

1945

The saga of the U.S.S. Birmingham: a compilation of her officers & men

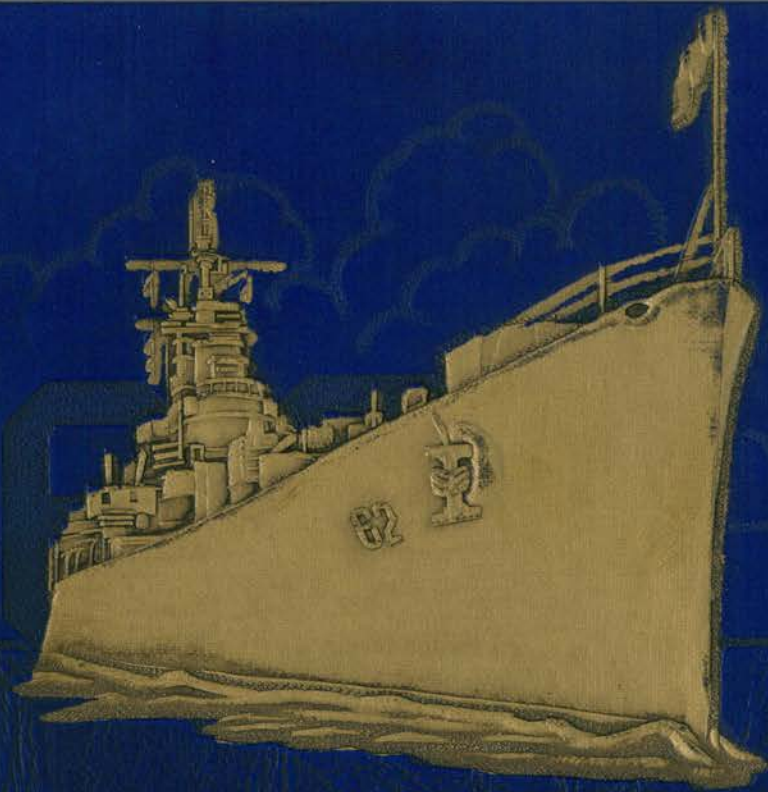
United States Navy

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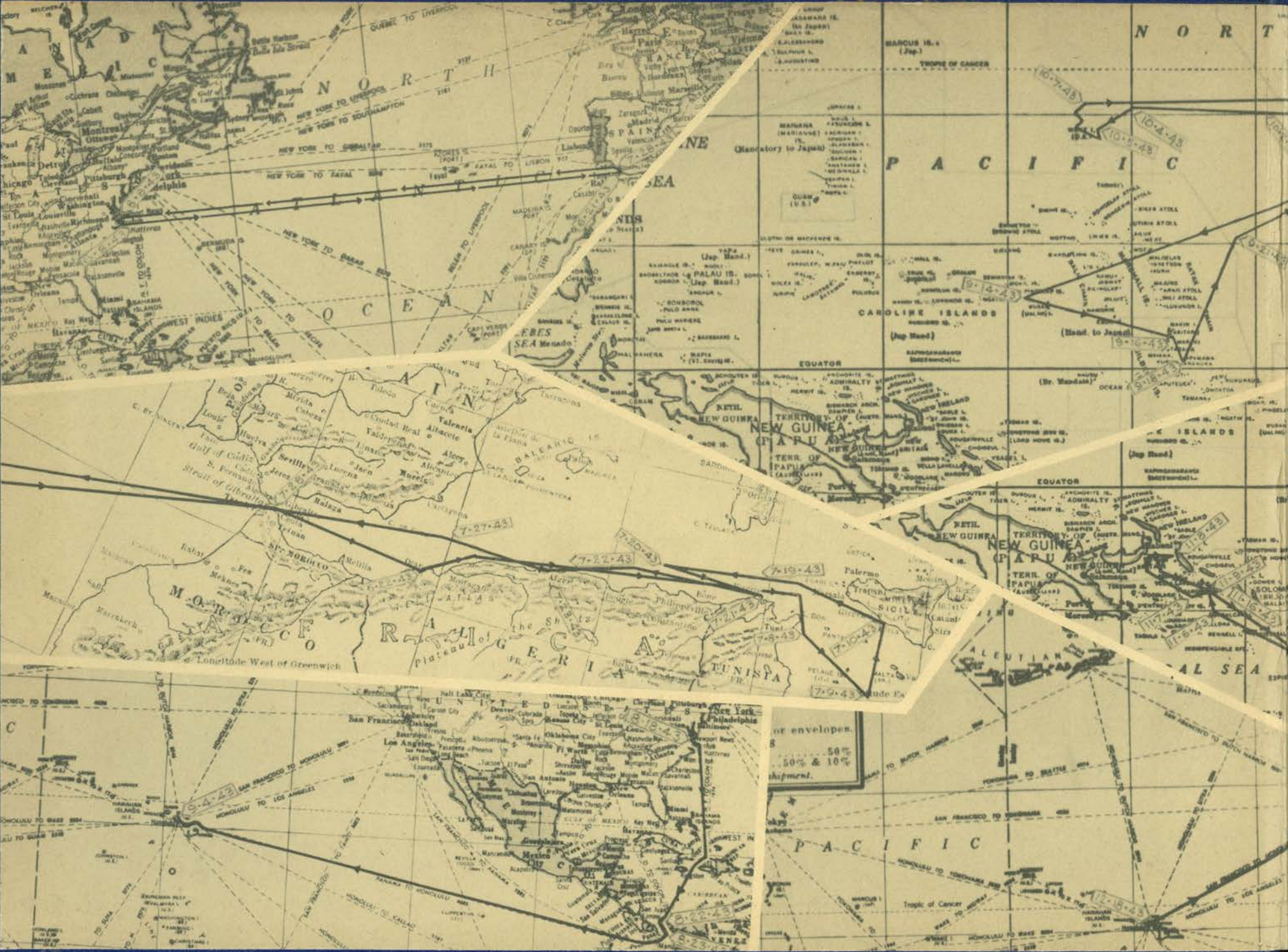
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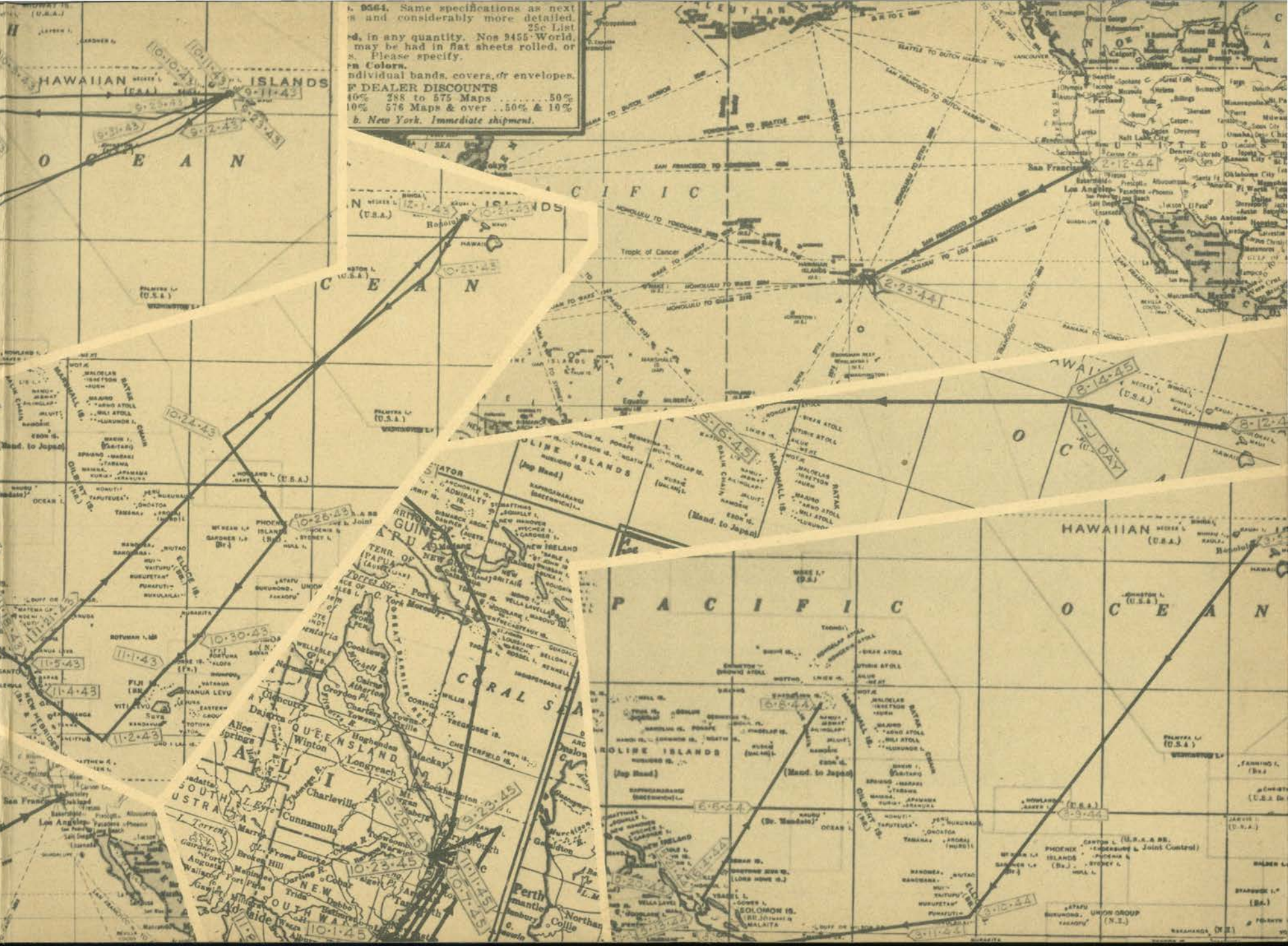
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USS
BIRMINGHAM



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THE



OF THE

U.S.S.


BIRMINGHAM

A COMPILATION OF HER OFFICERS & MEN

Foreword

by

REAR ADMIRAL THOMAS B. INGLIS
UNITED STATES NAVY




It was my good fortune and high honor to be entrusted with the command of the Birmingham from 11 August, 1943 to 22 November, 1944. Those were months filled with action, excitement, and high adventure. The trials and triumphs which we shared together; the knowledge that the success of the ship and the safety of all depended upon the devotion to duty of each; the understanding that the team was more important than the individual; the mutual respect and affection amongst us all; all these things made us "shipmates" in the finest sense of the word.

In the face of exhaustion, danger, and grimmest tragedy there was no grumbling, no shirking, and no flinching. Young America need concede nothing in fortitude to other races or other generations. Our steel ships, too, are served by iron men.

Never in history had a Captain the good fortune to command a finer crew.

Thos. B. Inglis





BIRMINGHAM

Take an area of about 53 square miles, an altitude of 600 to 1,200 feet, a mean temperature of 62.7°, and a population of 485,000 and you have Birmingham, Alabama, heart of Dixie and soul of Southern hospitality. It's a beautiful city, studded with numerous beautiful parks, and celebrated for its friendly mountains and broad valleys, crest-view drives and unexpected vistas, bridle paths and rustic walks, dogwood trails and rose-lined highways, wild flowers and formal gardens, wide streets and easy traffic, handsome homes and landscaped grounds—a city famous, in fact, for its distinctive residential sections, varied terrains, and charm of architecture—in a scene setting seldom seen in metropolitan centers.

Not only is Birmingham known for its scenic beauty, but it also ranks very high among American cities from an industrial viewpoint. Up and down the valleys and in the distant hills, there are miles and miles of mines and mills—541 manufacturing industries, to be exact, producing 2,325 different products. Some of these products are: rails which speed the trains, freight cars, structural steel that girds the nation, steel plates for ships that sail the seven seas, cement and asphalt, cast iron pipes, and numerous others. Because of large quantities of natural resources Birmingham has become the industrial center of the South, producing large amounts of steel and iron. The hand of nature deposited vast stores of coal, iron ore, and limestone in the Birmingham district—the only region in the world where the three ingredients of iron are found together in large commercial quantities. Birmingham has contributed much toward winning the war.

Ranking sixth in the United States in number of air routes, Birmingham occupies an important position in aviation. No vital business center in the United States is more than eleven hours away. And, incidentally, Birmingham also boasted a large B-24 bomber assembly plant, which turned out large numbers of huge bombers for use by our air forces to bomb the enemy into submission.

An industrial city, in the true sense of the word, Birmingham has also been able to grow culturally. Its churches have won national fame. It has an excellent public school system, several private schools, two colleges and a splendid public library system. It also has a Civic Symphony and a Little Theater.

During the past four years of war, the entire industrial might of Birmingham has been harnessed to the machinery of total victory, and the City of Steel has done herself proud by her contributions to the national war effort. So you can easily see that we members of the crew of the gallant and war-weary "Mighty B" can be proud to have our ship named for Birmingham, Alabama, and vice versa.

Introduction

Cruisers, Watchdogs of the Fleet, ships capable of long months at sea by themselves, in the company of fast carrier task forces, or the monotonous, wearing task of shore bombardment, these ships are truly the most versatile type in our Navy today. The Birmingham is a light cruiser. She is a ship 600 feet in length with a beam of 60 feet. Her standard displacement is 10,000 tons. Her engines give her a designed speed of 33 knots. Her armament consists of 12 six inch rifles mounted in four turrets of three each, making up the main battery, and 12 five inch rifles mounted in six mounts of two apiece combined with numerous 20 and 40mm. comprise the AA battery. Needless to say, any information regarding the effective range of these weapons is of a confidential nature, but it is no secret that one of the Jap flags on the Birmingham's bridge represents a plane that was brought down at a range of 14,000 yards, or about 7 miles.

Typical of all large ships in the Navy, the facilities within her would amaze the average civilian. Steam from her boilers which drive the turbines deep in the bowels of the ship would supply steam heat all winter long to a city of thirty thousand people.

One of the greatest single problems in the Pacific war was keeping the combatant ships supplied with fuel, ammunition and food, particularly was this true of the fast carrier task forces. After the disappointment at Saipan, where our forces were caused to turn back because of lack of fuel after almost sighting the Jap fleet, the supply of fuel assumed a role of much greater importance. It was the large tankers, with their escorts coming almost in the back yard of the enemy that enabled such groups as task force 58

and task force 38 to strike lightning like blows on the homeland of Japan and her outlying islands. These ships would appear at predetermined positions with uncanny accuracy, refuel an entire task force, and steam calmly over the horizon to pick up another load of fuel.

The arrival of a refueling fleet was something of an event, for usually the tanker would bring mail.

Steaming along at high speeds, the two ships, tanker and cruiser, would parallel each other. At the precise moment the two ships were in the correct position feverish activity would break out on both ships. Distance lines out, telephone lines between ships, and at last, the life giving fuel hoses. As the work progressed, all hands topside would occasionally glance at the crew handling the mail, Scuttlebutt ran wild, "How many sacks did we get aboard?" "Was it first or second Class?" Did the Movie Officer remember to exchange movies, or will we have to see the same damn show for another week?" All of these questions and hundreds more were asked, and each receiving a different answer, for scuttlebutt is notoriously inaccurate.

If the weather was calm, refueling and such would proceed with little trouble, but in bad weather the story was a different one. Every hand engaged was called on for his best. The ships rolling and pitching present a new problem in seamanship to even the most accomplished OOD and helmsman. The fueling crews had a full job on their hands trying to connect the slippery hoses to the deck connections. The job was made doubly dangerous by the fact that the life lines were down in the vicinity of the hose connections and a slip meant a good salt water bath and

possibly a long wait before getting back on board. A destroyer would be detailed to pick the unfortunate individual up, but picking him up was something else again. No ship was permitted to stop dead in the water for fear of air or sub attack, the best that could be done was to trail a few lines in the water in the hope that the individual would be able to grasp one of the lines and be hauled in. Even after that, time had to be taken for the "can" to come along side to deliver their unwelcome passenger. Due to the possibility of someone slipping and falling over the side, it was mandatory for all men handling lines or fueling hoses to wear life jackets at all times.

Unfortunately, not all of those stationed on a ship have the privilege of watching an enemy plane being shot down in flames, or seeing an opponents ship break up and go down after a few salvos from a six-inch battery. Perhaps we might call them the unsung heroes of the ships company, those men of the Repair parties, and the Engineers. To them the action of battle comes in fragmentary pieces over the soundpowered telephones, or an occasional word passed over the ship's loud speaker. Some of the larger ships have men assigned to the task of giving information as it comes in over the radio, but only when the number of personnel aboard is sufficient to allow all stations to be fully manned is this possible. The older men manage to keep the younger ones on the verge of nervous prostration with their sea stories of how the USS X—— was torpedoed and sank in just a very few seconds, they being the only ones to escape. Usually the younger men catch on very quickly and soon they are spinning the very same yarn to someone else, who has probably heard it.

Regardless of the quips, and remarks that pass between these men during the tense hours at General Quarters, the slightest casualty will see every hand alert and ready to do his part in order that fighting qualities of the ship remain unimpaired.

There are few conveniences which the Navy does not provide for the comfort of the crew on a ship the size of the "B", as she is affectionately called by those who know her. A well equipped barber shop keeps the "hair and beard neatly trimmed," according to Naval regulations, and although those receiving the "trimming" often express their thoughts regarding the method of clipping, the results are always the same. On rush days, the four barbers claim to turn out one haircut every ninety seconds. The laundry, which any small community would be proud to own is capable of turning out in such a quantity that every man on board will have his gear laundered once a week. This is one of the few spots on the ship that can compare with the Engine rooms or Fire rooms for uncomfortable working conditions, and a great deal of praise is due those sturdy souls who work far into the night so that clean clothes are ready for liberty call. A "gedunk stand," or soda fountain to the landlubber, dispenses Cokes, sundies, malts and ice cream, which have been the envy of every small ship that has ever been along side the Birmingham. A great deal of work is turned out by those in charge of the "gedunk stand," and one can hardly blame them for hiding out once in a while. However it isn't long before the familiar words are heard over the ships loud speaker, "The man with the keys to the Soda Fountain lay down and open up same."



Dedication

The guns of the "Mighty B" are now silent.

The Lord has seen fit to silence these guns and give us the Victory for which each of you fought so valiantly. Regardless of the duty, He has seen fit to deprive you of the companionship of many of your comrades.

To these shipmates who "manned the guns" of the "Mighty B," this book is dedicated.



Roll of

Charles V. Agnew
William B. Alexander
Carl S. Austin
Marshall L. Babbs
Thomas E. Barger
Samuel J. Barron
Albert J. Bassett
Robert H. Bates
Paul C. Benzie
Alan R. Bergman
Joseph E. Bishop
Anthony Blanco
Cleo Blankenship
John P. Bodnar
Harry L. Bowers
Johnnie Brown
Donald H. Brumbaugh
Henry E. Bryant
Ernest A. Buckingham
Mike T. Burckhard
Robert L. Burnham
Rodger M. Burns
Daniel N. Butkiewicz
Collie H. Butler
Vincenzo J. Caputo
Robert P. Carl
Kenneth J. Carmody
James R. Carr
John F. Carroll
Roland Cooper
Charles O. Corbin
Carlo L. Corini
Joseph F. Costigan
Harold R. Cottrill
Winfred L. Cramer
John A. Creaven
Thaddeus H. Crockett

Dominic P. Culotta
Billy W. Deakin
Norwin G. Deane
Frank J. Decenzo
Roger T. Dial
Alfonzo J. Dickerson
Howard B. Dietrich
Robert H. Dobbins
Clarence L. Doughman
Albert H. Droste
Robert C. Duke
Charles D. Dymond
Stanley E. Ekstrom
Samual E. Elkins
Harold P. Ellison, Jr.
Francis J. Elsinger
William J. Elson
Harry J. Englert
Ralph J. Erickson
George Estes
Steve Evankoe
James W. Farish
James W. Filip
Clinton J. Fillinger
George E. Flynn
Leon J. Folkman
Simon P. Ford
Arthur J. Fowler
Ace H. Francom
Paul D. Frazier
Richard E. Fulton
James A. Gaffort
Paul W. Gerson
Winfred B. Gifford
Charles H. Gilbert
Howard J. Gilboe
Joseph J. Gluscic

Jack R. Gobble
Vincent R. Godin
Edward P. Golitko
Robert E. Goodrich
James P. Graham
Joe E. Graves
Forrest M. Greene
Arthur Griger
Charles P. Gwinn
Edward J. Haas
John E. Hahn
Alferd E. Haid
Timothy R. Hamner
Raymond L. Hartle
William Hedges
Donald D. Heppler
George H. Hoagwood
Anthony J. Hoegerl
Ralph W. Hoff
Eugene W. Hogan
Hubert H. Holley
Henry F. Howard
James E. Howze
Dale H. Hoyt
Broudis D. Huckaby
Hubbard P. Huey
Joseph F. Huls
Norman E. Hunter
Thomas F. Hunter, Jr.
David E. Jackson
Raymond James
William Jaramillo
Roman J. Jareck
John T. Johnson
Richard H. Johnston
George F. Jones
William D. Kane

Lee C. Kenley
Robert C. Kerr
Francis Kirkpatrick
George E. Kohake
Balzar W. Kramer
Charles S. Kuminga
Peter P. Kwitkowski
John J. Kwolek
Johan A. Landin
George H. Large
Joseph Latorre
John A. Lavalley
William D. Lawson
Osias J. Leblanc
Ovila J. Leclair
Daniel Leonard, Jr.
Domenico M. Leta
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James R. Libengood
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Ernest E. Loeffler
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Frederick J. Low
Wimpy Lowe
Charles W. Mahin
George P. Mara
Franklin L. Marker
Oscar F. Marriott
Alvah I. Marsland
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Wayne V. Mauck
Paul T. Mauter
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Larus E. Payton
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Van Ostrand Perkins
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Emil Popa
Robert G. Porter
Lewis W. Postle, Jr.
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Daniel O. Reed
Harold O. Reed
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Charles E. Sells
Frank Shaver, Jr.

Joseph P. Sheil
Joseph R. Sieger
John Sidor
Clarence M. Simkins
George C. Slippy
Harold T. Smith
Mirel R. Smith
Robert F. Smith
Isidro Solano
Charles W. Spillane
Albert H. Staymates
Russell Lav. Steenhoek
Billy Stepp
Arthur Studden
Calvin J. Tanner
Clair E. Taylor
Loyd Taylor
Jesse Z. Teague
Harold J. Thiesen
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John R. Thompson
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Jesse B. Thurmond
William L. Tice
Everett S. Tipps
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Richard E. Tucker
Charles A. Trucott
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Roy L. Ulery
John R. Vanderberg

Clyde E. Vaughn
Warren J. Vicknair
Ferdinand M. Voigt
Claire L. Voiles
Wendelin J. Volk
Delmer O. Voelker
Jack W. Wade
Charles O. Walden
Paul A. Walker
William H. Walls
James T. Walters
Lee Waterman
Delbert L. Waynick
Bruce E. Weaver
Marlin A. Weaver
Edward P. Webb
James L. Wedeking
Ralph J. Weigand
Paul R. Wells
Clayton C. West
Howard V. Westfall
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Robert H. White
Tadeusz B. Wilczynski
Leonard W. Williamson
Max Wilson
Warren D. Wise
Warren W. Wolff
Fritz A. Wollerman
Harry Wong
Russell D. Wood
Henry T. Wytrykowski
Paul P. Zeisler
Jerome A. Zespy

NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM

for service as follows:

“For extremely meritorious service during Salvage Operations after the U.S.S. PRINCETON had been critically damaged by enemy Japanese action in the Battle off Samar, October 24, 1944. Undeterred by foul weather, fires raging on the flight and hangar decks of the stricken carrier and a series of violent internal explosions, the U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM gallantly went alongside. Operating in a choppy sea as the wind steadily rose and rain reduced visibility, the BIRMINGHAM fought fires desperately for several hours with every means available and had almost

extinguished the devastating blaze when forced to desist and gain

extinguished the devastating blaze when forced to desist and gain sea room to protect the PRINCETON against the combined threat of submarine and air attack. With the carrier drifting rapidly in the high wind, the valiant cruiser had again maneuvered close aboard when a terrific explosion blew off the major portion of the PRINCETON's stern, enveloping the BIRMINGHAM in heavy smoke and debris, raking her starboard side from stem to stern with shrapnel, plating and planking and killing or wounding more than half her ship's company. Prepared to aid further by towing the ruined hulk, she discontinued her perilous mission only when ordered to abandon and sink the PRINCETON, and subsequently retired to Ulithi without assistance despite the serious casualties sustained. Her high standards of integrity, loyalty and service as evidenced by the self-sacrificing devotion to duty of her officers and men reflect the highest credit upon the BIRMINGHAM and the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving on board the U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM on October 24, 1944, are hereby authorized to wear the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon.

James Forrestal

Secretary of the Navy

Shipz



REAR ADMIRAL JOHN WILKES, U.S.N.
Born in Charlotte, N. C., May 26, 1895. Graduated from Annapolis as an Ensign in June, 1916. Served in World War I. Commanded the BIRMINGHAM from her commissioning, January 29, 1943 until August 11, 1943. His present duty is the Bureau of Navy Personnel in Washington. Home address: 132 W. Morehead St., Charlotte, N. C.



REAR ADMIRAL THOMAS B. INGLIS, U.S.N.
Born November 19, 1897 in Petoskey, Michigan. Graduated and commissioned Ensign from the U. S. Naval Academy in June 1917. Served on the U. S. S. KEARSARGE in World War I. Became "Skipper" of the BIRMINGHAM on the 11th of August, 1943 and was detached on November 21, 1944 due to wounds sustained during the PRINCETON incident. He is currently serving as Director of Naval Intelligence in Washington. Home address: 4821 Drummond Ave., Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Captains



CAPTAIN HARRY D. POWER, U.S.N.

Born in Buford, Georgia, on the second of October, 1896. Received his commission as Ensign in 1919. Served as Commanding Officer of the U. S. S. BIRMINGHAM from November 21, 1944 until August 9, 1945. He is now the Commanding Officer of the R. O. T. C. unit at Tulane University in New Orleans. Home address: 618 Audabon St., New Orleans, La.



CAPTAIN RICHARD H. CRUZEN, U.S.N.

Born in Kansas City on the 28th of April, 1897. Attended V. M. I., and then the Naval Academy where he received his commission as Ensign following his graduation on June 6, 1920. Became Captain of the BIRMINGHAM on August 9, 1945 where he is still serving. Home address: 1048 Union St., San Francisco 11, California.

Executive



CAPTAIN JOSEPH E. CHAPMAN, U.S.N.
Born in Arlington, Nebraska January 10, 1901. Graduated from the Naval Academy in 1923. In September 1942 was ordered to duty in connection with fitting out the BIRMINGHAM and subsequently served aboard her as the first Executive Officer upon her commissioning. Detached from BIRMINGHAM in January 1944 when he received his promotion to Captain. He is currently Commander of the U.S.S. General George M. Randall. Home address: 1111 Vallejo Street, San Francisco, California.



CAPTAIN WINSTON P. FOLK, U.S.N.
Born on the 10th of November 1901 in Nashville, Tenn. Commissioned Ensign upon graduation from Annapolis on the 7th of June, 1923. In June 1942 he was sent to Newport News, Virginia to aid in fitting out the BIRMINGHAM, and then to serve aboard her as First Lieutenant and Damage Control Officer. Designated Executive Officer of the BIRMINGHAM in January. At present he is serving in the office of Civil Relations. Home Address: 3005 North Franklin Road, Arlington, Va.

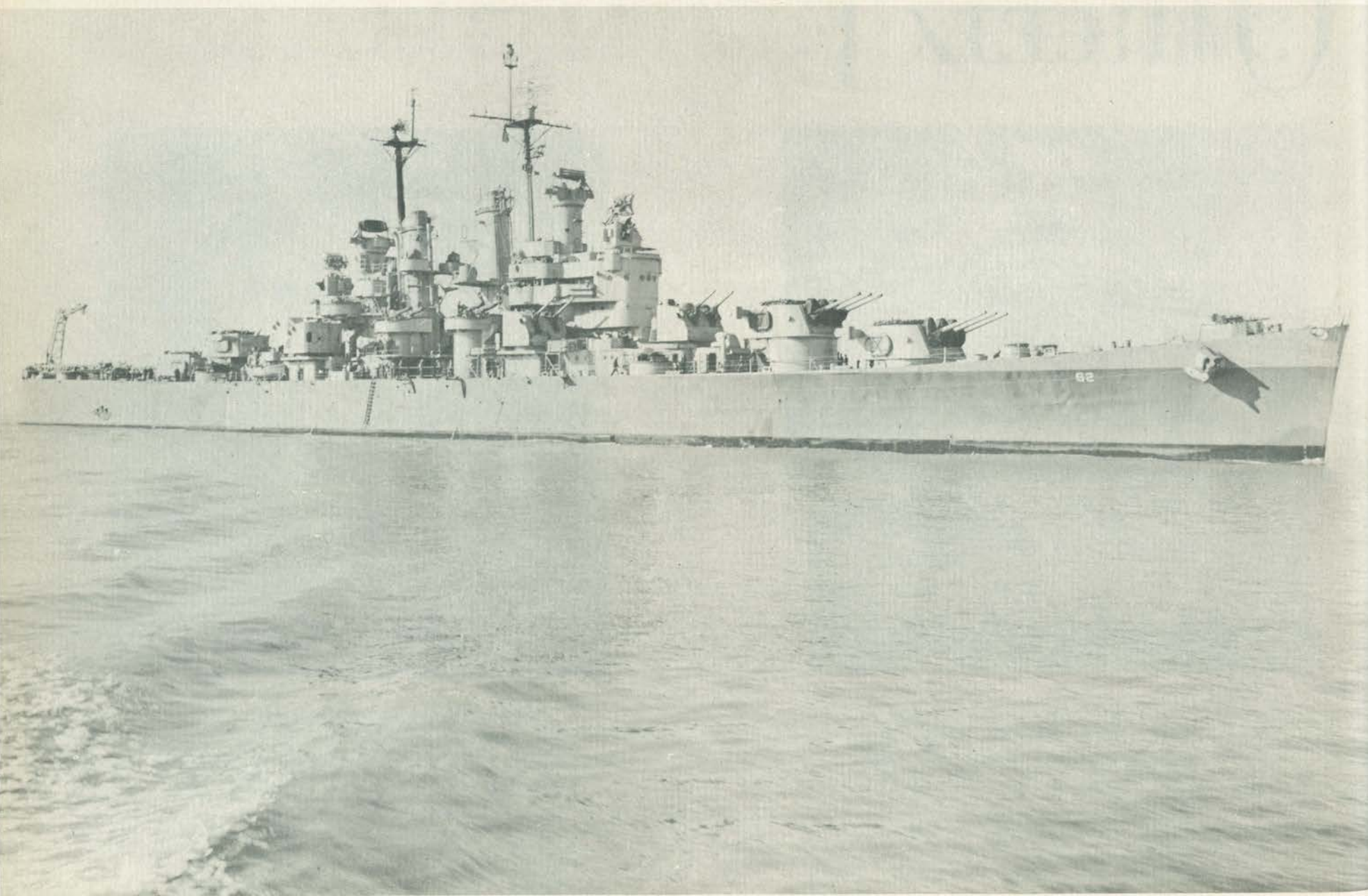
Officers



CAPTAIN FRANCIS R. DUBORG, U.S.N.
Born June 27, 1907 in Beowawe, Nevada. Received his commission as Ensign in 1929. After serving as Gunnery Officer aboard the BIRMINGHAM, he was appointed Executive Officer in December 1944 which post he held until July 1944. He is currently serving with the Bureau of Naval Intelligence. Home address: 5616 Roosevelt Street, Bethesda, Maryland.



COMMANDER RICHARD R. HAY, U.S.N.
Born in North Scituate, Mass., on the 22nd of March, 1909. Appointed to the Naval Academy and graduated as Ensign with the class of 1931. He served aboard the BIRMINGHAM as Executive Officer from July 1945 to June of 1946. At present he is under instruction, senior course at the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island. Home Address: 124 Lexington Street, The Anchorage, Middletown, Rhode Island.



U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM

Ship's History

CHAPTER 1—ATLANTIC THEATER UNDERWAY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Prior to 1130, 29 January 1943, the ship moored to Pier No. 7, Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Virginia was the private property of the Newport News Shipbuilding Yard, and in the eyes of the U. S. Navy just a contract. The ship was the U.S.S. Birmingham (CL62) and had not yet been commissioned, and as such was not a part of the U. S. Navy. The officers and men of the pre-commissioning detail were well settled aboard the "B" and had established at least some semblance of order in the mad confusion so characteristic of a ship going into commission.

At 1100 on that morning we were all assembled on the main deck aft where the commissioning ceremony was to take place. It was a cold morning, and the threatening of snow did little to help us forget that fact. Though in blues with overcoats, most of us were still cold enough to wonder how long this ceremony was to be; and so it was quite to our relief when the Official Party arrived on time at 1145, five minutes before the U.S.S. Birmingham officially became a part of the U. S. Navy. At 1150, the Captain of Norfolk Navy Yard, representing the Commandant, read the official directive from the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, ordering the ship to be placed in commission. With the sounding of colors by the ship's band, the national ensign, jack, and commission pennant were broken, and the "B" ceased to be a contract and became a major combat vessel of the United States Navy with a complement of 62 officers and 894 enlisted men. Shortly after, Captain J. Wilkes, USN, read his orders and took command of the Navy's newest ship. Commander J. E. Chapman, USN, as Executive Officer, gave the order to "Call the Watch," and for the first time aboard the "B" the Boatswain pipes were

heard together with the word "Set the Watch, first section." Section one fell out and set the first of a long series of watches which were to be routine before the "B" would return to inactive status.

Impressive though the ceremony was and despite our feeling of pride for the "B" at its finally coming in its own, we couldn't quite forget the briskness of the morning as we bundled closer into our coats when given "Ship's Company, at ease." Since we were to remain at massed parade until the Commandant left the ship, the most oft-repeated phrase was "I hope he leaves soon!"

And so the Birmingham became an integral part of the Navy, but it was far from ready to take its place alongside its sister vessels to fight the enemy. We were a green crew and sorely in need of the five months fitting out and shakedown in order to make the "B" a fighting ship.

Until 8 February the ship was still at Pier No. 7 swarming with yard workmen and unrecognizable as a warship because of the various lines and makeshift platforms which clung to its superstructure. But gradually the yard workmen and their tools disappeared (as did many of the ship's tools) until a week later we shifted berth to dry dock No. 2 where an intensive battery alignment was made. The fire-controlmen definitely went to work.

Then began a long four months of shake-down in Chesapeake Bay commencing with the degaussing run to demagnetize the ship and to adjust the magnetic compasses. Radio calibration tests also became a part of the routine before we returned to the deperming slip.

Came the day and it was a rough one when we made

our full power speed runs to determine just what the "B" could do. It was then that some landlubber fire controlman down in Sky Plot insisted that the ship had run aground and was half-way up the trunk tying on his life belt before he realized that the terrific shaking was merely caused by the ship shifting from "Full Speed Ahead" to "Full Speed Astern." It took two seamen and a bucket brigade system to provide facilities so the Goodyear representative recording vibration data. He was not alone either. We had a preview of things to come when Norfolk army fighter and bomber planes made simulated dive-bombing, torpedo, and strafing runs on the "B" to give us practice in tracking. It took a long time for this to become also a matter of routine.

Next came a series of emergency drills—fire drill, fire and rescue, plane crash, abandon ship, collision until we all knew the bugle calls which figured so prominently in our everyday lives, and would automatically make our way to our stations. G. Q. was held at any and all times including the middle of the night until figuratively we could find our Battle Stations with both legs and one arm tied under us leaving one arm to hop upon. Many a shin was skuffed on hatches which we were sure were not there the previous day. Plenty of vociferous oaths were heard when the traffic rules were not obeyed.

Emergency steering drills and engineering casualty drills, drill, drill, drill. We practiced until we would do almost anything anyhow. We were green and there was much we had to learn the hard way.

Finally the day came when the guns were to be fired for the first time on structural firing tests. Most of us had never heard anything louder than a twelve gauge shot-gun explosion before in our lives. Sick bay was the only place on board ship where cotton batten, the proverbial noise drowner, could be drawn. It was a busy place. Many of the naive had huge chunks of cotton flowing from their ears, while others with an air of bravado claimed they did not need any.

And so it went from day to day—drills and firing all day and anchoring in the Wolf Trap Range, Chesapeake Bay by night. Morning and evening G. Q., fueling at sea, gunnery practices, emergency drills day after day for two months.

On 19 March 1943 we headed north up the Bay to Annapolis Roads, Maryland, where an official inspecting party

from the Navy Department, Bureau of Ships, and the Academy boarded the "B" to determine the progress made. It was here too that several groups of 100-300 midshipmen from the U. S. Naval Academy came aboard the ship for a tour. But the shakedown for the Birmingham was still not over; for as yet no extensive gunnery exercises or Battle Problems had been held. So three days later the "B" headed south again, this time to dock at NOB, Norfolk, Virginia, for several minor repairs and later to Berth No. 1, Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va., for major repairs. While here at Portsmouth, several groups from gunnery went to Dam Neck, Va., to get practice in AA firing with the 40mm. and 20mm. batteries. At fire-fighting school in the yard many of us learned that we could go into blazing infernos which we formerly thought were not approachable.

On 22 April a group of civilian engineering draftsmen and electrical engineers together with Arma Company engineering representatives came aboard to observe the performance of the ship's equipment while actually in use. On this cruise, everything in the books was tried. In addition to repeating all previous tests and drills, complex realistic battle problems simulating actual action were held with almost every type casualty known. Streaming of paravanes was a new experience to most of us who up to this time thought they were some mark and modification of a buzz bomb stowed on the forecandle. Whenever flight quarters was sounded, most of us would rush to the main deck aft to observe the elaborate preparation, and finally the plane hurtling into space.

An extensive gunnery training program was carried out in which every gun blasted away. Everything in the well known book was thrown at us. "Guard your sector and keep your tin hat on" was the watchword. These were the lessons we had to learn before joining the first team at Scoglitti, Gela and Licata.

The rest of our shakedown was aptly described by the nickname given the Birmingham by her crew—"Underway Saturday and Sunday Birmingham." For during the week we remained anchored in Hampton Roads off Norfolk, but came Saturday and weekend liberty and off to sea we went. We couldn't see it then but we did later.

Finally on 7 June 1943, the "B" completed her shakedown period



FIRST BLOOD

On the morning of 8 June 1943, the Birmingham left Norfolk heading for her first enemy action. She joined Task Force 65 two days later to escort our troops across the Atlantic to Mers-el-Kebir, Oran, Algeria. During this trip across, several sub contact reports were made, and the Boise reported a periscope 100 yards off her starboard bow. Evasive action by emergency turns and the dropping of depth charges by destroyers was our only answer.

Ten days out of Norfolk, Rief, F2c on the U.S.S. Davison, developed an acute case of appendicitis, and since the Davison had no doctors on board he was transferred to the "B" where the Doc could perform the operation. An appropriate notation in the quartermaster log two hours later read "Appendectomy completed. (Successfully.)"

On 22 June, after passing the Rock of Gibraltar and steaming into the Mediterranean, the "B" pulled in to Mers-el-Kebir harbor at Oran, Algeria. Liberty was granted until 2100, but somehow quite a few of us found things too intriguing ashore; and as a result, many Captain's Masts and Summary Court Martials were held. The African wine there too did something to us which must have antagonized the French police beyond the point of endurance—and of course there was the shore patrol. A few could attest that it was true they had dungeons in Africa.

We had known for some time our purpose for being here, so the "B" with the U.S.S. Brooklyn and Des Ron No 13 put temporarily to sea and held gunnery exercises. After returning to Mers-el-Kebir for a few days to take on ammo to full load capacity, the "B" again put to sea—this time heading for the invasion of Sicily with a task force composed of the U.S.S. Boise, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Savannah and later to rendezvous with the landing craft and troop ships.

After four days of uneventful steaming i. e. all except for a few sub sound contacts, the force arrived off the South Coast of Sicily. It was then late Friday night, 9 July 1943, and as yet the enemy had no notion that we were going to make a landing. Obviously in such an undertaking everything depended on proper timing, and in an operation of such magnitude with so many vessels involved, timing was extremely difficult to control. (All told, the operation was to involve 160,000 men and 3,200 ships of all types.) It was 2200 9 July 1943, just a matter of hours before the first wave was to hit the shores at Gela, Licata, and Scoglitti, for D-Day was

10 July and H-hour 0245. Flight quarters had been sounded. Men were removing the bombs from our planes and replacing them with flares. To save time, they decided to drop the outboard bomb into the water. An aviation ordnanceman crawled into the plane to release the lever, but he grabbed hold of the wrong one in the dark and instead released a flare which dropped to the deck and burst into flame. It seemed the sun had risen; the whole ship was lit up, and no way was available to stop the flare—for water only intensified the light. Finally one man stepped forward, picked the burning flare up with his bare hands, and tossed it overboard. His arms and hands were badly burned so he was taken to sick bay immediately and treated; and once again the task force was steaming in the dark night hoping that the Nazis had not detected them.

As we approached the anchorage areas, we could see searchlights and flares on shore. The sputter of machine guns and ping of rifles was clearly audible, but they were not directed toward our approaching convoy, as yet undetected. Many times we were caught in the beams of shorebased searchlights, and it seemed to us as if we were clear targets for enemy batteries. But the firing on shore was caused by the arrival of our paratroopers who were dropped on enemy positions to seize points around Gela. The convoy continued to steam on to the three landing beaches off Scoglitti, Gela, and Licata. Our ship was going to the Licata area in company with the U.S.S. Brooklyn and Des Ron 13 on a fire support mission for the whole Licata area.

The Licata group was under the command of Admiral Conolly who became briefly perturbed when it seemed evident that the rough weather was making it difficult for the smaller vessels to make any perceivable headway, but thanks to the submarine Safari and the destroyer Bristol, who acted as beacons, the landing was made on time.

At 0443, 10 July 1943, the Birmingham hurled its first salvo against the enemy, the target being emplacements in the hill above the beach at Licata. Both planes had been catapulted and were over the area to spot for us, but the darkness and enemy fire made it difficult for either of the pilots to do efficient spotting. Our main battery kept firing for forty-five minutes on previously arranged shore bombardment targets during which we were subjected to enemy air attacks, the first coming at 0515. This attack was composed of less than





OFF LICATA, SICILY



SICILIAN INVASION BEACH

five planes which were not seen at all but which were fired upon by the secondary battery in full radar control. The second attack at 0550 was less successful in evading the "B"'s fire, for it was during this attack that the "B" first drew blood by downing one of the five twin-engined bombers making the run. The bomber appeared to lose power, glided down along the starboard side, and crossed ahead to the beach. About 3,000 yards away from the ship, it burst into flames and exploded.

Early in the morning after sunrise we recovered our two aircraft. The planes had received several hits from enemy fire which also caused the death of Prutilpac, M. M., AOM2c, USN, who was mortally injured and fell from the rear of the plane—and so the list of men (which was to number into the hundreds) who gave their lives while serving aboard the U.S.S. Birmingham (CL62) was started.

The main battery again opened fire at 0826 on a shore battery emplacement with a plane from the U.S.S. Brooklyn doing the spotting. Direct hits were made, and the battery knocked out. At the end of the firing, the Italian flag flying from the top of the castle at Licata was seen to disappear and the stars and stripes raised to take its place—Licata was ours.

At 1815 that night another air attack developed which was promptly taken under fire. Luckily no hits were made as the planes turned out to be British Spitfires. Other ships in the vicinity had already been firing on them; for the planes, part of a British fighter patrol, "winged over" in what appeared to be a dive attack, making it easily conceivable that they were enemy planes starting an attack.

The next day, 11 July 1943, no shore bombardment was done by the Main Battery, though the secondary battery was kept busy all day firing at attacking enemy planes. One ME 109 was observed to score direct hits on LST 158, anchored about two and one-half miles west of Licata, causing it to burn extensively. Casualties were four missing and fourteen injured—the ship finally had to be abandoned.

Late in the evening several bomb splashes were observed about 150 yards distant, but no firing was done since the Task Group Com-

mander had ordered no firing unless the planes were actually seen, in order not to give away our position.

As the Army pushed westward from Licata on D-day, the patrols of the ground forces approached Agrigento and Porto Empedocle, and naval fire support was requested on 12 July. In order to supply this fire support the Birmingham, screened by the Ludlow and Edison, proceeded to Porto Empedocle on the afternoon of the 12th. Both aircraft were launched to spot our fire against the targets in Agrigento and on the road between it and Palma De Montecaro. The U.S.S. Edison was employed in screening the "B" while the Ludlow was ordered to operate near the eastern boundary of the enemy minefield to take, under fire, assigned targets in that area.

The bombardment of Porto Empedocle was complicated by the fact that all fire had to be delivered over the enemy minefield, which necessitated long ranges with all spotting done by planes or by Army fire control parties. While the Birmingham went in close enough to be within range of coastal batteries, firing was usually carried out from a greater distance. The bombardment laid by the "B" included several series of salvos against shore batteries and other strong points. During the second of these from 1400 to 1432, while the main battery was firing at targets requested by the Army, several splashes, estimated to be four inches, were observed falling around the Birmingham. This shore battery was promptly neutralized and finally put out of commission.

On the morning of 15 July, while cruising with a task force south of Licata, the U.S.S. Brooklyn struck a mine causing all ships to make emergency turns to avoid the mine field; but the Brooklyn required assistance to get out of the danger. The Birmingham was assigned to provide shore bombardment at Porto Empedocle during which several shore batteries were completely knocked out and much anti-personnel fire was delivered. Again the ship became a target for shore batteries (about 4") whose splashes were observed falling around the ship, and again the secondary battery neutralized them effectively.

During the night of the fourteenth and fifteenth, we were joined by the H.M.S. Abercrombie and on the 18th by the U.S.S. Philadelphia, Doran, and Davison. There was an

abundance of targets in the area, and some of the waterfront batteries were hard to neutralize. Gun positions, barracks, fuel stores and dumps, ammo magazines, and an armored train were among the targets destroyed by the ships' fire.

At 0811 on 17 July, word was received that Porto Empedocle had fallen the previous day. The fall of Agrigento soon followed, and the army turned inward out of range of naval artillery assistance. The Philly, Doran and Davison departed on the 78th, leaving the "B" and the screening destroyer to patrol off Siciliana in support of the 2nd Armored Division advancing on Sciacco.

On the 20th, the Birmingham and Philadelphia, having been relieved by the Boise and Savannah, left for Algiers, Algeria, their mission accomplished.

It might be mentioned here that the performance of the Aviation Detachment was of very high order during the Sicilian Campaign. At different times the planes were under fire from enemy aircraft, enemy AA batteries, friendly AA batteries, and even friendly fighter planes; and as a result many of the aviation personnel were recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Birmingham soon after received orders to sail home to Uncle Sugar again, for ships were sorely needed in the Pacific to prove to the Nips that they were not a superior race.

The two week trip across was very uneventful, and no matter how unappealing Norfolk had seemed before we left, it now was heaven. Before we sailed again, the Birmingham lost its command, for Capt. Wilkes was advanced to a Rear Admiral status and left the ship. For the last time we heard his constant reminder, "Wear your tin hats and guard your sectors."

A highlight of the campaign was a coordinated night dive bombing attack by German planes. Captain Wilkes chose to counter with evasive maneuvers and held fire to avoid presenting the enemy with a point of aim. The ship had an unscheduled full power run and gave the rudder a real workout. Bombs fell close but there was no damage. For his skillful ship handling and the complete averting of what could have been a smothering attack, Captain Wilkes was awarded the Legion of Merit.

CHAPTER II

After spending liberty dodging cautiously about towns in Africa, hot spots around Norfolk like the "30th Division Club," "Shamrock Garden," "Top Hat," "Captain Bob's" and "The Shack" were welcome changes.

During our stay in Norfolk Admiral DuBose reported aboard with his staff to make the Birmingham the Flagship of ComCruDiv 13. The leave periods were short at Norfolk and there was plenty of work for all hands taking on ammunition, fueling, applying our Pacific war paint and readying the ship for the Pacific. The short yard period flew by us.

On August 18, along with the U.S.S. Murry, we got underway for the Canal Zone. Again it was drill, drill, drill. The jobs we thought we knew perfectly were learned even better. There was no time for relaxing in the Pacific and Captain Inglis was taking no chances. We had only thought our shake-down was over. That coat of stateside rust we had picked up, be it ever so thin, had to come off in a hurry.

We arrived at Limon Bay, Panama, the Atlantic entrance, on August 22. Without delay we proceeded through the Canal so as to be in Balboa by sunset. The crew remained topside for the trip through the lakes and locks which join the Atlantic and Pacific. We arrived in Balboa with time to spare and liberty was granted to eligible men, till 2300. Those who went ashore saw little similarity between the Coconut Grove there and the Coconut Groves of Los Angeles and Boston.

We had our first man overboard. The ant-sized bow sentry from the 1st Division will not soon forget the sudden drop through the bullnose into the calm waters of the Canal while on watch on the forecandle. The same character is also to be remembered as the lad who wanted to swim half way across the Chesapeake to visit a buddy on the Philadelphia, but only got as far as leaving a note for his division officer saying where he was going.

Quarters were held the next morning as the ship got underway. There was not an absentee.

Scuttlebutt which circulated that we were headed for San Francisco or San Diego before leaving the States for overseas

did not circulate for long. The word got around fast that our base course pointed straight to Pearl Harbor.

The Birmingham story from Panama to Pearl Harbor was hard to take—it meant early reveille, hard work and long hours—but it is not hard to write: General Quarters Drill, A. A. Practice, Watches, General Quarters, A. A. Practice, Watch, Launch planes, Recover planes,—repeat—repeat. Mock air attacks greeted our arrival in Pearl. It was without fireworks, but we saw, sitting where the Japs were to sit, a preview of fast carrier operations. It was easy on the eyes. We also got a taste of Pacific sleeve runs and there was not much difference between these trial runs and the real Mc-Coy. Gun and director crews had a real work-out that day. It was good to hear "exercise completed" and to see Diamond Head off in the distance. On arrival in Pearl Harbor we transferred the flag of CruDiv 13 to the Santa Fe. This was the B's first, but not last tour of duty as a flagship.

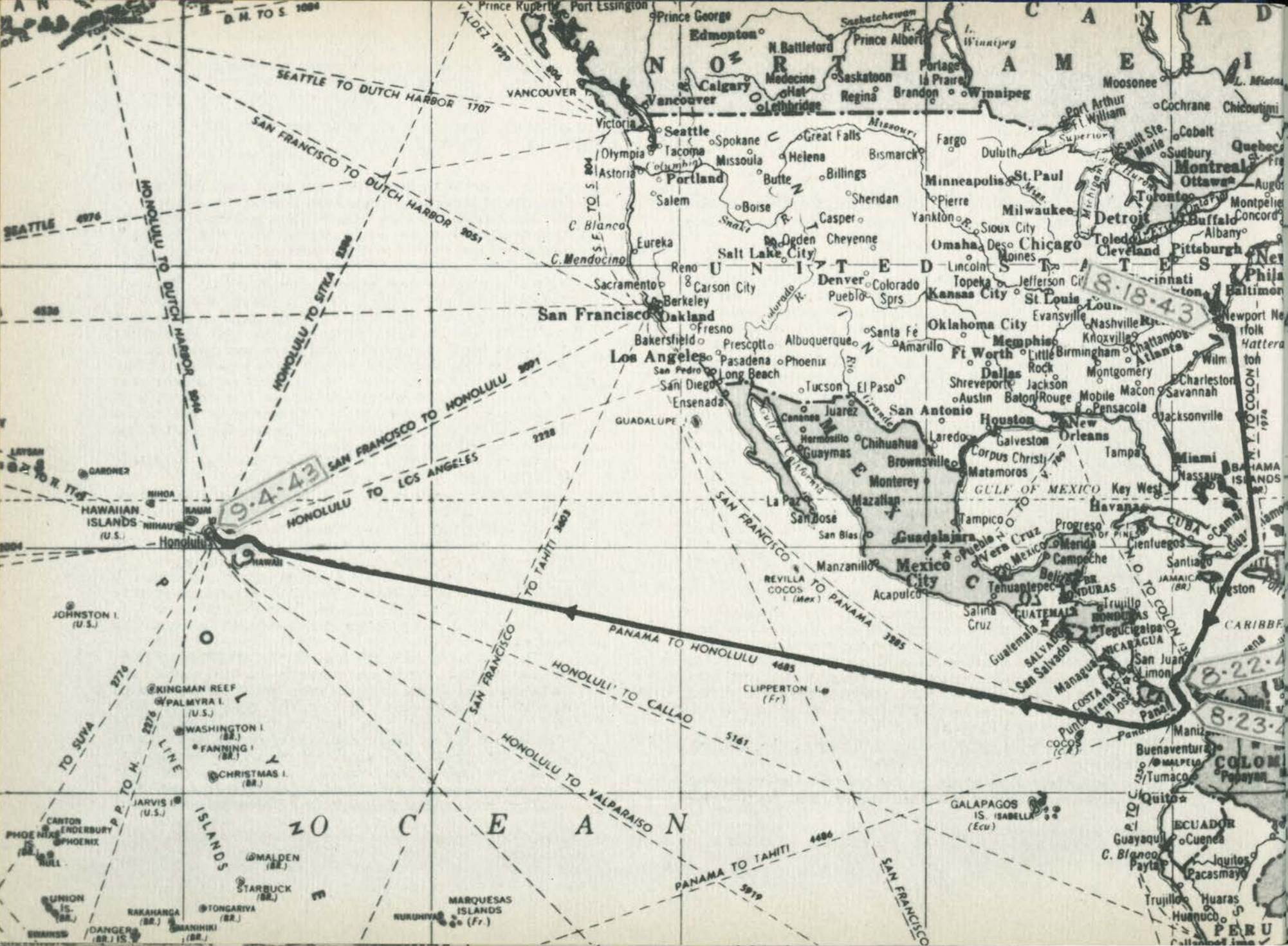
On September 11 the BIRMINGHAM departed from Pearl Harbor on her first assignment in the Pacific.

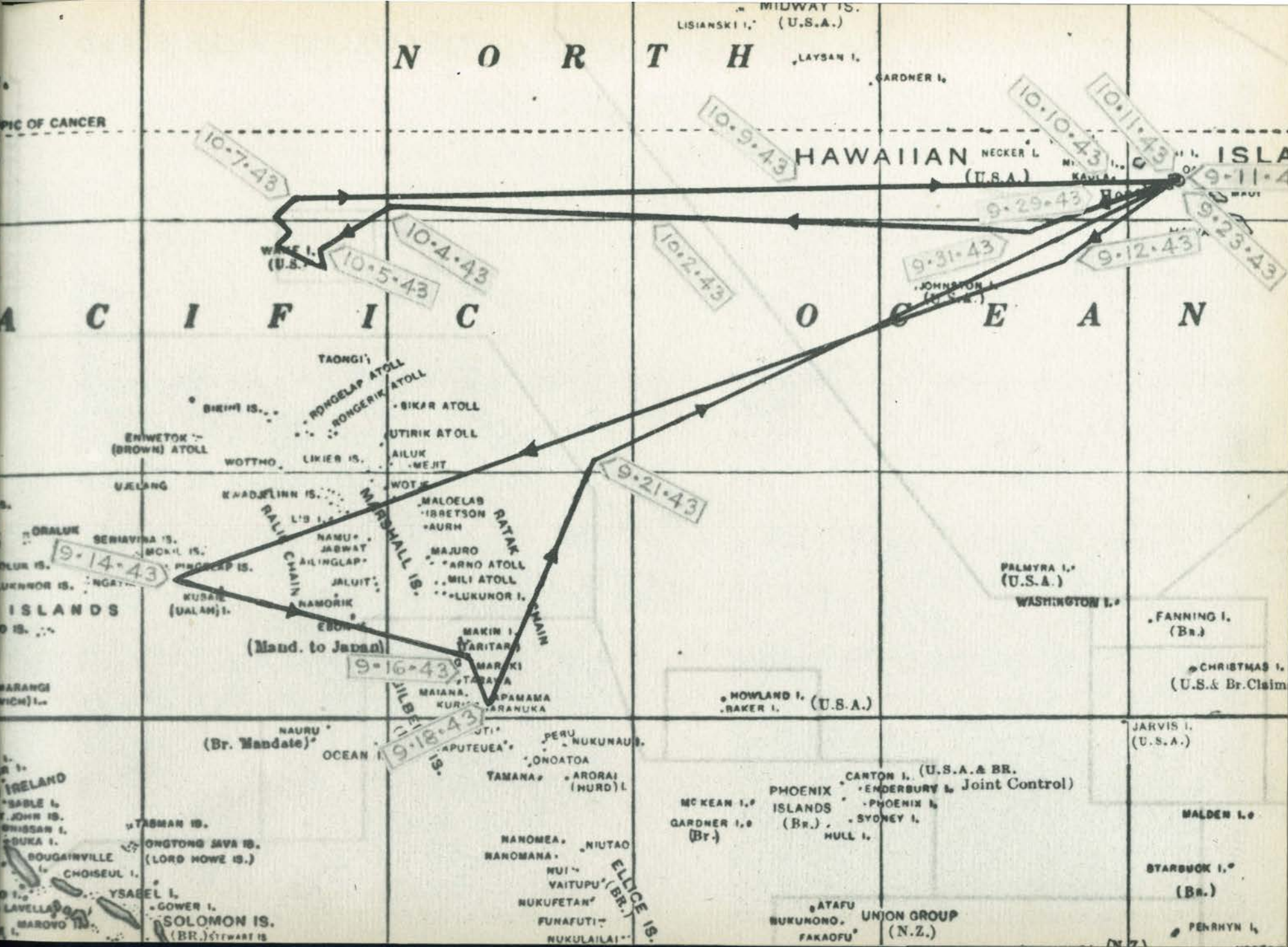
The Task Force's mission was to destroy aircraft and air installations on Tarawa in order to decrease enemy pressure on our holdings in the Ellice Islands and to provide training for future operations. At no time has the Navy been of the opinion that it is possible to receive too much training.

