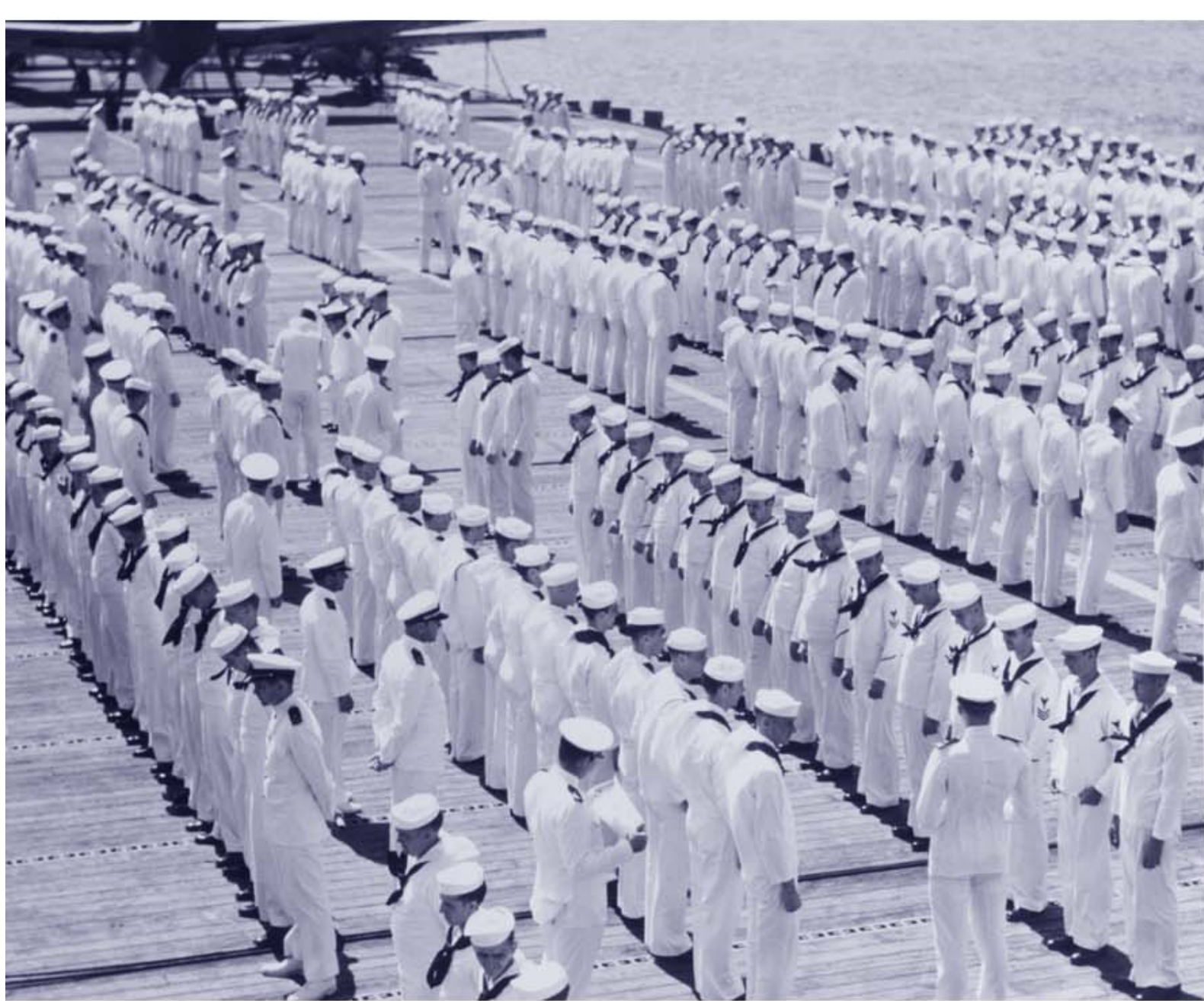


Newsweek

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Our Growing Navy

Review of Year's Launchings
Shows Losses Are Overcome



For the first time the people knew the size of the disaster at Pearl Harbor (see pages 25 and 38). Over the week end the mind of the nation focused on the story told in countless columns of type and countless pages of pictures. And the public grasped eagerly at the heartening fact revealed by the government at the same time—that the losses “soon will be erased forever.”

But during the same week end there was other news coming piece by piece—and generally overlooked in the attention paid to the recital of Pearl Harbor damage—which added up to an even more encouraging picture of growing American might on the seas. The separate pieces of news came from the shipyards where from Saturday to Tuesday of the nation's observance of Pearl Harbor anniversary eight more warships, aggregating more than 98,400 tons, slipped down the ways. This tonnage, impressive in itself, was only a year-end addition to even more impressive figures: since the Japanese attack, more than 332,000 tons of battleships, aircraft carriers, and cruisers have been launched to date. And this is far from being a complete roster of the new ships of the American Fleet, since these launchings include only the larger naval vessels of the 150-odd types now coming from shipyards all over the country.

The present size of our mightily growing Navy, the full numbers of the ships commissioned, built, and building for it, and the details of their construction were, of course, shrouded deep in military secrecy. Yet this much was certain: at least 41 ships were launched between Jan. 1 and Nov. 30; more than 120 keels were laid. And it was likewise certain that the list

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Our Growing Navy

was incomplete. This year's announced launchings include three battleships, three regular aircraft carriers, three carriers converted from ships originally designed as 10,000-ton carriers, and ten cruisers. There were, in addition, swarms of smaller craft launched. And Rear Admiral Emory S. Land, chairman of the Maritime Commission, announced that as of Oct. 1 the Navy had 14,192 vessels under construction: combatant, 1,341; patrol, 1,034; mine, 563; auxiliary, 336; and district and small craft, 10,918.

But naval construction is only one phase of the great program which has ballooned American shipbuilding to unprecedented heights of President Roosevelt's goal of 8,000,000 deadweight tons of new merchant shipping in 1942 alone, the Maritime Commission reported Dec. 2 that 625 vessels of 6,890,000 tons had been built during the first eleven months. And the balance, 100 vessels of 1,100,000 tons, would be turned out before January.

The anniversary launchings were highlighted Monday, Dec. 7, by ceremonies at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for the battle ship New Jersey, which officials said was of a slightly greater tonnage displacement than its sister ship the Iowa—listed at 45,000 tons.

James V. Forrestal, Under Secretary of the Navy, told at the launching of one detail of the New Jersey's power: in an area one-tenth that of an average city block, the ship will carry approximately as many anti-aircraft guns as an entire anti-aircraft regiment possesses. And he said that an American battleship "of similar excellence" in a recent battle in the Pacific had put its second salvo flush on the target at a distance of more than 17,000 yards.

The seven other anniversary launchings were the 25,000-ton aircraft carrier Bunker Hill, at Quincy, Mass.; the Belleau Wood, an aircraft carrier converted from the 10,000-ton cruiser class, at Camden, N. J.; the 10,000-ton light cruiser Miami, at Philadelphia, and four 2,100-ton destroyers, the Heerman and Hoel at San Francisco, the Sigsbee at Kearny, N. J., and the Thatcher at Bath, Maine.

Thus, thundering down the ways, the fighting ships join a fleet whose goal was blueprinted eight months before Pearl Harbor. On April 9, 1941, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox hailed the commissioning of the 35,000-ton battleship North Carolina (the first United States battleship commissioned since 1923) as the first unit of an armada that would give the nation "unchallenged supremacy on the high seas." As of Dec. 7, 1942, the Navy gives its own answer to Dec. 7, 1941.