

1946

War history of the U.S.S. Heermann

United States Navy

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Destroyer

X

U.S.S. HEERMANN

DD - 532

WAR HISTORY
OF THE

USS

HEERMANN



This Record

Is humbly dedicated to
the men who gave their
lives for their country
while serving aboard this
vessel

HOWARD F. DOAN, Quartermaster 3c

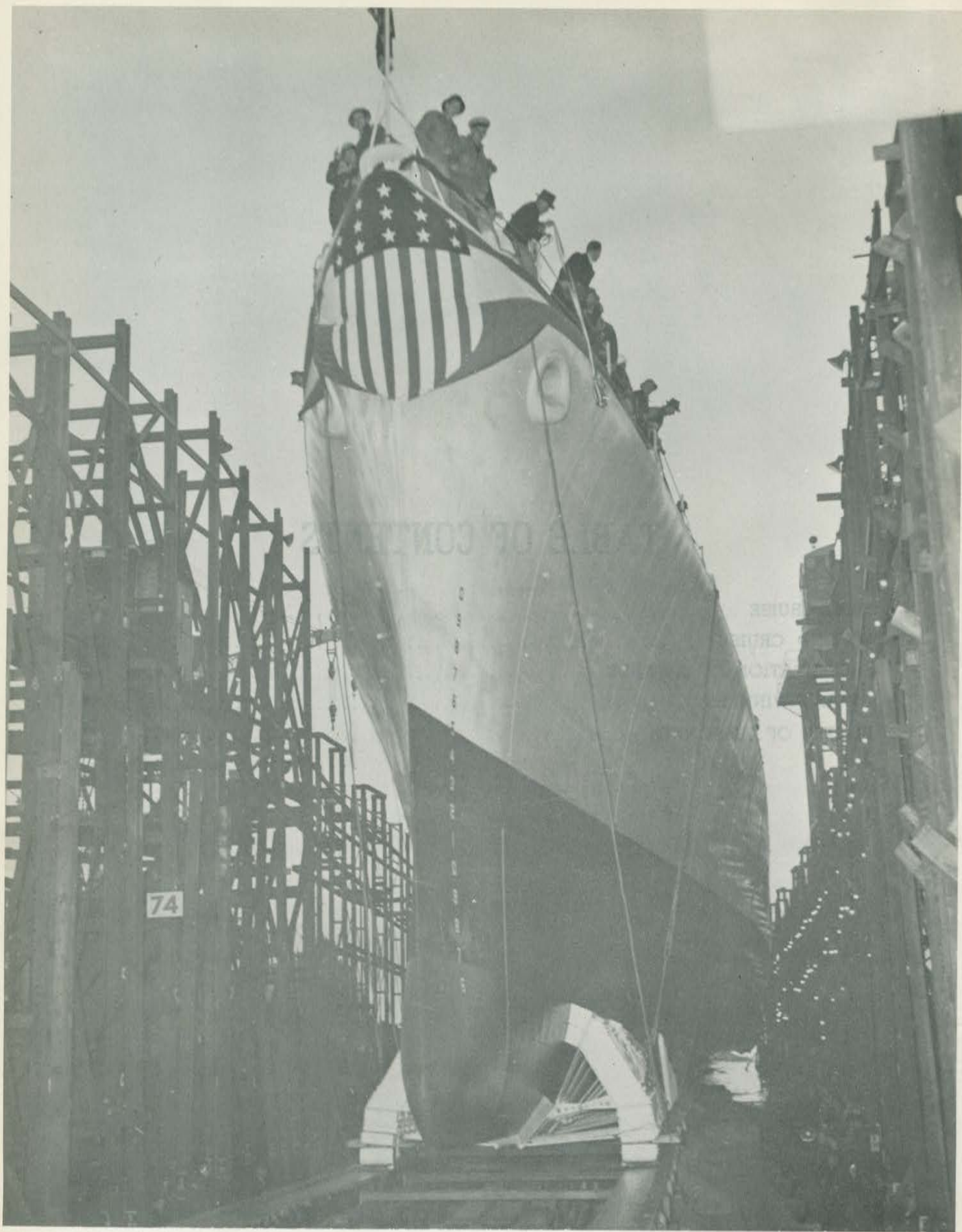
THOMAS P. EVANOWSKI, Sonarman 2c

ALTHON L. ROSSUM, Machinist's Mate 2c

CHESTER E. WARREN, Radioman 2c

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BIRTH OF A LADY

FIRST CRUISE

OCTOBER 1943 - DECEMBER 1944

For service during the war in the Pacific, personnel of the "L'il Hoiman" received the following ribbons and engagement stars. . . .

RIBBONS

Presidential Unit Citation
Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon
American Theater Ribbon
Philippine Liberation Ribbon
World War II Victory Ribbon

ENGAGEMENT STARS

Tarawa Operation, November 19-21, 1943
Marshall Islands Operation, January 31-February 4, 1944
Operations with Task Force Group 304, May 22-June 15, 1944
Southern Palau Islands Operation, September 6- October 4, 1944
Leyte Operation, October 17-October 26, 1944
Iwo Jima Operation, February 15-February 27, 1945
Okinawa Gunto Operation, March 17-June 10, 1945
Japanese Empire Raids and Bombardments, July 10-August 15, 1945

FIRST CRUISE

OCTOBER 1943—DECEMBER 1944

It was the sixth of July in 1943, she had just been commissioned. Within the course of time she would be called many names, some spoken in anger, some in fear, some in pain; but now she was the U. S. S. Heermann (DD532.) The gods were pleased.

The crew was like the country they served. They came from east and west, north and south. They'd been farmers, students, grocers, salesmen. They were of every color, every creed. We were lucky, there were a few old hands aboard to help build a fighting crew for a fighting ship.

Then came the shakedown cruise. There is nothing under the sun like a shakedown cruise. It's indescribable but it gets results. After that period in San Diego we began to look as if we had "been born on the crest of a wave and rocked in the cradle of the deep." Shakedown gave us forewarnings of things to come and suddenly it became apparent that fighting a war was hard work and lots of it.

On the first of October, after another brief session in the yard, the powers that be decided that the Heermann was ready to go out and win her spurs. So we headed out toward the



LATITUDE "0"



NEPTUNE'S COURT

islands. That last look at the Golden Gate Bridge always seems to be the one that hurts the most. All of us knew it would be many a day before we would be Stateside again, but we were ready—we had the finest ship in the Fleet and the finest group of men alive to fight it.

