

**Top Gun Ranger (CVA-61)**

presents

**Wild, Wild West-Pac**

**starring the Lone Ranger  
and a cast of thousands**





## Table of Contents

(Top) Gunsmoke . . . . .4

Deployment 1972-73

What's My Line? . . . . .78

Divisions and Squads

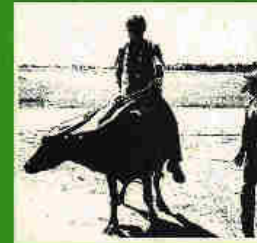
All in the Family . . . . .218

Ranger Crew Members

As the World Turns .278

Ranger and the Navy



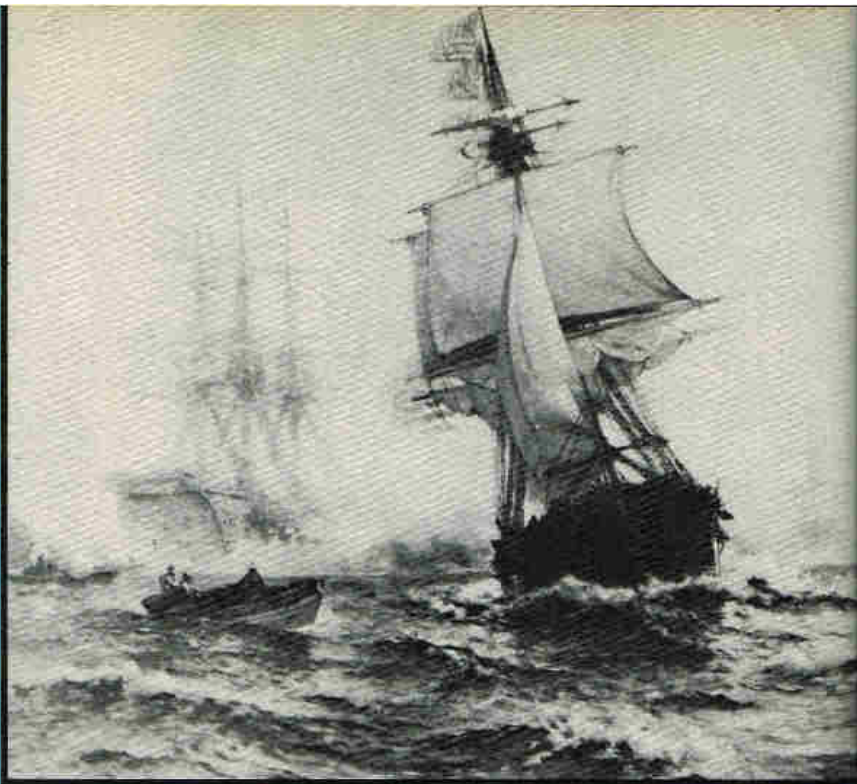


the way we lived . . . . . 62

## (Top) Gunsmoke

before we sail . . . . .	10
the places we've seen . . . . .	22
the way we lived . . . . .	62





The name of "Ranger" isn't something new with CVA-61. There have been Rangerboats at nearly every point in American history.

The first Ranger was a Revolutionary War sailing ship which roamed the shipping lanes harassing the British, who eventually captured her and took her into their own Navy . . . humiliating.

But for part of her three years of sailing, Ranger One was commanded by the young freedom fighter John Paul Jones. It was during this time, in 1778, that Jones negotiated with the French to receive the first salute to the American flag — a simple act marking the first official recognition of the infant American republic by a foreign power.

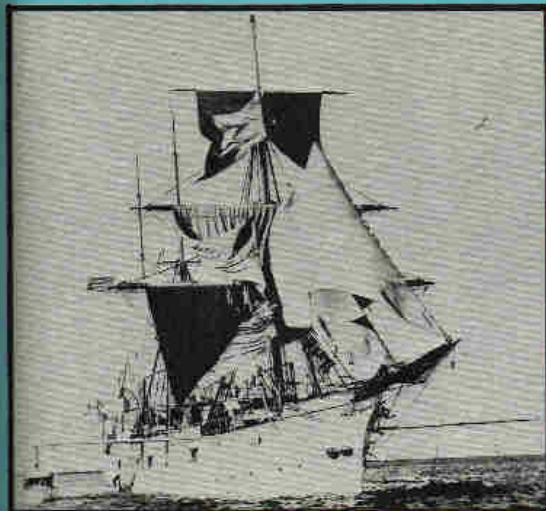
For a long while, there were Rangerboats of little lasting history-book significance . . . boats which seemed to be in the right place at the wrong time, never getting into the thick of things (historically speaking).