The Task Force included 11 destroyers, the SANTA FE, MOBILE, and BIRMINGHAM. It was built around the carriers LEXINGTON, PRINCETON and BELLEAU WOOD.

On the 15th and 16th, the Task Force refueled and was ready for the strike.

The first strike took off from the LEXINGTON at 0331. The strike consisted of 52 planes launched a little earlier than planned, in the belief that the moon might furnish enough light for a good pre-dawn bombing. Gun flashes in the faint light of dawn proved to be excellent targets for fighters in reducing AA fire for the bombers in the second wave. There was no air opposition at all during any of the attacks, but AA fire was heavy. One comment was that the island "was apparently set for this group, and appeared to be a vortex of vomiting flame and anti-aircraft fire." There were five other





N O R T H

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

PACIFIC OCEAN

PACIFIC OCEAN

10-7-43

10-9-43

10-10-43

10-11-43

9-11-43

9-23-43

9-29-43

9-31-43

9-12-43

10-5-43

10-4-43

10-2-43

9-21-43

9-14-43

9-16-43

9-18-43

IRELAND

SABLE I.

JOHN IS.

BRISBAN I.

BUKA I.

ROUGAINVILLE

TASMAN IS.

ONGTONG SVA IS. (LORD HOWE IS.)

YSABEL I.

GOWER I.

SOLOMON IS. (BR.) STUART IS.

NAURU (Br. Mandate)

OCEAN I.

NANOMEA, NIUTAO, NANOMANA.

NUI, VAITUPU

NUKUFETAN, FUNAFUTI

NUKULAILAI

ELLICE IS. (BR.)

MCKEAN I., GARDNER I. (Br.)

PHOENIX ISLANDS (Br.)

CANTON I. (U.S.A. & BR. Joint Control)

ENDERBURY I., PHOENIX I., SYDNEY I., HULL I.

ATAFU, BUKUNONO, FAKAOFO (N.Z.) UNION GROUP

HOWLAND I. (U.S.A.), BAKER I.

PALMYRA I. (U.S.A.)

WASHINGTON I.

FANNING I. (Br.)

CHRISTMAS I. (U.S. & Br. Claim)

JARVIS I. (U.S.A.)

MALDEN I.

STARBUCK I. (Br.)

PENNYN I.

MIDWAY IS. (U.S.A.)

LAYSAN I.

GARDNER I.

NECKER I. (U.S.A.)

KAUAI I.

OAHU I.

MOLOKAI I.

HAWAII I.

WAKE I. (U.S.)

TAONGI I.

RONGELAP ATOLL

RONGERIK ATOLL

BIKAR ATOLL

UTIRIK ATOLL

AILUK, MEJIT

WOTI

MARSHALL IS.

MALOELAP, IRRETSO, AURN

MAJURO, ARNO ATOLL, MILI ATOLL, LUKUNOR I.

JALUIT, NAMORIK, EBON

MAKIN I., YARITARI, MARIKI, TAPANA

MAIANA, PAMAMA, KURURANUKA

PERU, NUKUNAU, ONOATOA, YAMANA, ARORAI (NURD) I.

APUTEUEA I.

ELI BE I.

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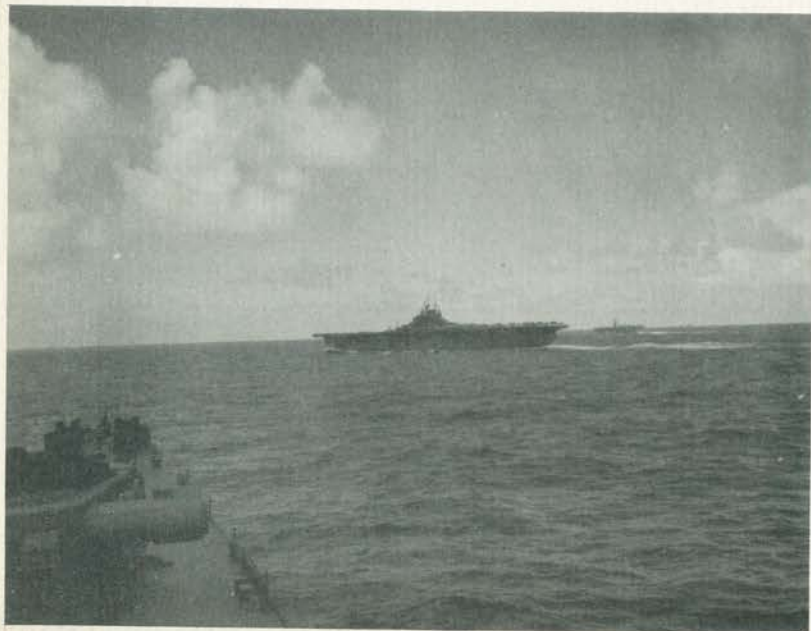
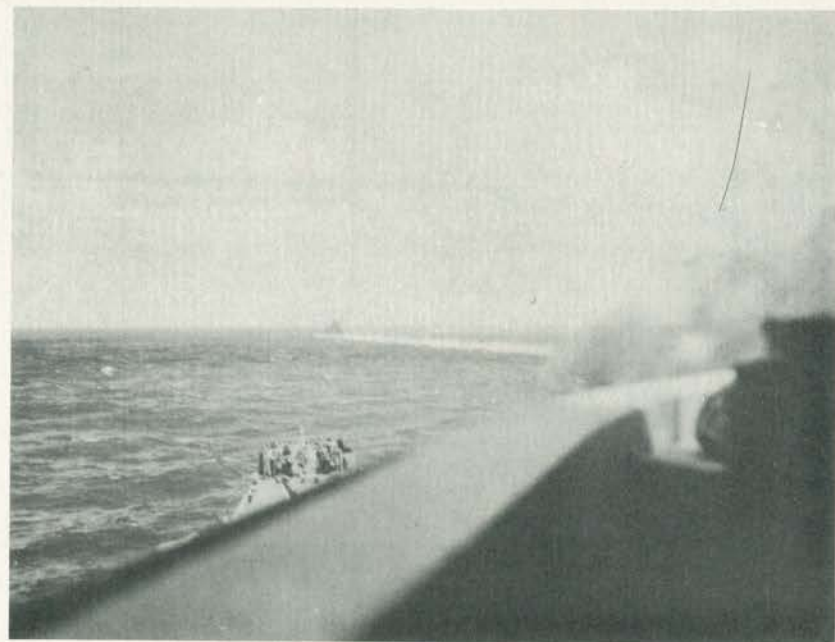
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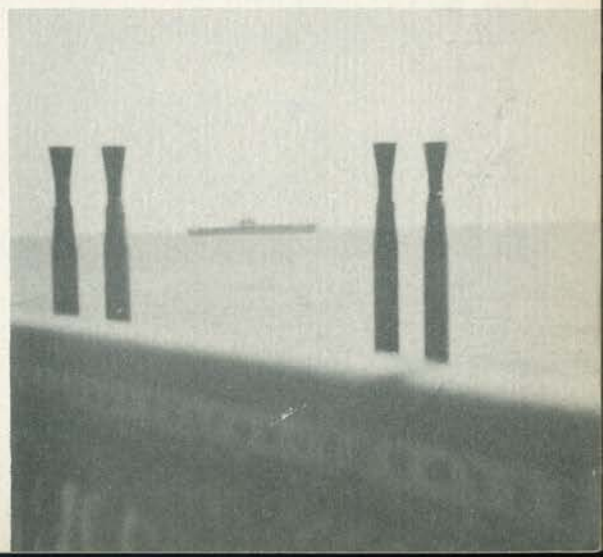
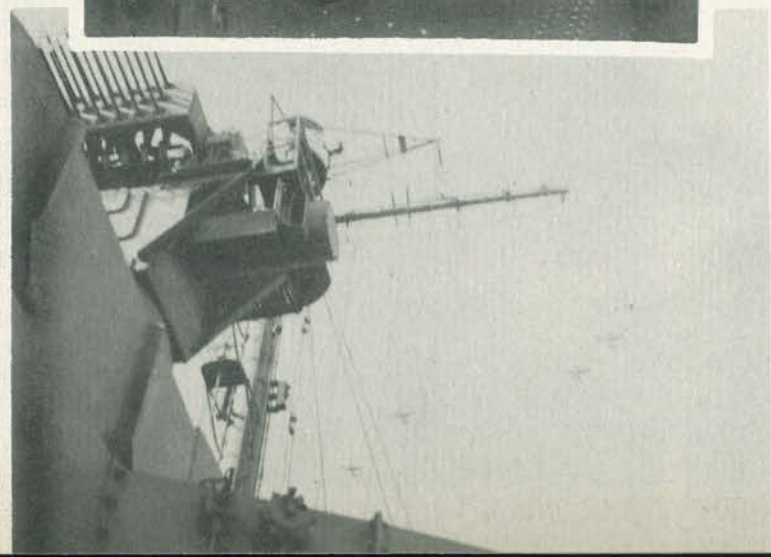
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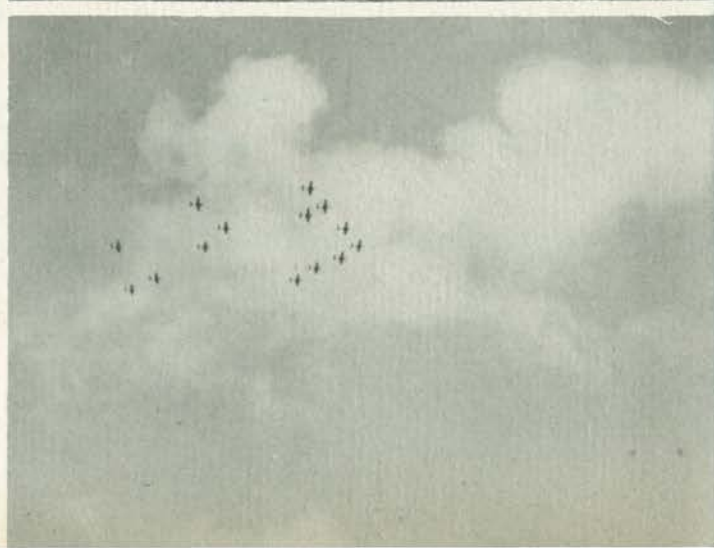
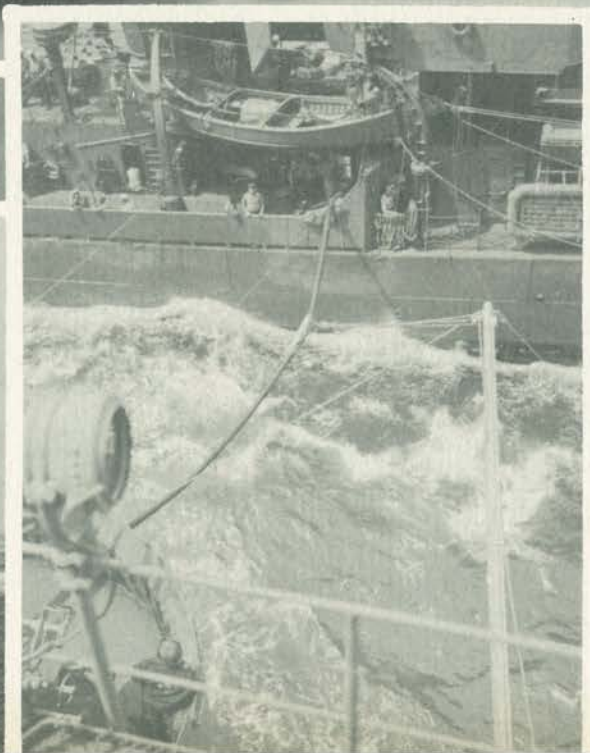
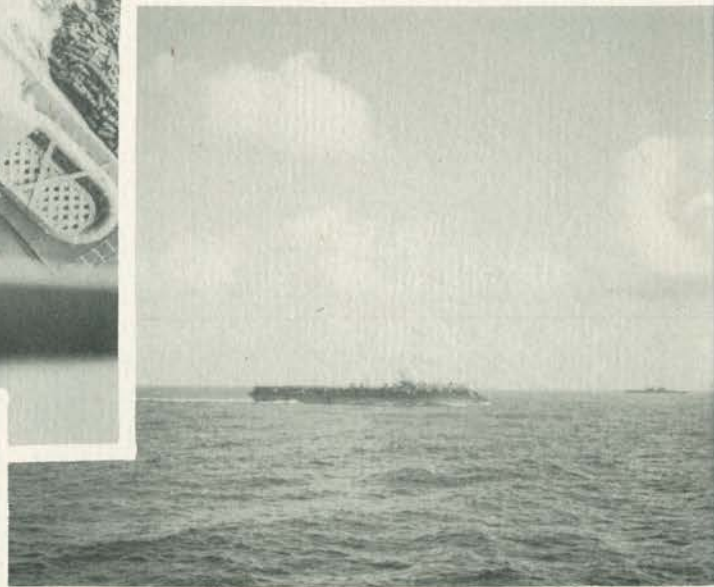
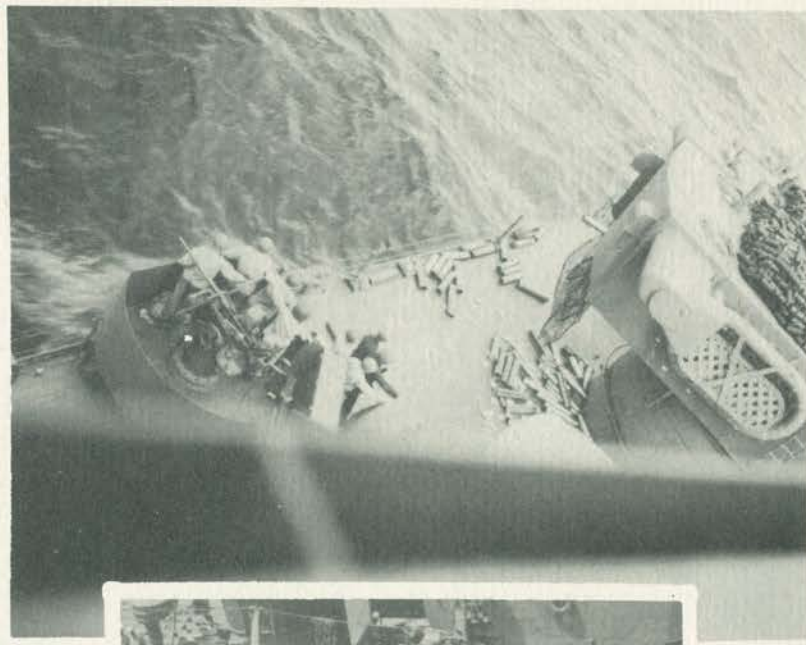
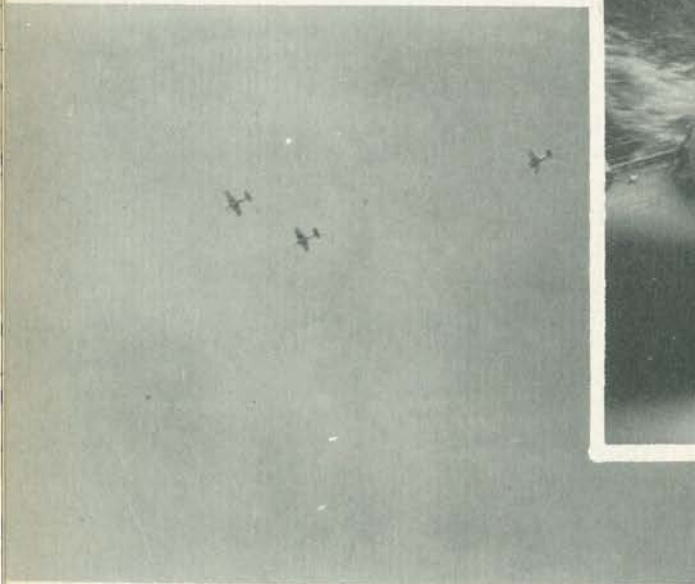
TARAWA AND WAKE ISLAND



RAIDS—SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER 1943



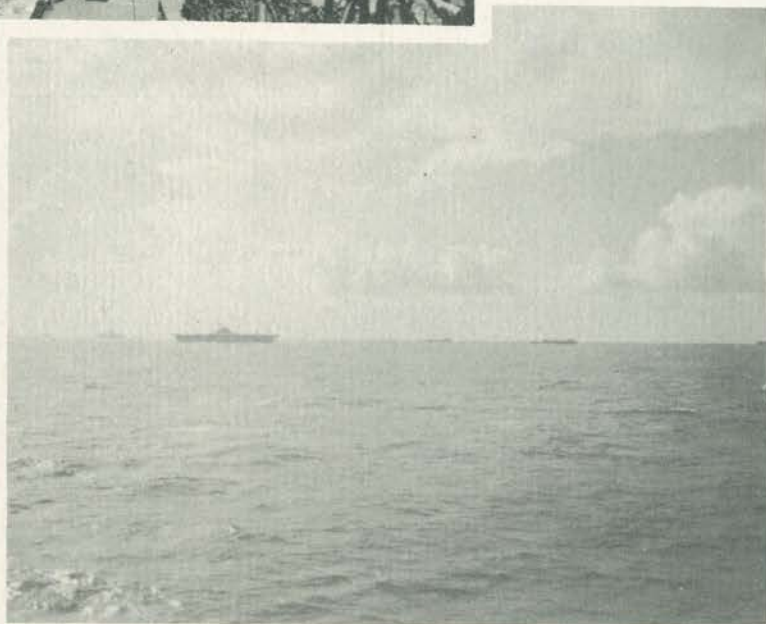
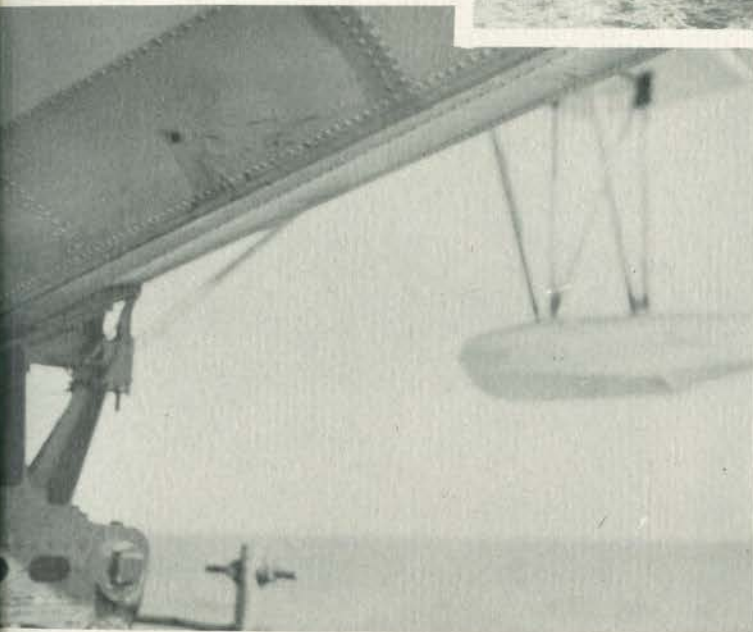
TARAWA AND WAKE ISLAND



RAIDS—SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER 1943

attacks launched that day but no surface contacts. This was the BIRMINGHAM'S initiation into the Pacific War, and there was disappointment in the hearts of eager but inexperienced gunners who fired not a single round. Old timers, especially survivors, knew better. Only one enemy plane came into sight that day and it was downed by our fighters before it could come into range.

It was reported that installations on Tarawa were largely



destroyed, considerable fuel and ammunition destroyed, a small freighter sunk, and other small craft in the lagoon sunk or left burning.

On the 18th the BIRMINGHAM headed eastward at 25 Knots until she rendezvoused with the entire Task Force on the 19th, refueled 20 September. The mission had been accomplished and a deserving "Well done" greeted all hands upon our return to Pearl Harbor, on 23 September 1943.

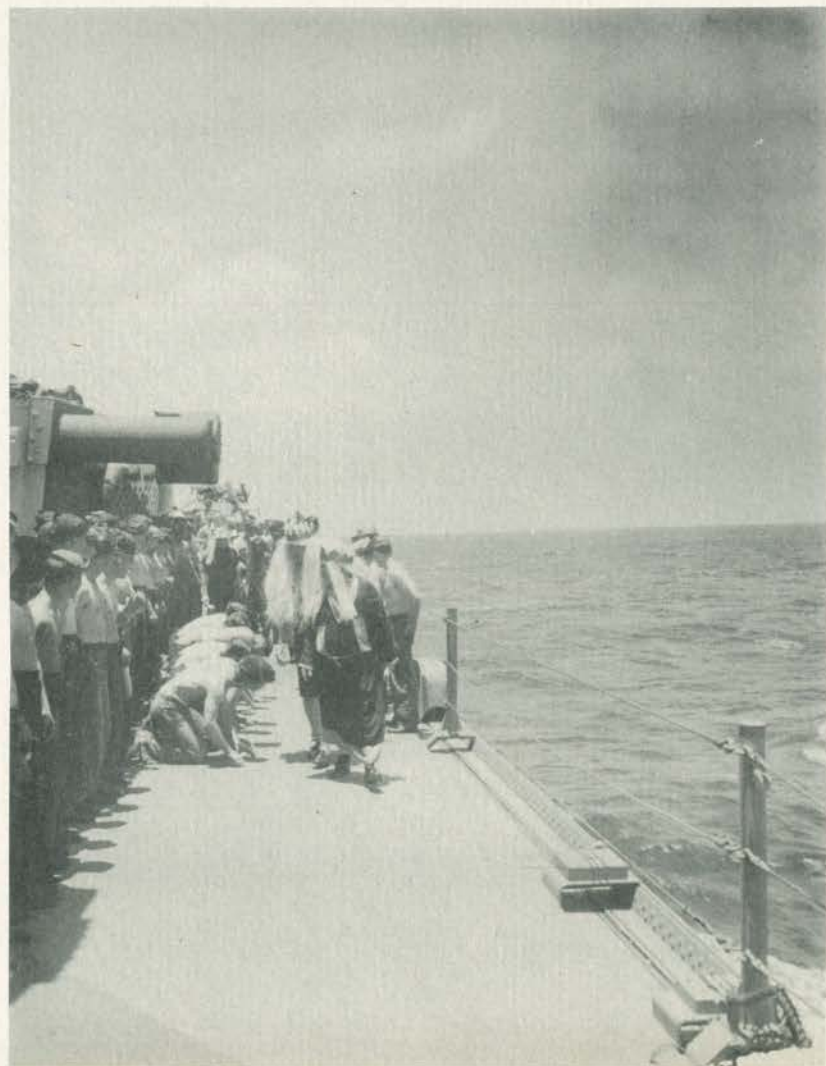
Until this trip the BIRMINGHAM had never crossed the equator, but she earned her diploma as a member of The Ancient Order of the Deep, right along with those other slimy Pollywogs whose threatened mutiny had to be suppressed by King Neptune's outnumbered but trusty Shellbacks. The Court of his Royal Highness had a busy day.

CROSSING THE LINE

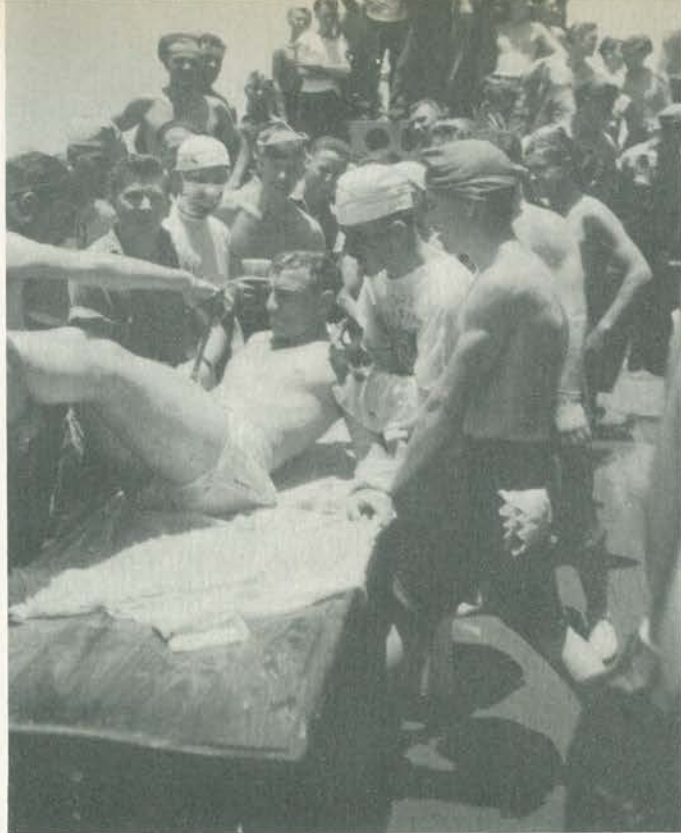


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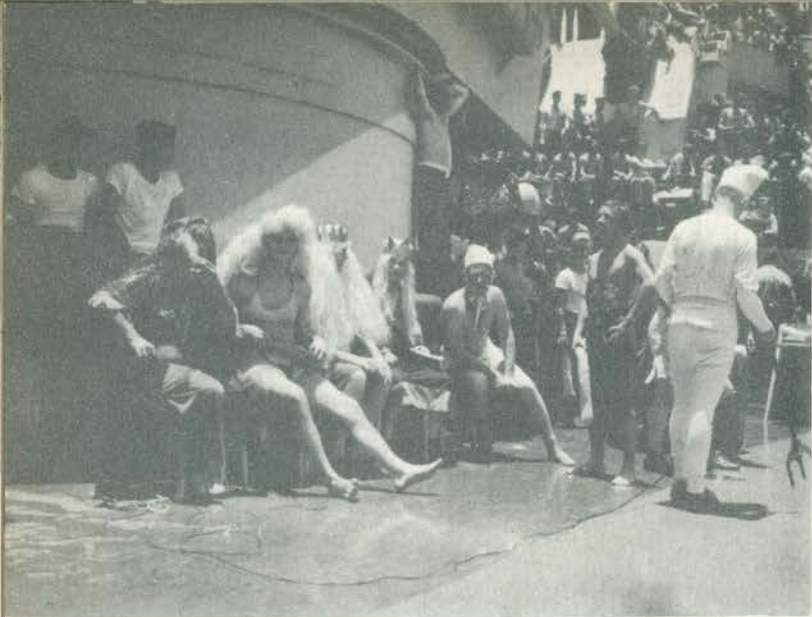
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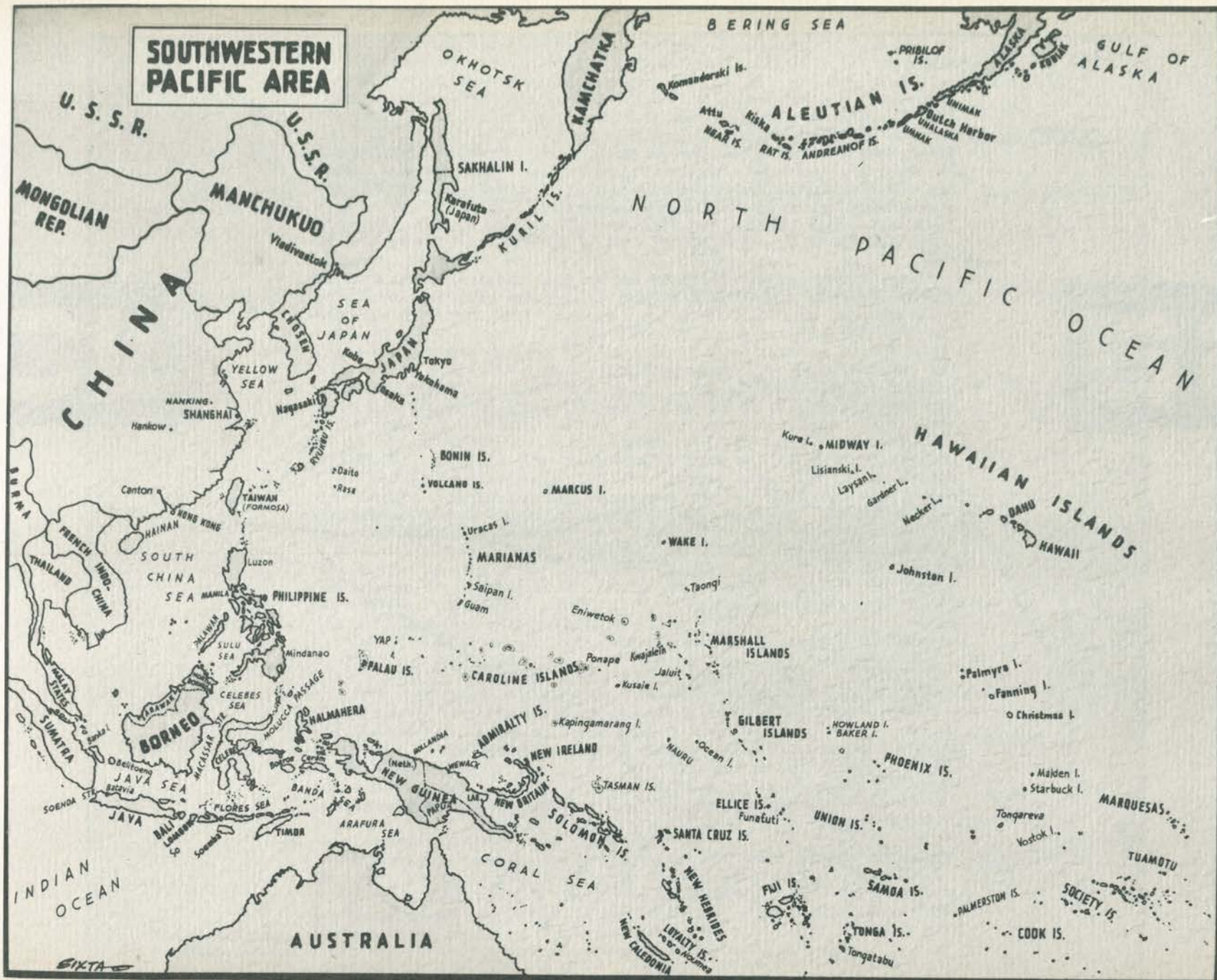






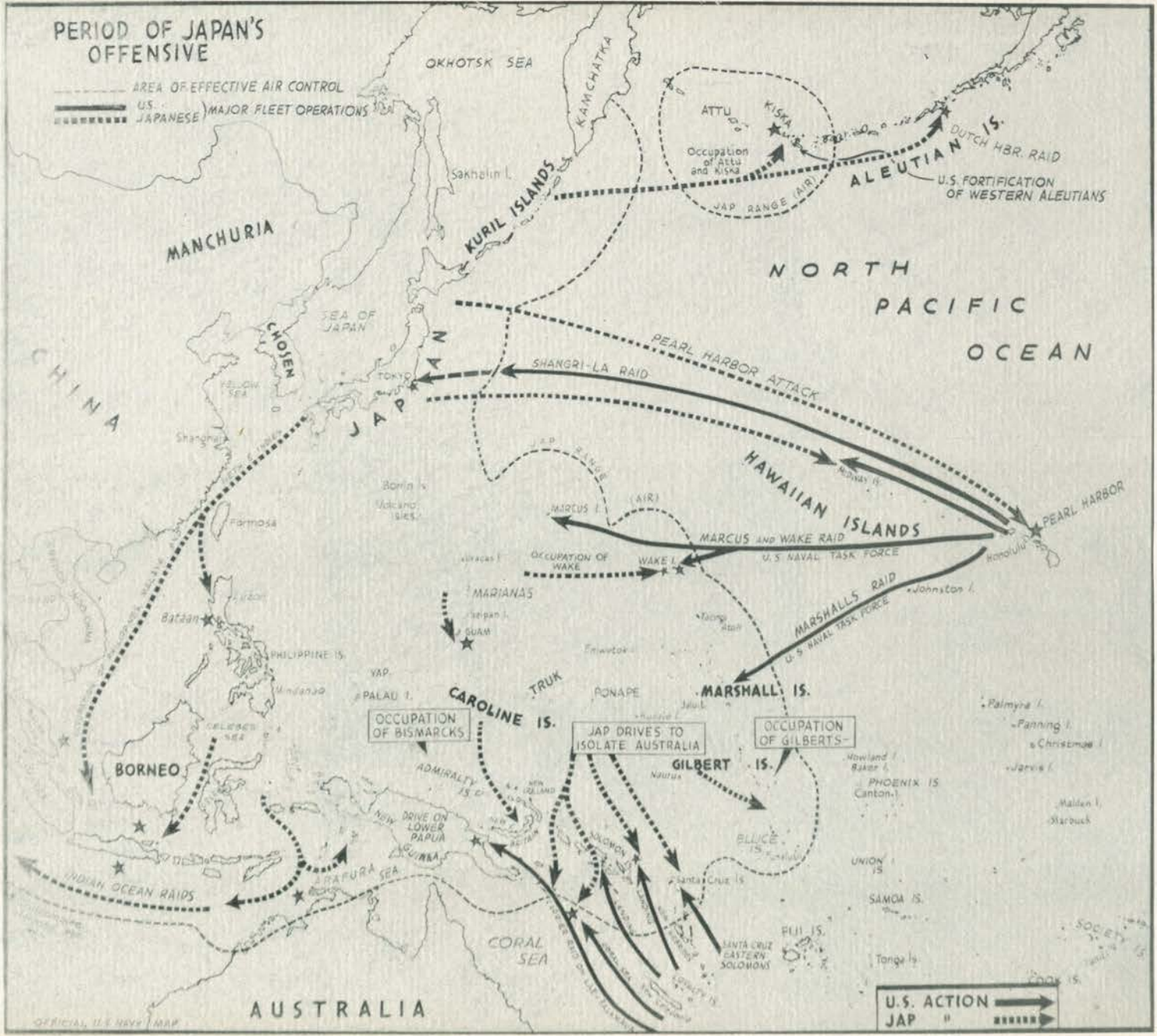


**SOUTHWESTERN
PACIFIC AREA**



PERIOD OF JAPAN'S OFFENSIVE

- - - - - AREA OF EFFECTIVE AIR CONTROL
 ——— U.S. MAJOR FLEET OPERATIONS
 - - - - - JAPANESE MAJOR FLEET OPERATIONS



OFFICIAL U.S. NAVY MAP

U.S. ACTION ———→
 JAP " - - - - -→

The ship returned to Pearl Harbor to await assignment.

The next action in which the BIRMINGHAM took an active part was the two day combined aerial and surface bombardment of Wake Island, on 5 and 6 October. This was to be the ship's first bombardment in the Pacific. The Task Force included the largest carrier striking force ever yet assembled. The BIRMINGHAM left Pearl Harbor September 29 for a brief period of training with the Task Force. On "Dog Minus One Day" October 5, there were several radar contacts with unidentified aircraft. No effort was made to intercept with the combat air patrol, secrecy was paramount. Evidently the Japs were not aware of our presence. We could not chance the combat patrol giving it away. On October 6 the northern bombardment group, composed of the cruisers, BIRMINGHAM, SANTA FE, MOBILE and NASHVILLE, plus screening destroyers was detached from the main body group to carry out its scheduled bombardment against the island. The supporting Task Unit was made up of two carriers, the INDEPENDENCE and BELLEAU WOOD plus five destroyers. One approach from Wake was made from the eastward. At 1248 we opened fire with the 5 and 6 inch batteries. This time the Japs were throwing shells at us from their 6" shore batteries. After a thirty minute duel, flashes from the Wake shore ceased. Jap broadcasts on our radio, to "save ammunition," were heard but not heeded. During the engagement the Combat Air Patrol intercepted two groups of enemy planes apparently from the Marshall Islands. In the two enemy groups was an estimated total of 13 bombers and 12 fighters, of which our fighters downed 5 bombers and 6 fighters. The bombardment ended at 1248. Upon completion of the bombardment we retired with our Cruising Group. The Carrier Group remained for a second day. All enemy A.A. fire was eliminated, air opposition smothered and the confidence of our pilots increased. The entire Task Force retired during the night of 6-7 October. The force refueled at sea on 8 October and headed north again for Pearl Harbor. The entire operation had been a preview of the forthcoming offensive of the Pacific War, on a small scale. On October 11 at 1137 the ship moved alongside the Naval Ammunition Station, Pearl Harbor, T. H., to take on ammunition and make preparations for the next operation.

Ten days later we were underway again with a formation of carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers and tankers, destination unknown. Ships present included the ESSEX, BUNKER HILL, INDEPENDENCE, TENNESSEE, INDIANA, COLORADO, MARYLAND, MOBILE, PORTLAND, GUADELOUPE, PLATT and screening destroyers. A southerly course was set. On 4 November, after an uneventful cruise, the force arrived at Espiritu Santo.

It was announced that our next operation was to be in support of landings in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. The word had no sooner been put out than rumors began to circulate of surface action in the Solomons and need of additional surface support at Bougainville. At midnight we started taking on fuel, supplies and ammunition, a hangar full of 6"/47 cal. armour piercing. That was not shore bombardment stock.

At 1059 the morning of 5 November the BIRMINGHAM got underway for Purvis Bay at a speed of 30 knots. Ships present, SANTA FE, MOBILE, MURRAY, McKEE, JOHN ROGERS, and HARRISON. At 1010 the next day we passed through the torpedo nets at Purvis Bay, Florida Island, Solomons. We transferred our ammo to a lighter for use by other ships. All hands got a fair nights sleep that night. It was to be the last for quite a while.

CL

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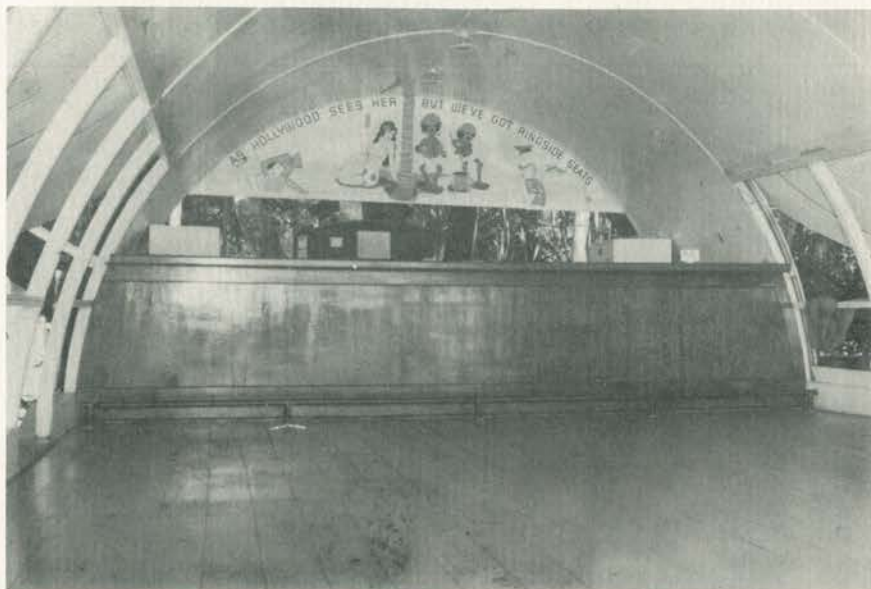
BIRMINGHAM, HONOLULU, ST. LOUIS AT PORT PURVIS



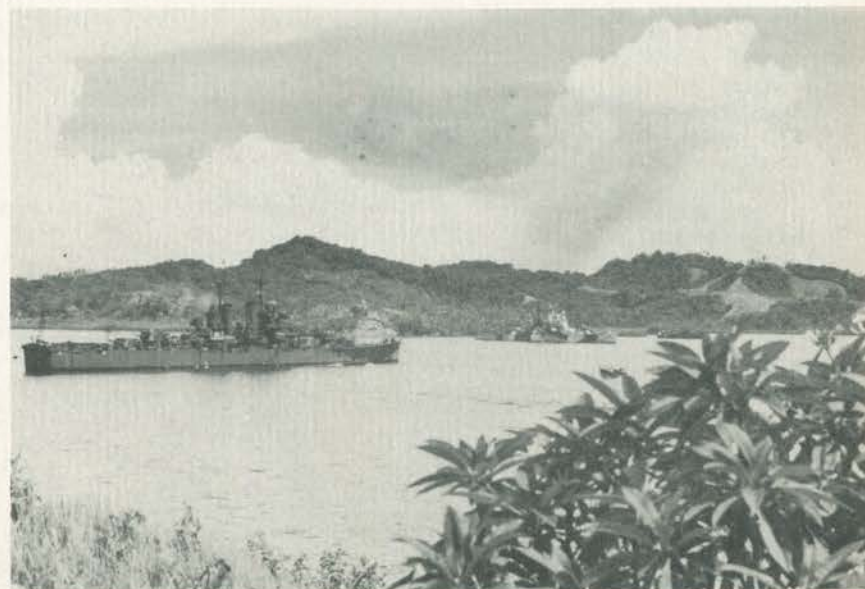
FROM DIXIE ISLAND, KULA GULF, SOLOMON ISLAND



DIXIE ISLAND OFFICERS' CLUB



DIXIE ISLAND OFFICERS' CLUB



PORT PURVIS, HONOLULU, AND BIRMINGHAM

The next morning at 0833, 7 November, we were underway again, headed up "The Slot." Our assignment was to cover the unloading of transports at Empress Augusta Bay. Surface support consisted entirely of light cruisers and destroyers. Our force consisted of the three cruisers of Cru Div 13 and four destroyers under the tactical command of Admiral DuBose, ComCruDiv 13, on the SANTA FE.

The night of 7-8 November was a night of false alarms, numerous enemy flares, bogie contacts and on the whole, unrest. The transports reached Empress Augusta Bay on the morning of the 8th and completed unloading by late afternoon in spite of a noon air attack, which was effectively handled by transport A.A. fire.

For us, that day brought more alarms, bogies and several visual contacts by screening ships of Jap snoopers. The ship remained at General Quarters practically all day. All A.A. batteries were manned constantly.

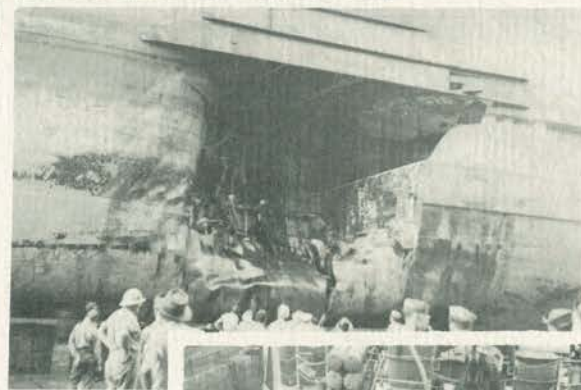
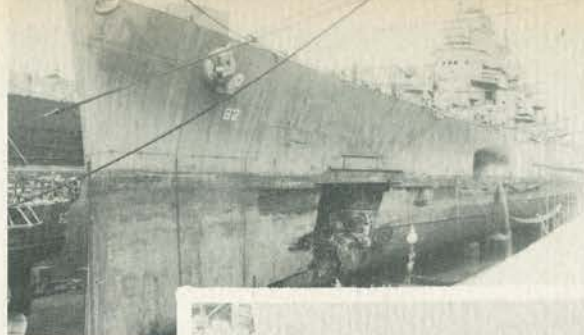
The night of 8-9 November was not to be a night of false alarms.

Toward dusk a Jap snooper, a twin engined bomber—Betty—came in to look the situation over. When taken under fire by the MOBILE, the Jap turned away and retired to the northward. In the distance our radar operators could see this Jap rendezvous with a large attacking force which split into groups and closed the formation. Darkness set in, bogies closed from all sides, the crew waited tensely in the darkness.

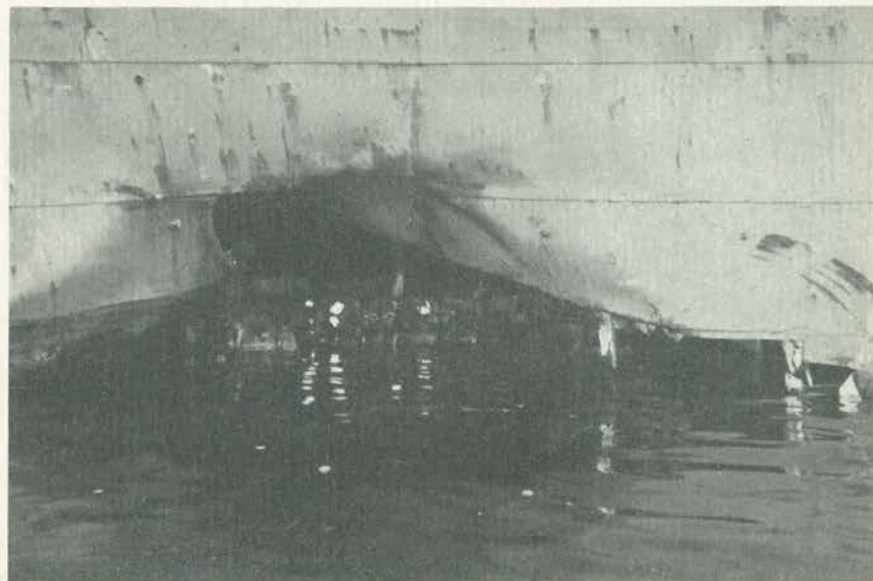
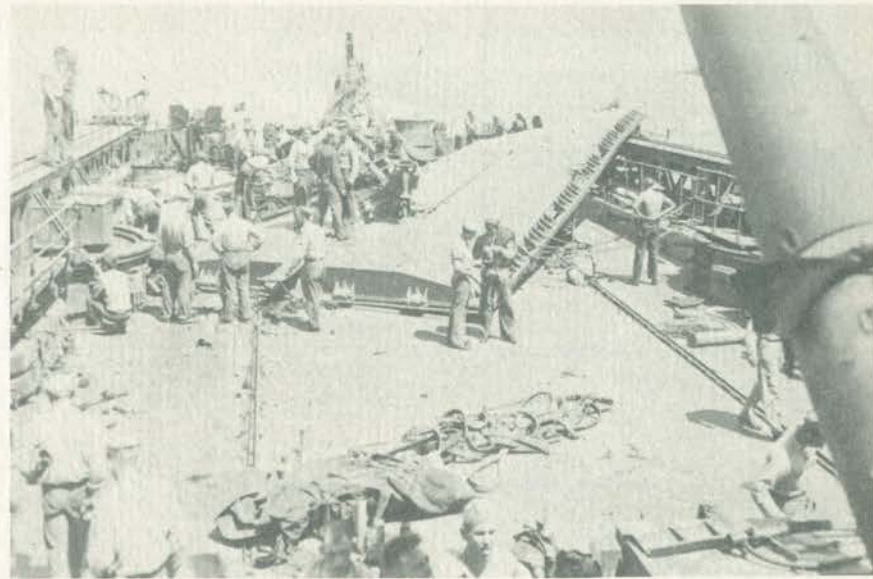
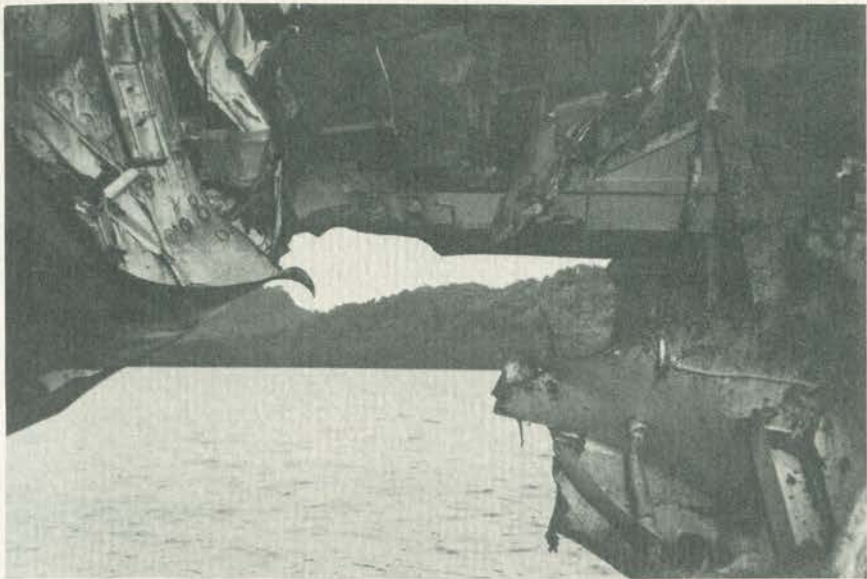
The BIRMINGHAM was the first ship in the formation to open fire. She engaged the attackers with her main battery while the planes were outside of range of the dual purpose A.A. battery. The lighter guns opened up as the planes came within their range. It appeared that the Japanese had singled out the BIRMINGHAM as the primary target. This was to be her first night action in the Pacific and one which would not be soon forgotten by those on board. It was dark, the enemy attack was smoothly coordinated and viciously pressed home. The action was extremely fast. The force maneuvered violently at high speed. The water was crisscrossed with torpedo wakes. Ships took individual avoiding action to dodge torpedoes and attacking planes. All batteries fired simultaneously.

Fire commenced at 1930 and ceased at 0340 the following morning.

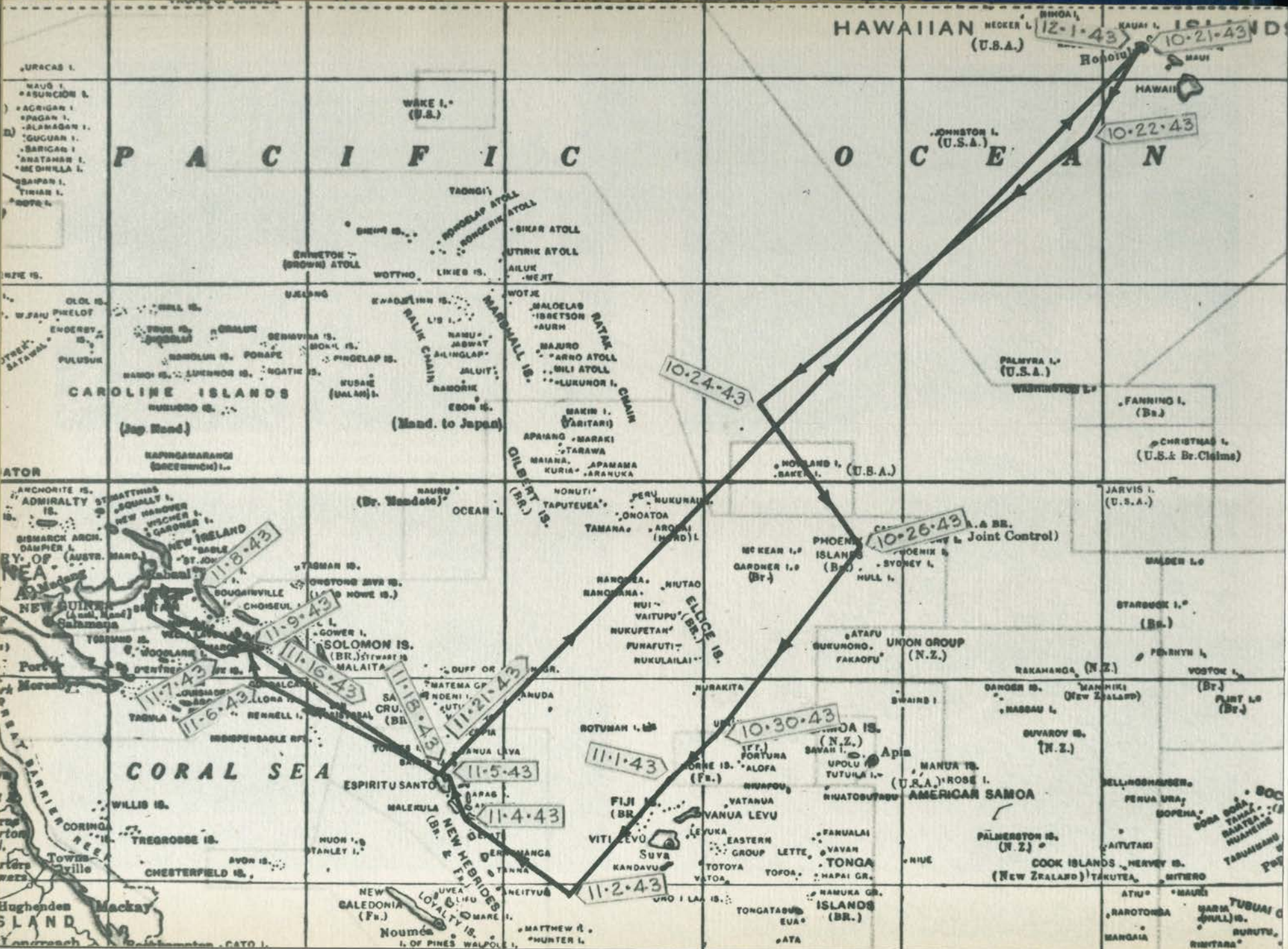
The BIRMINGHAM was credited with four sure kills and one assist. Eleven planes were shot down by the entire force. In return the BIRMINGHAM took one torpedo in the bow, one torpedo or skip bomb in the stern and a bomb on turret four. Thanks to the sturdy construction



SHIP'S DAMAGE AFTER NIGHT



PLANE ATTACK—BOUGAINVILLE



HAWAIIAN ISLANDS (U.S.A.)

PACIFIC OCEAN

URACAS I.
NAU I.
ASUNCION I.
ACRIGAN I.
PAGAN I.
ALAMAGAN I.
GUGUAN I.
BARICAN I.
ANATMAN I.
MEDHILLA I.
SAPAN I.
TIRIAN I.
ROTEL I.

OLOL I.
W. FARU PHELOF
ENDERBY I.
PULUSUK
CAROLINE ISLANDS
(Jap. Mand.)
RUPUNGU I.
NAPINGAMARANGI
(GREENWICH) I.

WAKE I. (U.S.)
TAONGI I.
BONHOLAP ATOLL
BONGERIK ATOLL
SIKAR ATOLL
UTIRIK ATOLL
LILIK I.
WOTHO
KADAFIN I.
LIS I.
NAMU
JABWAT
ALINGLAP
JALUIT
RANORIK
ESON I.
MAKIR I. (FARITARI)
APRIANG
MARAKI
TARAWA
MAIANA
APANAMA
KURIA
ARANUKA

10-24-43

PALMYRA I. (U.S.A.)
WASHINGTON I.

FANNING I. (Br.)
CHRISTMAS I. (U.S. & Br. Claims)

ANCHORITE I.
ADMIRALTY I.
BISMARCK ARCH.
DAMPIER I.
NEW GUINEA
NEW IRELAND
BOUGHNVILLE
CHOISEUL I.
SOLOMON IS. (BR.)
MALAITA
SA CRU. (BR.)
TONGAREVA I.
RENNELL I.
INDISPENSABLE I.

NAURU (Br. Mandate)
OCEAN I.
NONUTI
TAPUTEVEA
ONOATO
TAMANA
ARORAI (MORD) I.
RAROROA
NIUTAO
NANOANGA
HUI
VAITUPU
NUKUPETAH
FURAFUTIT
NUKULALAI

10-26-43

PHOENIX ISLANDS (Br.)
SYDNEY I.
HULL I.

JARVIS I. (U.S.A.)
MARDEN I.
STARBUCK I. (Br.)
PERRYNH I.
VOSTOK I. (Br.)
PIRT I. (Br.)

WILLIS I.
TREGROBE IS.
AVON I.
STANLEY I.
NEW CALEDONIA (Fr.)
NOUMEA
I. OF PINES
WALPOLE I.

ROTUMAH I.
FIJI (Br.)
VITI LEVU
SUVA
KANDAVU
VATANUA
VANUA LEVU
VITUKA
EASTERN GROUP
TOTOA
TOFOA
TONGATAPU I.
ISLANDS (Br.)