The Hawaiian Islands are beautiful, any travel poster will tell you that. The Navy-eye view might differ just a little. It seems that all the grass-skirted beauties have migrated to Hollywood and besides you can't go looking for grass-skirted beauties when all your time is taken up in training exercises. Our stay at Pearl Harbor was short and we were soon on our way.

Out of Pearl we steamed, headed for a little place in the New Hebrides, by name Efate, (don't reach for your maps because you probably won't find it on there.) The trip was uneventful for the most part. We rescued the crew of a downed plane and spent some time on what we thought was a submarine contact. The highlight of the trip came on the twenty-fifth of October when we crossed the equator and King Neptune and his entire court

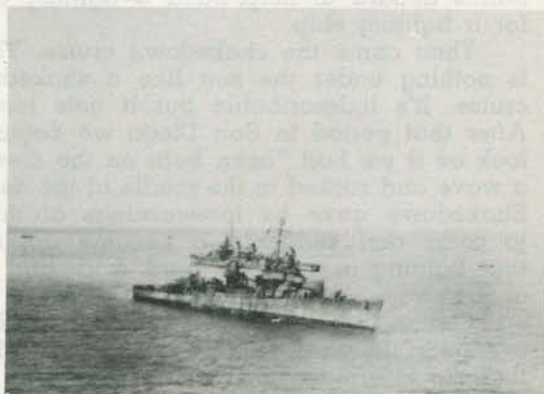
came aboard to convert all the Pollywogs into honorable Shellbacks. This ancient ceremony, which takes place upon the "crossing of the line," is a little difficult to explain. About the closest thing to it is the initiation of a freshman into a college fraternity, except that it is more violent if anything. The Pollywogs were washed down with salt water, shocked with electric current, submerged in fuel oil and all received a sound paddling, all this after being made to do sundry foolish things for the amusement of the old shellbacks. This process completed, all were welcomed into the ranks of Honorable Shellbacks.

One could hardly call Havanah Harbor, Efate a tropical paradise, but it was land and it did look good to us. There was something in the air, something big, you could almost smell trouble approaching. As always our stay in port meant more training, until everyone was letter perfect in his job. Seventy-five percent of every war is spent in training, this one proved no exception. When the chips are down there is no place for mistakes. Early on the thirteenth of November, the winch groaned, the chain came sliding along the deck and we were on our way. The skipper put out the word, we were on our way to Tarawa, in the Gilbert Islands. This was it, the job we had trained for, we were off to meet the Japs for the first time. We were ready, but each of us had our own thoughts which we kept to ourselves.

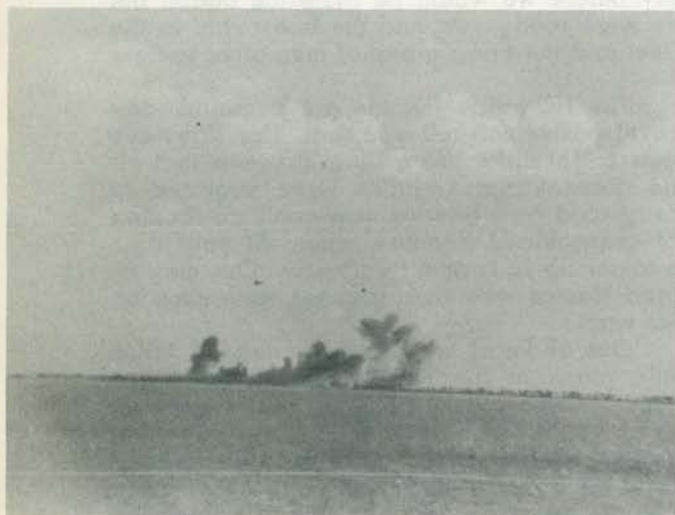
On the night of twenty November, we approached the atoll, and with the light of day



BOMBARDING TARAWA



CASUALTY



TARAWA BURNS

Tarawa lay before us, looking like any one of a thousand islands but destined to become one of the bloodiest battlefields in the world's history. There in the lagoon lay a small Jap ship. It was our first target and those long hours of training stood us in good stead, for she was dispatched with ease. It was the first score in the first inning of a long game. Later that evening, as we were returning to our station, a Betty came winging in and dropped a torpedo; luckily it was a miss and we continued on our way. It was here that we ran aground on an uncharted reef and had to wait for the tide to rise and float us off. With the next dawn came orders to move into the lagoon and provide close fire support for the Marines on the island. This was our meat, and

for the next two days we kept up a steady barrage covering the advance of the Marines across the sand. The Marines reported that the firing was very good; the Japs, well, they are still telling their ancestors about it.

After the island was secured, we joined a small group of damaged ships and returned to Pearl Harbor for repair work. About a month later, the repairs completed, we were on our way again. It was to Kwajalien in the Marshall Islands this time. We were part of the support force and it wasn't found necessary to use us. We spent all of our time doing patrol work off the island and hoping for a better job. We did find a patrol plane that had been forced down due to lack of gas and towed it back to the island.

Things went along so well at Kwajalien that it was decided to move on and take Eniwetok Atoll at once. Here the support force was to be used and we were primed for action. The Heermann was the second destroyer into the lagoon. The channel leading in was another of those narrow- half-charted affairs; but to make this one worse, the two sides of the channel were formed by Jap infested islands. You could practically reach out and shake hands with those Nips. This time we were really in close while providing fire support for the landing forces, we could see the troops moving across the island through the palms and brush. It was here at Eniwetok that we took our first Jap prisoners. Both of them swam out to the ship from the land and the whaleboat went to pick them up. One of them decided, at the last moment, that he didn't want to be a prisoner at all. He tried to set off a hand grenade, hoping to kill himself and take a few of our men with him. Luckily, the thing didn't go off and no one was hurt.

We remained in the Marshalls, keeping busy with anti-submarine patrols, until March 5th, then we were off to Majuro Atoll, for upkeep and more of the old training. We had been in Majuro only a few days when we received orders to go to the Solomon Islands and relieve DesRon 23. That area down there had been hot in more ways than just the weather and it looked as if we might have good hunting. However things had quieted down and our work was pure routine. Convoying ships back and forth between our base at



OUR FIRST JAP PRISONER



NO FIGHT LEFT



BARBERSHOP TRIO



TULAGI'S TRAVELING STORE

Port Purvis and Emirau. Every now and then we would get a bit of the choice duty such as submarine hunts up along the coast of Bouganville and New Hanover. We even did one shore bombardment at Fangelawa Bay, New Ireland.

