

SARATOGA VI

Displacement : 56,000 tons
Length: 1,063 feet
Beam: 130 feet 4 inches; extreme width: 252 feet
Draft: 37 feet
Speed: 33 knots
Complement: 3,826 crew
Armament: 4 5-inch guns
Aircraft: 70 to 90
Class: *Forrestal*

The sixth Saratoga (CV-60) was laid down on 16 December 1952 by the New York Naval Shipyard, New York City, N.Y.; launched on 8 October 1955; sponsored by Mrs. Charles S. Thomas; and commissioned on 14 April 1956, Capt. R. J. Stroh in command.

For the next several months, Saratoga conducted various engineering, flight, steering, structural, and gunnery tests. On 18 August, she sailed for Guantanamo and her shakedown cruise. On 19 December, she reentered the New York Naval Shipyard and remained there until 28 February 1957. Upon completion of yard work, she got underway on a refresher training cruise to the Caribbean before entering her home port, Mayport, Fla.

On 6 June, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and members of his cabinet boarded Saratoga to observe operations on board the giant carrier. For two days, she and eighteen other ships demonstrated air operations, antisubmarine warfare, guided missile operations, and the Navy's latest bombing and strafing techniques. Highlighting the President's visit was the nonstop flight of two F8U "crusaders," spanning the nation in three hours and twenty-eight minutes, from the Bon Homme Richard (CVB-31) on the west coast to the flight deck of the Saratoga in the Atlantic.

The carrier departed Mayport on 3 September 1957 for her maiden transatlantic voyage. Saratoga sailed into the Norwegian Sea and participated in operation "Strikeback," joint naval maneuvers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries. She returned briefly to Mayport before entering the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for repairs.

On 1 February 1958, Saratoga departed Mayport for the Mediterranean and her first deployment with the Sixth Fleet. From this date through 31 December 1967, she was to spend a part of each year in the Mediterranean on a total of eight cruises. The remainder of the time, she either operated off the coast of Florida or was in port undergoing restricted availability.

While deployed with the Sixth Fleet on 23 January 1961, a serious fire broke out in Saratoga's number two machinery space which took seven lives. The fire, believed caused by a ruptured fuel oil line, was brought under control by the crew, and the ship proceeded to Athens where a survey of the damage could be made.

On 2 January 1968, Saratoga sailed for Philadelphia and an overhaul and modernization program which was to last 11 months. On 31 January 1969, she departed Philadelphia for Guantanamo, via Hampton Roads and Mayport, and extensive refresher training of the crew and air detachments.

On 17 May, Armed Forces Day, she was the host ship for President Richard M. Nixon during the firepower demonstration conducted by Carrier Air Wing Three in the Virginia Capes area. On 9 July, she departed Mayport for her ninth Mediterranean deployment. Underway, a Soviet surface

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force and a "November" class submarine passed in close proximity, en route to Cuba. Off the Azores on 17 July, Saratoga was shadowed by Kipelovo-based Soviet aircraft. They were intercepted, photographed, and escorted while in the vicinity of the carrier. She operated with Task Group 60.2 of the Sixth Fleet in the eastern Mediterranean during September in a "show of force" in response to the large build-up of Soviet surface units there, the hijacking of a Trans World Airlines plane to Syria, and the political coup in Libya. Numerous surveillance and reconnaissance flights were conducted by Carrier Wing Three aircraft against Soviet surface units, including the carrier Moskva, operating southeast of Crete. Saratoga operated in this area again in October because of the crisis in Lebanon. She returned to Mayport and the Florida coast from 22 January until 11 June 1970 when she again sailed for duty with the Sixth Fleet.