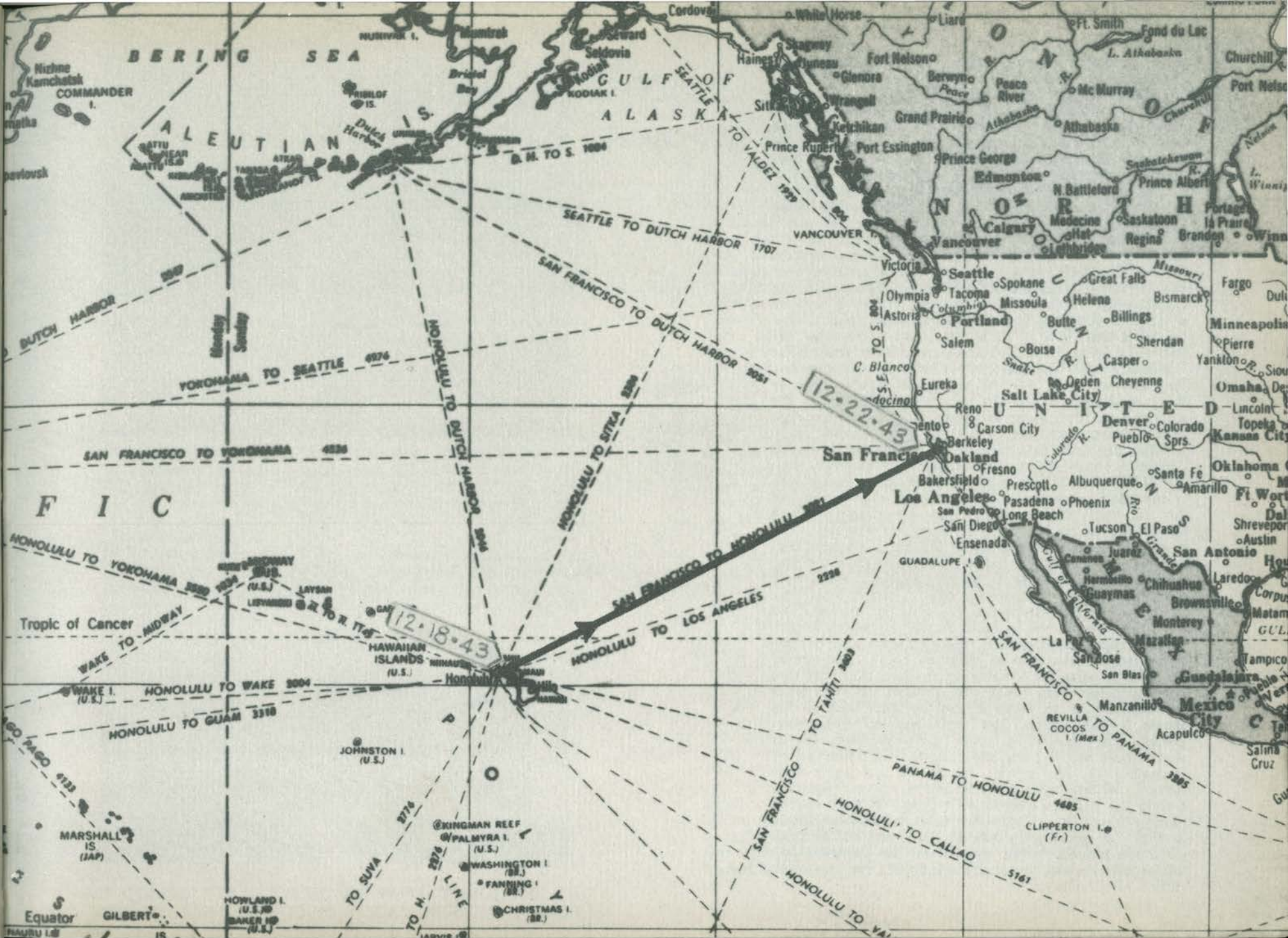
10-30-43

AMERICAN SAMOA
MANUA IS.
ROSE I.
HUIE

BELLINGHAM I.
FENUA URA
SOPEHA
SOPA
TAKUTEA
MITERO
ATIU
MAUI
RAROTONGA
MANGAIA
TUBUAI I.
BURUTU
RHYTARA

11-2-43

Hughenden
Mackay
CATO I.



BERING SEA
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
NUNIVAK I.
MOTOF I.
Dukof Harbor
TANAGA I.
ATKAD I.
KODIAK I.

GULF OF SEATTLE
ALASKA
Sitka
Ketchikan
Prince Rupert
Port Essington

Yukon
Ft. Smith
Fond du Lac
L. Athabaska
Churchill
Port Nelson
Athabaska
Mc Murray

DUTCH HARBOR
YOKOHAMA TO SEATTLE 4276
SEATTLE TO DUTCH HARBOR 1707
SAN FRANCISCO TO DUTCH HARBOR 2051

SAN FRANCISCO TO YOKOHAMA 4236

F I C

12-22-43

SAN FRANCISCO TO HONOLULU 328
HONOLULU TO LOS ANGELES 328
HONOLULU TO SAN FRANCISCO 328

HONOLULU TO YOKOHAMA 3380
WAKE TO MIDWAY 1824
WAKE I. (U.S.)
HONOLULU TO WAKE 3004
HONOLULU TO GUAM 3318

12-18-43

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS (U.S.)
JOHNSTON I. (U.S.)
MARSHALL IS. (IAP)
GILBERT IS.
HOWLAND I. (U.S.)
BAKER IS. (U.S.)

KINGMAN REEF (U.S.)
PALMYRA I. (U.S.)
WASHINGTON I. (BR.)
FANNING I. (BR.)
CHRISTMAS I. (BR.)
TO SUVA 2714
TO H. LINE 2274

SAN FRANCISCO TO PANAMA 3985
PANAMA TO HONOLULU 4685
HONOLULU TO CALLAO 5161
CLIPPERTON I. (Fr.)
MANZANILLO
ACAPULCO
GUADALUPE I.
REVILLA COCOS I. (Mex.)

HONOLULU TO VAL

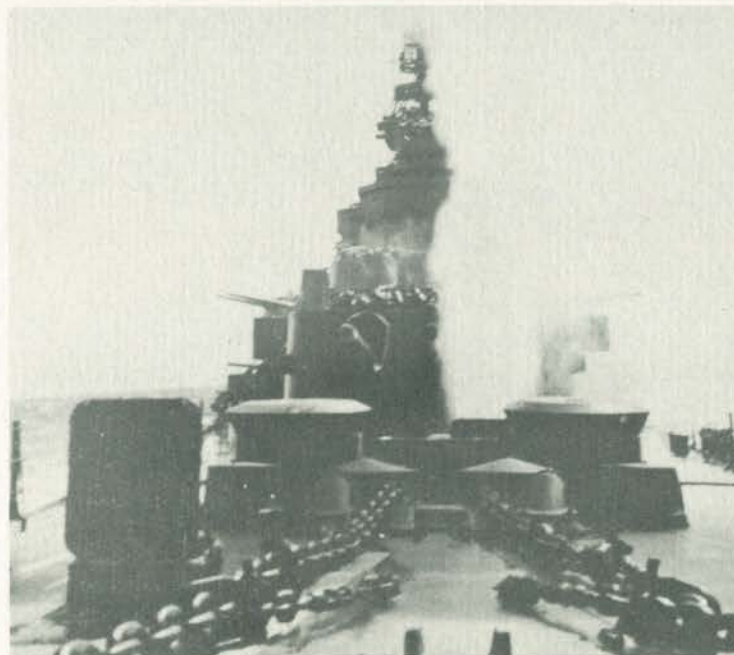
of our good ship we were able to "float, mote and shoot" throughout the night.

The next day Tokyo Rose admitted the loss of 15 planes, but claimed the sinking of three American battleships, two aircraft carriers, seven cruisers, thirteen destroyers and many transports. The Birmingham, only ship even damaged, thus became equal to a whole one-ocean-Navy in Tokyo's eyes.

In the morning we separated from the rest of the force and proceeded to Purvis Bay to receive some temporary repairs.

After completing our temporary repairs we got underway for Pearl Harbor November 16. The trip was one which must have made a record of some kind. Sailing in company with us were two destroyers with one engine each, one aircraft carrier with no planes and we of course, had two gaping torpedo holes, both below the waterline, plus a slightly bruised turret. The "B" steamed 5,000 miles to the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard under her own power! The last 1,000 miles were the toughest. The weather was foul. Waves broke repeatedly over the bow. It was feared the whole forward part of the ship might carry away, but America had built the type of ship that could take it.

The trip was not without its bit of entertainment. We became the only ship ever to boast a geyser. Every time the BIRMINGHAM'S bow plunged into a wave, air was caught and compressed "Tween wind and water," in the forward torpedo hole. The recurring pressure threatened to buckle the bulkheads so we opened a vent to the main deck to allow the air to escape. That relieved the "panting" but we got more than we bargained for. All the rest of the way to Pearl, every time we pitched into a swell a huge geyser, nearly mast-high, erupted from the forecandle. The boys dubbed it "Old Faithful." We arrived at Pearl Harbor December 1. Admiral Nimitz took a personal interest in our ship and arrangements were made to have the entire crew moved off the ship to recreation centers at Camp Andrews and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and to have the yard work continuously in an effort to get the ship back to the States for Christmas. The yard workers were soon brought into the spirit of things (coffee for them, served at all hours helped) and they had their job finished by December 18. We left for the States that same day. Smooth sailing, with the hull intact, was a pleasure. During the trip, we averaged 24 knots. Captain Inglis's plans worked out perfectly—we anchored in Mare Island at 1022 the morning of December 22, and at 1430 that afternoon the first sailor went down the accommodation ladder with his sea bag over his shoulder. He was going HOME for Christmas.



GEYSER COMING FROM HATCH ON FO'S'LE, OPENED TO RELIEVE PRESSURE CAUSED BY TORPEDO HOLE IN BOW

CHAPTER III

HUNTER'S POINT TO PEARL

We left Hunter's Point on February 18th in company with the destroyers Uhlmann, Newcomb and Longshaw. The 772 passengers crammed on the ship didn't know it then, but they were in for a rough ride to Pearl. The sea began to run high the minute the Golden Gate passed out of sight, and at 8 o'clock that night the Uhlmann lost a man overboard. She was unable to pick him up, and the incident didn't help the glumness which enveloped the ship as the United States fell rapidly astern.

Passengers and Birmingham recruits were miserable throughout the trip, and there were at least 500 cases of seasickness. The ship took on a non-standard camouflage, and head and compartment cleaners worked overtime. The weather limited exercises to tracking, and communication drills, until well along the trip, when diminishing seas permitted some A. A. fire.

We arrived at Pearl on the 23rd and immediately began wading knee deep in training exercises scheduled for the ship.

We calibrated rangefinders and radars, lined up the main and secondary batteries, fired countless "sleeve runs." The main battery fired long range battle practices and exercised at spotting. On the 29th, we bombarded the island of Kohoolawe.

That night we received orders to meet the carrier Intrepid, which had been torpedoed and was having trouble making harbor. We made all preparations to tow, but in spite of a missing rudder, the Intrepid, aided by two tugs, made port without our assistance.

Each cruiser on her way to the forward area must pass all the designated exercises. We completed ours successfully on March 2nd, and at that time were ready to proceed West.

I'VE SEEN IT ALL, I'VE BEEN TO PURVIS

On March 5th, the Birmingham and destroyers Thatcher, Hopewell, and Dashiell left Pearl and headed southwest for Funafuti, a small atoll in the Ellice group. Diamond Head fading over the horizon was the last glimpse of American territory a lot of boys would ever see. None of us could foretell what lay ahead, or the chain of events which would lead us back to Pearl in November.

On March 9th, we crossed the equator, and all Pollywogs were properly initiated into the realm of Neptuneus Rex.

On the 10th, preceded by our two aircraft, we steamed

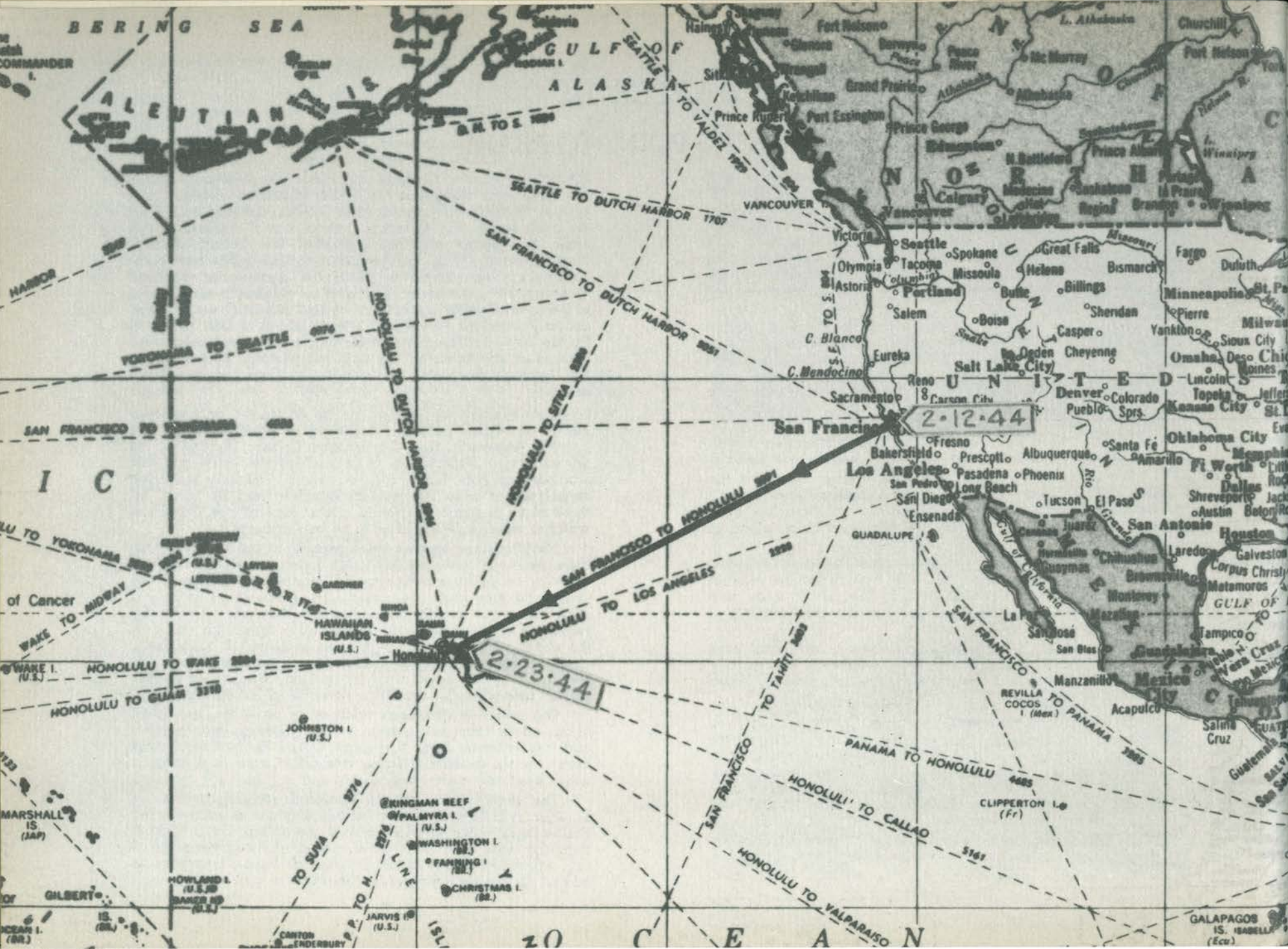
through Te Buabua Channel into Fongafale anchorage, Funafuti, and went along side the tanker Polonaise. Funafuti is a typical Pacific atoll—crystal clear lagoon, flat, hot, and short on fresh water. But for some time it was a major stepping stone for planes and ships headed for Espiritu Santos, New Hebrides, long an important allied advanced base. Swimming over the side in Funafuti's lagoon was excellent. We reported to Commander Third Fleet (Halsey), and instead of being directed to Espiritu, as we had expected, we received orders to head for Purvis Bay, Florida Island, Solomons group. Purvis Bay—this brought back memories to those who were aboard in November of '43, as it was the first port in which the Birmingham anchored subsequent to her damage at Bougainville.

That evening we headed for the Solomons, anchoring in Purvis on March 14th, and reporting to Admiral "Close the Range" Ainsworth, then Commander Cruiser Division 9. As the anchor hit bottom, few of us realized we would call this Godforsaken hole 'home' for 2½ months. The only other big ships present were the cruisers Honolulu and St. Louis, all three of us in black and white zigzag camouflage. Condition watches were modified so as to be less arduous.

Florida Island was no south sea island paradise. The natives were not attractive, although many boys claimed they grew lighter as the months went by. Trading for cat-eyes, grass skirts and war clubs flourished—but those of us who had seen too many movies soon learned that, contrary to the teachings of Cecil B. DeMille, the native knew the value of the good old American dollar, and preferred it to trinkets, cheap jewelry, etc. Most business was transacted on the beach, but a day never went by without its quota of dugout canoes alongside the fantail or port side of the forecandle.

The island itself looked pretty from off shore, but that's about all. It was hot, overgrown with heavy undergrowth, and infested with bugs and snakes. The Recreation Center, better known as Monte Carlo, was OK if you liked coke or warm beer.

The weather was hot, as Florida is only 7° below the Equator. A man without a good tan was out of uniform, and during noon hour, topside looked more like Coney Island than the deck of a man-of-war. Many chanced the tropical rain squalls and slept topside, as below decks compartments heated up like an oven during the day.



BERING SEA

GULF OF SEATTLE
ALASKA

YUKON RIVER
MACKENZIE RIVER
ATLANTIC OCEAN

ALEUTIAN ISLANDS

SEATTLE TO DUTCH HARBOR 1707

SAN FRANCISCO TO DUTCH HARBOR 1851

HONOLULU TO DUTCH HARBOR 1851

HONOLULU TO SITKA 1851

SAN FRANCISCO TO HONOLULU 1851

HONOLULU TO LOS ANGELES 1851

SAN FRANCISCO TO YOKOHAMA 1858

YOKOHAMA TO SEATTLE 1876

WAKE TO MIDWAY

HONOLULU TO WAKE 1884

HONOLULU TO GUAM 1888

MARSHALL IS. (JAP)

GILBERT IS. (BR.)

PHOENIX IS. (BR.)

JOHNSTON I. (U.S.)

KINGMAN REEF (U.S.)

PALMYRA I. (U.S.)

WASHINGTON I. (BR.)

FANNING I. (BR.)

CHRISTMAS I. (BR.)

JARVIS I. (U.S.)

CANTON ENDERBURY

SAN FRANCISCO TO TAHITI 1803

PANAMA TO HONOLULU 1885

HONOLULU TO CALLAO 1861

HONOLULU TO VALPARAISO

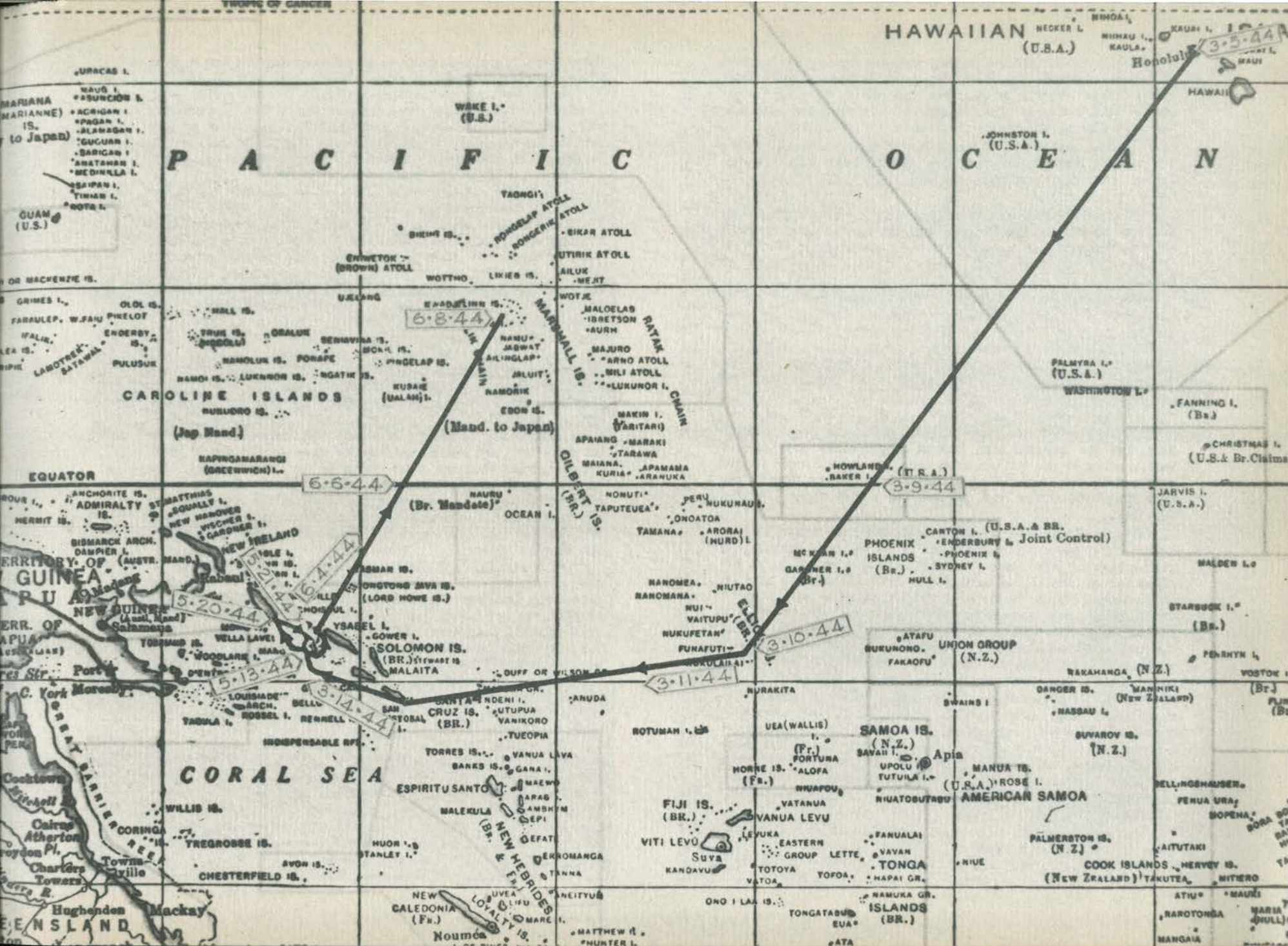
REVILLA COCOS I. (Mex)

CLIPPERTON I. (Fr)

GALAPAGOS IS. ISABELLA (Ecu)

2-12-44

2-23-44



HAWAIIAN (U.S.A.)
HECKER I.
NIHOU I.
KAUAI I.
KAUAI I.
MAUI I.
HAWAII I.
JOHNSTON I. (U.S.A.)

P A C I F I C O C E A N

MARIANA IS. (to Japan)
GUAM (U.S.)
MORVAN I.
WAKE I. (U.S.)

TAONGI I.
BONERAP ATOLL
BONGERIK ATOLL
BIRAR ATOLL
UTIRIK ATOLL
ALUX I.
WOTJE I.
MALOELAB I.
IBREYSON I.
MAJURO I.
ARHO ATOLL
MILI ATOLL
LUKUNOR I.
MARIANNA I.
APAMAMA I.
ARANUKA I.
MARSHALL IS. (Hand. to Japan)
GILBERT IS. (Br.)

CAROLINE ISLANDS (Jap Hand)
NAPINGAMARANGI (GREENWICH) I.
RUEUDORO IS.

NAURU I. (Br. Mandate)
OCEAN I. (Br.)
NEW IRELAND I.
NEW GUINEA I. (Aust. Mand.)
YSAHEL I.
SOLOMON IS. (Br.)
MALAITA I.

HOWLAND I. (U.S.A.)
BAKER I. (U.S.A.)
PHOENIX ISLANDS (Br.)
CANTON I. (U.S.A. & Br. Joint Control)
ENDERBURY I.
PHOENIX I.
SYDNEY I.
MULL I.
SATAFU I.
BURURONG I.
TAKAFOU I. (N.Z.)
UNION GROUP (N.Z.)

EQUATOR
TERRITORY OF GUINEA
TERR. OF APUA
C. York
GREAT BARRIER REEF
NEW ENGLAND

ROTUMAH I. (Br.)
VANUA LAVA I.
VANUA LEVU I.
FIJI IS. (Br.)
VITI LEVU I.
SUVA I.
KANDAVU I.
NEW HEBRIDES (Br. & Fr.)
LOYALTY IS. (Fr.)

UEA (WALLIS) I. (Fr.)
MORNE I. (Fr.)
VANUA LEVU I.
FIJI IS. (Br.)
VITI LEVU I.
SUVA I.
KANDAVU I.
SAMOA IS. (N.Z.)
SAVAII I.
TUTUILA I.
NIUATOBUTUBU I.
AMERICAN SAMOA (U.S.A.)
MANUA IS.
ROSE I.
TONGA ISLANDS (Br.)
TONGATAPU I.
TONGAREVA I.
TONGATABU I.
TONGAREVA I.

CORAL SEA
WILLIS IS.
TREGROSSE IS.
CHESTERFIELD IS.

RAKAHANGA (N.Z.)
SUVAROV IS. (N.Z.)
AMERICAN SAMOA (U.S.A.)
MANUA IS.
ROSE I.
TONGA ISLANDS (Br.)
TONGATAPU I.
TONGAREVA I.
TONGATABU I.
TONGAREVA I.

... Movies on the fantail, boxing matches among the various divisions and with the St. Louis, softball games, and other entertainment helped relieve the monotony, but it still got boring after a month or so. It got to be a standard joke that we were getting underway the next day—to shift berths.

On first arriving, scuttlebutt had it that we would strike at Kavieng, New Britain, any day. As it turned out, this was correct and the plans were all laid, only to be cancelled at the very last minute.

On the 28th of March, in preparation for the contemplated Kavieng operation, the Birmingham, St. Louis, Honolulu and eight destroyers went to sea for two days of training exercises. On the 29th all ships had returned and anchored again in Purvis.

On March 21st, the ships in the anchorage went on 24 hours notice for getting underway and stayed that way until the first of May. Throughout April we scraped, wire-brushed, painted, re-scraped, re-wire-brushed, and re-painted, and that's about all except to alternately receive and cast off the destroyers, Terry, Saufley, Hopewell and Franks from our port side.

It used to be good fun when these destroyers would come alongside. The remarks passed back and forth are not printable, but the general idea is that they claimed our anchor was welded to the bottom, and that we were caught in our own potato peelings. We told them that if they didn't take their tin-plated canoe and get out, we would draw 45's and sink them.

We finally turned over the main engines again on the 1st of May, getting underway for three days of training in the vicinity of Savo, San Cristobal and Guadalcanal. In the afternoon of the 3rd, we returned to Purvis and went on four hours notice. Naturally the scuttlebutt spreaders were at work again. When we traded all our armor piercing ammunition for high capacity on the 10th, all of us knew we were in for a stretch of shore bombardment duty. By now, we knew something was in the air, but no official information was forthcoming, so the rumor mongers held sway.

On the 11th, we went out for a day and conducted communication drills with shore fire control parties on Guadalcanal. On the 17th, we sortied with the other two cruisers and headed up the slot for Hathorn Sound, Kula Gulf, New Georgia Island, arriving early the next morning. Present were two other Cleveland class cruisers, the Cleveland and Montpelier, comprising CruDiv 12, to which we were subsequently attached on the 13th.

Hathorn, although better than Purvis, was still a far cry from the Hollywood version of a tropical paradise. We were to see a lot of it in the next two weeks. Highlights of our time

there were organized visits to a captured Jap airport and to Kolombangara Island.

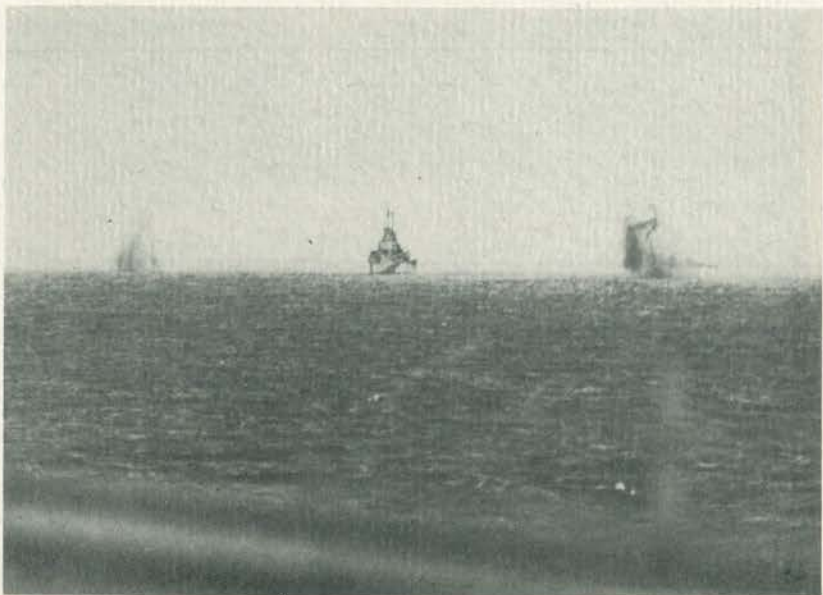
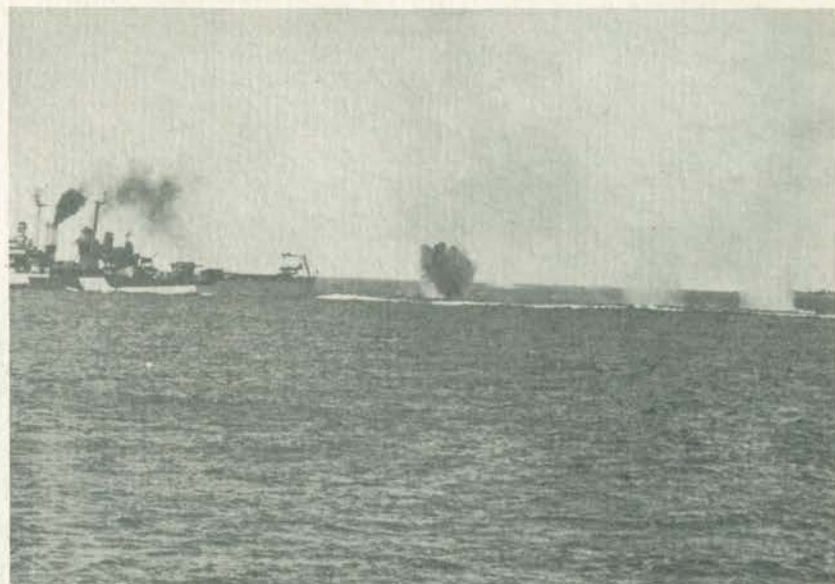
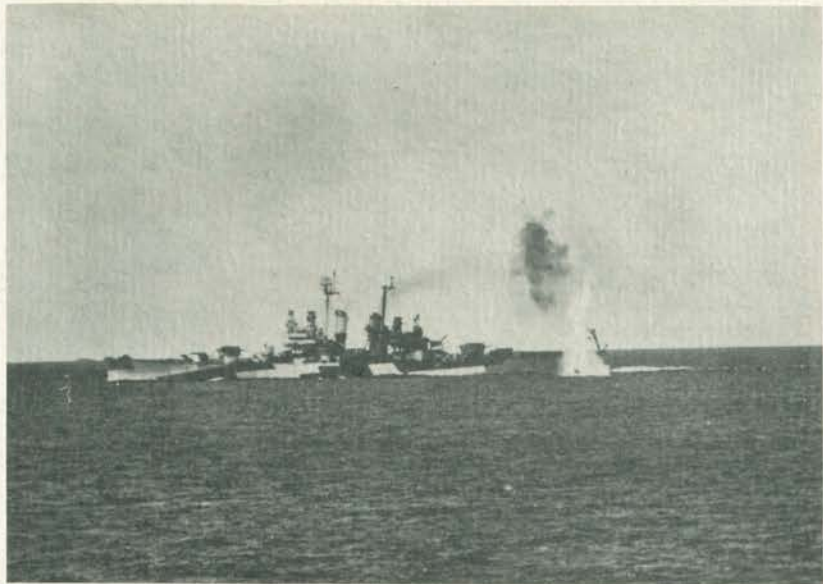
Using Hathorn as a base, we made several sorties with CruDiv 12, conducting shore bombardment and anti-aircraft exercises, the most interesting of which was the firing on live targets, Japanese shore installations in the Shortland Islands on May 29th. The Japs straddled the Birmingham at one point, and scored a hit on the forecastle of the Cleveland Montpelier at another. We retired at noon and then headed for Purvis, arriving the morning of the 21st.

On the 25th, we took part in a full dress rehearsal of a landing staged at Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal. It was complete with pre-arranged neutralization fire, H-hour, invasion troops, shore fire control parties, and post-landing call fire. In the light of future events, this was an extremely valuable experience. None of us could completely appreciate it at the time, however, as we were still in the dark as to where we were going and what our job was going to be.

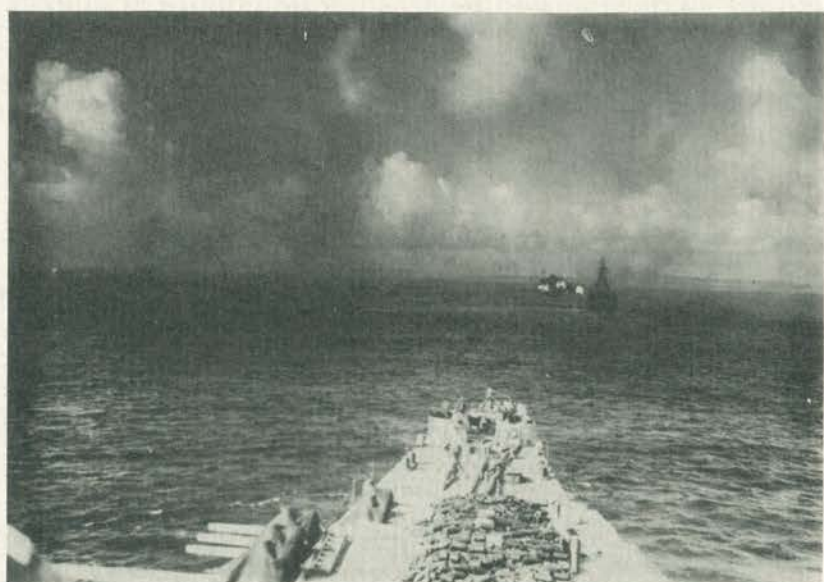
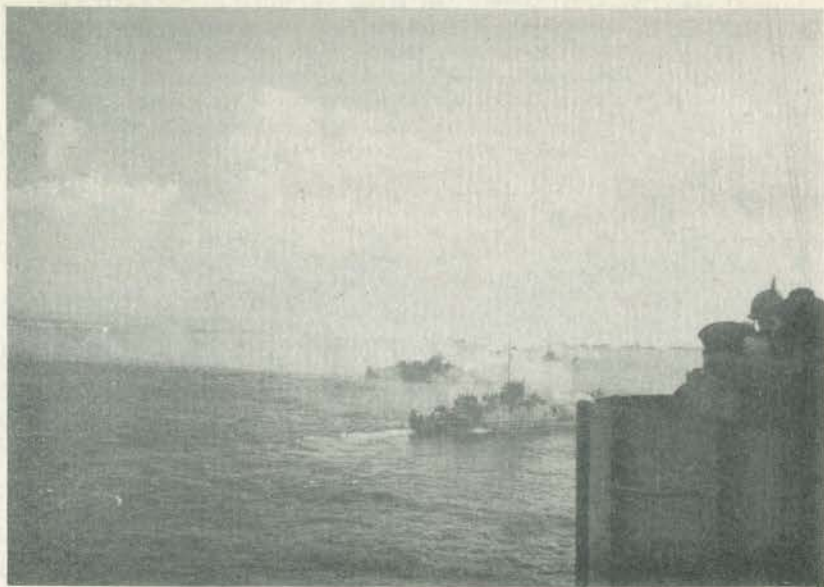
In the first few days of June, we came into contact with an enemy in addition to and less subtle than the Japanese, Bacillary Dysentery. We were still in the process of rigid and prolonged training for impending operations, but a high percentage of the crew was incapacitated. At one point, there were 240 cases requiring medical treatment. Dysentery or no dysentery, we left Purvis Bay for good on the 4th of June, rendezvoused with the troop ships of an attack group, and headed north via Indispensable Strait for Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. That evening the Captain told the crew that the Birmingham, as a unit of the bombardment forces, would take part in the invasion of the Mariannas Islands, primarily the island of Saipan.

On the morning of June 8th, we anchored in Roi anchorage, Kwajalein, and immediately "topped off" with fuel and provisions. Looking around at the tremendous number of ships present, we got a pretty good idea of the planning that had gone into the operation, and of the amount we had at stake. Actually, only one Task Force, the bombardment force, was present in Roi. Task Force 58, a most formidable unit in itself, was at near-by Enewitok. With us were the Tennessee, California, Colorado, Louisville, Cleveland, Montpelier and numerous destroyers. The Honolulu and St. Louis were part of another bombardment group.

We sortied with the above ships on June 10th. Coincidentally, the epidemic of dysentery aboard the Birmingham reached its peak this day. We zigzagged towards Saipan through the 11th and 12th without incident. On the morning of the 13th, a plane on anti-patrol spotted a periscope, and destroyers raced out and depth-charged over the contact, without visible results. At 11 o'clock, the air patrol splashed a Jap Betty 45 miles from the formation.



JAP SHORE BATTERIES FIRING—14 JUNE, 1944



D-DAY—SAIPAN—15 JUNE, 1944

The ship's No. 1 radar operator had the 8 to 12 in Combat that night. In his words: "We had both the search radar gears in operation. Ships were reporting Bogies to the Task Force Commander. While searching for low flying aircraft I happened to notice a rain cloud which looked a little unusual. I checked it, and upon further investigation, found a surface target, hiding inside the cloud. It was reported to the Task Force Commander, but went unconfirmed by the other ships of the force. I was pulling my hair, as I was sure it was a bonafide contact, and nobody would believe it. About five minutes later, the Montpelier verified our report. A destroyer, the Melvin, was detached, finally, and ordered to investigate. We were pretty tense in COMBAT as we felt our reputation was at stake. Upon arriving in the designated area, the destroyer blared over the radio that she had picked up our target. She was given permission to open fire. A few seconds later, the Melvin reported that the surface target had faded, and had been replaced by a strong sound contact, indicating a diving submarine. Depth charge attacks were carried out, and a few minutes later oil and debris came to the surface. The Melvin was credited with a "probable kill."

On the way to the Mariannas, officers and key men aboard ship met and discussed the coming operation. Maps and plans were broken out and studied, procedures outlined. The part the Birmingham was to play was only too clear. On D-1 day (one day prior to the landing) we were to proceed to a point 2,500 yards off Afetna Point, one of the minor promontories on the east coast of the island. Twenty five hundred sounds like a lot of yards, but when you are dealing with 6", 5", 3" and 40mm. guns, it is the next thing to slingshot range, and the maps showed many Jap ordnance installations



around Afetna Point. On D-1 day, we were to support the Underwater Demolition Teams, firing as necessary to cover them. On D-day, we were to provide fire coverage for the assault troops, as well as act as a marker for them. (The '62' on our bow was in 3 foot letters for this purpose.) The operation plan went into rather grim details; if hit and in danger of sinking, the Captain was directed to beach the Birmingham and continue to render fire support if possible. June 14th was D-1 Day.

At 0100 on the morning of the 14th lookouts spotted a red glow on the horizon. It was Saipan, still burning from Task Force 58's preliminary strikes. About an hour later, a vessel, later identified as a Japanese transport, was picked up by radar, evidently attempting to flee the locality. A destroyer was detached and ordered to sink it with gun fire. It burst into flames a minute or so later. By 0200, the outline of Saipan was clearly visible, and the Birmingham, Tennessee and California left the formation to proceed independently to their fire support stations. At 0300, we launched aircraft for spotting purposes. At 0552 we were close enough, and opened up with the 5" and 6" batteries against assigned targets. A little after 0800, we began drawing counter-fire from the shore. At 0845, the APD's, carrying the Underwater Demolition Teams, were within 1,000 yards of the beach, and began putting their small boats in the water. The Japs must have thought it was the first wave, because all hell broke loose. The APD's and all ships within range received heavy, continuous, and accurate fire from the beach. The Birmingham, was repeatedly straddled, and near misses caused shrapnel to spatter against the sides of the ship and whine through the rigging. All our batteries went to rapid continuous fire, and the din was terrific. We sprayed the beach and picked out enemy guns where we could. The Captain shouted, "Don't be afraid to use the damned ammunition. That's what it's for."

As the ship maneuvered, placing one side and then the other towards shore, the word was passed "Now the starboard side is the engaged side," and hands stationed to starboard found cover as best they could. A few minutes later it was the men on the port side who were digging in, and those to starboard came up for air.

A third division gunners mate, stationed in the lower handling room of a 5" mount, describes what it was like below decks: "After about two hours of continual firing, the deck of the handling room had an inch of sweat, which was pouring off us as we passed the powder and shells up. It made keeping on your feet a problem in itself. The ping of shrapnel on the bulkheads was almost continual."

At 1130, when the UDT's had completed their reconnaissance for submerged mines and tank traps, all ships withdrew. Miraculously, only two men were wounded and the

ship received only the most minor damage. The two casualties were back at their stations in 30 minutes. So far we had expended several thousand rounds of 6" and 5" ammunition. At times the guns had gotten so hot that the bloomers had become ignited. Hoses were played on the blistered barrels to cool them down.

We secured from GQ, recovered our planes, and then at 1406, headed back into Point George. Jap shore batteries opened up again, but the reception was not as hot as it had been that morning.

That night we fired "Harassing Fire" at prearranged targets on Saipan-crossroads, airfields, railroad stations, suspected gun emplacements, troop concentrations, etc. A good part of this consisted of firing starshells. It was always a question in our minds, who got harassed most, the enemy or us?

The next morning, D-day, a black pall of smoke hung over the island. Looking back at the horizon, we could see what looked like hundreds of troop and cargo ships outlined against the sky. These ships began putting their landing craft in the water, and soon the sea was literally covered with small craft of all descriptions. Meanwhile, the Birmingham, firing deliberately at prearranged targets as she went, moved back into her original point. Jap return fire was only sporadic.

By 0800, with minor adjustments, all vessels, apparently numbering thousands, from battleships to open boats, were in assigned positions with parade ground precision. At 0730, after a murderous air strike, ships increased the tempo of bombardment of the beaches. Enemy defenses were receiving a relentless pounding. H-hour was first 0830, then changed to 0840. At 0815, landing craft started for the assault beaches, passing the Birmingham in perfect formation led by amphibious tanks, guided by SC's and PC's and supported by LCI (G)'s firing 40mm. guns and rockets, a terrific spectacle those topside will never forget. The first wave went over the reef into the lagoon at 0836. Enemy shore batteries, concealed mortars, positioned inland, and AA batteries in the hills suddenly commenced a vicious shelling of the landing craft. The Birmingham again went to rapid continuous fire in an attempt to knock out these guns. A marine who went by us that day, later came aboard and said those in his boat thought we had been hit; our entire starboard side was a wall of heat, flame, and smoke.

As the first wave hit the beach, we were forced to slow down and lift our fire inland. It was gratifying to learn that the marines who went in through our fire support sector had a well established beachhead before 9 o'clock.

At 0930, we were in communication with shore fire control parties ashore, but no call fire was requested until mid-after-

noon. We withdrew at 1030, recovered one of our planes, and then delivered occasional counter-battery fire from moderate ranges. At 1120, we secured from GQ and set an easier condition. All afternoon, we periodically fired counter-battery and call fire. That evening, enemy planes were reported attacking the transport area. Every AK and AP present must have opened up, because you couldn't see the sky for 40mm. tracers. We headed for the area, but the attack proved ineffective and we returned to our fire support sector. During the night, we fired illumination and harassing fire against Saipan and Tinian. Again we wondered who was harassed most. Later in the operation, one learned how to sleep with a 5" mount singing a lullabye ten feet overhead. At dawn on D-1 day (June 16) enemy planes were reported over the transports again, and once more the AK's and AP's put on a Fourth-of-July show.

D plus one day was a grim day for the Army and Marines on Saipan. The Japs played havoc with the troops, pouring heavy, accurate, and well controlled mortar fire onto the beachheads. It was sheer murder for a while. Our shore fire control spotter was almost frantic, but was pinned down and unable to spot. These mortar positions defied detection from air, surface, or ground. The Japs were extremely clever at concealment of equipment and themselves. Day after day—Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Okinawa—search as we might with high powered rangefinders and binoculars, we rarely saw a Jap soldier or movement of any kind. Yet the next day, the troops ashore would report heavy resistance in the very area we had searched.

All the 17th we fired at targets of opportunity and targets selected by the shore fire control party. That night, harassment and illumination were routine until 3 o'clock in the morning, when the Japs started one of their nightmarish Banzai charges. We stepped up the rate of starshell fire and threw in 6" fire for good measure. Favorable reports were received from our spotter, and later we learned the attack had been beaten off with the Japanese suffering heavy losses. As the sun came up, we had exactly 23 starshells left on board.

In spite of the mortar fire, Banzai charges and suicide tactics of the Japs, our troops continued to move ahead, though not without cost. Landing craft continually streamed past the Birmingham towards the beach with men, equipment and supplies. But they came past going the other way too, loaded with wounded.

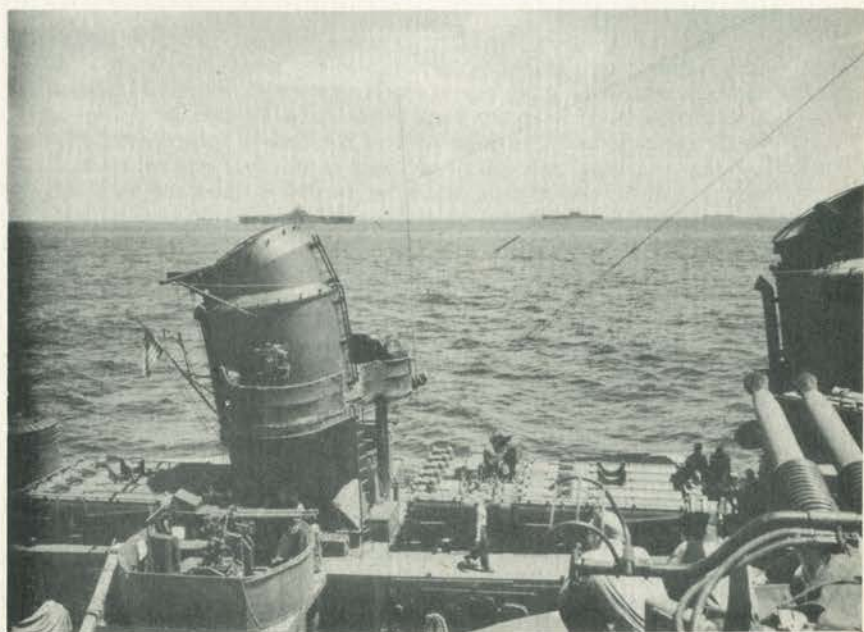
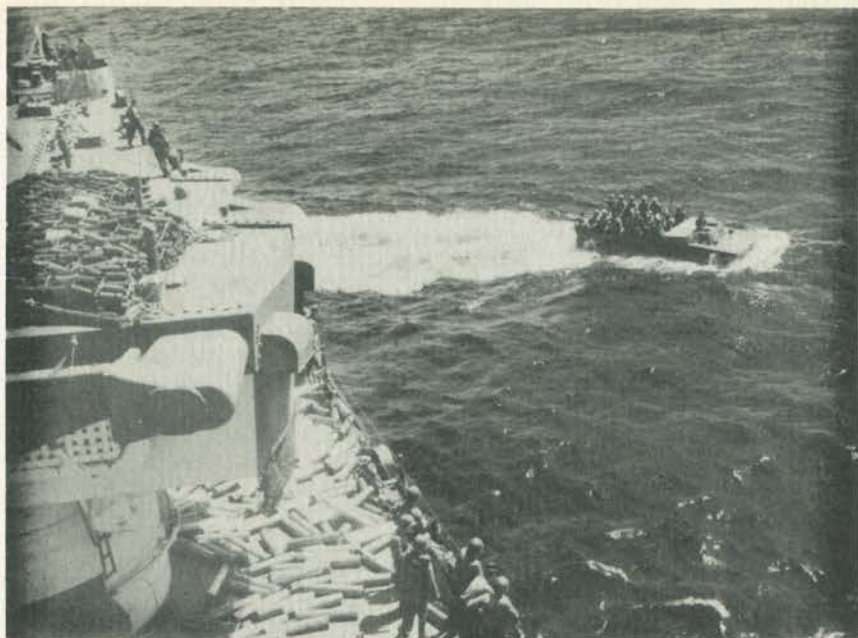
Early on the 17th, we received the word that the Jap fleet was out and headed towards Saipan. We all half-expected this. At dawn, the Birmingham was detached from the bombardment force, ordered to replace ammunition, and report to another Task Group for a prospective air and surface action.





BOMBARDMENT—SAIPAN AND

62



TINIAN—JUNE, 1944

THE TURKEY SHOOT

On June 17 we left Saipan, rendezvoused with the Cleveland, and Montpelier at noon, and headed west to join Task Force 58. A large scale engagement with the Japanese Fleet, surface or air or both, was in prospect, as a considerable enemy force, including battleships and carriers, had been sighted enroute from the Philippines to the Mariannas. Tokyo had claimed repeatedly that the Mariannas campaign was the show-down, and evidently this was their bid to disrupt U. S. operations.

At 1600 that day, we joined up with our assigned Task Group, consisting of the Lexington, Enterprise, Princeton, San Jacinto, CruDiv 12 plus the Birmingham, Indianapolis, and screening destroyers. Operating with a fast carrier task force, 58 or 38, was always considered most preferable by us. Parenthetically, few civilians realized that the only difference between Task Force 38 and Task Force 58 lay in who was in command. Halsey and Spruance would alternate; if the former was in charge, it was 38, if the latter it was 58. The ships were always the same. It was usually good for a laugh when your family wrote that they had read that one force had relieved the other, and that they hoped you were getting a nice rest. And while Halsey was out operating, Spruance was in the States or with CincPac, planning the next operation, and vice versa.

Steaming out in the open with the newest and best ships of the fleet was pleasant compared to the nerve-racking and often monotonous business of working over an island 24 hours a day as a bombardment ship. Task Force 38 and 58 steamed at 20 knots or better a good part of the time. Flight operations by the carriers, refueling, passing mail, and constant zig-zagging enlivened a dull watch, and most of us were egotists enough to get a kick out of making history, as Spruance and Halsey were doing.

All through the 17th and 18th we zigzagged westward at 18 knots. In the morning of the 18th, a Jap 'Betty' torpedo bomber was shot down by the CAP 45 miles from the formation. That afternoon, the Jap fleet was reported to the southwest, and the formation changed course accordingly. At 8 o'clock in the morning of the 19th, the Task Force was 85 miles from Guam, Many Bogies began appearing on the screen. The carriers launched fighters, and interception began. Soon the radio was alive with tally-ho and splash reports. Aces were made in less than an hour. It was truly a 'Turkey Shoot' for our pilots. But some enemy planes got through to the various Task Groups. Just before noon, five Jap torpedo bombers attacked our formation from astern. The Birmingham and other ships opened up on one to starboard. The result was spectacular; one wing flew off in one direction, the torpedo plummeted straight down, and the fuselage and other

wing burst into flame. The other four planes were splashed before they could loose their torpedoes. By 3:30 in the afternoon, more than 400 Japanese planes had been shot down by fighters and ships' anti-aircraft fire. This was an all time high.

The carriers recovered their planes and we headed for the Jap fleet again. It was difficult to make much westerly progress, as the formation had to continually turn into an easterly wind to launch and recover aircraft. That night and the morning of the 20th we continued on at 23 knots. On the afternoon of the 20th, the enemy was reported within striking range, and the sky overhead was soon alive with planes forming up for heavy strikes. As the planes disappeared over the horizon, the men on the surface ships waited with bated breath for the contact report. It came at 1850 that evening. The results were in every newspaper. But not so much was said about the subsequent events. It was pitch black as the planes began to return. All ships were ordered to turn on masthead lights. A destroyer in the van pointed a searchlight skyward. It was an eerie feeling, as we had steamed completely darkened since the beginning of the war. Despite these aids, the planes, desperately low on fuel, had trouble getting back to their ships, and soon pilot after pilot was forced to put down in the water. Emergency flares dotted the ocean around the formation. Several planes crashed in the sea close aboard the Birmingham. We lost many planes in that manner that night. At one point the men on the carrier San Jacinto were watching their planes circle overhead. Suddenly an unfamiliar looking insignia passed through the beam of a searchlight—it was the Rising Sun on a Japanese Val. The plane disappeared before a shot could be fired. Whether the enemy pilot thought it was his fleet below and was coming in for a landing, or whether he was just out for a look, nobody will ever know.

Meanwhile, destroyers were active picking up downed airmen. Through the efforts of these destroyers, and the thorough search effected the next day, loss of personnel was surprisingly small in comparison with the number of planes lost.

On the 21st, an air strike was launched to finish off the cripples left by yesterday's engagement. A fast unit, comprised of the newest battleships and carriers, was detached in an unsuccessful endeavor to overtake the fleeing remainder of the Jap fleet. At 1030 that night, all ships were dangerously low on fuel, and the Task Force Commander ordered all pursuit abandoned. On retiring towards the Mariannas, our unit passed through the waters which were the scene of the major strike against the enemy fleet. Much debris was visible, and several Japanese survivors were discovered and taken aboard by destroyers.



AIR TRAILS FROM DOG FIGHTS—FIRST BATTLE OF THE
PHILIPPINE SEA. 397 JAP PLANES SHOT DOWN

We reported back to the bombardment force on June 25th. The next day, we headed for the area just off Tinian Town, Tinian Island and proceeded to steam back and forth at slow speeds, firing deliberately at targets of opportunity. We received no return fire, and despite careful scrutiny, could discern no sign of life in this area. A sense of security, false in the light of future events, overtook us. That night we returned to Saipan and fired harassing fire.

The routine was the same, with minor variations, from the 27th of June until the 20th of July. We bombarded Saipan, Tinian, and the small nearby island of Agrigan. It was a tedious, tiring and thankless job. Seldom did we get a chance to evaluate the damage done by the ship's firing. We fired for Shore Fire Control Parties. We fired harassing fire and illumination, and the few nights we didn't, we retired with other ships, and returned in the morning. Only once during this period, on June 28th, on Tinian, did we see enemy troops. Slowly our own forces fought their way across Saipan. Afetna, Mutcho, Charan Kanoa, Garapan, Tanapag—all sooner or later were on the right side of the front lines chart that was kept up, day to day. Once or twice we had air alerts, but they never developed. After the Turkey Shoot, later labelled the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Mariannas were cut off from the Empire.

Meanwhile, plans had been laid for the invasions of Guam and Tinian. D-Day on Guam was July 21st. On the 20th, we left Saipan and proceeded south to participate in the initial landings on this ex-U. S. base. On arrival, we relieved the San Francisco and proceeded to lay Birmingham shells on this island as well. Except for witnessing the always fascinating spectacle of the troops moving in, the Guam mission was comparatively uneventful for the Birmingham. Again we had the maddening experience of being unable to see enemy movement of any description. That evening we were released and ordered to return to Saipan.

D-Day on Tinian, or J-Day as it was called to distinguish it from D-Day on Saipan and W-Day on Guam, was set for the 24th of July. The invasion plan was carefully worked out. All during the campaign on Saipan, ships had been putting particular emphasis on the western side of Tinian island from Guquan Point south past Tinian Town to the southern tip of the island. The Birmingham had spent many hours practically lying to off Tinian Town, working over everything that even looked like a target. Rarely did we see anything suspicious, and never did we encounter return fire from the beach. To our topside spotters and pilots, everything looked quiet and peaceful. It was discouraging. We burned cane fields, knocked down houses, radio and radar stations, and sprayed the shore with 40mm. fire. The northern part of the island received little or no attention.

On J-1 Day, duplicating the procedure at Saipan, UDT teams supported by fire support ships, including the Birmingham, went in off Tinian Town. The Japs had learned from experience, and held fire. We laid down a heavy barrage along the beach area. To all outward signs, the landings were to be on the west side of the island, near Tinian Town. But the next day, J-Day, was a rude awakening for the Japs. The main body of the landing force stormed ashore on the northern tip of the island, the part which had received almost no attention. That the strategy was successful, almost unbelievably so, was proven as follows. First, the troops got ashore easily and met little resistance until well down the island. Second, ships engaged in a fake landing off Tinian Town received a red hot reception. The Norman Scott had her bridge blown off and her Captain killed. The Colorado, stationed right where the Birmingham had spent so much time, received 27 hits in less time than it takes to tell, and suffered heavy casualties. Captain Inglis, seeing these ships in trouble, turned the Birmingham around and headed for their vicinity, only to be ordered back to the northern sector by the bombardment commander. Third, in the hours that followed, Jap troops were plainly in view as they tried to move up from Tinian Town to the landing area. It was evident that the island commander, convinced that the landings would be made off Tinian Town, had concentrated troops and guns in that area, leaving his northern flank vulnerable.

Throughout the landings, ships, aircraft, and artillery based on Saipan gave Tinian a thorough pasting. We got a close-up of the marine artillery at work. All their batteries would fire rapidly for a minute and then stop. The resulting concentration of explosions made the target area seem to erupt in dust, flame and smoke.

One plane from the Louisville crashed 500 yards off our bow that morning. A survivor was delivered aboard the Birmingham, but lived only for a minute. Enemy anti-aircraft batteries were active, and topside spotters observed another U. S. plane shot down in flames near Tinian Town. At 0930, a Louisville plane was ordered to spot for us. Suddenly the radio blared out that the pilot had spotted Jap troops moving northward. It was one of the few times we heard of clearly visible enemy troop movements. We immediately opened up, and started walking salvos through the area. At 1020, the plane reported we had flushed a covey of Japs, and we began to put shells out in earnest. The spotter became almost incoherent over the air, as he reported Japs running frantically in all directions. It is a question who was more excited, the Japs, the spotter, or us. Momentarily, the spotter lost the troops, but picked them up again, and again we put everything we had on them.

We ceased fire about 1100, and the Louisville plane reported the troop concentration was no more. It was a gratifying morning to all of us, because so often the only reports on the effectiveness of our fire we received were, "nice shooting," or "that should cover the area," or "area neutralized," and a good part of the time smoke, dust, or darkness cut down visibility so much that any analysis of effect was impossible.

Our troops continued to clean up Saipan and move ahead on Tinian, and the Birmingham continued the seemingly endless job of day-call fire and night illumination and harassing. One night, for the first time in the history of the ship, the searchlights were played on the beach in an attempt to catch enemy troops moving during the night. This process was called "making like a sun-beam," and although the operation was interesting, it was fruitless. On July 31st, while supporting a large scale offensive on Tinian, we were suddenly straddled by several large calibre shell splashes, which caused a flurry of excitement. It was never determined whether they were sporadic Jap fire or stray U. S. projectiles. On August 1st the conquest of Saipan and Tinian

was officially announced, although there were still a lot of Japs to clean out. On August 5th we were detached from the bombardment force.