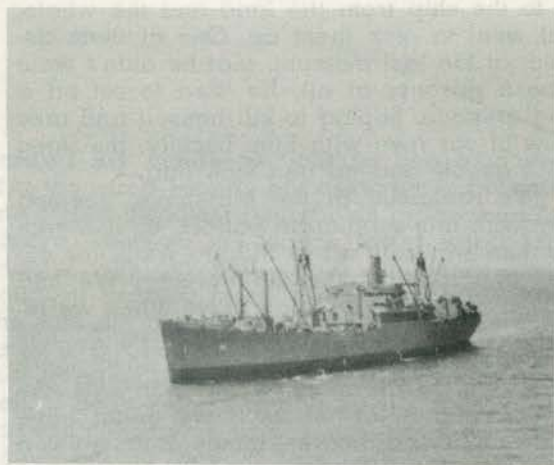
Port Purvis, Florida Island, is a land locked harbor, completely surrounded by high hills which kept out the sea breeze. A hotter place you could not find. It very seldom rained during the day, but the moment that movies would start on the forecastle, down it would come in torrents. The natives there are like something out of a nightmare, they chew Betel Nut which makes their teeth black and they dye their hair orange. There was always a boatload of them at the fantail trying to sell grass skirts and other trinkets. Some of the people even bought the stuff.

Early in August it was decided that we needed a little of the famous "R&R" (rest and recreation). We were sent to Noumea, New Caledonia. Well, at least they did have streets and houses, not to mention that famous "Butterfly Rum," so called because drinking it gives one the sensation that he has just swallowed a flock of neurotic butterflies. It contains a little bit of everything, including rocks and kerosene. After liberty, the boat crew would pile everyone in the boat like logs and they were almost that stiff. All was not a bed of roses though, a lot of our time down there was spent in putting a new coat of camouflage on the ship. We were only there four days,

then we were on our way back to the Solomons.

On arriving in the Solomons it was apparent that something was in the wind. The Fleet was in. We found that we had been assigned as part of the destroyer screen for a group of CVE's. Once again that old demon, Training, showed his head and we were off. Training, training, and more training was our lot until, on the sixth of September, the Task Force formed up and we were on our way for Palau. Throughout the entire operation our group of CVE's supported the landings of the Marines and Army on Pelelui and Angaur Islands. Not once during the whole time did we, on the Heermann, see the enemy. About the only way we had of knowing how the war was progressing as to listen to the radio. It was a case of being near and yet so far. Most of our time was spent in fishing out the flyboys, who missed the carrier when they tried to land, and the never ending mail trips. Once while the gig was being put in the water to investigate a floating body, the falls slipped and spilled everyone into the drink. All hands were recovered—never did get the gig back again.

The Palau operation was over for us early in that fateful month, October, 1944. We went to Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island in the Admiralty Group. There, all was hustle and bustle. All we had time to do was load food and ammunition and then we were off to the Philippines on what was nearly our last trip.



CONVOY



CAMOFLAUGE JOB IN NOUMEA

We left Manus on twelve October for the Leyte Operation. Again we were with the CVE's but fate had something more in store for us than the routine we had experienced in the Palau Operation. We had expected to hear of the Jap fleet before this but now we knew that they must, at least, try. They had to do something, we were getting too close to the home islands for them to just sit tight.

The weather on the way up was miserable but it cleared up as we neared the area of operations. It was on the way up that we encountered the typhoon which created such havoc in that area. Luckily we were well prepared for it and there was little or no damage. Some of the other ships were not quite so lucky. Our area of operations was east of Samar Island and we reached it, without further incident, on the eighteenth of October. The carriers began their pre-invasion strikes and all went well. At the end of the first week, word came that the landings were successful and we all began to breathe a bit easier.

The night of 24-25 October we received scattered reports of big doings down in Surigao Strait, but it was too soon to have more than a vague inkling of what was going on. On the morning of the 25th, we went to dawn general quarters as usual and secured when the sun was up. There we were, steaming innocently along, much as we had for weeks—six baby carriers, three destroyers and four destroyer escorts of the northern carrier group. All of a sudden, all hell broke loose. The general alarm started to ring and the word was passed, "All hands man your battle stations!" Before we left those battle stations again one phase of the greatest daylight surface engagements in history would be finished. It looked as if the whole Jap navy was on top of us. It wasn't really the whole Jap navy, just four battleships, five heavy cruisers, and eleven destroyers.

It all began when some splashes were seen in the center of our group. Not having any idea that the Jap ships were around, we thought that we were under attack by high

level bombers. That idea didn't persist very long though, because it was only a matter of minutes before the Japs hove into sight and we knew then that the chips were really down and the cards dealt. The screening vessels immediately began laying down a smoke screen around the formation, and at the same time trying to form up for a torpedo attack on the Jap battleline. We kept running in and out of rain squalls which made the visibility good sometimes and poor at others. This was a destroyer's meat (also his nightmare,) a daylight torpedo attack against enemy capital ships in a battle line. We tried to form the U. S. S. Hoel for the run in, all the while laying smoke like mad, but because of the constant maneuvering to avoid other ships it was next to impossible. During this approach period and all the while we had been laying smoke, we had engaged the cruisers in a gunnery duel, firing for all we were worth. The enemy was firing back with their main batteries but their aim was poor and they missed us time and time again when it seemed certain that they would punch us full of holes. Lady Luck was working over-time for us, that's certain. We fired a salvo of seven fish at the cruisers when the range had closed to less than 9000 yards. No sooner had we gotten the torpedoes off than we discovered the four battlewagons on the other side of us. Changing course toward them, we made our second torpedo attack. All the way in we kept working over the lead battleship with our guns. Our little pop guns were supposed to be ineffective against capital ships such as these were, but we managed to fill her superstructure full of holes and she broke off firing at us. The other ships didn't though and the air was full of everything from sixteen inch shells to machine gun bullets. Those sixteen inch shells sounded just like freight trains passing over and if one had hit it would have probably done more damage than a train. At this time we got our first battle damage, shrapnel took off the left end of the rangefinder and smashed up the whaleboat, sending splinters showering thru

the air. We sent our second salvo of fish off at a range of a little less than 4000 yards. Battleships are big, they even look big, but to us nothing looked bigger than those Japanese battleships when only four thousand yards away. We were so close that we could smell the rice cooking in the Japs galley. One torpedo hit right under the No. 4 turret of the lead battleship with a terrific explosion, and she was out of the fight for the rest of the day.

