

USS LEXINGTON

- *The Blue Ghost*

By Harry and Linda Kaye Perez

As she sits there in all her glory, moored to a specially constructed pier on Corpus Christi Beach, you cannot help but be in awe of this magnificent piece of history. She presents a powerful image, painted in original combat colors and appears ready to once again report for duty. She is photogenic without a doubt. She is the USS Lexington.

The Guardian of Freedom

Today, though not to be called out to sea again, Lady Lex rests in wait, standing guard over her beloved city of Corpus Christi, Texas that served as her port of call on several occasions in her illustrious career. When on duty, she was a city unto herself, housing over 3,000 combat personnel and over 60 airplanes during World War II. The USS Lexington,

an Essex-class aircraft carrier, was commissioned on February 17, 1943 and was the fifth U.S. Naval vessel to bear this name. The Lexington saw extensive action in the Pacific, serving with distinction in numerous sea campaigns, most notably acting as the Flagship for Admiral Marc Mitscher who led the Fast Carrier Task Force through their battles across the Pacific.



Thousands of air sorties were flown off her deck with many successful missions in support of the massive naval and air armada. Can you imagine lumbering down an extremely short runway at a very slow airspeed, loaded down with thousands of pounds of ordnance, hoping and praying that you will have enough lift to get off the flight deck. Wow! That took some guts!

The Japanese labeled the Lexington as the “Ghost” ship since she would always reappear after reportedly being sunk four times. She was, in fact, damaged several times in fierce combat, but managed to limp into Pearl Harbor for almost miraculous repairs and back at sea in record time. The crew of the Lexington referred to her as the “The Blue Ghost,” because her dark blue camouflage paint scheme would make her appear ghostly at dusk.

Continues To Serve

After war’s end, the Lexington went through several retrofits to accommodate the onset of the jet age, and was reclassified as an attack carrier, and again reclassified as an antisubmarine carrier. For nearly 30 years she spent her time as a training carrier at various naval installations.

The Lexington was decommissioned in 1991 after an active tour of duty longer than any other Essex-class ship. Because she set more records than any other aircraft carrier in U.S. Naval history, this 16 deck, 33,000-ton vessel serves as an important repository of historical information. Therefore, she is regarded as a memorial to those whose service to our country is cherished. Now fully restored and forever to remain in mint condition, she serves as the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay.

Getting There

If you’re planning to fly to see Lady Lex, you will find several airports all within 20 miles of her, such as: Nueces County (KRBO) in Robstown, the Alfred C. ‘Bubba’ Thomas (T-69) in Sinton, McCampbell-Porter (KTFP) in Ingleside, Mustang Beach (KRAS) in Port Aransas and Corpus Christi International (KCRP) in Corpus Christi, just 7 miles to the museum. The Corpus Christi Airport has two great FBOs; Atlantic Aviation

View of the Flight Deck from the Bridge



PHOTO BY HARRY & LINDA KAYE PEREZ. PHOTOS BELOW COURTESY OF USS LEXINGTON MUSEUM ON THE BAY



FA 18A Hornet



F-4A Phantom II

SNJ-5 Texan



T34B Mentor



PHOTO COURTESY OF USS LEXINGTON MUSEUM ON THE BAY. PHOTOS BY HARRY & LINDA KAYE PEREZ

Various aircraft on the Flight Deck



F-18 Blue Angels on the Flight Deck



KA-3B Sky Warrior



(www.atlanticaviation.com) situated on the west ramp, paralleling runway 13 and Signature Flight Support (www.signatureflight.com) situated on the east ramp, paralleling runway 17. They both provide all of the standard amenities such as a pilot lounge, crew and rental cars, flight-planning areas, hotel/limo arrangements and more on a 24-hour basis. Call in advance if you have any special requests for additional services. All of the airports will service your aircraft with 100LL, with the McCampbell-Porter (KTFP) and Corpus Christi (KCRP) airports providing Jet A or Jet A+ prist.

A Tribute to a Grand Lady

The Lexington is open every day of the year except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Entrance fees range from \$8.95 to \$13.95. You enter through Hangar Bay #3, which is designed to be the hub of the museum and the starting point for five distinct tours. Pick up a map at the entrance that explains each of the color-coordinated tours. There are two excellent presentations in the Joe Jessel 3D Mega Theater: Legends of Flight showing at 12:00 & 3:00 and Air Racers showing at 11:00, 1:00, 2:00 & 4:00; each runs 25 minutes.

Much has been written about this Grand Lady and the service she provided so long ago, in places so far away, in a war that if not won would have set mankind back a thousand years. The Lexington lies moored in perpetuity in Corpus Christi Bay, as a symbol of bravery and dedication of the men and women who fought and died in the defense of freedom.

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