Looking back at Saipan, Tinian and Guam, it was one of the most grueling operations experienced by the crew and officers of the Birmingham. The continual firing made rest and relaxation a problem. During the campaign, the batteries fired thousands of rounds without a major casualty. But by the end of July, our mounts and turrets needed an overhaul and regunning. Nevertheless, we were fortunate, compared to the troops on the beach. At least a couple of times a week we could retire out of the area, cool off and get some sleep. And, even if at GQ stations eight or ten hours, you could look forward to a shower and hot meal.

One fact that impressed all of us was the excellence of Jap camouflage. Only once, on Tinian, did we see enemy troops on the move. On the other hand, once ashore, our men and equipment were everywhere visible. Often we had a perfect view of U. S. tanks, flame throwers, and front line troops in action.

Behind the lines, our men could be seen engaged in all the rear activity that accompanies a large scale offensive. Mechanized equipment, supplies, prefabricated docks, and troops streamed ashore daily. Warehouses, an airfield, supply depots, developed before our eyes.

Despite fatigue and boredom, morale stayed high. Most everyone's sense of humor remained with him. Each station had its "characters." In Sky Plot, few will forget a certain Fire Controlman third class and his stories of his good old bootlegging days on the West Coast, or the ship's ace rangefinder operator and his "snow job." The antics of a certain fire control switchboard operator are legendary. On one occasion, a Jap soldier was spotted running out of a cave and excitedly reported to Plot by the topside control officer. The switchboard operator and phone talker, leaping to his feet, "Quick! Target angle and speed." Our confused director officer, "Level, cut in plot." Our hero, undismayed, "Level aye level."

Interesting and amusing incidents or not, we were all thankful to leave the area for good on August 5th.



SHIP CONVOY

After leaving Saipan, the Birmingham joined up temporarily with a group of new battleships, the Washington, Iowa, Alabama and Indiana. The ship was designated guide and stationed in the middle of the formation. It was comforting, if a little embarrassing, to be steaming all alone in the center of that array of power.

The next day, the Task Group contacted another unit which included the cruisers of CruDiv 13, to which the Birmingham is normally assigned by Pacific Fleet Organization. At 1135 that morning, the ship received orders to report to Admiral DuBose, commander Cruiser Division 13, and for the first time since leaving Mare Island Navy Yard in February 1944, the Birmingham took her place with this division.

Throughout the next few days, cruisers, battleships and destroyers fired offsets and AA., and conducted extensive day and night mock surface engagements. To most of the crew and a good many of the officers, these tactical exercises and battle problems were Greek. Someone would pompously announce "the red force is attacking our right flank!" The ship would step up to 25 knots; directors, mounts, turrets would obediently train out; repair parties would don steel helmets. After several drill loads and salvos, we would report "enemy sunk. When do we secure from GQ?" It was a nice change to watch the various ships slice the water at flank speed, but frankly, most of the time we didn't know which end was up.

On August 11th, the Task Group pulled into Enewitok. When the modified watch was set at 1126 that morning, it was the end of over two consecutive months of battle condition III.

The Birmingham, in need of some urgent repairs, was assigned to the tender Ajax. The Ajax did a lot for us, but about all we did for them was to give them an epidemic of dysentery. On analysis, the doctors discovered that many of our crew and officers were still "Carriers."

During availability alongside the Ajax, all four boilers were cleaned and overhauled, and major repairs affected where possible.

Enewitok, although no Garden of Eden, was a welcome change after the heat, dirt, and fatigue the ship experienced at Saipan. New fresh and frozen provisions were stocked, and other necessary supplies requisitioned and loaded. One bright omen, noted by all, was the exchange of 6" high capacity ammunition for armor piercing. This meant we would undoubtedly operate with a fast carrier task force for a while.

Recreation was a problem at Enewitok. There were a great many ships in the anchorage, and the beach was always crowded. But every fourth day, it was a change, at least, to go over and take a swim.

The ship remained in Enewitok throughout August, and aside from one red alert, all was quiet, and everyone got fairly well rested up. It was obvious that the ships of Task Force 38 were preparing for another series of major operations against the Japanese.

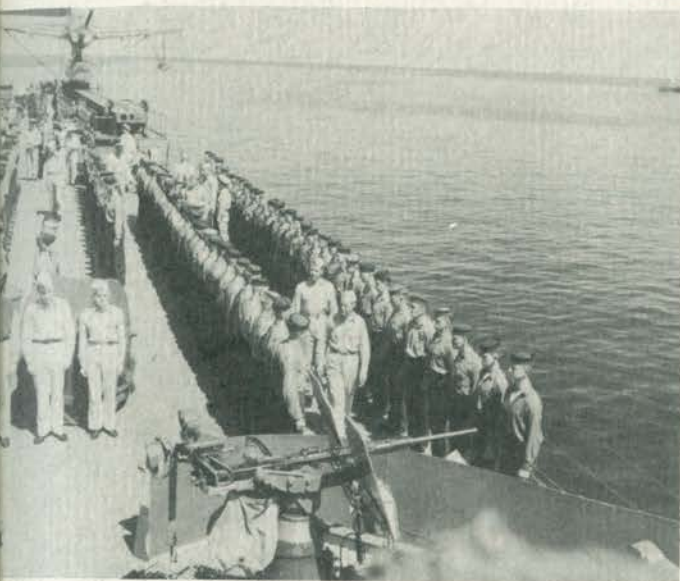


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62





INSPECTION AT ENIWETOK—AUGUST, 1944

FLEET RESTING AT ENIWETOK



AUGUST, 1944



On August 30th, the period of rest and relaxation came to an end, and the fleet got underway for strikes against the Palau Islands and the Philippines.

We were now with the newest and fastest ships of the fleet. Operating with them was comparatively enjoyable, but necessitated remaining in a tip-top state of efficiency. Rarely did formation speed drop below 15 knots, and zigzagging was routine. At full strength, a Task Force consisted of four carriers, four or five battleships, four or five cruisers and anywhere from fifteen to twenty five destroyers. Keeping in station was a must for the Officer-of-the-deck, and sometimes watchstanders went crazy furnishing "ranges and bearings to the guide." Communication was by flags and flashing light during the day, intership radio at night.

Our Task Group included the carriers Essex, Lexington, Langley and Princeton, the battleships Iowa, Washington, Massachusetts, Alabama and Indiana, the cruisers Santa Fe, Mobile, Reno and Birmingham plus 23 screening destroyers.

Flight operations were part of the day's routine, as anywhere west of Enewitok an anti-submarine patrol was a necessary precaution, and near enemy held islands, a combat air patrol constantly scouted for enemy aircraft. The air patrols involved relatively few planes but a major air strike filled the sky overhead with hundreds of fighters, dive and torpedo bombers. To launch or recover aircraft, the whole formation would cease zigzagging and turn into the wind, and four destroyers would automatically leave the screen and pull up behind each carrier, standing by for sea rescues.

Fueling these formations was a major operation in itself, but constant practice made it routine. Instead of the Task Force retiring hundreds of miles with the resultant loss of time, the tankers were dispatched to the extreme forward areas, and refueling was accomplished under the enemy's nose. Organization and practice allowed a whole group to fuel in a morning. A tanker formation was a welcome sight. It meant fuel, but much more important, it meant mail.

As the mail came aboard, the clerks spirited it away to the post office for sorting by divisions. An hour or so later "mail call" turned the ship upside down. When we operated with 58, letters only ten days old were not uncommon.

On September 3rd, the destroyer Pritchett came alongside our port side to fuel. The sea was heavy, and during the operation, a Pritchett man was washed overboard. He was clearly visible to us as the wash swept him astern. Since he was conscious and his head and shoulders were above water, we figured he stood an excellent chance of being picked up. The Pritchett circled back. When she came alongside again, we learned she had been unable to see her man and had given up the search.

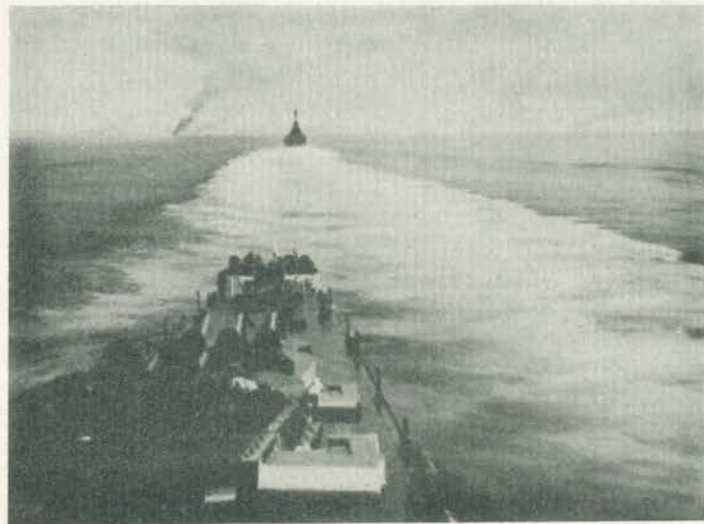
During the 6th and 7th, all three Task Groups launched

heavy air strikes against the Palau Islands. The crew was ready for enemy return attacks, but none materialized. There were no bogies; our planes met no fighter opposition, only meager AA fire, and we suffered no losses. It was a distinctly one-sided engagement, and so few targets were available that a number of scheduled strikes were cancelled.

The Task Group fueled the next day and then headed for Mindanao, Philippine Islands. This would be the first time U. S. Forces had fired a shot in the Philippines since the surrender of General Wainwright. Halsey alerted the whole Task Force, as heavy opposition was expected.

Early in the morning of the 9th, the Task Force turned into the wind and launched the first air strikes against Mindanao; special attention was to be given to the Davao airfields and shipping. At 8, a pilot reported a 'forty' ship convoy headed south, hugging the coast in the vicinity of Sanco Point, Mindanao. At 9:30, commander cruiser division thirteen received the following message from the Task Group Commander, "Proceed at once and carry out attack on convoy 15 miles north of Sanco Point. Convoy proceeding on southerly course. Take two of your cruisers and four destroyers." A few minutes later, the Santa Fe and Birmingham, screened by Des Div 110, pulled out of the formation and headed for the convoy at 30 knots.

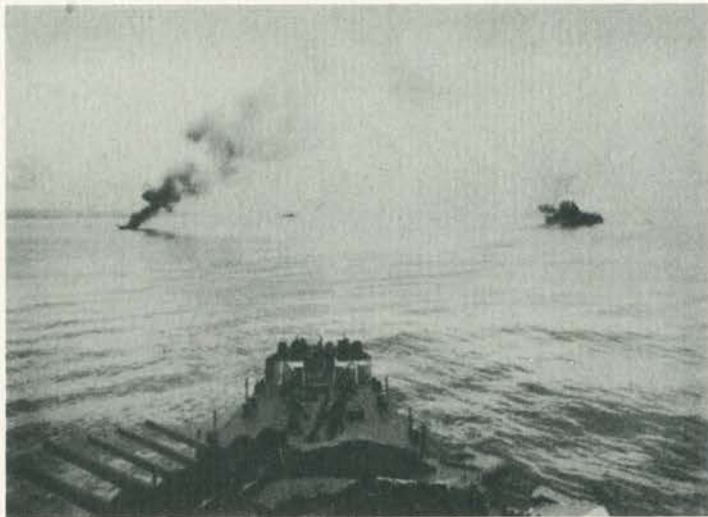
In spite of a small air patrol, no one felt too comfortable about leaving the protection of the main Task Group. Surface ships hate an operation without plenty of air cover, and we



SANTA FE AND BIRMINGHAM TAKING CARE OF

were headed top speed directly towards Mindanao with exactly four friendly fighters. Nor did we know what to expect from this 40 ship convoy. At 1035, the coast of Mindanao appeared over the horizon, and about an hour later lookouts picked up the convoy. Instead of the large troop and cargo ships we all expected, a group of enemy Sampans hove into view. It was a rout, naturally, as the japs had nothing to shoot back with. All the Sampans (some were actually small AK's) were hit or sunk. The Birmingham was credited with four exclusives and four assists. The main battery chased one small ship for about 20 minutes. Salvos splashed all around, but by some miracle the Jap, high-tailing it for a protective spit of land, got through all of them. In spite of synthetic race hatred, many heaved a sigh of relief as the Sampan disappeared behind the spit. Japanese survivors dotted the water. In true Samurai spirit, they refused to even look at us as we steamed by. A few were picked up by destroyers for questioning.

In shooting at one of the ships close to shore, the Birmingham laid a 6" salvo over the target on the beach. We claim to be the first ship to put shells in the Philippine Islands since the early days of 1942. Contrary to all expectations, the detached unit received no air or surface opposition. At two we headed back for our Task Group and by four we were in formation. Much to our surprise and amusement, we learned that stateside papers had written the action up in detail. "Combined operations by planes and surface units had destroyed



JAP SMALL CRAFT OFF LEYTE

a large 52-ship convoy off the coast of Mindanao." All hail the conquering heroes!

Strikes continued through the 9th and 10th. Targets were scarce and some operations were cancelled. Again our planes losses were almost negligible. The following day the Task Force retired and fueled. The battleships Washington, Iowa, Alabama, Indiana and Massachusetts joined up and the force headed northwest for operations against the Central Philippines, Samar, Cebu, Leyte, Negros, and Dinagat.

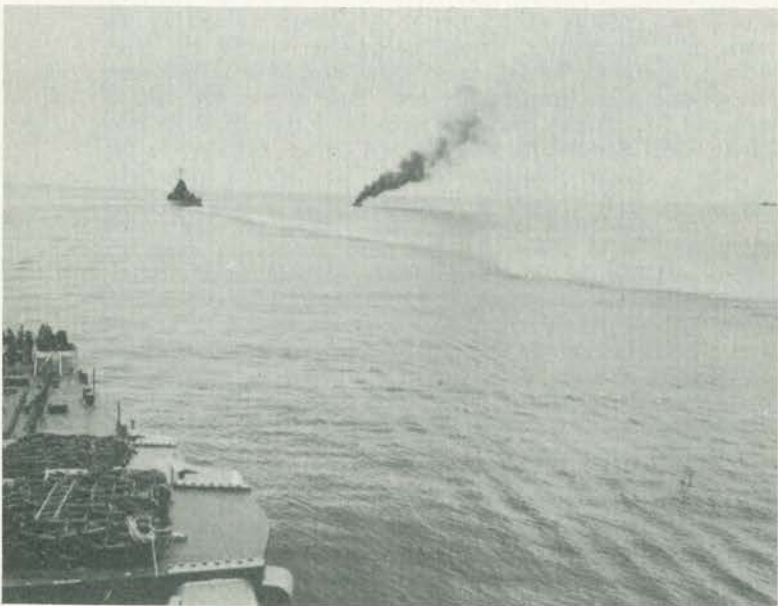
As the force approached Surigao Strait, heavy strikes were launched. Pilots reported many available targets, including shipping and airfields, principally on Negros and Cebu. We stayed in the area throughout September 14th. Although the enemy launched no major attack on us, a Betty was splashed by the Air Patrol on the 12th. On the 13th a number of bogies appeared on the screen. Early that morning, before sunrise, a Jap plane suddenly came out of the darkness and flashed by 2,500 yards to port. 40mm. and 20mm. gunners opened up, but the Jap was by before any hits were scored. An hour later, another enemy plane, identified as a "Francis," skimmed right through the middle of the formation at wave-top height. Taken under fire by various ships, it was finally splashed on the horizon.

One incident deserves note. A downed plane was reported near Negros Island, and survivors were visible to circling aircraft. A carrier task force includes no planes capable of a sea landing except the scout planes carried by the cruisers and battleships. These seaplanes would be easy prey to a Japanese fighter, as a scout seaplane is not very maneuverable, slow, and carries only light armament. Nevertheless, our two planes, and two from the Massachusetts plus a fighter cover headed for the downed plane. Arriving in the area deep in enemy-held territory, Lt. (jg) Harold Mote was guided to the spot by carrier fighters. It was a small lagoon near a Japanese held island. "Tiger" Mote put his plane down, picked up a radioman, the only remaining survivor, and returned him to the Birmingham without encountering resistance from the Japanese. The radioman, from the Wasp, reported that his plane had been hit by 40mm. fire as it was making a bombing run on an airfield. The pilot kept the plane in the air long enough to get out of the area, but was forced to crash land in the lagoon. The plane sank rapidly, and the other men were unable to free themselves from the wreckage, and went down with it.

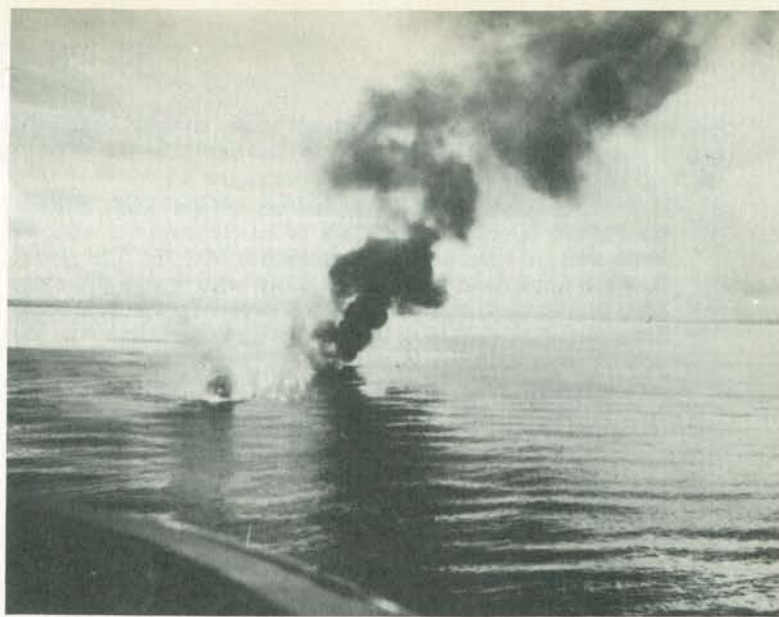
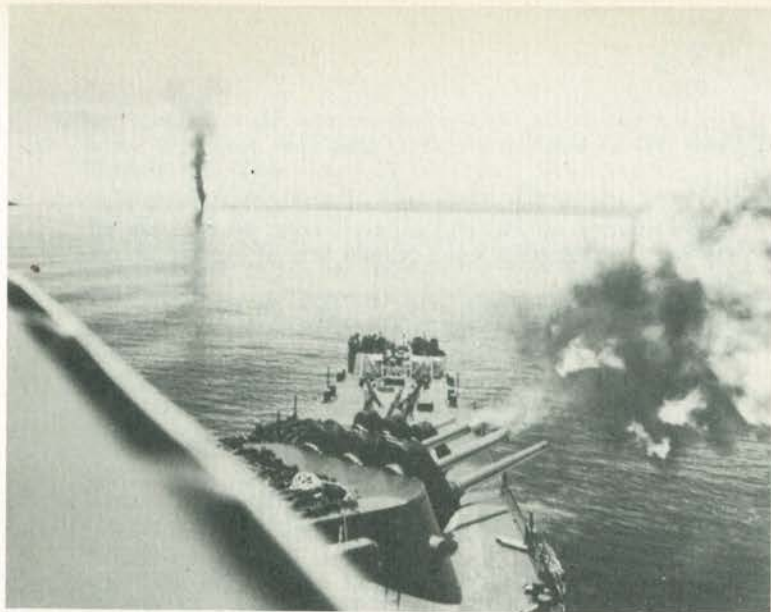
On completion of the strikes against the Philippines, Halsey reported to CincPac "no airborne opposition and only meager AA encountered. Approximately 10 to 15 planes destroyed on ground. Few servicable planes left to Japs. All airfields . . . well hit. No shipping left to sink. Most of the bulk oil supplies destroyed. This area wide open."



OFF LEYTE COAST—SEPTEMBER, 1944



SANTA FE FIRING AT JAP CRAFT



BIRMINGHAM FIRING AT JAPS



BURNING JAP CRAFT

TYPHOON

On September 15th, American troops went ashore on Peleliu Island, Palau. This is an appropriate spot to state that all men on the Birmingham who thought about it, were impressed with the rapidity with which the stepping stones to Tokyo fell to U.S. Forces. To the bombardment ships and ships of 38 and 58, one campaign was no sooner over than the next began. It made the steps seem short. It was easy to see, however, that this was due to the particular job our type of ship was assigned. To an LST, LCI, or to the Marine or Army Regiments who went, an operation was preceded by months of training, and the rate at which the U.S. Flag crossed the Pacific must have seemed a lot slower than it did to us. Yet we left Saipan early in August. Less than a month later we were off Peleliu, and a month after that we were supporting landings in the Philippines.

Another point which is relevant here; even the worst pessimists and 'debunkers' were forced to admit that Task Force 38 or 58 was efficiency at its best. All operations, from combat to fueling and passing mail, were handled with speed, precision and perfection. It was the Fleet at its peak.

Our task group took a back seat for the Palau operation and stayed off the islands to render air support if called for. The ship's announcing system was connected to the radio, and a plane observer gave all hands a play by play description of the landings on Peleliu. The island of Anguar was invaded on the 17th.

We left the area on the 19th, and after refueling, headed for Luzon for air strikes against that island, principally the Manila section. On the morning of the 21st, just after our planes had taken off, the ship's announcing system was cut in on a broadcast in English from a Manila radio station. Apparently the Japs had no knowledge of our proximity. The broadcast proceeded smoothly until 0930, when it was suddenly interrupted by a frantic voice saying in English "This is an air raid!" followed by what meant the same thing in Tagalog and Japanese. After two excited repetitions, the station signed off and was heard no more. About then we could visualize the planes coming in. The enemy lost over 200 planes that day, and about 15 Jap ships were sunk. Airfields, buildings, and installations were hit hard. Carrier losses were 15 planes. The next morning, a Jap plane skirted the formation and escaped despite the fact that we fired

100 5" shells at him. Later that morning, the whole task group opened up on a high-flying Tojo. Bursts covered the sky, but his contortions gained him at least a temporary reprieve.

After a rendezvous with tankers on the 23rd, we proceeded to the area off San Bernadino Strait for more strikes against the Central Philippines. Shipping was the principal target, but these strikes against the Philippines were primarily designed to keep the Japs engaged and prevent reenforcement of their garrisons in the Palau Islands.

We operated off the Philippines, refueling when necessary until the 27th, when the force split up, part proceeding to Ulithi, and part, including the Birmingham, anchoring in Kossol Passage, north of Babelthuap Island, Palau group. Babelthuap, 15,000 yards from us, was uninvaded and contained 20,000 Japs. Turret and mounts were kept trained in the direction of Babelthuap, and armed sentries were stationed on the main deck. Upon anchoring, the Birmingham concluded her longest steaming period at sea since commissioning—22 continuous days, during which time she had covered 12,272 miles.

We stayed in Kossol Passage until October 2nd. It was hardly "rest and relaxation." Working parties, and nightly sorties saw to that. No one liked being that close to that many unengaged Japs.

We sortied for Ulithi on the 2nd, arriving the same day. Reports of a typhoon headed in our direction were now coming in constantly. The next day, the wind increased and swells were very heavy in the anchorage. Destroyers began dragging anchor. Most ships, including the Birmingham, were forced to sortie. In the open, the seas were running high. Green water came over the bow regularly, but a look at nearby destroyers as they rolled and plunged practically out of sight, convinced us our plight was relatively mild. That night, the wind tore through the rigging and no one even put foot on the main deck. It was pitch black and raining hard. An eerie sight greeted the midwatchstanders as they relieved the watch on gunnery stations. Halyards, masts and yardarms glowed with St. Elmo's fire. It looked as if someone had given them a solid coat of luminous paint. It was a fascinating if uncomfortable night.

The typhoon abated the next morning, and we were able to put back into Ulithi.

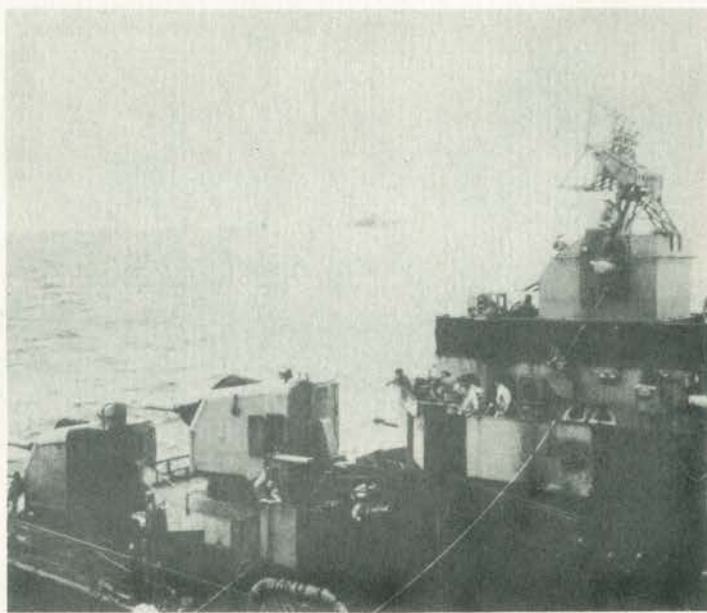
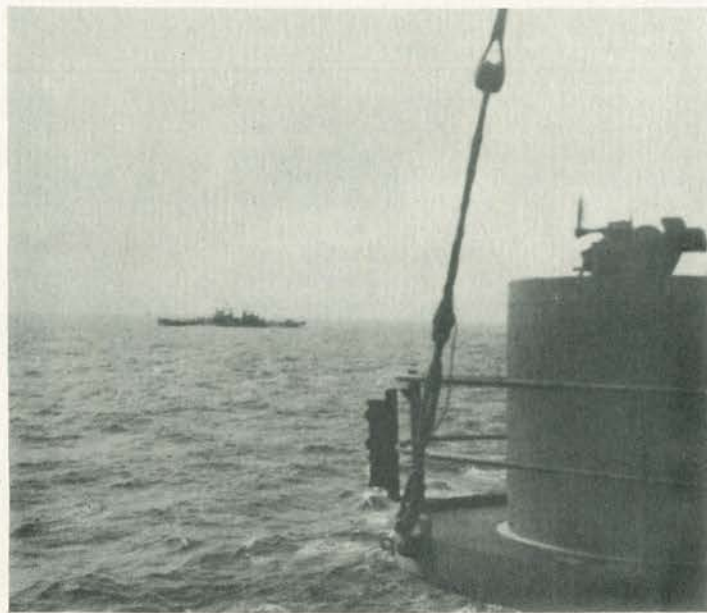
STREAMLINED BAIT

October 1944 was an action-filled month for the Birmingham. We were attached to Admiral Halsey's 3rd fleet. On October 6th, Task Force 38 left Ulithi, preparing for the now famous sweeps against Okinawa, Formosa, the Ryukyu Islands and Philippines. The Birmingham remained in Ulithi, provisioning from the Aldebaran, subsequently rendezvousing with her task group on October 8th. The 8th was the day we refueled at sea in extremely heavy weather. The tanker, low in the water, would dip into a swell, green water would cascade over her bow, and the men on her main deck were on their backs more often than their feet.

On the 9th, the whole task force was steaming northwest at flank speed, headed for the Nansei Shoto. This was the first carrier task force operation against targets in the Japanese Empire proper, and none of us felt too comfortable about getting in that close. The first strikes, on the 10th, were against Okinawa, and were highly successful. Evidently the task force had made the run in undetected by enemy picket boats or patrol aircraft. So far so good, but it wasn't hard to visualize the activity on the surrounding Jap airfields. All hands having government life insurance were glad of it. We expected a large scale air attack momentarily. Although several un-

identified planes were contacted by radar, these expected attacks never materialized. We retired without seeing a Jap plane. Halsey's communique "Our losses light. Jap fire insurance rates going up. There is practically nothing left to insure in Okinawa," proved a little over-optimistic, as we found out when we returned in April of 1945.

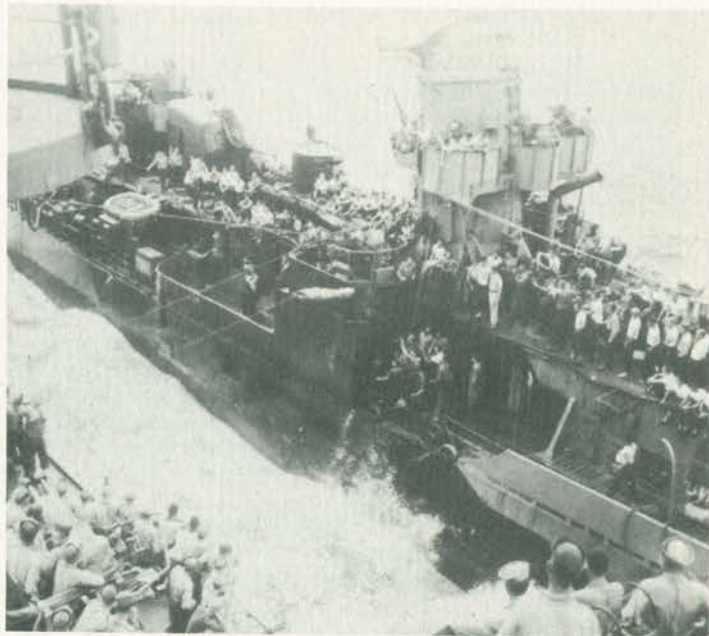
The task force refueled and headed for Formosa on the 12th. This time the enemy knew we were coming. About 1900 that night, the Japs began a series of air attacks on the task force which were to last throughout the 17th. The night of the 12th was an eerie one. Although no ships were damaged, Japanese planes alternately closed and opened our formation, dropping many flares. We tracked one plane in from several miles. As it reached the outer screen, the destroyers opened up. The Jap pilot jettisoned all his flares at once. The result was a blinding flash. The combined surface and aerial fireworks made a display we shall not soon forget. Being illuminated by enemy flares is a peculiar sensation; we felt like the receiving end of a shooting gallery. Making smoke didn't help much. We opened up with the 5" battery three times that night, and although several Japanese planes were splashed in flames, we claimed no hits.



CANBERRA AND HOUSTON IN TOW OFF FORMOSA

The next morning the Birmingham was further west than she had ever been—55 miles off the coast of Formosa. Again the sky overhead took on the aspect of a bee hive, as hundreds of friendly planes circled the task force, forming up for the scheduled strikes.

That evening, the Canberra was torpedoed and taken in tow by the Wichita. CruDiv 13 and DesDiv 100 were ordered to fall out and screen these two ships. We knew it would be a tedious process, but we never expected our speed of advance for the next two days would average less than 3 knots. We circled the Wichita and Canberra at 15 knots all that night, with the Santa Fe, Mobile and Birmingham and the destroyers of DesDiv 100. Due to heavy seas, the Wichita was having trouble towing the Canberra, whose engineering spaces were flooded, and our speed towards safety was a resounding 2 knots. On the afternoon of the 14th the Japs must have spotted the limping formation, because large groups of Bogies began appearing on the screen regularly, headed in our general direction. About this time, the rest of Task Force 38 left our immediate vicinity: the carrier Cabot was assigned us for air cover, and Admiral DuBose, ComCruDiv 13, was made OTC of the unit.



Between 1715 and midnight, the formation opened fire on enemy planes six times. Again the Japs resorted to flares. Night fighters from Task Force 38 were active that night intercepting countless raids.

At midnight, we contacted the sea-going tug Munsee, and at 7 o'clock the next morning the Munsee took over the tow of the Canberra. The Wichita left to rejoin the main body of 38. Fifteen minutes later we learned the Houston had been torpedoed and was in tow by the Boston. We learned further that our unit was to meet and include the Boston and Houston.

All that morning, the Cabot's fighter screen provided superb cover from approaching Bogies, and undoubtedly saved us much grief. At 11, we met the Boston and tow, and included both ships in our formation. By now we were barrelling along at 4.5 knots. The radio recorded splash after splash by our fighters.

That afternoon came the straw that almost broke the camel's back. Starting at about 1615, and continuing for some time, reports were received which were conflicting but all of which indicated that the Japanese Fleet had come out of hiding. The first one, and the most nerve-fraying, was that



TAKING HOUSTON SURVIVORS ABOARD

two groups of enemy ships were 200 miles north of us and headed our way. Visions of torpedo laden Teratsuki class destroyers and raked-stacked cruisers confronted all. This wasn't the worst—"Where was Admiral Halsey and Task Force 38?" We felt they must be around somewhere, but we wanted to hold hands with them about then.

Captain Inglis did his best to build up morale, but his parting "God bless you all" left most of us a little white in the face. Pasty-faced groups of men talked undertones. Radarmen watched their scopes with fear and trepidation, alert for any signs of the enemy.

It was an uncomfortable night. We didn't know what was coming—surface or air attack, and counting the big ships we had which could fire didn't ease one's mind.

It wasn't until next morning that we learned that Task Force 38 had been in the vicinity, and that we were "streamlined bait." The gist of the plan was to entice the Jap fleet with our hopelessly small, crippled, snail-paced unit. When the Japs, coming down to finish us off, were within range, Halsey planned to step in and hit the Japanese fleet with the rest of Task Force 38. Which was great—except that it is a distinctly uncomfortable feeling to be bait, especially when there is always the chance that the fight might strip the hook. The Japs, however, refused to cooperate, and headed back to Japan that night. We learned later that the enemy force consisted of one carrier, two battleships, one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers and eight destroyers.

On the morning of the 16th, a second sea going tug, the Pawnee, took the Houston in tow. Later we received 187 men and 5 officers, whom the destroyer Boyd had evacuated from the Houston. That afternoon, about 1 o'clock, many enemy planes were reported closing from the west. Fighters intercepted, but some got through. The Santa Fe and destroyers on the opposite side of the formation, opened up on a Francis, closing us low on the water. The bomber flew through a hail of flak, literally hopped the Santa Fe, torpedoed the already helpless Houston, and finally crashed in flames just off our starboard bow. As one of the AA director officers put it "The plane was a large twin engined bomber, and was so close it looked to us like a C-47 coming in for a landing." The Birmingham fired only a few rounds of 40mm. ammunition at this plane, mostly due to other ships being in the line of fire. At about this time the ship operators momentarily lost the electrical load. For a second it was a helpless feeling for all mounts, directors and computers suffered a 100% loss of power; all this time within fighter range of Jap airfields. The tug Pawnee contributed to downing this Francis. A few seconds later, another plane, a Jill, closed the Santa Fe. Combined fire of the Santa Fe, Birmingham and destroyers brought the Jap down in flames before it could get rid of its torpedo.

Attention shifted to the Houston. The twice-hit cruiser had taken on additional list to starboard and it looked as if she might sink after all. More Houston personnel went over the side and were picked up by destroyers. By 1600, the Houston steadied, all ships returned to normal stations, and the unit headed east at 4½ knots.

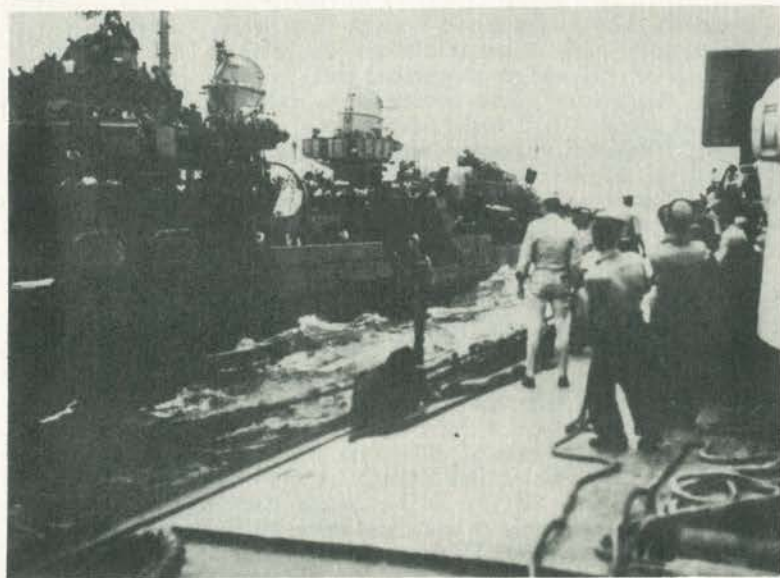
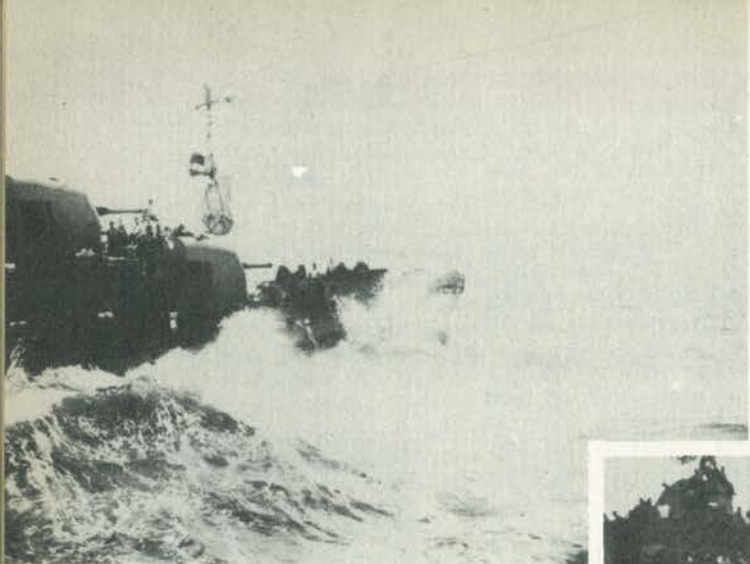
The next day we received additional Houston survivors; 128 men and 13 officers. At 1036, a lone Jap snooper plane was splashed by the CAP. That night, CruDiv 13 and DesDiv 100 were relieved of their special assignment and ordered to rejoin our original task group. It was OK with us; crawling at 4 knots, simulating a worm on a fish-hook was not for us.

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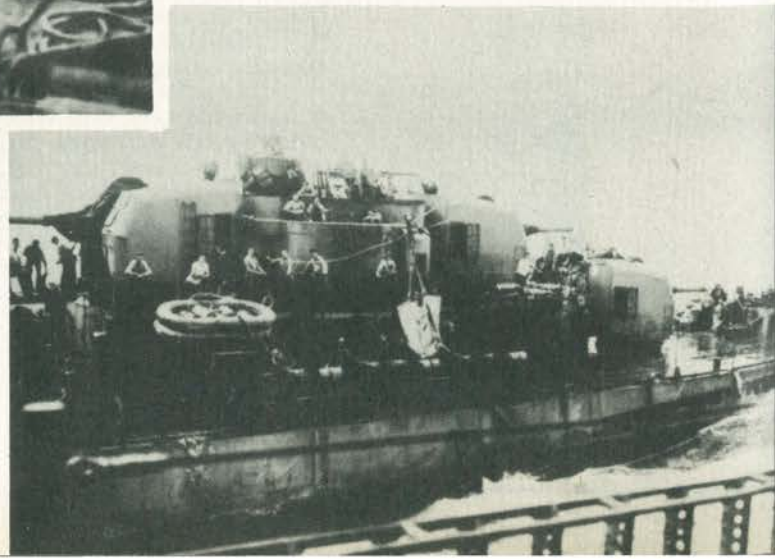
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"MIGHTY B"



TAKING HOUSTON SURVIVORS OFF DESTROYER



NO GREATER LOVE

Early October 24, a task group, consisting of the Essex, Lexington, Langley, Princeton, Washington, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Alabama, Santa Fe, Mobile, Reno, Birmingham and 17 screening destroyers was zig-zagging towards Luzon for strikes in support of our land operations on Leyte. This was a prelude to the battle of Leyte Gulf. Before sunrise and throughout the early morning, watchstanders will remember the galaxy of Bogey reports and contacts, most of which were effectively handled by our air patrol. At 0930,



however, a lone Japanese dive bomber came out of an overcast and dropped a 500 pound bomb squarely in the middle of the flight deck of the light carrier Princeton. Our di-

rector officer was one of the very few men who



saw the plane before it dropped its bomb. Resulting explosions and fires aboard the carrier were aggravated by the fact that planes were on the flight deck and hangar deck being refueled. By 1000, the Princeton, burning badly, had dropped out of formation, and a few minutes later the Birmingham was ordered to fall out, take charge of the Reno, Gatling, Irwin, and Cassin Young, and proceeded to the assistance of the burning ship. A brief respite from general quarters allowed those stationed below decks a glimpse of the carrier, but almost immediately the Reno and destroyers opened up on a group of closing Japanese aircraft, and the general alarm sounded. Several planes were splashed, including two shot



MARCUS IS. (Jap.)

TERRITORY OF CAMBER

SALESANDRO VOLCANO IS. (Jap.)
SULPHUR I.
S. AUGUSTINO

LANGDALE I.

PARCE VELA I.

JURACAS I.

MARIANA (MARIANNE) IS. (Mandatory to Japan)

MAUG I.
PASUNCON I.
AGRIGAN I.
SPAGAN I.
ALAMAGAN I.
GUGUAN I.
SARIGAN I.
ANATAMAN I.
MEDINILLA I.
SAPAAN I.
TINIAN I.

GUAM (U.S.)

WAKE I. (U.S.)

PACIFIC

PHILIPPINE SEA

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (UNITED STATES)

9-21-44

9-22-44

9-24-44

9-30-44

9-17-44

9-25-44

9-9-44

9-15-44

9-27-44

(Jap. Mand.)

PALAU IS. (Jap. Mand.)

ULUTHI OR MACKENZIE IS.

FEYS GRIMES I.

FARAULEP. W. FAU

WOLEA IS.

URUPIE

LAMOTEN. SATANAL

GLOL IS.

PIRELOT

ENDERBY IS.

PULUSUK

HELL IS.

OROLU

BEHAVINA IS.

BOAL IS.

PHISLAP IS.

HUSAGE (MALAN) I.

CAROLINE ISLANDS

(Jap. Mand.)

KAPINGMARANGI (BRITISH) I.

UJELONG

ENADLINA IS.

LID I.

NAMU

JALU

NAMORIK

BOON I.

(Mand. to Jap)

EQUATOR

(Br. Mandate)

NEW GUINEA (PAPUA)

TERR. OF PAPI (AUSTRALIAN)

TERR. OF PAPI (AUSTRALIAN)

PRINCE OF WALES I.

ADMIRALTY IS.

BISMARCK ARCH.

DAMPIER I.

NEW BRITAIN

NEW ISLAND

NEW GUINEA (Jap. Mand.)

NEW GUINEA (Jap. Mand.)

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NEW GUINEA (Jap. Mand.)

SOLOMON IS.

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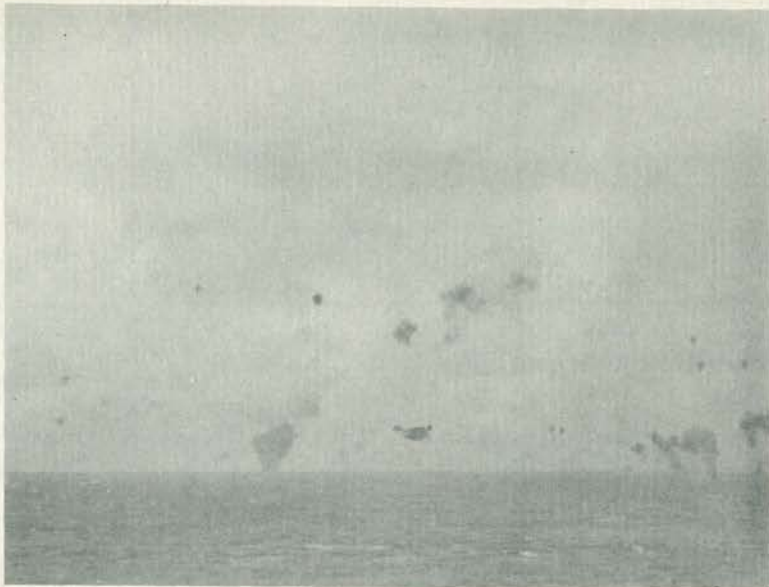
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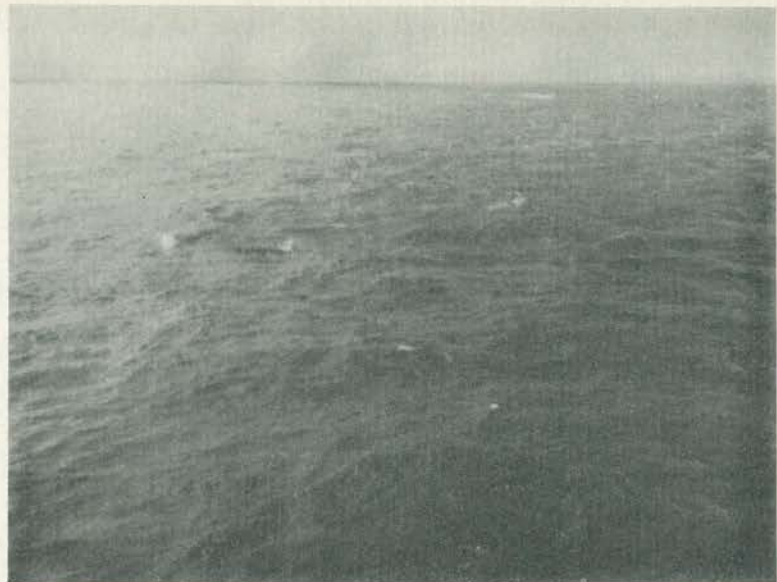
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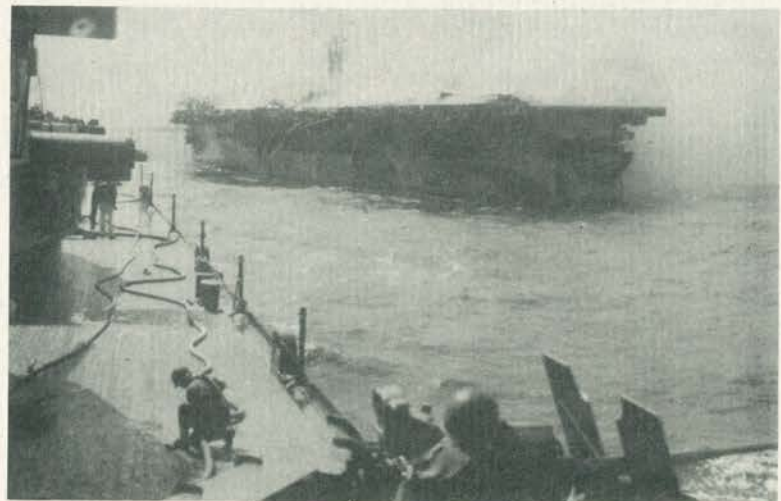
down by friendly fighters who went in through our own anti-aircraft fire for the kill. This ship took two others under fire



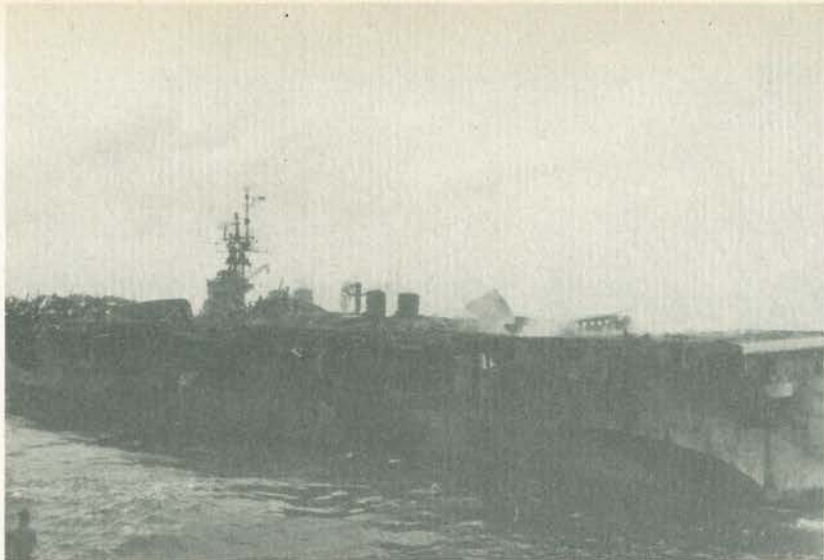
ton again secured from general quarters, and made preparations to fight the fires on the carrier. The Essex assigned us a division of fighter planes for a "CAP", and through the



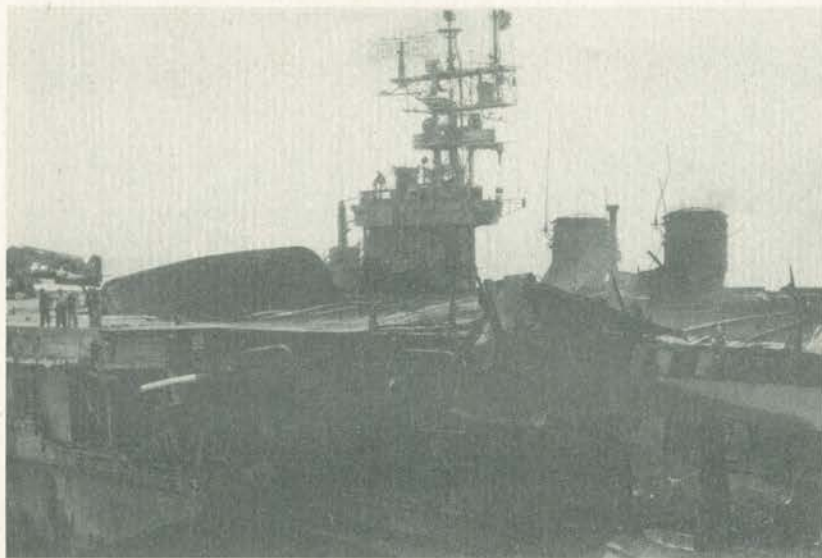
with undetermined results. At 1030, the men of the Princeton could be seen abandoning ship, and Captain Inglis ordered the destroyers to pick up survivors. Our own cargo nets were broken out. As the radar screen cleared, we closed the Prince-



efforts of the ship's combat team three splashes were scored. As the Birmingham drew alongside, topside personnel



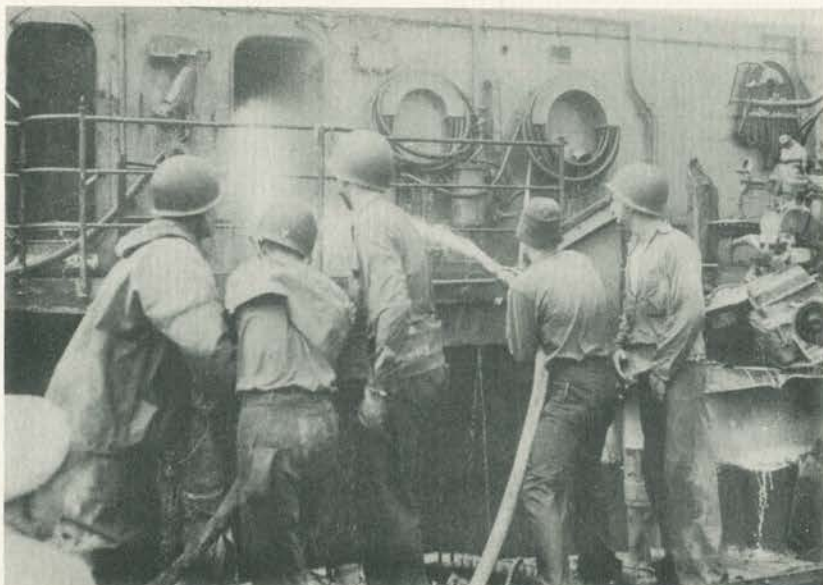
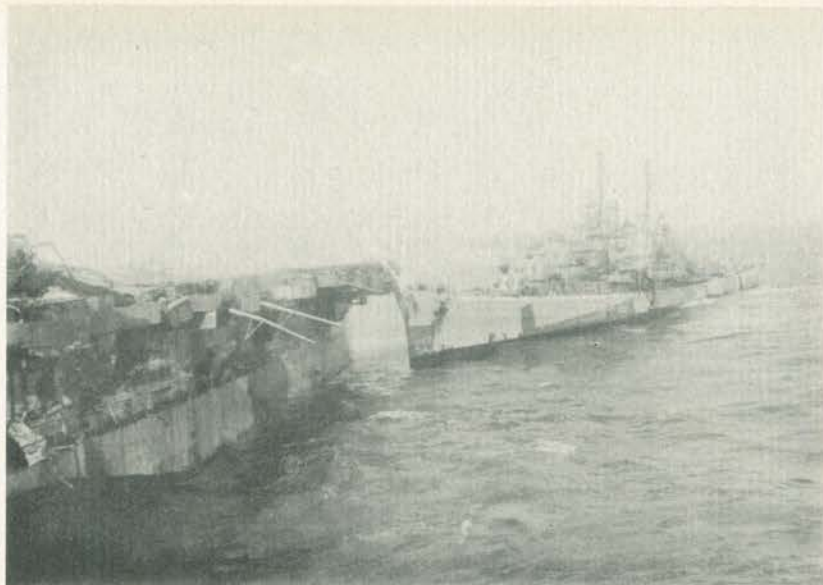
had a close up of the havoc wrought by the bomb. The flight deck was torn up, the hangar deck gutted, and few intact planes were visible. 40mm. mounts swung at random, and small calibre ammunition exploded sporadically. Fires could be seen raging through



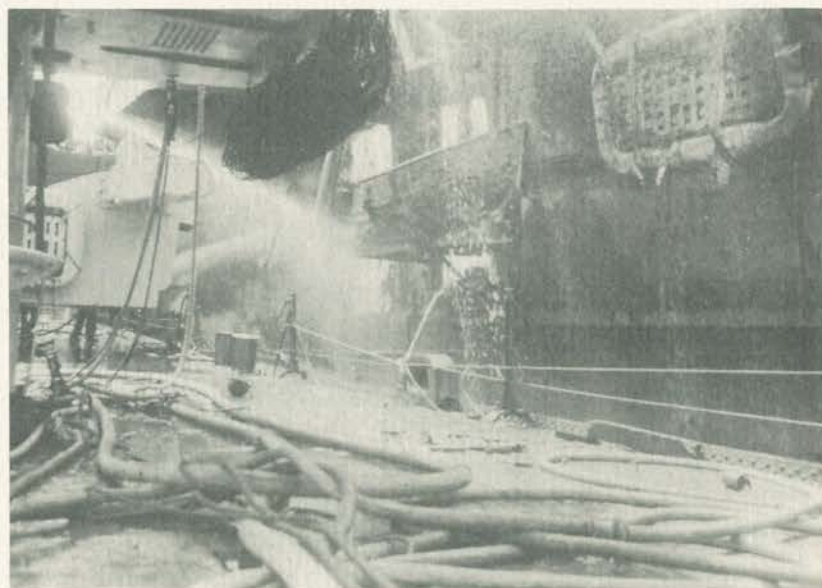
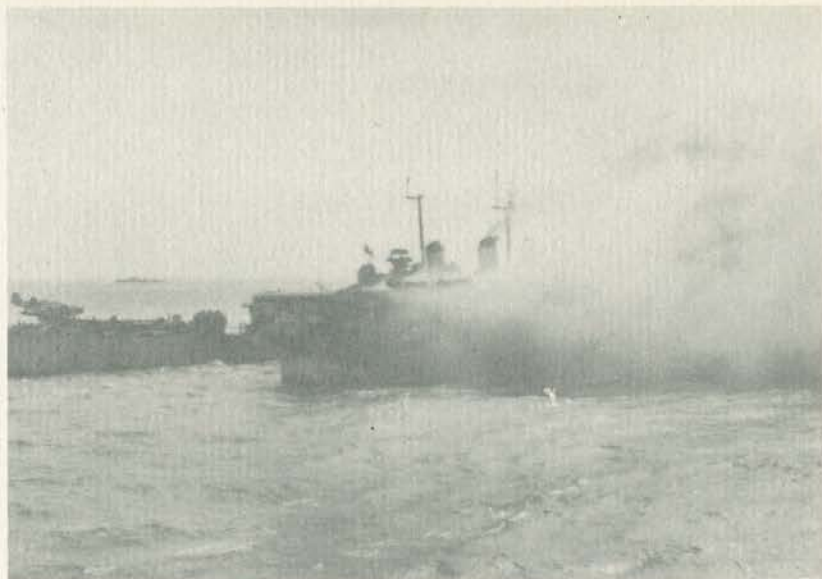
the ports. As the two ships crunched together, hoses from the Birmingham began playing on the fires. Our Assistant First Lieutenant took a volunteer fire-fighting party of 35 men aboard the carrier. At 1300, the captain of the Princeton, still aboard his ship, reported

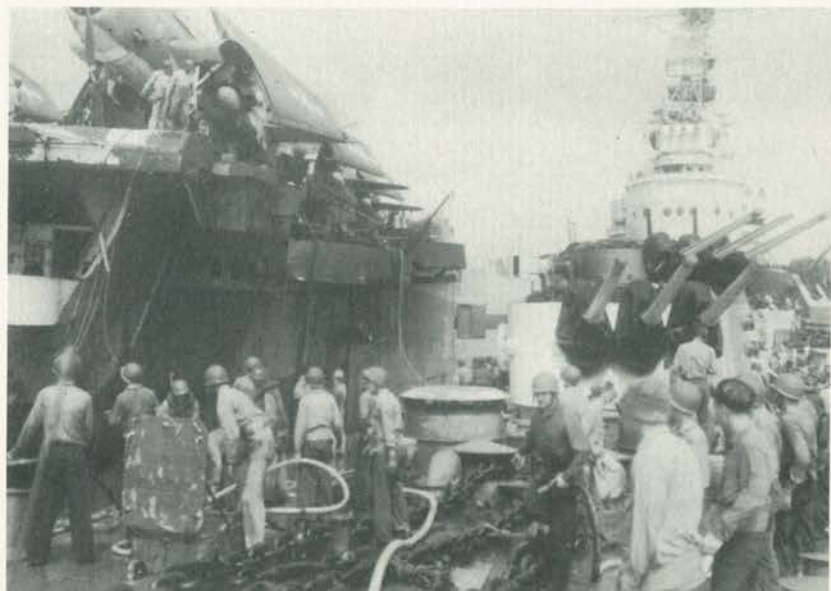
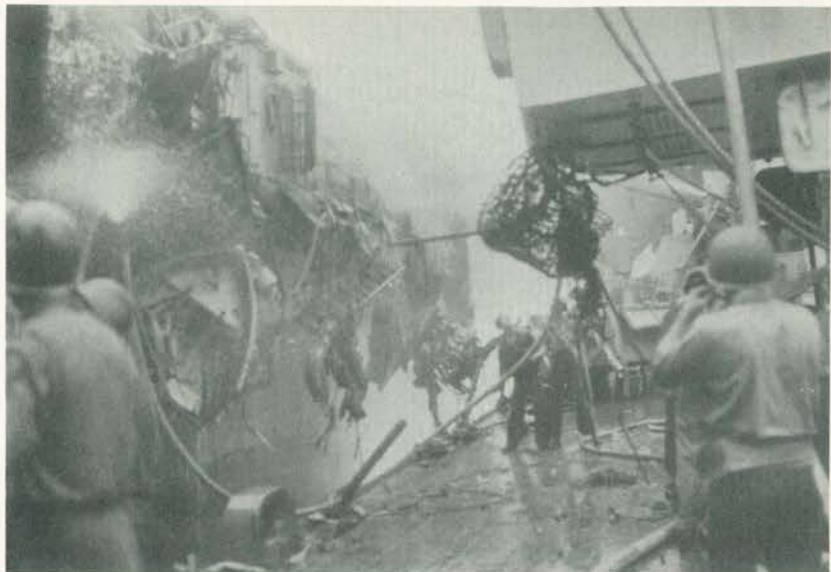


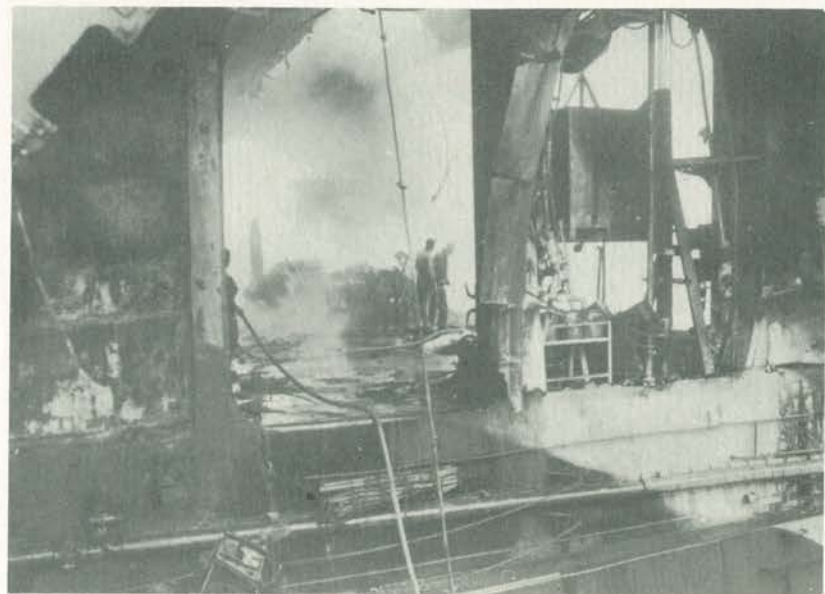
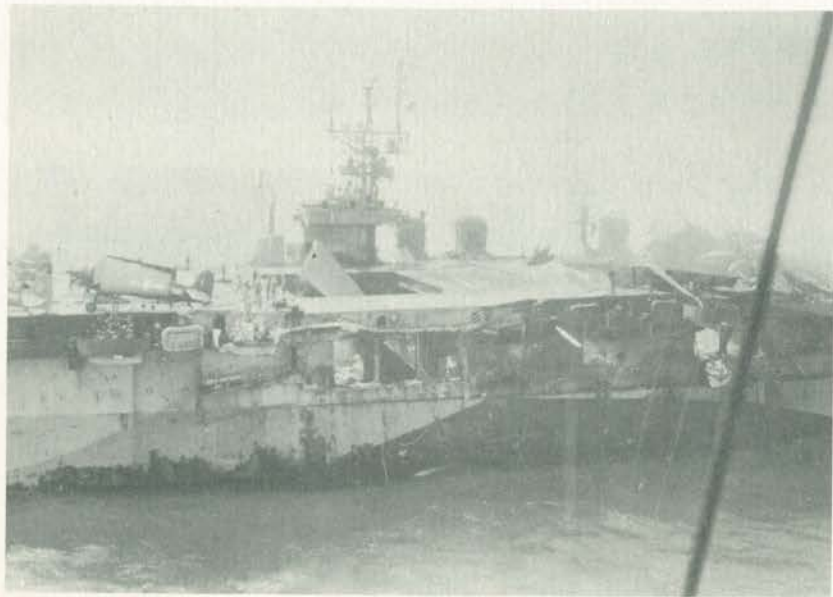
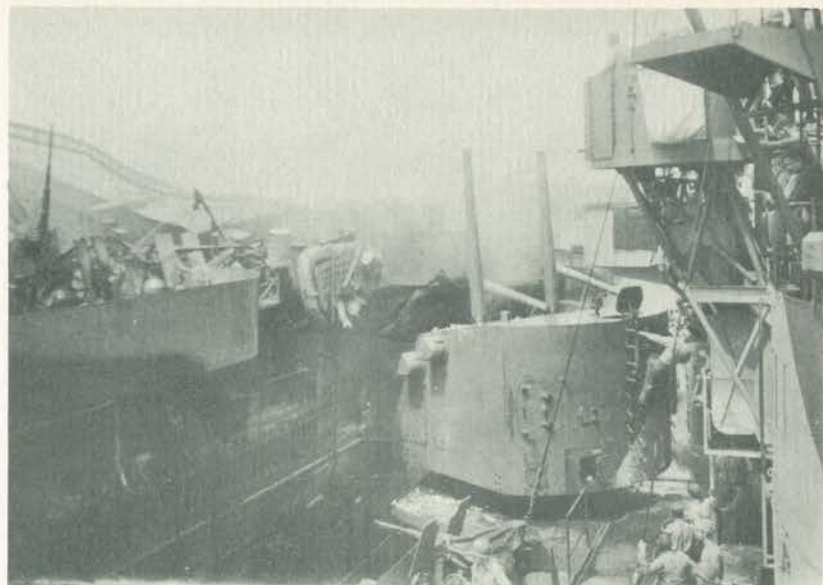
FIGHTING FIRES ON THE FLIGHT



DECK OF THE PRINCETON







that he thought the fires were getting under control. Twenty minutes later a possible sub contact and reported Bogies forced the Birmingham to pull away and screen the Princeton with the other ships. The Morrison, caught on the downwind side of the Princeton, was dismantled and helpless, and only managed to pull clear 20 minutes to a half hour later. At this point, a Jap Judy dove out of the clouds, took a good look, and climbed out of sight. Our air patrol splashed this plane and another a few minutes later.