We could readily see that this was no place for us now that we had no torpedoes left and we were needed elsewhere. The carriers were in a bit of trouble, the cruisers had closed the range and were pounding them with every gun they had available. The Hoel and the Johnston were in a sinking condition by this time and it seemed that if anyone was going to do anything to help the carriers it would have to be us. We returned at full speed and, while trying to cross through the formation, we almost rammed the Johnston. We went from full speed ahead to full speed astern just in time to miss her by a scant three inches. Back up to full speed ahead went the engines and we were soon in position between the cruisers and our baby carriers. As soon as the Japs saw us, they stopped firing at the carriers and took us under fire with everything they had. How so many shells could miss, we'll never know. Even with our small guns, we were hurting them more than they were hurting us. Our shells started a big fire on the fantail of the leading cruiser and she dropped out of the formation. It was too good to last though, one of the other cruisers finally hit us with a salvo of eight inch shells. One shell went through the base of the number one stack, the rest went through the bow, down low, causing the forward part of the ship to flood. In addition, there were shrapnel holes everywhere. It was at this point that we suffered most of our casualties.

Due to the flooding, we were down by the bow so much that the anchors were dragging in the water. We kept up a steady fire all this time and it appeared that the Japs had had

enough for they turned away. Now, we had to get back to our own group which had continued to retire as fast as it could. The only thing that was blocking our way was a Jap cruiser and she didn't have too much fight left in her. After exchanging salvos with us for about three minutes, she, too, turned and steamed off to join the rest of the retiring Jap fleet. We were in pretty bad shape, and as the Jap fleet had retired, we requested permission to stop and shore up the forward bulkheads which were caving in, due to the force of the water in the forward compartments. It was now 0930, our battle had begun at a little after 0700; we were pretty well worn out and a little rest would have been a wonderful thing. However, our job for the day was not complete and the danger was far from being over. It took us about forty-five good minutes of work to shore up the bulkheads and then we were on our way to rejoin our group.

We had almost regained our positions in what was left of the formation when the air attacks began. Down they came and we experienced our first Kamikaze type attacks. The Japs had a new weapon here and it looked as if we were to have the dubious honor of being the first victims. At 1102 we saw a Jap plane dive into the St. Lo, one of the carriers, and several others made their appearance at the same time. We took them under fire, shooting one down. The whole thing was over in a matter of minutes but it seemed like an eternity. The St. Lo, after being hit became a raging inferno, there were several great explosions and she slowly turned turtle and sank. We immediately began picking up survivors, a good part of whom were wounded and nearly all of them were burned. We succeeded in picking up seventy-two men and eight officers, including the commanding officer of the St. Lo. By now, the carriers and what remained of the screen were well on their way and it looked impossible for us to catch up, since we were limited to a speed of about 15 knots by the holes in the bow. We were ordered to join up with the U. S. S. Dennis, who had

remained behind as we had, to pick up survivors and render whatever aid possible, and to proceed in company to Kossol Passage, Palau Islands for temporary repairs.

It was on the way back to Kosol, that we buried our heroic dead, buried them with a ceremony that is as old and revered as the Navy itself. The victory over the enemy had been paid for with their lives. They paid the greatest price that can be asked of a man, they gave up their lives for their country.

At Kossol, we transferred all our wounded to the U. S. S. Bountiful, a hospital ship, wishing them all a speedy recovery. Temporary repair work was accomplished by a tender, the U. S. S. Prometheus. It was merely a matter of welding plates over the holes. From Kossol, we went down to Seeadler Harbor at Manus for drydocking, resigned to the idea that we would be repaired there and return to the war at once. We were put in a floating drydock, pumped out and nice patches were put on the hull. It was decided, though, that the facilities there were not sufficient to fix us correctly and we received orders to the States. What a joyful day that was! They were going to let us go home for a while!

From Manus, we went straight to Pearl Harbor. We stayed there only as long as we had to. It was just two days but even so that

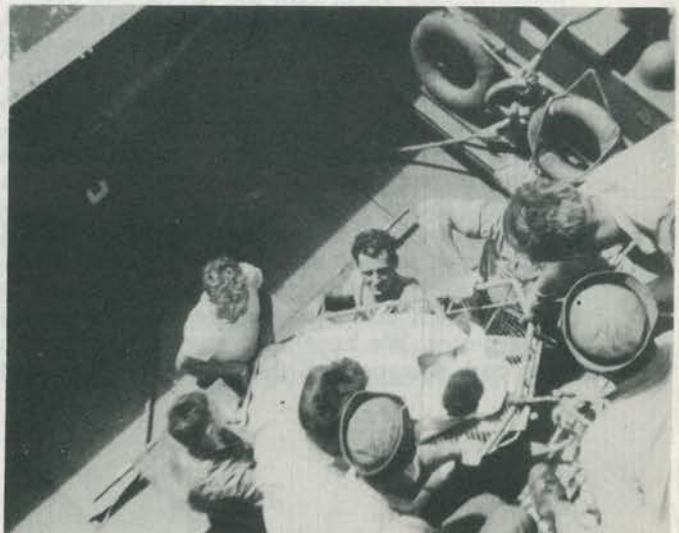
was too long. Then we were on our way home—it was what we had dreamed of for a long time and here it was. There's no mistaking a ship that is homeward bound, even if she's not flying a homeward bound pennant. There is a little something on the faces of her crew, there is even something about the way she seems to eat up the miles as though she, too, knew what was at the end of the trip.

On the twenty-sixth of November, we passed under the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco Bay. We had been gone over a year and it was good to be back. It had been a full fourteen months, there's no doubt of that. How good that bridge looked; it is amazing how something that looks so good when you approach, can look so sad when you leave it going away.