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the "Ranger" tag was carried by five boats. There was an armed schooner which picketed Chesapeake Bay in 1815; a brig which patrolled Lake Ontario in the War of 1812; a sail-and-steam ship that spent years on survey duty around the turn of the century and was later a school ship in Massachusetts; a converted steel yacht that worked in coastal defense, and a mine sweeper that swept for only one year.

Then came CV-4, the Ranger of World War Two. This was the first US ship designed and built "from the keel up" as an aircraft carrier. Commissioned in 1933, she spent the early war years ferrying army aircraft to Africa. The ship was later loaned to the British, who used her to fight off Germans along the northern Atlantic convoy route.

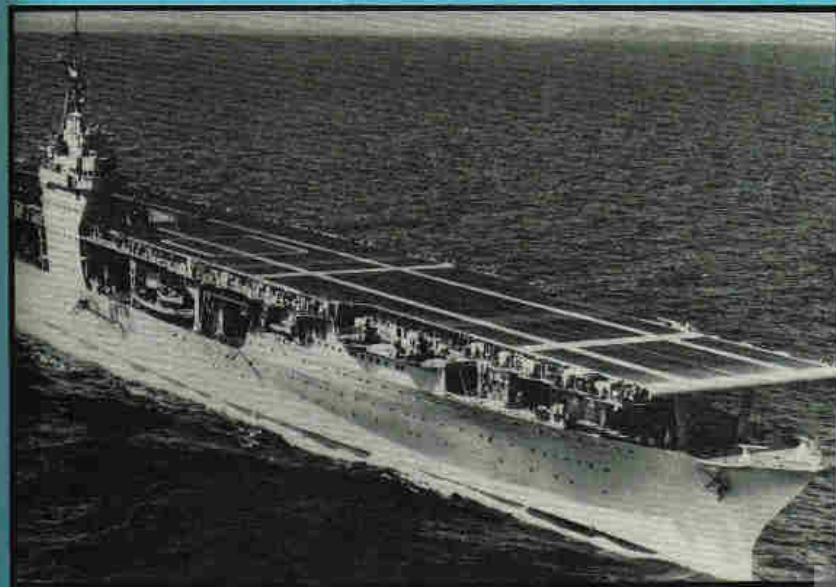
CV-4's record was impressive. Even after Hitler claimed to have sunk her, Ranger went on to destroy 40,000 tons of Nazi shipping.

