12 tankers built on a joint Navy-Maritime Commission design. It was started on March 13, 1939 as ESSO TRENTON (MC hull 7) by the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co. of Kearny, N.J. It was christened by Mrs. Clara Esselborn of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. On Oct 22, 1940 the Navy acquired it as a fleet oilier and it was designated AO28 and renamed Sangamon.

After service on the west coast and Hawaiian waters,

Sangamon went to the Atlantic fleet in the spring of 1941. On Dec 7, 1941 when war broke out she was in Argentina off loading a cargo of oil. On Feb. 14, 1942 it was re-designated AVG 26 and on Feb 25 she was decommissioned and work began to convert her to an Escort Carrier at the Norfolk Navy Yard. It was commissioned as ACV 26 on Aug. 25 1942. On July 29, 1943 it was changed to CVE 26.

Her name stems from the river Sangamon, which flows peacefully through central Illinois. Sangamon is an Indian name which means, (The Place Where There Is Plenty To Eat) Peace was not to be for the carrier Sangamon, however. Destiny had marked her for a turbulent career, a career that carried her into the far-flung battle fronts of the Atlantic and the Pacific. She participated in major operation after major operation. Her planes hurled tons of bombs and rockets on the enemy, helping clear the seaways of enemy shipping. Her guns blasted Jap aircraft from the skies. Her snub nose plowed through thousands of miles of dangerous waters. She took part in the Atlantic's first big invasion. She fought the Pacific War from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.

She was a small carrier but she had a big punch. Although the Sangamon was classified as a CVE, she constituted a considerable increase in size over the early baby flattops. She was 553 feet long, displaced 12,500 tons and had a gross weight of 27,500 tons. She had a draft of 35 ft. The flight deck was 502 feet long and 81 feet wide. She had dual 20-millimeter and dual and quad 40-millimeter gun mounts. There were two five-inch guns in the rear of the ship, but they could not be elevated for air defense because they were partially under the flight deck. It was approximately 45 ft to flight deck and 70 ft to the bridge from which the ship was controlled.

The structure that contained the bridge had the odd look of being glued to the starboard side of the flight deck. On the deck that was on the same level as the flight deck, was the chart room, which was used by the navigation department. The Admiral of Carrier Division 22 used the next level. It also had a manual steering station, which had a wood wheel about 4-1/2 ft in diameter. This thing was a bear to operate. It was only used when the electric power failed. The next level had what was called the open flying bridge. This had armor piercing metal about four feet high around the exterior. On the forward part it had a plastic front above the armor piercing metal with a canvas top. This was where the ship was controlled from at sea. The Officer of the Deck and Jr Officer of the Deck stood watch here. The Captain came up here when

needed. Other officers as the Air Officer, Navigator and Gunnery Officer also were up here at times. The quartermaster, helmsman and engine signalman were also up here. It was quite crowded when special sea detail was in progress.

This deck contained a very small cabin where the captain could rest when we were in combat areas. This was to have him quickly available. Above that was the Signal Bridge, which had only canvas for a windbreak. There was an inside access to all these areas. Above that was the look out area, which also had only a canvas side. She was the first of four tankers converted into carriers, which became known as the Sangamon class. Her sister ships are the Suwannee, Chenango and Santee. She had a crew of 1100 including the aircrew. She had one catapult and two elevators to the hanger deck. The Captain, Admiral, and officers had their quarters in the forward part of the ship. The Combat Information Center was also located here. The majority of the crew had quarters below the water line. The quartermasters and stewards had quarters in the after part of the ship. On calm days or when in port, it was possible to open portholes for ventilation. At night no portholes or hatches could be open to maintain total black out while at sea. If you had to move around in these areas you would use a flashlight with red cellophane over the glass. The Chief Petty Officers also had quarters in the forward part of the ship. The sick bay was in the after part of the ship.

The ship was like a small city. It had a well-stocked sick bay with a surgeon. Injured sailors from the smaller ships were sent over by a stretcher on ropes. This was called a breeches buoy. They had a dentist, a barber, laundry, dry cleaning, post office and a machine shop. It also had a (GEDUNK) store where toilet articles were sold. On some days they sold ice cream. They were able to make 77 gallons a day when everything went OK. When one of the escorts delivered mail they would receive a treat of ice cream. The profits were used to support the laundry, barber, cobbler, and tailor shop. Money that was left over was used for ships parties of which there were two. One was in Seattle and one in Norfolk. When getting a hair cut, it was a good thing to tip the barber to get a better cut. When the ship was decommissioned the money left was used to make up a book for the crew.

We would rotate between a Catholic and Protestant Chaplain. When a chaplain of our faith was not aboard, an officer would hold a prayer service. At times some would attend the services of the other faith. I still say this is where the ecumenical movement got started.

NORTH AFRICA

The Sangamon, first commanded by Captain C. W. Wieber, had an inauspicious beginning. Her crew was green. The shakedown cruise was short, a brief trip around Chesapeake Bay.

She then embarked Air Group VC 26 and set out to sea as a carrier for the first time. She cruised to Bermuda. After a brief stay, she and the Suwannee and the Santee, plus the carrier Ranger sortied for a rendezvous with a tremendous invasion force, which had formed at East Coast ports. This armada was destined to transport and support the North African landing force, the same force, which formed the springboard for the eventual deathblows against Germany.

This force consisted of the carrier Ranger which was the only one in the Atlantic, the four escort carriers, Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango and Santee which were designated ACV's at this time, three battle ships, USS New York, Massachusetts and Texas, six cruisers, USS Wichita, Tuscaloosa, Savannah, Augusta Brooklyn and Philadelphia. 38 destroyers, transports and all other ships needed to land troops in Africa. The carriers carried 28 (TBF) torpedo bombers, 36 (SBD) dive-bombers and 108 (F4F) fighters. Most of the pilots were untried in combat. Nearly half of the sailors had no experience. The Ranger was the first ship built from the keel up as a carrier.

The Sangamon was in the northern attack group, which was made up of the following: BB 35, USS Texas, CL 42, USS Savannah, ACV 26, USS Sangamon, ACV 28, USS Chenango, DDS 418 Roe, 429 Livermore, 432 Kearny, 440 Ericsson, 604 Parker, 199 Dallas, 430 Eberle, 455 Hambleton, and 458 Macomb. These ships were in Task Group 34.8 under the command of Rear Admiral Monroe Kelly.

There also was a southern and a central task group made up of more ships all under the overall command of Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt aboard CA 31 USS Augusta.

The rendezvous was made without mishap and the carriers fell in astern of the formation bound for Casablanca and Port Lyautey. Also in the formation was the Chenango, ferrying 76 Army P-40s to be used as garrison aircraft. No flight operations were conducted en-route due to the secrecy of the movement.

On November 8, 1942 the landings were made, with relatively light opposition in the Sangamon's sector of operations. All air resistance encountered was that of the French Air Force. The Sangamon's air group (composite Squadron

26 (VC26) provided combat air patrols, anti-submarine patrols and close air support for the ground forces. Cooperation of the air arm with the ground forces during the invasion proved to be an eye-opener to many officials. The Sangamon lost 2 (SBD's) and 1 (F4F) through enemy action.

The Sangamon left this operation several days later than it was scheduled to. A plane crash on the flight deck carried away all the radio receiving antennas. As a result an order for the ship to return to the United States was not received until several days after it should have been carried out. Finally messages were straightened out and she headed for Norfolk. On her return trip, heavy seas battered the Sangamon. The forward end of her flight deck was damaged and the forward catwalks were carried away. This necessitated a 10-day yard period for repairs. At the same time 20-millimeter gun mounts were added to the ship's armament.

Some where in this fall period (Sept. 25, 1942) Lt Cmdr. Sam Porter flying a Vought F4U-1 Corsair had some trial take off's and landings aboard the Sangamon. After 4 attempts he stopped the trials. The cockpit was to high to see the landing signal officer when coming in and it bounced too much. It was then turned over to the Marine Corps and after some modifications was used on carriers as well as land. It would turn out be the best fighter plane of the war.

Then the ship turned her bow towards the Pacific where the Navy was sorely in need of carriers, there was but one. The Japs had sunk the Lexington, Yorktown, Wasp and Hornet and damaged the Saratoga and Enterprise. The latter of the two, were the only two left in the Pacific. The new Essex class carriers were not commissioned as yet.

Early in December 1942 the Sangamon, Suwannee, the cruiser's Wichita and Cleveland and a destroyer screen departed from Norfolk for Noumea, New Caledonia, via the Panama Canal. The voyage was long and uneventful. An intensive program of gunnery, maneuvering, communications and tracking drills were carried out. The group arrived in Noumea in January. After a brief stay, the carriers were sent to Havannah at Efate Island in the New Hebrides. Later the Chenango joined the Sangamon and Suwannee and the now famous Carrier Division 22 was formed, with Capt. A. C. McFall commanding. He was later promoted to Rear Admiral. The flag was now aboard the USS Suwannee. It was now the oldest carrier division and the first organized during the war. At this time the four carriers took on the designation of (CVE's). Havannah Harbor was little more than an anchorage then, but for the Sangamon it was home for the next eight months. This period

was spent mostly waiting for something that never happened. The Navy had few carriers ready for action at that time. So few, in fact, that when all the old battleships and cruisers in the South Pacific force went looking for the Jap fleet at the time of Guadalcanal's final evacuation, only three carriers went along. They were the Sangamon, Suwannee and the Santee. No contacts with the Japs were made however. On Feb 3 this group was made up of the 3 carriers and BB's Maryland, New Mexico, Colorado, Mississippi, CA Wichita, CL's Cleveland, Montpelier, Louisville, Columbia, and 10 DD's.

On Feb 2, 1943 Rear Adm V. H. Ragsdale took over command of Carrier Division 22. Sometime in the late summer of 1943 the flag was transferred to the USS Sangamon.

Once during the eight-month period the Sangamon, in company with the same group, helped cover the landings on the Russell Islands.

On April 5, 1943 Captain E. P. Moore took over as Captain of the USS Sangamon from Captain Wieber. Most of the time was spent in port in company with the battleships Colorado and Maryland, which had moved up from Suva. These battleships and the three carriers were organized into a task group for some time but never went out together except for maneuvers.

The Sangamon's air group however, did have some active moments. It spent two 30-day periods on Guadalcanal during the height of that campaign. For the remainder of the time it was shore based on Efate Island, except for occasional training exercises with the ship.

The last few months in the South Pacific were spent with the carriers alternately going out for a week or 10 days covering convoys making the run on Guadalcanal.

July 29, 1943 In accordance with VCNO letter S05-20-124, OP 23-S-E dated June 10, 1943 the designation of this ship is changed to CVE 26.

In August the Division's base was changed to Espiritu Santo, but the Sangamon remained there only a short time before steaming to San Francisco for an overhaul at Mare Island Navy Yard. The ship arrived in San Francisco in September 1943.

She returned to the Pacific War in October of 1943. In the months ahead the ship's character was to change radically from what it had been during her previous stay in the war zone. Her activity had been limited for the most part to covering convoys in the area immediately behind the fighting front on Guadalcanal. Now she was to approach the fronts herself. She was to participate in the terrific island battles to be fought in the great expanse of ocean from Tarawa to

Okinawa.

During the period at Mare Island, the workmen had incorporated several changes into the material complexion of the ship. She had air-operated barriers to replace the old ones which had been laboriously hauled up and down by hand. New paravane sponsons jutted from her sides. An inert gas arrangement had been installed to give added protection to her gasoline system. There was a redesigned Combat Information Center, and a second gyro ended her reliance on the single old one. Perhaps the most significant changes were the installation of an improved Mark HII-1 catapult in the place of the Mark HII and substitution of new radar. In addition there was a new squadron, Torpedo and Fighter 37, which operated nine SBD's, nine TBM's and 12 F6Fs, the last being a new fighter type replacing the F4Fs formerly on the ship. Lt. Cdr French Wampler was Air Officer.

The first port of call on the new cruise was Espiritu Santo. The ship remained there for a short time. Then on November 9 she went out to participate with transport and support groups in a practice landing at Pango Point on Efate Island. On November 13 she left Espiritu Santo again, rendezvoused with Task Force 53 the next day and steamed out. The Central Pacific Offensive began.

TARAWA

First came Tarawa. November 20th was "D" day at Tarawa. The ship's mascot "Sangy" shared the D-day excitement with the crew. That day she gave birth to a litter of pups. It was this incident rather than D-day itself that the crew remembers best.

On the first 2 days of the operation the ship launched strikes to aid with the landings. During the rest of the time and, after November 29th at Apemama, the ship followed a pattern, which became increasingly familiar as the Pacific offensive progressed. F6F Combat air patrols and TBM anti submarine patrols for both the target area and carrier group, searches and hunter-killer flights were launched regularly. Sorties were at times carried out at the request of troops ashore. CAP and ASP patrols were carried out en route to different destinations also. Between launchings the ship with other carriers of the division fueled many destroyers and some cruisers. They were able to do this during the rest of the war, due to the large amount of fuel they could hold in their tanker hulls. On one occasion the Sangamon and its

group contacted a Jap submarine. The USS Cotton took the sub under attack, possibly destroying it.

Several things learned at Tarawa proved important during subsequent operations. In the first place there was the question of minimum wind with which the Sangamon class carriers could operate. Weather conditions at Tarawa provided a ready answer. From December 3rd to 8th, hourly wind averages fluctuated between 2 to 6 knots. It was concluded that with 5 or more knots they could operate without undue loss. When winds dropped to less than 5 knots operations were still feasible although greater losses could be expected. The speed at which planes could be catapulted was satisfactory. An average launching took one minute and fifteen seconds, and for a limited number of planes this could be reduced to one minute. The planes only had an area of about 70ft by 300ft to land on. There was a set of barriers about 2/3 up the flight deck to prevent planes from crashing into the planes parked up forward. These were mechanically operated to let the planes move forward, after a successful landing.

Fuel and fueling created another problem. When the ship left San Diego before the operation began, she carried more than 3,000,000 gallons of fuel oil. Together with the other two carriers, she fueled 45 destroyers and two cruisers. She received no fuel herself during the long cruise and yet had enough left for 18 days steaming when she put into Pearl Harbor. Her crew began to call her "an oil can with wings" And eventually one of them designed an emblem, pointing to her tremendous fuel capacity. The emblem was an oilcan sprouting wings with a "2 in 1" printed on the can.

While at sea the ships were always on a zigzag course in order to make it harder for an enemy submarine to attack. If another ship was alongside for fueling or transfer of mail or personnel this was not possible. In an emergency they would break off very quickly and resume zigzagging. At sea while she took on fuel from a tanker, there could be another ship on the carriers other side and another on the opposite side of the tanker all fueling at the same time. This was only attempted in daylight and in friendly waters. There was one time when she was forced to fuel at night. This was because of continual attacks, all day long for several days. The tanker had to leave and we badly needed fuel. Sangamon Operated between 16 and 18 knots as 18 was her top speed.

The Sangamon served as a double duty ship. While her fuel capacity was an important factor, it presented hazards too. In order to carry such a quantity of fuel the ship had to fill her wing tanks, placing the inflammable oil next to her skin.

The anti-torpedo protection these tanks afforded when filled with salt water was sacrificed. Recognizing this, the division commander warned against use of these carriers as "handy tankers". He recommended the wing tanks be emptied of oil before entering combat zones and that fueling be accomplished in areas well removed from the scene of action.

The ship left the Tarawa area December 7th to return to the States for alterations. The period in San Diego was especially enjoyable for the crew was able to spend Christmas at home. Peace and quiet did not last long for the Sangamon, however.

KWAJALEIN

On January 13th of the New Year she plowed out into the Pacific again. She paused for a day at Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. She then pushed on for another "D" day. This time it was Kwajalein on January 31st. At Kwajalein, she launched her routine patrols, sent off strikes and in general operated as before.

For this operation ADM V. H. Ragsdale was in command of (Cardiv) 22. Capt. E. P. Moore was captain of the Sangamon. Air Group 37, Lt. Cdr. F. L. Bates was aboard the USS Sangamon. Also in the force were the Suwannee, Chenango and destroyers: Farragut, Monaghan, Dale, Morris, Hughes, Mustin and Ellet. USS Appalachian with Rear ADM R. L. Conolly aboard was OTC. Task Force 53. Santee was not along on the operation. Jan 22, 1944 entered Lahaina Roads, Maui Island, Hawaii for 1 day.

Three incidents distinguished this operation from the preceding ones. The first was a fire. On January 25th, still far from Kwajalein, the ship along with the others of her division broke away from Task Force 53 to operate independently throughout the day. Everything proceeded in the usual fashion until late afternoon. At 1651 a fighter plane came into the landing circle, received a cut, floated up the flight deck, caught no arresting wires, broke through the barriers and crashed into planes parked forward.

Its belly tank, filled with 150 gallons, ripped loose and scattered flaming fuel among the parked planes. Fire raged generally. The flames ran aft for 90 feet along the flight deck's starboard side and whipped up over the bridge making ship control extremely difficult. The carrier was swung out of the wind so the fire could be fought and it was brought under control. Bernard Levene QM 3/c was at the helm and remained there to control the ships direction. Eight men died in the

crash and seven were injured seriously. Fifteen men jumped over the side to escape the flames and all but two were subsequently picked up. Temporary repairs were made at sea.

It was not uncommon to have some type of accident when landing aircraft. There were men standing by in fire suits for every landing. There was a special vehicle for picking up planes that went onto the catwalk. It was called a "cherry picker". They also had jeeps for moving the planes about the flight and hanger decks. On launching operations, there were times when planes would not have enough speed and they would go into the sea. Destroyers would pick up the crew if they survived. In one case a pilot died shortly after landing his badly damaged plane. The Captain had them strip the plane of all-important parts and then pushed the plane over the side with the pilot in it for burial. Any time a fuselage of a plane was badly damaged they would dump them after removing all valuable parts.

Sometimes planes would drop their bombs or rockets when landing. They were to get rid of all unused ones, but some of the time this was not possible because of damage to their plane by enemy fire. If they forgot or were not able to lock their 50 caliber guns, they would fire on landing. This would always send anyone topside scurrying.