On 28 September, President Richard M. Nixon and his party arrived on board. That night, word was received that Gamal Abdul Nasser, President of the United Arab Republic had died; an event that might plunge the entire Middle East into a crisis. The intelligence and communications personnel of the Saratoga were required to supply the President, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretaries of State and Defense with the essential intelligence information to keep them abreast of the deteriorating situation. The Presidential party departed the ship the next evening, and Saratoga continued on patrol in the eastern Mediterranean until she sailed for the United States on 2 November. From her arrival at Mayport until 10 March 1971, she was in a "cold iron" status. She then operated off the Florida coast until 7 June when she departed for her eleventh deployment with the Sixth Fleet, via Scotland and the North Sea where she participated in exercise "Magic Sword II." She returned to Mayport on 31 October for a period of restricted availability and local operations.

On 11 April 1972, Saratoga sailed from Mayport en route to Subic Bay, P. I., and her first deployment to the western Pacific. She arrived in Subic Bay on 8 May and departed for Vietnam the following week, arriving at "Yankee Station" on 18 May for her first period on the line. Before year's end, she was on station in the Tonkin Gulf a total of seven times: 18 May to 21 June; 1 to 16 July; 28 July to 22 August; 2 to 19 September; 29 September to 21 October; 5 November to 8 December; and 18 to 31 December.

During the first period, Saratoga lost four aircraft and three pilots. On the plus side, on 21 June, two of her "Phantoms" attacked three MiG 21's over North Vietnam. Dodging four surface to air missiles, they managed to down one of the MiG aircraft. Saratoga's planes attacked targets ranging from enemy troop concentrations in the lower panhandle to petroleum storage areas northeast of Hanoi. On her second line period, she lost an F-4 to enemy fire northeast of Hanoi with the pilot and radar intercept officer missing in action. During this period, her aircraft flew 708 missions against the enemy.

On 6 August, Lt. Jim Lloyd, flying an A-7 on a bombing mission near Vinh, had his plane shot out from under him by a SAM. He ejected into enemy territory at night. In a daring rescue by helicopters, supported by CVW-3 aircraft, he was lifted from the midst of enemy soldiers and returned to the Saratoga. On 10 August, one of the ship's CAP jet fighters splashed a MiG at night using "Sparrow" missiles.

During the period 2 to 19 September, Saratoga aircraft flew over 800 combat strike missions against targets in North Vietnam. On 20 October, her aircraft flew 83 close air support sorties in six hours in support of a force of 250 Territorials beleaguered by the North Vietnamese 48th Regiment. Air support saved the small force, enabled ARVN troops to advance, and killed 102 North Vietnamese soldiers. During her last period on station, Saratoga's aircraft battered targets in the heart of North Vietnam for over a week.

Saratoga departed "Yankee Station" for Subic Bay on 7 January 1973. From there she sailed for the United States, via Singapore, arrived at Mayport on 13 February 1973. As of 1 January 1974, Saratoga was on active duty with the Atlantic Fleet.

Saratoga received one battle star for service in the Vietnamese conflict.

Recap of Sara's History:

- October 1955
Launched by Mrs. Charles S. Thomas, wife of Sec. of Navy. Named in Honor of a New York Revolutionary War victory and CV-3
- April 1956
Commissioned at New York
- June 1957
President Dwight Eisenhower and cabinet visit off Florida
- September 1957
Maiden cruise
- February 1958
First Med Cruise. Lebanon and Libya cruise support
- August 1959
Second Med cruise
- August 1960
Third Med cruise
- January 1961
Seven die in machinery space fire in Mediterranean
- November 1961
Fourth Med cruise
- July 1962
Angle deck extended 58 degrees
- December 1962
Cuba cost patrol during Soviet missile crisis
- March 1963
Fifth Med cruise
- November 1964
Sixth Med cruise
- March 1966
Seventh Med cruise
- May 1967
Eighth Med cruise
- January 1968
\$50 million overhaul in Philly
- May 1969
President Nixon visits ship

