

Life seemed to offer a little more elbow room on the Forrestal. After the closeness and harrassment of the Vreeland I truly felt anonymous for a change. One big advantage was the variety of meal choices. On a small ship you eat whatever is on a limited menu. On a carrier you can eat sandwiches and chili everyday if you like in a snack bar. You don't have to worry about time as something or another is open nearly twentyfour hours a day. They even dispensed soda water for nothing. In those latitude it meant a lot. The ship stores were in most case walk in affairs although there was a line to get your turn. Small shops have you bellu up to a window for whatever it is you need. The Forrestal kept a gedunk open for candy and cokes quite a bit. The Vreeland had only one advantage and that was messdeck movies, which were not done on the Forrestal. The Vreeland had a unique command and gave anybody popcorn during the movie. They tried to have a heart. I found the supply division on CV59 was cool though they broke down and got a VCR, and enough porno films for a whole cruise. It was a rare oc assion and maybe somebody snitched but we watched them only twice as I recall. Other wise it was CCTV in a smoulderingly hot compartment. I'd wind up on the fantail many times just to get a lung full of air. The Forrestal had roaches and was a sadly worn out old carrier. After this cruise, which might have proved longer if she still had a decent amoun of overhaul left in her. as it was the ship was badly worn out. She made more knots than a destroy but most everything was in shabby condition inside and out.

Other of the entertainments on the Forrestal was going up to the buzzard's nest and watch the flight ops. You really needed ear plugs as the jets were terrifically loud as they took off, when they came in it wasn't as bad. If they didn't line up right they'd take off again. The aviation boats ains mates were a bunch of animals worse than the BTs. They hooked up the aircraft to the catapult and into storage. One guy had to run underneath the nose of the operating jet and hook it to the catapult then run off to the side. There were many horror stories of these poor guys being blown off the flight deck and landing in the sea five stories or so below. There were other stories of men getting cooked in the exhaust, and the firfighting epic shown to all naval personnel happened on the Forrestal. At one time the whole flight deck I watched was set on fire, and it ragee for many hours. So- one day when the catching gear malfunctioned, we were watching below on CCTV, everybody really got excited as the Forrestal had a bad reputation for casualties. We watched the deck apes hook up a net to stop the aircraft that had to land quickly as all were small and of limited flying time. The net was spread across the flight deck, and the plane landed similarly to if the regular gear was operating. It came down normally hit the net and came forward precariously on its nose and settled back safely. The safety system worked, and there was no disaster. Fly offs came at different times. during the day and took up to an hour. It seems a mass drill would take place and planes were launched one after the other. The planes would be gone for an hour or so and return as they could be scheduled. Other fly offs took place intermittently throughout the day. Possibley the heavy traffic ritual was used to fool our observers and give them a confusion of traffic to watch at one time. Otherwise I'd surmise they did air drills when they all launched en masse.