

GHOSTS OF THE YORKTOWN

THIS APRIL, A SERIES OF DIVES TO THE FINAL RESTING SPOT OF THE USS YORKTOWN REVEALED REMARKABLE DETAILS ON THE HERO OF THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

BY ADAM STANTON
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY NOAA



"I've got 'em!" yelled L/Commander John S. Thach into the microphone from the cockpit of his Grumman Wildcat. The daring naval aviator had spotted the incoming force of 18 Val dive-bombers — the type of aircraft that had caused such havoc and destruction at Pearl Harbor. Protected by six Mitsubishi Zeros, the force of dive-bombers was being led by Lt. Michio Kobayashi and was heading directly for one of the most important surviving Pacific assets of the US Navy — the veteran aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* (CV-5). The date was 4 June 1942 and history was being made. First, let us take a look at the ship that bore the name of one of America's most famous battles.

BIRTH OF A CARRIER

At the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in Virginia, 21 May 1934 was a very important date. America was in the middle of the Great Depression and hundreds of thousands of its citizens were out of work, out of food, and out of hope. However, at the shipyard, workers were busy since the latest US Navy weapon of war was being laid down — the USS *Yorktown* (CV-5). Even though military budgets had been stretched to the breaking point, the Roosevelt administration knew that the new carrier had to be built to counter the increasing threat of Japanese imperialism in the vast Pacific.

CV-5 was the first in the *Yorktown*-class and she was an imposing vessel



A mosaic showing the mapped portion of the wreck of CV-5.

with an overall length of 824 feet 9 inches and a length at waterline of 770 feet. She had an overall beam of 109 feet 6 inches and 83 feet 3 inches at waterline with a draft of 26 feet. Six Babcock & Wilcox boilers were capable of pumping out 120,000-shp via four geared steam turbines and four screws. She had a designed top speed of 32.5 knots with a range (at 15 knots) of 14,400 miles. Her initial design complement would be 2217 officers and men.

Her initial armament (and this would change after Pearl Harbor) consisted of eight 5-inch guns, four quad 1.1-inch guns and 24 .50-caliber machine guns. She would have the ability to carry 90 aircraft that could be launched via two flight deck catapults and one hangar deck catapult.

Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company was contracted to build CV-5 and she was laid down on 21 May 1934. When launched on 4



Insignia of USS *Yorktown*.

April 1936, the carrier was sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt. *Yorktown* was commissioned on 30 September 1937 at Naval Station Norfolk and after fitting out she headed to Hampton Roads for training exercises.

At the start of the new year, the carrier set sail for Puerto Rico and carried out shakedown through the Caribbean. She arrived back at Norfolk on 6 March 1938 for repairs,

Remotely operated vehicle *Deep Discoverer* images the wreck of USS *Yorktown* on 19 April.