

Harris Lee History

Late in 1942 Harris enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he was trained as a fighter pilot and flew the F6F Hellcat on numerous missions in the South Pacific aboard the **USS BELLEAU WOOD CVL 24** (ex- New Haven, Dec. 6, 1942)

**INDEPENDENCE CLASS (9 ships)**

**Displacement:** 11,000 tons (14,300 *full load*)

**Complement:** 1,569

**Length:** 600 ft (*w.l.*), 618 ft (*o.a.*)

**Beam:** 71.5 ft

**Draught:** 20 ft

**Aircraft:** 45

**Guns:**

2 - 5" AA

16 - 40 mm AA Bofors

40 - 20 mm AA Bofors

**Armour:**

Belt 1,5" - 5"

Main deck 3"

2nd deck 2"

**Machinery:** Geared turbines. 4 shafts. S.H.P.: 74,600 = 31.5 kts. Boilers: Babcock & Wilcox.

Ref: <http://www.voodoo.cz/ww2car/ships/usa/independclass.html>



<http://www.ussbelleauwood.com/>

<http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/ships/carriers/histories/cv24-belleauwood/cv24-belleauwood.html>

## **USS *Belleau Wood* (CVL-24, originally CV-24), 1943-1960**

USS *Belleau Wood*, an 11,000-ton [Independence class small aircraft carrier](#), was built at Camden, New Jersey. Begun as the light cruiser *New Haven* (CL-76), she was converted to a carrier before launching and was commissioned in March 1943. Her original carrier hull number was CV-24, which was changed to CVL-24 in July 1943 at the time she arrived in the Pacific to join the war against Japan. During the rest of 1943, *Belleau Wood* took part in raids on Tarawa and Wake Islands and the invasion of the Gilbert Islands.

In the first half of 1944, *Belleau Wood* was part the carrier force that supported the Marshall Islands operation, raided enemy positions throughout the Central Pacific and helped conquer Saipan. During the Battle of the Philippine Sea, in mid-June, her planes sank the Japanese aircraft carrier *Hiyo*. Following a brief overhaul, she rejoined Task Force 58 for further operations to take Guam, the Palaus and Morotai, as well as raiding the Philippines, Okinawa and Formosa. In late October 1944, *Belleau Wood* participated in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. While operating off the Philippines on 30 October, she was hit aft by a Kamikaze suicide plane and set afire. Badly damaged, with 92 of her crew killed or missing, she had to return to the United States for repairs.

*Belleau Wood* returned to the Western Pacific war zone in February 1945, in time to help in raids on the Japanese Home Islands and support Marines on Iwo Jima. The rest of the war was spent on further attacks on targets in and around Japan. Her planes participated in the massed [aircraft flyover](#) that followed the [Formal Surrender of Japan](#) on 2 September 1945. After supporting occupation operations into October, *Belleau Wood* transported U.S. service personnel back to the United States until early 1946. Generally inactive from then on, she was placed out of commission in January 1947.

*Belleau Wood* was reactivated in 1953 for loan to France. Under the name *Bois Belleau*, she served the French Navy until 1960, when she was returned to U.S. custody and sold for scrapping.



Burning aft after she was hit by a Kamikaze, while operating off the Philippines on 30 October 1944. Flight deck crewmen are moving undamaged TBM torpedo planes away from the flames as others fight the fires. USS *Franklin* (CV-13), also hit during this Kamikaze attack, is afire in the distance.

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-b/cv124.htm>

A Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter begins to fold its wings after landing aboard USS Hornet (CV 12) following a raid over the Marianas in June 1944. [80-G-469204]