The second incident occurred the following day. Jan 26 Fueled USS Farragut - 65,142 gal of fuel oil, USS Monaghan - 57,766 gal of fuel oil. The ships of the formation had formed a fueling disposition. Having completed fueling two destroyers, the Sangamon resumed zigzagging and commenced a 40-degree turn to port. The Suwannee, about 1800 yards off the Sangamon's port hand, started a starboard turn preparatory to conducting flight operations. The ships began to nose towards each other. Orders were given on both carriers to back down. Their momentum was too great. With both backing down full, they scraped bow to bow. Fortunately they were almost dead in the water and only superficial damage resulted. It was the first and only collision the Sangamon ever had.

Jan 30 USS Appalachian and escorts left formation. Rear ADM V. H. Ragsdale aboard Sangamon OTC. At times USS Louisville Rear ADM J. D. Oldendorf aboard or USS Santa Fe, Rear ADM L. T. DuBose aboard with their groups joined up. At these times one of these ADM's became OTC.

Jan 31 to Feb 7 during this period of time there were a great deal of cruisers and destroyers joining and leaving the formation. The senior Rear ADM aboard the cruiser at that time would be OTC. Such as rear ADM's J. D. Olendorf - USS Louisville and Rear ADM. T. L. Dubose - USS Santa Fe.

Feb 7 Anchored in berth 128 Kwajalein Atoll Lagoon, Marshall Islands.

Feb 9, 1944 Underway. Rear ADM Ragsdale-OTC.

Feb 10 anchored Kwajalein Atoll Lagoon, Marshall Islands. The third incident occurred on the night of February 11th-12th as the ship lay at anchor in the Kwajalein. At 0203 several enemy planes were reported 60 miles away, coming in. The Sangamon sounded general quarters. None of the planes approached within attacking distance of the ship, but several of them heavily bombed nearby Roi and Namur Islands. The U.S. forces had occupied these islands a few days before. Large explosions and many fires were seen from the ship, but the "all clear" signal sounded at 0415 without the Sangamon herself having undergone an attack. The crew, which had begun to figure their ship was jinxed, decided her luck had returned.

Feb 15 Underway, Rear ADM H. W. Hill onboard USS Cambria - OTC.

ENIWETOK

And return it had. The Sangamon went through invasion after invasion without a scratch. The log for the remainder of the year read like a storybook:

Eniwetok--D-day on February 17th.... Strikes and patrol until February 24th when she finally departed for Pearl Harbor to repair the fire and collision damage. From here on I will be making use of a copy of the ships log, which I obtained from the Naval Archives. It will be much more detailed.

On March 1 Captain M. E. Browder flew aboard to relieve Captain E. P. MOORE as commanding officer. Lt CDR. Fox, ex. officer, Lt. CDR. Moore Navigator. Sangamon was assigned to Task group 51.18. Rear ADM V. H. Ragsdale in command. Ships in this unit other than Sangamon were Suwannee, Chenango, with escorts Morris, Hughes, Mustin and Ellet. plus 10 time zone.

March 3 Sangamon moored to Berth B22 Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor. LT. CDR. F. Wampler relieved CDR. J. H. Kuhl as Air Officer.

March 6 Received 69,000 gal of aviation gas and 684,262 gal fuel oil. During this stay also received ammo.

March 8 Moved to berth B-7, B-8 Pearl Navy Yard. Plus 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ time.

March 11 Moved to Starboard side of berth F-12 Ford Is. Pearl Harbor.

March 15th, 1944, underway from Pearl Harbor with the

Santee, Chenango, Suwannee and Des. Sq.48. At this time the unit was designated Task Group 58.7. TBM's sent up daily for anti-sub patrol. From the air the planes on ASP could see Submarines cruising just below the surface and could drop their depth charges on them. F6F's were sent up for fighter director exercise and to tow sleeves for gunnery practice as needed. At this time SBD's were replaced with all F6F's.

March 17 A. J. Hopkins S2/c fell overboard and was picked up by USS Taylor. Plus 10 time zone.

March 18 Conducted gunnery practice. Plus 10½ time zone.

March 20 F6F crashed into port catwalk on landing, no personal injuries. Considerable damage to plane. Plus 11 time zone.

March 21-22 set clocks ahead 23 ½ hours to minus 12 ½ time zone.

March 23 USS Taylor left formation to investigate sub contact. Lost contact. Set clocks back ½ hour to minus 12 time zone.

March 24th the Sangamon crossed the equator. This was reason to have Shellback initiation. This was a ceremony to initiate any one who had not yet crossed the equator. It could not be held in enemy waters as it involved a good part of the crew including the Captain. This included a royal chaplain, barber baby, dentist, doctor and more. "King Neptune" came aboard to take part in this. At this time it was announced that he now had temporary command of the ship. It was not a great deal of fun for those being initiated, but at a later date you could play the opposite role. The day before, the "POLYWOGS" took a lot of harassment from the "Shell Backs" Officers, including the Captain had to take part in this.

The royal baby was a big fat guy with only a diaper on. His belly was greased except for a very small area in the middle. As you bent over to kiss that small area some one hit you from the rear with a wooden paddle forcing your face into the grease. While lying on your back the royal chaplain blessed you with a purple dye that did not wash off. The royal painter put paint in your hair, which made it necessary for the royal barber to shave your head. The royal dentist gave a shot of Novocain, which tasted very foul.

On March 25 USS Cony reported sound contact. Took evasive action. Lat. 02-44.6 S, Long. 161-45.0 E Lost contact.

USS Taylor left formation to investigate sub contact. She expended all depth charges without losing contact.

On March 26 at Lat 01-35.7 S and Long. 157-03.4 E met Task Group 58.2. USS Sangamon assigned to Task Group 50.15 consisting of Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango, Santee, Chester,

Pensacola, Salt Lake City, Kaskaskia, Platte, Guadalupe, Sabine, Callaghan, Porterfield, Mertz, Laws, Longshaw, Morrison, Morris, Hughes, Mustin, Ellet, Lardner, Cony and Lansdowne. Rear Adm. E. G. Small on Chester, OTC. USS Taylor received 83,332 gal. of fuel and Hughes received 72,167 gal. of fuel. USS Mustin reported Sound contact. Took evasive action, Minus 11 time zone.

March 28 USS Hickok received 29,400 gal. of fuel and Monaghan received 38,471 gal.

March 30 USS Callaghan reported sound contact, evasive action taken. USS Callaghan dropped depth charges and lost contact.

April 1 Sangamon became part of Task Force 50.15 under command of Adm. R. A. Spruance, COM.CEN.PAC. (Fifth Fleet) USS Porterfield made sound contact. Took evasive action. USS Callaghan dropped depth charges and lost contact.

April 2 fueled USS San Francisco 90,607 gal, Marshall 86,000, Owen 83,2000 gal, and New Orleans 195,442 gal. from the fast carrier group who were making a raid on Pelieu Island. Formed Task Group 50.15.2 Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale OTC.

April 4 Carrier Division 22 and 6 destroyers left Task Group 50.15. to form Task Group 58.7.

April 5 Broke down and dead in water 35 min. because of contaminated fuel due to open valve in # 7 tank. USS Lardner received 20,000 gal fuel.

April 6 TBM crashed on landing, no personnel injured, damaged propeller. Conducted gunnery practice.

April 7 21 F6F's and 7 TBM's flew to Espiritu Santo for temporary duty. Anchored in Second Channel, Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Island, Berth 14 ½.

April 8 Received 50,081 gal gasoline and 917,162 gal of fuel from USS Tappahanock. Took on ammo.

April 11th underway from Segond Channel. Formed Task Group 78.1, with Sangamon, Santee, Chenango, Suwannee, Escorts Mustin, Morris, Hughes, Ellet and Lansdowne with Rear Adm V. H. RAGSDALE on Sangamon in command. Planes that were on the beach returned. TBM crashed on deck, plane damaged, pilot OK. F6F piloted by Ensign L. C. Rhodeback crashed into sea, pilot lost.

April 12 Conducted gunnery practice.

April 13th anchored in Purvis Bay, Florida Island Solomon Islands. berth 16.

April 16th underway from Purvis Bay. Formed Task Force 78 (Seventh Fleet) with Sangamon, Suwannee, Santee, Chenango, Corregidor, Coral Sea and escorts: Black, Lardner, Ellet,

Hughes, Morris, Mustin, Kidd, Chauncey, Bullard and Landsdowne. Rear Adm. Ragsdale in command.

April 17 Held memorial service for pilot Ens. L. C. Rodeback.

April 19 sighted Task Group 78.2. Corregidor, Coral Sea, Black, Kidd, Chauncey and Bullard left formation to join Task Force 78.2. Escorts received fuel from USS Patuxtent and Williamson. Set clocks back 1 hour to minus 10 time zone.

April 20 sighted Manus Island, Lat. 01-17.9 S, Long 146-38.0 E. Joined Task Force 77, Rear Adm. D. E. Barbey on USS Swanson in command.

April 21 Steaming in company with Task Forces 74, 75, 76 and 77 as part of Task Force 78.1.

NORTHERN NEW GUINEA -AITAPE -HOLLANDIA

Aitape: D day on April 22nd Task Force covered the landing for two days, launched patrols and strikes with little opposition. General MacArthur requested that the fast carrier force remain for a few days to cover the landings. Adm. Halsey would not do this, saying that his carriers would be too vulnerable to attack by Jap land based planes. He said the escort carriers could stay. This is one of the many instances where a commander made a choice as to who was expendable.

The carrier was now in the Seventh Fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid. The Sangamon was in Task Force 78 under the command of Rear Admiral V. H. Ragsdale. Under his command was TG 78.1 his own Cardiv.22 which included the Sangamon, Suwannee, Santee and Chenango plus Destroyer Squadron 2 which included the Morris, Anderson, Hughes, Mustin, Ellet, Landsdowne and Lardner.

Task Force 78.2 under the command of Rear Admiral R. E. Davison. This group included Escort carriers, Natoma Bay, Coral Sea, Corregidor and Manila Bay. As escorts they had Destroyer Squadron 48 which included Erben, Walker, Hale, Abbot, Bullard, Kidd, Black, Chauncey and Stembel.

April 21 Launched 13 F6F and 1 TBM for photographic mission over Hollandia, New Guinea.

April 22 Launched 12 F6F and 9 TBM for strike at Aitape, New Guinea. 1 F6F for photographic mission. TBM piloted by Lt .P. G. Farley went overboard after catapult. Pilot and T. H. Beall AOM 1/c rescued by USS Mustin. R. M. Pope ARMC 1/c lost at sea.

April 23 G. S. Albeck FC1/c from USS Hughes came aboard with acute appendicitis. We had a surgeon aboard. Launched F6F's for Combat air patrol and TBM's for anti sub patrol.

Carriers would alternate on these duties.

April 24th anchored in Seeadler Harbor, Manus Is., Admiralty Is. Berth # 5 Received 29,460 gal aviation gas and 320,000 gal fuel from USS Chikaskia.

April 26th underway from Seeadler Harbor in company with Task Force 75 and 78.1 Adm. Ragsdale in command.

April 27 Launched F6F's for CAP and TBM's for ASP. F6F crashed into barriers. No personnel hurt.

April 27 to May 5. Provide patrols for Holandia, Tanah Merah, Wake Island and Ataipe. An Avenger rigged as a photo plane got some pictures, which proved to be very helpful in future, landings.

April 28 Launched planes for CAP And ASP. F6F crashed and burned, no personal injuries. Minor damage to plane. USS Morris reported sonar contact, took evasive action. Contact false.

April 29 Launched planes for CAP. Medical Officer transferred to USS Black to perform emergency appendectomy operation. Task Force 75 left on assigned duty.

April 30 Launched F6F', for CAP and 1 TBM for photographic mission.

May 1 1944 Operating at Lat.01-49.5 S and Long.141-14.1 E Fueled USS Morris, 72,643 gal. Ellet, 87,380 gal. Mustin, 54,166 gal Black, 99,720 gal, Daly 51,250 gal. and Beale 52,221 gal.

May 3 -F6F crashed into barriers, no personal injuries. Slight damage to plane.

May 5th anchored in Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, Admiralty Islands in Berth #6.

May 6 Received 698,441 gal of fuel oil from USS Sheldon Clark.

May 7th underway from Seeadler Harbor. Joined with Task Unit 78.4.1 and 78.4.2 With Rear Adm V. H. Ragsdale in command aboard Sangamon.

May 9 Entered minus 11 time zone.

May 11 Most of the planes took off to go to Henderson Field on Guadalcanal while the ship was in port.

May 12th Anchored in Pallikula Bay, Esipritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands, Berth 30. Received 115,190 gal of fuel oil, 58,600 gal aviation gas and 1,325 gal lube oil from USS Chikaskia.

May 17th Charles Lindbergh came aboard for a visit.

May 21st underway from Pallikula Bay . Rear ADM. F. B. Stump reported aboard for temporary duty. Formed TaskGroup 53.7

May 22 Conducted gunnery practice. USS Hale left to

investigate sub contact. Search negative.

May 23 Planes returned to ship from shore duty.

May 24 Conducted gunnery practice.

May 25 J. W. Morley S2/c fell overboard. USS Kidd rescued him. Lat. 08-51-0 S, long. 159-21-0 E. He was sleep walking.

May 26th Anchored in Tulagi Harbor, Florida Is.; Solomon Is Berth 7. Mountains surrounded this harbor. The temperature was well over 100 degrees and no breeze. The ship did not have air conditioning and with the water temperature in the high 80s it was mighty uncomfortable below decks. It was not uncommon to have temperatures close to 100 degrees below decks. When possible the mess hall tables would be moved up to the fuel deck. This area was about amidships and about six-foot above the water line. It was open from starboard to port in a limited space, which left some air through. This was a good area to sleep while in port. Every bit of space on the flight and hanger decks, plus the gun mounts was filled with men trying to get some sleep. Some took their mattresses or hammock to lay on. This is one time we were glad to get underway just to feel the breeze caused by the ship in motion.

May 27th underway from Tulagi Harbor. Formed Task Group 53.7 R Adm. V. H. Ragsdale in command. (Fifth Fleet)

May 29th Most of the planes left the ship to land on Espiritu Santo Island. Anchored in Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo Island, New Hebrides Island, Berth 12. Assigned to Task Force 53, Rear Adm. R. L. Conolly in command. Task Force 53.7 consists of USS Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango, Erben, Abbot Hale, Pocomoke and Walker. Loaded ammo.

June 2 underway from Segond Channel. Plains returned to ship from beach. USS Santee, Fullam, Guest and Bennett joined formation.

June 5 Conducted gunnery practice with towed sleeve. I. L. Morley S2/c hit by tail wheel assembly from TBM, minor injuries. Joined Task Group 53.1 Rear Adm R. L. Conolly OTC on USS Appalachian.

June 6th Invasion of France.

June 8th anchored in Kwajalein Lagoon, Marshall Is. Berth Able 5. Most of these anchorage's could hold a great number of ships. In some cases part of the crew would be taken ashore by barge or landing craft. There was not much except sand there to play baseball or volleyball. On some rare occasions we were given a can or two of 3-2 beer. This was a very low alcohol beer. The only place that had decent shore leave was Pearl Harbor and there the enlisted men had to be back aboard by 6 pm. Officers could stay later. At this time Honolulu had only

two hotels, the Royal Hawaiian and the Mana Loa.

Here we berthed at a dock on Ford Is. Naval Air Station. It was the dock aft of the one where the USS Utah was lying on her side from the raid on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. On the other side of the island, lay the USS Arizona. We had to take a ferry to get to the mainland. It took us to a dock opposite the submarine base. On the mainland we would get on a small train to get to Honolulu. Pineapple grew wild along the tracks. There were venders selling 16 oz. cans of juice for something like 5 cents. There was one theater, which had open sides for ventilation.

It was always nice to get in a harbor this far back from the front, not only for the shore leave, but because we got fresh food. After 2 or 3 days out to sea, all milk, eggs and potatoes where powdered and they were nothing to get excited about. The potatoes were actually yellowish in color. While here we would see an USO show at times instead of the old movies we would see out on the front. They would show them on the hanger or flight deck while anchored in the out-lying harbors. On one occasion a group of Hawaiian dancers came aboard. They had a little girl about 5 years old along. She stole the show.

June 12th underway from Kwajalein In company with Task Group 53.1, Rear Adm. R. L. Conolly OTC on USS Appalachian. Rear Adm V. H. Ragsdale on Sangamon OTC of Task Unit 53.7.1

June 13 Sighted Eniwetok Atoll 13 miles.

June 14 Joined Task Group 53.1 Rear Adm R. C. Conolly OTC on USS Appalachian.

June 15 fueled the following ships: USS John Rodgers, 47,814 gal. McKee, 39,913 gal. Stevens, 40,212 gal. Harris, 52,572 gal. Haggard, 46,690 gal. Colahan, 35,631 gal. Hailey, 41,485 gal. Schroeder 41,480 gal. and Hale 58,433 gal.

SAIPAN

Rendezvous with the carrier group of Task Force 53.14, Rear Adm G. F. Bogan on USS White Plains in command. On June 21st-supported landing for six days. Here the Sangamon's role as a support became more complicated. In addition to providing support for the ground forces, anti sub patrol, and combat air patrols, she now would launch strikes against shipping, aircraft facilities and use fighter-bombers for some of these missions. During this period the ships would move to different units almost on a daily basis as needed.

June 20 Received 415,000 gal of fuel oil and 50.000 gal of aviation gas from USS Enoree.

June 21 Task group now consist of USS Sangamon, Suwannee, White Plains, Midway, Erben, Hale, Walker, Abbot, Longshaw, Porterfield and Callaghan. Rear Adm G. F. Bogan on White Plains OTC. F6F crashed on landing. No personal injuries. Major damage to plane. USS Hale reported sub contact. Took evasive action and USS Hale dropped depth charges. Lost contact.

June 23 Fueled USS Erben, 53,477 gal. Abbot 62,756 gal. and Hale 60,038 gal of fuel. Planes launched to support troops on Saipan Is.