At about 1430, all was clear and the sub contact evaluat-

It is impossible to convey verbally or in writing the horror of the scene on our topside. No person knows or ever will know what it was like unless he was there. Nor will those aboard on that day ever forget. Suffice it to state the figures: 239 dead; 408 wounded; 4 missing. It was an ironic touch of fate that our casualties, amounting to 54% of officers and crew, were triple those of the Princeton.

In the hours that followed, bravery was commonplace. The turret captain of turret 4, both legs severed, refused medical attention, pulled himself up, and directed first aid

CL



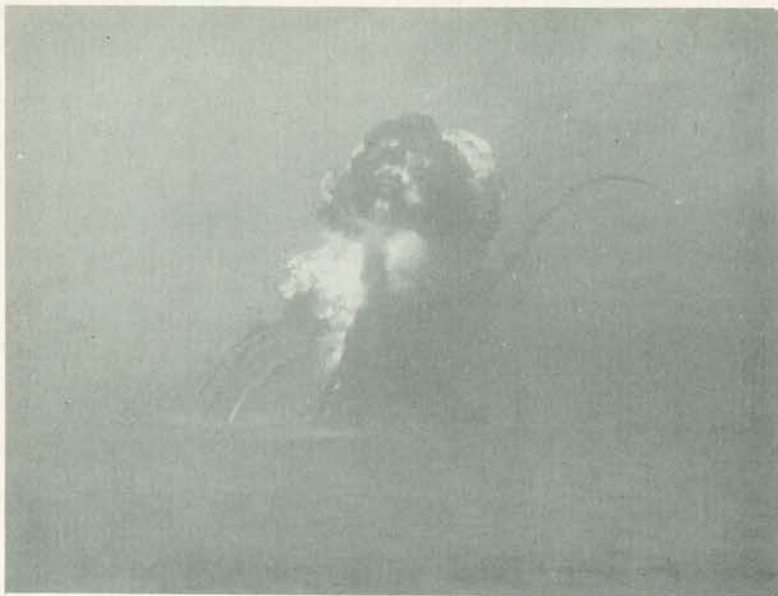
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EXPLOSION OF THE U.S.S. "PRINCETON",
BIRMINGHAM ALONGSIDE

ed as false. Captain Inglis took position to put the Birmingham alongside again. Few men on this ship realized the suffering and destruction that lay in store for them as they watched the gap between the two ships close for a second time.

At 1520, a spring line was made fast to the carrier, the ships then being separated by about 50 feet. At 1522, the Princeton's after magazines exploded, including a torpedo warhead locker. The starboard side of the Birmingham and all the men topside there—fire fighters, line handlers, gun crews, towing detail and the watch topside—received the full effect of the blast.

to those around him. Finally carried below, he turned to the division boatswain mate and said "Well, it looks as if I'll never drive that Cadillac after all." Our junior aviator, one leg badly smashed, told medical parties he could take care of himself and ordered the administration of first aid to those wounded in his vicinity on the main deck aft. The wounds of both these men later proved fatal. The senior medical officer was on the Santa Fe assisting in an abdominal operation, his specialty; our dentist was killed outright, leaving the junior medical officer the only doctor aboard. All hands that could be spared, including many painfully injured, turned to caring for the wounded.



SINKING OF THE PRINCETON BY THE U.S.S. RENO

The Princeton was torpedoed and sunk by the Reno. The Birmingham, now commanded by Commander Winston P. Folk, as Captain Inglis was among those wounded, took charge of the Irwin, Gatling, and Morrison, and headed for Ulithi. All was not clear sailing, and nerves were on edge. Most everyone knew part of our battery was worthless, and that the Morrison was badly damaged. On the 25th, late in the morning, a Japanese Frances twin-engined bomber was sighted, and we wondered if we ever would get home as the plane headed for the formation. We opened up with 20's and 40's, and the Jap didn't press his attack. The sound of the guns and the realization that we were being closely approached again by the enemy was a shock to all, and especially to the casualties.

Our senior medical officer had been re-

turned to us, and additional medical assistance, doctors, corpsmen, and supplies, had been transferred to us from ships of the unit and from ships of the refueling group with whom we rendezvoused on the afternoon of the 25th. Despite this fact, there were still wounded men whom the doctors had been unable to reach during the three day trip to Ulithi. Throughout this trip, our Padre conducted burial services on the fantail for our 200 dead. It was a heart breaking scene as friend after friend was placed on the port side, identified, and then slipped over.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We arrived at Ulithi on October 27th, and were preceeded through the channel entrance by the towed Houston and Canberra. We immediately went alongside the hospital ship SAMARITAN, and transferred all seriously wounded. Later ship's personnel had a chance to look over the damage to our ship. One shaft had been bent, and it had to be secured and locked. Every foot of superstructure on the starboard side had its quota of shrapnel holes, and in places bulkheads looked more like sieves. The 5" battery had two operative mounts. One 5" mount was a complete shambles. All starboard 40's were out of commission. Our plane, riddled, had been jettisoned. One radar only had been jury-rigged into working order. Main deck compartments—galley, quartermaster's shack, Captain's cabin—were badly mauled.

We got underway for Pearl on the 31st. On November 4th, the chaplain held memorial services on the fantail for those who died in the explosion.

Pearl Harbor looked mighty good on the 10th; Golden Gate looked even better on the 17th. Glad as we were to get home, our thoughts dwelt often with those who didn't, and never would, make it.

BACK TO MARE ISLAND

The first day in California, U.S.A., was marked by two major events. We unloaded all ammunition, and sent half of the ship's company home on 22 days leave. The Navy Yard had done an excellent job of making arrangements. Air and train reservations had already been arranged for; busses were practically waiting at the gangway. It was a happy group of men who went down the gangway. Those remaining on board lifted another projectile and muttered "My time will come."

The next day we left the ammunition depot and steamed up Carquinez Strait, mooring to Pier 22 in the Yard. No sooner had the gangway been rigged than an army of yard workers took over the ship, nor did they give it back until the day we left. For a while, all hands remained aboard, but living conditions were unbearable, and crew and officers were soon moved to quarters ashore. Some of the married men were lucky enough to get Quonset huts, enabling them to bring their wives to Mare Island.

Captain Inglis, ordered ashore for hospitalization, was relieved of command by Captain Harry D. Power, USN. No more would the sound of the voice of our Captain bring us the "dope" at his evening "fireside" chats. We hated to see Captain Inglis leave.

Replacements for our many casualties and transfers began reporting in almost immediately, and by the time we left, the ship was back up to complement. New men were interviewed and classified prior to being assigned divisions. Soon the ship had a complete, if almost entirely new, organization once more.

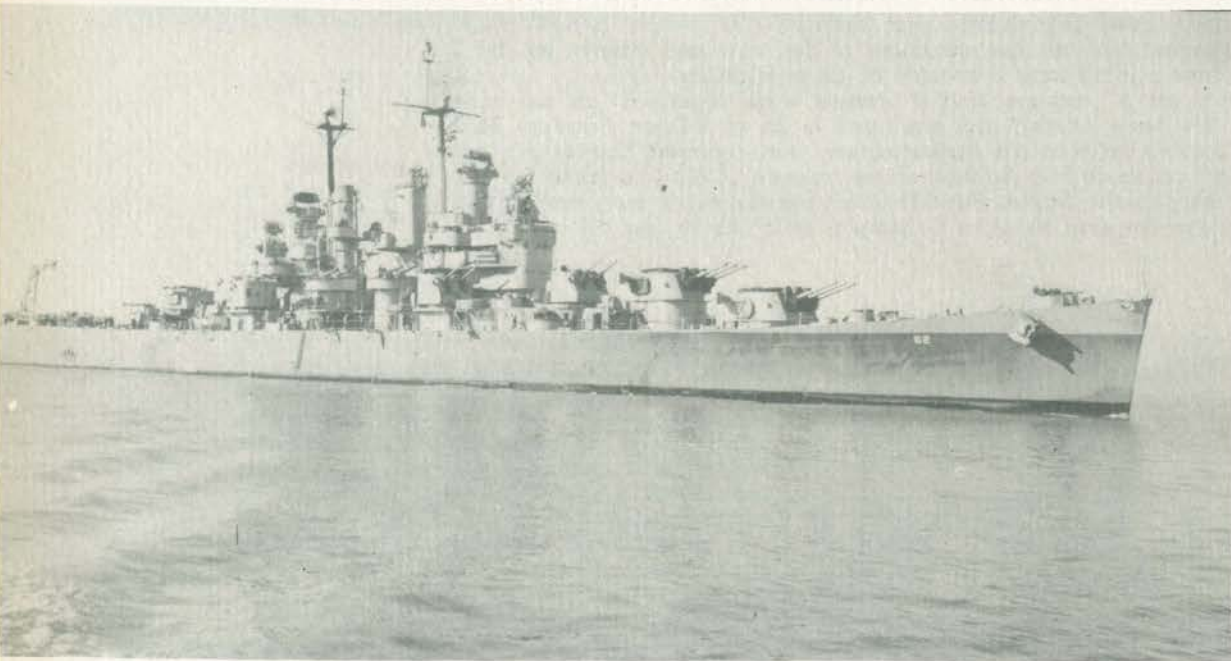
When the first contingent returned, the remainder of the crew and officers left for 25 days leave, the extra 3 days coming from a revision of our availability.

During availability, all 5" mounts and 6" turrets were regunned, all our radar equipment modernized. We were altered and equipped to be a division flagship. Battle damages, including the myriad holes in our superstructure, were repaired. The rapidity with which the ship was being put back into fighting shape amazed us all. The faster the yard worked, the shorter our stay in the States. But this didn't prevent every man from making the most of the 60-odd days the ship spent in California, both ashore and aboard.

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BIRMINGHAM AFTER REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS AT
MARE ISLAND, JANUARY, 1945

CHAPTER IV

REFRESHER TRAINING

Just as all battles and wars must come to an end, so must Navy yard periods. Thus, at 2400, January 16, 1945, the Birmingham officially completed her availability at Mare Island, California. It is understandably difficult to describe accurately the detailed and individual reactions of the crew at this time, but in a composite sense, it can most certainly be said that we were generally reluctant to face the future.

Among the 50 officers and 450 men who were new on board (the majority had never been to sea before), there was coupled with this reluctance, an insatiable curiosity inherent in all humans "to see what it's like," and for them our leaving had at least some future. But the old hands, many of whom had been aboard during those frightening days at Bougainville, in addition to the Princeton explosion, felt that they had seen enough, and would just as soon settle down at Mare Island for the remainder of the war rather than steam under the Golden Gate bridge again. That's the way things stood, and now that our feelings are set forth, let's return to some hard facts.

During the two months the ship underwent overhaul, several accomplishments (and results thereof) by the yard and ship's force are particularly noteworthy of mention. All damage incurred by the Princeton explosion was repaired. The ship was considerably modernized, in accordance with the latest trends in Naval Warfare. New and more powerful guns were added, fire control was definitely improved, and the latest in naval radar was installed. Also, the once peace-loving town of Vallejo, California, was left in a state of seething turmoil, bordering on revolution. "Dopey Normans" had achieved nation wide publicity, overshadowing "Duffy's Tavern" in its meteoric rise to fame. It should please "Dopey" not a little to know that a full sized representation of his emporium was featured in the "*Birmingham Broadside*" (the ship's periodical) for many months after he thought we'd forgotten him. Forget you, "Dopey"? Not on your life!

The ship was now ready for its post-availability tests, checks, and short but intense refresher training. From January 17 through January 21 we moved in and out of Hunter's point, Mare Island, and San Francisco. We loaded stores and ammunition, tested and fired our modernized catapults, calibrated all radars and the radio direction finder, held full power trials and general drills, and test fired all gun batteries. The new members of our crew were rapidly discovering

that life at sea during wartime is anything but relaxing.

On January 21 we returned to Mare Island, fully satisfied with our preliminary trials, and during the next two days the yard corrected most of the minor deficiencies that became apparent while at sea. As far as the crew was concerned, those two days were just barely enough to apply the finishing touches to all the unfinished business in and about the "Valley-Jo" and San Francisco areas. Very reliable sources informed us that "Dopey Norman" planned to shut his emporium down tighter than a drum and then secure for several months in order to recuperate. Hmph, we just can't understand it!

On the morning of January 21 we "topped off" with fuel, and shortly after midday the Birmingham, manned by a sober crew indeed, slowly made her way thru the harbor toward the Golden Gate. We were now enroute to San Diego, California, to report to the Commander, San Diego Shakedown Training Group, for refresher training. You know, there's only one feeling that can compensate for that terrible siege of grim loneliness that grips all men as they pass under that magnificent bridge and head toward the open sea, and that's the feeling of unconfined joy that is sensed when the ship passes under that very same bridge—headed in the opposite direction.

Except for a momentarily jammed rudder, our trip to San Diego was rather uneventful. Several trials and tests in connection with ship control were held, and before we cleared San Francisco harbor, three factory new aircraft were picked up by the ship. The ship anchored in San Diego harbor late the following afternoon, and almost immediately a representative of Captain C. C. Adele's Shakedown Training Group staff came on board to discuss our proposed ten day, concentrated training and refresher course.

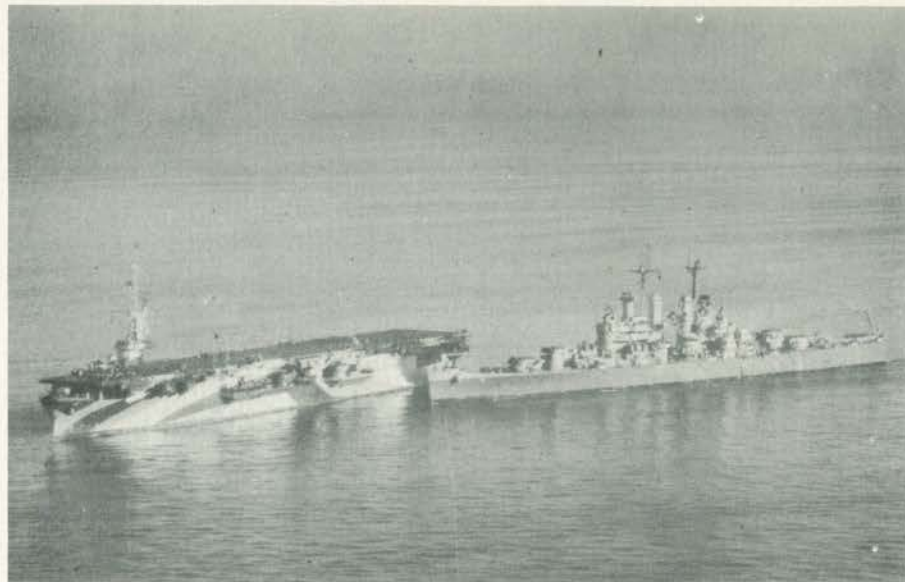
The period embraced by the dates January 25 and February 2 was one of the toughest we had ever faced. A schedule of events was set forth that appeared impossible to adhere to on paper, yet for the most part, was adhered to. This, coupled with the almost agonizing fact that practically half the officers and crew knew so little about gunnery and general ship-board routine, resulted in considerable confusion, many mistakes, and some poor results as far as scores were concerned. However, it was unanimously agreed that both the crew and the training command had accomplished

a great deal in their joint mission—that of making the ship ready for battle. Better to make and correct mistakes now, rather than when each mistake might cost a life, or several lives.

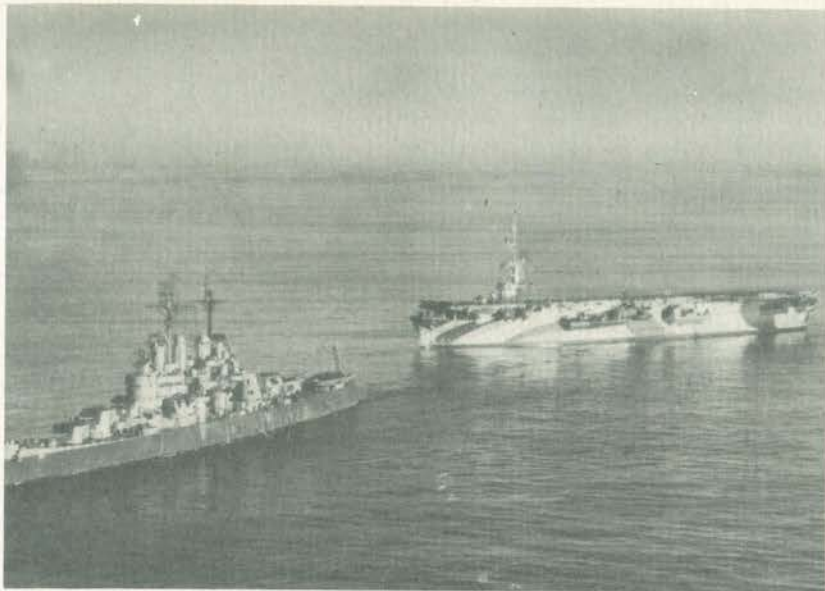
During the entire training period the DMS STANSBURY, a fast minesweeper (converted destroyer), operated with us and acted as escort. In addition, we had a blimp assigned to our area the majority of the time, and when an unidentified submarine periscope was sighted south of the Coronados Islands on January 28, the DOUGLAS FOX, a new destroyer, was assigned as additional screen. Thorough investigation of the area in which the submarine was reported found nothing, and we concluded that the report was either erroneous or that the submarine headed for sea. At any rate, the Douglas Fox was detached the following day to carry out her original orders, and we carried on our schedule without any further threats or scares.

Here is a summary of what the Birmingham waded through during this training period. We went to General Quarters on approximately eighteen occasions, and fired almost every type of gunnery exercise in the book. We expended some 300 rounds of 6", 900 rounds of 5", and several thousand rounds of 40mm. and 20mm. shells. In addition, we experienced at least five simulated air attacks, held casualty drills on at least five occasions, held fueling, breeches buoy and paravane drills, practiced towing with the Block Island (CVE), and held a hundred and one other drills ranging from flag hoists to radar counter measures. There was no argument that after our final two day bombardment of San Clemente Island, we had not had a pretty rough nine days. The griping was loud and frequent, but beneath it all, the crew knew that this training was a vital part of our preparations to stave off enemy attacks that were sure to come in the future.

During the final day of our schedule, Rear Admiral F. C. Denebrink, USN, Commander Operational Training Command, Pacific, and an inspecting party came on board to conduct a scheduled inspection and witness a battle problem. Upon completion, the Admiral summarized a maze of data collected by his party



BIRMINGHAM TAKING THE BLOCK ISLAND



IN TOW

and himself, and in doing so, he pulled no punches. He complimented us where we excelled, and thoroughly lambasted us where we were bad.

Late in the afternoon of February 2 we moored alongside a dock at the Repair Base in San Diego. All unfinished business and repair work that cropped up during our nine days at sea were taken care of by the yard, and the ship was made ready for sea. Then, on February 4, a task group was formed—consisting of the Birmingham (with our Captain Powers as officer in Tactical Command), the DMS Tolman, the DMS Ditter, and the DMS Gherardi. Late in the afternoon the group got underway, formed the prescribed anti-submarine formation with the Birmingham as guide, and set base course 254° T, speed 18 knots, for Pearl Harbor, T. H.

Despite our most recent operational controls, the ship was still assigned to Cruiser Division Thirteen, U. S. Pacific Fleet, consisting of the cruisers Santa Fe, Birmingham, Mobile, and Biloxi, with Admiral M. L. Deyo, USN, as divisional commander in the Santa Fe.

The trip to Pearl Harbor was routine, but our training didn't stop for a minute. All ships zigzagged according to prescribed doctrine; the usual tracking and calibration drills were held, and we launched and recovered aircraft whenever practicable.

The task group arrived in the vicinity of the Hawaiian Islands early on the morning of February 10th. Land was actually contacted the night before by radar, 108 miles distant, but positive identification as the island of Maui wasn't made until 0330 Tuesday morning, at a distance of 78 miles. During these early hours planes from Air Wing No. 47 made simulated air attacks on the formation, and later in the morning and early afternoon the entire formation fired anti-aircraft practices at towed sleeves. Finally, at 1700, the ship entered Pearl Harbor and moored at Middle Loch, remembered by most of us as "DesPac." Upon our entry into port, our task group was dissolved.

After one day in port we were off again, and it was again the same story. We moved in and out of our assigned operating area off Oahu, firing incessantly. The liberties

granted during the days in port failed to produce any great feeling of relaxation. Pearl Harbor and Honolulu were overrun with servicemen, and Waikiki became an exploded illusion. Yes, the new men were definitely experiencing the hardships of war, and all the help they received from the old hands was a shake of the head, a sardonic laugh, and a wisdom laden "I told you so."

However, our training was achieving results, and it was plainly apparent that that confusion which had marked some of our activities back at San Diego was rapidly dissipating. Firing was more rapid, a greater number of hits were obtained, and the crew became confident. With great elation we completed our refresher training at Pearl Harbor on February 17th.

On the afternoon of February 16th, the Commander Cruiser Division Sixteen (located in the Guam) detached us as scheduled, and we set out immediately for Saipan Island, Mariannas group. (Our operational command now changed to Commander Fifth Fleet.) Although traveling at 21 knots, a feeling of uneasiness prevailed the ship during that long run across the Central Pacific, for without escort and no sound gear of our own we were not anxious to chance upon a submarine lurking along the track of our base course. The trip was uneventful and on the morning of February 25th, we sighted the island of Saipan.

While preparing to pass through Saipan Channel a beautiful sight befell the eyes of those who were fortunate enough to be topside. Hordes of B-29 bombers, taking off from Saipan and nearby Tinian Island, were rapidly forming up into a mass formation for a raid on some Japanese city. The press news on the following day carried the story of a 300 plane incendiary bomb raid on Tokyo, and, of course, we knew the whole story now.

As we passed through Saipan Channel (narrowest and shallowest Birmingham ever went through—thirty feet deep, eighty yards wide), a good view of the island was afforded, and some of the old hands were surprised at the change brought about during the few months that the island was occupied. Vegetation was lush and plentiful, barracks and quonset huts mushroomed all over the island, and nowhere could the scars of bombardment be seen. It was truly a remarkable Seabee achievement.

Our purpose at Saipan was to fuel, receive new orders, and transfer our three new scout planes to the local Naval Air Base for inspection and repair. All three items were taken care of in short order, and shortly after mid-day on February 26th the ship got underway independently to rendezvous with our assigned task group, which at this moment was conducting air strikes on the Japanese mainland. Everyone on board was keyed up, for the idea of operating with Admiral Mitscher's fast carrier task force was something much more to our liking than the prospect of being a part of the shore bombardment group.

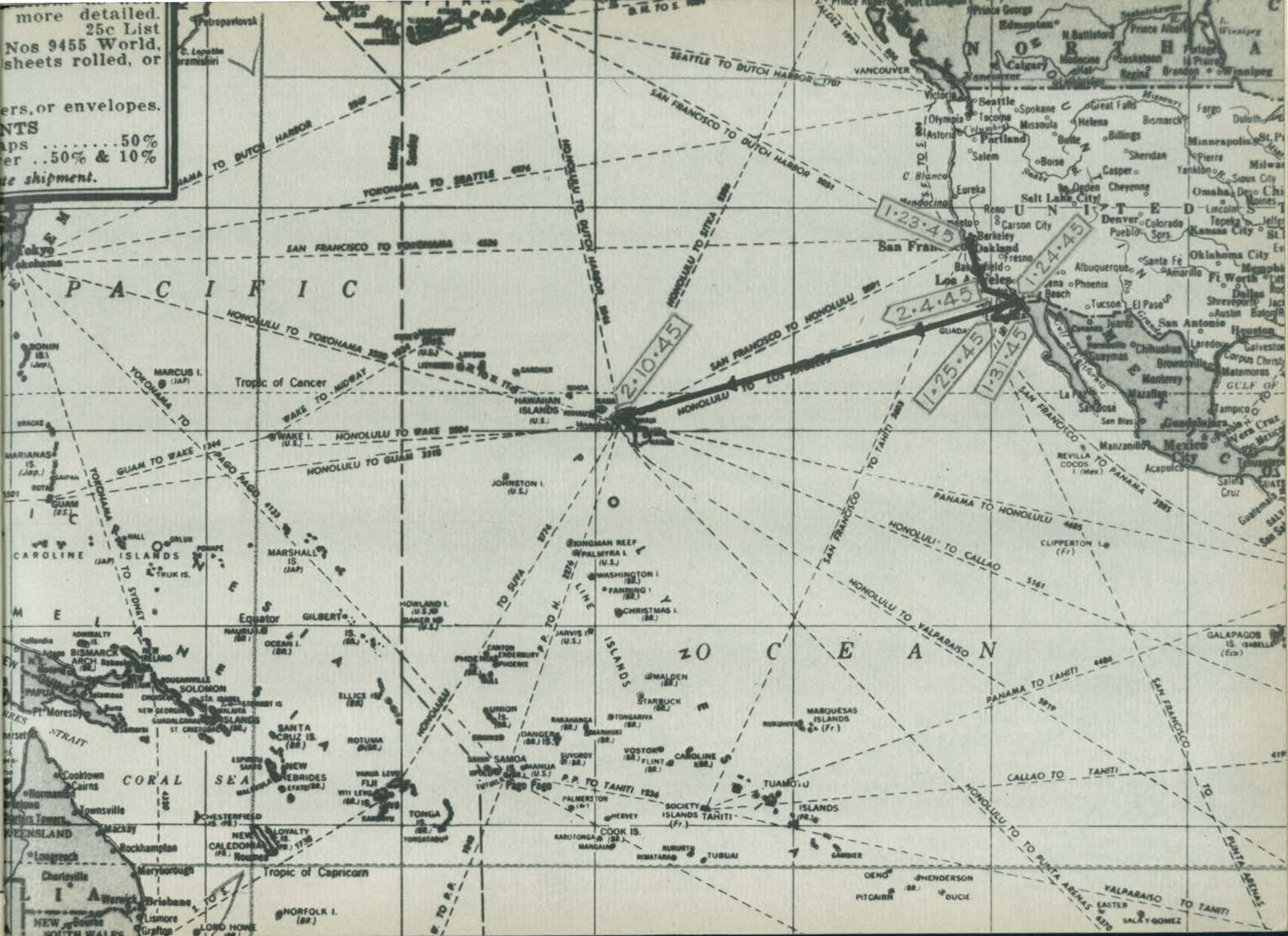
We were doomed to disappointment however, for the following night, while at sea, we received orders from Commander Fifth Fleet (Admiral Spruance) to proceed and report to Commander Task Force 51 at Iwo Jima for temporary duty. Needless to say, the whole outlook was completely altered. Then, to add to our rapidly mounting woes, word was received that the U.S.S. Saratoga, largest and oldest of our flat-tops, had this day absorbed no less than seven Nip suicide planes while operating off Iwo. Suicide planes? We had heard all sorts of scuttlebutt concerning these new Jap tactics, but thought that it was purely a localized affair. With our collective fingers crossed we headed for Iwo Jima.

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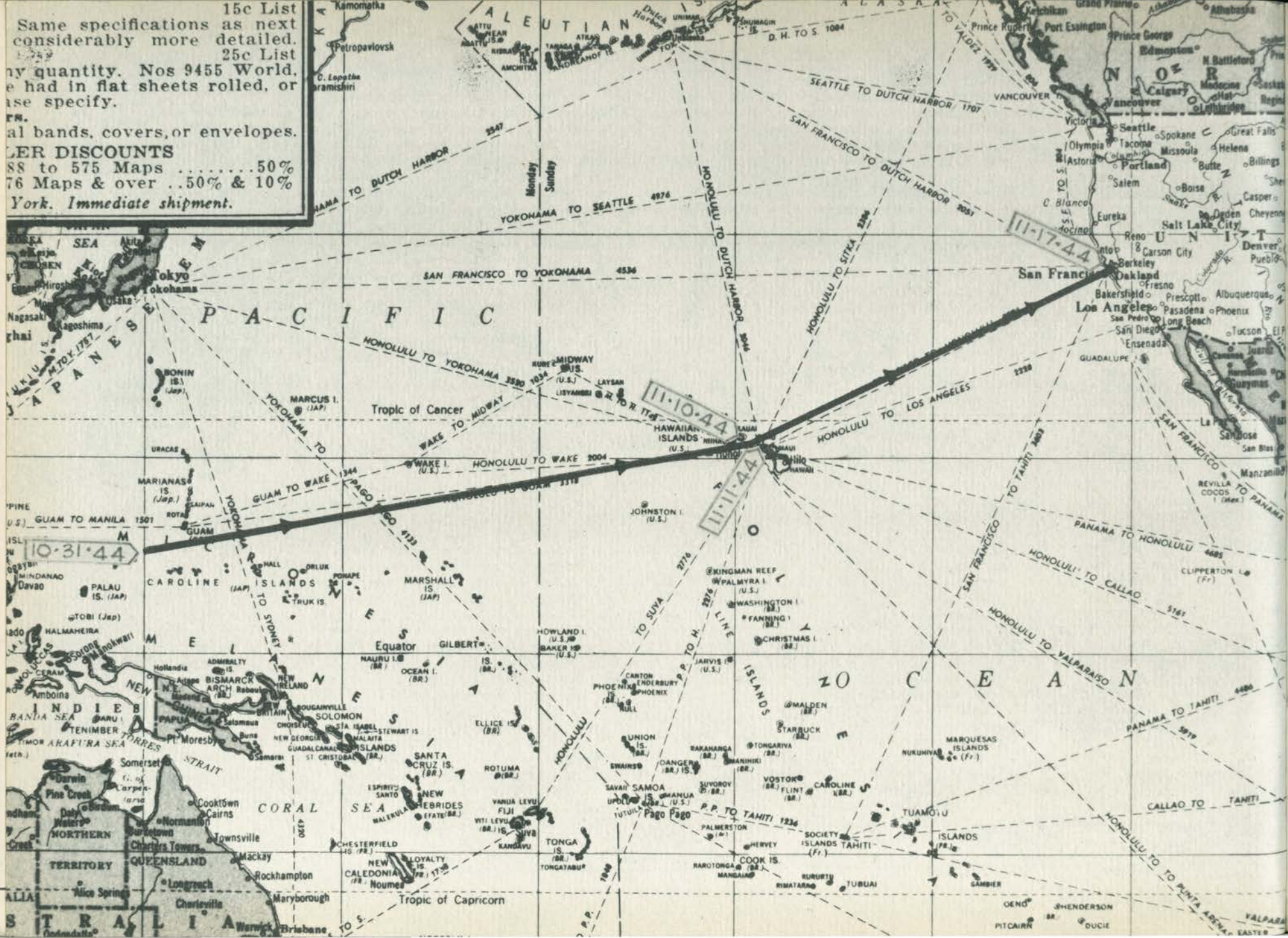
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 25c List
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THE MARINES' SHOW

At 0700 on the morning of February 28th we sighted Mt. Surabachi on Iwo Jima Island, bearing dead ahead, 15.5 miles distant. As we drew closer, more and more ships were discernible, and finally a vast fleet was outlined against and off to either side of the island. A short time later, we could perceive ships of all types, ranging from awesome looking battle wagons to little LCVP's running about the harbor. At 0800 we reported in to the task force under the command of Vice Admiral R. K. Turner, USN, in the Eldorado, and were ordered to lie to until assignment was received from the commander of the amphibious support force. At 1045, we were ordered to relieve the destroyer Fullam in a fire support sector, and awaited the call to fire by the shore fire control party. We went to general quarters; all hands were tense. At 12 noon we commenced firing the 5" battery to port on enemy installations, as directed by the shore fire control party and spotted for us by plane from the U.S.S. Wake Island. The Birmingham was firing at the Japs once again after an absence from the active war since October 25, 1944.

Our fire support missions during this extended shore bombardment period are too lengthy to describe. During our six days at Iwo Jima, the highlights of the assault and the part that the Birmingham and her crew played there are the things that we wish to recall.

The afternoon of the 28th was the first real firing assignment for our new hands, and they turned in a good performance. As the island was small, it took accurate shooting to prevent our shells from landing amongst our own troops, especially since the front lines were never very definite. Therefore we look back with pride at some of the comments made by the shore fire control parties who were controlling us during that first afternoon's fire. "Your shots are not going to waste; there is plenty of stuff in there," "Your firing is very effective; you're doing a swell job." "We really need the fire in that area. There are pill boxes there." All these comments added up to new confidence and determination, for we could rarely see for ourselves just how effective our firing was.

That first night was our duty night, and those of us who had never experienced it before learned right then and there that if a guy allows gunfire to interfere with his sleep, he's just due for no sleep. We fired starshells at periodic intervals over the enemy lines, to prevent the little "Japos" from infiltrating into our own back yard. This went on until approximately 0100, when CTF 51 altered orders to all ships. At 0230 "condition Red" was set, and this ship went to general quarters and ceased firing starshells.

It was our first encounter with a "Bogey" this time out, and all hands were scared to death. We moved out to sea and changed speed to 25 knots. At 0300 our 5" battery opened fire on an enemy plane to port. As far as we could determine no hits were obtained, but old buck-tooth sure did retire in a hurry—and not without our approval either. The ship then resumed her station and continued firing starshells the remainder of the night without further interference.

Thus the operation continued, the ship rendering call fire during the day and illuminating and harassing every other night. On our "off" nights we would form up with a group of ships and retire several miles out and cruise about the entire area. This group was under the command of Rear Admiral B. J. Rogers, USN, as O.T.C. in the battleship Nevada. Other ships present were the battleships Tennessee, Texas, Idaho, Arkansas, the cruisers Indianapolis, Vicksburg, Tusculooa, and destroyers and other types too numerous to mention.

We experienced one more "Bogey" scare up to the time we departed, and although we ceased illuminating and moved out to sea to meet the threat, the plane never came close enough for us to fire. Otherwise all our attention was devoted to the island—eerie, black looking Iwo with its constant pall of overhanging smoke.

From all the reports gathered, the Leathernecks were having a rough time. Progress was measured in terms of hundreds of yards, and enemy small arms, artillery, and mortar fire was taking a terrific toll. Very elaborate and well hidden cave systems made it particularly difficult for both our boys ashore and for the supporting ships.

There was little counter battery fire during the whole operation as far as the Birmingham was concerned. We saw the destroyer Calhoun catch an enemy shell off the north-eastern coast, and the "Columbia Victory," a transport, was fired on one morning by shore batteries as she approached the western beaches. Things got so hot that she rather hastily withdrew.

At this time we can recall an interesting diversion, something on the lighter and more human side. The incident involved one of the boys in our Marine detachment, Pfc. Endo Panozzo, of Chicago, Illinois. During one afternoon we were not called upon to fire for some time, and Endo, sportsman deluxe, decided to stream a line over the fantail and do a spot of fishing. There were several bites, but the following morning the real catch was made. With the help of about five

men, Endo hauled aboard a six foot shark, and proudly strung it up from the center gun of No. 4 turret. Then, much to the amazement of the crew, the huge fish began to bear young until some 24 small flopping sharks, each about 9 inches long, lay wriggling on the deck. Endo is claiming a world record for this.

Another incident that deserves mention at this time concerns two sailors on the fantail who were just itching to get over to the island in order to give the Marines a hand. After much discussion, one of them finally decided to go over the side and swim for it. Well, into the water he went, and it is difficult to recall another time in our lives when a man was seen to change his mind so fast. It wasn't long 'ere our self styled one man army was back on board, ruefully admitting that perhaps it would be better if he left the show over there to the Marine Corps.

At approximately 1500 on the afternoon of March 4th we intercepted a radio message from a B-29 returning from a raid on Japan. The plane was damaged and the pilot planned to "ditch" in the Iwo area. Five minutes later the plane appeared and successfully landed on Iwo's southern air strip. Then, two hours later, and much to our surprises, the B-29 made a successful take-off and headed for home. The air strip was only about 5500 feet long, and not even our smaller bombers had used it yet. This was with a raging battle being fought only a mile away!

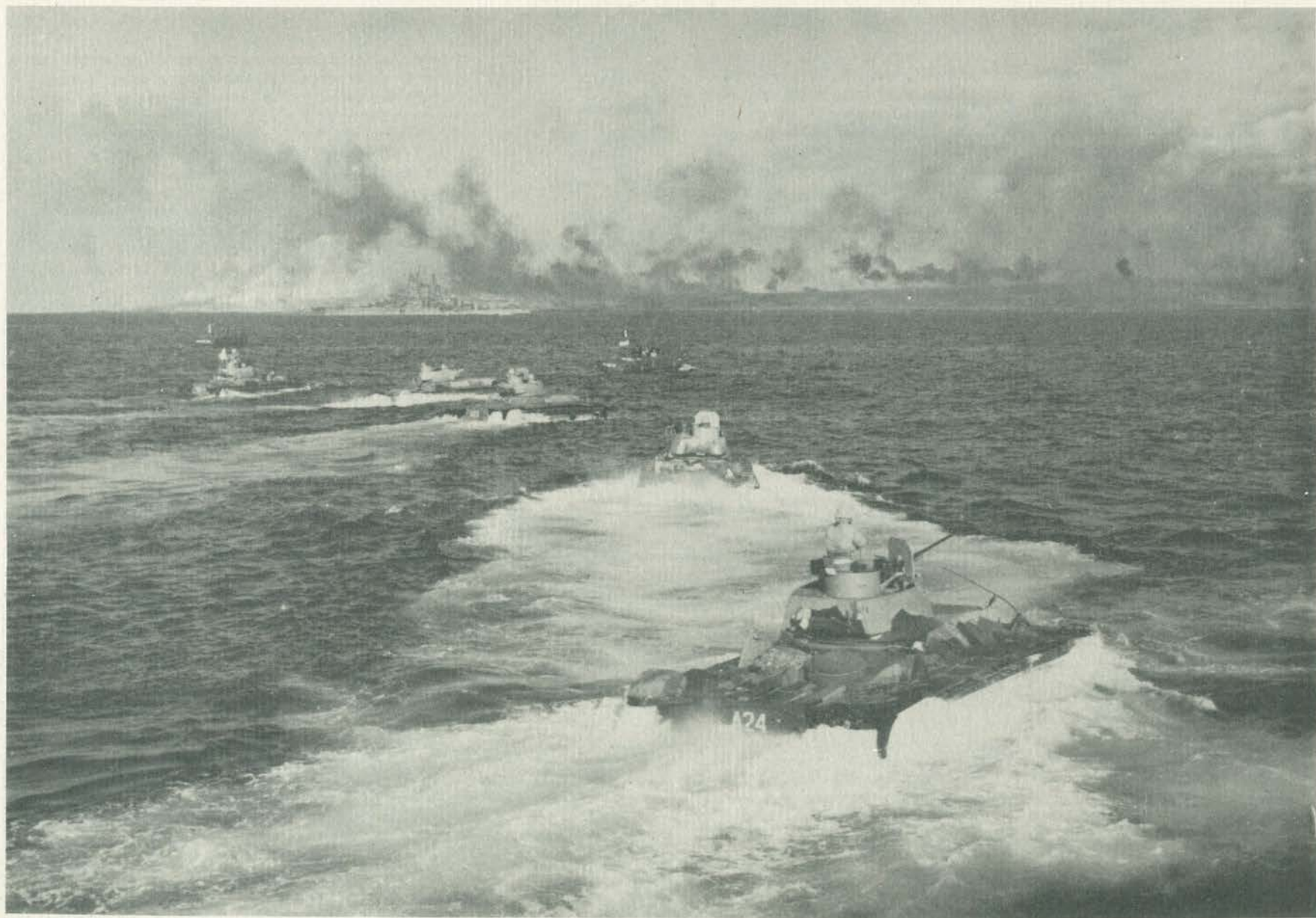
The Birmingham continued to deliver call fire all morning and afternoon on March 5, in preparation for the big push that was to come the following day. However, late that afternoon we were relieved in our sector by the heavy cruiser Salt Lake City, and proceeded to rendezvous with the heavy cruiser Baltimore off the southeastern shore of the island. At that point another task unit was formed, composed of the cruisers Baltimore (flag ship of Rear Admiral Wiltsie, Commander Cruiser Division Ten and O.T.C. of this task unit), Birmingham and Vicksburg, and the escorts Bull (APD-78), John D. Henley (DD-553), and Harry F. Bauer (DM-26). In accordance with orders from Admiral Turner, this task unit got underway at 1700 for Ulithi Atoll, Caroline Islands.



SHARK CAUGHT BY PFC. PANOZZO OFF IWO JIMA



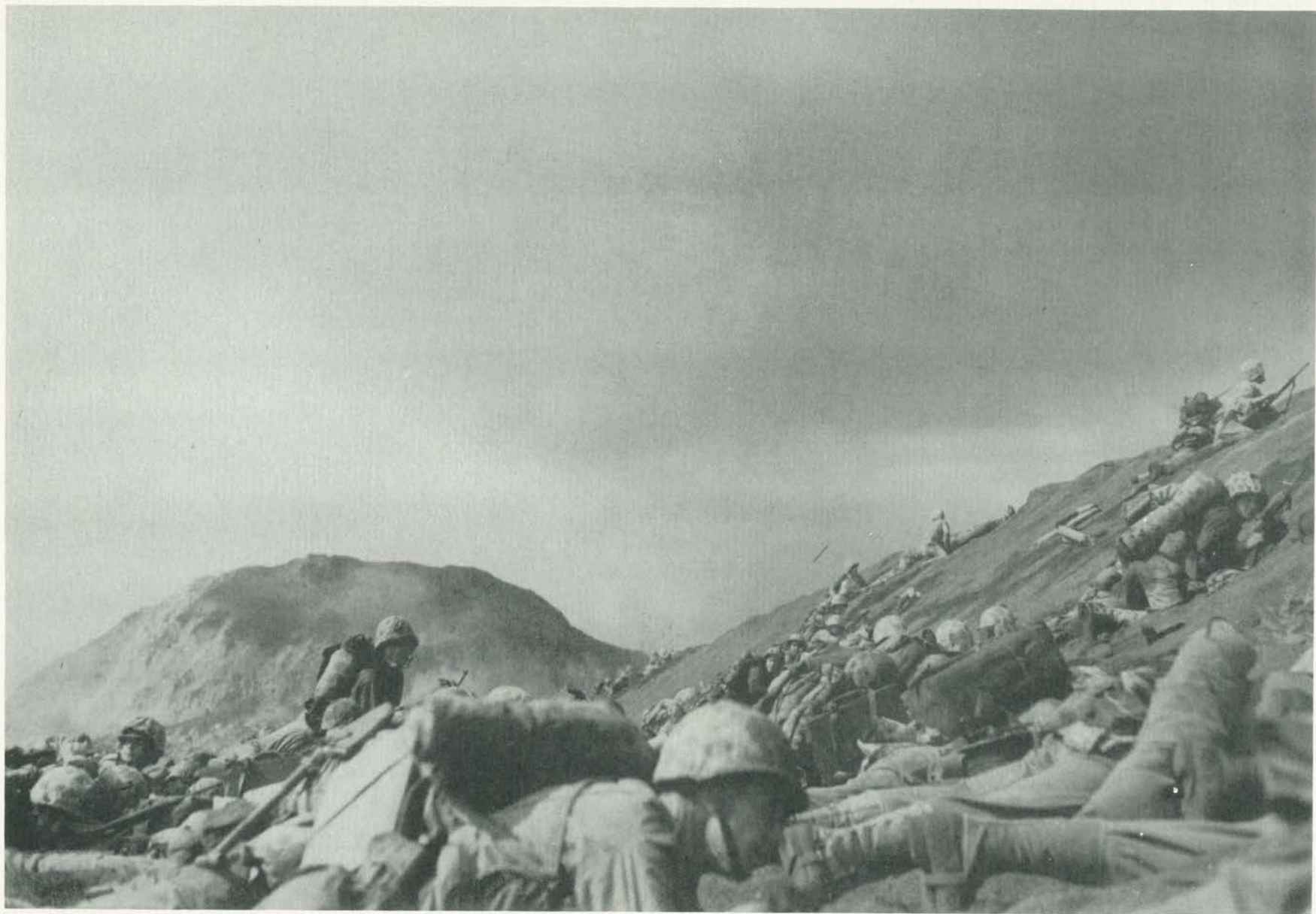
MARINES WAITING TO GO IN IWO



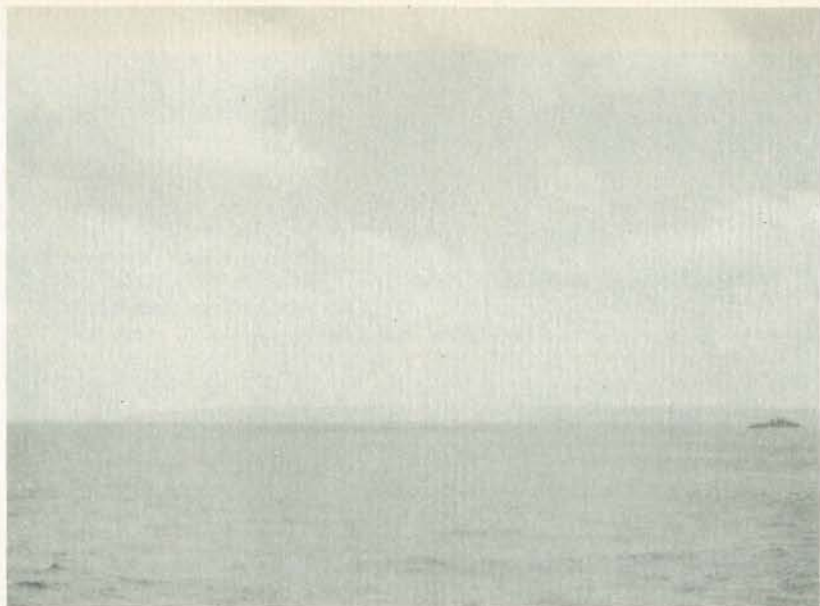
MARINES UNDER SUPPORT OF BIRMINGHAM'S SHELLING



HITTING THE IWO BEACH



STARTING THEIR ATTACK



IWO JIMA



IWO JIMA—TRANSPORTS UNLOADING

MOG-MOG INTERLUDE

Ulithi was just one of the many tiny groups of islands throughout the Pacific, which, by virtue of being arranged in circular fashion and interconnected by reefs, served as excellent anchorages and advance bases for our rapidly expanding fleet. Ulithi, one of the largest of these protected anchorages (it could contain the entire U. S. fleet at peak strength, and then some), was one of the main jumping off spots for our operations during the second half of the war, and because of its great importance was virtually kept secret from the American public. The nearest Japanese held territory was the island of Yap, about 150 miles away, and in order to keep interference from that direction down to a minimum, army bombers continually neutralized the island.

In the early hours of the morning on March 8, Falalop Island, Ulithi Atoll, was picked up visually at a distance of 15 miles. As the ships in the formation prepared for the entry, our interest in the huge anchorage mounted by the minute. Before us, as far as the human eye could see, was probably the largest and most formidable fleet of warships and auxiliaries ever assembled at one time in one spot. All of Task Force 58, and practically all of Vice Admiral J. B. Oldendorf's bombardment forces were present, to say nothing of the huge fleet of tankers, oilers, repair and hospital ships, and all other types of auxiliaries that one could think of. It was difficult to recall a more thrilling sight, and the old hands reveled in memories of previous operations.

Our thirteen days in Ulithi served as a well needed rest for most of us, since condition watches were suspended except for early morning and twilight hours. However, excitement was definitely not lacking, and on several occasions we had the well known jitters. The "Japos" knew we were there, and were certainly going to do all in their power to keep us on edge and make things generally uncomfortable.

On the evening of March 11 the nightly movie was being shown on the fantail, and considerably more than half the crew was back there. At approximately 2010 a low flying plane flew directly over us, a scant 50 yards away, but no more than the usual, unconscious interest was displayed by our own crew. Then, just a few seconds later, a definite concussion was felt by all hands topside. Looking to port, one could see a large burst of flame an undetermined distance away. One man yelled "Gee, look at the fire on the island." Then he looked closer, and in an awe-shocked, almost imperceptible voice, murmured, "Gosh, it looks like a carrier."

Yes, it was a carrier—and only 3,000 yards off our port

beam. The Jap suicider, who could have done tremendous damage had he chosen us as his victim instead of the carrier, had crashed into the fantail of the flat-top, and almost immediately thereafter SOPA signaled to all ships "Flash Red—all ships to general quarters." Our fantail cleared in record time, and a very alert crew went to their battle stations on the double.

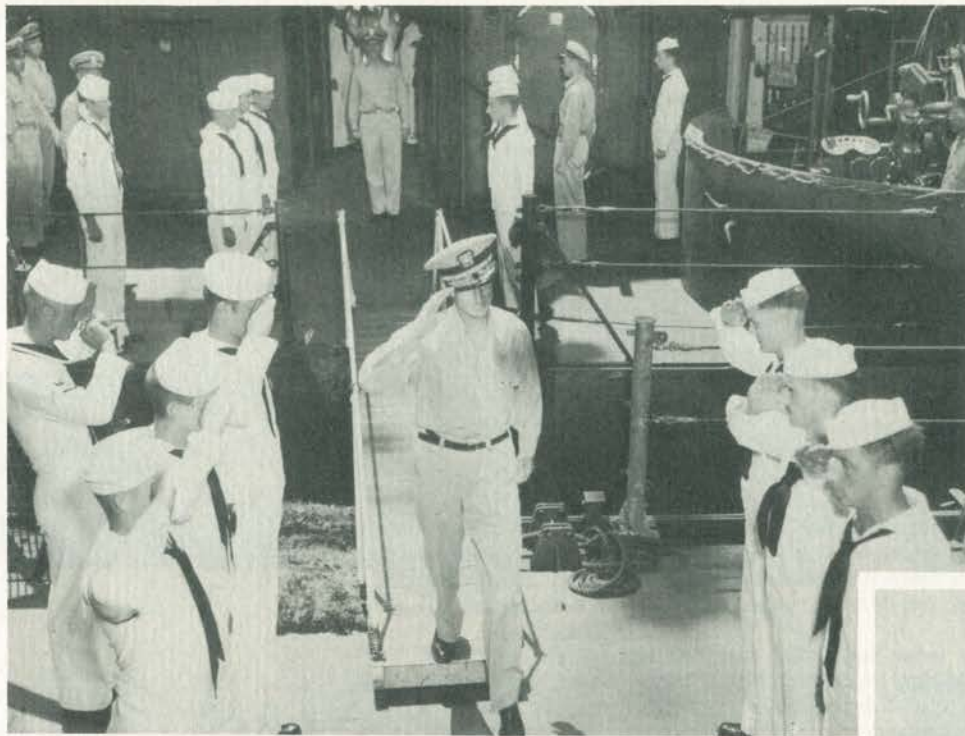
Visual reports indicated that the carrier was the Randolph, one of our new Essex class ships. The fires were extinguished quickly, but approximately 25 men lost their lives as a result of the explosion. Other reports indicated that at least two other enemy planes had crashed in the vicinity, but no further damage to our ships resulted. At 2030 SOPA set "Flash White", and the Birmingham's crew, thoroughly on edge, but considerably relieved, went back to see the remainder of the movie.