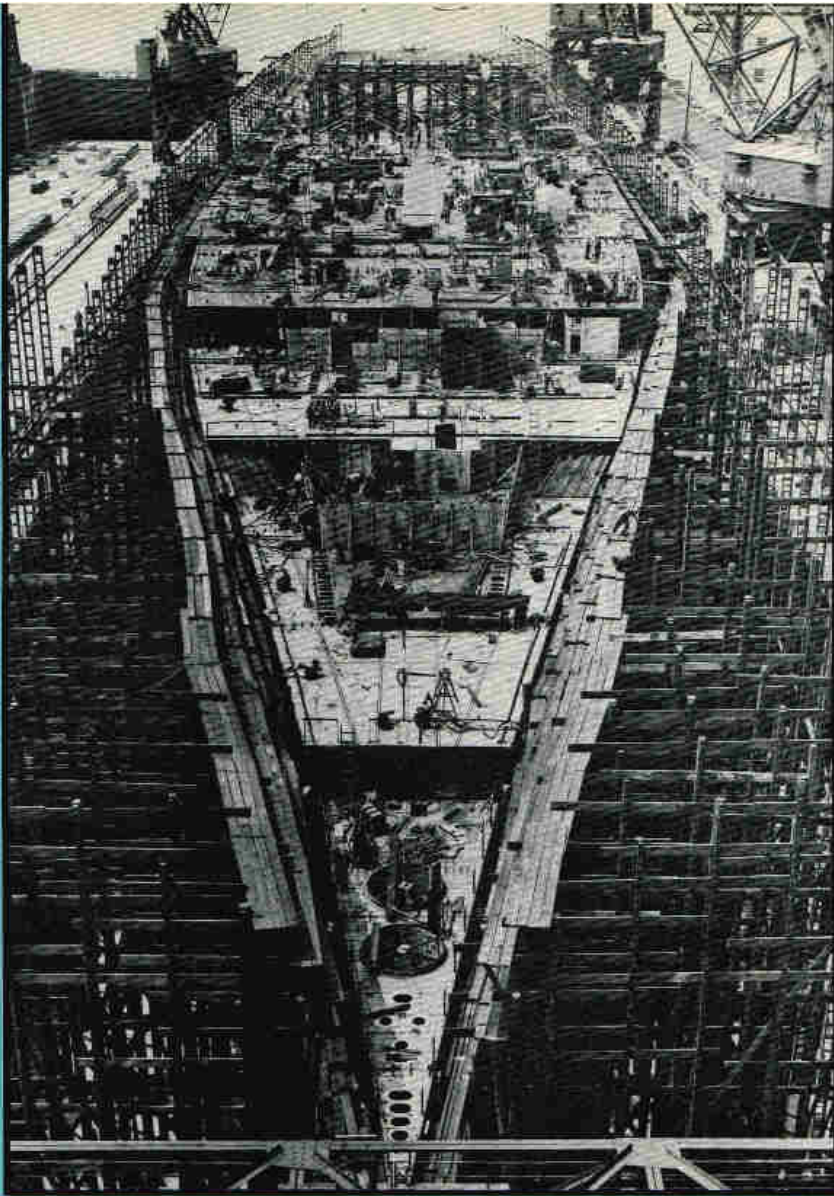
Ranger set out the end of the war training air squadrons off Hawaii. The 23-year-old warrior was decommissioned in 1946 and unceremoniously sold for scrap the following year.



## Ranger sails out of the past

**ABOVE LEFT:** The first USS Ranger, commanded by Captain John Paul Jones in 1778. **LEFT:** Sail-and-steam Ranger built in 1876. **BELOW:** CV-4, the first American vessel designed and built to be an aircraft carrier.





## before . . . and after

Spawned in the Atlantic Ocean 19 years ago, Ranger CVA-61 has spent nearly all of her watery life in the Pacific.

The mighty war-ship is an able veteran of frequent action in Southeast Asia . . . that's what this book is all about. Ranger has recently completed her eleventh deployment with the Seventh Fleet there, the last seven of them on combat duty off Vietnam.

After construction in Newport News, Virginia, Ranger was formally commissioned August 10, 1957. The ship floated around on the East Coast and in the Caribbean for awhile, accomplishing all the diplomatic niceties customarily assigned to a new ship.

In June, 1958, she went around South America headed for her new home at Naval Air Station Alameda on San Francisco Bay.

The 80,000-ton carrier began her first tour in the Far East in early 1959. That cruise took the ship to ports in Japan, the Philippine Islands, and Hong Kong. Much of this deployment was spent on "image" or "showboat" duty. But it wasn't all show. During a flare-up in tensions between Taiwan and mainland China, the ship patrolled the island's coast.

CVA-61 made additional cruises to the Far East for the next four years, and in 1964 went to war for the first time. It was then that planes from the ship began flying combat missions.

Since that time, Ranger has made annual combat deployments to the Gulf of Tonkin, where nearly all of her at-sea time has been spent . . . with the exception of a brief assignment in 1969 off Korea.

For her performance during her second tour in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1965-66, Ranger won several Navy awards, which led to her nickname of "Top Gun of the Pacific."