June 24 Launched planes for Saipan and Guam. F6F damaged over Guam. Pilot landed at Aslito Air strip, Saipan Is. Plane damaged beyond repair, pilot OK. USS Kalinin and Ross joined formation.

June 26 launched planes for strike on Saipan. Enemy plane shot down by USS Abbot.

June 27 received 62,500 gal fuel and 456,000 gal aviation gas from USS Kennebago.

June 28 Here the Sangamon formed under Task Group 52.14.3 under the command of Rear Admiral V. H. Ragsdale. USS Sangamon, Hale, Hull and Erben.

June 29 Anchored in Saipan Harbor for a few hours to take on ammo.

During this time period three fighters lost to AA but all pilots saved. Even the ship's torpedo planes shot down enemy planes. Only one enemy attack on the ship materialized when six to eight Jap planes bore down on the night of June 26th. They orbited outside the formation, with one occasionally breaking off to make an attack on individual ships. At 2345 a Kate closed the Sangamon, flying low it crossed ahead about 100 yards away. It circled and dropped a torpedo, which passed astern of the ship. Two destroyers with radar equipped guns, then shot it down in flames. When it passed over the bow of the ship you could see the torpedo slung underneath and could see the pilot very plain. The policy was not to have the carriers open fire, as this would give their position away. One of the gunners on a forward gun mount yelled out "next time he comes by can we rig a Jacobs ladder and give him a paint job?" The Admiral and Captain got a laugh on this.

This was a real test for the CVE's. With the fast carriers engaged in a shoot out with the Jap Carrier force on the other side of the island, the invasion fleet was attacked by wave after wave of Japanese land based aircraft. The CVE's held their own and sent the Japs running.

June 30 steaming in company with Task Unit 52.14.3 Less Suwannee and Abbot. Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale on Sangamon OTC.

Later that day joined Task Unit 52.17.8 Rear Adm. C.T. Joy on USS Wichita OTC.

July 2 fueled USS Erben, 72,452 gal. HALE, 72,451 gal. Bennett, 36,226 gal. Hudson, 36,226 gal. Fullam, 45,270 gal. and Guest 48,470 gal.

July 4 Formed Task Group 53.7 Rear Adm V. H. Ragsdale OTC.

July 6 F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries, Slight damage to plane.

July 7th Anchored in Southern Anchorage Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Is. Berth L-5. Here the USS Santee joined Carrier Division 22 after finishing her role in the Atlantic.

July 8 Loaded provisions and ammo.

July 9 Received 33,000 gal aviation gas.

July 10th underway from Eniwetok in company with Task group 53.7 minus USS Chenango. Rear ADM. V. H. Ragsdale on Sangamon OTC.

GUAM

GUAM: Sortied for Guam on July 10th Cardiv 22 RADM V. H. Ragsdale, Sangamon Capt. M. E. Browder Air Group 37 Lt. Cdr. S. E. Hindman, arrived in operating area July 13th, more patrols and strikes.

July 12 USS Abbot reported sound contact. Evasive action taken. Contact negative.

July 13 USS Kidd joined formation. Planes sent over Guam to ready for invasion.

July 14 USS Chenango joined formation. USS Sissbee and Schroeder who escorted her left area. Rear ADM. T. L. Sprague reported aboard to take command of Carrier Div. 22.

July 15 Fueled USS Erben, 82,142 gal and Kidd 72,288 gal. At this time a Marine Liasion Officer would fly over Guam in a TBM to spot for troops. He would call in for strikes over Guam.

July 17 USS Hogan joined formation to deliver mail. USS Suwannee, Kidd and Walker left on assigned duty. USS Sangamon, Hogan and Erben left formation to go on assigned duty. TBM with Marine Liaison Officer damaged over Guam by enemy fire. Told to land at Saipan for repairs.

July 18th anchored in Saipan Harbor for the day only to take on ammunition.

July 19 Joined up with USS Chenango, Abbot and Hull. Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale OTC.

July 20 USS Suwannee, Kidd and Walker joined formation.

Now Task Group 53.7 Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale.

July 21 USS Corregidor, Kalinin Bay, Bullard, Chauncey and Hale which was Task Group 53.7.2 joined formation. Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale OTC. Launched 3 TBM for smoke mission over Guam. 4 TBM for Strike, Air observer, artillery spotter and photo mission. This was repeated the following days.

July 22 F. D. MgGlashan AMM2/c Fell into forward elevator pit while ship was darkened. Serious injuries.

July 23, 40,935 gal. of fuel to USS Bullard.

July 24 plane crash on landing, no personal injuries. USS Monterey, Breton, Lansdowne and Lardner left formation for assigned duty. USS Corregidor, Kalinin Bay, Chauncey, Kidd and Hale left on assigned duty.

July 25 Took on 124,400 gal. of aviation gasoline from USS Manatee. USS Chenango, Abbot and Hull left formation for assigned duty.

July 26 USS Corregidor, Kalinin Bay, Chauncey, Bullard and Hale joined formation. USS Black also joined formation. Later USS Sangamon, Erben and Walker left on assigned duty.

July 27th anchored for the day in Saipan harbor to take on ammunition. Rear Adm. T.L. Sprague relieved Rear Adm. V. H. Ragsdale who went to the Alameda Naval Air Base, Calif. as Commander Fleet Air, West Coast. Left port before dark. Took on ammo from USS Cape Trinity and Pocomoke.

July 28 joined with Task Group 53.7, Rear ADM. T. L. Sprague OTC on Sangamon. USS Corregidor, Kalinin Bay, Hale, Bullard and Chauncey left formation on assigned duty.

July 29 USS Suwannee, Black and Kidd rejoined formation. F6F crashed on landing, minor injury to pilot, plane damaged beyond repair. Task Group 53.7.2 rejoined formation. Marine Liaison Officers left ship.

July 30 now Task Group 53.7 Rear ADM T. L. Sprague OTC on Sangamon. USS Suwannee, Chenango, Corregidor, Kalinin Bay and DesRon 48 minus USS Stemble were the other ships in this unit.

July 31 TBM crashed on landing, no injuries. Engine and prop damaged on plane. Fueled USS Chauncey, 37,316 gal.

August 1 Steaming with Task Group 53.7, consisting of Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango, Corregidor, Kalinin and DesRon 48. Fueled USS Erben, 66,206 gal. of fuel oil, and Kidd, 54,047 gal of fuel oil. Later USS Bullard, Chauncey, Black and Kidd left on assigned duty. USS Stemble joined formation.

August 3 Conducted gunnery practice. Minus 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ time zone. En route to Eniwetok Atoll.

August 4th Conducted gunnery practice. Anchored in central Anchorage, Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands, Berth 379.

August 5 Received 384,683 gal of fuel and 48,000 gal aviation gasoline from USS Niobrara and ammunition from USS Caelum. Shifted from Central Anchorage to Southern Anchorage berth M4. Took on aviation spare parts.

August 6 Received ammo from USS Caelum. Moved to Berth -4 Took on aviation spare parts.

August 9th Underway from Eniwetok Atoll with USS Suwannee, Chenango. Santee, Midway, Shelton, Dennis, Eversole, and Bull. Rear ADM T. L. Sprague on Sangamon OTC. Task Unit 57.19.5 Conducted gunnery practice. Minus 11 time zone. En route Manus Island.

August 12 TBM crashed on landing damaging 3 other TBMs. No personal injuries. Planes flew to Manus Island to remain there while Sangamon was in port. Minus 10 time zone.

August 13th Most of planes flew to Manus Is. Anchored in Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, Admiralty Islands, Berth 117, for a long rest. Received 7,600 gal. aviation gasoline from USS Rio Grande. When in these ports there was a lot of transfer of personnel.

August 16,17 Took on ammunition from Pityilu Is. and Naval Ammo Depot, Manus Is.

August 20 took on aviation spare parts. Personal came aboard to check for compass compensation and to repair diesel auxiliary generators.

August 21 received fresh food supplies from Navy Supply Depot. USS Nashville, Hopewell, Nichols and HMAS Shropshire, HMS Ariadne got underway.

August 23 Received ammo from Naval Ammo Depot.

August 26 Received ammo from Air Center Manus Is, Admiralty Is.

August 29 Underway with USS Midway, Fanshaw Bay, Santee, Chenango, Suwannee, Dennis, Raymond, Shelton, Bull, Edmonds and Eversole. Held gunnery practice and planes returned to ship. Ships returned to port at end of day. Anchored in berth 117.

Sept. 1, 1944 Anchored in Berth #117 Seeadler Harbor as Task Force 78 Rear Adm T. L. Sprague on Sangamon OTC. Other ships of force are USS Santee, Suwannee, Chenango, Midway, Fanshaw Bay, Edmonds, Bull, Rowell, Eversole, Dennis, Butler, Raymond and Shelton.

Sept 4th USS New Jersey with ADM W. F. Halsey anchored in harbor. Underway for one day to pick up air group which was on the beach.

Sept.5 USS New Jersey left port. Received Provisions from beach.

Sept.7 Received 7,800 gal. gasoline from USS Pasquotank.

The Sangamon's crew began to grow restless. They were tired of "D" days, and of long periods of steaming. They were tired of seeing flat coral islands, and even blue clear water of the Pacific had lost its beauty, they wanted to go home.

Sept 10 Commodore J. E. Hewitt RAAF came aboard as an observer until Oct. 23.

MOROTAI

Sept 10th underway for the invasion of Morotai. Had to anchor and get underway later because of very heavy rain squall. Went out with the same ships as before only as Task Group 77.1 and 77.2 (Seventh Fleet) with the hope it would be the last one of the year. Ships in unit- Sangamon, Chenango, Santee Suwannee, Fanshaw Bay, Midway, Bull, Butler, Shelton, Rowell, Edmonds, Raymond, Dennis and Eversole. Held gunnery practice.

Sept 13 Joined Task Force 77. Rear Adm. D. E. Barbey on USS Wastach OTC. Fueled the following: USS Edmonds 34,328 gal and Butler 22,423 gal. Planes were again put in the air for ASP, CAP, Photo and strikes.

The Sangamon arrived off Morotai on September 15th, the day of the invasion. The landings were largely unopposed, and there was no need for close support missions after the initial wave of assault troops hit the beach. Strike planes were diverted to bombing and strafing and, in general, rendering inoperative the nearby airfields on Halmahera Island.

Sept 14 Left formation with other ships to form Task Group 77.1 Rear Adm T. L. Sprague on Sangamon OTC.

Sept 16 F6F piloted by Ens. J. E. McNinch crashed while strafing at Galela Airstrip Halmahera Is. resulting in death of pilot. One memorable incident occurred during the operation in Wasile Bay at Halmahera. A Santee plane, engaged in a strafing mission, was hit early in the morning of September 16th. The plane blew up and the pilot was blown free.

On the beach around the bay were many Jap gun emplacements. As the pilot descended by parachute into the bay, our fighter planes heavily strafed the Jap gun positions to keep them from hitting him. Our fighter planes made their runs so low, that one Suwannee pilot was shot down and lost.

Mean while a PBY plane was dispatched, to attempt a rescue of the stranded Santee flier. Jap gunfire was so intense, however, that the slow moving PBY was unable to carry out its mission. The plane did get in long enough to drop a life raft. The stranded pilot climbed in the raft and precariously eased into a sheltered spot behind a pier jutting

out into the bay.

The fighter planes continued to keep him out of Jap hands with countless strafing runs. Back on the Sangamon several torpedo planes were rigged with smoke tanks and launched. They arrived over the Bay simultaneously with two PT boats, which were to attempt a rescue.

The torpedo planes laid a heavy smoke screen and the PT boats sped into the Bay hidden from Jap gunners. They found their way to the pier and pulled the pilot aboard. In the smoky haze, the PT boat crews spotted a small Jap tug. They whipped towards it, opened fire with their 40-millimeter guns and sank it. Then they sliced through the smoke screen and out of the Bay to safety. That no enemy air attacks occurred at Morotai does not indicate that Jap planes were absent. They regularly were over the landing area either before the combat air patrol arrived at dawn or after it left in the evening.

In his comments on the operation, the division's commander pointed out several things, which were to be important in future operations. He referred to the helplessness against a night torpedo attack of a CVE unit screened only by destroyer escorts. He recommends that destroyers and anti-aircraft cruisers be added to the carrier dispositions. He suggested that pilots be given training ashore in night operations. Perhaps his most pertinent remark came with the recommendation that additional type radar be installed on a least one ship of the division. "In amphibious operation," he said "where operations are carried on in close proximity to land masses, it would be easy for enemy aircraft to follow land until opposite the formation and then close it with out being detected."

Sept.17 Sent planes out to search for downed pilot off Morotai Island. F6F piloted by Ens. M. G. Knackstead.

Sept 18 Took aboard by stretcher a sailor from PT.489 who received a fractured skull while rescuing downed pilot.

Also returned pilot Ens. M. G. Knackstedt.

Sept.19 Fueled USS Dennis, 44,791 gal. USS Shelton received 47,588 gal fuel. F6F crashed, no personal injuries.

Sept. 21 USS Dennis transferred sailor with acute appendicitis.

Sept 23 USS John Rodgers and Harrison joined formation and then left with USS Fanshaw Bay and Midway.

Sept 24 USS Edmonds received 27,492 gal fuel.

Sept 25 USS Suwannee, Chenango, Raymond and Butler left formation and formed T.G. 77.1.4. USS Dennis received 56,034 gal fuel.

Sept 26 USS Eversole received 48,958 gal fuel and Rowell

20,334 gal.

When the Sangamon left Morotai on the 27th, a second chapter in her pacific war experience came to a close. Although she had required almost an entire year to build up her standout record, there had been a minimum of mishaps. Between October 19th, 1943, and September 27th, 1944, she had participated in six major invasions. She had steamed 89,261 miles. She had launched and landed 4,834 planes. These planes had expended 537,800 pounds of bombs and 482,200 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition. It was an enviable record.

Sept 27 Task Unit 77.1.2 consisting of USS Midway Fanshaw Bay, Rowell, Shelton, Edmonds and Eversole left formation. This left only Sangamon, Santee, Bull and Dennis in Task Unit 77.1.1.

Sept 30 F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries Plane has major damage. At the conclusion of the Morotai invasion, the Sangamon did not head homeward. There was one more thing to be done in 1944. There was one more invasion, destined to be the biggest, most action-packed event the ship was to participate in during the year.

October 1 1944- Sangamon assigned to Task Force 78, Rear Adm T. L. Sprague in command. T.F.78 consists of Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango, Santee, Midway, Fanshaw Bay, Richard Bull, Richard Rowell. Eversole, Dennis, Raymond, Edmonds. John Butler and Shelton.

October 1 to 11 - Anchored Berth #3 Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, Admiralty Islands. Took on fuel from USS Pasquotank and Leopard, 790,000 gal. from the later. CMDR. E. O'Beirne reported aboard to be Executive Officer. Took on 22,000 gal. diesel oil from U.S. Army Y-13. Took on ammunition and aviation parts. Received 112,000 gal aviation gas.

Oct 2 Received 790,000 gal fuel from USS Leopard.

Oct 6 Comdr E. O'Beirne relieved Comdr L. O. Fox as Executive Officer. Received ammo, aviation parts and provisions. Army Officers came aboard to assist in directing planes in next operation.

LEYTE GULF

When the Sangamon returned to the anchorage at Manus after Morotai, few aboard realized just how soon their ship would suffer it's first battle scar. The crew sometimes referred to her as "Sangy, the Unsinkable" because of her fortunes in battle. She had seen a Jap torpedo plane run at her one dark night off Saipan. She had been drawn into the scope of a sub attack. She had nosed precariously through

countless Jap-held islands. Yet not once had she been stung by a torpedo or pierced by a bomb.

There were some Australian ships in the harbor. One day, some of the men came aboard impersonating women and put on a show. It was a good way of getting rid of the boredom.

So when the first hints of the next operation came, the Philippines seeped via grapevine to the crew, a feeling of anxiety and apprehension swept through the crew. Would the luck of the Sangamon hold? Could she escape damage once again?

Orders were received sometime between October 1st and 12th, assigning the Sangamon to Task Force 77.4, a massive organization under Vice Admiral T. C. Kinkaid. This was dubbed (MacArthur's Navy). The fast carrier force to the north under Adm. Halsey was assigned to Adm. Nimitz. Nimitz and MacArthur answered to Adm. King in Washington.

The escort carrier group, to which the Sangamon was assigned, included 18 CVE's with destroyers and destroyer escorts under the command of Rear Admiral T. L. Sprague. Operation plans were outlined in meticulous detail as to what each of the hundreds of ships participating was to do. They pointed out the specific target, Leyte. Leyte lay not on the open sea but on the inboard side of a long gulf almost closed to seaward by land and surrounded by the myriad island of the Philippines. These geographical facts proved unfortunate for the Sangamon and her sisters. Air group 37 Lt. Comdr. S. E. Hindman had 12 (F6F) Hellcats, 5(F6F) Wildcats and 9(TBM) Avengers aboard. The Sangamon, Santee, Suwannee, Chenango, Petrof Bay and Saginaw Bay were part of the group along with escorts DD's: McCord, Trathen and Hazelwood. DE's: Edmonds, Richard S. Bull, Richard M. Rowell, Eversole and Coolbaugh. The code name for this group was "Taffy One".

Shortly after dawn on October 12th, the Sangamon and 11 other carriers steamed out of Manus Island bound for the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur was aboard the Cruiser Nashville. Two Australian cruisers and one destroyer were with TG 77.3. It was a real treat to see these three ships leave the anchorage. When our ships got under way it was in a slow orderly way. They started out with full speed with their crew at stations and the band playing their National Anthem.

Two columns of six carriers each formed and the ships moved out to sea with their gun crews practice, firing on a towed sleeve. About noon Task Force 77.2, the bombardment group composed of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, appeared on the horizon. The CVE's and the bombardment group joined to form one large force under Rear Admiral J. B. Oldendorf. He had the following bombardment group under his

command: BB's Tennessee, California, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, West Virginia and Maryland. The Cruisers were the Louisville, Portland, Minneapolis, Honolulu, Denver, Columbia, Phoenix, Boise, HMAS Australia and HMAS Shropshire. The escorts were: Hutchins, Bache, Beale, Killen, HMAS Arunta, HMAS Waarramunga, Letuze, Newcomb, Bennion, Heywood L. Edwards, Richard P. Leary, Robinson, Ross, Albert W. Grant, Bryant, Cony, Aulick, and Sigourney.