In the ensuing days we experienced three or four more scares. On all of these occasions the reported enemy planes turned out to be friendly, and in almost every case it was a PBM Mariner flying boat. It was at this time that many of us first heard the expression "Peter Bogey Mike" in reference to our Navy's flying boat.

During our stay in port the ship sent its quota of 200-250 men every other day to Mog Mog Island, which was set up as a fleet recreational center. Facilities on the tiny, coral, palm studded island had developed very rapidly, and men going on recreation had at their disposal basketball courts, baseball diamonds, grill pits, swimming areas, daily music by ships bands, and most important, three bottles of beer per man. All that remained of the natives were their dwellings—little palm covered huts.

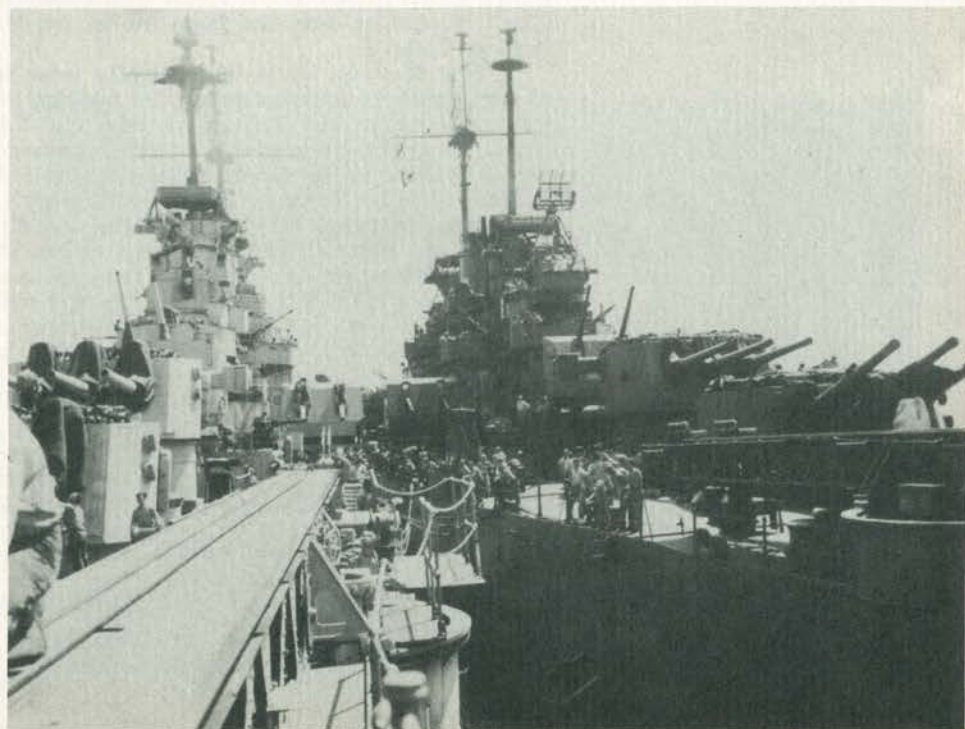
The principal brain twister in every man's mind at the end of an operation was, "what do we do next?" After about one week at Ulithi, "Scuttlebutt Mike" began spreading the word that before long we would be enroute to the Nansei Shoto chain of islands south of Japan proper—specifically, the island of Okinawa. Almost immediately all available maps and charts were broken out, and upon locating Okinawa on the edge of the east China Sea, many of the Birmingham's military analysts scoffed at "Scuttlebutt Mike." "It would be Japan proper," said this self-styled minority, "You can be certain of that."

On March 10, Admiral Deyo shifted his two star flag from the Santa Fe to the Birmingham, since the former ship



REAR ADMIRAL M. L. DEYO, COM CRU DIV 13
COMING ABOARD AT ULITHI FROM U.S.S. SANTA FE

SANTA FE ALONG SIDE BIRMINGHAM



was scheduled for a navy yard overhaul and would not be with us on our next operation. Several days later, Vice Admiral Oldendorf had a mishap in the harbor, resulting in his collar bone being fractured, and in order to avoid unnecessary delay in replacing his command, Admiral Deyo and his staff were quickly shifted to the Tennessee to assume temporary command of Battleship Squadron One. Then, in order to keep the administrative ends together, Rear Admiral B. J. Rogers shifted his two star flag from the Idaho to the Birmingham, to assume duties as Commander Cruiser Division Thirteen and Commander of an amphibious group. With Admiral Rogers' unusually large amphibious staff, the ship now boasted a total of 109 officers, the largest in its history, and the griping in the crowded wardroom country was prolonged—but not too loud.

On the morning of March 14, an ominous and thrilling event took place—Admiral Mitscher's Task Force 58 stood out from Urushi anchorage in Ulithi Harbor, and proceeded out to sea. This sortie of our fast carrier task force had but one meaning, as it always had in past operations. The enemy would be softened up by rapid and intense air strikes, and then Admiral Deyo's large supporting force would move in with transports and other auxiliaries for the main assault. It was all very clear now, and more than a few gazed longingly at the vast procession of ships steaming out to sea, silently wishing that we were going with them—instead of remaining behind with the old battleships and cruisers of the bombardment force.

It became increasingly apparent, despite the attempt to conceal it, that this operation would take in the assault and occupation of Okinawa, plus some other islands in the Nansei Shoto chain which were not yet designated, even by "Scuttlebutt Mike." No sailing date had been set for us, but we were on four hours notice at all times in Ulithi.

Few of us on board had actually seen the British navy in the Pacific, although all had received information that a striking force was being assembled to work with and under the overall Pacific command of Admiral Nimitz. If any of us had any doubts as to the authenticity of this information or as to the good intentions of our ally to do their bit in the Pacific conflict, this doubt was quickly dispelled on March 20. On that date, twenty-one of Her Majesty's ships stood into Ulithi Harbor, led by the battleships Howe and King George the Fifth, and the aircraft carriers Illustrious, Indomitable, Indefatigable, and Implacable. While not quite matching our own T.F. 58 in size or striking power, this was a formidable array of ships, and certainly could be counted upon to play a large part in this next operation.

On 21 March the Birmingham got underway along with other cruisers of her task force group for what was expected and later proven to be the toughest naval operation of the bloody Pacific war. This ship was a unit in the gun fire and covering force group under the command of Rear Admiral Deyo, and was enroute to Okinawa to prepare for the assault and occupation of this vitally important island as a prelude to the final assault on Japan proper. Here before us lay a tremendous endeavor, for during the entire operation, scheduled to last for months, we would be within easy striking distance of Jap bombers and fighters based on Amami Shima, Kyushu, occupied territory in China, and Formosa. In addition, what we had been fearing all along was now an accepted fact. The Kamikaze was to be seriously considered, and as our large force pounded the seas in a northwesterly direction, the old hands on the Birmingham wondered superstitiously about that third strike.

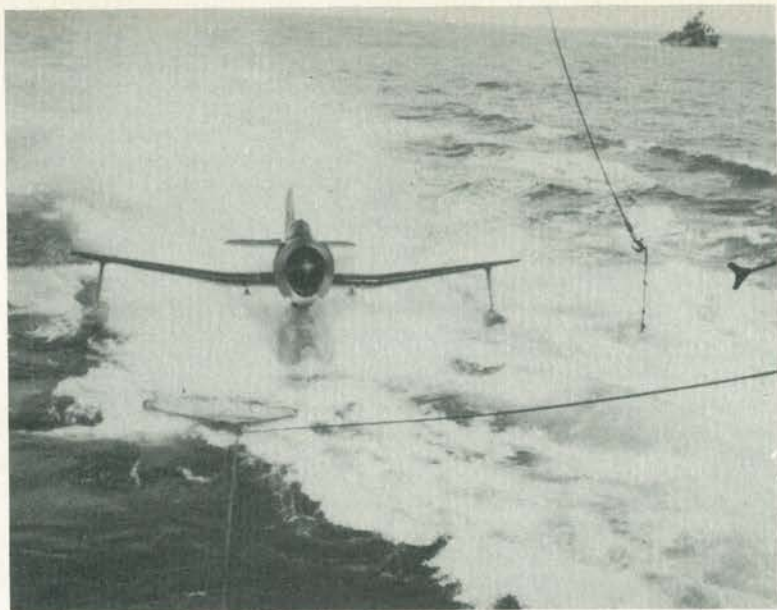
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FLIGHT QUARTERS—LAUNCHING AND LANDING THE SC-1



SC-1 GETTING ON THE SLED FOR A "CHARLIE" RECOVERY



PILOTS CURTIS TECHNICIAN AND 2 MEN

"FLASH RED"

During the second half of the war the American public heard much about the immense size and striking power of Task Force 58. In all fairness to the combatant ships involved in the close support missions of these various operations, we should point out that the task force, to which the Birmingham was now attached, was the unsung other half of the mighty Fifth Fleet, and in size and striking power could very well stand up against any other Navy in the world. Briefly then, Gunfire and Covering Force consisted of the following: ten old but modernized battleships (with the Tennessee as Force Flagship), seven heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, twenty-four destroyers (including the Laffey, O'Brien, Cassin Young, and several others which later distinguished themselves in valiant combat against superior enemy forces), four destroyer escorts, one fast minelayer, one fast minesweeper, six attack transports, one communication guard ship, and three seaplane tenders. Many of these old battlewagons were literally raised from the bottom after that fateful day at Pearl Harbor, and men of the Navy are justly proud with the manner in which these ships went about settling old scores during the latter half of the war.

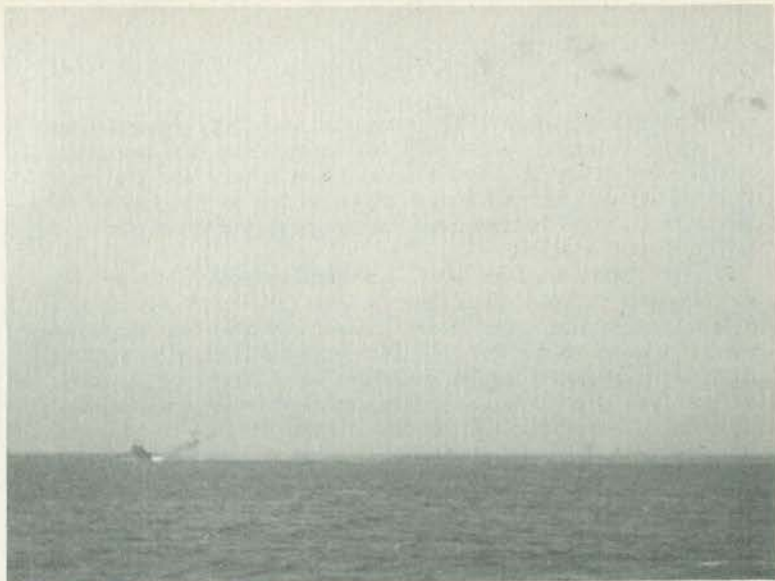
During our three day journey to the Nansei Shoto, Captain Power, large, gruff, and forceful, did his utmost to prepare us both physically and mentally for the struggle that lay ahead. All sorts of charts and relief maps were broken out, and officers and petty officers alike studied the area, with particular attention given to the fire support area to which we were assigned. These maps were excellent, depicting gun emplacements, suspected blockhouses, caves, ancient tombs, radio stations, and many other objects that would make excellent targets. Finally, the Skipper warned us of the severe and ever present threat of suicide plane attacks, and in reference to this he bluntly remarked "I know that I can't always speak for you people, but I am certain that we all have a lot o' livin' to do yet—so get the 'bastard' before he gets us!"

Briefly, the overall plan of operation went something like this. Task Force 58 would operate to the east of Okinawa and deliver air strikes against Amami Shima, Kyushu and Okinawa itself. In addition Admiral Mitscher was to keep a combat air patrol over the area for defensive purposes. To the west Army bombers of General Chennault's 14th Air Force would harass enemy air strips in China. Finally, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser's British Fleet was detailed to operate around the extreme southern end of the Nansei Shoto, specifically the Sakashima Group. Air strikes and bombardments of these islands and Formosa were designed to minimize enemy air

attacks from our rear. With maximum possible protection on all sides, Admiral Deyo and his supporting bombardment force were ready to move in and blast a path for the huge fleet of transports and cargo ships which would arrive on the scene at the proper time to disgorge it's men and material on the beaches.

Fully briefed as to what we were expected to do, the Birmingham arrived off Okinawa late on March 24 to commence preliminary operations. During the next few days we were attached to the Tonachi Fire Support Unit, which acted as a covering force for Mine Group No. 1. Ships of the latter group moved ahead of us, cutting and destroying mine anchorages in the area around the tiny island of Tonachi, located several miles to the southwest of Okinawa. These preliminary operations prior to "Love Day" (April 1) also included the occupation of the Kerama Retto and several other tiny islands off the west coast of Okinawa. Kerama Retto consisted of several islands arranged in more or less horseshoe fashion, and the small but well protected harbor would serve as an excellent seaplane and logistics base during the ensuing operation. On the other islands it was planned to set up Army artillery units to support the principal operation. All these objectives were captured by small Army groups several days prior to "Love Day," with little or no opposition offered.

From March 26 through March 31 we operated in and about the Okinawa area, firing at likely targets whenever the opportunity arose. We all knew from the first day on that this little "deal" wouldn't be a soft touch, and that suicide menace we heard so much about was now staring us straight in the face. On March 26 torpedo wakes were sighted by both the St. Louis and the Wichita, and on two occasions the latter reported sighting submarine periscopes. That night, we experienced our first air raid of the operation, and although puny in comparison with what was to come later, it was enough to give everyone a severe mental jolt. On March 27 the tempo of the air attacks increased, and those topside had the horrible fortune of seeing four ships hit by suicide planes—the destroyers Dorsey and O'Brien, the battleship Nevada, and the cruiser Biloxi. Although serious damage and considerable casualties were sustained, the stricken ships remained operational. That same day the destroyers Leutze and Porterfield each reported the sighting of submarines, and a short time later, the sinking of same. Floating mines were seen everywhere, and restricted our movements considerably. It appeared as though new mines were being sewn every night by enemy planes after we retired. On March 28, one of our minesweepers, the Skylark, struck a mine and ex-



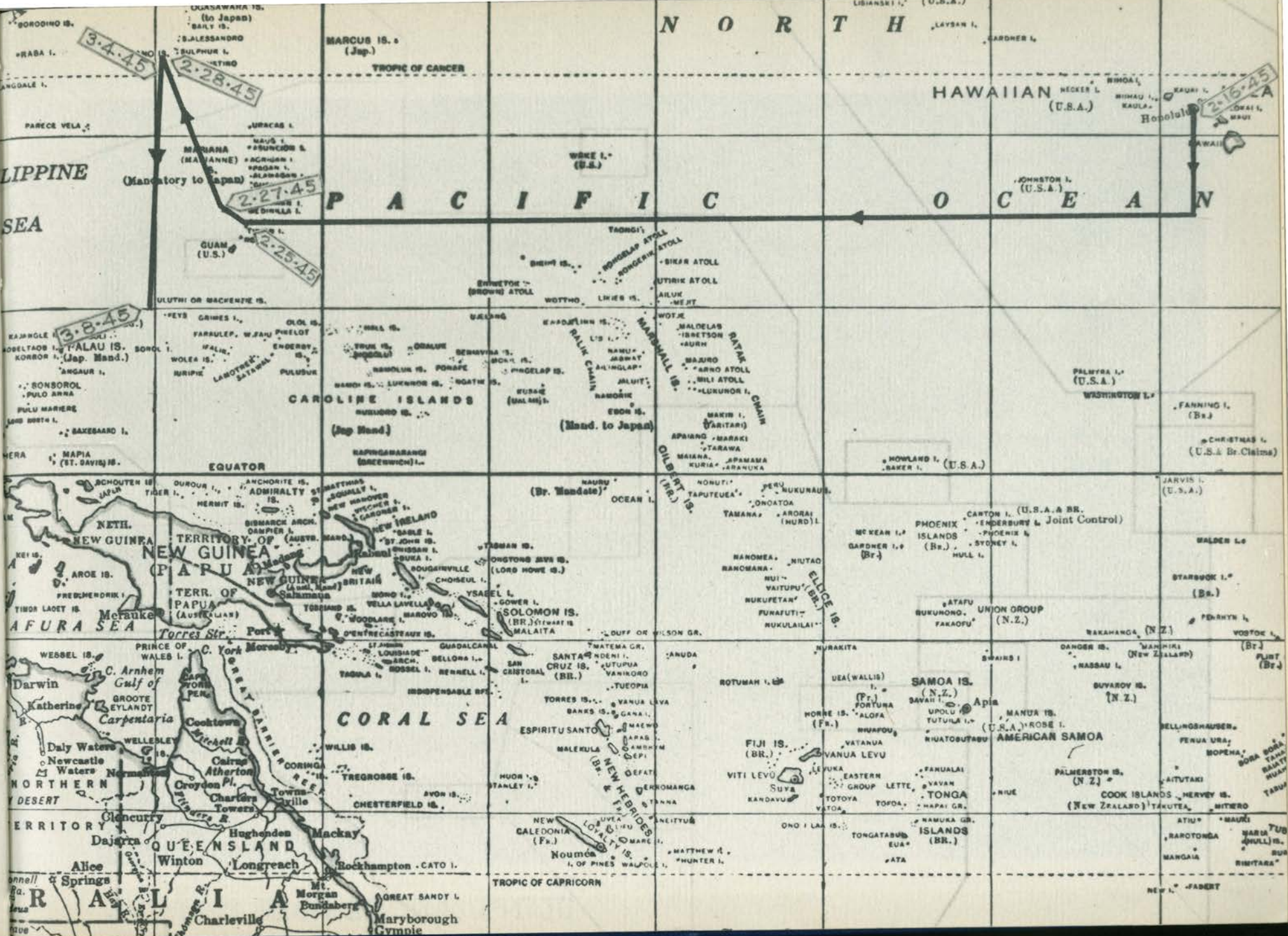
"AA" FIRE—OKINAWA



U.S.S. BILOXI HIT BY SUICIDE PLANES

ploded violently. Incidentally, in connection with these mines, how many of us remember that afternoon when the 40mm. battery controlled by the forward exploded four mines and sank two additional mines without them exploding.

Thus it continued until "Love Day." The ship was now attached to a fire support unit consisting of the Birmingham, St. Louis, Wichita, Tennessee, Nevada, and the destroyers Abele, Fellars, Bryant, Wesson, and Barton. The unit in turn was assigned to the fire support sector which included the southwestern shores of Okinawa from about the middle of the island to a point well below Naha, the largest and capitol city on the island. On the night of March 31 a tired and apprehensive crew made final preparations for the terrific early morning bombardment, which would culminate in the landing of General Buckner's Tenth Army and General Geiger's First, Second, and Sixth Marine divisions.



N O R T H

HAWAIIAN
(U.S.A.)
NECKER I.
KURE I.
HAWAII I.
MAUI I.
HONOLULU
JOHNSTON I.
(U.S.A.)

P A C I F I C O C E A N

PHILIPPINE
SEA

(Mandatory to Japan)

GUAM (U.S.)

CAROLINE ISLANDS
(Jap. Mand.)

(Mand. to Japan)

(Br. Mandate)

HOWLAND I. (U.S.A.)

CHRISTMAS I. (U.S. & Br. Claims)

NEW GUINEA
(PAPUA)
TERRITORY OF
NEW GUINEA
(AUSTRALIAN)

CORAL SEA

SAMOA IS. (N.Z.)

AMERICAN SAMOA (U.S.A.)

FIJI IS. (BR.)

NEW HEBRIDES (BR. & N.Z.)

TONGA ISLANDS (BR.)

COOK ISLANDS (NEW ZEALAND)

QUEENSLAND
Mackay
Rockhampton
CATO I.
Gympie
Maryborough
Winton
Longreach
Alice Springs
Darwin
Katherine
Newcastle
Waters
Normanby
Glencurry
Dajarra
Mt. Morgan
Eundaberg
Charleville
Great Sandy I.

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

3.4.45

2.28.45

2.27.45

2.25.45

3.8.45

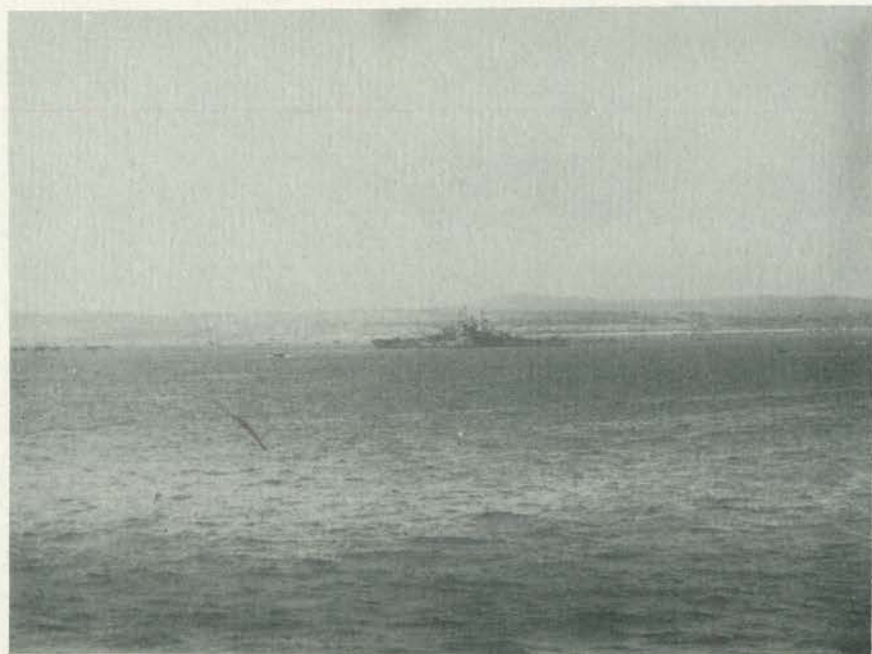
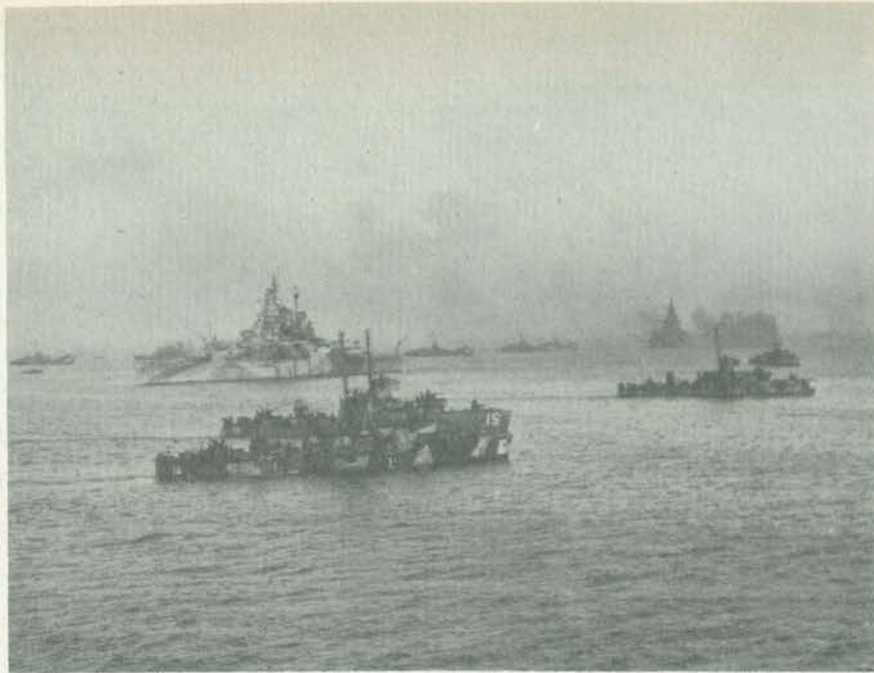
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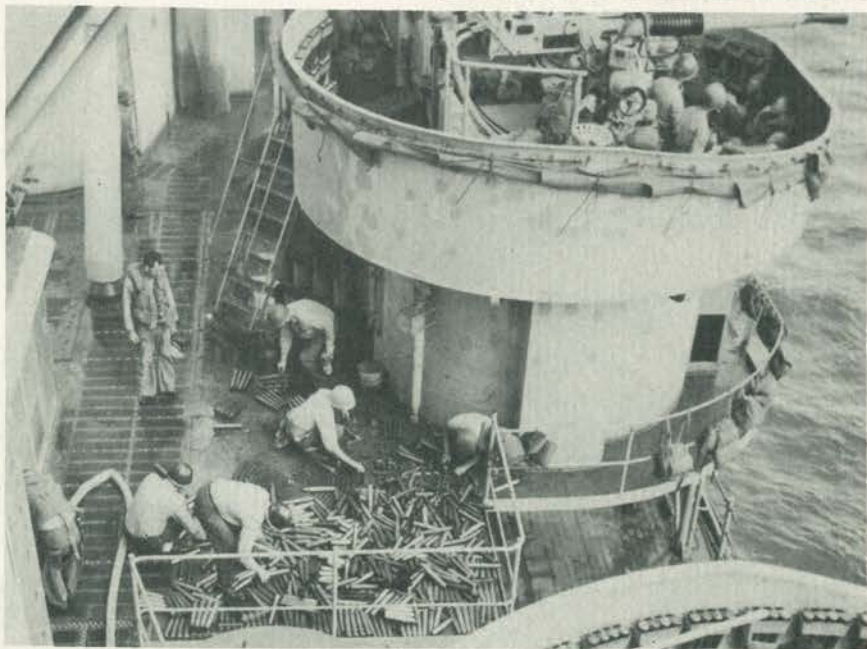
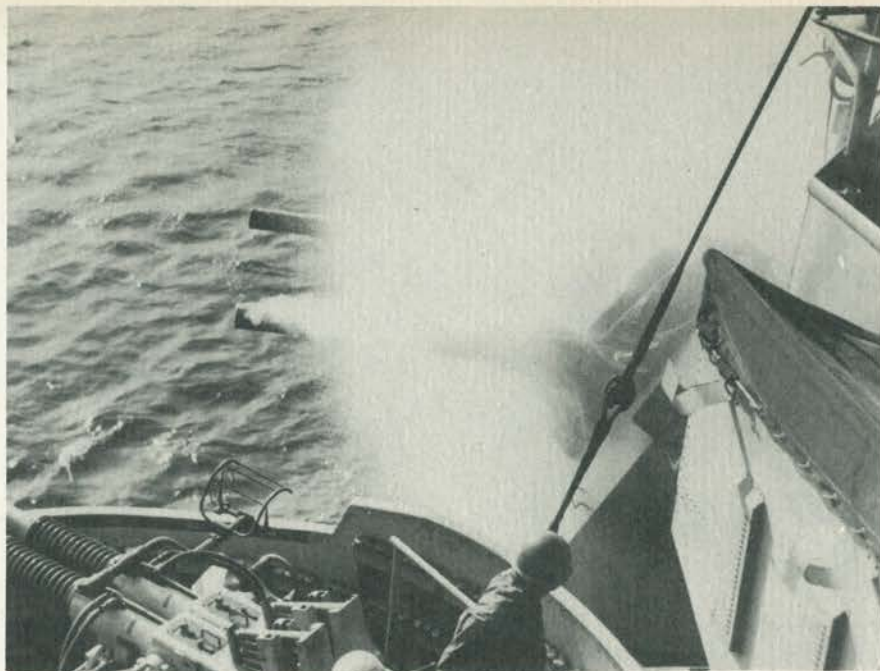
ULITHI, ANCHORAGE FOR THE



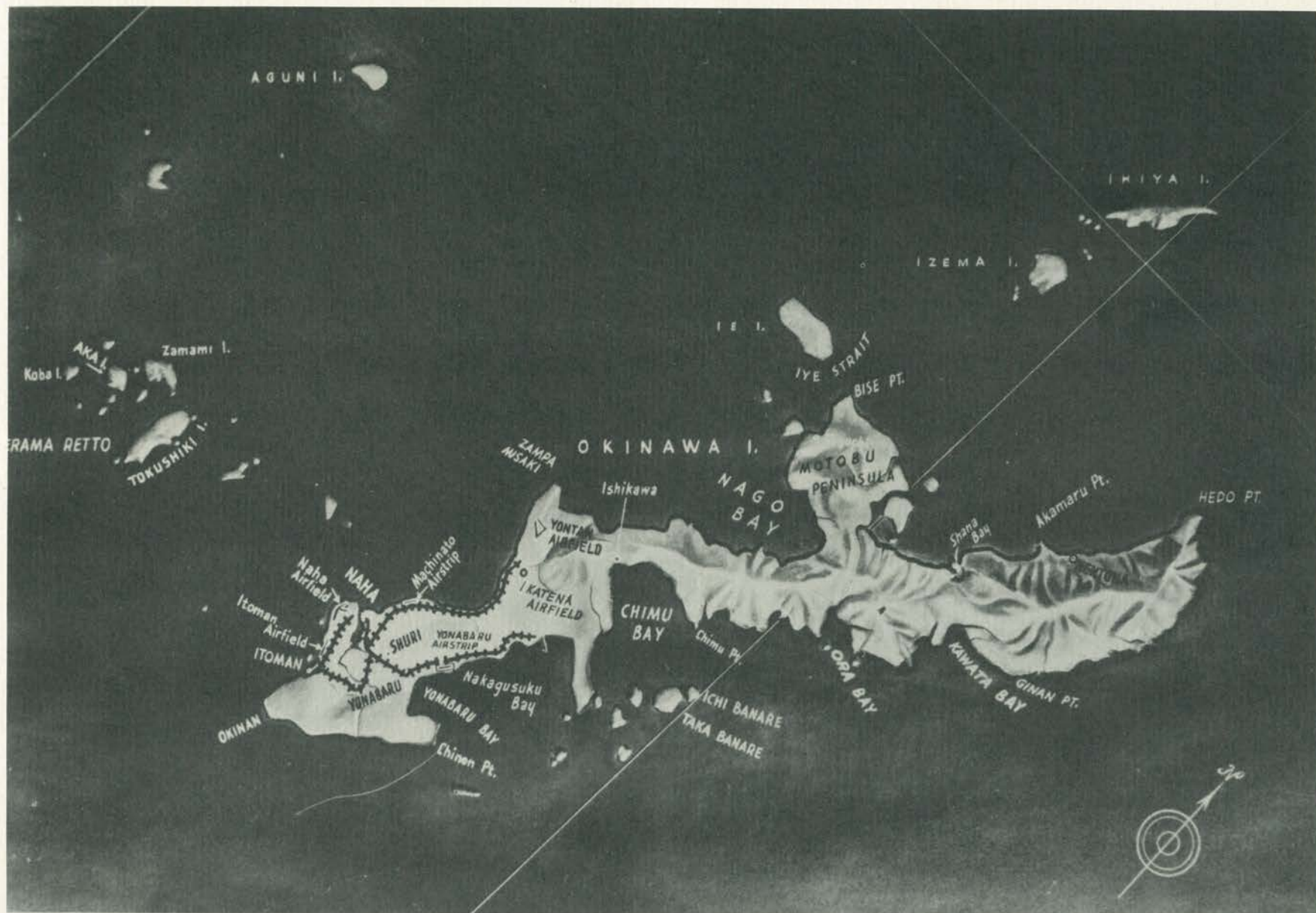
WORLD'S LARGEST FLEET

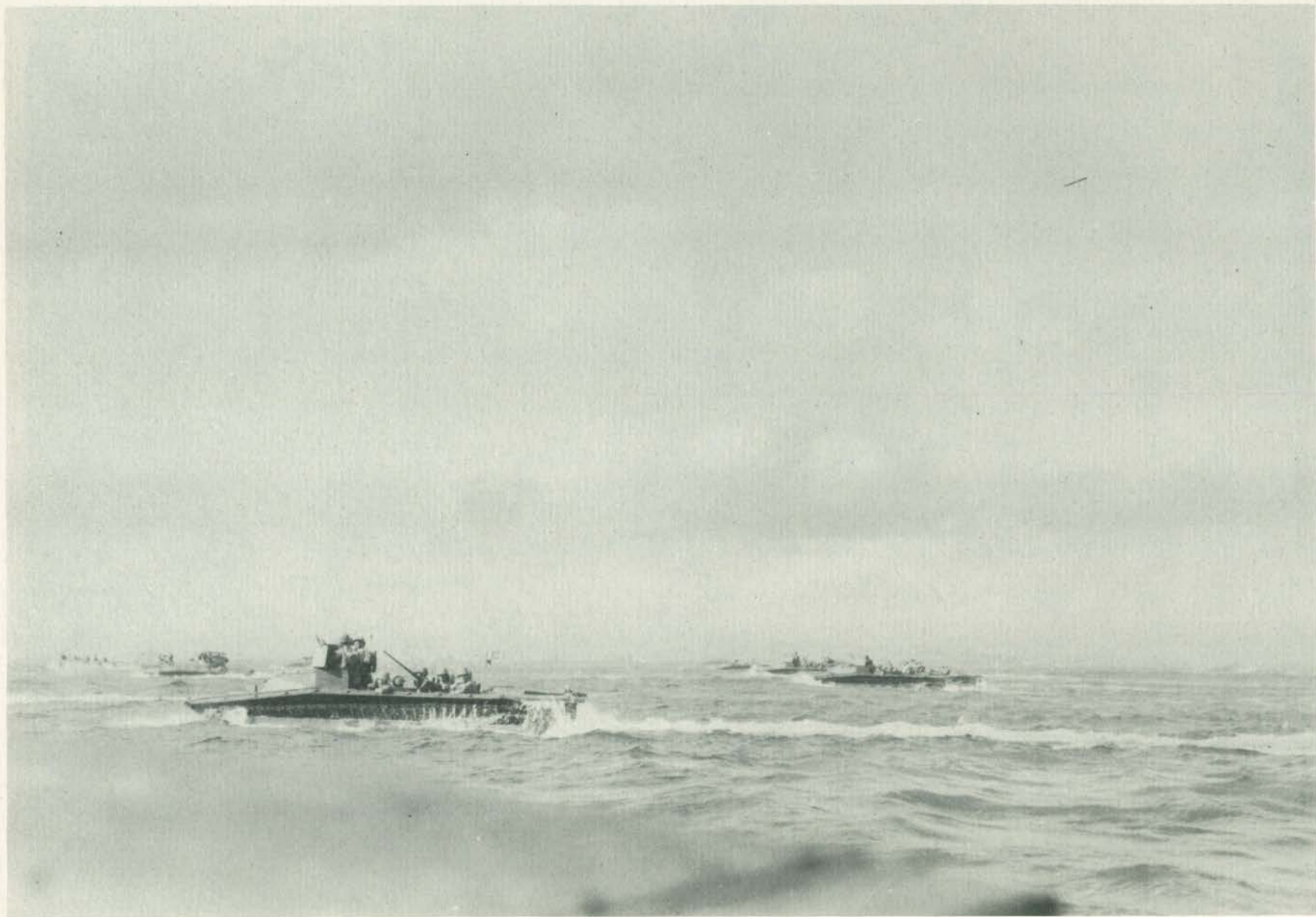


PRE-INVASION—OKINAWA—MARCH, 1945



BOMBARDMENT—OKINAWA





"L"-DAY—



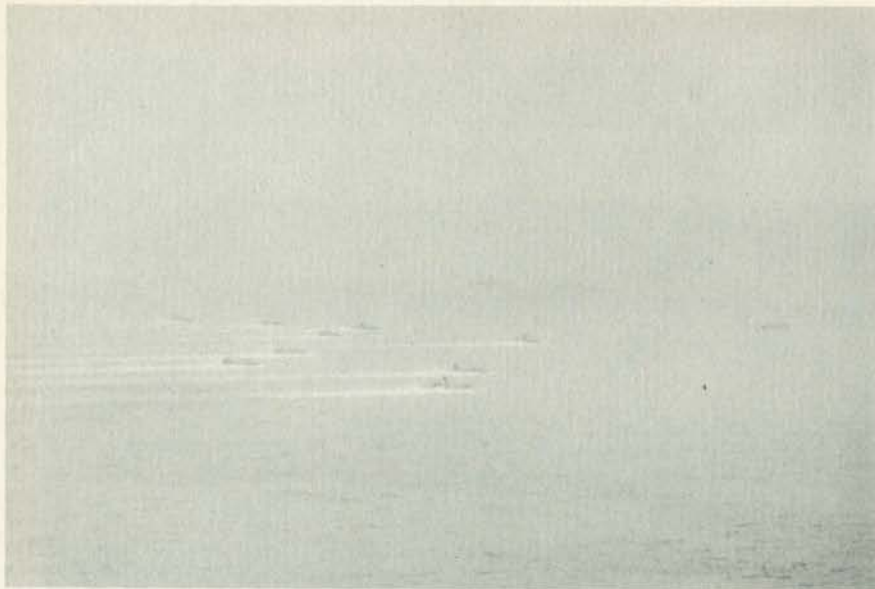
LANDING AT OKINAWA



MARINES LAND ON



OKINAWA BEACHES



At exactly 0608 local time, April 1, 1945 all heavy ships in the bombardment force were directed to open fire according to plan, thus commencing what later proved to be the last and most costly amphibious operation of the long Pacific war. The volume of the barrage and the din created were frightening and few of us could ever understand how any living thing could possibly withstand the onslaught. Then, at 0620, while the invasion barges were steaming for the beaches, as we fearfully expected, enemy air attack commenced. Almost immediately, a plane flying at medium altitude came in fast from over the island and commenced a run on the Birmingham.

In a flash our 5" AA. batteries were shifted from the shore bombardment set-up to that of air attack, and all guns on the port side fired at point blank range. At 2,000 yards the plane, identified as a "Val" was hit by a 5" shell, but he still kept coming. Then, when less than 500 yards away and headed for the bridge, 40mm. guns shot off his landing gear and one wing, causing the plane to roll over slightly and drop its bomb about 50 yards off the port bow. The sudden loss in weight and balance caused the burning and disintegrating plane to lift slightly at this moment, and it miraculously cleared the forward superstructure between the main and secondary battery directors, crashing into the sea a scant 20 yards off our starboard bow. Most of us will never forget this harrowing experience, nor will we ever fail to remember how B. J. Rogers, Rear Admiral, United States Navy, and our own little A. D. Barrett, Slc, United States Naval Reserve, never flinched during the entire run, standing up side by side in the forward superstructure with eyes glued to the oncoming plane until it crashed and disappeared. When interviewed a short while later by a roving reporter from "The Birmingham Broadside," little A. D. remarked "Hell, I was fascinated!"

Notwithstanding the above, most of us were scared, plenty scared—and many who were topside to witness the duel between ship and plane were still shaking nervously several days later. The words of our Skipper came to mind repeatedly: "Get the 'Bastard' before he gets us!" This was a terrible game, a game played for keeps, and not a few wondered just how many consecutive wins we could attain before coming out on the short end of the score. That was a matter that only the future could tell.

Meanwhile the landings went according to plan, with little or no opposition from the enemy on the beach. Within two weeks the Marines had fanned out and completely occupied the rocky, barren northern end of the island. The Tenth Army, after quick initial successes resulting in the capture of several airstrips in the center of the island, bogged down considerably when it came up against the powerful Shuri defense line, running from a point north of Naha town

through Shuri Castle straight to the southeast coast. It was in this area that the Birmingham was called upon to deliver most of it's firing.

From that first day on the routine was pretty much the same. We fired every type of shore bombardment mission in the book—close support, deep support, counter-battery, harassing, neutralization, and illumination. We experienced and repelled every type of attack the enemy could think of—air, submarine, suicide boats, swimmers, and shore batteries. Our guns seemed to boom endlessly, and "Flash Red-Control Green" became a daily by-word. Long, terrible hours were spent at condition watches, and gradually the weary crew became superstitious, and fatalistic. Where at one time a man jumped at the crack of a gun, he now kept on eating in the mess hall as eight 5" guns pumped shell after shell at an attacking enemy plane. The only things that kept us going during these trying days were thoughts of our loved ones at home and an unconquerable sense of humor. Therefore we will go along from day to day and attempt to present the highlights and most exciting events which we on the Birmingham recall most vividly.

After that narrow escape on "Love Day" we managed to remain free of any further attack for the next few hours, although one plane managed to sneak through and dive into the West Virginia not far away, causing a fire and moderate material and personnel casualties. That night and early on the morning of April 2 numerous "Bogies" were picked up, but none approached close enough for us to open fire. The Combat Air Patrol had quite a bit of success, radio reports indicating that they had destroyed 14 Nips. Admiral Mitscher's "Birdmen" continued their excellent work during the next few days, accounting for a huge number of suicide bent planes, and as a result we were not called upon to repel air attacks.

In the early hours of April 3 a little excitement was caused by a near miss on the Biloxi by a suicider, followed by the report of an aerial torpedo estimated to have passed us 6,000 yards away. Our bombardment continued. On April 4 we had just commenced firing at a target when our Shore Fire Control Party realized that he was just a bit too close for comfort, and was going to "Pack up and get the h - - - out." To avoid causing him any discomfort, such as eviction, we ceased firing on that target.

April 6 will be remembered as one of the most gruelling days of the entire operation. From 0300 to 0600 we were at General Quarters with "Bogies" reported all around us. A dense smoke screen was laid over the entire area, and none of the ships in the anchorage were attacked. The most agonizing condition during these night attacks was the fact that we were at anchor and completely unable to maneuver should an air attack be aimed at us. In addition, the smoke screens

laid over various ships for protective purposes sometimes worked to our disadvantage, for although we could never see the enemy he might make out the top of our superstructure. Of course we were never permitted to fire when the order to "make smoke" was given, which added to our helpless feeling.

At 1500 that afternoon, while retiring with Task Force 54 for the night, we encountered the most desperate and intense air action by the Japs thus far in this operation. At 1600 we splashed a "Val" at 6,000 yards. By this time there were estimated to be from 35-40 enemy planes in the air surrounding our forces. At 1640 we fired at 3 "Judys" in formation. All were splashed; we got credit for one. At 1811 the destroyer Newcomb took a suicider 3,000 yards off our port bow. When the destroyer Leutze came alongside to render aid two more planes crashed squarely into her (the Newcomb) causing some damage to the Leutze also. At approximately 1840 the attack was over, and our scoreboard showed 35 planes destroyed by our surface forces, and 55 Japs splashed by our Combat Air Patrol.

April 7 was a day that we'll all remember too. By 0900 that morning three more ships were hit by sons of Hirohito (we had various other names for them), thus raising the total number of successful suicide attacks to twenty-four. Then, at about 1500, we received word that a Japanese Task Force, consisting of one Yamato class battleship, two light cruisers, and eight destroyers was headed for Okinawa. Though they were heavily outnumbered, it was agreed that considerable damage could be inflicted by skillful use of their small but fast force. Hasty conferences were held on Admiral Deyo's Flagship, and the final decision was something we should not soon forget. At 1700 a major portion of Task Force 54 steamed out to sea, formed the proper disposition in preparation for surface engagement, and set a course and speed that would enable us to intercept the hostile force at 0500 the following morning.

Now just the thought of a surface engagement with a new and powerful Jap battleship was not a pleasant one. When the "battle happy" crew that we were took a peek topside and saw nothing ahead of us, nothing alongside us, and everything behind us, everybody took another look, and if not otherwise engaged, dashed off a quick letter home. The Birmingham was the spearhead of the right flank force, which was charged with keeping the enemy from running that flank and getting to our transport area at Okinawa. While this may sound like an Army-Navy football fracas, we assure you that we definitely were not thinking about the deft art of handling a pigskin as we steamed along seemingly all alone at 15 knots, with the nearest ship several thousand yards astern. At 1820 a "Bogie" was sighted by the formation, and several ships opened fire. The defense proved unsuccessful, however, for the plane crashed into the battleship Mary-

land in the center force. Incidentally, many of us could remember the Maryland back at Pearl Harbor, where she was being repaired following damage by another Jap suicider.

A few rare characters throughout the ship kept spirits high, and to them we owed a world of thanks. The boys stationed in Sky Plot, for example, will be a long while in forgetting the antics of "Espy" Espinosa and Cal Dougherty, the incomparable "zany twins", Cal, an old destroyer man, would frequently ask the Sky Plot control officer, Lt. (jg) H. N. Feit, what he would do if a torpedo warhead suddenly appeared through the bulkhead and just lay there on the deck "going psst, psst, psst," as Cal always put it. It doesn't sound funny in writing but bringing our thoughts out into the open in such a manner did a great deal towards relieving our pent up emotions.

Shortly after 1900 the best news we had received since the operation started reached our ears. A dispatch from Commander Task Force 58 indicated that Admiral Mitscher's fast carrier task force had beaten us to the punch and had already attacked our "targets for tonight." A force of 385 dive bombers, fighters, and torpedo planes had intercepted and routed the Jap force late in the afternoon, 50 miles southwest of Kyushu, sinking the battleship Yamato, both cruisers, and three destroyers. Eight torpedos and five half ton bombs sent the Yamato to the bottom, and the remainder of the force, consisting of five damaged destroyers, was last seen limping homeward. Many voices were heard giving forth words of envy of the fast carrier outfit but there was a silent prayer of thanks and a song in every heart as we watched the formation do an about face and cruise silently in our retirement area during the remainder of the night.

The next four days were quiet, and we were free from enemy interference as we continued our methodical supporting and harassing bombardment missions. Not everyone shared our good fortune however, for in the early hours of April 9 the destroyer Badger was badly damaged by a suicide Nip motor torpedo boat carrying depth charges. Later in the day the destroyer Sterrett, operating on picket duty to the northwest of our area, was attacked by six "Vals." She shot down four, but was damaged when one of them plunged through her AA. fire and crashed into her side.

April 9 was also a day of joy, for it marked the very first day that regular daily mail service was instituted at Okinawa. The seaplane base at Kerama Retto was now operating smoothly, and after all the mail was flown in, a fleet of LCIs would quickly distribute it among all the ships in the area. It was a marvelous seven day service from as far away as New York.

On the following day, April 10, we received the sober report which summarized the number of ships that were sunk or damaged due to enemy action up to and including April 8.

Twelve were sunk (nine by suicide planes, one by suicide boat, and two by mines), and 56 were damaged (43 by suicide planes, six by bombers, three by mines, one by aerial torpedo, one by suicide boat, and four by shore based artillery). The report was indeed alarming, but there was small consolation in the fact that the Japs were paying a far greater toll than our forces.

After four days of respite from air attacks, came April 12. Early in the morning of that day we received intelligence reports that the enemy would deliver a powerful sustained air attack against the entire fleet that afternoon. Accordingly, Admiral Deyo kept the major portion of T. F. 54 at sea all day, cruising in various AA. dispositions. The sky was sunny and cloudless, and the day quiet and seemingly peaceful. At 1447 the expected air attack developed. From that time until 1700 the Birmingham fired at just two enemy planes, repelling one and splashing the other at 3,500 yards with a terrific barrage of 6", 5", and 40mm. shells. Final reports indicated that a total of 17 raids were made on our forces during this period of time, with 164 enemy planes destroyed by ship's gunfire, planes of T. F. 58, and an air patrol of 72 fighters operating from Okinawa. The intense air raids however, took a heavy toll among our forces, the most serious of which was the sinking of the Destroyer Abele. Ships damaged included the destroyers Cassin Young, Fellars, Jeffers, Stanley, Lindsey, Purdy, Riddle, Gladiator, and Rall, and the battleship Tennessee. The picket destroyers, according to an official report, though performing a very necessary function, were continuing to bear the brunt of the Jap suicide attacks.

The next five days, up to and including April 17, were hectic ones. The operational plan called for the assault and occupation of the small island of Ie Shima, located a few miles to the west of Okinawa and well north of the area in which we were usually bombarding. The island was a good prize since it contained several airstrips suitable for heavy bomber operation. It is significant to note at this point that the Birmingham was the first heavy ship to place a shell on Ie Shima.

The preliminaries were pretty much the same as for Okinawa. With the aid of our excellent charts we bombarded pill boxes, caves, gun emplacements, stone barricades, block houses, cross roads, and various houses near the beach. In addition we covered the underwater demolition teams as they went about their extremely hazardous work of destroying underwater obstacles which might interfere with the safe movement of our landing barges.

At noon on April 14 we received a report of the approach of two "Bogies," one making 440 miles per hour, but no attack developed. As we later discovered, this was undoubtedly one of the new Jap "Baka" bombs, and although we had some further experience with them later in the campaign, they never caused our forces any grave concern. No further threats of

air attack developed until April 15, when, at 1800, many "Bogies" appeared on our radar screen. A heavy enemy air attack was forming. At 1900 they commenced making runs from all around the clock, and during the next two hours our 5" and 40mm. batteries repelled three separate attacks. The remainder of the night was uneventful.

The following day saw elements of the 77th Army Division land on Ie Shima and consolidate gains of up to 1,500 yards inland. We fired the 6", 5", and 40mm. batteries in support, and then, as we all expected, the Japs commenced



an attack. From 0745 to 1030 about 100 planes in 10 separate raids approached from the North, 37 of which were shot down by the Air Patrol and 15 by ships' gunfire. However, 13 ships were hit in suicide dives. The Pringle was sunk; the Laffey, Hobson, Bryant, Bowers, and Harding (all destroyers), two LCS's, one LCI, and four others were damaged. The Laffey was under a continuous two hour attack, and although she was hit by two bombs and four suicide planes she survived the attack and managed to shoot down six "Vals" between hits. In recognition of the valor of these



AIR VIEWS OF OKINAWA

picket ships, Task Force Commander (Vice Admiral Turner), paid them special honor with a message of praise and commendation.

On April 17 we were detached from support duty at Ie Shima and proceeded back to our sector at Okinawa. Day after day it was the same routine, with minor variations. Air attacks after April 17 petered out somewhat, since the Japs had suffered terrific losses and were undoubtedly girding their strength for future large scale attacks. Over on Ie Shima the 77th Division was engaged in moping up operations just three days after the first landings. It was at this time that we received the sad word from the U.S.A. that Ernie Pyle, famous columnist and G. I. favorite, had been killed by enemy fire on Ie Shima.

As for Okinawa, things were a bit different, and General Buckner's men were having a rough time trying to crack the Shuri defense line. By this time the Marines from up North were being regrouped and sent to reinforce the Army in the Southern sector. On 21 April the 24th Army Corps commenced a big drive supported by one of the heaviest combined air attacks and naval bombardments delivered on any one sector during the entire war. More air attacks and more ships were hit by members of Hirohito's "Divine Wind" Corps, but the Birmingham kept on methodically with its heavy and effective support.

By this time the crew was experienced and confident, although tired and anxious to get out of the area. Our performances, were in many cases superb, and this was due in part to the grand sense of humor portrayed by a homesick bunch of boys.

One of the nicest of the many complimentary remarks received by the ship came from our air spotter on the morning of April 10. "That was the best shooting I have ever seen" he stated tersely over the radio, referring to the series of gun emplacements, caves, and trenches that we had just made uninhabitable for the enemy.

Most popular with the crew was the story of how Captain Power was severely taken to account by a seaman second class. It was a relatively quiet evening at Okinawa, and the Skipper stepped out from his sea cabin on the wing of the bridge unconsciously carrying a lighted cigarette. A sailor on the main deck (We don't recall his name, but we do know he was a seaman second) chanced to look up, and seeing the cigarette glare he immediately went into action without realizing who the offender was. "Hey," he screamed, "put that cigarette out!" Captain Power, thoroughly alerted, looked over the side, and yelled back "Aye, Aye, Sonny"—and out went the cigarette.

No accounting of human interest stories during this period would be complete without this one involving the Marine

Detachment. During one of the 5" bombardments some of the Marine gunners amidships were standing at phone cord length from a twin 5" mount, when the latter sent an unexpected shot booming over their heads. In the ensuing scramble to move out of range of the concussion effect of any additional shots, one of the boys stepped on the phone cord and tore it in two—at least that's what the PFC. from Georgia claimed when questioned about the dangling, loose end. "Co'se, ah DID have a little tehnsion on that line," he remarked rather bashfully.

At the end of the month there was, in the lingo of our spotters, "no change, no change." The Army was still being held to small gains, our bombardment continued, and Nip suicide planes continued to take a large toll of all types of ships. Whenever these air attacks would peter out for a few days it was always ironically remarked that the enemy was waiting for it's next class of Divine Wind boys to graduate from their two week course in Formosa. That was just about it, too, for whenever we began to think hopefully that the Nippos were just about running out of planes and pilots, they would always come back, stronger than ever. The sick and wounded received no preferential treatment either. On April 28 the Navy Hospital Ship, Comfort, proceeding to the Marianas, was heavily damaged by a Jap suicider.

On several occasions toward the end of the month it was reported that enemy planes were still operating from Nana



YORKTOWN PILOT BEING PICKED UP

airfield, and in order to deal with this effectively we were often assigned to special firing missions called "Flycatcher" duty. At dawn and twilight a group of ships would line up and steam slowly up and down the coast of Naha, pounding the air strips from one end to the other. Thus, if any planes were on the air strips at the time, they were "caught like flies." This duty was always interesting.

Commencing May 1 the Tenth Army, reenforced by the First Marine Division, went all out in an attempt to break through the Shuri defense line. While initial successes were gained along the eastern end of the line, considerable difficulty was experienced in the vicinity of Naha Town, where enemy mortar and artillery fire was still strong and effective. Our ships were having their difficulties too, what with suicide boats and swimmers, enemy shore batteries and air attacks to be constantly reckoned with "Flash Red" was announced so frequently that after a while it just didn't seem to mean anything. Even the return of Admiral Deyo and his staff to the Birmingham on May 1, replacing Admiral Rogers, failed to evoke any interest. We were tired, very tired, and could see no end to this blasted campaign.

May 4 was really the day, and just as many of us had feared, the luck of the Birmingham ran out for the third time in its battle-scarred history. The day started auspiciously enough with all sorts of antics by the Nippos on the beach, including an air attempt to land behind our lines. This was



REAR ADMIRAL M. L. DEYO TRANSFERRING FROM TENNESSEE TO U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM

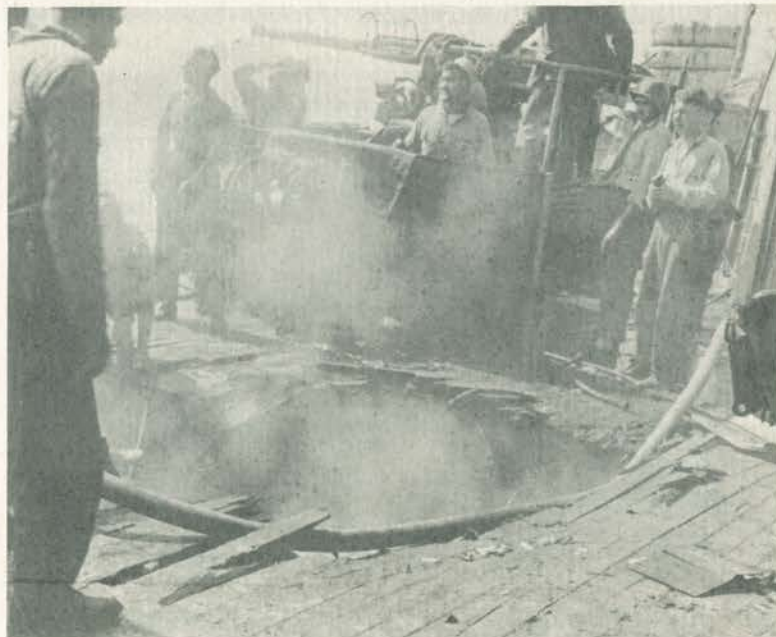
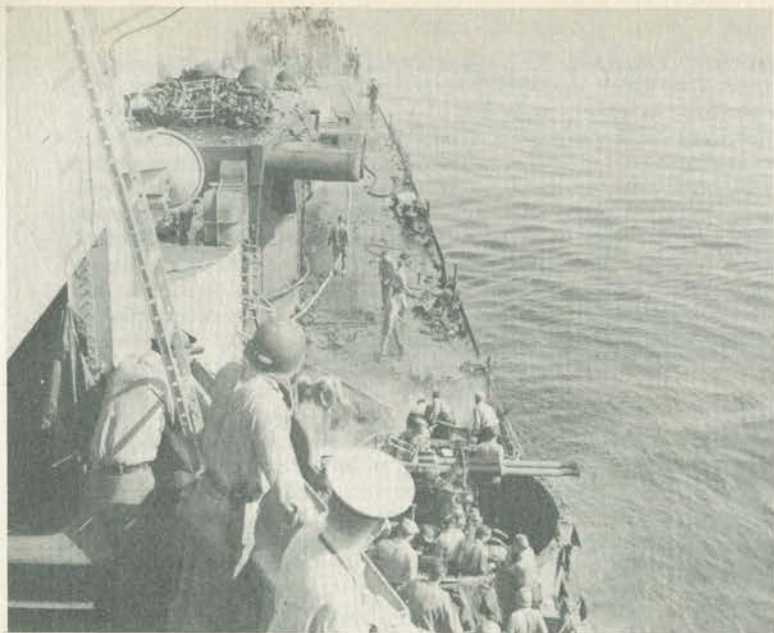
promptly repulsed. At approximately 0300 "Bogies" began to appear in force, and all during the hours of darkness the Air Patrol did a spectacular job of keeping most of the would be attackers from getting too close. However, at 0700 the number of enemy planes in the vicinity was increasing, and the ship promptly went to a stronger condition of antiaircraft readiness. Shortly after 0800 a huge dog-fight was in progress, covering a large area 40 miles to our north. Many "Bogies" were reported within twenty miles of us, most of them flying very high. By 0835 many of these had been splashed, but the attacks continued. At this time "Flash Red" was announced by the senior officer present afloat.

