

U.S.S. Enterprise (CVN-65)

On Sunday morning, September 24th, 1960, a bottle of champagne flew from the hand of Mrs William B. Franke, the wife of the former Secretary of the Navy. It shattered on the bow of an awesome new warship at Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, Newport, VA. The ship was the USS Enterprise, the eighth to carry that gallant name, and thus was christened the longest, tallest, and mightiest warship the world has ever known.

At the commissioning of the Enterprise, the world's first nuclear carrier, Secretary of the Navy John B. Connally Jr. called it a worthy successor of its immediate predecessor, the highly decorated seventh USS Enterprise (CV-06) of World War II, which had been sold in February 1947. "The Fighting Gray Lady, as it was called, served in such well-known battles as the raid on Tokyo and the Battle of Midway," he went on to say. "The new Enterprise will reign a long, long time as queen of the seas." And well she has; just look at these stats: "The Big E" is powered by 8 nuclear reactors, four geared steam turbines, and four shafts. And she's a *BIG girl!* She stretches 1,040 feet, and her flight deck width is 252 feet. She displaces 89,600 tons when full, attaining 30+ knots (34.5 mph). She carries 85 aircraft and 5,830 personnel (including 2,480 for the air wing). For armament, she boasts Sea Sparrow missile launchers and 3 Phalnx 20 MM CIWS mounts.

She began flight operations on 17 January 1962, when an F8U "Crusader" became the first airplane to land on board her giant flight deck. The same aircraft later became the first plane to be catapulted from *Enterprise*. One month later, the nuclear-powered carrier played a role in the space age when *Enterprise* acted as a tracking and measuring station for the flight of Friendship 7, the "Project Mercury" space capsule in which Lt. Colonel John H. Glenn, Jr, USMC made the United States' first orbital space flight.

The latest Big E transferred to the Pacific's Seventh Fleet in 1965 and became the first nuclear ship to engage in combat when it launched an air strike in Vietnam on Dec. 2, 1965. In April of 1965, she became the first nuclear carrier to transit the Suez Canal. By the end of 1996, Enterprise had completed 15 overseas deployments.

The COMBINE listing lists six Pre-War covers and two Post-War covers for the Enterprise, and of course, these aren't all for the same ship. I believe all of these covers refer to either Enterprise #7 or #8 (the last two). I don't see any indication that any of the early Diamond Enterprise covers were DQs, and Enterprise #7 was launched in the mid-1930s, so that would seem to preclude any Enterprise before #7 being represented by covers here.

Shown here is one of the two covers from the current Enterprise [left]. In 2013, *Enterprise* became the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be decommissioned.

