



USS PALAU CVE-122

The United States Ship PALAU was named for Palau Island, of the West Caroline Group, in western Pacific. It was the scene of hostile action between American and Japanese forces during the invasion on September, 1944.

The Palau was constructed by the Todd-Pacific Shipyards, Inc., at Tacoma, Washington. The keel for the vessel was laid on 19 February 1945, and she was launched on 6 August 1945. Captain Willis Cleaves, USN was her first commanding officer with Commander Thomas Christopher as executive officer.

Some hull characteristics of the PALAU are as follows;

Length, overall	557' 1"
Flight deck length	506'
Beam of flight deck	80'
Mean draft	28' 10"

Once the USS PALAU underwent a short shake down in the Puget Sound area, she proceeded to San Diego to pick up Marine Carrier Air Group-12 commanded by Major C. P. Weiland USMC. Carrier qualification commenced immediately and on 2 February 1946, Major Weiland made the very first landing ever aboard her. After the war demobilization was in effect, and as a result the Marine Carrier Air Group was decommissioned. Major Weiland reverted back as Commanding Officer of VMF-461, the Corsair fighter squadron which now remained aboard.

On 16 March 1946, the USS PALAU received orders to proceed to a new home port at Norfolk, Virginia, arriving there 1 April. She departed Norfolk and arrived at Boston 4 April for major repairs. She left Boston on 11 May for Norfolk. Here began a long period of inactivity for the ship while the Marine squadron continued training at MCAS Cherry Point, NC. In the meantime, Captain Cleaves was placed on the retired list in July and was relieved by the executive officer, Commander Christopher, pending the reporting aboard of Captain Cameron Briggs.

After months of dockside upkeep, the PALAU and VMF-461 began to operate off the Virginia Capes, and then, in May, 1947, departed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for three weeks of intensive training exercises. She arrived back in Norfolk on 16 June and began preparations for the forthcoming cruise to Africa.

On 5 July 1947 the PALAU departed Bayonne, New Jersey for Recife, Brazil and Monrovia, Liberia. At New York she had taken aboard certain ambassadors-at-large and State department people. Among them was BriGen Benjamin O. Davis, U.S. Army, Retired. Benjamin Davis was the very first black general to be commissioned in the U.S. Army. It happened at San Juan Hill, where Teddy Roosevelt made his famous charge during the Spanish American War in 1898. Another notable aboard was Col Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., son of the general. Colonel Davis was the first black graduate of West Point. He distinguished himself during World War II, when he commanded the 332d Air Group, which fought in North Africa and later in Italy as part of the XII and XV Fighter commands. He

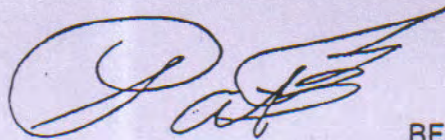
later became the first African-American general in the U..S. Air Force.

Captain Cameron Briggs was relieved at Recife, Brazil by Captain Ford Taylor on 19 July. Then came the Atlantic crossing with landfall off Monrovia, Liberia on 25 July.

The American contribution to the Centennial celebration was the presence of the USS PALAU and a flight demonstration by the squadron. President William Tubman of Liberia came aboard along with his staff, and were duly impressed by the live ordnance demonstration and the air show, which was a spectacle for the whole country to see. Presidents, kings, native paramount chiefs, and representatives from every country in the world would be present for this grand occasion. At the grand opening of the ten days of ceremonies, President Tubman would knight Captain Ford Taylor with the Star of Africa, and Major Pat Weiland with the Liberian Order of Distinguished Service.

The Liberian adventure ended shortly and then it was a two day voyage to Dakar, Africa. Arrival there was on 3 August in order to enjoy the sights and sounds of that exotic city. The departure from Dakar finally brought the ship back to Norfolk on 16 August 1947.

For the next twelve months (to August 1948), Ship's operations activity had dwindled to occasional carrier qualification off the Virginia Capes. At this juncture, the termination of the history of the USS PALAU coincides with the termination of the tour of duty of Major C. P. (Pat) Weiland, USMC, commanding officer of VMF-461, who wrote this story.



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U.S.S. PALAU CVE - 133

U. S. S.
OCT
24
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THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

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