After all the ships got into formation, it was a very secure feeling for the first time in the pacific operations. There were ships as far as one could see. Other ships were to join later. Six CVE's and some cruisers and escorts had remained behind to escort transports.

For two days little disturbed the tedium of steaming. Late on the afternoon of the second day, rumblings of a storm to come penetrated the calm. This time it was nature's storm and not the storm of battle. Next morning a typhoon, reported in the northeast, whipped up the winds around the formation. The ship's meteorologist scanned his charts worriedly and harassed the communications officer for any additional word on the storm. The weather continued to thicken through the 16th. Shortly before noon of that day, the battle ship and cruiser group left the formation to proceed to Leyte Gulf, where they were to bombard the beaches three days in advance of the amphibious force.

Winds continued strong around the carriers, increasing toward gale force. As the night wore on heavy seas pounded the ship. Along towards morning number two whale boat, the wherry and port boom on the Sangamon were carried away. The escorts in the screen were suffering an even worse trouncing. The most seriously damaged was the destroyer escort Rowell, which lost her mast. The typhoon moved to within less than 100 miles. Visibility became limited to less than a mile. Waves broke over the Sangamon's flight deck and spray whipped up onto the superstructure. Fortunately the typhoon approached no closer. Late on the 17th the winds fell off and the sea subsided. The carriers once more turned towards Leyte, having cleared an unanticipated barrier in their quest of the Philippines.

October 16 left T.G. 77.2 to form T.U.77.4.1, Rear ADM. T. L. Sprague on Sangamon in command. Fueled USS Oberrender-32,986 gal., Haggard-64,897 gal., Trathen-64,2233 gal., Hoel 68,578 gal.

October 17 Lost port motor whaleboat and port boat boom due to heavy seas.

October 18th found the Sangamon operating with Task Force 77.4.1 20 miles off the Philippines. The unit included

Sangamon, Suwannee, Santee, Chenango and escorts. Two carriers, the Saginaw Bay and the Petrof Bay, were to join the unit on the 22nd. The operating area of this unit lay east and southeast of Leyte Gulf. Most of the time the ships were within sight of either Samar or Mindanao. This gave the Jap lookouts stationed on the mountain tops an opportunity to keep the unit under constant observation.

The Sangamon and her sisters launched flights in support of advanced elements of Task Force 77, operating in Leyte Gulf, and augment these with strikes against Leyte and Visyan airfields. On some of these flights the pilots dropped leaflets to inform the Japs that they could surrender, and to let the people of the Philippines know they were about to be freed. They were printed in English and Japanese. Whether reeling under the impact of the initial assault or merely marking time until they analyzed the situation, the Jap's did not strike back immediately. Often their planes appeared on the radar screen, but not until the 20th did they approach the group of carriers.

October 19 F6F piloted by Lt. F. J. Reiser made forced landing in sea. Pilot rescued by USS Coolbaugh.

Oct 20 Day of the actual invasion, dawn broke through a screen of high and middle clouds, generally scattered. There was no rain and visibility was good. All in all, it was a good day for the invasion. The ship proceeded with routine operations, launching a combat air patrol for the Leyte area at 0552 and a support mission at 0750.

Then as the ship was launching a "How" hour strike against Leyte at 0825, it happened. The shrill sound of the general alarm cut through the noise of planes warming up on the flight deck. Three Zekes, having eluded radar detection, appeared high over the Santee. They dropped three bombs but missed. At first they were thought to be dropping spare gas tanks. Flying fast into the west they disappeared briefly. At 0827 they were sighted again coming in low on the water forward of the Sangamon's port beam. As they drew near the Sangamon's port, battery broke loose with a ship-shaking barrage. Standing staunchly on the open bridge, Captain Browder roared; "Shoot the bastards down!" The upper portion of his body was not protected by the armor piercing metal.

Exactly what happened in the next few minutes is obscure, as in all such cases. One plane turned on its right wing about 500 yards from the Sangamon and flew erratically along the port side. It probably was this plane that was spotted by a Sangamon fighter, just launched, who gave chase and shot it down with several 50-caliber bursts.

The second Jap plane evidently turned and fled from the ship's withering fire. It strafed the Sangamon, then whipped around hard and came in fast to skip bomb into the ship's port side. As the plane still under fire, pulled up over the bow, it burst into flames and plunged into the sea. The pilot who gave his name as Yashio Yamamoto, petty officer first class of the Japanese Navy was picked up by the destroyer Trathen and later delivered to the Sangamon.

He was put in the brig for several days until they could get an interpreter aboard to question him. Later on he was taken ashore and turned over to the ground forces. While on the ship he was blindfolded and taken on the flight deck for walks. He was treated much better than they treated our captured men.

The carrier took her hit at Frame 83 on the main deck level. This was near the barbershop. Although a two by six section of steel plating ripped loose, the bomb failed to penetrate or explode and tumbled into the sea. Fifteen seconds later it exploded at a point 300 feet farther aft, but it was only a low order detonation of the part of the bomb that had not crumbled on impact.

The explosion shook the carrier from stem to stern, but only caused superficial damage. What was more glaringly obvious was that the electric power failed, the gyro repeaters went out, and steering was useless. The ship lost speed and dropped out of formation, her starboard engine falling off to less than two thirds. With her port engine running full she was able to maintain 11 knots. At 0850 the engine room reported "ready to answer all bells" and at 0905 all except permanent damage had been repaired.

Then there was time to survey the situation. Three men had been wounded by 20-millimeter shell fragments, which scattered along the port catwalk during the strafing attack. None were seriously injured. The only permanent damage was to the forward gyro where the wires supporting the sensitive element broke. Shifting all equipment to the after gyro readily offset this. The torn section of plating was patched immediately. No underwater damage resulted.

During the first few days after the initial attack, something of normalcy settled about the Sangamon as she continued her business of launching and recovering. Planes were sent up for local protection and strikes and observation on the beach. Combat Air Patrol was maintained on the beach at all times by Escort Carrier planes.

Life on a carrier, especially the Sangamon class was far from routine. Once you left port there was a constant

launching and recovering of planes, which meant certain people had to go to "flight quarters". The same took place for fueling, transfer of mail, personnel or material. Then there was "General Quarters". For the Okinawa invasion we took aboard a night squadron, so it meant disruption at night also. There were times when there was not much rest.

On the night of the 21st the ship spent some time at general quarters when "phantom bogies" appeared on the radar screen. These "phantoms" looking much like the usual unidentified plane indications on the screen, showed up in the north and moved southward. Nothing could be detected visibly even though the radar indicated the "phantoms" were close to the ship. Only the destroyer McCord reported a plane low on the water. It flew around the formation showing lights and was tracked out by radar to 20 miles where it disappeared. The strange "phantom" procession continued until 2015, by which time tracks had been charted on 15 indications.

Meanwhile, Sangamon pilots reported another disturbing note. Many Jap aircraft, mostly grounded on Visayan fields, had been sighted. Between the 21st and the 23rd the ship's pilots destroyed 19 Jap planes in the air and on the ground. On the 24th, they intercepted a large force of planes the enemy hurled at the landing area. They shot down nine for certain, probably got four more and damaged one. On the same day a Judy was splashed near the formation.

October 22 USS Petrof Bay, Saginaw Bay, Bull and Edwards joined formation. There was other cause for concern also. On the 22nd and 23rd U.S. subs Dace and Dart scouting off Palawan detected Jap fleet units steaming up from the Singapore area. The subs attacked and inflicted some damage, but the Jap force continued. Two Sangamon planes shot down near Leyte, both pilots rescued. USS Rowell reported periscope 5000 yards. Investigated but lost contact. Fueled USS Trathen 85,062 gal, Edmonds, 39,646 gal. USS Eversole joined formation.

October 23 USS Edmonds investigates sub contact, lost same.

October 24 Jap "Judy" approached formation and was shot down by Santee pilot. F6F piloted by Lt. Jg. K. W. Kenyon crashed in water about 20 miles away, plane sank, pilot picked up by USS Collbaugh. USS Obberrender joined formation. Later USS Chenango, Saginaw Bay, Edmonds and Obberrender left on assigned duty. USS Southard joined formation.

This then, was the situation:

1:Admiral Halsey's fast Third Fleet was deployed east of

the Philippines. It was in a position to intercept should the enemy attempt to cross the narrow Visayan waters.

2: The CVE force, divided into three units, were steaming in separate operating areas east of the Philippines. The Sangamon's carrier group and escorts, known as Task unit 77.4.1 was operating east and southeast of Leyte Gulf. The second group Task Unit 77.4.2. was operating 30 to 50 miles north of the Sangamon unit. The third group Task Unit 77.4.3. was steaming another 30 to 50 miles north of unit two.

3: In Leyte Gulf lay the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers of the bombardment group. Countless transports supply ships, landing craft and other small vessels were also in the Gulf.

On the morning of the 24th, the Third Fleet planes sighted two large Jap surface forces moving eastward, one in the Sibuyan Sea and one in the Sulu Sea. Both these forces were taken under heavy air attack and many ships were damaged or sunk, including Kurita's Flag ship. Meantime, a third Jap unit, this one built around carriers, was reported by a Navy search plane to be moving down on the Philippines from a point some 200 miles off northern Luzon. To meet this threat Third Fleet units sped northward to intercept. This turned out to be a Japanese decoy fleet to lure Halsey north away from Leyte Gulf.

During the early morning hours of the 25th the force, first sighted in the Sulu Sea, attempted to slip into Leyte Gulf but Seventh Fleet battleships, cruisers destroyers and PT boats all but wiped them out. This was a situation any Naval commander looked forward to. This was where you could use what was referred to as the (T formation). The battleships and cruisers could be positioned to fire broadside on an enemy that could only fire forward as they approached. Also under cover of darkness the destroyers and PT boats could fire on them as they approached. This incident saved the landing force from serious if not fatal consequences. In this engagement the Jap's lost 2 battleships, 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers.

The other Jap force that had been attacked the day before by the Third Fleet, slipped out of San Bernardino Strait into the Pacific, into the operating area of the CVE's. This heavy force, four battleships, eight cruisers and at least ten destroyers burst suddenly on CVE Unit 77.4.3. and took it under fire. The largest gun in the CVE unit was 5 inch. The Japs had 17.5 on their new battleships. This unit was about

100 miles north of the Sangamon and her group. The Sangamon's unit immediately launched a strike to aid the CVE's under attack. It was unable to muster many planes for the strike, since many of its aircraft already were participating in two other engagements. One group had been sent to give protection to Leyte area and another to hammer the Jap force originally sighted in the Sulu Sea.

The bombardment group in Leyte Gulf was too far away to be of quickly needed help. Also, they were nearly out of the required ammunition after their morning engagement. Admiral Halsey's group was too far north to be of any help. There will always be a big question as to why Admiral Halsey did not leave some of his big carriers and battle group to cover this area especially after having encountered them in that same area the previous night.

About the time the Sangamon finished launching her strike to aid the beleaguered CVE group, several enemy planes were picked up on the radar screen 15 miles away. A few minutes later the Sangamon unit was under a terrifying attack.

At 0737 A Jap plane came out of a thin cloud, roared upon the Santee, dropped a bomb and crashed into the flight deck in a suicide attack. This was a Kamikaze. It was the first time the Sangamon's force or any force witnessed the violent action of the Kamikaze (Divine Wind) Corps, pledged to plunge its planes to death on U.S. ships. Several more Zekes were sighted overhead, each apparently picking a target and preparing for a suicide.

At 0738 one plummeted toward the Sangamon in a screaming, strafing dive. At first he seemed to experience difficulty in aiming himself. But at 3,000 feet he roared hard right and straight through the heavy anti-aircraft barrage the Sangamon gunners were putting up. At 1,000 feet he faltered. He veered slightly, apparently hit. Then he missed the ship, plunging into the sea less than 25 feet off the port bow and exploding. So close did he come that three men on the forecastle were wounded, one of them fatally.

At 0759 Three more enemy planes continued to circle overhead. Then they too began to break off individually and plunge down towards the ships. One crossed astern of the Sangamon at about 5,000 feet, turned and came up through the fire of the ships entire port battery. It nosed up for a moment and plunged into the Suwannee. At 0759 the Sangamon opened fire with its port guns at the second Jap plane, attacking the Petrof Bay. That pilot missed too, plunging to death in the sea. A minute or so later the Sangamon blasted away again at the third plane. The Jap circled the formation

and then fled into the west.

At 0803 During the air action, the Santee reported she had been torpedoed. At 0803 the destroyer Trathen sighted a periscope a mile away. She turned to attack but the sub eluded her. Back in the formation the Suwannee and Santee were billowing forth smoke and flame. The Santee was fighting a six-degree list as a result of the torpedo hit. Scattered about the sea were the many men who had gone overboard when the suicide struck and exploded. The destroyer escort Bull scurried about rescuing them, many of them injured critically. Later the more serious cases were transferred to the Sangamon. She turned the after part of her hanger deck into a sick bay. Some of the men were severally burnt.

Finally the Santee and Suwannee reported their fires under control. Spirits aboard all the ships were bolstered by a courageous announcement from the battered Suwannee. "All fires are out," boomed the voice over the internship radio circuit, "All we found of the Jap are bits of flesh. We're ready for battle."

Within two hours after the fires were out, and both carriers had resumed flight operations. At 1116 the Sangamon herself had a casualty. The electric steering failed and the diesel generators lost their load. The starboard engine fell to 44 RPM due to the loss of vacuum when the starboard condenser was pumped dry and the air ejector became hot and vapor bound. Shortly after this was repaired, the catapult cable parted and it was estimated it would require 20 hours to replace. Fortunately a strong breeze struck up before the 1530 launching, permitting free deck takeoffs rather than the usual catapulting.

Enemy air attack fell off the rest of the day although one weak attack developed at 1145. Two planes approached the formation. One combat air patrol shot down one of these 10 miles away. The other, a Judy came in and dropped a bomb near the Petrof Bay, and strafed the destroyer escort Bull and disappeared to the east.

USS Picking, Sproston and Hale joined the formation. USS Coolbaugh came alongside to transfer 4 of the Suwannee crew it picked up from the water. USS Hale came along side to transfer wounded it had picked up. All were injured, one died later. USS Bull and Eversole left on assigned duty. Meantime Sangamon planes were attacking both the southern and middle Jap surface forces. A lack of heavy armor piercing bombs handicapped their efforts since CVE's presumably were not equipped for combat with heavy Jap fleet units. Such bombs were omitted to make room for more of the smaller types. The Sangamon, having been

out of the Navy Yard for a year, had the additional handicap in not being able to handle rockets as many CVE's were. Twenty-four sorties in all were launched to aid the blows against the Jap fleet. Many did not return. USS Picking, Sproston and Hale left on assigned duty. USS Petrof Bay reports torpedo wake which means a second sub is area. No contact made. When reports came in on these attacks the following tally for the Sangamon was reported:

- (1) Jap ships south of Leyte
 - 1BB possible torpedoed
 - 1DD seriously damaged by strafing.
- (2) Ships east of Samar.
 - 1BB strafed 1
 - Mogami class cruiser damaged by strafing and near miss.
- (3) Jap unit retiring through San Bernardino Strait.
 - 1 Nachi class cruiser strafed and bombed.
 - 1 new destroyer sunk

At dark that night, Sangamon pilots were dispersed over the entire battle area. Many had landed nearly out of gas. Almost all planes suffered flak damage. Eight pilots were at Tacloban airfield, two at Dulag, four on the Suwannee and one was believed to be on a tanker. Eight were unaccounted for, although some were located later.

At 1931 held burial service for W. P. Hyss Y3/c From Sangamon and C. Fedora Bkr 3/c from the Suwannee.

At 2026 USS Picking, Hale and Sproston left to assist T.U.77.4.3.

At 2038, the scarred remnants of CVE Unit 77.4.3. which had been attacked by the heavy Jap fleet, was sighted six miles astern of the Sangamon's formation. An enemy submarine was pursuing the carriers, which were traveling without escorts. Three destroyers were dispatched to assist but the submarine submerged and disappeared. Shortly thereafter a Jap plane, evidently a snooper appeared in her vicinity. It did not attack.

The remnants of TU 77.4.3. joined the Sangamon's disposition. The Carriers St. Lo and Gambier and escorts Hoel, Roberts and Johnston were not along as the Japs had sunk them. Had the Jap Fleet not broken off its attack, all of the escort carriers and their escorts might have been destroyed. The reasons they broke off were: they thought they were up against the big carriers due to not the right recognition of the ships and the terrific fight that was put up, and to the open radio messages they over heard. They got the impression that reinforcements were on the way from the north.

Here I would like insert a letter from Lt. Cdmr Raymond A Goodman which I received in Jan 2004. He sent this to me after his son had got in touch with me thru E-Mail. His Dad Raymond who was known as "Benny" by his shipmates in Car.Div.22 because of Benny Goodman the orchestra leader never told any of us about this. After some pressure by me on a phone call, I got this letter from him. He said he never talked about it because he did not want to appear as bragging. He does not want to claim that it was he who was responsible for the Japanese Navy retiring from battle. He says he might just be a part of a large puzzle as to why Kurita turned back---

When Vice Adm Kurita turned the most powerful ship in the world, the Yamato, with its accompanying ships, north thru the San Bernadino Straits away from Taffy 3, he left a question that historians never answered. WHY? I was a member of the staff of Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague, ComCarDiv 22, based on the Sangamon. I was assigned to control a Close Air Support frequency on AM 2097 kcs. This was a plain language frequency to communicate with the Marines on Leyte with Taffy 2 and Taffy 3, but because it was AM, it could be intercepted by the Japanese. As a matter of fact, I was aware that the Japanese were listening because occasionally I could hear their voices. At 0800 on October 25, 1944 Taffy 3 informed me that they were being attacked by battleships. Taffy 1 (the Sangamon) then went to general quarters after it found itself under attack by the kamikazes (as we learned to call them). This was the first ever kamikaze attack.

