

GUAM

14 February 1969—

After bidding farewell to the Golden Dragon and his court, we sailed into the sun, looking for the Thief Islands. As the sun broke from the clouds one morning, Guam appeared out of the dark and beckoned us closer. Passing Orote Point on our way into Apra Harbor, we entered an atmosphere in Spanish and American history.

Guam is where America's day begins, being the westernmost territory of the United States. Here, and on the neighboring islands of Saipan and Tinian, lies the bastion of American air and sea power since 1945. From the Polaris Submarines at Port Apra, to the Strategic Air Command at Anderson Air Force Base, U.S. Military power is in evidence everywhere. Every third truck on Marine Drive is a U.S. Navy flat bed carrying 750 and 1000 pound bombs to the bays of the waiting B52's at Anderson. We realized, surveying the scene, that we had at last entered the theater of action. If you live on Guam, the sound of the B52 is the same to you as the sound of a bus to a New Yorker. Scarcely five minutes go by, day or night, without one of the eight engine giants passing low overhead.

Both Guam and its neighbors are under control of the Defense Department. It has been so since the 6th of June, 1944. U.S. Marines stormed ashore on Red Beach One on Saipan, where a Coast Guard Loran Station now stands, at a cost of 10,000 U.S. casualties. The Marianas have since been a U.S. stronghold in the Pacific. Within weeks after their capture, the Marianas became the land of the giant bomber. B29's roared off the runways on Saipan and Tinian in the predawn darkness to deliver tons of bombs to the Japanese homeland. Tinian is forgotten by all but a few now, its runways overgrown with brush and weeds. Yet it was here that the Atomic Age began. At 3:30 A.M. on 6 August 1945, the B29 "Enola Gay" roared off the runway on Tinian carrying only one bomb. Within hours Hiroshima was a disaster area of proportions unheard of since the days of Pompeii. Two days later another B29 carried its load down the Tinian airstrip to seal the fate of Nagasaki. World War II came to a screeching halt.

After fueling and staying overnight in Guam, we turned our bow into waters the SPENCER knew well, having cruised the Philippine Sea in 1945 as an amphibious command ship. Once again we headed west.