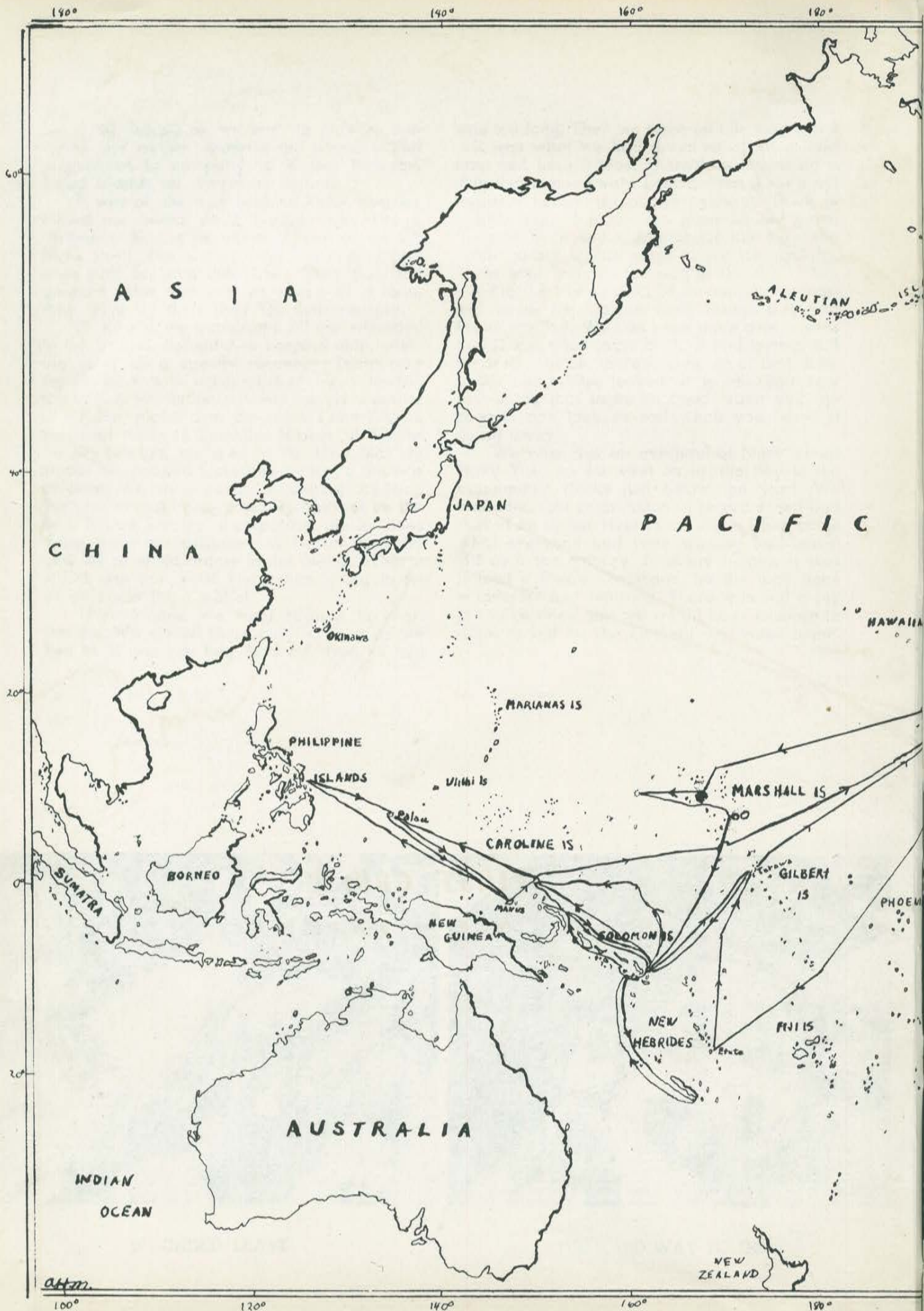
We were due for overhaul at Mare Island Navy Yard so we went on up the Bay to the ammunition docks just below the yard. We unloaded that ammunition in record speed and moved on up the river to our dock. Then came what everyone had been waiting for—leave. All over the country, in many homes, it was indeed a Merry Christmas, for the long gone wanderers had returned. There was still a big job to be done and we would have a share in doing it but for the moment we were—home.