It became obvious that Halsey and the Third Fleet were not guarding the Straits, and that the Taffy units were on their own. My position was in a compartment between CIC and the radio shack. I had a radioman and only a runner to communicate with flag plot and the Admiral. During the hours that followed, I became convinced that Admiral Kurita with the Yamato and his fleet were going to dispose of Taffy 3, Taffy 2 and Taffy 1 and enter Leyte Gulf.

I was personally scared. I decided to make an effort to interfere with that scenario. I sent the following message on the Close Air Support frequency: Taffy 3 this is Taffy. The Big Boys are on their way and should be with you in half an hour.

In ten minutes, Taffy 3 called and informed that the Japanese had turned north and disappeared. I was shocked, and the runner rushed the message to Admiral Sprague.

Some three weeks later, the Sangamon was in Bremerton in dry dock for repair. I was awarded the Legion of Merit medal

with an A for action by the Admiral. This was his way of confirming that he believed the unauthorized message had some influence on Kurita's decision to withdraw.

Here is a quote from Thomas J. Cutler's book, "The Battle of Leyte Gulf", page 262: "But Kurita did not have a clear picture at all. For some inexplicable reason, he and other members of his staff continued to believe that they were not gaining on the Americans sufficiently. After the war, he told an interviewer that he honestly believed that the American carriers were making 39 knots during the chase. Added to that were his concerns over several messages that the Japanese communicators had intercepted. These messages were in fact, plain language appeals for help from Kincade, but the pessimistic side of Kurita deduced from these dispatches that help was indeed on the way and it was only a matter of time before it arrived."

At 2230, the destroyer Coolbaugh in the screen reported a sound contact. On turning to investigate she sighted a periscope dead ahead. She scurried forward and dropped her depth charges. A moment later a loud explosion rent the air and watches on the Sangamon saw a flash of flame rise some 200 feet above the water. The Coolbaugh claimed a direct hit. A few minutes later the Petrof Bay reported a torpedo wake close aboard paralleling her starboard side. No additional attacks developed that night and TU 77.4.3. left the formation near dawn, departing for Woendi.

The Sangamon's communications shack received some cheerful news on the morning of the 26th. The Jap fleet, broken and routed, was fleeing through the seas and narrow straits of the central Philippines. At 0830, a strike of six fighters carrying 500 pound SAP's was launched to attack a Jap cruiser and destroyer fleeing south of Masbate. The planes scored probable bomb hits on the Kuma class cruiser. It was later reported that it sank the destroyer with repeated strafing attacks. In this and previous attacks the Sangamon pilots met intense anti-aircraft fire, yet they made run after run unwavering. Practically all the planes were hit by flak.

Enemy air attacks over the Leyte area on the 26th were light. Two Sangamon pilots, flying combat air patrol reported only one small group of nine planes. They shot down two of them. At 1100, USS Southard came along side to transfer pilots and air personal rescued from downed planes.

But the morning's cheering news was offset shortly after noon. At 1215, six to eight enemy planes were reported by the Combat Information Center to be coming in from the north, 48 miles away. When the raid closed to 25 miles it split into

three groups. One group of three planes was intercepted and destroyed by the combat air patrol. The other two groups eluded the fighters and came in without showing on the radar screen. At last they were spotted through binoculars in the altostratus clouds overhead. There were four planes maneuvering and swinging over as they prepared to come down.

All ships opened fire. One plane crashed into the water just missing the Petrof Bay. Two of them fled. The last one hit home. Down he flashed through the heavy flak. At first he appeared to have chosen the Sangamon for his suicidal objective. But at 5,000 feet, whether deterred by the ships fierce fire or seeing a better target in the Suwannee's planes parked forward, he turned out and circled the Sangamon's stern. The heavy flak barrage continued but somehow he escaped a fatal hit. At 1238 he zoomed up, then nosed over and dove into the Suwannee, striking and exploding on the flight deck near the base of the island. A huge ball of orange flame burst over the deck, engulfing the bridge and all the parked planes. As this flame leaped skyward it gave way to a mass of billowing white smoke, which turned black as the ship burned. The stricken carrier out of control swung in a wide turn across the Sangamon's bow. The Sangamon came hard left to avoid her, crossing in her wake. Scattered over the sea were fifty or sixty of the Suwannee's men. The Sangamon stopped her engines lest these sailors be caught in the twirling screws. Three rafts and two life nets were dropped and 30 Sangamon men on the catwalks tossed their own life belts to the sailors in the water.

The Suwannee gradually came to a stop in her slow blind run. A great pillar of smoke mounted into the air hundreds of feet above her. Flames crackled and billowed from her sides and flight deck. While other carriers of the formation maneuvered in wide arcs around their wounded sister, the destroyer escort Coolbaugh and the destroyer Trathen rescued personnel from the water.

Once again the Suwannee showed she was a courageous, rugged carrier. In just 38 minutes after she was hit, all fires were controlled. At 1430 she rejoined the formation making full speed. As an operating carrier, however she was out. The Jap suicide had been too destructive. Her planes, some of which were attempting to land at the time of the attack, landed aboard other carriers. Many of her injured were transferred to the Sangamon. One Sangamon pilot shot down over beach and one by Jap Destroyers, fate unknown at this time. Late that night the Suwannee and Coolbaugh left the unit for Kossol Roads.

The next two days proved anti-climactic but they were trying ones for the Sangamon. The strain of constant vigilance and lack of sleep began to tell on the crew. Enemy planes, mostly snoopers continued to appear on the radar screen. The ship went to general quarters repeatedly even after the cruisers Phoenix and Shropshire and four destroyers, Leutze, Stoddard, Edwards and HMS Arunta arrived to lend their guns to the formation. One Zeke approached and was shot down nearby. A Judy flying very high crossed the formation and drew fire from many ships. No longer needed, the Santee left for Manus after having operated almost two days since taking a torpedo hit and suicide. The mast-less Rowell accompanied her back. Meanwhile the Chenango, Saginaw, McDonough, Lang, Taylor and Nicholas returned from their mission to Morotai for replacement planes and rejoined the unit.

No more kamikaze planes attacked during the remainder of the operation. But the vivid pictures of their screaming, terrifying dives were stamped indelibly in the minds of the crew. The suicide's had not proved effective in stemming the invasion of the Philippines but they had created a new problem of war. This Task Unit was the first to come in contact with the (KAMIKAZE).

October 27 Held burial service for R. E. Merkel AMM 3/c from USS Suwannee.

October 28 Jap prisoner was transferred to USS H. L. Edwards to be taken to Com.7th Fleet. Burial service for R. L. Dugan S 1/c from USS Suwannee.

Admiral Sprague who had witnessed their dives from the Sangamon's flag bridge, aptly described them as "robot bombs with human minds". Captain J. M. (Kit) Carson, Sprague's Chief of Staff and a veteran of many kinds of Jap attacks, described the suicide plunges as "the most terrifying type of offense I had ever seen". So when the orders to leave Leyte area finally arrived on the 29th a feeling of relief and jubilation swept through the ship's company. They had undergone a rough experience, and they knew their job had been well done. The gun crews stuck to their stations through seemingly endless periods of fire. The flight deck and catapult crews pushed on stoutly even while under attack. Officers and men both above and below decks handled their jobs without faltering, yet knowing death hovered in the seas nearby and the skies overhead.

On two occasions radar picked up unidentified aircraft which turned out to be planes from USS Franklin and Enterprise low on gasoline. Took them aboard. Under normal conditions, most sailors had four hours on and eight hours off duty.

When circumstances made it necessary for more men to be on at one time, it was 4 on and 4 off. For general quarters everyone went to battle stations. Being on a carrier meant some men had to go to flight quarters any time from before daylight to dark. This meant that for the past few days some men got little if any sleep. Being on a carrier was a unique experience, in that there was very little quite time in daylight hours when in combat areas.

October 31 Steaming in company with Task Groups 77.2, 77.3 and 77.4. Held burial service for E. Ubite StM1c. USS Louisville, Portland, Tennessee, Minneapolis, Hafford, Thorn, Wells, Bach, Multan and Beall left on assigned duty. Rear Adm T.D. Radix in USS Virginia OTC.

The ship had launched 473 sorties in 15 days under hazardous conditions, storms, night operations and enemy attacks. Yet no major accident, not even a barrier crash occurred. At the end the battle, the Jap Navy had lost 27 of the 64 ships they had flung into this encounter. This included 3 battleships and 4 carriers. Of the approximately 220 ships the U.S. Navy had committed to this engagement, they lost only 3 escorts and 2 escort carriers. This was the LARGEST NAVAL BATTLE in the history of the Navy. There were approximately 286 naval warships from the United States, Australia and Japan involved in this engagement. This will probably never be repeated.

Commendations were an old thing to the Sangamon. But when she received them this time she felt they were well justified.

Admiral Kinkaid messaged:

MSG for Admiral Sprague x the gallant action of the group under your command saved the day in Leyte Gulf x you may be sure I am proud and grateful.

Admiral Kinkaid.

Admiral Nimitz said:

CinPac joins Com 7th Fleet in respect and admiration for the performance of the escort carriers in their gallant fight against heavy odds.

Admiral Nimitz

The message from the ship's own Admiral Sprague was most valued. He said:

To the officers and men of the escort carriers and to the kin of those who were lost x this task group has participated in one of the decisive battles of the war x the aircraft of

these carriers not only met and defeated the enemy attacks in the air but they have turned back a large enemy fleet composed of his most modern ships x the intrepid courage, skill and fighting spirit of the pilots and air crewmen were superb x never have fighting men had a greater task and never have fighting men performed their duty with greater determination and distinction x the seamen like handling of the vessels x the brilliant offensive and defensive work of the screen x the cool accuracy of the gunners x the sustained and imperturbable handling of planes on deck x the calm singleness of purpose of the rearming and gasoline details x the prompt and efficient action of the damage control parties and engineers x all contributed to turning the tide of battle to victory x against such teamwork the enemy could not prevail x I am proud to have been privileged to have been present and observe your achievements x God bless everyone of you and may the citizens of our country forever remember and be thankful for your courage x to the mothers, fathers sisters and brothers, wives , son and daughters of those who were lost I say x be comforted and inspired in the thought that the victory for which these men contributed so freely and courageously gave their lives has contributed immeasurably to the final defeat of the enemy.

T. L. Sprague RADM, US Navy

October 29 -USS Phoenix, HMAS Shropshire, Arunta, USS Newcome, Multan and Leutze left on assigned duty. Task Unit left formation for assigned duty. Now at Lat.10.55.0 N Long.129.50.0 E.

October 30 Joined up with various units of 77.2,77.3,Rear ADM. J. B. Olendorph on Louisville OTC.

October 31- USS Louisville, Portland, Tennessee, Minneapolis, Hafford, Thorn, Welles, Bache, Multan and Beale left on assigned duty. Rear ADM T. D. Radix on West Virginia OTC. On these last few days there were a lot of ships arriving and departing according to orders from the higher commands.

Nov 1 1944 -Operating as Task Unit 77.4.1 Rear ADM. Sprague On Sangamon OTC. Ships in unit-USS Sangamon, Chenango, Santee. Suwannee, Petrof Bay, Saginaw Bay, McCord, Hazelwood, Trathen Edmonds, Richard S. Bull and Rowell. En route to Manus Island, Admiralty Islands with units of T.G.77.2 and 77.4, Rear ADM. T. D. Radix on West Virginia OTC. Held burial service for E. Porter S1/c of USS Suwannee. En route to Manus Island and HOME.

Nov 2 USS Hazelwood left on assigned duty.

Nov 3 Held burial service for H. J. Olfert S1/c of the

USS Suwannee. Anchored in Berth 18 Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island. Admiralty Islands. Wounded transferred to base hospital. Moved to Berth 265.

Nov 4 Received 400,000 gal. fuel oil and 15,000 aviation gasoline from USS Niobrara. USS Suwannee personnel who were rescued from water returned to their ship.

Nov 5 Unloaded ammunition and bombs.

Nov 7 Unloaded aviation stores and loaded 12 F6Fs for transport.

Nov 8 Transferred ammo to USS Argonne. A lot of personnel came aboard for transport to the states.

Nov 9 Got underway for the long awaited voyage home in company with USS Suwannee, Chenango, Santee. Edmonds, Rowell, Daly, Bull and Heerman, Rear ADM. T.L. Sprague OTC. Of Task Unit 16.19.1.

Nov 13 Lat.05-51.2 N--Long.175.35.0 East.

Nov 10 F6F crashed on landing, minor damage and no personal injuries.

Nov 14 USS Bull received 54,210 gal. fuel. USS Daly left formation to proceed to Majuro Island, Marshall Islands. During the trip back planes were launched for Combat Air Patrol and Anti Sub Patrol.

November 1944 Rear Admiral C. T. Durgin Commander of Carrier Division 29 now assumed the newly created command of all the CVE's. He held this command for the battle of Lingayen, Iwo Jima. Okinawa and in Nov. 1945 was assigned shore duty.

Nov 19 Moored to Berth Fox 12 Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Oahu Island, Territory of Hawaii. Unloaded 26,700 gal of aviation gas to YO-123.

Nov 20 Took aboard some more passengers to be transported to the states.

Nov 21 Underway from Pearl Harbor sailing independently to Alameda Air Station, USA. No planes sent aloft as we were in cover of shore based patrols.

Nov 27 Docked at Navy Pier Alameda, California. Several hundred men including those put aboard for transfer left the ship. All planes were removed from ship. Fighting Squadron 37 and Torpedo Squadron 37 pilots and all support personal were transferred to Alameda Naval Air Station for assignment. Rear ADM. T. L. Sprague left on temporary duty to report to the Commander-in-Chief, US Fleet in Washington, D.C.

Nov 28 under way to Bremerton, Ship Yards.

Nov 30 Moored to Pier 6-c, Navy Yard, Bremerton, Wash.

The Sangamon finally arrived at Bremerton, Washington,

and there were leaves for the crew repairs and alterations for the ship. In some ways those 400 days at sea had rendered the carrier obsolete. Both at Leyte and in the Marianas, her planes had to peck away with 50-caliber guns while other carriers sent out rocket equipped aircraft. The helplessness of exclusive reliance on the old type radar was present at Leyte. A year long, series of failures for the Sangamon and her sisters, pointed up the need for an additional catapult.

Dec 13 Moved to dry dock #2 PNSN Bremerton, Washington. During the Navy yard availability period from November 30th to January 24th, workmen remedied these deficiencies. They installed rocket storage space and a second catapult. A new type of radar was included in the redesigned Combat Information Center. In addition, three new twin 40-millimeter mounts were installed, along with a bomb elevator, lights for night operations and additional fire fighting equipment. They also removed a great amount of barnacles from the ship's bottom and painted it after being put in dry dock on Dec. 14. If these barnacles get to great they can slow down the speed of a ship.

While the ship was in dry-dock and all these renovations were going on, the crew lived aboard ship. The yard crew worked around the clock so the living conditions were not the best. To go on liberty to Seattle, Wash., we took about a half-hour ferry ride from the Bremerton Naval yard. It was a good liberty city. While here on January 18, 1945 we had a ships party at a nightclub called the "Melody Lane" located at Union and Seventh Ave. USO girls and WAVES were there to make it a better party. It was a good party, but ended up in a big fight that ended the party except for those of us that were on Shore Patrol duty. We stayed on with the waitress's and club personnel and had a great time. The really good thing was to have fresh food every day.

Some of the crew were sent on leave at different times. At this time personnel from the navigation department and the officers who stood watch as officer of the deck while at sea, were sent for a one-week crash course on Loran. This was a new type of radar used when entering port. The school was at Treasure Island, California. Those who went to school went by day, and had the nights free. I went with Lt. Jg. Hessler who was well liked by the enlisted men. We flew down and met his wife and some friends who ran a liquor store. Obviously we had a great time every night.

Dec 29 Gas masks stored in brig caught fire. Ship yard assisted in putting out fire. Nine crew members were burned, none serious. A lot of personnel were transferred off and on

the ship while in port.

Jan 14, 1945 Left dry-dock and moored to Pier 3C Puget Sound Navy Yard. Started receiving fuel and ammunition aboard.

Jan 19 Took aboard 150 tons of fresh provisions and a great deal of ammunition.

Jan 21 took on 236.250 gal. fuel from dock.

Jan 24 moved from Pier #C to Anchorage off Orchard Point, Puget Sound, Washington. Took aboard Torpedoes and rockets.

Jan 26 Underway to conduct full power trial and return to anchorage.

Jan 27 Underway to conduct degaussing runs and then anchor off Indian Island, South of Port Townsend, Washington. Berth 55.

Jan 28 Took aboard P.B. SQUADRON # 53. Took on ammo.

Jan 30 Underway independently for next mission. Capt. M. E. Browder Capt. with Capt A. L. Malstrom and Comdr. E. O'Beirne Executive Officer.

February 1 entered channel to San Francisco with visibility down to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile at times. Had to reverse course at one time and reenter channel. After passing under Golden Gate Bridge anchored to Pier Able, Alameda Naval Air Station, Alameda, California.

Feb 2 Rear ADM. T. L. Sprague returned aboard. from temporary duty in Washington D.C.

Feb 3 Capt. Malstrom took over command of Sangamon. Capt Browder left ship to report to Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida.

Feb 5 to 10 took on fuel and fresh supplies.

Feb 9 Loaded PV Venturas and F6F's from Naval Air Station. Received 145.670 gal aviation from dock. Officers and men from VPB-52 reported aboard for transportation.

Feb 10 Underway independently En route Pearl Harbor.

OKINAWA

The cruise back into the pacific war was leisurely but highly important. From January 24th to 30th the ship conducted post-repair trials in Puget Sound. One has to remember that Bremerton is about 60 miles from the Pacific coast. Puget Sound is very deep and fairly wide, so this is a great area to do these tests. Then she steamed down to San Francisco, arriving February 3rd. During the short trip, heavy seas inflicted considerable damage to the forward areas of the ship and caused difficulties with the port main turbine. This necessitated a 10-day repair period at the Alameda carrier pier.

