

# EPILOGUE

I would be remiss if I closed this book without mentioning the four aircraft carrier Museum Ships, and the heritage that they are to all of us. They are the U.S.S. Intrepid (CV-11) in NYC, the U.S.S. Yorktown (CV-10) in Charleston, SC, the U.S.S. Lexington (CV-16) in Corpus Christi, TX, and the U.S.S. Hornet (CV-12) in the San Francisco area. All of these ships served with great distinction in the Pacific Theatre during WWII. They were an important and integral part of the victory there. It should be said that these ships were modified from their WWII configuration sometime after that war such that their island structure is now diminished by having their armaments removed. Specifically, all the 5-inch and 40-mm guns were removed after WWII, and the island structure had a major reconfiguration. Also, the flight deck was modified by having the straight-ahead configuration changed to a canted-deck configuration. This allowed landings without the problem of possible crashes with aircraft up ahead. Many of the decks below the hanger deck are not open to the public, yet. This is less so with the Lexington because she was deactivated much later than the other three ships. Because of this, she is also in better condition than the others. However, the others are being diligently upgraded, and the Yorktown is well along in that effort. But it must be reiterated, these are not the original ships from the WWII era. They've been modified. I strongly recommend visits to these ships as honored and valuable parts of our history. They are also extremely interesting in their own right, as well as a grand tribute to the American ingenuity and industrial capability. They all were (are) marvelous ships. They deserve your homage, if nothing else, as a magnificent chapter in the U.S. naval history.

Being most familiar with the U.S.S. Intrepid, it is chosen for some observations about what one will see when visiting it. The other ships are all well worth the visit too. For instance, the U.S.S. Yorktown has multiple tours such as the following: "Living and Working Spaces", "Engine Room", "Flight Deck and Bridge", "World War II Carrier Rooms", "Memorial Hanger Bay", "Captain and Flag Officer In-Port

Quarters", and "Shipyard Exhibit". They also have a destroyer, a submarine, and a coast guard cutter there. An excellent shop is nearby, and the entire area is pleasantly attractive and open, with plenty of parking. Back to the Intrepid: its flight deck carries many military aircraft of the 1970-1990 era. Down on the hanger deck there are a couple of well refurbished WWII aircraft. Since displays are changed periodically, no attempt will be made to be too specific. To best describe the Intrepid suite, their brochure will be quoted verbatim:

## **United States Navy Hall**

Upon entering the 900 foot long museum, visitors will begin their first journey as they "go to sea" aboard a modern super carrier. Throughout the bright and colorful hall onlookers will be introduced to the key components of the contemporary Navy's battle group and view its essential worldwide roles. Featured will be the people, ships, and aircraft which constitute today's thoroughly professional team. Highlighting the hall is a wide screen, intensified sound movie which will place the viewers in the midst of a busy, flight deck as super sophisticated jets take off and land simultaneously. Staged throughout the hall will be examples of modern carrier aircraft and related equipment, supplemented by mini-theaters, displays, and optic boards. Visitors will then leave the present day world behind as they step back in time and enter INTREPID'S hanger during October and November of 1944.

## **Intrepid Hall**

Here the mood is completely different. The lights are dim, the colors are the blue-grays of the wartime Pacific. The time-travelers now find themselves aboard the INTREPID on the eve of the epic Battle for Leyte Gulf. An emotional and

highly dramatic audio/visual presentation recreates INTREPID'S finest hours. We fly with her pilots, we steam thousands of miles and operate continuously. We support the liberation of the Philippines and we prevent the Japanese Navy from sinking troop-laden transports off the invasion beaches. We also witness INTREPID'S life and death struggle during a massive kamikaze attack. Ordinary men exhibit extraordinary qualities as both sides battle to near exhaustion. Battle-fatigued visitors then pass through another time zone and enter a bygone era. They will now enjoy the lighthearted spirit and bravado of aviation's pioneers.