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- July 1969
Ninth Med cruise
- June 1970
Tenth Med cruise
- September 1970
Eastern Med during Soviet fleet buildup and Jordan crisis
- June 1971
Eleventh Med cruise
- August 1971
Flooding of two machinery rooms while in port, Athens, Greece, within six days
- April 1972
Vietnam War cruise, Mayport to the WestPac, via Cape of Good Hope
- July 1972
Designated CV-60, all purpose carrier, first named so
- January 1973
15,000 combat missions flown during Vietnam tours
- September 1974
Twelfth Med cruise
- January 1976
Thirteenth Med cruise
- July 1977
Fourteenth Med cruise, Collision off Sicily
- October 1978
Fifteenth Med cruise
- March 1980
Sixteenth Med cruise
- September 1980
Philadelphia Ship Yard for \$526 million Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) overhaul
- April 1984
Seventeenth Med cruise, first since SLEP modernizing
- August 1985
Eighteenth Med cruise, Indian Ocean, two major Libyan actions, Seventh Fleet operations
- October 1985
President Reagan commends Saratoga for PLO hijacker recovery by F-14s
- March 1986
Strikes against Libya missile sites and patrol boat

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- June 1987
Nineteenth Med cruise, Johnny Carson visits Saratoga at Cannes, France
- January 1988
Overhaul, Norfolk Naval Ship Yard, \$280 million
- August 1990
Departs for Red Sea in support of Operation Desert Shield, makes record breaking six Suez Canal transits

USS Saratoga and embarked Carrier Air Wing 17 deployed August 7, 1990, five days after Iraq invaded Kuwait. After a high-speed transit to the Red Sea, Saratoga's air power provided a credible and early deterrent to further Iraqi aggression in the first days of Operation Desert Shield.

Saratoga and her Battle Group developed the procedures and teamwork necessary for supporting U.N. Resolutions 661 and 665 by multi-national coalition forces in the Red Sea.

The Red Sea operations were punctuated by two short periods in the eastern Mediterranean in early October and mid December 1990, supporting the U.S. Sixth Fleet's NATO commitments. Port visits include brief stops at Istanbul, Izmir and Antalya, Turkey; and Haifa, Israel.

Some of Saratoga's more notable accomplishments from late August to January 17 include:
 - Three Red Sea patrols
 - More than 9,000 stories
 - Emergency medical assistance for three foreign nationals on transiting merchant ships
 - Multi-national maritime interception force operations conducted in support of the United Nations embargo, with 242 ship intercepts by Battle Group units
 - First helo-borne ship interdiction utilizing U.S. Navy SEALs
 - Maintained a 24 hour defense alert for the Red Sea and western Saudi Arabia
- December 1990
Twenty-one crewmembers drown when a ferry boat sinks off the coast of Haifa, Israel
- January 1991
Sara begins strike operations against Iraq in support of Operation Desert Storm; Sara unleashes 4.3 million pounds of ordnance

When President Bush gave the order to take the fight to Iraq from the air, Saratoga was in the forefront. Air Wing 17 aircraft delivered Operation Desert Storm's lightning strikes and thunder. Saratoga's crew matured as early combat successes against Iraqi MiGs and strategic ground targets were tempered by Air Wing 17 aircraft and flight crew losses. All aboard celebrated as one with the return in March of all fliers held as POWs, with the exception of Lt. Cmdr. Mike Speicher of VFA-81 who is listed as Missing In Action. The critical early air defense of Saudi Arabia and subsequent air campaign in the liberation of Kuwait were, arguably, among 36-year-old Saratoga's finest hours.