Aboard the Birmingham everything seemed rather peaceful. It was a beautiful, cloudless day, and we weren't firing at the moment. Then, at 0840, a plane was splashed by the St. Louis only 4,000 yards away. The very next thing that most of us recall was the rattling sound of 20mm. fire coming from our own ship, and to men who had fought and lived through almost constant air attacks for forty consecutive days and nights, 20mm. fire was the most frightening, God-awful sound imaginable. The next few seconds seemed like eternity, and then it happened.

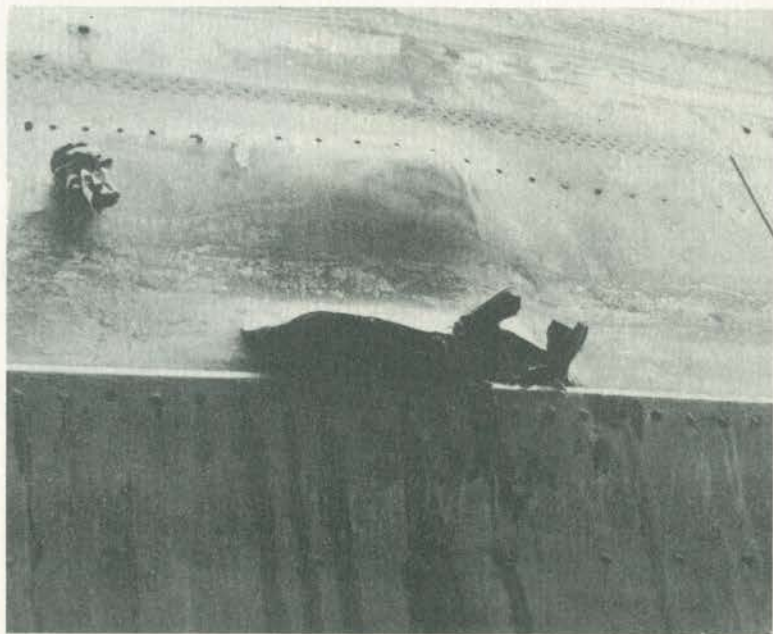
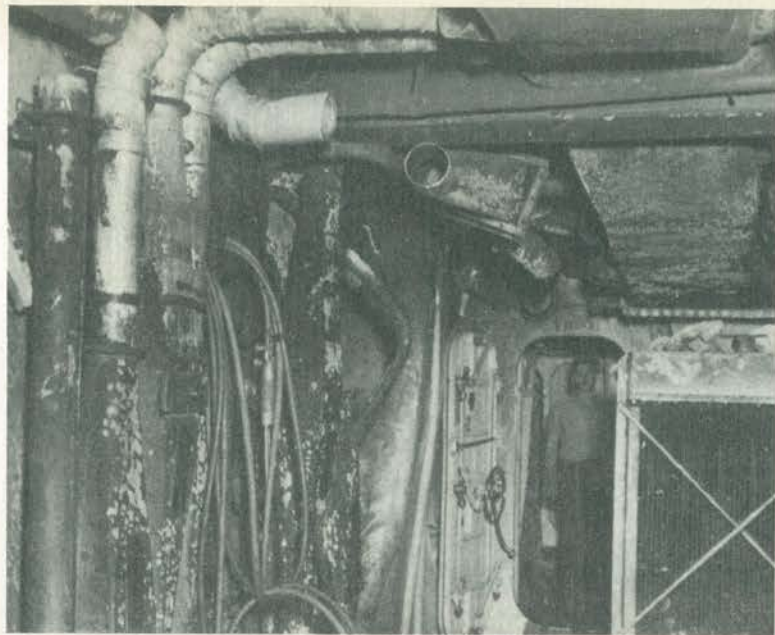
The plane, a single-engined "Oscar," plunged into the starboard side of the main deck just abaft turret 2, and the ship shuddered with the impact. Those of us who were there had an indelible and everlasting picture carved into our minds as men streamed up from below in ever increasing numbers to receive much needed medical attention and comfort from the more fortunate ones. Yes, the Birmingham had taken a third strike.

The plane itself penetrated to the third deck, where it exploded. The estimated 500 pound bomb carried under the fuselage kept on going and exploded farther down, the force of the blast carrying upward and forward. The entire sick bay area was demolished, resulting in the death of both the ship's medical officers and the majority of our pharmacist's mates and hospital corpsmen. Flaming gasoline started fires over the entire area. Powder magazines in the vicinity were immediately flooded as a precaution.

As in the past, the crew was galvanized into action and handled the situation with perfection. Fires were quickly extinguished, and the trapped and wounded were evacuated with utmost speed and efficiency. Four doctors from adjacent ships quickly came aboard in response to our request, and took charge of administering medical aid. The smoke-filled wardroom being uninhabitable, emergency battle dressing stations were set up on the main deck amidships, the crew's lounge, and in Chief Petty Officers' quarters. Officers and men were working everywhere, but gradually the toll mounted. We prayed that another attack wouldn't come now.

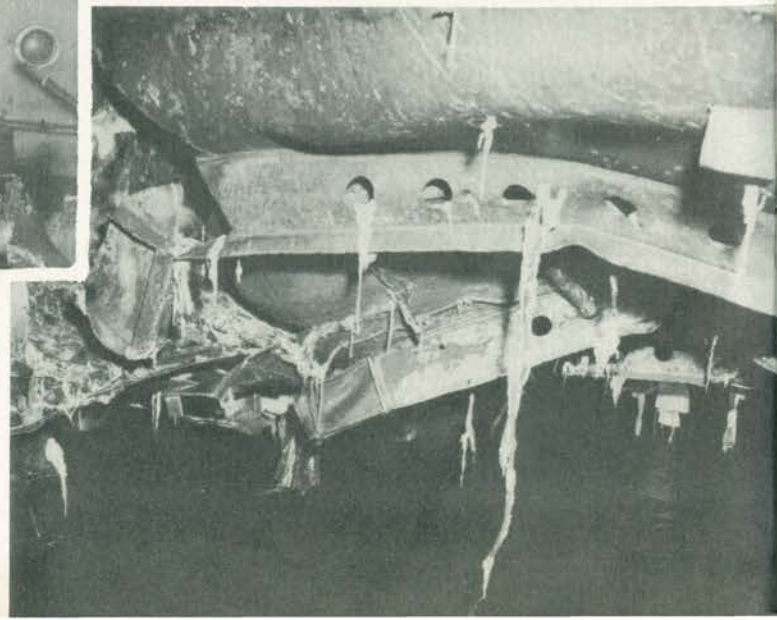
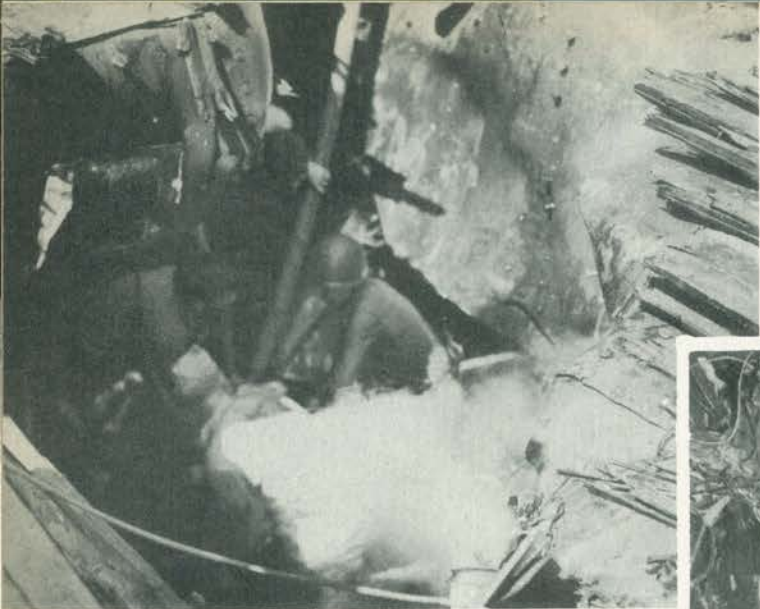


SUICIDE PLANE—



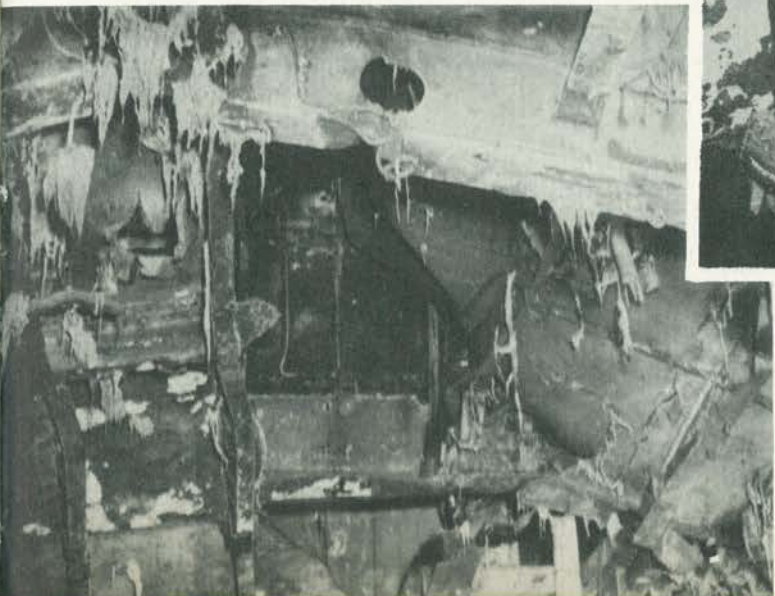
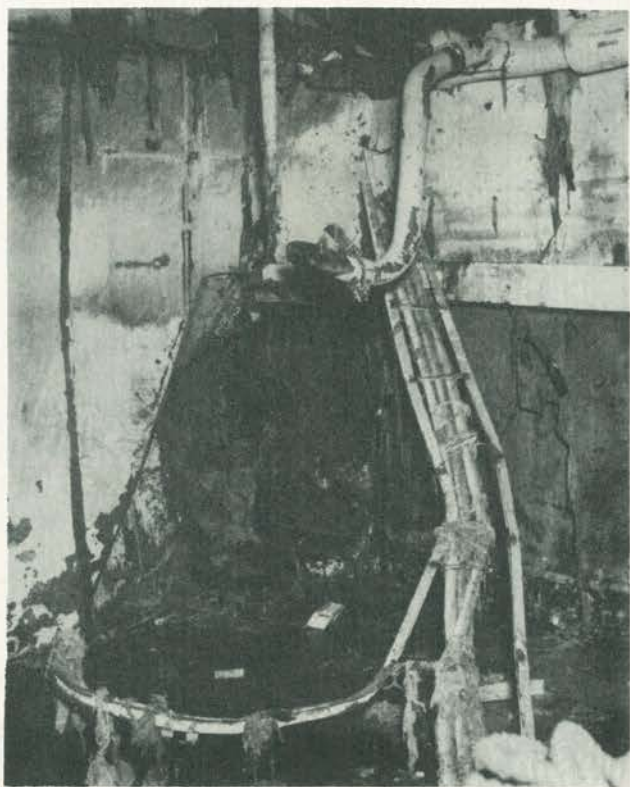
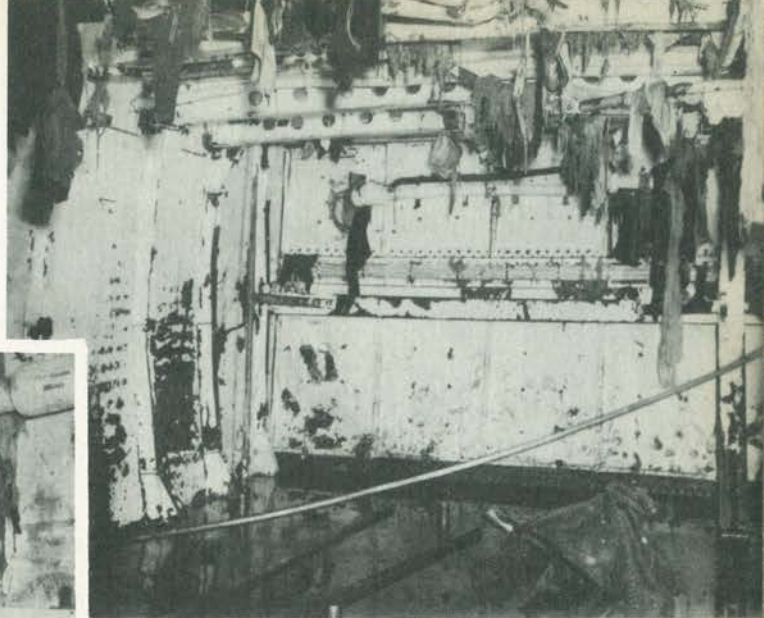
SHIP'S DAMAGE—OKINAWA

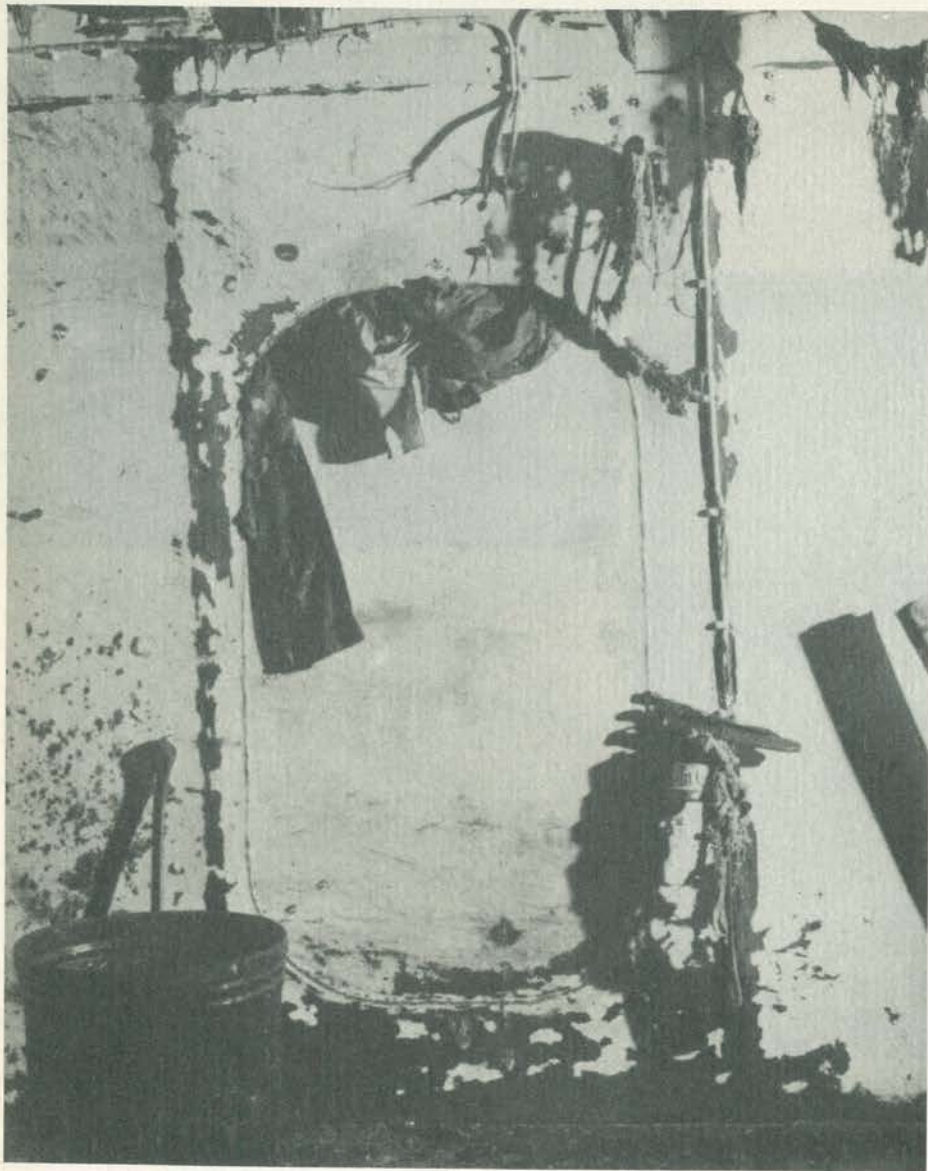
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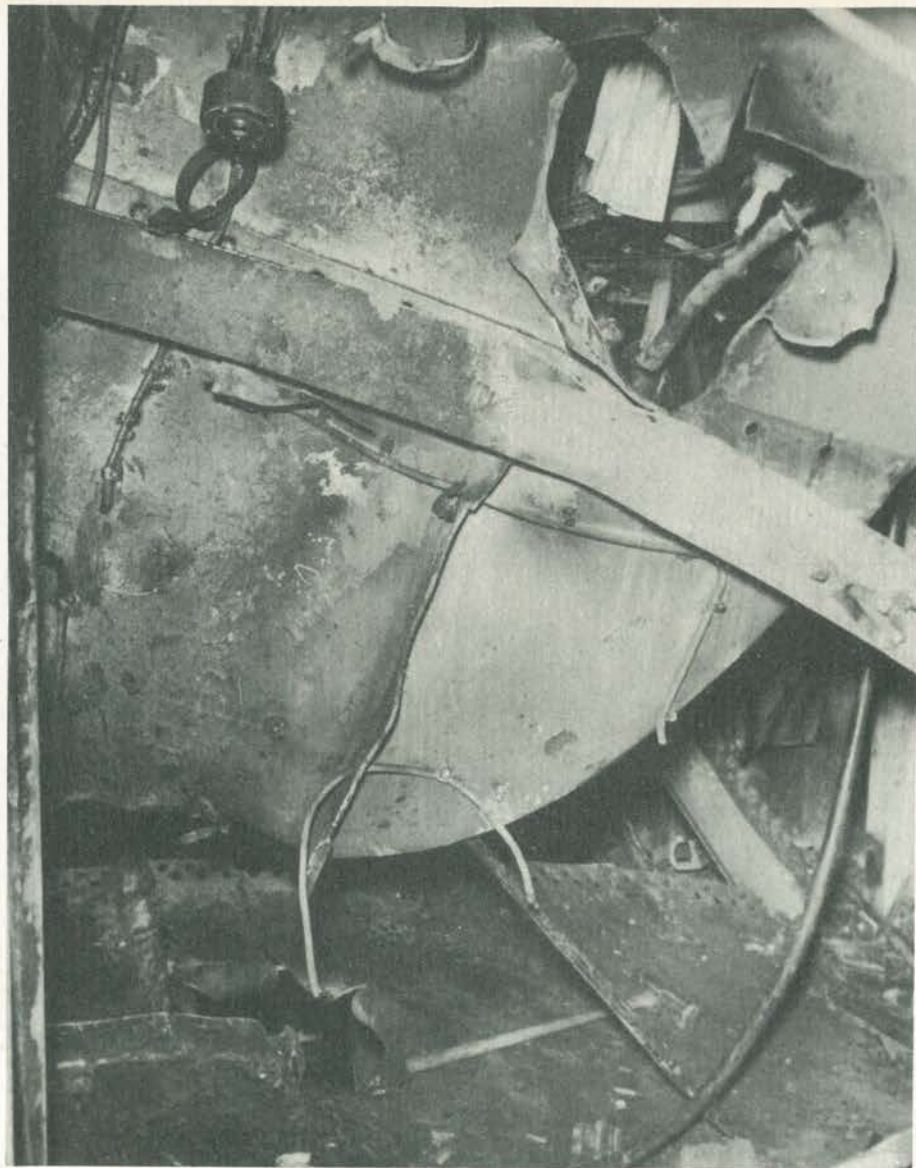
OKINAWA DAMAGE PHOTOS

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Looking from A-415-L at ruptured part out board side of BH39, 1st platform deck. Rupture opens into A-412-L. Note rupture occurred at weld blanking off old W.Y. door.



Looking into after end of W.R.S.R. 211 just forward of BH-45 from the center line passage. Note the bomb holes in both main deck blown down, and in second deck. Bomb's path seems to have been about 30° from the vertical slanting out-board and toward the side of the ship.

Before noon all the wounded and dead that could be located were evacuated. Repair parties feverishly continued their work of shoring staved bulkheads, clearing debris, and assessing damage. Men with nothing specific to do moved about trying to help, and others anxiously searched for and inquired about their buddies.

For the remainder of that day a tired, saddened crew just waited—waited, prayed and just thought. We waited because there was nothing else one could do. We prayed and thanked God for sparing us. And we thought about the officers and men who died and those lying wounded on some hospital ship. We talked a little too, and here and there one of us interposed little accounts of bravery and the wonderful sense of humor displayed by this guy and that guy. That gave us strength.

There was the Marine gunner, who unflinchingly stuck to his 20mm. gun until the plane crashed not far from his station. Unmindful of his own safety, "Red" plunged into the flaming hole in the main deck and helped several badly burned men to safety. We talked about others who were first at the scene helping with the evacuation of personnel and

fighting fires. We shall never forget their magnificent effort.

Many of us who were attending the wounded on the quarterdeck recalled innumerable tales of their self-sacrifice, cooperation, and unselfishness. We thought and talked about the Brooklynite who, suffering severely from shock after escaping from a rapidly flooding compartment, insisted that he was in good shape and begging to be kept on board. And then there was the steward, puffing a cigarette between two badly burned lips, never uttering a sound despite fatal flash burn. They were all like that, and no words can ever describe our devotion to these men.

We all smiled when we thought of the veteran Pfc., a New York boy serving with the Marine detachment, who was sleeping in the Marine compartment when the plane struck, and miraculously escaped with burns about the face and hands, refusing to be down on the quarterdeck, he moved about from man to man with that irrepressible grin, spreading whatever good cheer he could muster with his wonderful sense of humor. He topped it all with the remark, "I got the Purple Heart twice before, but I knew it was coming then. Now that they're holding reveille on me, it's time to move out."



OKINAWA CIVILIANS

Our part in the campaign was definitely over, and on the following day the Birmingham got underway for Ulithi Atoll.

At this point we should summarize briefly the part played by the Birmingham during this most active campaign of the war. During our 41 days at Okinawa, we fired on all but two of these days. On 18 to 20 occasions we were assigned night illumination and harassing duties, which meant that our guns were cracking all through the night. We destroyed Jap gun emplacements, pill boxes, shore batteries, caves, and other targets of military importance, but their exact number will forever go undetermined. Air attacks or alerts during this

period were almost daily occurrences, and on 20 different occasions Jap planes were taken under fire by the Birmingham. We point with pride at the record of six hits and three assists. This enemy plane activity, plus the ever present threat of their suicide boats, swimmers, submarines, and mines, made the campaign what it was. Finally, the guns of the Birmingham probably fired as many shells, gun for gun, as any other ship in the campaign, for we expended more than 24,000 rounds of all types. We were now going back, and those of us who were fortunate enough to be making the trip took pride in the magnitude of our effort.



AT WORK

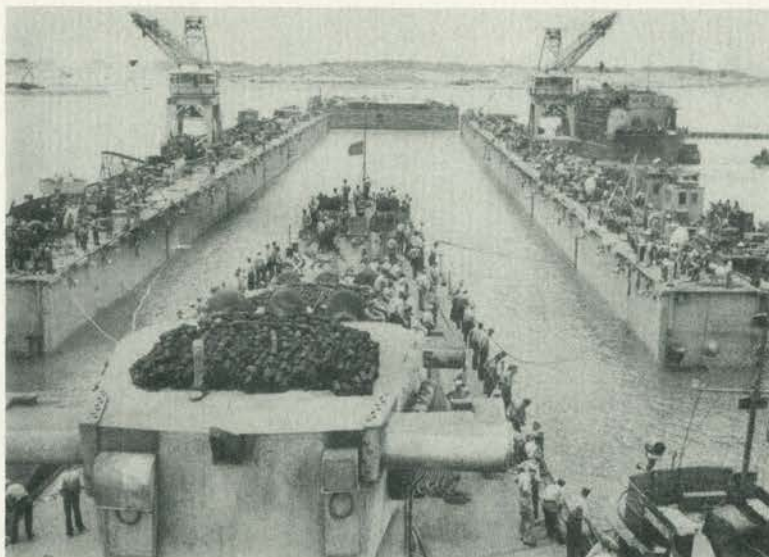
HOPE AND DISAPPOINTMENT

On the second day out from Okinawa our orders were changed, and we altered course to proceed to Guam, in the Mariannas. Some saw a bad omen in this, for it was common knowledge that much more extensive repair work could be accomplished at Guam than at Ulithi. Would they repair us at Guam? Some pessimists thought so, others believed that temporary repairs would be made there, with a complete job to follow at Pearl Harbor. The brightest thoughts expressed by some had us going directly from Guam to Mare Island, speculation and scuttlebutt were rampant, but actually nobody could really predict the future. From the logical standpoint it was hardly possible for the job to be done entirely at Guam, for extensive electrical and hull repairs were required. Pearl could probably do it, with Mare Island remaining as the best bet for this type of work. Still, we could only wait—time would tell.

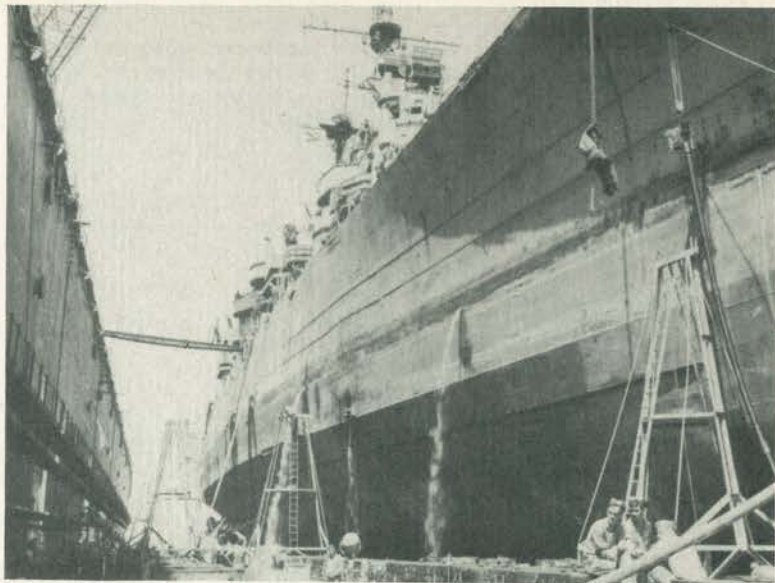
During our three day trip to Guam it was difficult to forget what we had just been through. Human nature being what it is, we tried to find an escape, and on several occasions the speculation as to where we'd be repaired did offer us that escape. But each day a few more dead would be located and removed from the damaged and flooded area, and the solemn sound of the executive officer's voice at the burial ceremonies always served to bring back that vivid memory. Many men had never before witnessed a burial at sea, and it was later agreed that those they had seen in various motion pictures were not overdone in either solemnity or procedure.

Our arrival in Apra Harbor, Guam, on May 10 was heralded with relief. During the first few days at this Pacific bastion many of the wounded returned to the ship, and more than one happy reunion was witnessed. At this time we had finally computed the total casualties that occurred on May 4. Summarizing, there were 5 officers and 43 men dead, 4 men missing, and 8 officers and 74 men wounded. The total number of officers and men killed and injured aboard the Birmingham since her date of commissioning now approached the 800 mark.

On May 13 the ship moved into a new floating drydock, the dock pontoons were pumped dry and the Birmingham slowly rose out of the water. That afternoon, for the first time in almost two months, condition watches were secured and the regular "in port" watch set. To men who practically lived at general quarters or watch and watch, this was a blessing indeed, but fate was determined not to let us forget the immediate past, and



GOING INTO DRYDOCK AT GUAM



IN DRYDOCK



HOLE IN THE SIDE

that very same day we were jolted once again into a state of terror and fear.

We were enjoying the movie on the fantail, the first since we left Ulithi. The area was not darkened, and both drydock and ship were bathed in floodlit brilliance. The movie was a good one, and the entire ship was crammed into the space back aft. Then, like a pistol shot, a voice rang out, "Flash Red!" Backs straightened, heads popped up, ears strained. This wise guy oughta be shot, there were no such things out here!

But the cry was repeated, and finally the ship's loudspeaker roared out "darken ship." The fantail emptied in nothing flat, and within two minutes the entire AA. battery was manned. "Hey," someone yelled from the forward superstructure, "turn those blasted lights off on the drydock!" The lights on the drydock were promptly turned off, and we were now bathed in darkness.

It wasn't a false alarm, but pretty nearly so. We received a report indicating that an unidentified plane was hovering about the island of Saipan, more than 150 miles away. Since the entire area was under the same command, an alert anywhere meant that the entire group of islands would be prepared. Actually, the Birmingham was pretty impotent, for we could never take any target under fire without the extreme danger of toppling over in our drydock. We laughed about it afterward, but it certainly wasn't funny when it happened.

By this time we knew that Guam could never repair us, and there were thoughts of seeing loved ones, "Valley-Jo," and "Dopey Norman's" once again. We played a bit too, but facilities at war-busy Guam were definitely limited. About the only decent place was little Gab Gab Beach, where you could take a swim, guzzle down a couple of beers, and then try to charm an elusive Red Cross gal up at the canteen—all in three hours. It wasn't exactly the type of liberty we craved, but it was a diversion.

On May 21 we were underway for Pearl Harbor, commencing nine days of the smoothest run most of us had ever experienced. After holding a few tests to determine the strength of the bow area, it was decided that we could travel safely at 20 knots—a comfortable cruising speed. The sea was no rougher than an inland lake during those nine days, and the sun shone brilliantly. Men began to show real signs of good cheer once again, and sun tans became commonplace. The main topic of conversation was inevitable—home and good ol' home cookin'.

Upon our arrival at Pearl Harbor the tenseness that had built up during the last two days of our journey reached its supreme climax, and scuttlebutt was rampant. We moved into the ammunition depot—this was a bad omen. Then, as soon as the brow went down, hordes of civilians streamed on

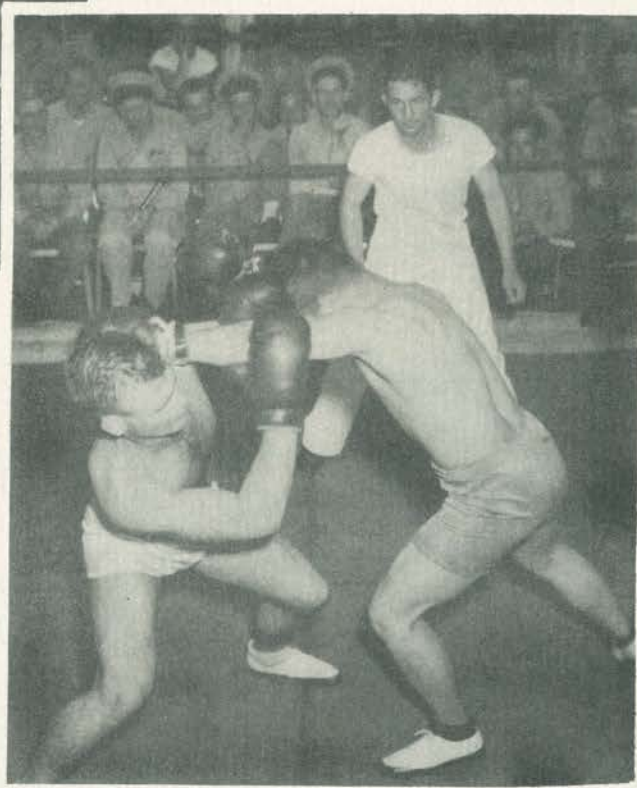


HARBOR AT GUAM



GUAM AT NIGHT

**"MIGHTY
B"**



"SMOKER" ON THE FANTAIL



board, and it didn't take long to discover that they were from the yard planning division. We were to be repaired at Pearl Harbor.

The next two months was a story of typical navy yard routine, and little need be said about that. Briefly, our battle damage received top priority, and repairs were made swiftly. In addition a few improvements were made in our radar and fire control set-ups. The crew meanwhile, had one section liberty, with one section out at the camp Andrews rest center at all times. Liberty at Pearl was not good, mainly due to the great number of servicemen in the vicinity.

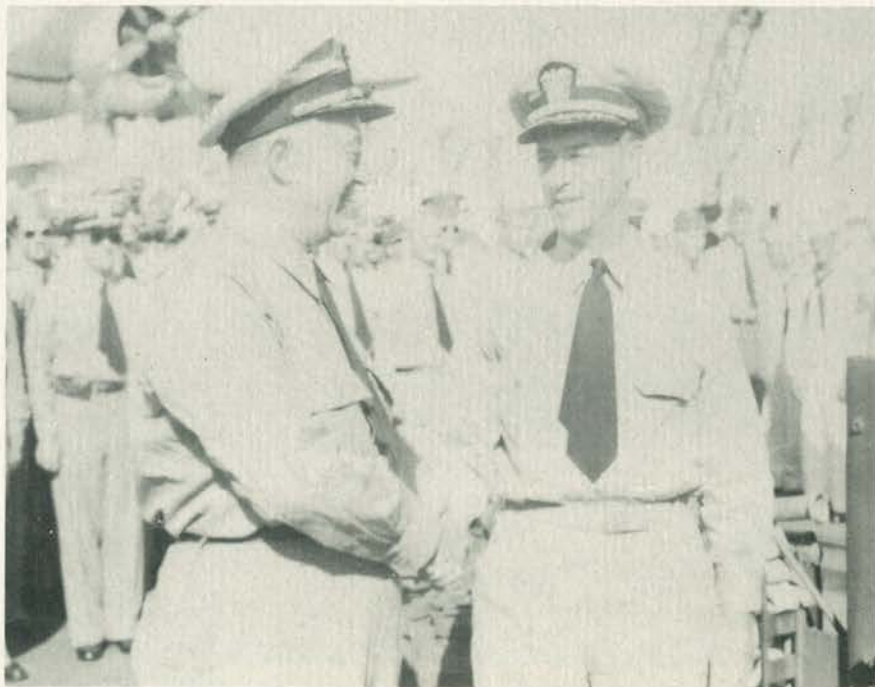
During June and July many officers and men were sent to radar, gunnery, and other types of schools in order to bring personnel up to the standard of our new equipment and the latest doctrines of warfare. We were a pretty well trained outfit when our availability was completed, and we were all set for that inevitable refresher training course. In fact, as proved later, we were probably in better shape than we had been when we commenced the Okinawa campaign.

We received a few new men on board during the period, mainly to replace our Okinawa casualties. Likewise we lost

some officers and men and although we didn't like the idea of seeing old hands and good friends leave the ship, men who had learned under them capably filled their shoes.

From July through August 12 we moved in and out of Pearl, operating off the islands of Oahu and Kahoolawe and going through the same old routine. On August 9 all hands were mustered aft to witness ceremonies during which Captain Power turned his command over to our new Skipper, Captain R. H. Cruzen. It was with reluctance that we bid Captain Power farewell.

By far the biggest news of this two week period however, was not in any of the above. It was news that shook the world, and made the entire war look puny in comparison. In those early days of August we had heard for the first time about atomic energy as an instrument of war, and of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was undoubtedly the greatest thing in history, and our joy was surpassed only by the rapid sequence of events that occurred from day to day—all adding up to total victory. Russia declared war on Japan, and the latter was bargaining desperately for peace, like a man stuck in quicksand and rapidly being sucked down.



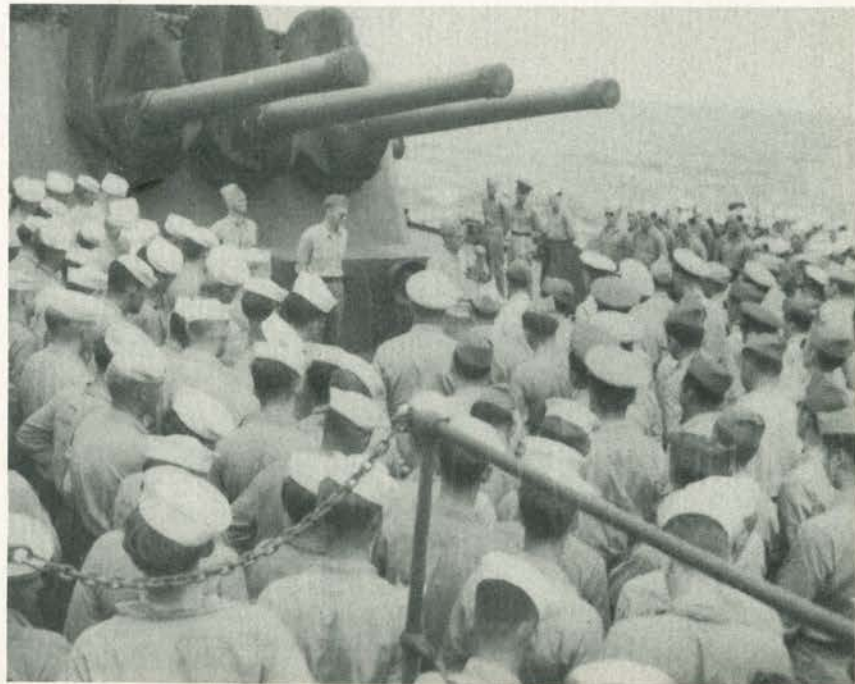
CHANGE OF COMMAND

CHAPTER V

PEARL TO SAN FRANCISCO

In the midst of the circulating peace rumors, the Birmingham received orders to proceed westward for the next operation. On August 12, the "B" stood out from Pearl Harbor in company with the Santa Fe, the Antietam, and the destroyers Hawkins, Miles C. Fox, Allen M. Sumner, John R. Pierce, Rowan, Coghlan, and O'Brien—all comprising a task group, commanded by Rear Admiral M. L. Deyo. It had become the custom for warships bound west to practice shore bombardment on live targets on the isolated Jap garrison at Wake Island. Plans had been drawn up for the engagement and the new members of the crew were to gain much-needed experience before participating in action against more formidable targets.

Members of the crew were keeping their ears glued to the radio loudspeakers for further developments on the reported peace moves. The radio gang was constantly besieged with queries. "What's happening now?" "Have the Japs quit yet?" "Have we dropped any more atomic bombs?" "When do we turn around and go home?" Then at 0300 one morning came the announcement over the ship's loudspeaker system, "Now hear this—the war is over! The Japanese government has agreed to an unconditional surrender." Crowds of excited sailors gathered on the fantail shouting and dancing around in gleeful relief. The nervous strain and tension of many harrowing hours of combat was lifted from the minds of all. The realization that the question of returning



home was then only a matter of time, and not one to be decided by the fortunes of war, proved to be a source of spontaneous elation. More sleep that night was out of the question. This report however proved to be false. When, at 1300 on August 14, Admiral Deyo addressed the task group, officially announcing the cessation of hostilities, the news was an anti-climax. The ships of the group executed a 360° turn to the right, blasted away with their whistles and sirens, and steamed on, awaiting further orders.

The "B" by-passed Wake Island and, after a short stop at Eniwetok, once again pointed her bow towards Okinawa. Two days away from her destination, the ship ran into heavy weather. Some later claimed it was the heaviest she had ever encountered. Others were non-committal, having suffered too much from the effects of mal de mer to offer any comment. Nagasuku Wan (Buckner Bay) was a much more welcome sight on August 25 than it had been on the ship's previous visit.

The ship waited in Buckner Bay while the Third Fleet entered Tokyo Bay for the formal surrender ceremony. On August 27, twenty six men, the first of those eligible for discharge under the Navy's newly initiated point system were transferred, while the rest of the crew voiced their dissatisfaction with the method of computing point scores.

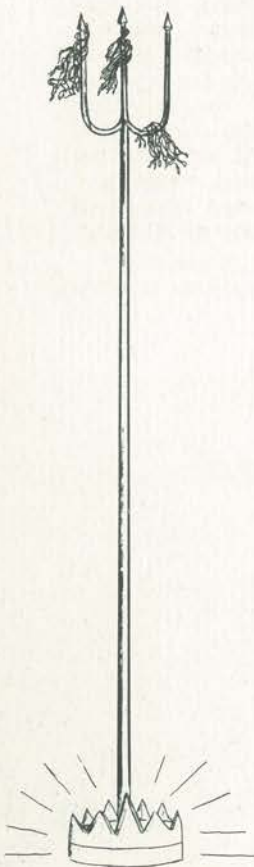
On the seventh of September, the Birmingham, Wichita, Suwanee, Cape Gloucester, Chenango, and several destroyers formed the Sasebo-Kyushu mine sweeping support group and departed for Sasebo to pave the way for the occupation forces. The shores of Japan had just appeared over the horizon when the "B" was ordered back to Okinawa to be detached from the Fifth Fleet and sail for Brisbane, Australia, to become the flagship for Commander of U. S. Naval Forces in Australia and New Guinea. The "B" departed Buckner Bay once again on September 11, this time steaming southward towards Brisbane and her first peacetime assignment.

"CROSSING THE LINE"

After stopping for a few hours on September 14th at Tacloban in Leyte Gulf for fuel and provisions, the Birmingham continued south for Brisbane. With the realization that in a few days the ship would be crossing the equator, the crew decided it was then time to take inventory and weed out the lowly Polywogs from the honored Shellbacks. The results of the check were discouraging. About two thirds of the ship's complement were Polywogs. Something had to be done! To attempt to enter the domain of Neptunus Rex with such an appallingly large percentage of these low forms of animal life aboard would border on sacrilege. On the fifteenth, in true Navy tradition, the Shellbacks began the process of purification of souls, and each and every neophyte was made to atone for his many sins and transgressions.

The Shellbacks carried out their duties in a complete and thorough manner. And when Davey Jones boarded the ship for an inspection on the evening of the sixteenth, he found everything in order. The neophytes on the Birmingham were ready to appear before his Royal Highness, King Neptune.

On the morning of the seventeenth, at longitude 139°12' East, and latitude 000°, the ruler of the Realms of the Deep, climbing through the hawse pipe, honored the decks of the ship with his presence, and prepared to welcome his new subjects. The Birmingham had rid itself of Polywogs, and King Neptune acquired many loyal new subjects.



"DOWN UNDER"

During the last part of the voyage, those who had been to Australia before briefed the crew on what to expect of the Australians and what the Australians would expect of us. When the ship arrived at Brisbane on September 23, everyone was prepared to be on his best behavior ashore. They soon learned, however, that it was easy to relax in the company of the friendly, hospitable Aussies.

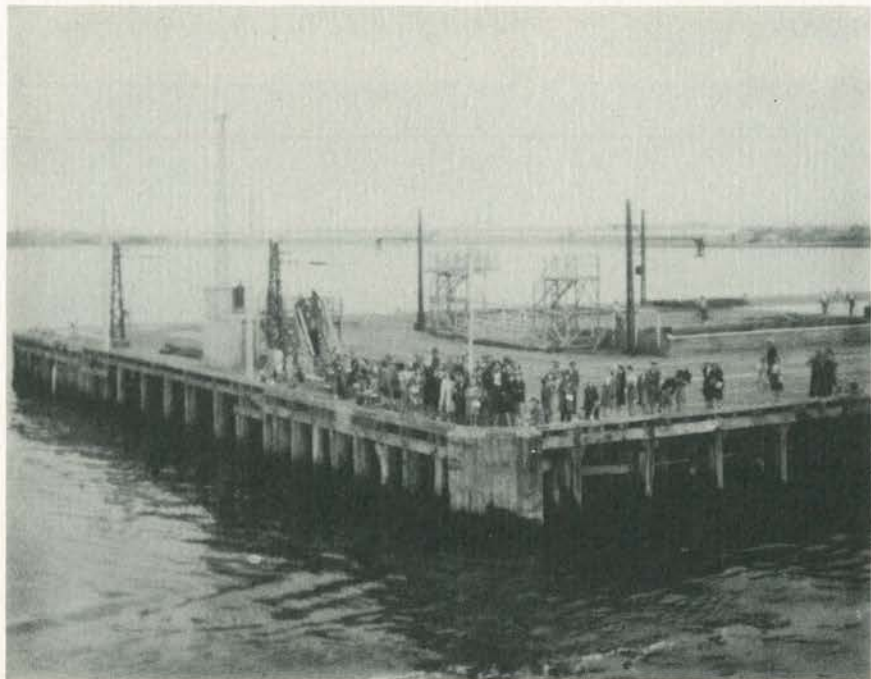
The two star flag of Rear Admiral C. E. Van Hook was raised at the mainmast on September 26, and once again the Birmingham was a Flagship. Then began the task of closing down the American Bases in the Australian and New Guinea Command Area.

Liberty in Brisbane was the first time the men had been able to get ashore since the peace declaration. The first few liberties were gay affairs with everyone doing his belated celebrating in true Navy fashion. A constant source of cajolery ashore was the dispute over who it was that had an accent. It never was settled to the satisfaction of both parties whether

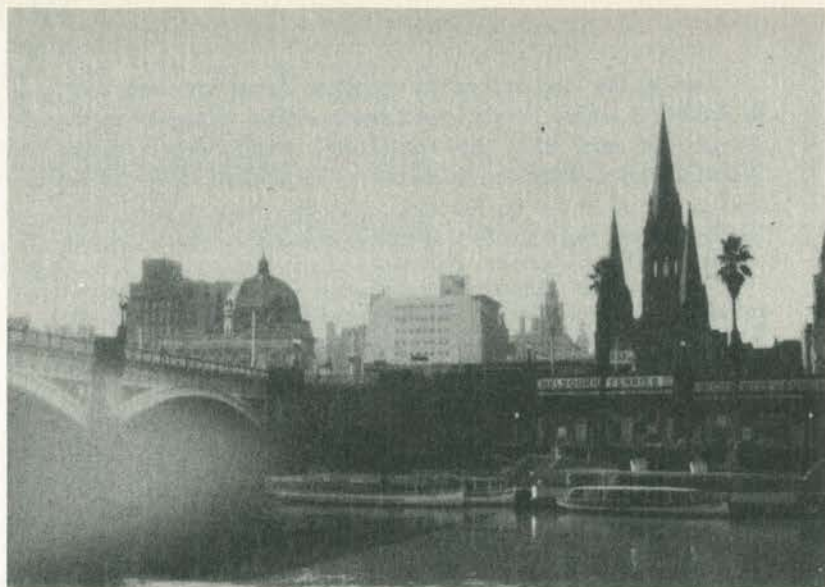
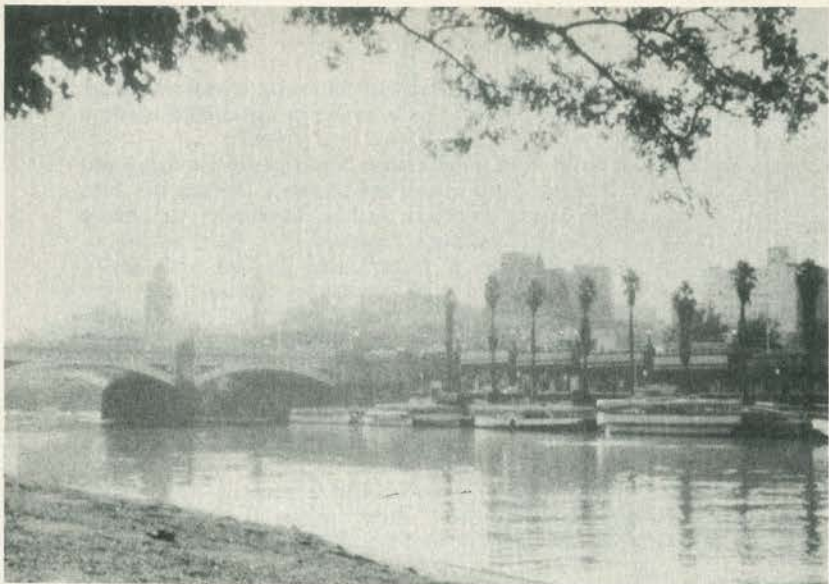
it was the Americans or the Australians who speak English with an accent. But regardless of how it's pronounced, everyone enjoyed many a plate of "Styke and Aigs."

Trips to Sydney and Melbourne became quite frequent as the job of closing out the bases progressed. During the first visit to Melbourne, it was learned that in Australia, too, there is a quality known as "Southern Hospitality." With a glance at the list of events he was to attend, one Ensign was heard to remark, "With all these parties to go to, I won't rate any liberty at all." The farthest south the "B" went in her travels was to Hobart, Tasmania, where Mrs. Deschaineaux, wife of the late Captain of the Heavy Cruiser H. M. A. S. Australia, was presented with a Legion of Merit awarded posthumously to her husband for outstanding service in the Philippines. The presentation was made by Captain Chambers, Chief of Staff to Admiral Van Hook.

With the expected arrival of the Amsterdam on November 20, rumors began to circulate about when the "B" would begin the journey east to the Golden Gate. "I'll be home for



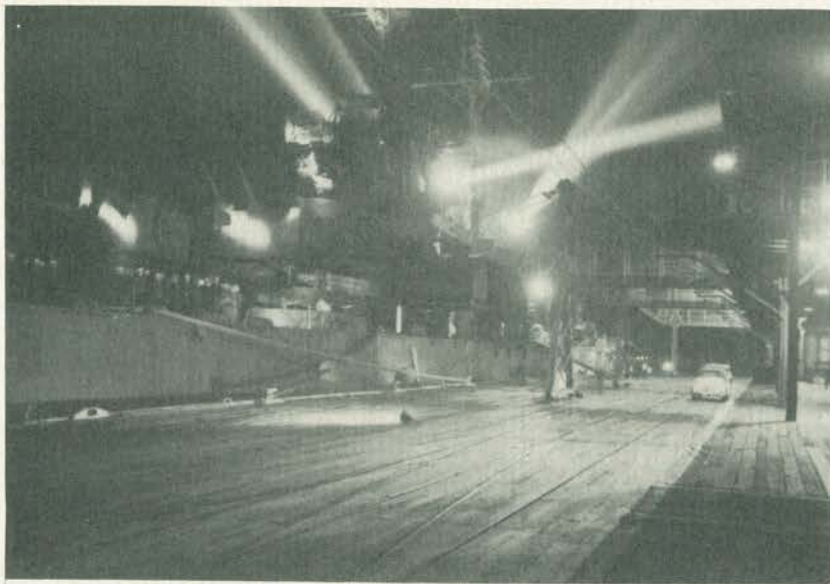
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



SEARCHLIGHT DISPLAY — MELBOURNE



HOBART, TASMANIA



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



Christmas" could be heard any hour of the day, even after news was received that damage suffered in a storm would prevent relief by the Amsterdam. But Christmas was spent in Sydney, with the Marines and "I" Division taking top honors in a compartment-decorating competition. New Year's Day found the "B" in Brisbane again with the myriad of jelly fish clogging the sea chests and leaving doubt as to her ability to overcome this and get underway again. Speculation was rampant, but as each scheduled date of departure arrived in turn, the ship was no closer to American shores.

Point scores for discharge accumulated slowly but steadily, and critical scores began to drop, making more and more of the ship's personnel eligible for the change from Navy Blues to Herringbone Tweeds. With the transfer

of the draft to the escort carrier Attu on February 11, a total of 675 men had been returned to the U. S., 576 of whom were returned for discharge. The earth-bound Birmingham Aviation Unit packed up their planes and also departed on the Attu.

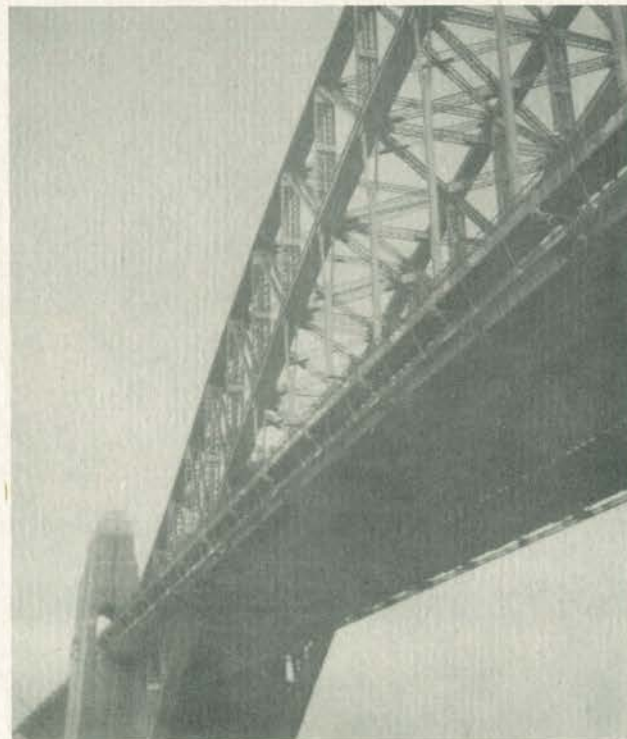
The day finally came when the homeward bound pennant, the product of the signal gang's labors, was rigged to the mainmast. Four hundred and eighty five feet of red, white, and blue bunting fluttered in the breeze and then trailed in the wake as the Birmingham, her crew, and Army and Navy Passengers sailed under the Sydney Bridge for the last time on March 9, with the faces of the waving crowd at the pier growing more and more indistinct. Many stayed topside to watch the outline of Australian shores grow dimmer in the waning light of the setting sun, then went

below to discuss plans for the long-awaited homecoming.

The ship was twenty hours out of Sydney when it was discovered that two girls had stowed away. These girls were turned over to civilian authorities, and the "B" resumed her homeward trek.

On the 27th of March, the Admiral's Staff having been dissolved by CINCPAC, the "B" began the last chapter of her story—the trip to San Francisco for overhaul, in preparation for joining the post war inactive fleet.

After three years of faithful service to her country in war, the mighty "B" was to join the Inactive Fleet in readiness, should the occasion arise, to render the same high standards of service that gave her the nickname—"Mighty B".



AUSTRALIA TO



SAN FRANCISCO

QUARtermaster's DIARY

THE SAGA OF THE BIRMINGHAM: That's a tale that covers three oceans and 155,000 nautical miles. Since we laid her keel in the Newport News Shipbuilding Yard, I've kept a sort of mental log of the "B" and me—places we've been, people we've met, things we've done. It goes something like this . . .

29 January, 1943

Norfolk, Virginia . . . The Birmingham, CL 62. My first ship. She looks pretty good. So far I've been lost only five times today. Someone told me we were underway, and I got violently seasick until I saw mooring lines secured as fast as could be to the dock.

New ship or old ship, I have liberty tonight and I'm going ashore even if it has to be Norfolk. What a dump! The streets are so narrow you can reach across and shake hands with a guy on the opposite side. Me for the wide open Midwestern Prairie!

Lots of good fellows in the crew; suppose I'll get to know them all before this cruise is over. Guess we'll go out in Chesapeake Bay for training for a couple of months. Wish we'd hurry and get overseas; I'm sure tired of old Norfolk.

22 June, 1943

Oran, Algiers . . . So this is Africa. Personally I'll take the U. S.—even Norfolk. What a place! Men, women, horses, pigs—everything that walks strolls down these streets. Some of these Arabs are mean bozos—they think nothing of splitting a buddy's skull and leaving him kicking in the gutter. Many veiled Moslem women, but they're strictly taboo. Plenty of Army around.

Trip over wasn't bad; I'm feeling pretty salty by now.

CL



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21 July, 1943

Bizerte, Tunisia . . . Just an overnight stop here. Wish I could get over and look for the famous Gertie, but it's up anchor early in the morn for Algiers.

23 July, 1943

Algiers, Algeria . . . Slightly different from the movie of the same name. However you never can tell when Hedy Lamar is going to pop out from behind one of these walls. Wine is easy to get, but you know me,—never touch it.

27 July, 1943

Oran, Algeria . . . More of the same—I've had Africa.

8 August, 1943

Norfolk, Virginia . . . Good old Norfolk! After Africa it's heaven on earth. Sure is swell seeing the usual mob at the Thirty-Third Club again. Took a weekend and visited Virginia Beach—not bad! Looks like SoPac for the big "B". We really get around.

22 August, 1943

Balboa, Canal Zone . . . What did I tell you? Managed to fasten on to the one and only liberty party going ashore here. Bought a lot of (chanel No. 5?) perfume and silks and once again weathered the storms of temptation in my own innocent manner.

4 September, 1943

Pearl Harbor, T. H. . . . Honolulu itself is closed up tight as a drum with an early curfew. Waikiki is quite nice, and the Moana and Royal Hawaiian Hotels are open to sailors. The city is nothing but a lot of ramshackle penny arcades. Am rather disappointed after all the alluring pictures I had painted in my imagination.

You really feel the tempo of war here though; everybody is constantly on the move and you can feel an air of determination about the place. The Navy Yard goes without stopping, and pleasure-seekers are few and far between. I hear from the mess cooks that we head south before long.

10 October, 1943

Pearl Harbor . . . Just in briefly after strikes on Tarawa and Wake. Getting to be a regular veteran now. Guess we kiss civilization good-bye for a long spell this time. We're heading for SoPac where even coral atolls are few and far between.

4 November, 1943

Espiritu Santo . . . I've hardly had time to catch my breath. I guess I'm just learning what war is. We just got out here and are sliding along towards Bougainville one night when Wham! Bam!—Torpedo and two bombs.

We're in for emergency repairs here; island's not much—palm trees on a pile of coral. Head for Purvis Bay tomorrow. We'll have to go back to Pearl at least to get fixed.