### **Pioneers Hall**

Daring young men, in flimsy flying machines, will take the visitors from the turn of the century through the pioneering 30's. The entire hall is a festival to life, bright and lively with the sights and sounds of the times. The onlooker cannot help but become enchanted as new horizons are conquered and dramatic breakthroughs enable man to climb into the hitherto forbidden heavens. Aeroplanes, built of wood and fabric, graphically demonstrate the state of the art of that period. Old films and new clips, combined with antique artifacts, enhance the charm and romance of this hall. Features will include ship-borne aviation, Navy racers, the early aircraft carriers, lighter-than-air dirigibles, the first trans-Atlantic flights and the birth of commercial aviation. Next, the visitors will return to the present and enter a vast hall which is a museum unto itself.

### **Technologies Hall**

The largest and most diverse hall is a panorama of modern man's ability to defy gravity and his natural environment. Exhibits range from submarines deep in the ocean, to the modern surface Navy, to proposed colonies out in space. Having just left a hall with petite and frail aeromachines, visitors are now overwhelmed by presentations depicting jumbo jets, mam-

moth rockets, gigantic submersibles, complex weapons systems and 21st century designs. Several galleries, staged throughout the Technologies Hall, will be periodically revised to reflect the contemporary and futuristic concepts. Typical of the galleries are: Vertical Flight, Civil Aviation, Space Travel, Man on the Moon, and Guided Missiles. The highlights of space technology will be dramatically present during the "Men and Ships in Space" movie--on the very spot where Mercury and Gemini space capsules were recovered and brought aboard the Intrepid. Visitors will then ascend to the huge flight deck, where diverse types of aircraft will be staged along the length of the flight deck, some illustrating the techniques of aircraft launch and recovery. There they will have the opportunity of climbing to the control bridges and command centers, high in the island structure experiencing some of the sensations felt in the nerve-center of the ship.

### **The Future**

As funds become available, additional spaces will be opened below decks which divide into two distinct categories. First, a series of adjacent compartments will be restored to "as they appeared" while the Intrepid was an operational ship. This will include typical living quarters, workshops, mess halls, and engineering spaces complete with massive boilers and turbines. Second, numerous existing spaces will be converted into display halls which will present a comprehensive sea, air, and space story. (The hanger deck halls provide only some of the highlights). Both the military and civilian sectors will be represented. This will include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Civil Aviation. Representative topics will vary from amphibious operations to test flying and test pilots to New York's sea and airport complexes to the story of Polaris to the military sea transportation service to super tankers, and more. (Go to Intrepid Square Pier 86, West 46th St. and 12th Avenue.)



It's hoped that by now the reader is infused with an abiding interest in our Naval history and heritage. This book has tried to engender such a feeling. There are many, many books and videos that are available to augment this interest. Below are a few such books and videos:

"No Easy Days: The Incredible Drama of Naval Aviation" by William Butler (both a book and a video (Jaguar Home Video, Avion Park) that depicts starkly and vividly the actions referred to in the chapter "Mishaps")

"The Aircraft Carrier Intrepid" by John Roberts, Naval Institute Press, 1992 (Excellent)

"Essex-class Carriers" by Alan Raven, Naval Institute Press, 1988 (This is an excellent, though smallish, compendium)

"The Fighting Lady" available from the Yorktown Naval Museum, (This is an excellent 1-hour documentary that depicts what it was like on board a carrier, including gun-camera shots)

"The Story of the 'Fighting I' U.S.S. Intrepid" (Intrepid Naval Museum) (This is a 1-hour documentary of the Intrepid's history)

"Task Force", Warner Bros., 1949, with Gary Cooper (This film, on video, was shot on board the U.S.S. Antietam. It's a history of the aircraft carrier and has a good story-line)

"Wing and a Prayer", 20th Century Fox, 1944, with Don Ameche and Dana Andrews (An Oscar winner with good photography on board an actual Navy carrier)

"Midway", Universal, 1976 (depicts the Battle of Midway, in color, and is a fairly accurate rendition. Try to get the 2 1/2 hour version)

"Flat Top", Monogram, 1952 (not a bad movie of WWII)

"Men of the Fighting Lady" (flashbacks to WWII)