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Some of Saratoga Battle Group's notable accomplishments from Operation Desert Storm include:

- Flying two, 626 long distance combat sorties, day and night
- Delivering more than 4.3 million pounds of ordnance on target
- Shooting down the first two enemy MiG-21 aircraft of the war by two Saratoga F/A 18 Hornet jets from VFA-81 while enroute to a successful bombing mission
- An integral coalition role in driving Iraqi from Kuwait
- 36 Tomahawk missiles were fired by Saratoga Battle Group Units, 10 from the Red Sea

On the whole, Saratoga racked up some very impressive numbers from her nearly eight-month cruise:

- Ship's systems reliability rates above 98 percent
- Aircraft operationally ready rates over 90 percent
- 12,664 sorties with 11,700 carrier landings
- 217 days actually underway with on 20 days in port
- Over 82 underway replenishments, moving nine million pounds of ordnance and 14 million pounds of food and supplies
- Record-breaking six Suez Canal transits...and, the most important number: one nation liberated
- March 1991
Saratoga returns home to a heroes welcome
- May 1992
Twenty-first Med cruise
- January 1994
Twenty-second Med cruise
- June 24, 1994
Saratoga returns from her last Med cruise, her last deployment
NAVY NEWS SERVICE - 29 JUN 94 - NAVNEWS 039/94

Super Sara Comes Home for Good MAYPORT Fla. (NNS) -- The USS Saratoga (CV 60), the Navy's oldest active duty aircraft carrier, completed her final voyage June 24 when she returned to Mayport, Fla., after a six month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea.

"You have had a tremendous deployment .. carrying out a vitally important mission for our nation," said Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton, speaking to the crew of Saratoga enroute to Mayport. "The Saratoga has had such a great history and tradition, on this her last deployment ... you have done her proud."

USS Saratoga, the sixth ship to bear the name, was launched in Brooklyn, N.Y. on Oct. 8, 1955. Since then she has participated in a number of vital military operations. She patrolled off the coast of Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis, steamed off the coast of Lebanon during the six-day war, saw combat in the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam War and in the Red Sea during the Persian Gulf War.

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USS Saratoga's final deployment was the 22nd of her 38-year career. The ship is slated to be decommissioned Aug. 20 in Mayport, Fla. -USN-

Navy News Service

NAVY NEWS SERVICE - 17 AUG 94 - NAVNEWS 049/94

USS Saratoga Set to Decommission Aug. 20 MAYPORT Fla. (NNS) -- After 38 years of service, the Navy's oldest aircraft carrier, USS Saratoga (CV 60), will be decommissioned Aug. 20 at Naval Station Mayport, Fla. Chief of Naval Operations ADM Mike Boorda will be the principal speaker at the ceremony.

USS Saratoga was commissioned April 14, 1956 and returned from her 22nd and final deployment to the Mediterranean June 24. The carrier spent 70 days of the 164-day deployment on station in the Adriatic Sea in support of NATO and U.N. operations Deny Flight and Provide Promise in Bosnia-Herzegovina. -USN-



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- August 20, 1994

U.S.S. Saratoga (CV -60) Decommissioned

The following is the text of CNO remarks at decommissioning of USS SARATOGA, 20 August, 1994.

As we flew down this morning, I spent a lot of time thinking about what I might say as we bid farewell not only to a ship but to an important era in Naval history and in the history of Naval aviation. Oh yes, I had a speech all prepared. It was a great speech, talking about how effective carriers are, that they are the backbone of American presence around the world, that every president, most lately our current president, has always asked in times of crisis...where are the carriers, and quite often I might add, SARATOGA herself was the one who answered that call. My speech, the one I had prepared, mentioned Wheelus Air Force Base in Libya. You might recall that base we conceived it and paid for it in the 1950's at nearly the same time as our SARATOGA was being born. The airfield is still operating in Libya all right, we know because we visited it in 1986, with aircraft flying from U.S. Navy aircraft carriers. SARATOGA on the other hand, has sent her aviators and their aircraft to the skies over Vietnam, the waters of the Gulf of Sidra, the dangerous airspace of the Middle East, and the deadly skies over Bosnia where war still rages on. Yes, my speech, the one I'm not going to give, talked of these things and more....but as we flew on, getting closer to Mayport and SARATOGA, I realized I needed a different kind of speech, and so, instead, let me talk of this ship, the people who have been a part of her, and of the end of an era.

