

# Wasp OF MANY STINGS

Instrumental in turning the tide in the Pacific during the early days of WWII, the first USS Wasp will live on as an immortal name in American Naval history / **BY ROBERT J. CRESSMAN**



protection for CV-7, instead relying upon the subdivision of the ship into relatively small compartments and the provision of a liquid layer inboard of the shell.

Once the Navy had settled on the design, the new ship had to have a name. After the assignment of *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* to CV-5 and CV-6, respectively, Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson submitted a list to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on 22 January 1936, giving four alternatives for CV-7. All commemorated famous warships in the history of the fledgling US Navy: *Wasp*, *Hornet*, *Peacock*, and *Essex*. Swanson suggested *Wasp* for CV-7; Roosevelt concurred and expressed approval with that choice, calling it a "splendid historic" name.

Walt Disney created this insignia for VF-7 aboard the *Wasp*.

Under the restrictions imposed by Chapter 1, Article VII of the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, the United States Navy was allowed 135,000-tons for aircraft carriers. *Lexington* (CV-2) and *Saratoga* (CV-3) displaced 66,000-tons between them; the future *Yorktown* (CV-5) and *Enterprise* (CV-6) took up 40,500-tons, while *Ranger* (CV-4) took up 14,500-tons. That left the Navy with 14,150-tons to expend on CV-7. The Navy specified that the displacement, cruising radius, aviation facilities, and general characteristics of CV-7 be the same as in *Ranger*; the flight deck and hangar arrangement, as well as damage control facilities, were to be modified from the *Ranger* design; the superstructure was to be similar to that drawn for CV-5 and CV-6, while the armament — eight 5-in/38-cal dual purpose guns in open pedestal mounts and four quadruple-mounted 1.1-in/75-cal anti-aircraft guns — was to be identical to that of CV-5 and CV-6.

The Navy's ship designers hammered out a design for CV-7 that resulted in a ship that displaced a total of 14,700-tons. She was 741-ft 4-in long, 80-ft 8-in in beam, and drew 19-ft 11-in (mean). She could turn up 29.5-kts, and had space for some 80 aircraft and a complement of 2367 officers and men.

Because of her size, designers found it impossible to provide a fully-developed system of underwater



Within three-months of Roosevelt's approving the new carrier's name on 25 January 1936, the ship's keel was laid on 1 April 1936 at Quincy, Massachusetts, by the Bethlehem Steel Company's Fore River plant. A little over three-years later, on 4 April 1939, *Wasp* was launched, with Mrs. Charles Edison, the wife of the

Assistant Secretary of the Navy, smashing the traditional bottle of champagne (Great Western) on the bow of the warship. Tragedy marred the christening and launching ceremony, however, when two Naval Reserve planes from NAS Squantum collided over Quincy. Both planes tumbled from the sky taking their two-man crews to their deaths; their fly-over had been part of the ceremonies. *Wasp* fitted out into 1940. War had broken out in Europe late the previous summer with the German invasion of Poland; but then a *Sitzkrieg* or "Phony War" period ensued. Events in Europe showed that the war was still in that phase at the time of *Wasp's* commissioning. On 25 April 1940, at 1121, the Navy's newest carrier went into commission alongside the