February 16 Held gunnery practice. Docked at Dock Fox-13 Ford Is. Pearl Harbor.

February 17 moved to Buoy x-10 and x-10-S.

Feb 18 Support personal of Fighter and Torpedo Squadrons 33 came aboard.

February 19 Left Pearl Harbor with USS Acree and McConnell as Task Group 19.2 Captain A. I. Malstrom OTC. Conducted gunnery practice. Fighter and Torpedo Squadrons 33 flew aboard. Lt. Cdr. J. C. Eckhardt Air Officer. One TBM crashed in to sea, pilot and 3 crew members rescued. This is the first night fighter squadron to be aboard a CVE. This would prove to be quite a challenge.

February 19 to 23 Held gunnery practice and landing and take off of planes. Because this was the first night squadron ever aboard a CVE so it took some night practice.

February 23 Moored to berth F-9 Ford Island, Pearl Harbor. Received 165,000 gal of fuel oil.

February 26 Underway with USS Williams and Tills as Task Group 19.2. For gunnery practice and Plane launching and landing. F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Slight damage to plane and island structure.

March 2 Held gunnery practice, Lt. Jg. K. K. Kull fell 32 ft. from hanger deck down bomb elevator shaft which resulted in his death. Docked to berth F-13 Ford Island, Pearl Harbor. Body of Lt. Jg. Kull transported to local undertaker. Received 18,250 gal. of aviation gas.

March 3 Received 99.250 gal fuel oil from YOG-L24

March 5 underway from Pearl Harbor with the Battleship Maryland and escorts, USS Hart, Metcalf and Aaron Ward. Captain J.D. Wilson in Maryland OTC of Task Group 12.5.4. This departure marked the beginning of a new and rugged adventure. This was the end of quite nights aboard ship. Launched ASP and CAP on a daily basis.

March 8 Held gunnery practice.

March 11 , Held gunnery practice. USS Metcalf received 72,460 gal. of fuel.

March 12, 13, 14, 15 Held gunnery practice.

March 16th the ship arrived at Ulithi Harbor and anchored in Northern Anchorage Berth 29. There she found many ships gathering and preparing for the invasion of Okinawa, the final assault on the road to Japan. While in port the Sangamon received fuel 14,406 gal., ammunition and supplies. Gene Tunney former heavy weight boxing champion was the Fleet Recreation Director. This was a typical tropical beach, sand, sand and more sand.

March 21, Underway from Ulithi Harbor. The Sangamon was

assigned to Task Unit 52.1.1 under Rear Admiral C.A.F. Sprague aboard Fanshaw Bay. This group included the escort carriers: Sangamon, Makin Is. Fanshaw Bay, Natoma Bay, Savo Is., Lunga Point and Anzio. Destroyers: Ingraham, Bagley, Boyd, Paterson, Hart and Bradford. Destroyer escorts: Boyd, Bradford, Nawman Lawrence C. Taylor, Melvin R. Nawman, Oliver Mitchell, Robert F. Keller, Tabberer, Richard M. Rowell, Richard S. Bull, Dennis, Sederstrom, Fleming and O' Flaherty. The ship was now in the Fifth fleet under the overall command of Adm. Chester W. Nimitz. B. H. Humasti Csp (AA) fell overboard, picked up by USS Callaghan. minus 9 time zone.

On March 20th, TF 57, a British Unit officially joined the US Navy forces in the pacific area. They had been on maneuvers in the Manus area since March after arriving from the Atlantic. This unit included 5 carriers, 2 battleships, 7 cruisers and about 15 destroyers. On this date the carriers HMS Indomitable, Victorious, Indefatigable and Illustrious, battleships King George V and Howe, cruisers Swiftsure, Black Prince, Euryalus, Argonaut, Uganda and HMSZS Gambia and Achilles, and the 24th Destroyer Flotilla arrived at Okinawa. Later the carrier Formidable with escorts arrived.

The British group alternated with the Sangamon Group in keeping the area between Okinawa and Formosa, which included airfields at Nansei, Shoto, Sakishima, and Formosa out of action. The alternating between these two groups finally showed that the High Command had great confidence in the Sangamon Group. You have to remember that 4 large carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers were replacing the escort carriers, destroyers and destroyer escorts. The escort carriers proved that they could take care of them self at Leyte Gulf.

The approach to Okinawa was almost without incident. The Sangamon's planes flew routine flights over the assembled forces and, in addition, her new night fighters went out on dawn and dusk patrols. On the night of the 24th, a night fighter coming in for a landing hit the Fanshaw Bay's antenna, high on the island and crashed. The pilot was not recovered.

March 23 USS Hart received 17,251 gal. fuel, USS Paterson received 7,688 gal of fuel, USS O'Flaherty received 21,998 gal of fuel.

Actual operations around Okinawa began on March 25th, seven days prior to the invasion date. During the seven-day period the Sangamon operated some 50 miles south of Okinawa, providing support for the activities close to the beach. Fueled the following ships, USS Fleming- 18,368 gal. and Sederstrom- 8,290 gal. USS Sederstrom hit # 8 40MM gun mount

with her bridge while making fueling approach. Slight damage to both ships.

March 25 USS Fleming received 18,380 gal fuel oil after 2 attempts due to temporary loss of steering. USS Sederstrom received 8,290 gal of fuel.

March 26th, a Sangamon night fighter shot down a Val in radar controlled interception. This was the first time in Navy history a night fighter from an escort carrier successfully carried out a night interception. The Val was picked up shortly before dusk some 40 miles away. C.I.C. vectored out a night fighter to intercept. Shortly, the night fighter sighted the enemy plane on his radar, closed in on it, and shot it down in flames. USS Anzio and Savo Island joined formation. Near collision with USS Anzio when it came into formation. Sederstrom, Lowery and Fleming left formation on assigned duty. Later that day USS Anzio and screen left on assigned duty.

March 27 Following ships received fuel, USS Hart, 60,641 gal. and Taylor, 25,350 gal. F6F crashed on landing, pilot OK, R. L. O'Dell AMM2c killed in this crash while directing planes. F6F went into sea on take off, pilot rescued.

March 28 F6F went overboard on launching, pilot rescued by USS Paterson.

March 29 received 286,108 gal. of fuel and 52,900 gal. of aviation gas from USS Cowanesque. Sub contact, took evasive action.

March 30 Two F6F's crashed on landing, no personal injuries. One plane had major damage. USS Paterson left for assigned duty.

March 31-USS Makin Island, Taylor and Rowell left on assigned duty. This was the start of a rotation of ships to go to Kerama Retto for supplies. This anchorage had been secured earlier to be used as a forward supply base for the invasion of Okinawa. Ships going in for supplies could not stay over night as it was under daily attack from Jap Kamikazes. The following received fuel, USS Bull 19,000 gal. Oliver Metchell 18,452 gal. M. R. Nawman 19,985 gal. and R. F. Keller 19,421 gal. USS Dennis and O'Flaherty left formation on assigned duty. USS Sedstrom, Fleming, Lowry, Patterson and Eisele reported for duty.

April 1st, From the time of departure from Ulithi until now the planes were only providing local cover. As of the first they also gave support to the landing forces. Easter Sunday, also (D) day. Sangamon left Adm. T.L. Sprague's unit, Car. Div.24 and joined Car. Div.22 under Rear Adm. W. D. Sample On Suwannee to form Task Unit 52.1.3. Later Rear Adm.

T. L. Sprague went on to Command Carrier Division 3-3 CVs, 2CVLs and battle group. Later he was Deputy Chief of Naval Personal, and finally Com. Air Force Pacific Fleet, retiring in 1952 as Admiral. The escort carriers in the unit were Sangamon, Suwannee, Santee, Chenango.

The escort was made up of the destroyers Metcalf, Drexler, Fullam, Massey, Guest and Helm and destroyer escorts Edmonds, Sederstrom, Fleming, Tisdale, Eisele, Bebas and John C. Butler. Lat.25-21.9 N--Long.127-24.5 E. The chaplain conducted Easter Services over the P.A. system while at battle stations. Two F6Fs crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Slight damage to planes.

April 2 Two F6Fs crashed on landing, no personal injuries but a lot of damage to 7 planes on forward part of flight deck. All barriers temporally out of commission.

From April 1st to 8th, she continued to fly routine patrols, launch support missions to aid forces on the beach and maintain a night combat air patrol until 2115.

April 5 Fueled USS Fleming, 19,250 gal. USS Eisele 6,090 gal. USS Tisdale 13,275 gal. F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Slight damage to plane. Replacement planes were obtained from CVE's whose job it was to ferry replacement planes out to the front. Escort ships would transfer the pilots to these ships.

April 6 the Japs started striking back in force on the beach on Okinawa. Sangamon pilots shot down 3 Jap planes.

April 7 received replacement planes from USS Attu CVE 102. The following ships received fuel, USS Butler 26,888 gal. and Massey 59,452 gal. F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Damage to plane and 20mm gun mount. The damaged planes were striped of everything that was usable and the rest was dumped overboard.

April 8th, the Sangamon and other ships of her unit moved to a new operating area 70 miles east of Sakishima Gunto. This group of islands included Ishigaki and Miyako, on which the enemy had airfields for launching attacks against shipping around Okinawa. It became the task of the Sangamon's group to keep these fields inoperative. When it became necessary for the Sangamon Unit to refuel or take on ammunition or food the British Group would relieve us.

The islands became what the air group called "our baby". Since other carriers of the unit took over the routine patrols, every flight from the Sangamon to Sakishima was either a strike or target combat air patrol. It constituted a rigorous job to keep the Japs grounded. The Sangamon planes had to keep hitting the target all day and most of the night.

Yet the Japs doggedly stuck to repairing their battered fields and installations. F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries, major damage to plane.

April 9 Plane crashed on USS Chenango which resulted in fire on forward flight deck followed by several explosions. Some of their planes and pilots operated from the Sangamon for a few days until the Suwannee could make repairs to flight deck.

April 10 ADM W. D. Sample and some staff came aboard the Sangamon. USS Suwannee, Sederstrom, Massey and Eisele left on assigned duty. Two F6F's returned with damage from enemy gun fire, no injuries to pilots.

April 11 Two F6F's crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Major damage to plane to one plane.

April 12 USS Suwannee and escorts rejoined formation. USS Santee, Fleming, Metcalf and Eisele left on assigned duty. Word was received of the death of President Roosevelt. His son LT.CDMR Frank Roosevelt was Captain of DE USS Culvert M. Moore part of Task Group 52.1.3. He was flown back to the States. All ships that could held a memorial service. Received 350,000 gal. of black fuel oil, 146,00 gal. aviation gasoline and 108,235 gal. of diesel fuel from USS Suamico. Jap plane was shot down by our planes. USS Tisdale recovered Jap body.

April 13 USS Chenango, Sederstrom, Guest and Tisdale left on assigned duty. Rear Adm W. D. Sample and staff returned to USS Suwannee. These temporary transfers usually involved about 15 personnel.

April 14 USS Santee, Eisele and Fleming joined formation. USS Sangamon, Drexler, Eisele and Fleming left formation on assigned duty.

April 15 Planes and pilots returned to USS Chenango. USS Sangamon and escorts entered Kerama Retto, Okinawa Gunto, Nansei Shoto. Sangamon in Berth K-99 to load ammunition and aviation parts. Left harbor with USS Drexler and Fleming to join Task Group 52.1.3. Each ship now had been to Kerama Retto to replenish fuel and supplies as needed. By doing this 3 carriers always remained on duty.

April 16 Rejoined Task Group 52.1.3. USS Sederstrom, Tisdale and Eisele left formation on assigned duty.

April 17 USS Butler joined formation. Spent two days covering the invasion of Ie Shima.

April 18 Rear ADM. W. D. Sample and staff came aboard Sangamon. This trip there were about 50 personnel came aboard. At this time he started a new schedule for the Sangamon. From this time on her planes would operate only at night. Dusk and dawn flights were launched daily. Flights were kept over enemy

air fields at Ishigaki and Miyako at all times.

At this time a British Carrier group composed of 5 large carriers, cruisers and destroyers took over this station. They had their first experience with Kamikazes and did not do to well.

During all this time, the closest approach the enemy made to the Sangamon formation was during mid morning of the 12th. Two enemy planes closing appeared on the radar screen. They came in dropping "window" in the usual deceptive manner of Jap planes bent on attack. C.I.C. vectored out the combat air patrol and it shot down one Myrt within sight of the ship. The other plane fled. A parachute was seen to drop from the flaming Myrt but when a destroyer reached it no body was found. Another destroyer recovered the pilot's body from the plane wreckage.

Our planes noted considerable activity around these fields despite the continual bombings and strafings. On the 18th and 21st Jap planes were sighted either in the air or on the ground. The Jap's were not writing off these fields as useless. Apparently they had under ground hangers, or well camouflaged revetments and brought their planes out only for dusk or dawn flights.

April 20 joined Task Unit 50.18.62 to receive fuel from USS Tappahannock. received 190,000 gal fuel oil and 64,700 gal. aviation gasoline. This was at Lat.24-44.8 N--Long. 128-42.9 E.

April 21 USS Suwannee, Massey and Edmonds left on assigned duty. F6F crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Light damage to plane. Took aboard replacement planes from USS Savo Island.

The Sangamon reached its high point of effectiveness during the Okinawa campaign on April 22nd. A dusk strike of eight fighters and four torpedo bombers were launched against the Sakishima group. They were joined later by four night fighters. As the strike approached Miyako, it spotted a large group of enemy planes. Possibly 25 to 30 warming up on Nabob Field. Most of them seemed to be twin engine planes. As the Sangamon planes began their attack, seven Oscars appeared overhead at about 14,000 feet.

Our planes pressed home their attack on the grounded aircraft first. Down they plunged. Bombs, rockets and 50-caliber machine gun fire tore into the enemy planes. Explosions and flames spread destruction among the aircraft and Jap personnel. Then the fighter planes turned towards the seven Oscars overhead. In the ensuing dogfight five Oscars were shot down. Later four more Oscars were sighted and shot

down with the aid of the newly arrived night fighters. Thus, by destroying what must have been a major portion of the enemy's Sakishima force, the Sangamon's accomplished in a single stroke, the purpose for which the task unit had been sent there. Came very close to hitting a mine. USS Jeffers exploded mine. TBM crashed on landing, no personal injuries. Minor damage to plane. After this master stroke, operations settled into a round of neutralizing strikes against the fields.

April 23 2 F6Fs crashed on landing, no injuries. Major damage to one. USS Suwannee, Edmonds and Drexler rejoined formation. USS Chenango, Guest and Butler left on assigned duty. F6F crashed thru barriers, 4 planes damaged beyond repair, 2 with minor damage, pilot OK.

April 24 Rear ADM. W. D. Sample and staff were transferred to USS Suwannee. USS Sangamon, Edmonds and Drexler left on assigned duty.

April 25 moored in Kerama Retto Berth K-95 to receive ammunition. Underway later on with escorts.

April 26 rejoined Task Group 52.1.3. Rear ADM W. D. Sample and staff came aboard. USS Jeffers received 59,652 gal. of fuel.

April 27 USS Santee and escorts rejoined formation.

April 28 Received 223,560 gal. fuel and 51,000 gal. aviation gasoline from USS Niobrara. Lat. 24-20.0 -- Long.130-04.0 E.

April 29 TBM crashed into sea away from ship. Pilot Lt. Fred Warren and E. C. Levesque ARM2c rescued. E. A. Desjarlais ARM2c reported missing. USS Suwannee, Guest and Edmonds left for Kerama Retto.

April 30 USS Lang joined formation. F6F piloted by Lt. Jg W. H. Baskett shot down near Ishigaki Jima, Sakishima Gunto. Pilot last seen on reef. TBM dropped life raft. USS Dennis left on assigned duty.! TBM returned with pilot and radio man injured by enemy shrapnel.

May 1 Lat.24-02.3 N.--Long.126-38.0 E. Assigned to Task Unit 52.1.3 Rear ADM. W. D. Sample on Sangamon OTC. Unit consists of USS Santee, Chenango, Suwannee, Drexler, Dennis, J. C. Butler, Massey, Edmonds, Russel, Guest, Lang and Fullam. USS Chenango, Massey and Drexler left on assigned duty.

May 3 USS Chenango, Mustin and Stack joined formation. Rear ADM. W. D. Sample and staff transferred to USS Suwannee. USS Guest received 45,000 gal. fuel, Edmonds 29,740 gal. fuel. USS Sangamon, Fullam and Dennis left formation for Kerama Retto for what was to be the largest most important day for the Sangamon.

May 4, 1945 Shortly after dawn, she slipped into Kerama Retto, Okinawa Gunto, Nansei Shoto in company with the destroyer Fullman and the destroyer escort Dennis And anchored in berth K-99. Many enemy aircraft in the area and over nearby Okinawa forced her to sound general quarters several times during the day. The gunnery department and C.I.C. remained in Condition 1 starting at 0801. The harbor was under a smoke screen a good part of the day. The Jap's would drop bombs right through the smoke screen. On several occasions they were lucky enough to hit some ships, including 2 ammunition ships which literally disintegrated. The Arrom Ward, a destroyer, came into port assisted by a tugboat. While on "picket duty" she had been hit by 4 suicide planes and from the water line up there was not much left that looked like a ship. These DD's and DE's were sent out either in-groups or singly to serve as floating radar stations in a radius around Okinawa. In that way they could sound an alarm before the Japs got to the island. They came in small and large groups. Some times over a hundred at a time. These ships took more of a beating than any other ships in the invasion.

Fate dealt the carrier a blow late in the day. Her departure was delayed by the late arrival of some aviation lubricating oil from the USS Suisum. Had she begun her return trip on time, May 4th probably would have been just another day.

At 1830 she finally got underway. Low cumulus clouds and fine light effects provided an ideal setting for an enemy attack. The DE Dennis and the DD Fullman were immediately aft of us.