Our Super Sara was born in New York in 1952 when she was laid down. She was launched in 1955 and she was commissioned in April 1956, three months after young Seaman Recruit Mike Boorda came to our Navy. Over the years she has been watched after, commanded and loved by several men....many of whom are here with us today. Would the former commanding officers of our ship please stand and be recognized.

Just last weekend, I attended the commissioning of a new ship. At just the right moment, the sponsor said, in an emotion filled voice, bring our ship to life. At the moment hundreds of crewmembers ran to the ship, came aboard and manned the rail. It was a special time and, as most traditions do, the act of doing this made an important point. Ships are, as the common wisdom says, just steel and other materials, they are not alive. It is the people who bring a ship to life. I believe that, at least I did. Heaven knows, I've heard it said and said it myself so many times. But today, as I stand here in a ship we all care so much about, I'm not quite so sure.

What about the thousands, the tens of thousands of Sailors who have put on yellow shirts and white shirts and red shirts and all the other rainbow colors and manned this flight deck.....did they not impart some of that fearless spirit and "go get 'em" "can do" attitude to the flight deck itself? Does some of what makes those Sailors alive now live in this ship?

What about the engineers who breathed life in the engineering spaces, who made a tough steam plant drive this carrier for nearly four decades in the heat, in the hard environment that only steam engineers can know about. Does not the plant buried deep in SARATOGA now contain some of the life of those dedicated engineers who made her go?

Throughout this ship are places and spaces where countless Sailors (and by Sailors I mean all Sailors....officers and enlisted), where countless Sailors worked, and ate, and slept and wrote letters home and missed their families and worried about their shipmates and tomorrow even as they shook off the weariness of

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today.....do these spaces, all throughout our Super Sara....do they retain some of the life that these men breathed into her?

What of the families who waited? Some of those families waited only to learn their Sara crewmember was not going to return. Does their faith and their sacrifice and their pain still remain somewhere deep inside the ship?

And what of the captains and the admirals who sailed in SARATOGA? Like others here today, I am one of those who sat alone in the chair, in my case on the Flag Bridge while even more important, a captain...Dave Frost in my case....was one deck below, on his bridge, a part of his ship in every way, a captain who in many respects is the ship, wedded to a ship that becomes as much a part of the captain as any other part of his body. What of those men, have they not left something of themselves in this steel, this machine called SARATOGA?

And what of those special aviators who have flown from this deck? They have known the joy of flying from here, they have known the dangers of war from here, they have felt the special feelings in the ready rooms, the gut-wrenching feelings when another did not come back, the joy when they all did. Are they not still in those ready rooms in some way that is impossible to explain?

And finally, what about those who left the bow cats or the waist cats, never to return. What about the spirits of these valiant aviators who had their last meal in SARATOGA, their last handshake, their last look into someone's eyes, someone who thought of them as shipmate, squadron mate. Aviators whose last step on this earth was a step from this very flight deck into eternity...what of them? Does a part of them still live in this ship? I think it does.

I think I know that the answer to each and every question I have asked is yes. This ship is alive just as all who have served in it are alive either in reality such as those of us who are here today, or in spirit and memory such as those who have served and serve no more. SARATOGA is Super Sara, we....all of us....have made her more than a ship....she is a part of us and we are a part of her.

The world is not a peaceful place. Oh, we all wish it could be, but it is not. There are wars today and, I am sorry to say, there will be wars in the future. Our Navy, God willing a strong Navy, will be a part of them. And there will be aircraft carriers and Sailors manning them, and there will be aviators flying from their decks, carrying the fight forward, winning and, yes, sometimes dying for their country and their cause. And each time one of those catapults fires, each time the noise and fury of the flight deck rises again, each time a pilot feels the rush of acceleration and the joy of flight, each time a carrier turns into the wind, and each time the Air Boss says "recovery complete," each and every time these things happens...and they will...our Super Sara and all she means to us.....our very special ship will live again.

-USN-



Courtesy of: US Navy and other unknown sources.