



*Captain Carlos W. Wieber, USN—First skipper of the Sangamon.*

dous invasion force which had formed at east coast ports. This armada was destined to transport and support the North Africa landing force—the same force which formed the springboard for the eventual death blows against Germany.

The rendezvous was made without mishap and the carriers fell in astern of the formation bound for Casablanca and Port Lyautey. Also in the formation was the Chenango, ferrying Army P-40s to be used as garrison aircraft. No flight operations were conducted enroute due to the secrecy of the movement.

On November 8, 1942, the landings were made, with relatively light opposition in the Sangamon's sector of operation. All air resistance encountered was that of the French Air Force. The Sangamon's air group provided combat air patrols, anti-submarine patrols and close air support for the ground forces. Cooperation of the air arm with the ground forces during the invasion proved to be an eyeopener to many officials. The Sangamon lost none of her planes or pilots through enemy action.

The Sangamon left this operation several days later than it was scheduled to. A plane crash on the flight deck carried away all radio receiving antennas. As a result an order for the ship to return to the United States was not received until several days after it should have been carried out. Finally messages were straightened out and she headed for Norfolk. A part of her air group was sent to the Chenango at Casablanca to provide air coverage for a convoy returning later. The pilots thus affected rejoined the ship at Norfolk. On her return trip the Sangamon was battered by heavy seas. The forward end of her flight deck was damaged and the forward catwalks were carried away. This necessitated a 10-day yard period for repairs. At the same time additional 20 millimeter guns were added to the ship's armament.

Then the ship turned her bow towards the Pacific where the Navy was sorely in need of carriers—there was but one. Early in December,