

A bit dazed, Joe moved out of the mess hall and forward to the crew's washroom. Pushing open the door, he had to blink. There along the bulkhead stood, not the usual jumble of basins and pipes, but a gleaming, orderly arrangement of stainless steel basins flanked by rows of small-sized lockers.

Each member of the crew who uses that washroom, Joe learned later, is assigned a locker for his toilet articles. When he gropes his way in for his morning shave, he simply has to open his locker, detach the removable door from its hinges and hang the whole affair up over the basin. For inside the door, attached by small clamps, are his toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, etc.—ready for action. Also in the locker go his towel and wash cloth. There they are automatically dried between times by air from the ship's system which is forced through the wire-mesh lockers.

Backing out of the glistening wash room, Joe ducked down one deck and stepped into the forward crew's berthing compartment. Here again the change was obvious.

Beneath each bunk was a row of sliding drawers for personal effects. At the foot of each tier of bunks stood full-length perforated aluminum lockers. A couple of writing tables and chairs were spotted about the roomy compartment.

The old steel bunks had been ripped out and replaced with modern, aluminum three-tiered jobs, each one equipped with a sponge rubber (neoprene) mattress.

Our "Chief Brown," used here as an example, is not an actual person. However, there is nothing the slightest bit unreal about the transformation that new crewmen like Joe Brown will find when they board *Meredith* for the first time. It's all just as Joe saw it for *Meredith* represents the first tangible results of a new far-reaching plan to improve living conditions aboard U. S. ships of the Fleet for both officers and enlisted men.

This is not to say that the Navy hasn't been concerned about livability in its ships right along. It has—as evidenced, for example, by the increased use of air conditioning for temperature and humidity control in the last 40 years. Four decades ago, air conditioning was used only to keep the powder dry; today it is being installed in all or part of a

variety of vessels ranging from submarines to aircraft carriers.

But the new livability program (or "habitability" as it is known officially), goes a lot farther than air conditioning alone. It brings into focus all the factors that go to make a ship a home. It is a well-integrated program through which the Bureau of Ships design people hope to reverse the current tendency to cram "hardware" into every available nook and cranny in a ship.

The tendency to put more and more equipment into a hull that wasn't designed for it was a natural outgrowth of the increased complexity of modern sea warfare. Technological improvements marched on, and Navy commanders naturally wanted each new improvement aboard their ship. Radar with all its little "black boxes," new fire control equipment, loran, fancy plotting facilities—all these things were brought aboard and increased the ship's fighting effectiveness.

The result has been that, to make way for the new machines, crews have been crowded into smaller and less comfortable spaces. The little ships with many assignments have suffered most, but crews of all naval vessels have been caught up in the spreading jungle of gadgets.

Two years ago the Navy gathered its experts together for an assault on the problem. The first step was to make "Habitability," the word coined for the program, a "military characteristic" for each new ship. This meant that "habitability" would be considered along with all other major factors that determine a ship's ultimate form—armament, armor, speed and maneuverability—and if necessary compromised with them.

Acting under a direction from the Chief of Naval Operations, the Operational Development Force at Norfolk, Va., turned loose a posse of specialists which swarmed over more than 200 different ships of all types of the Atlantic Fleet. This group produced a detailed, 12-volume report that in the end may affect the living conditions of every ship in the Navy today as well as every new ship built in the future.

The investigators launched their attack on three major fronts:

- An item-by-item survey of the living spaces, bunks, lockers, wash-room equipment and messing facilities of individual ships.
- Scientific measurements of at-



MODERN fire support ship (IFS) has sleek berthing for crew (above). Messing facilities are greatly improved.



QUARTERS for chiefs are roomier, more comfortable (above). Officers' wardroom takes on 'new look,' too.