Pilots serving with air squadrons aboard ship were kept busy with almost daily flight operations of one type or another. If they weren't on actual combat missions, they were on reconnaissance operations taking photographs of the Southeast Asian cities and countryside . . . they were flying supplies to the destroyers working with Ranger . . . they were bringing on fuel and taking it off . . . they were flying surveillance missions to protect the ship against intruders.

Each cruise was unique in its own way, with differences caused by military operations, administrative policies, and even the personalities of the command and the many crew members.

But even more than the differences (at least in retrospect), each cruise was very much the same. The human element of an aircraft carrier remains pretty much constant, no matter what the ship does or where it goes. There are still certain jobs which must be done . . . engines kept running, supplies maintained, paperwork kept up to date (filled out in triplicate), planes kept in good order.

For all of the deployments, working days were long and leisure time was at a minimum.

All of the departures were fearful and painful, but when the ship finally returned beneath the tall spires of San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge each time, every Ranger crewman knew that he was home, whether he was from California or Maine . . . and every crewman knew for himself the immense truth in the poet's words:

"A man travels the world over in search of what he needs, and returns home so find it."



## before we sail



Regular overhaul . . . what was it? About 11 months of toil which gave Ranger a complete facelift.

From July 1971 to June 1972, Ranger was at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco undergoing the most thorough overhaul ever given the 19-year-old ship.

Men of the ship's company worked side-by-side with the many civilian

employees of the shipyard, giving their best in the long hours of dirty work.

Machinery was replaced, technical systems updated, offices and berthing areas renovated . . . the entire ship took on a new look as the busy months passed.

And in the end a new Ranger emerged . . . clean, modern, efficient, and perhaps the most up-dated ship in the fleet.



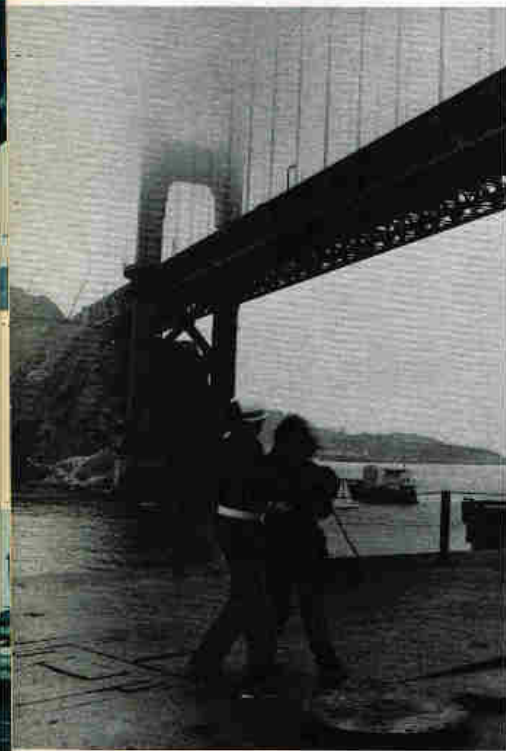


Work during the overhaul was varied and unrelentingly hurried. As the deck department "stitchleagues" were keeping it their cuts to repair the ship's hull, the engineering department "knaps" were renovating the boilers. Meanwhile the entire crew was refurbishing the many work centers and berthing areas around the ship.

As the overhaul drew to a close the crew was rewarded with a USO show in the hangar bay. And a new ship's luxury store was simultaneously opened for the crew.



## dependents' day cruise



People all over the place . . . more than 5,000 civilian dependents and guests were aboard Ranger as the ship, fresh from its long overhaul period, sailed west under the Golden Gate bridge and back again during the dependents' day cruise.