DISASTER STRIKES

Hardly had the ship secured her special sea detail when C.I.C. picked up a large group of enemy planes on one radar set some 29 miles away to the southwest. At about 40 miles, the other radar confirmed that there were about 6 to 12 planes. Shortly thereafter, the Sangamon and her two escorts went to general quarters and swung into an anti-aircraft disposition. Land based fighters over Kerama Retto vectored out to intercept and they tally-ho'd the enemy some 20 miles away from the ships. According to subsequent reports, they shot down nine Japs in the ensuing battle. Some got away.

At 1902 a Tony was sighted visually 3 to 4 miles off the Sangamon's port bow, circling fast to the left. The carrier swung into a hard left turn, both an avoiding maneuver and an attempt to get into the wind to launch her own planes. Then

all three ships opened fire. The Spears, a patrol craft near by, also turned its guns on the plane. The Jap plane zoomed in a wide arc astern of the carrier then straightened out on a course paralleling the Sangamon's. His speed was terrific. Smoke began streaming from the Tony as the flak began to rip through it. The Jap continued to head towards the carrier, his wings almost vertical. But either the pilot was hit, or the planes speed was so great he could not quite nose into the ship. He crashed into the water about 25 feet of the starboard beam. So close did he come that the ships transmitting antennae which had been lowered to a horizontal position to facilitate launching, was carried away by the Jap plane.

Three men went over the side and were later rescued by USS Spears. As the sun set, the Sangamon completed its turn into the wind and launched two night fighters. The fighters were vectored out immediately on an enemy contact picked up by C.I.C. 12 miles to the southwest. The fighters sighted nothing, and the contact disappeared on the radar screen at six miles. Gun crews and lookouts continued to scan the darkening sky anxiously. Below decks, ordnance men rapidly completed stowing rockets below, closed the bomb elevator hatch against the renewed attack and hurried to their battle stations. All other personnel cleared the hanger, which was normal procedure.

At 1925, twenty two minutes after sunset, the Fullam reported an enemy radar contact bearing 264 degrees true, distance 12 miles. The Sangamon's radar picked it up almost immediately and the two night fighters were sent out to intercept.

As seen from the bridge, the two fighters disappeared into a dark cloud in the west. At about the same time a twin engine Jap plane was sighted breaking out of the same cloud cover about three miles away. He circled fast towards the rear of the formation. All ships opened fire, but the plane a Nick, eluded the cone of flak and slipped into a dense cloud about 3,000 feet astern. Guns were checked momentarily to reorganize for the expected attack. Everyone peered anxiously into the darkening sky. Then the attack started. The Nick plunged out of the cloud. His speed increased as he flashed downward directly at the Sangamon. Flak from the Sangamon and Fullam ripped into the Nick. He did not waver. He flew directly over the Fullman. Leveling out momentarily at one point he nosed over again into a shallow suicidal dive. It flamed up as flak continued to pour into it. When it was about 50 feet astern of the bridge, it dropped a 500 lb. bomb and crashed through the center of the flight deck.

A tremendous explosion ensued. A huge flame burst skyward, seeming to cover the entire ship. The two 26 ton elevators were lifted into the air by the blast and settled awry in their former seats. The rear one was almost perpendicular. The ship itself shuddered as though attempting to shake off a fatal blow. For a moment silence seemed to settle over the ship. Then there was chaos. Flames began leaping from the ship. Fire broke out among planes on the flight deck and hanger deck. Ruptured steam and water lines hissed and gushed. The roar and crackle of exploding ammunition added a terrific din to the fiery scene. The fire raged generally on the flight deck, the hanger deck and the fuel or main deck. A heavy black smoke began to roll skyward.

About two thirds of the carrier's planes were on the flight deck, the remainder below on the hanger deck. Fortunately the planes were not serviced for take off. Ordinarily a plane ready for take off, carries about 400 gallons of aviation gas as well as a good supply of ammunition. The planes only had about 25 gallons of gas. The only planes saved were the two that took off and one on the port side forward, which had a wing clipped off by the forward elevator.

The ship took its hit at 1933. Bridge communications remained intact for a few minutes, long enough to put the ship on a course out of the wind. Captain Malstrom ordered all hands off the bridge except the navigator, helmsman and the captains orderly. Captain Malstrom too remained on the bridge. As the fires spread, electrical and telephone lines burnt through.

At 1955 all communications from the bridge severed. Large quantities of 20 and 40 MM and 50 caliber ammo on flight deck and catwalks exploded. The crew was able to jettison 16 planes before they caught fire.

Finally the ship started a slow blind turn. It was apparent that the control between the engine room and bridge had been cut. Shortly thereafter, the Sangamon steadied on a safe course to the south at a slow speed. Control of the ship was assumed at the emergency steering station "Batt 11" which already was manned from the ship being at general quarters. This station was on the port side of the flight deck catwalk near the aft part of the ship.

At 2025 the bridge was abandoned entirely and a command post was established on the forward end of the flight deck. Fire now burned generally on the flight deck between the two elevators, through the hanger deck where quantities of 50 caliber, 20 and 40 millimeter ammunition continued to explode,

in the catwalks where ammunition was stored, on the gun sponsons and on parts of the main deck.

The Sangamon was literally divided into two separate units by the flames. The thick wall of fire through the middle of the carrier prevented those on the forward part of the ship from knowing what was happening in the after part and vice versa. The fire raged from the forward to the aft elevators. The bomb stowage, torpedo stowage and magazines were flooded. Ships as far away as 60 miles said they could see the fire. Some ships in the area stood by to give protection in case of another air attack. The USS Hudson was the first to assist.

As in any catastrophe involving hundreds of men, there were countless incidents that night that will never be recorded. There were heroic deeds, some known, some unsung. There was death and terrible pain. There was quick thinking and inertia. There even was some humor.

With the ship divided by flames, and communications severed, centralized control was impossible. Ramifications from the suicide hit were many. All sorts of problems developed in all sections of the ship and men in each section used the best means to solve them.

Fire fighting groups often were driven back by scalding water, exploding ammunition, fire and dense smoke. But they hung on. Many things went on simultaneously. Doctors and pharmacist mates treated the wounded and burned. Breaks in fire mains were isolated. Steam was secured on ruptured auxiliary lines. A three and one half-degree list was corrected. Submersible pumps and handy billies were rigged. Broken risers were located and secured. Back aft on the flight deck, men pushed unburned and partly burned planes over the side before they became enveloped in flames.

Several ships came along side at great risk to aid in fighting the fire. LCI 61 fought the hanger deck fire from the port side. LCI 31, attempting the same, suffered extensive damage to her superstructure when she collided with the Sangamon. The destroyer Hudson, attempting to get close on the starboard side also suffered damage. In addition, a burning plane from the Sangamon's flight deck tumbled onto the Hudson's depth charges. They got rid of the plane without any depth charges exploding.

By 2200 all of the major fires were under control. An hour or so later, scattered fires in such places as the photo laboratory, the C.I.C. transmitter room and the battery locker room were out. These took longer because of the materials in them. At 2330, the carrier with the Dennis and Fullam in screening stations got underway at 12 knots. The Sangamon

still was afloat and capable of making speed, but fire and explosions had shattered her usefulness for what was thought to be quite some time. She had only one plane left, and that was minus one wing. The radio on this plane was operational. Her flight deck was a charred mess of wood and steel. The hanger deck was even worse. Her steel sides were riddled and torn. She was just a skeleton carrier. The destroyer Fullam told our Captain that he counted at least 27 major explosions that night.

I would like to insert here a letter that was written to Henry Millan a Cox from the Sangamon Crew. He received this on 8-11-97.

Quote --Dear Henry I saw in the VFW magazine where the Sangamon was going to have a reunion. I never served on the ship, but we did escort you out of the harbor and was trying to get you back to your duty station, but it never happened.

We were on your port side. Our ship was the USS Spears a minesweeper. We were on a radar picket station when they called us to help escort you.

The first plane that came in we opened fire on him and we managed to get a couple of 40 mm in his belly. He started to dive on us and he got about halfway down before he changed his mind and went for the Sangamon, but he missed the target. Two fellows jumped off the ship I suppose thinking they were going to get hit. Your Captain asked us to pick them up, which we did. They were hanging on to the wheel of the airplane that crashed.

We started to get back in formation when the second plane came in and crashed in your flight deck. Everything was on fire, we went in as close as we could to try to help you fight the fire, but rocket and machine gun bullets started to explode, so we had to back off. You were pushing planes off the flight deck and the water was ablaze. All you could hear was screaming and hollering.

I send these pictures, which are not the best, but I guess its better than nothing. It should bring back some memories. I send a few extra along, hope you like them. Have a good reunion.

Sincerely
Keith Steward
1142 S Cooper Dr
Deltona, FL 32725

This was the ship that the USS Dennis transferred 67 survivors of the Sangamon to after picking them out of the water. The USS Spears later put them ashore for transfer to

the USS Gasper APA 170 to return to the states as the USS Sangamon had left the area to rejoin her group. The Sangamon went on to Ulithi not Kerama Retto as some historians say. The men never rejoined the Sangamon.

I received this letter from Hank in June 2000.

Of those losing their lives in one compartment, a group died just as they were when the explosion occurred. The men had been sitting around, some leaning with their chin held up by one hand, others with legs crossed, a few sitting on the deck, knees bent up. The shock of the explosion had killed every one, just as they had been previous to the plane crash. In another office, a yeoman had been sitting at a desk typing reports. Another sailor was standing, leaning against the bulkhead, about ten feet away. Two officers sat just a couple of feet to one side of the desk. Shrapnel hit the outer bulkhead, leaving two holes that penetrated a pipe, and then proceeded to strike the yeoman in the forehead, removing his scalp. The shrapnel continued, still with terrific force, striking the man standing, killing him instantly, then lodged itself into a cabinet. The yeoman was removed to a hospital ship and for a time appeared to be recovering. After the ship pulled into port on the East Coast, the skipper learned of his death.

Shortly after dawn the next morning 0755 she rejoined her task unit. There riding gracefully in the formation was a new class CVE 105. The Block Island had joined the group the day before. It was a new and bigger type of escort carrier and like the Sangamon it was a converted tanker. That had to be a shock for them to see the Sangamon, as a lot of their crew was green.

Mustered crew on stations. 115 men missing, 17 known dead. Later found out there were 28 dead and approximately 110 wounded. 115 men went over the side and were picked up, 67 by the USS Dennis DE 405, 8 by the USS Fullam DD 474 and 3 by the USS Spears AM 322. The Dennis transferred the 67 to the Spears. The Spears later put them aboard the APA 170 USS Gasper for transfer to the states. Rear ADM. W. D. Sample and staff came aboard to look over damage and then left.

The Sangamon cruised with the group all day, taking time to bury her dead at 1800. The bodies were put into a canvas bag with a 5-inch shell between the legs to weight it down. They were placed on a stretcher covered by the American Flag, and while taps were played, they were tipped into the sea.

Dead buried, Lt. Jg. Ike H. Moore, Lt. I. V. Wiley, D. W. Avery AOM 1/c, C. R. Berry Flc(Momm), R. A. Henricson AOM1/c N. E. McGinnis PmM3/c, R. R. Miller S2/c, H. S. Mobley AMM1/c,

C. E. Nelms AMM1/c, E. B. Sherman MM2/c(T) and J. F. Stricker MM1/c. Six bodies that could not be identified were buried at the same time.

This is some of what was said at the service by the chaplain Lt. L. C. Sparks. "We are assembled to pay tribute and honor to those of our shipmates who have been lost. We felt the loss greatly, because they were so close to us and such a part of us. We are all dedicated to the same goal and the same ideal, to ensure for our country and for the world, peace. Our responsibility to our shipmates and to our God is to carry on and accomplish our duties with the highest efficiency that the things they have given their lives for might be a reality, and they will not have died in vain. We can do that through God. Our strength, our courage, and our power are from God and through Him we can accept this responsibility".

Felix McKay MMR 1/c a big sailor with a deep wonderful voice led in the singing of the Lord's Prayer. Any sailor who has taken part in a service as this, and has heard the playing of "Taps" as the body's slide into the water, will never forget it.

A NAVY CUSTOM by Edgar A. Guest

They've a custom in the Navy, which I think, is very nice.

There's no ice cream on destroyers, for those ships are short of ice.

So the men upon a carrier, when a plane has been downed at sea.

And the pilot and his comrades are reported to be, in the breeches buoy, which brings them. (What a gracious thing to do)

They put ice cream in containers for the skipper and his crew.

The destroyer boy's don't ask, with the rescue they're content.

But the lads upon the carrier have a touch of sentiment.

And although for days or longer they may have to do without,

They have a stock of sweet refreshment and they gladly dish it out.

In the breeches buoy returning, hence this bit of verse I pen,

They send "chocolate" and "vanilla" for the skipper and his men.

All of the above was taken from the Sangamon News put out the day after the burial.

At sunset, she left on the first of a long slow journey that was to bring her to the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia on June 12th 1945. USS Dennis accompanied her on the first leg of her trip home, first stop Ulithi Atoll.

As she headed out into the dusk of evening, a battered, blackened plane-less carrier, there were many aboard who glanced back at the sleek 105 class CVE that had replaced her. The words went unspoken but these thoughts evolved: The Sangamon was out of the wars forever. She had fought a good fight, a rugged fight, from Casablanca to Okinawa. Now she had been replaced by the Navy's newest most modern CVE. Her war career was ended. Her job was well done. The Queen of the CVE's, at long last headed homeward towards peaceful waters and a peaceful world.

May 6 Shifted con. to bridge, but retained steering at Batt 11, Aft. port side of flight deck.

May 9th anchored in Ulithi Harbor, Ulithi Atoll, Caroline Islands in berth 30 Northern Anchorage. Had the first of many inspections that were to follow. Received whole human blood for wounded. 15 men from USS Jason came aboard to make temporary repairs. [USS Jason not to be confused with the name given to the first USS Sangamon in 1898 as stated at the beginning of the story, but a Vulcan Class Repair Ship commissioned USS Jason (ARH-1) on 19 June 1944. In May 1945 was stationed at Ulithi. Is it ironic that this second Jason made the final repairs that made it possible for the first Jason, later Sangamon to get home?]

May 10 unloaded 100,000 gal. aviation gasoline and some ammunition. At this time we took on passengers to be dropped off at various stations.

May 11th under way from Ulithi with USS Rockingham APA-126. Conning and steering from bridge. A lot of cleaning up was done on the ship to make it livable. The props of the Jap plane and a few other pieces were found. One of his legs in a boot and his head in a leather helmet were found. There was no great formality in his burial. A general cleaning up of the ship took place on the trip back to the States. Most of the debris was pushed over the side.

May 21st moored at Berth F-9 Ford Island, Pearl Harbor greeted at the dock by the Navy Band playing Aloha. Air group 33 left the ship. A lot of aviation gasoline and aviation parts were removed from the ship. Comdr. D.C.

Goodman reported aboard for duty as Executive Officer. A lot of the passengers left the ship at this time. Personal belongings of personnel missing in action were transferred to naval air station. 101 missing or accounted for.

May 23 Cmdr. W. W. Carlson Left ship to facilitate ship repair in Norfolk. Underway from Pearl Harbor alone en route Panama Canal without escort. Had some gunnery practice on the way to Panama.

June 5th: Moored dock 16 Balboa Harbor, Canal Zone. Some of the gun mounts were removed to allow for passage through the Canal. To pass through the Canal you had to go through 3 locks on one side and 4 on the other side. In between there was a man made lake and some passes that had been blasted through the mountains.

June 6th passed through the Panama Canal. Moored Dock 18, Cristobal, Panama Canal Zone. A lot of personnel came aboard for transfer to the Naval Air Station, Norfolk. I do not remember on which side of the Canal we went on liberty. Where ever it was there were absolutely no morals here.

June 7 Underway from Panama. From Pearl Harbor to Norfolk there was a lot of shifting of steering stations on a daily basis. This was done to check repairs being made to steering system.

June 12th moored to pier 7 Naval Operating Base Norfolk, Va. On June 14 moved to Berth 7 Ammunition Anchorage, Hampton Roads, Va. To unload ammunition. On the 15th moved to Pier 6, Berth 38, Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va. The crew was removed from the ship and put in deluxe quarters on the Naval Base. We were put in barracks with standard size mattresses, which was a really big treat. The crew was sent to various schools to keep them occupied and to learn some new things. One place we were sent to was fire school. The officer in charge thought we could teach the class better than he because of what we had gone thru. Even after our experience the class was quite scary when we had to fight fire in a dummy ships hull. The food was fresh and very good after eating dried foods for so long. There was a swimming pool, baseball and tennis facilities.

Most all of the crew was given the opportunity to go home on leave. While in the Navy all mail going out was censored. When your letter was done an officer had to read it before he sealed it and initial it. We suspected the officers were not doing the same. It proved to be true when

we docked at Norfolk and a lot of their wives were waiting on the dock. How could they have known if they had not told them to meet them there. Some personnel of the ships crew were sent to different duties on other ships and stations. During the first weeks some new personnel came aboard as replacements. At this time repairs started on the ship.

In June 1945 we had a ships party at the Surf Beach Club at Virginia Beach using profits from the ships store. The crew had no access to girls so some one arranged to bus loads of WAVES from the base. In order not to have any extra curricula activities after the party was over they bused them back separately. The club was on the beach and it was a beautiful night. They had an inside and outside dance hall. Two orchestras alternated playing so there was music at all times. There was plenty to drink. It sure was a good way to take your mind off the war.

Chief Quarter Master, W.L. Lewis, for ten years an employee of the Navy Yard, told reporters that he would be in charge of the repair work on the flight and hanger deck. Before major repairs can be started, the entire structure has to be replaced. According to Mr. Lewis, if the material and labor will be available, the structure work would be completed in 30 days.

Mr. Lewis praised the work of those fighting the fire and commented, "The most amazing thing of all, is that the ship got back. If someone had not been on the job, the ship would have been destroyed. A most remarkable job of fire fighting must have been done."

He estimated that for the work he was in charge of, 250 men would be required. That figure would include, not only those working on the ship, but the shop workers who make parts and then send them to the ship to be used.

Plans for the ship were on file at the Navy Yard and some of the work was underway before the ship arrived. The carrier was in the yard less than two hours before workman were aboard, tools in hand, ripping out the charred, burnt and mangled debris.