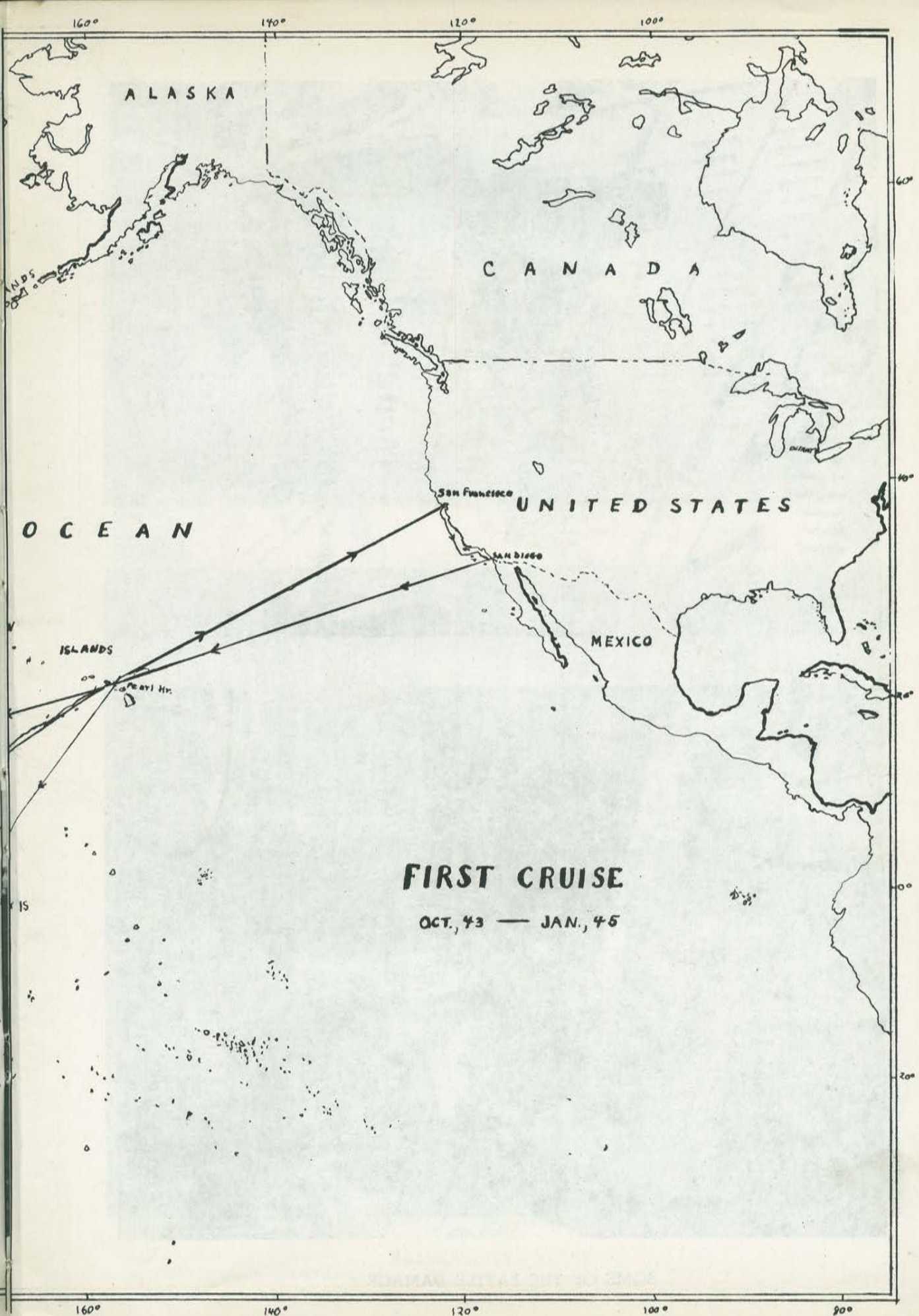


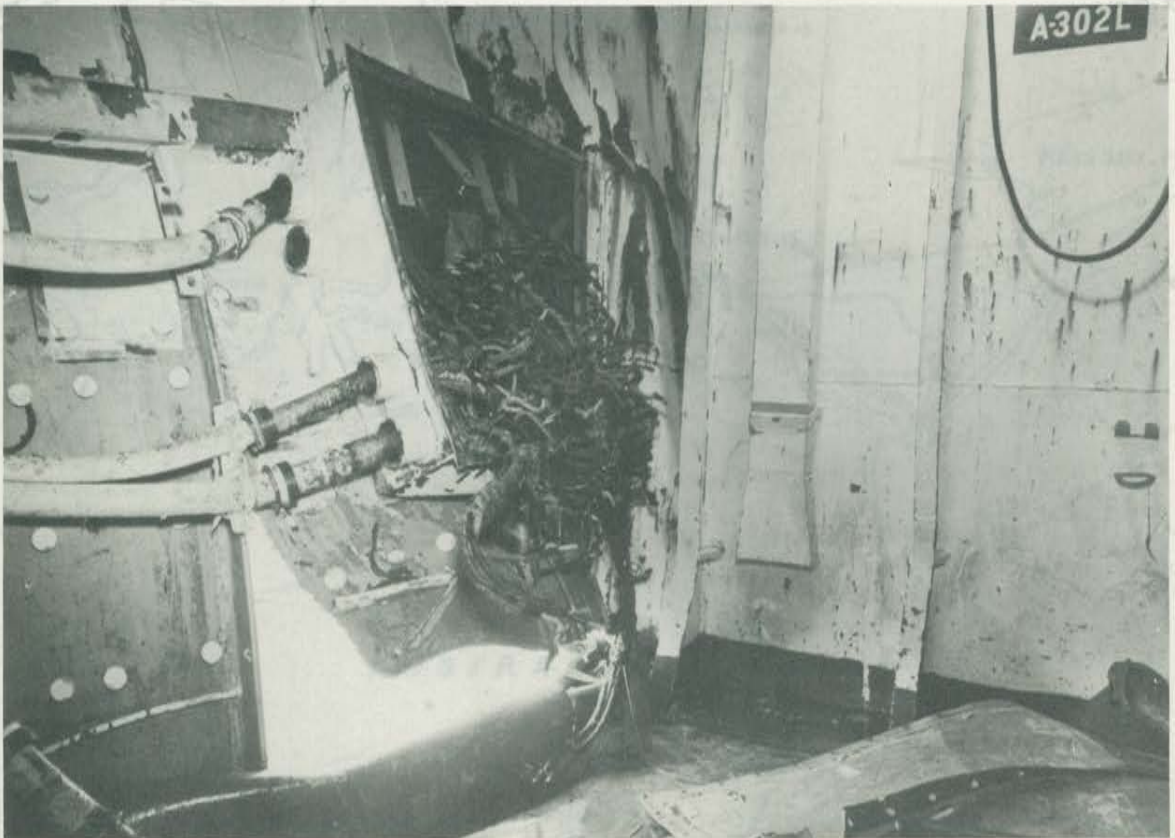
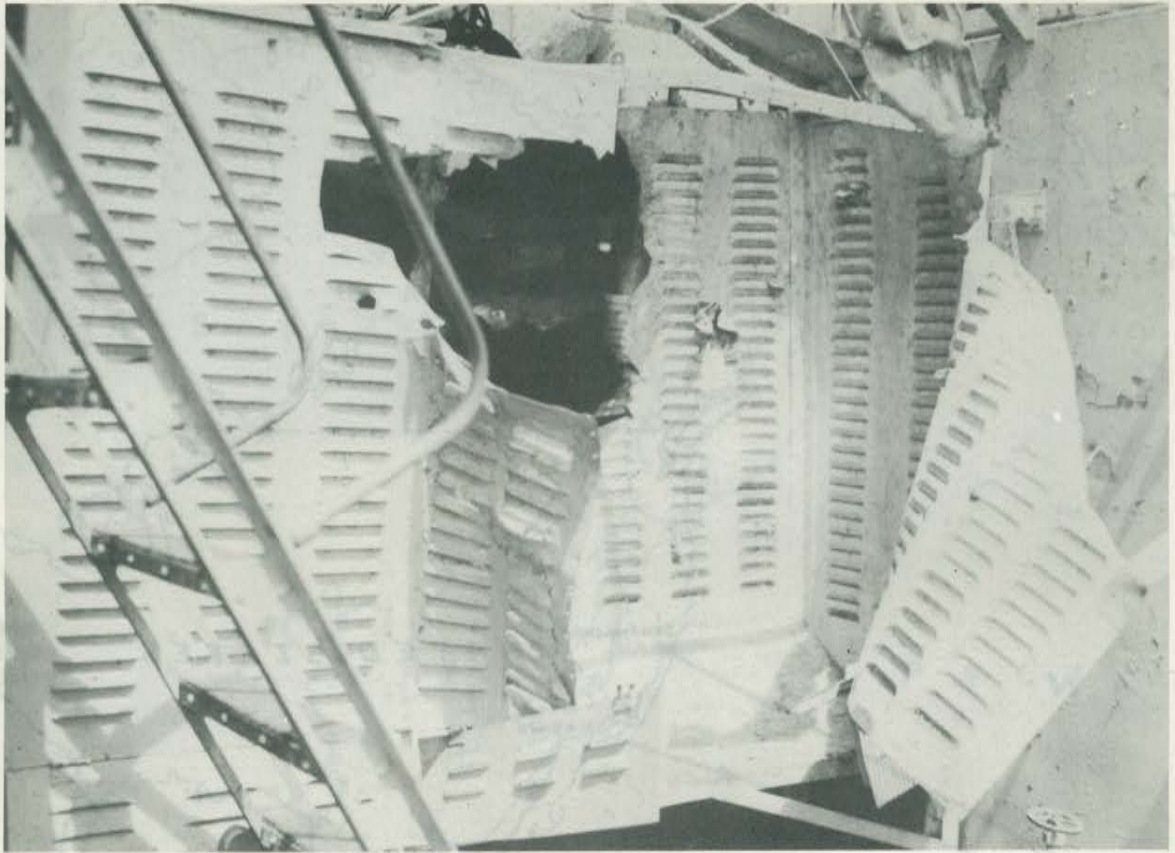
WOUNDED LEAVE