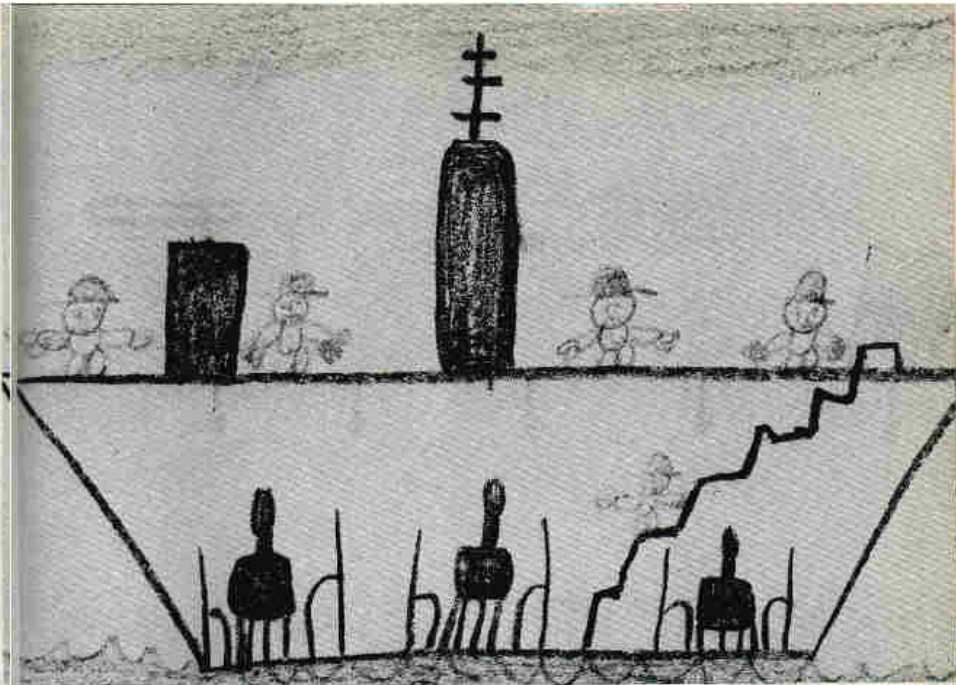
As the relatives and friends of Rangermen and shipyard employees learned first hand what it is like to sail aboard a carrier (even for just one day), they also realized that Ranger's days in the Bay area were drawing toward an end. Sea trials, refresher training, and then . . . deployment 1972-73.



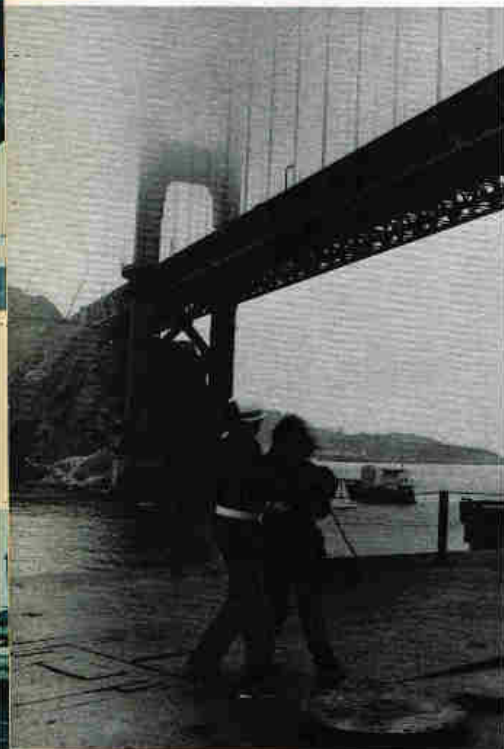
## a kid's eye view of Ranger



For some reason not quite understood by adults, Ranger holds a strange attraction for children. They thrill to walk up the brow, as if their mere presence aboard an aircraft carrier would bring them instant adventure. Whether it's a short tour of the ship by a group of school children, or a father bringing his son aboard to find out "where daddy works," or a Christmas party for young dependents . . . it's a mystifying thing, this attraction of children to Rangerboat.



## dependents' day cruise



People all over the place . . . more than 5,000 civilian dependents and guests were aboard Ranger as the ship, fresh from its long overhaul period, sailed west under the Golden Gate bridge and back again during the dependents' day cruise.

As the relatives and friends of Rangermen and shipyard employees learned first hand what it is like to sail aboard a carrier (even for just one day), they also realized that Ranger's days in the Bay area were drawing toward an end. Sea trials, refresher training, and then . . . deployment 1972-73.