6 November, 1943

Purvis Bay, Florida Island . . . It's hard to believe the bloody history of these islands—Savo, Tulagi, Florida, Guadalcanal—all lying peacefully, a lush green against the deep blue of the South Pacific. At night the jungle flowers bloom and a sweet heavy scent fills the air. We play ball and drink beer ashore, and once in awhile you catch yourself wondering what went on on the spot where you're standing. These islands made very recent history and the evidence is scattered all about—dud shells, rusting enemy equipment, shattered forests; yet it has the workaday Navy atmosphere with the irrepressible Seabees clearing landing strips, building roads, raising quonsets, never pausing, never letting up.

And out there under the water lie ships—battleships, cruisers, tin cans, Jap and Ameri-

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can—Iron Bottom Bay they call it. Little Savo Island—the speck of land to the west—scene of the disaster which sent the *Vincennes*, *Astoria*, *Quincy*, and *Canberra* down just after the invasion.

Up the "Slot" lie Rendova, Villa Lavella, Kula Gulf—all places that were just strange names in yesterday's newspapers, and further on is Bougainville, still Jap and very fresh in our memories. They're fitting us out for the trek back now. Everybody's in pretty good shape. The ship's badly hurt, but personnel casualties were light. We had a geyser of water coming out of a hatch in the torpedoed bow to relieve the pressure; that's how we earned our name "Old Faithful." We know the "B" can take it now. With a hole in her bow and one in her fantail, she kept right up with the boys at 29 knots, and that ain't crawling, brother!!

18 November, 1943

Espiritu Santo . . . Back for a final once-over and then off for Pearl and Uncle Seegar—we hope!!

1 December, 1943

Pearl Harbor . . . We dood it! A temporary patch-up here and then Stateside—maybe by Christmas. The farther east I get, the better this war looks.

22 December, 1943

Mare Island, California . . . Just like a homing pigeon the "B" streaked under the Golden Gate—twenty five knots all the way.

This is my first California port; I can't truthfully say it's always sunny, but you don't hear me complaining. Rodeman Center here in the Navy Yard provides good entertainment, and then there's Vallejo, across the causeway when you're in a more cosmopolitan mood. The invasion is on, and Georgia Street is meeting the onslaught without so much as a flicker of it's neon signs. Looks like a happy two months.

23 February, 1944

Pearl Harbor . . . On the road again. Had a slight variance of opinion with a tanker on the way out of Frisco Bay, our bow coming out slightly the worse for wear. This caused a two-week retention at Mare Island, much to everyone's dismay, of course. Don't tell anyone, but I saw more than just a few secret smiles appear when the word "Stand by for collision!" blared over the IMC.

Am enjoying a three-day rest at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel now as the Navy's guest. Nothing like good old fashioned luxury, I always say, and do I need a rest after that rugged Vallejo campaign!!

Where we're going, only God and the Navy Department know—and they're not telling.

10 March, 1944

Fanafuti . . . This is a pretty little atoll in the Ellice group. Really was a big base for the Guadalcanal campaign. Managed to get ashore with the Navigator and saw a few natives. They all greet you with, "Hi, Joe! Chewy, Chewy!" Those kids learn fast! Still can't find out what's in store for us.

14 March, 1944

Purvis Bay . . . Back in the Solomons once more. We're anchored and get plenty of beer and balltime on the beach. Something big must be brewing because a lot of ships are here. Looks like sort of a breathing spell. Some of the ships are going to Sydney, Australia, for a little rest. Hope we make it; I've heard strange but enticing rumors about that place that I'd like to investigate some day.

The soft ball league is going full throttle; of course, the souvenir seekers are ashore big-dealing it at every available opportunity. We're beginning to go tropical. Except for an epidemic of dysentery everybody's getting along pretty well. Got some new men aboard fresh from the States. They'll be in the groove before long.

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13 May, 1944

Kula Gulf, Kolowbaugara Island . . . This is a South Sea setting that would please any movie director. I half expect (and ardently hope) to see Dorthy Lamour step out of the jungle at any moment, Sarong and all. Dixie Island, on which stands the Officer's Club, looks like the place you'd like to build your sweet little nest and let the rest of the world go by.

Two months we've been in this vicinity now—wonder what's cooking!!!!

8 June, 1944

Kwajalein . . . I've seen sights in my life, but never one that'll give me the thrill I got this afternoon when we steamed into the atoll. Ships, thousands of them—battleships, carriers, cruisers, transports, landing craft—baby, this is going to be something big!! Scuttlebutt says it's the Mariannas—we'll soon see.

15 July, 1944

Saipan . . . Here we sit blowing Hell out of an Island I'd never heard of until last month. Nobody can say this war isn't a geographical enlightenment. We have a big force here and the Nips are pretty well nipped. The island is heavily wooded with a mountain in the center. To the south are Tinian and Guam which have also felt the sting of the "B." They say they found a radio man on Guam who's been hiding out since it's capture in '41. What a story he'll have! And think of that back pay!!

11 August, 1944

Eniwetok . . . Here we are with the famous T. F. 58; we're getting rested for a new drive. Scuttlebutt says Admiral Halsey's coming back, so you can bet we'll do plenty of moving.

This is my first squint at Eniwetok, and I can't say I'm particularly impressed. The islands are little low sandy strips with a few palm trees, but the anchorage is big and well protected by surrounding reefs. Oh well, I joined the Navy to see the world, and this is part of it—although I wonder why?

Dope just came out—Palau and the Philip-
pines are next on the firing line.

27 September, 1944

Kassal Passage, Palau . . . Scratch one
island group. Pausing here long enough to
fuel and take on Ammo. and then we're off
for bigger and better things to the north. We
lob a shell into Babelthnap occasionally to
let the Japs know who's winning the war.

2 October, 1944

Ulithi . . . Another day, another atoll.
Takes a magnifying glass to find this place
on the chart—and we came mighty close to
needing one to find it on the ocean. Nothing
but palm trees and Seabees. No girls. They
evacuated the natives from the main island
after the "invasion" last September which was
opposed by a daring fleet of outrigger canoes.
Tarawa was never like this. Now there's a beer
garden next to the native cemetery; how ap-
propriate. Celebrated my first liberty in two
months by drinking beer over at tombstone.
This is getting to be a helluva war.

28 October, 1944

Ulithi . . . Brother! After that *Princeton*
deal this place looks like the sweetest little
isle on God's green earth. No liberty this time
in. Everybody's pretty well shot, not knowing
whether to be glad they're alive or sorry for
what they've been through. Leave tomorrow
for points east—lovely direction!

10 November, 1944

Mare Island . . . Never has the Golden
Gate seemed as solid 24-carat as it was today.
I've gone under that baby an even number
of times now, and there's nothing I like better
than that! Well, Georgia Street, stand by! That
ship is here again!

3 February, 1945

San Diego . . . Dago looks swell from our
anchorage in the bay, but I'm yearning for
a close-up inspection tour. However, the boss
men say no; so I guess I spend a signal bridge

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liberty manning the telescopes. Watch your
shades, ladies!

Tomorrow we're off for the nasty old
Pacific again so it's farewell, adieu, and au
revoir. Parting is such sweet sorrow, Shakes-
peare once said; well, I can vouch for the
sorrow anyway.

10 February, 1945

Pearl Harbor . . . That place again! The
old "B" has gotten so that you just give her
her head and she turns right around and heads
straight for Cinc Pac. Got ashore long enough
to stock up on pineapple juice.

25 February, 1945

Saipan . . . What a face lifting this joint
has had! Last time I was here we were taking
it apart; now we're putting it together again.
Makes me wonder sometimes. Seabees are
all over the place. The mud has the usual red
color and is second to none in consistency.
Slogged around in a jeep today with a buddy.
Saw a nurse in an armored car. They sure
trust these guys! Visited the air strips and saw
a couple of Superforts. Glad those babies are
on our side; a flight took off this morning early.
Bet Tokyo's catching hell by now.

We're set to dish it out again, so the dope
goes. Scuttlebutt says we're joining up with
T. F. 58. Hope so, all those flattops give me
a big fat sense of security.

8 March, 1945

Ulithi . . . Just finished up Iwo Jima. Didn't
join the carriers but went with the bombard-
ment group. If I hear so much as a BB gun
go off after this war I'm going to massacre the
owner. Everything is peaceful; someone must
have a great big Opplan up his sleeve. Get
ashore at Mog Mog beach occasionally to
drink beer and relax. Mog Mog, Gab Gab, Ra,
Ra, Bleep Bleep, what moron named these
places anyway?

8 April, 1945

Kerama Retto . . . Born thirty years too
soon—that's the way I feel today. If we got
much closer to Japan we'd be in the moat of

the Imperial Palace. Aside from about six air raids a day, suicide boats and sundry malicious enterprises by the Nip drips this has been practically a pleasure cruise. Okinawa is a long pretty island covered with trees which I'm positive grow airplanes instead of leaves. There are supposed to be 400,000 people on the island, but I think that is a gross understatement judging from the trouble the Army's been having. These Japs are getting unreasonable; War is war and all that, but you don't have to run around crashing into people just to prove it. I figure when people start losing their sense of self-preservation it's about time to move to another planet. The First Lieutenant had them burn the rungs off the ladder on the stern down to the waterline so that the Nips couldn't climb aboard, you can see how bad it is. Dakota was never like this!

They say there are lots of snakes over on Okinawa; looks like they've gotten into the Army's blood the way the doughfoots have been crawling along lately. Ever since we got with this bombardment outfit turret 64 has been trying to win the war all by itself right over my bunk so my sleep is none too peaceful. It doesn't help any to have to get up every hour and shovel the insulation that has sifted down from the overhead off my bunk. Ah well, "You've got to take the bad with the worse," the wise poet said.

10 May, 1945

Guam . . . I kept telling the Captain one of those fools would get us, but he couldn't see pulling out for a cruise to New York just then. May 4 an Oscar Kamikazed us and here we sit in drydock—of course there are always the cautious few who believe he *might* have thought we were a carrier (our profiles are so similar) and was just trying to land. I think he definitely had malice aforethought. I swear I saw the son of a gun smiling as he dove past the pilot house. How I happened to be peeking out from under my helmet just then I'll never know, but I saw it.

Guam's not bad now. Gab Gab beach is the spot for the swank set this season. Beer

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is plentiful and cold; Women are scarce and even colder. Cinc Pac has his staff here now, so this is really the base. Air strikes are leaving all the time. Go to it Airedales, I'm all for you. Must be a strange feeling to fly over Tokyo and then come back to a nice cool evening in Guam as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Guess they'll have our hole plugged in about a week and we can hightail it—still don't know where we'll get fixed.

28 May, 1945

Pearl Harbor . . . Oh frabjous day (frabjous meaning unhappy)—woe is me, etc. We're being fixed here in Pearl instead of the States. Ah well, the bitter with the sweet and all that. It's better than Okinawa—and what isn't.

Liberties are not bad and not good. Surfing at Waikiki, torturing ourself with the local home brew, and breaking one's neck to get in under the curfew all combine to make an unusual if not particularly delirious liberty. With two months ahead of us, we ought to know this island pretty well at the finish. And then there are the suntanned Polynesian beauties—the longer you look at them the whiter they get. And I've been looking a long, long time.

15 August, 1945

Eniwetok . . . Even Iwo Jima would look good today; with World War II a thing of the past I'm at peace with nature. We were under-way to bombard Wake when the good news came; of course our siren wouldn't work when we tried to sound it while executing our gleeful 360° turn (180 degrees too much) in celebration of the event, but the spirit was there.

Latest dope heads us for our old stamping ground—Okinawa.

26 August, 1945

Buckner Bay, Okinawa . . . This is still not exactly an island paradise; got ashore once and drank hot beer and ate dust. Ought to be going up to Japan soon.

14 September, 1945

Leyte Gulf . . . This is just a stopover on the way to Australia. Just off Nagasaki we got orders to proceed to Brisbane, which goes to prove the old adage, "One never knows, does one." Tacloban is visible at scant intervals between cloudbursts. You have to wear a diving mask topside in this downpour.

We're all looking forward to visiting the land "down under." We've heard many wonderful tales of Australia, but of course they can't be true—you know how sailors exaggerate. Still it'll be interesting.

23 September, 1945

Brisbane, Australia . . . Here we are in civilization. Brisbane has about 400,000 people, most of whom are extraordinarily co-operative in showing us a good time. We Yanks have a reputation to live up to, and the boys from the "B" are certainly doing their utmost in that direction. "This Aussie beer is pretty potent," I thought to myself as I picked myself up off the deck. The girls are nice kids too.

4 October, 1945

Sydney . . . I have no words to express my thoughts. Sydney has a beautiful harbor and a towering bridge—the pride of the city. It also has a zoo and some biological gardens which I intend to visit in a few months when I have exhausted a variety of other forms of recreation. The Australians have a charmingly simple outlook on life; I'm beginning to enjoy myself in an amazed sort of way. King's Cross, a distant relative of Greenwich Village, is receiving its share of tourist trade from the "B".

8 October, 1945

Brisbane . . . Back to explore a little more fully the latent charms of Brisbane. The outdoor life—golfing, riding, tennis—forms a large portion of the recreational facilities here—Surfing at Southport rivals Hawaii's best.

26 October, 1945

Melbourne . . . The second largest and

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most attractive city yet in Australia has opened its gates to the "B". We received a rousing welcome here. St. Kilda Road and the residential district of Toorak are high on my list of well planned metropolitan areas. The boys from the "B" are doing their bit in trying to settle which beer is the best, Melbourne, Sydney, or Brisbane, by ardently sampling all brands. After the third schooner it makes little difference. Put a few "quid" on a nag in the famous Melbourne Cup Race, counterpart of our Kentucky Derby. The hospitality of the populace still fascinates me.

11 November, 1945

Brisbane . . . They say this is our last trip to Brisbane; We've certainly enjoyed the place to the hilt. Had two ship's parties that were nothing short of phenomenal with Ensign Ursic's band providing the jive. Something tells me these girls have dated Yanks before, I can tell by the way they dance. Our farewell was said to the accompaniment of cheers and tears from the dock.

26 November, 1945

Melbourne . . . Thanksgiving in Melbourne, and we have plenty to be thankful for: the end of the war, our pleasant duty in Australia, and myriads of other things. *HMS King George V* is tied up at the next pier; beautiful ship. Had visitors' day twice and you couldn't see the ship for the people. The dock is a constant source of diversion; about fifty girls stand a continuous watch alongside the mooring lines. They show a real nautical interest. They say this is our last trip to Melbourne, and again fond farewells have been said.

12 December, 1945

Sydney . . . Looks like Christmas in Sydney. Weather is strictly summer and the beaches are crowded. Bondi is a favorite spot for sun-baskers. Romance is rearing its lovely head for a few of the crew and it looks as though wedding bells will have a workout before we leave.

1 January, 1946

Brisbane . . . We liked our last goodbye so well we decided to come back for another. New Year's Eve was quite an occasion. This is really the last time here.

3 January, 1946

Sydney . . . This is getting to be just like home for us. The current question is, "What Navy are we in?" More of the old gang leave every month for discharge, but the spirit of the "Mighty B" remains the same despite the change in personnel. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may go home. Roses are red, violets are blue; you've had us and we've had you.

22 January, 1946

Hobart, Tasmania . . . This is a pleasant little city tucked in a mountain valley seemingly detached from the rest of the world. Liberty plans apparently have gone awry. It seems a slight fracas has taken place ashore. Ah well, boys will be boys; here comes the Shore Patrol wagon again.

28 January, 1946

Sydney . . . Home again! Back to Bondi we go; King's Cross is beginning to look like the Lovecastle when the special sea detail is set. The U.S.S. Attu came in for two days with some men from the islands on their way to discharge. When the first liberty wave hit the beach the reverberations were felt all the way to Perth. Hot dope! We're going to the States! (15 minutes later) "Retraction—it's Adelaide." (15 minutes later) "Pardon the mistake, I really meant Melbourne all along."

3 March, 1946

Sydney . . . Well, surprise—Sydney again. We sail for Pearl on 9 March. This time we're

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really leaving, Homeward Bound Pennant and all.

11 March, 1946

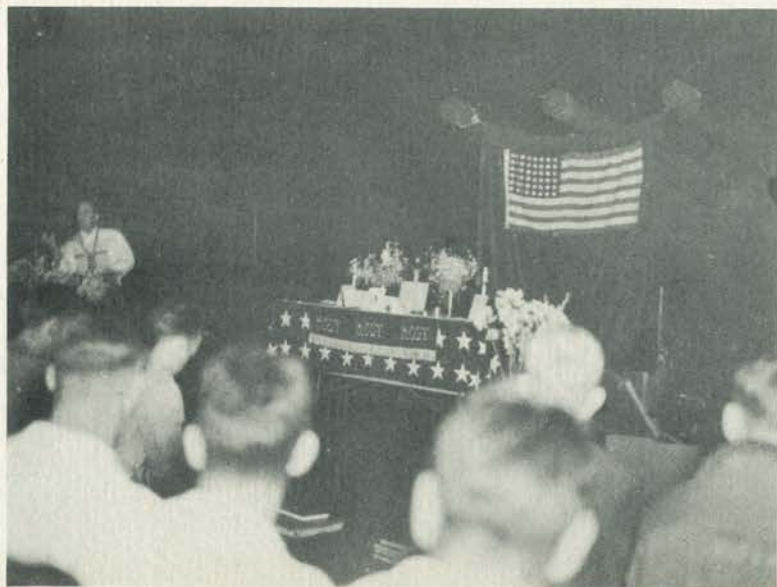
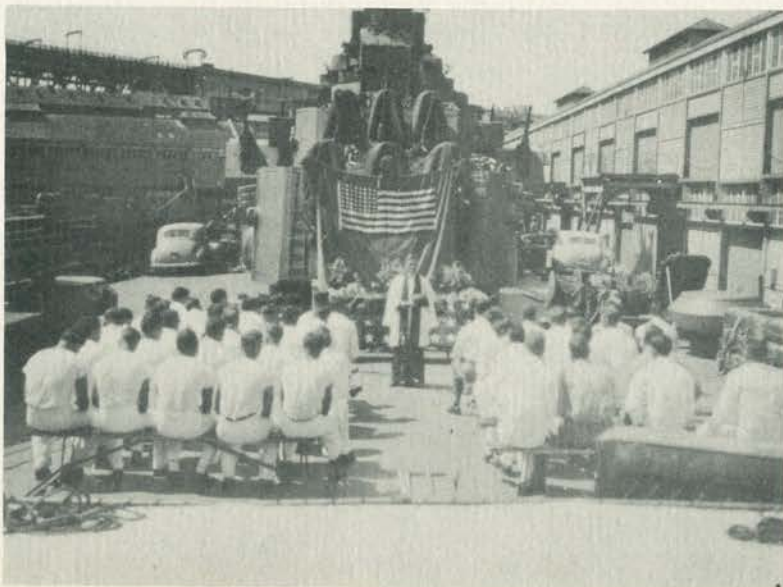
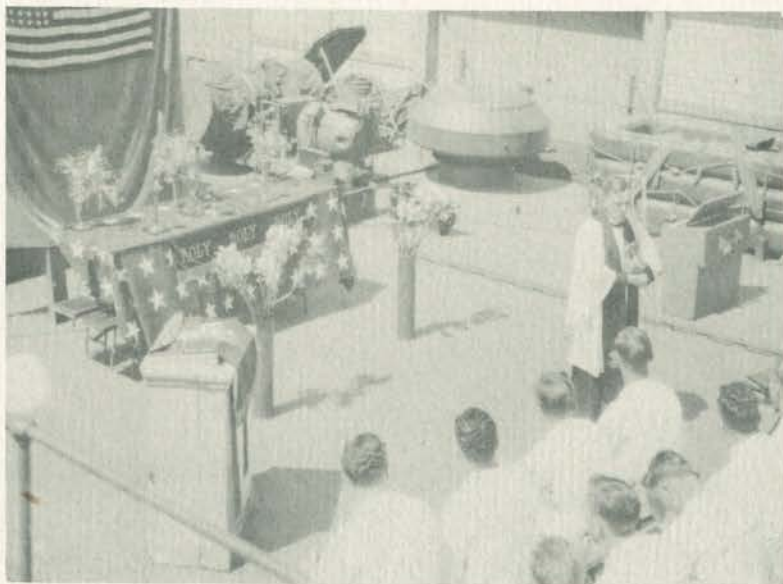
Sydney (but briefly) . . . What some guys won't try to take home for souvenirs!!!!

22 March, 1946

Pearl Harbor . . . Pearl, you lovely place, glad to see you. Just time for a few liberties in Peacetime Honolulu and we're pointed for Mare Island. Sure is funny to be up after dark here.

Mare Island, California . . . Life is so sweet 'cuz I'm back on Georgia Street. It's all over now but the shouting; after a repair period here we take the old lady up to Bremerton and put here in the Inactive Fleet. About that time I'll be inactivated myself as far as the Navy's concerned. My whole Navy life has been on the Birmingham; I've been through the good and the bad with her. Some of the experiences I've liked and some I haven't, but there aren't any I'll ever forget. The "B" is a war baby. She was built to fight and fight she did. Some of the crew think it's too bad that a comparatively new ship like her has to go up the river, but I don't look at it that way. She's just like most of the fellows who manned her; she looks right at home in war-paint but with shiny brass and white decks she's as uncomfortable as a country boy in church. Like her, during the War, we knew why we were needed and understood what we were doing. But in the Peacetime Navy we feel incongruous; our part is done. We're going back to our old life and the "B" is going out to pasture. But all are on call, and if I should have to go to sea again I hope I get a ship like the "Mighty B".

Divine Services



FROM THE JAPANESE
SUICIDE FLIGHT WHICH HIT THE
BIRMINGHAM MAY 1 1945 AT
SKELAWA

KILLED	MISSING	WOUNDED
47	4	81

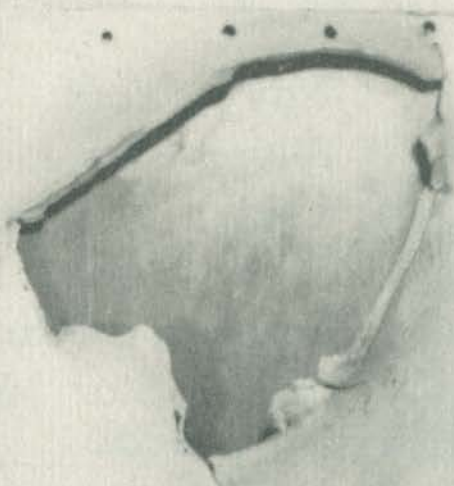
U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM

ACTING OFF BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND
7-9 NOVEMBER 1943

DURING REPEATED AIR ATTACKS
SEVERAL JAPANESE PLANES WERE
DOWNED BY BIRMINGHAM.

THE SHIP SUSTAINED
A BOMB HIT
AND
WAS DESTROYED.

NO. 101 11-32-43 (11-32-43)



LEST WE FORGET

24 OCTOBER 1944
ALONGSIDE USS PRINCETON

289 DEAD
1 MISSING
999 WOUNDED

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN

U.S.S. BIRMINGHAM

IN APPRECIATION
FROM THE SURVIVORS OF THE

U.S.S. PRINCETON

24 OCTOBER 1944

Awards and

DURING THE PERIOD OF
BIRMINGHAM PERSONNEL HAVE

Navy Cross	4
Silver Star Medal	9
Legion of Merit	3
Distinguished Flying Cross	9
Navy and Marine Corps Medal	2
Bronze Star Medal	56
Air Medal	1

TOTAL



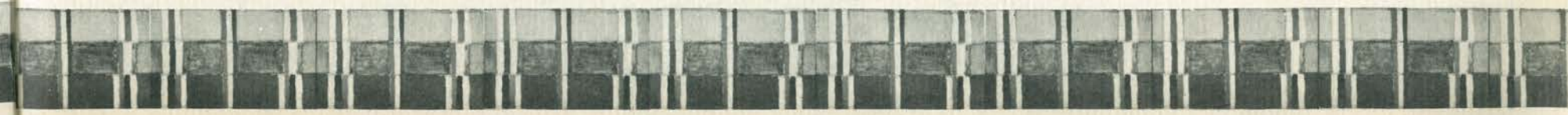
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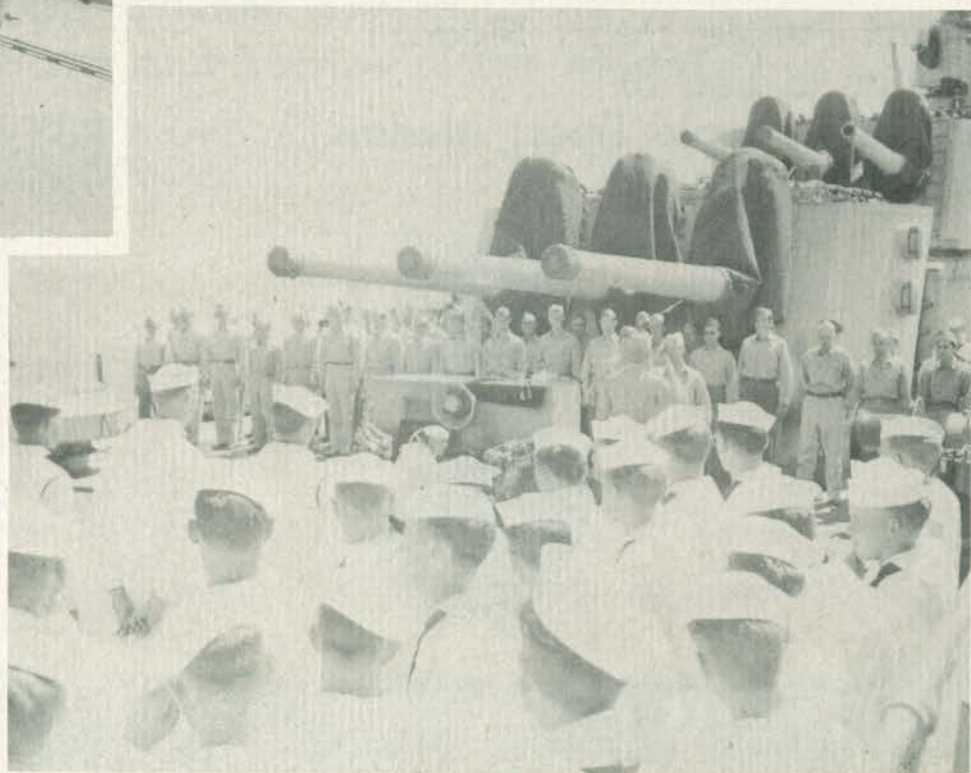
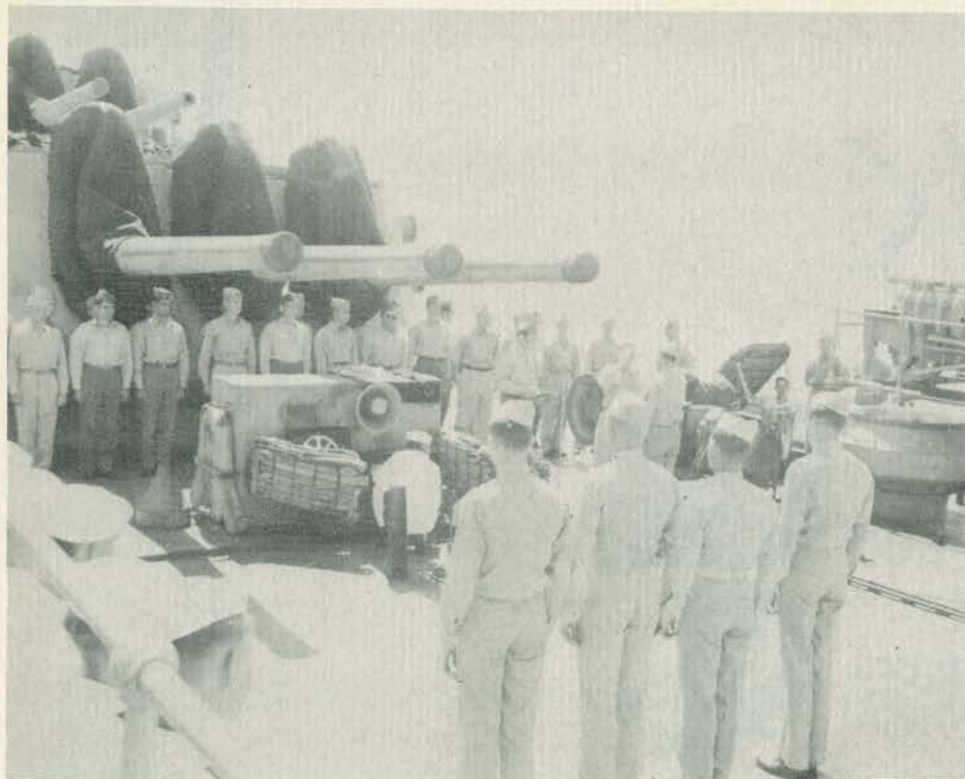
SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II,
WON THE FOLLOWING AWARDS:

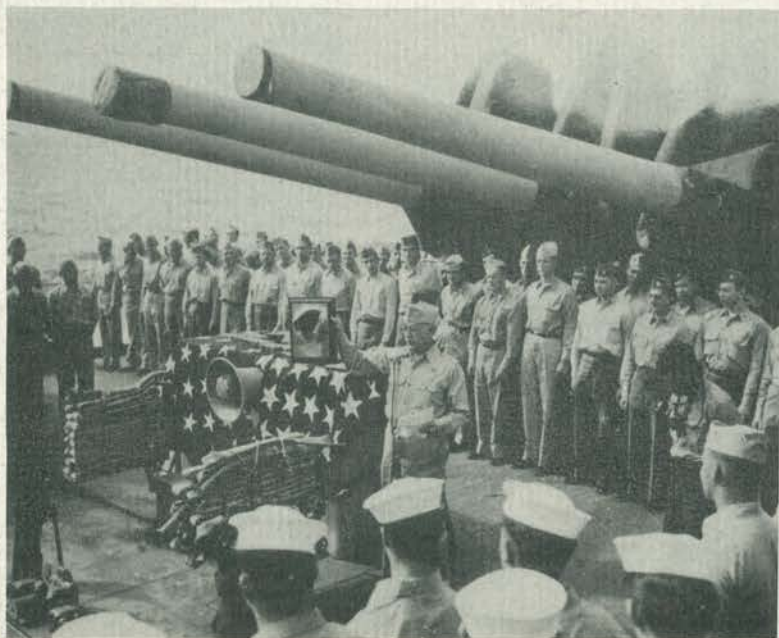
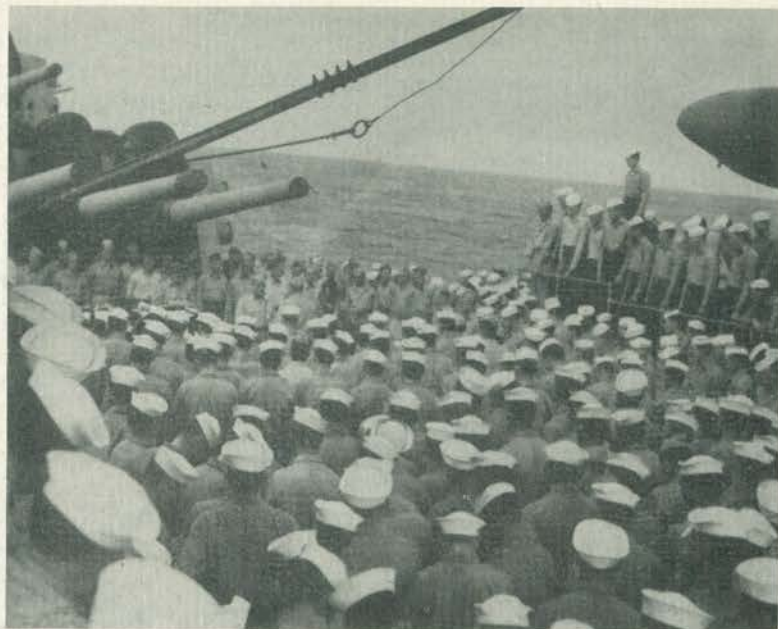
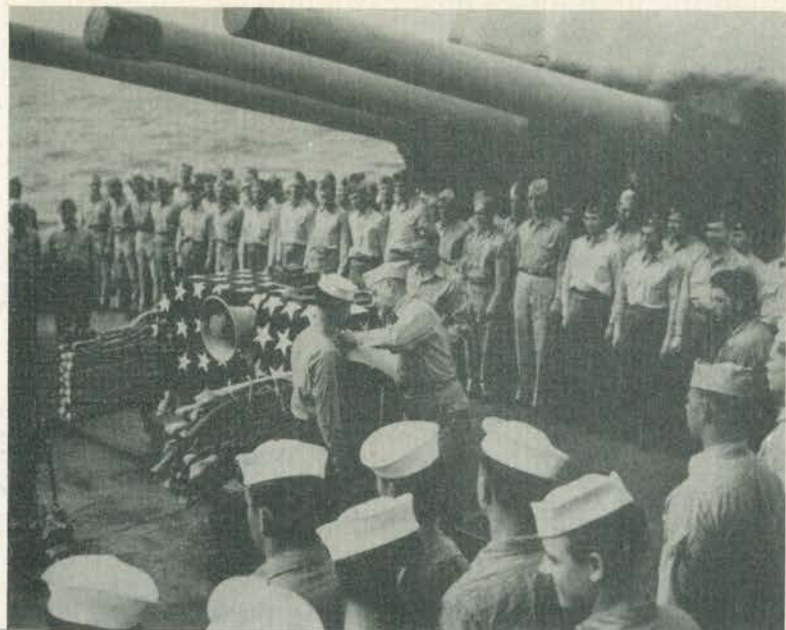
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Letter of Commendation	5
Gold Star in lieu of third Purple Heart Medal	1
Gold Star in lieu of second Purple Heart Medal	33
Purple Heart Medal	795

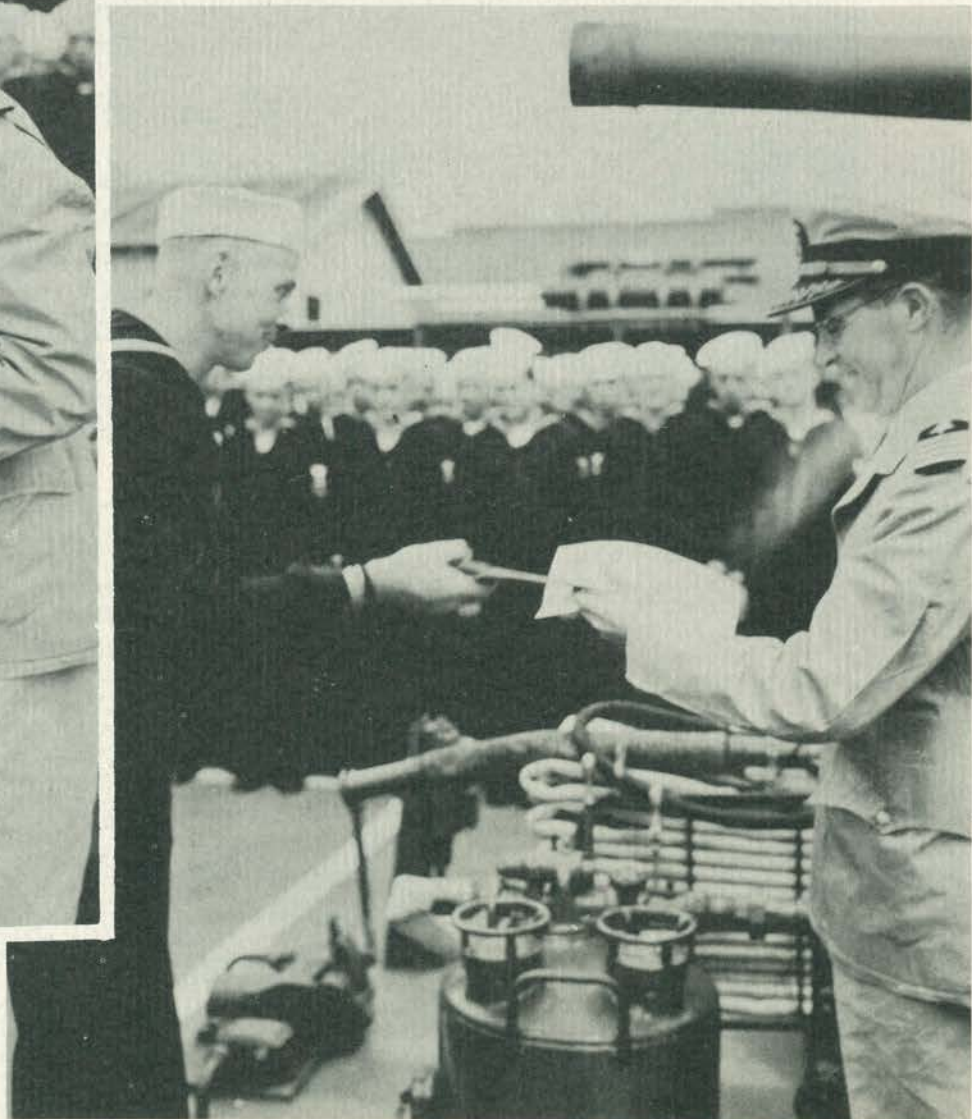


994











SICILY OCCUPATION

10-19 July, 1943

LEGION OF MERIT

Captain John Wilkes

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Lieutenant Robert D. Cox, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant (jg) Eugene H. Markley, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant (jg) Joseph H. McGuinness, III, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant (jg) Harold Mote, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant (jg) Roy "D" Wilkes, U. S. Naval Reserve
Richard S. Allen, A. R. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lloyd M. Hale, A. R. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
Mackey M. Prutilpac, A. O. M. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Buren R. Stahl, A. R. M. 1c, U. S. Navy

PURPLE HEART MEDAL

Mackey M. Prutilpac, A. O. M. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)

TREASURY-BOUGAINVILLE OPERATION

8-9 November, 1943

SILVER STAR MEDAL

Edward J. Haas, S. 2c, U. S. Navy

LETTER OF COMMENDATION WITH COMMENDATION RIBBON

Commander Joseph E. Chapman, U. S. Navy
Commander Winston P. Folk, U. S. Navy
Boatswain Joseph A. McGrane, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant (jg) Patrick P. O'Day, U. S. Naval Reserve
Commander Edward J. O'Donnell, U. S. Navy
George W. Amick, B. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
Rigoletto S. Caro, C. B. M., U. S. Navy
Raymond W. Gardner, S. 2c, U. S. Navy

Howard C. Hedegard, C. M. 1c, U. S. Navy
Willard J. Losey, C. E. M., U. S. Navy
Robert C. Swinney, B. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

PURPLE HEART MEDAL

Ensign Frederick E. Field, U. S. Naval Reserve
Boatswain Joseph A. McGrane, U. S. Navy
Charles Bertucci, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Christopher A. Brown, S. F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Hansel Brown, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Floyd T. Cannon, E. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James F. Cunningham, F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Raymond W. Gardner, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Stephen Godzisz, S. K. 1c, U. S. Navy
Edward J. Haas, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Jack H. Hampson, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Keith W. Hendrix, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Robert H. Horstman, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Laverne J. Krischel, B. M. 1c, U. S. Navy
Alexander J. Lapinski, S. 1c, U. S. Navy
Ross J. Lepper, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles J. Lohrman, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps
Frank Lucero, A. M. M. 3c, U. S. Navy
Paul F. Mahoney, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Franklin L. Marker, S. 1c., U. S. Naval Reserve
Louis F. Masztal, S. F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Frank E. McGee, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps
Coy G. Moore, Gy. Sgt., U. S. Marine Corps
William Omahen, G. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
George S. Pickens, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Ronald E. Sargent, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps
Frank H. Schmittgren, Jr., S. K. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harold C. Smith, G. M. 1c, U. S. Navy
Harry C. Updegraf, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps
Delmer O. Voelker, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert H. White, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Casimir S. Wiczorek, Plt. Sgt., U. S. Marine Corps—(Posthumously)
Frank W. Williams, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
George D. Willis, Jr., Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps
Murray M. Yagoda, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

MARIANAS OPERATION

14 June-4 August, 1944

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Captain Thomas B. Inglis, U. S. Navy

AIR MEDAL

Lieutenant Harold Mote, U. S. Naval Reserve

LETTER OF COMMENDATION WITH COMMENDATION RIBBON

Commander Francis R. Duborg, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Edward Ryan, U. S. Naval Reserve

PURPLE HEART MEDAL

William J. Hardy, S. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Arthur J. Hinnant, S. F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Francis J. Holley, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Norman D. Malone, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles J. Quinlivan, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Everett S. Tipps, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

LEYTE OPERATION

10-24 October, 1944

NAVY CROSS

Captain Thomas B. Inglis, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Alan Reed, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Ensign Robert C. Kerr, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Harold R. Oleson, C. T. C., U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)

SILVER STAR MEDAL

Captain Thomas B. Inglis, U. S. Navy
Chief Boatswain Joseph A. McGrane, U. S. Navy
Harold P. Ellison, Jr., S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Wimpy Lowe, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Donald E. McGee, S. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Lawrence A. Samuelson, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Jack M. Savage, C. Ph. M., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)

LEGION OF MERIT

Commander Winston Folk, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant James H. MacArt., (M. C.), U. S. Naval Reserve

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS MEDAL

Ralph D. Hovermale, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Richard L. Wilson, Y. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Lieutenant (jg) Edward A. Adey, III, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Edward V. Brewer, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Commander Donald H. Brumbaugh, (M. C.), U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant William C. Cantrell, (M. C.), U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Commander William J. Cabaniss, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Samuel L. Collins, U. S. Navy
Commander Francis R. Duborg, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Sterling S. Huyett, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Commander Gordon B. King, U. S. Naval Reserve
Carpenter Augustus C. Nickerson, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Patrick P. O'Day, U. S. Naval Reserve
Commander Abbott Peterson, Jr., (Ch. C.), U. S. Naval Reserve
Commander Van Ostrand Perkins, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Lieutenant Edward Ryan, U. S. Naval Reserve
Ensign Francis J. Woznack, U. S. Navy
Ensign James K. Wysham, U. S. Naval Reserve
Roy E. Bellah, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Leroy P. Blackman, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Augustus T. Blankenship, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve

Ulmont K. Buatte, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Mitchell J. Cholewa, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Roger T. Dial, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John Ducar, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Wayne S. Durst, S. 1c, U. S. Navy
Morgan F. Flesch, Jr., F. 1c, U. S. Navy
Morris B. Forst, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Charles "D" Galey, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Steven J. Gresh, B. 1c, U. S. Navy
Robert L. Hunsberger, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Chester Lewis, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Frank R. Lima, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Orlando S. Liotti, W. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Donald P. Luetjohn, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John F. McShane, W. T. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Joseph E. Menendez, RdM. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Marion M. Miller, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Wayne L. Miller, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles A. Newell, Bkr. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John H. Pierson, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Crist T. Polito, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Adam M. Puc, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Daniel P. Regan, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Luther G. Rowland, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Frank J. Sarkanay, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Calvin C. Sharp, Pfc, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Oren D. Smith, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert J. Smith, Sgt., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Anthony Sokowlowski, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Robert C. Swinney, B. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Eugene R. Taylor, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Joseph Velardi, F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Richard S. Weber, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Bernard C. Wolf, S. C. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve

LETTER OF COMMENDATION WITH COMMENDATION RIBBON

Ensign Thomas N. Bernard, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant John J. Brennan, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant (jg) Herbert E. Hansen, (S. C.), U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant (jg) Ralph M. Peterson, U. S. Navy

Lieutenant (jg) Kenneth W. Stenzel, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant (jg) Ray W. Taylor, U. S. Navy
Joseph Barrale, S. S. M. T. 3c, U. S. Navy
Marcus W. Blong, T. C. 1c, U. S. Navy
Anthony J. Boffa, Ph. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James E. Brough, Ptr. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John D. Caldwell, Ph. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert W. Carrell, C. Y., U. S. Naval Reserve
Eugene F. Casey, H. A. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John S. Charles, Ph. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Henry L. Collins, H. A. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James Collins, Cox., U. S. Navy
Howard K. Cox, S. K. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Wayne Dovey, G. M. 1c, U. S. Navy
Thomas A. Dudas, Ph. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Thomas M. Evans, R. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lavaughn Frost, Ph. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Howard J. Gilboe, Ph. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Leo J. Gillespie, Cov., U. S. Naval Reserve
Buhler S. Glans, C. Q. M., U. S. Naval Reserve
Donald M. Green, R. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Elton L. Hippert, F. C. 2c, U. S. Navy
Robert D. Holt, T. C. 1c, U. S. Navy
Claude E. Howard, C. S. M., U. S. Navy
Thomas F. Hunter, Ph. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Martin R. Lahti, C. Ph. M., U. S. Naval Reserve
Ross J. Lepper, R. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Edwin L. McAdams, C. R. M., U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert A. McAuliffe, Jr., F. C. O. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Louis E. Melton, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Andrew E. Morgan, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Merle E. Norquist, S. C. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
George M. Powers, Ph. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Leo W. Price, C. F. C., U. S. Navy
Daniel J. Reilly, S. K. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Emeron E. Robel, G. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Romeo R. Roberts, Ph. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
William K. Russell, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William A. Ryder, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Eddie S. Sauer, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Joseph J. Sheekey, B. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

Harlan E. Smith, C. Y., U. S. Naval Reserve
Carl E. Van Meter, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James R. Walker, Jr., F. C. 2c, U. S. Navy
Aloys J. Wigge, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Gerald White, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Donald R. Wilson, C. R. T., U. S. Naval Reserve
Bennie Wolfson, Ph. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Rocco A. Zarlenga, M. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Paul O. Zygowicz, M. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve

GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF SECOND PURPLE HEART MEDAL

Chief Boatswain Joseph A. McGrane, U. S. Navy
Commander Van Ostrand Perkins, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Charles O. Bertucci, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Hansel Brown, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Raymond W. Gardner, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Edward J. Haas, S. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Israel H. Hinitz, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Ross J. Lepper, R. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Frank Lucero, A. R. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
Norman D. Malone, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Franklin L. Marker, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
George S. Pickens, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Jack R. Swift, W. T. 1c, U. S. Navy
Everett S. Tipps, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Delmer O. Voelker, S. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)

PURPLE HEART MEDAL

Lieutenant (jg) Edward A. Adey, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Edward V. Brewer, Jr., U. S. Naval Reserve
Ensign Allen M. A. Buckingham, U. S. Naval Reserve
Ensign Martin M. Casey, Jr., U. S. Navy
Boatswain Rigoletto S. Caro, U. S. Navy
Ensign Morris Y. Clark, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Roland Cooper, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Commander Francis R. Duborg, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Stanley E. Ekstrom, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Commander Winston P. Folk, U. S. Navy
Lieutenant Joe W. Grimes, U. S. Navy

Commander Edward E. Grimm, U. S. Navy
Machinist George H. Hoagwood, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Captain Thomas B. Inglis, U. S. Navy
Ensign Robert C. Kerr, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Lieutenant (jg) Ward W. Markley, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant John L. Marocchi, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Donald McCormick, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Lieutenant Harold Mote, U. S. Naval Reserve
Lieutenant Alan Reed, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Lieutenant John Reid, (S. C.), U. S. Naval Reserve
Radio Electrician Mirel R. Smith, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Ensign Frank V. Votto, U. S. Naval Reserve
Electrician William H. Wingfield, U. S. Navy
Ensign James K. Wysham, U. S. Naval Reserve
Edward B. Adams, E. M. 3c, U. S. Navy
Smith C. Adams, Jr., S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Arthur M. Afdahl, E. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles V. Agnew, Rd. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Charles E. Albertson, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James R. Albury, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William B. Alexander, C. W. T., U. S. Navy
Richard S. Allen, A. R. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Kenneth S. Askgren, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Philip S. Astle, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William E. Austgen, S. S. M. B. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Carl S. Austin, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Marshall L. Babbs, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Howard E. Badger, M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Gerald R. Baldwin, C. M. M., U. S. Navy
Thomas E. Barger, E. M. 2c, U. S. Navy-I—(Posthumously)
Samuel J. Barron, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Albert J. Bassett, Jr., S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert H. Bates, Q. M. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Celeste L. Battistin, Mo. M. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John L. Belcher, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Roy E. Bellah, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Asie W. Beller, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James C. Bennett, Rd. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Paul Benzie, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Peter Beskenis, R. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Milford L. Bierhaus, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve

Joseph E. Bishop, C. E. M., U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Clarence E. Blackstock, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Anthony P. Blanco, S. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Frank S. Blanco, S. 1c, U. S. Navy
Cleo Blankenship, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
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Clovis A. Bowen, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harry L. Bowers, C. R. T., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
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Charles F. Brown, M. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
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Clyde O. Brown, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Mitchell Brown, Rd. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Ellis F. Bryant, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Ernest A. Buckingham, M. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Kenneth A. Bull, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Mike T. Burckhard, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert L. Burnham, S. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Rodger "M" Burns, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Fred I. Burson, C. F. C., U. S. Navy
Hugo Busa, F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Daniel "N" Butkiewicz, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Collie H. Butler, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Milton T. Butterworth, Rd. M. 3c, U. S. Navy
Stanley O. Bye, C. S. K., U. S. Naval Reserve
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Joseph S. Carlson, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Jesse "J" Campbell, Jr., Y. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Vincenzo J. Caputo, Rd. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert P. Carl, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Eugene V. Carmean, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Harry R. Carmichael, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Victor P. Carmichael, S. 1c, U. S. Navy
Kenneth J. Carmody, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Kenith L. Carney, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James R. Carr, S. F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
John F. Carroll, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Jessey E. Casper, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Kenneth R. Chandler, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John R. Chaney, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Vernon R. Charles, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve

Mitchell J. Cholewa, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Arthur H. Christy, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert E. Cleavor, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Leon Coleman, St. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James Collins, Cox., U. S. Navy
Charles O. Corbin, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Ermine A. Cordy, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Carlo L. Corini, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Antonio T. Costa, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Joseph F. Costigan, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Harold R. Cottrill, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Winfred L. Cramer, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Clinton L. Crandall, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John A. Creaven, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Lawrence "R" Cripe, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
Thaddeus H. Crockett, S. C. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Dominic P. Culotta, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Leslie J. Cuppett, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Christ Dangles, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Roland W. Darnell, A. O. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
Jewel R. Davidson, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Delbert B. Davis, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
Eddy J. Davis, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Billy W. Deakin, M. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Norwin G. Decane, C. W. T., U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Frank J. Decenzo, F. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Richard L. Decker, F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Morris A. DeGraw, M. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harlan H. Deitchler, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Rudolph DeJarnett, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Banks Delashmit, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Vernon E. DeMillion, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James E. Denton, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Paul D. Delph, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William A. Devine, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harrell L. DeWitt, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Henry W. DeYoung, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Alfonzo J. Dickerson, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Charles A. Dickinson, M. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Howard B. Dietrich, G. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert H. Dobbins, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)

Harry R. Doss, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James E. Donnelly, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Clarence L. Doughman, S. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
William W. Dozier, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Michael T. Drabick, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Albert H. Droste, S. S. M. L. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Edward J. Drzazinski, B. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John Ducar, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Henry E. Duggan, Jr., S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert C. Duke, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
John C. Dull, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Crede T. Dunbrack, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Clayton E. Dunford, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Merle P. Dunn, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harry Dyer, E. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles D. Dymond, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Frank G. Eichinger, B. M. 1c, U. S. Navy
Samuel E. Elkins, S. 2c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Nathan Elleew, F. 1c, U. S. Navy
Harold P. Ellison, Jr., S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Francis J. Elsinger, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
William J. Elson, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Lawrence A. Engen, F. C. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Harry J. Englert, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Ralph J. Erickson, W. T. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
George L. Escallier, E. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
George Estes, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
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Steve Evankoe, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Frank A. Evans, St. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James W. Farish, M. M. 1c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
James M. Ferels, M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James W. Filip, C. S. P. (A), U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert D. Fischer, S. K. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
George E. Flynn, G. M. 3c, U. S. Navy—(Posthumously)
Leon "J" Folkman, S. K. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Simon P. Ford, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Arthur J. Fowler, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Levin T. Fox, F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Frederick L. Franke, Jr., S. F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Paul D. Frazier, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)

Douglas E. Freeman, S. F. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Richard "E" Fulton, M. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Leonard F. Futch, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve
William A. Gaddy, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles "D" Galey, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps Reserve
Bernard M. Gannon, S. 2c, U. S. Navy
John A. Gaspa, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Anthony R. Gaugler, F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Martin F. Geiger, Jr., F. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Donald A. George, C. S. K., U. S. Navy
Paul W. Gerson, W. T. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Winfred B. Gifford, Cox., U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Charles H. Gilbert, Jr., E. M. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Buhler S. Glans, C. Q. M., U. S. Naval Reserve
Joseph J. Gluscic, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Vincent R. Godin, Y. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
John J. Gold, Y. 3c, U. S. Navy
Edward P. Golitko, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Charles V. Goudie, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Wayne E. Gould, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
John O. Gower, G. M. 3c, U. S. Navy
James P. Graham, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Joe E. Graves, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Robert C. Graves, S. C. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Forrest M. Greene, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Arthur J. Gregory, F. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Woodrow A. Griffith, E. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Arthur Griger, Y. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Charles R. Grove, F. C. 1c, U. S. Navy
John C. Grove, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
James J. Guerrero, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Albert R. Gumm, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Charles P. Gwinn, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
John E. Hahn, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Lloyd M. Hale, A. R. M. 2c, U. S. Navy
Oscar Hale, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William W. Hardy, S. M. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Hershell D. Harris, S. S. M. B. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Robert J. Harris, S. 1c, U. S. Naval Reserve
Raymond L. Hartle, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
William F. Hatzberger, C. T. C., U. S. Fleet Reserve

Lorrel C. Hass, S. 2c, U. S. Naval Reserve
William Hedges, G. M. 3c, U. S. Naval Reserve—(Posthumously)
Neile L. Hensminger, C. E. M., U. S. Navy
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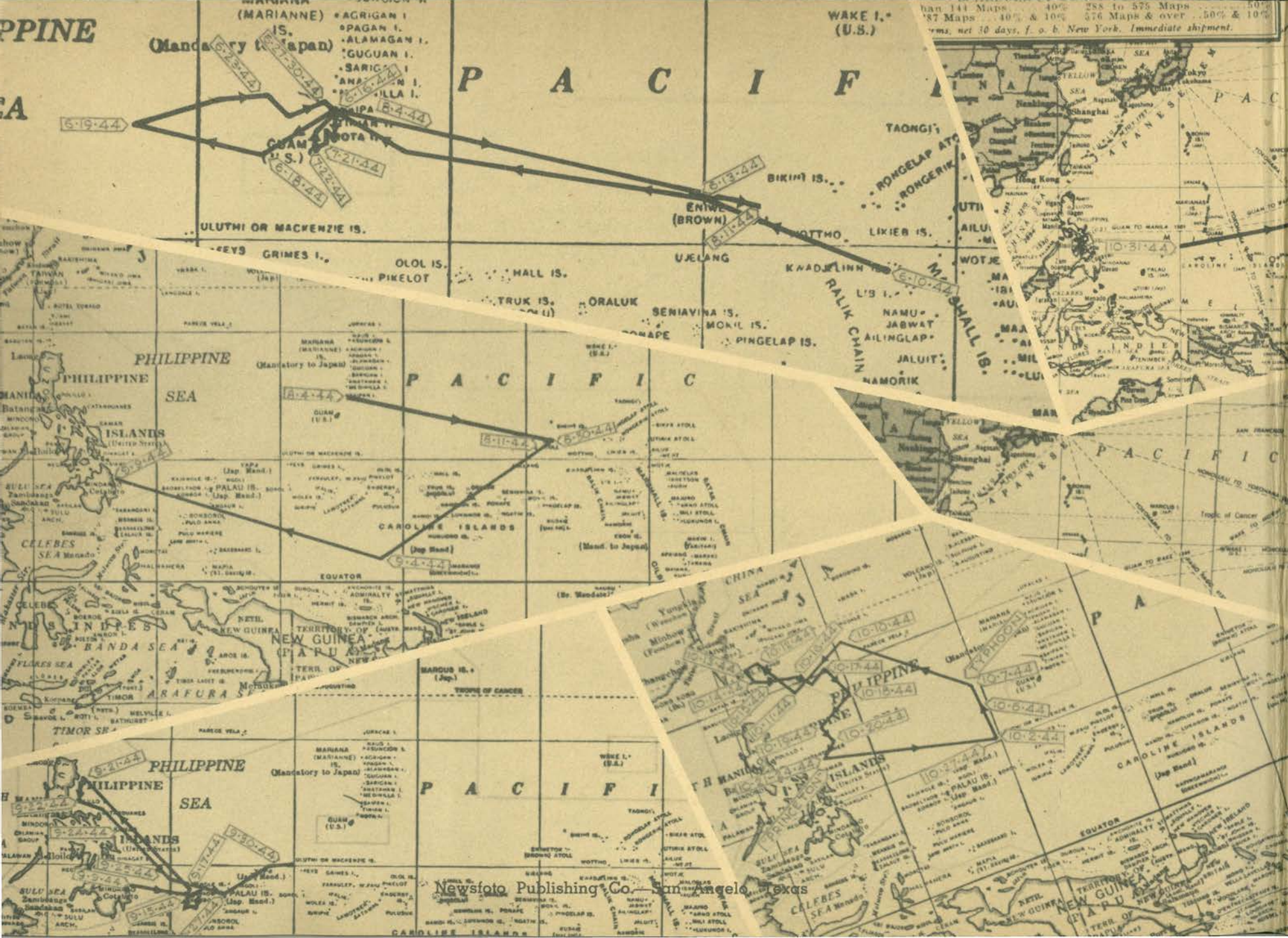
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