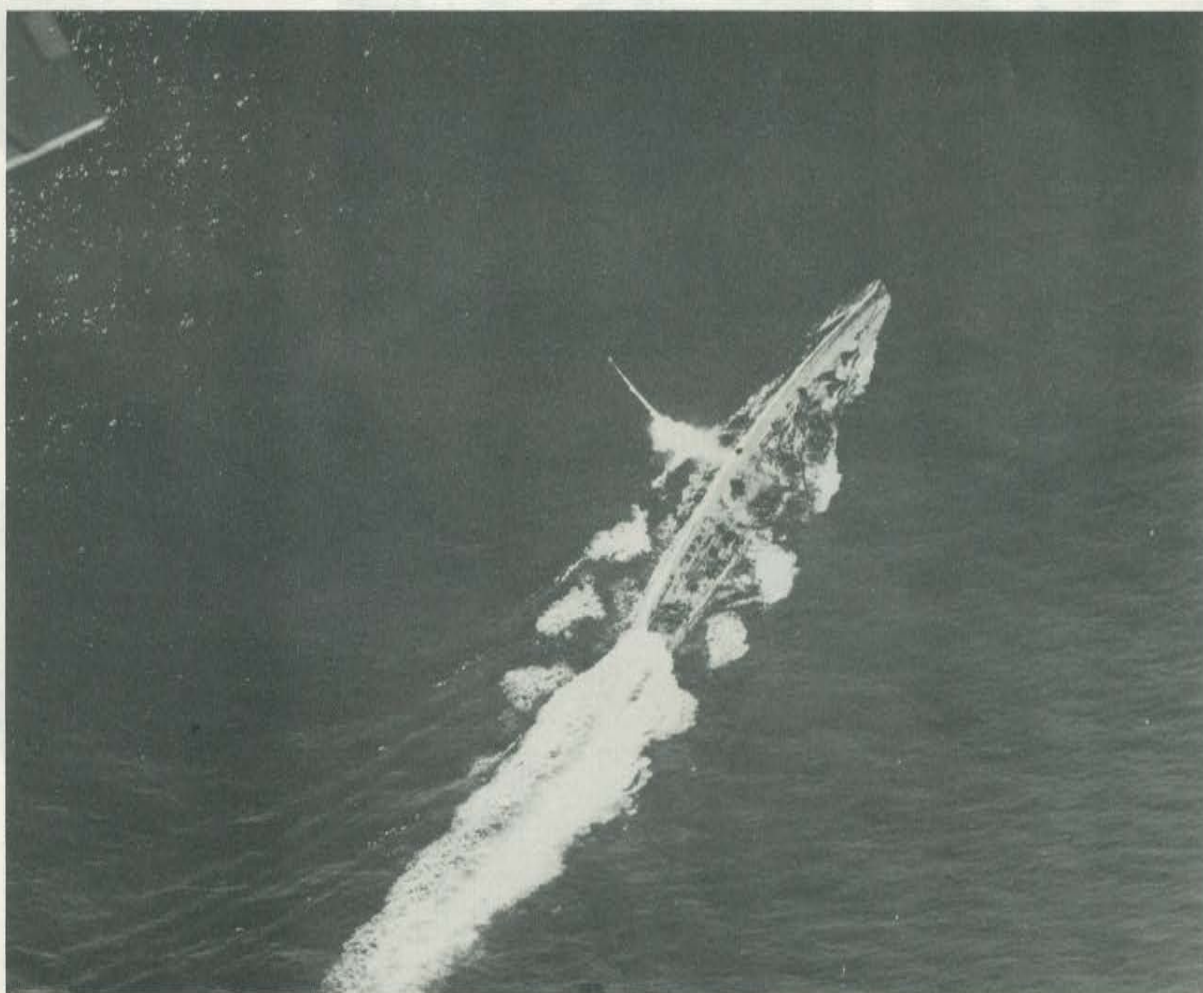
THE HARD WAY TO GO



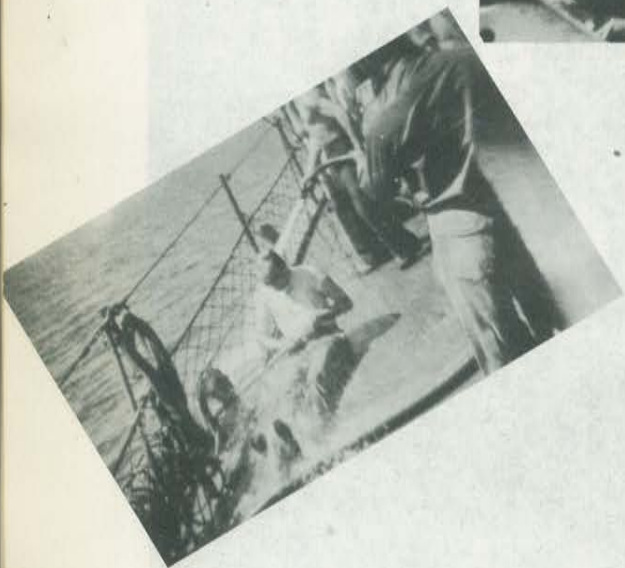
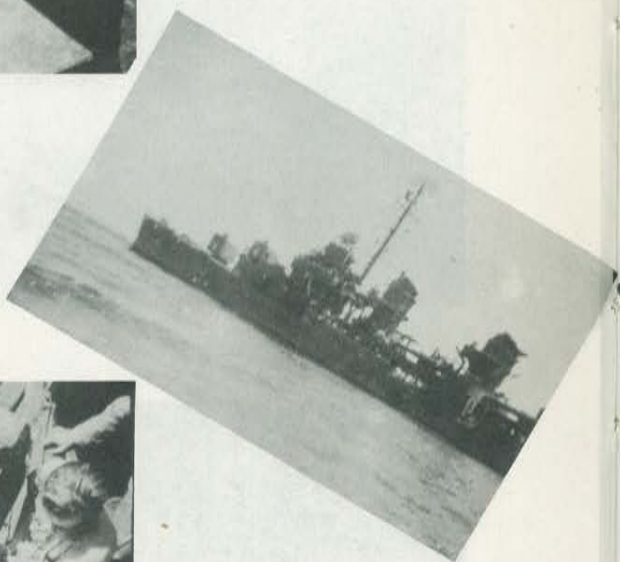




