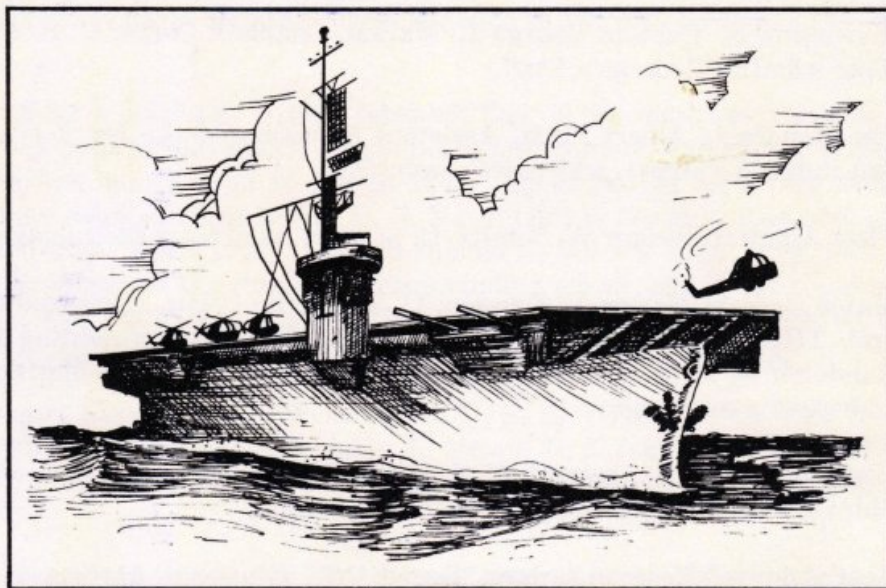


Contributed by Robert M. Cieri

# U. S. S. THETIS BAY (CVHA-1)



## *Commissioning Ceremony*



**SAN FRANCISCO NAVAL SHIPYARD**  
**San Francisco, California**  
**20 July 1956**

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

1520: Helicopter fly-over.

1530: Rear Admiral John R. Redman, U. S. Navy, Commander, Western Sea Frontier and Commandant, TWELFTH Naval District, opens ceremony.

Invocation by Captain George L. Markle, Chaplain Corps, U. S. Navy, of Rear Admiral Redman's Staff.

The Honorable Albert Pratt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Personnel and Reserve Forces), addresses assemblage.

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, U. S. Navy, addresses assemblage.

Major General Marion L. Dawson, U. S. Marine Corps, Commanding General, THIRD Marine Aircraft Wing, AIRFMFPAC, representing General Randolph M. Pate, U. S. Marine Corps, Commandant of the Marine Corps, addresses assemblage.

Captain Charles E. Trescott, U. S. Navy, Commander, San Francisco Naval Shipyard, states ship ready for commissioning.

1600: Rear Admiral Redman orders "Sound Off" (National Anthem is played, National Ensign and Union Jack hoisted, Commission Pennant broken); turns ship over to Commanding Officer, Captain Thomas W. South II, U. S. Navy.

Captain South reads his orders, reports assumption of command, orders "Set the Watch".

Personal flag of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy is broken.

Captain South addresses the crew, introduces Executive Officer and Heads of Departments of U. S. S. THETIS BAY.

1612: Vice Admiral Alfred M. Pride, U. S. Navy, Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet, delivers Commissioning Address.

Presentations to ship by San Francisco Council, Navy League of the United States, and San Francisco Naval Shipyard Employees' Association.

Benediction by Lieutenant Stacy L. Roberts, Jr., Chaplain Corps, U. S. Navy, of U. S. S. THETIS BAY.

1627: Pipe down from Commissioning Ceremony.

U. S. S. THETIS BAY  
1944—1956

First placed in commission as CVE-90, in the spring of 1944, U. S. S. THETIS BAY served in World War II as an aircraft transport, providing logistic support for the fast carriers of Task Forces 38 and 58. She crossed the Pacific Ocean 20 times for a total of 139,551 miles, carrying vital replacements of aircraft, men, and equipment to naval striking forces engaged in the final battles of the war with Japan.

Named for a small bay within Tebenkof Bay on the southwest coast of Alaska, the ship was built by the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company at Vancouver, Washington, where she was launched on 16 March 1944. Sponsored by Mrs. Rico Botta, wife of now Rear Admiral Rico Botta, U. S. Navy (Ret.), the ship was first placed in commission on 21 April 1944. Captain Donald E. Wilcox, U. S. Navy, now retired, assumed command as the ship's first commanding officer, and in the commissioning ceremonies was assisted in "cake-cutting" by Miss Claudette Colbert, wife of the then ship's Medical Officer, Lieutenant Commander Joel Pressman.


The next Commanding Officer of the U. S. S. THETIS BAY was then Commander, now Rear Admiral, Benjamin E. Moore, U. S. Navy, who relieved Captain Wilcox on 21 January 1945, while the ship was at Pearl Harbor for a brief (one day!) stay.

It is regretted it was not possible for Adm. and Mrs. Botta or Captain Wilcox to be with us today. Warm good wishes to the ship were received from them. Fortunately, Rear Admiral Moore, currently the Director, Aviation Plans Division in the office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Pentagon, was able to be present, and is welcomed heartily by all hands.

The THETIS BAY earned one Battle Star on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the THIRD Fleet operations against Japan, 10-18 July, 25 July—15 August 1945; the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia, for the periods 2-8 September, 23-27 November 1945 and 5-12 January 1946; the American Theater Medal; and World War II Victory Medal.

In January of 1947 the ship was placed out of commission in reserve, and attached to the Tacoma, Washington, Group of the Pacific Reserve Fleet, where she remained until her delivery in May 1955 to the San Francisco Naval Shipyard for conversion into the Navy's first helicopter assault carrier.

Commissioning of the THETIS BAY as CVHA-1 marks the real beginning of a joint effort by the U. S. Navy and the U. S. Marine Corps to develop and refine doctrine, tactics, and procedures under a new concept . . . "vertical envelopment." This new concept of assault consist of multiple vertical envelopment from the air joined with surface attacks from the sea. The versatility of three-dimensional assault is thus combined with the mobility of the U. S. Fleet.



THOMAS W. SOUTH II  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Commanding Officer

HAROLD A. WELLS  
Commander, U. S. Navy  
Executive Officer

FRANCIS H. McCLANAN  
Commander, U. S. Navy  
Operations Officer

WILLIAM D. DOWER  
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy  
Navigator

OREN K. LARSEN  
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy  
Air Officer

LEIGHTON J. BRUNSON  
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy  
Engineering Officer

ALEXANDER M. TODD  
Lieutenant (jg), U. S. Navy  
Gunnery Officer

ROBERT W. H. DARROW  
Lieutenant Commander, SC, U. S. Navy  
Supply Officer

DAVID GILLETTE  
Lieutenant, MC, U. S. Navy  
Medical Officer

GEORGE K. WOODWORTH  
Lieutenant, DC, U. S. Navy  
Dental Officer