Leonard Hicks, a Cradock man, quartermaster welder, estimated a total of 85 welders, including 30 for the ship work would be required to do the burning and welding necessary on the ship. Mr. Hicks is in charge of several repair jobs in the yard. L. V. Tindall of Williams Court would be in charge of the welding and burning on the Sangamon. Telling of the job of clearing away the debris, he

said that while burning, some of the shells that had been scattered throughout the ship at the explosions, corners and crevices. No one at the yard had been injured as a result of these explosions. After discovering the possibility of scattered shells under the hanger plates and various other places, a thorough search of the ship was made for others. In one instance gasoline was found in a pipe that had to be removed.

The major repair work to be done on the ship is the electrical equipment. All of this was damaged. Spokesmen for the yard were not available to discuss this. All lighting, communications, radio and gun circuits on the hanger and flight decks had to be replaced and improved on.

The entire sprinkling system was wiped out. This will be installed as well as many water lines, gas, oil and fuel lines and a fire main. Officers in charge of the repair at the yard were reluctant to set a date for the completion of the work, however they hoped the ship would be under way in three months.

Men from Virginia serving aboard the Sangamon were:
James Carter - Staunton; Leonard Merrett - Buena Vista;
Robert Hines - Fries; James Heck - Williamsburg; Irvin Lewis - Richmond; Carl McCuen - Manassas; William McKinney - Danville; Walter Outten - Townsend G. E. Morris - Buena Vista; Theodore Murphy - Charlottesville; John Webb - Roanoke; Ray Cornett - Comers Rock; G. L. Nagy - Pocahontas; John Murphy - Alexandria and Jesse Crumpler - Petersburg.

The yard crew started to repair the ship, but stopped around the time of VJ day. They decided the ship was no longer needed. For several months the crew was sent to various schools on the base. These included fire fighting, gunnery and some others. These were more or less to keep the crew occupied. At the fire school the officer thought we could teach him a few thing after what we had gone through.

August 6 CDR. W. J. Bettens relieved Captain Malstrom as commanding officer. Up until this time there was an almost daily turn over of personnel as if the ship was going back to sea at some time. Now this all stopped.

On VJ Day August 15 the mayor of Norfolk would not allow any one from the base into town. He was afraid the service men would tear up the town. So we broke into the PX and had our own party. There were WAVES in a camp on the other side of a fence, but they would not let any one cross over.

August 28 moved to Berth 1 A Norfolk Naval Yard. At this time I believe they decided to scrap the ship. At this time they transferred men off, but none on. Started to inventory everything aboard ship. This was a huge job.

Aug 31 J. Tarnowski S2/c Fell from flight deck to poop deck and received fractured skull. Sent by ambulance to U.S. Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia.

Sept 22 a large group of personnel were transferred off the ship. This was the start of a long list of men to leave. Most were sent to the Receiving Station at Norfolk, Virginia.

October 18, 1945 moved to berth 39 Norfolk Naval Yard her last move as USS SANGAMON.

On October 24th 1945, a decommissioning ceremony was held on the dock where the ship was moored. Some of the crew received medals at this time. Every one was reassigned to different ships or stations. Captain Malstrom had been transferred to the new carrier Tarawa. He took "Sangy", the ship's mascot with him. Later on, while this carrier was in San Diego, a ceremony was held in which "Sangy" was retired with full honors and with an escort of five sailors she was sent by station wagon to Denver to be with the former master she had aboard the Sangamon. He was the former S 1/c L. E. Black. She wore the purple-heart for wounds suffered in Okinawa and ribbons for the 11 major battles she took part in. There were only approximately 375 men left aboard when the ship was decommissioned.

Following are a few of the experiences some of the crew had after the suicide hit. Boatswain R. L. Judd led a repair party into the hanger deck by cutting through a jammed door with a welding torch. A pile of boxes containing large rocket heads, over which the flames were beginning to spread, comforted the party. So the party wet the boxes down and used them as a barricade. Tons of water was then poured into the conflagration. Chief Carpenter W. W. Anderson, a veteran of World War 1 and one of the oldest men aboard, supervised the manning of pumps and turning of valves. The hanger deck sprinkler system was turned on in the nick of time. The first water poured out boiling hot.

Aviation Machinist mate third class Theodore Mann was among the first to rig a hose on the flight deck and combat the flames. "Debris and shells were flying all around us" he recalls. "Burning stuff kept dropping on us from the super-structure. a 50-caliber slug caught me in the helmet and

knocked me out. When I came to, I still had the hose nozzle in my hand, and I returned to fighting the fires. Mann had to be ordered to leave his post three times after it was realized that the stream of water from his hose was no longer effective. Before he left, he propped his hose on a loose piece of wood so that the water would shoot as far as possible toward the fire. Lt. Comdr. F. Gilkeson also worked with Mann and Lt. McSoley against the flight deck fires.

Before that, flames on the catwalk, just aft of the bridge had trapped Lt. McSoley. He had to shove aside a section of the wing of the Jap bomber in order to get clear. Then after giving first aid to an unconscious man, he returned to the wing section and cut the wing sufficiently clear so that the catwalk could be used. Following that, he and S1/c Gene Knowles attempted to put out the fire in a signal bag. Lt. McSoley was finally ordered below for treatment, since he was burned in the initial blast.

One of the first to make his way from the after to the forward end of the ship was AVM 1/c J. D. Nicholson, who struggled through the flames and debris and under a sagging red-hot deck to get instructions on jettisoning unburned planes. On the way he recalls seeing MM1/c Felix McKay fighting one big fire single-handed.

Lt. Sorenson managed to rig up the after steering mechanism and slowly worked the ship into a course favorable for combating the fire. Lt. Jg Homer Trussell was working to pump water out of the lower deck compartments. He and Ensign Arthur Leighton helped to restore communications between Lt. Sorenson and the engine room so that the ship could be kept under control. Lt. G. T. Kramer, later relieved Ensign Leighton.

Among those prominent in fighting the flames on the flight deck was Lt. Jg. Hesler, who is credited with leading a hose up to the fire. Lt. R. Miller and Lt. J. W. Davison helped to fight fire on the hanger deck.

In the confusion and intense activity, a lot of men worked heroically to whip the fire. Among these were M 1/c J. B. Crumpler, Coxswain T. A. Anthews, Shipfitter 2/c C.T. Price, CM 1/c J. I. Birch and M 3/c J. P. Hickel. One of the busiest men on the ship was Cmdr. W. W. Carlson, the ship's first lieutenant. He had to contend with broken steam lines, punctured risers, low water pressure and the threat of explosives catching fire. He also had to correct the list to starboard and to rig portable pumps for drainage.

Working with Cdm. Carlson were QM 3/c R. G. Kemper and S 1/c K. D. Forsberg. Kemper went over the side at some time and was picked up by USS Spears. I do not know how these last two names got in this article in the Navy Yard paper, as both of these men went over the side when the first Jap plane came in. They were picked up by the USS Spears and never came back aboard. In about 2000 I got in contact with R. G. Kemper who was a retired Jr. High School principal. He could not believe this story, but I had a copy of the paper sent to him.

At the time the plane struck, Lt. Comdr. Eckhardt was on the bridge. After the explosion he and Lt. O. F. Tussey restored order on the after part of the bridge. Lt. Comdr. Eckhardt asked permission to leave the bridge, as his duties as flight officer were not needed. He and Lt. R. L. Van Meter attempted to work on the fire around the outside of the bridge. They succeeded in getting a fire in the outboard signal flag bag out. They then joined Lt. Comdr. G. C. Malmquist, Lt. F. M. "Whitey" Wistert, Lt. J. W. McDull, Lt. R. H. Miller and Water-tender 3/c W. K. Hoskins. At one time they were in the aviation engineer's shack working on the fire in the elevator pit through a small crack in the door. At the time, there was much exploding ammunition on the hanger deck, a bad fire burning just outside the door of the shack, and the shack itself was very hot. Lt. Jg. J. M. Stacy got some more men to help and they soon had worked out to the hanger deck and were pushing the fire back. Among those was Coxwain P. W. Thomas who without orders fought the hardest to get the fire out.

In order to increase the supply of water available to the Sangamon, U.S.S. LCS 13 came alongside and stayed close with no regard for her safety. Photographer's Mate 3/c took charge of the line handling and fought fires in the various openings under the flight deck with what his shipmates called "great valor". "Cases of individual heroism and bravery were many, and require no special mention other than to say, "Thank God for them" said Lt. Wistert. By the brave efforts of many, the big fires on the flight and hanger decks were extinguished at about midnight. Some of the water-drenched officers and men gathered in the wardroom to celebrate their victory by consuming 70 gallons of ice cream.

This was to be the LONGEST AND BLOODIEST BATTLE of the war. It lasted approximately three months. The U.S. Navy lost 34 ships and approximately 5,000 men. There were about

200 ships damaged, 70 severely.

Dreams may come and dreams may go, but in the future any time Lt. Jg. Fletcher Baldwin of 5 Wahtah Court, New Gosport, breaks out with his dreams all hands aboard the Sangamon will turn an attentive ear.

Seems that on May 4th, while the Sangamon was leaving Kerama Retto supply base, Baldwin, who is catapult and arresting officer, crawled off in a corner of the flight deck for a brief snooze. As the sandman whisked him off to sleep, he dropped magic sand, causing the officer to envision the ship, sailing from port with two escorts. With little warning, the dream continued, a plane came out of the clouds, aiming directly mid-ships on the flight deck. With that the dream ended.

Imagine the lieutenants surprise, as well as the other members of the ship who had heard about the dream, when only a few hours later a Jap Nick did come through a dark rain cloud, diving into the ship exactly midway between the two elevators.

The official ships log dated October 24, 1945 states that the ship was placed in the custody of Lt. Cmdr. W. C. Lauritzen USNR. a representative of the Norfolk Navy Yard whom tendered receipt letter file #CVE-26/A4-1(1-200) to be stripped and disposed as scrap. There are different versions as to what happened next. The one thing that seems common is that it was sold on February 11 1948 to HILLCONE STEAMSHIP CO. of San Francisco for \$356,000. Hillcone SS Co. Was a small line operating in the Pacific from at least the post World War period through the early 1960's. Their flag was red with a large white lozenge bearing a black "H".

Seems a Frank E. Wigelius Captain USN Ret. of Jacksonville, Florida Says some years back while on a court case he went for a walk and saw a ship at the local ship yards. It was an oiler with the name Sangamon on it flying the Panama Flag. He tried to get aboard but the Italian crew was on strike and the people in charge would not let him aboard. Said he took some pictures but I do not know where they are. Last known date it was heard of was 1960 when it was scraped in Osaka, Japan.

On 4-7-2004, I got in contact with Auke Visser from Leeuwarden, Holland by e-mail. He has a web site on the former Esso Tanker. I told him that I was trying to find out what happened to the Sangamon. He did some searching and found a book called "Tanker Directory of the World" -1959.

It said quote: Sangamon - 18,414 DWT - Panama - S.S. - Maritime Transportation Co. S.A. - 1939 - Federal S.B. & D.D. Co. Kearny, N.J. The address given was Maritime Transportation Co. S.A.; 311 California Street; San Francisco CA., USA. Also found in Lloyds Shipping Register Year 1954/55, same owner. Also noted ex. "Esso Trenton" (1).

HERE ARE SOME COMMENTS BY OTHER THAN THE SHIPS CREW

WILLIAM T. Y'BLOOD

The Sangamon, though was hit hard on May 4, 1945, She had just been replenished at Kerama Retto, a group of islands 15 miles west of Okinawa, and was just leaving the anchorage as the sun began to set. A Tony suddenly dove on her but missed by just 25 feet. Half and hour later, as darkness descended, a twin engine Nick plunged through her flight deck and exploded in a huge fire ball. Both of her elevators, each weighing 26 tons, were blown out of their wells and a raging inferno threatened to engulf her entire hanger deck. Herculean efforts by her crew knocked down the fire and saved the ship. No other escort carrier faced with a hanger deck fire of such magnitude had survived. Even some fast carriers, notably the Franklin, had been hard pressed themselves in their battles with such fires. The Sangamon had fought from North Africa to Okinawa, but now she would fight no more.

DENNIS O'Beirne ABOARD AM 324

The Minecraft's patrol duties in May were highlighted by two incidents. The first occurred on 4 May and the second on 9 May. In the first case, the ship was patrolling 5 miles to the south of Kerama Retto about sunset. Five miles to the north, five Japanese suicide planes headed for the Sangamon (CVE 26) Combat air patrol (CAP) F4U corsair fighters downed four, but the fifth crashed into the escort carrier at 1933. A burst of flame shot into the darkening skies, and soon the ship became a blazing inferno, ammunition and gasoline exploding at intervals and sending sheets of flame into the air to a height of what looked like hundreds of feet.

Screening ships and other vessels in the vicinity went to the Sangamon's assistance. After obtaining permission from her sector commander to do so, Vigilance (AM 324) departed her patrol area at 2035 and closed Sangamon to lend a hand.

Vigilance located three swimming sailors blown overboard from the CVE and directed a nearby LCV (P) to pick them up and transfer them to a high-speed transport. By midnight, Sangamon's fires were under control, and she was towed to an anchorage in Kerama Retto. (NOTE---- the Sangamon was not towed into any port. She rejoined her group under her own power the next day and left for Ulithi with the USS DENNIS).

L T. J G P O W E L L P I E R P O I N T C . O . O F L C S (1) (3)

On the first of May we went back to the picket-line, to Roger Peter Seven. This station had a spotty reputation. It had its share of action, but it was not the bogey highway that some of the others were. In the first few days it lived up to its reputation. We had alerts and even raids, but all around us the other stations were catching unadulterated hell. During evening twilight the ships of Roger Peter Seven retired from their daylight position to one closer to Kerama Retto. On the evening of 4 May, as we steamed into our night station, the USS SANGAMON, a CVE, with two destroyers, sortied from Kerama Retto. We were at general quarters at the time, there being bogeys in the area. Just at dusk two of the kamikaze boys rode their divine wind down on the carrier. One of them was knocked down early by five-inch fire from the DD's but the other, despite a fountain of automatic weapons fire, hit the Sangamon dead center, at the base of the island.

The ships of Roger Peter Seven immediately headed for the carrier at flank speed to render assistance. When we arrived she was ablaze from stem to stern, with ammunition, pyrotechnics and bombs exploding, and debris flying everywhere. As the 61 came up, a DD went along the starboard side of the Sangamon to put water on the hanger deck. {Note: this was the USS Hudson}. However, damage control parties on the flight deck were pushing planes overboard, and one of them landed on the fantail of the destroyer and she immediately moved clear. Another jettisoned plane narrowly missed us as we moved in to replace the DD and we too were forced to stand off a short way.

At this time our own damage control parties had the 61 in maximum condition of readiness to assist the CVE. All the fire lines were streaming, and we were ready to handle survivors. In this connection it should be noted that until the ships from Roger Peter Seven arrived on the scene men were abandoning the Sangamon. However, when help arrived they gave us a cheer and we saw no one else go over the side.

After our first attempt to get alongside we went under the Sangamon's stern and found that the damage control parties there had no contact with the bridge. Accordingly we went up the side of the carrier to the spot in which the Captain of the Sangamon had set up his command, the bridge being gutted by fire. There, we requested to try to get water on the fire under the bridge. Once again we came alongside, but the bridge was now on the leeward side and the smoke was extremely heavy, too heavy for us to see enough to direct our water effectively. By this time the men of the Sangamon had gotten the terrific fires on the flight and hanger decks partially under control, the explosions were much less frequent, and we stood off about fifty yards from the carrier to render any assistance she might ask for. The last job we did for her was to read and report her draft. The men of the Sangamon did a truly magnificent job. When we first came up to her no one would have bet a nickel on her chances of survival, but her crew stuck to her and with stubbornness and guts, saved their ship. It was a grand and inspiring performance.

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ADDENDUM

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I found out writing the history is like putting a giant jigsaw puzzle together. There is always that elusive last piece that turns up.

THIS INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED AFTER THE BOOK WAS PRINTED.
HAS A VERY GOOD EXPLANATION OF THE LAST DAYS OF THE SANGAMON.

Additionally to the info as disclosed earlier it is also recorded in Paul H. Silverstone's book "US Warships of WW II" (Ian Allan, London, edition 1977) page 55 that the vessel was scrapped in 1960.

Just a few highlights from LLOYD'S SHIPPING INDEX about where the Sangamon travelled after WWII as a tanker.

| Name | Comp. | Blt. | GRT | From | For | Latest report |
|---------------------------|-------------|------|-------|-----------------------|---------------|--|
| (Lloyd's, July 27, 1948) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Hillcone | 39 | 11323 | Hampton Rds Feb 15 | Mobile | Ar Mar 1 |
| (Lloyd's, Jan. 17, 1950) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Hillcone | 39 | 11323 | Campana Dec 27 | Bandar Mashur | Sd Cape Town Jan 8 |
| (Lloyd's, March 27, 1951) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | WCC | 39 | 11780 | Amsterdam Mar 13 | Tyne | Ar Mar 16 |
| (Lloyd's, July 1, 1952) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | WCC | 39 | 11780 | Mena al Ahmadi June 7 | La Plata | In 34.59S 11.39E June 23 |
| (Lloyd's, May 24, 1955) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Maritime T. | 39 | 11780 | | New York | Ar May 21 |
| (Lloyd's, Aug. 28, 1956) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Maritime T. | 39 | 11780 | Aruba Aug. 19 | Amuay Bay | |
| (Lloyd's, Jan. 23, 1958) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Maritime T. | 39 | 11780 | Aruba Jan 16 | Curaçao | |
| (Lloyd's, Apr. 5, 1960) | | | | | | |
| Sangamon | Sangamon | 39 | 11780 | Galveston Mar 9 | Bombay | Ar Suez Apr 2 - in tow - been aground |

It appears that this last incident was decisive for finally selling the vessel to the breakers in the summer of 1960. Otherwise the ship might have lasted on for a couple or more years. But anyway, the Sangamon appeared to have been quite again trading peacefully between 1947 and 1960.

(Thanks to Gerhard Mueller-Debus for this information).