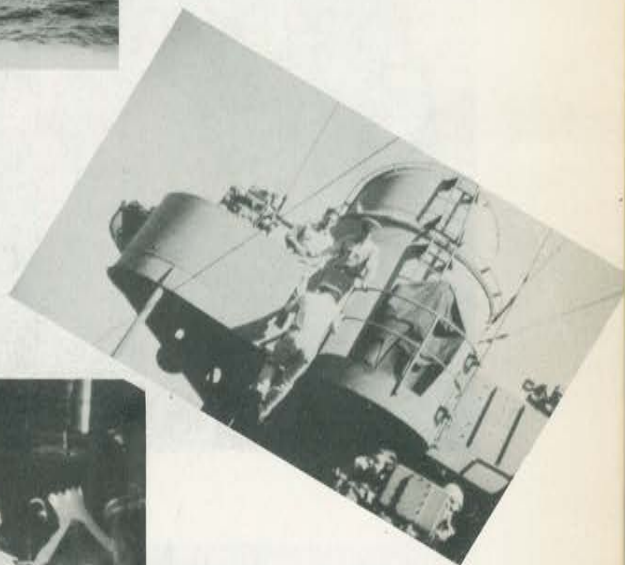
SOME OF THE BATTLE DAMAGE



KAMIKAZE EYE VIEWS .



REAR VIEW OF LANDING CRAFT





"O" DIVISION



"C" DIVISION



"E" DIVISION



"D" DIVISION



"S" DIVISION





DWIGHT M. AGNEW
COMMANDER, U.S.N.
JULY, 1943—APRIL, 1944



AMOS T. HATHAWAY
COMMANDER, U. S. N.
APRIL, 1944—AUGUST, 1945



WILLIAM K. YARNALL
LT. COMMANDER, U.S.N.
AUGUST, 1945—

'Sunday Punch That Failed—'



KEY OFFICERS.—San Francisco destroyer's officers who participated in the second battle of the Philippines are shown, left to right: Lieutenant (jg) Max Thelen, USNR; Lieutenant E. F. Newsome, USNR; McKinnis, Tex.; Commander Amos Townsend Hathaway, USNR, executive officer; and Lieutenant Edwin Boldin (MC), USNR, Wichita Falls, Tex., and Lieut. Comdr. W. L. Cogger, USNR, executive officer, Atlanta, Ga.

S.F. DESTROYER IN EPIC SEA FIGHT DEFENDING LEYTE LANDING

BY MILES W. KRESGE

The Sunday punch that failed—was that of a tiny but heroic force of three U. S. destroyers and four destroyers that took on a side of the head Kongo-class battleship, the huge ship crashed fitting and five heavy cruisers built on the heels of the destroyer. The battle, which the U. S. Navy called the "Sunday Punch," was told here today by Commander Amos T. Hathaway, 30, of Bakersfield, skipper of the only surviving destroyer.

The ship, which cannot be identified other than as a product of the Bethlehem Steel Co. yards here last year, is now undergoing battle damage repair at the Mare Island Navy Yard. Her sister ships, the U. S. S. Hull and U. S. S. Johnston, were sunk in the valiant harassing action that aided in keeping the powerful Jap force from invading the Leyte Gulf and from smashing a Navy carrier

Commander Hathaway then ordered his last three torpedoes away. One of them exploded against the Japanese battleship. The huge ship crashed fitting and five heavy cruisers built on the heels of the destroyer. The battle, which the U. S. Navy called the "Sunday Punch," was told here today by Commander Amos T. Hathaway, 30, of Bakersfield, skipper of the only surviving destroyer.

Heermann's Men Lauded For Battle

Continued from Page 1
those fleet was ever able to attack in force.

As the result of the unit award all personnel serving aboard the Heermann at the time of the encounter are authorized to wear the unit citation ribbon with one star.

Meanwhile word came that the submarine Jallao, on its way to Vancouver as part of the Navy day celebration is being delayed, with three other submarines on their way to Columbia river ports, because of fog, according to an Associated Press dispatch, and will lay over at Astoria till tomorrow. All of the vessels were due to arrive at their destinations today.

With the Jallao, which will join the destroyer Heermann here, are the torpedoes, bound for Portland, Keokuk, due at Longview and Lamprey set for Astoria. The report, stated the submarines would not reach the Columbia river lights until 3 p. m. today.



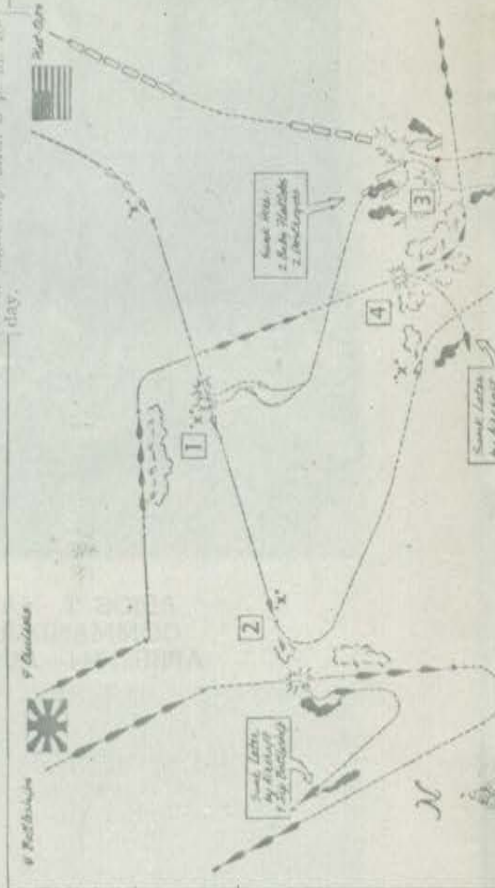
CMR. A. T. HATHAWAY
"Japs were yellow as hell"

Two Bombing Forays Ended The St. Lo

The glory of the last moments of the carrier St. Lo sunk by a Japanese bomber on October 24 yesterday added further details of the Navy action in the Philippine Sea, when the destroyers "Destroyer X" emerged victorious.

It was told at Alameda by Lieutenant Commander Richard L. Centner of Billings, Mont., air officer of the ship and the last man to abandon her except for the Captain, F. J. McKenna.

Commander Centner reported that last word of the Japanese approach came by radio at 6:30 a. m. from a torpedo plane, just half an hour after he had seen the carrier.



Destroyer's Crew Gets Citation

A Bantam Drubs Four Fighting Conks

More on Destroyer 'X' in Philippine Battle

How They Squared Off for Philippine Scrap

The three U. S. destroyers—one of them having been sunk in the first battle—were the only ones left of the fleet. The four Japanese destroyers were the only ones left of the fleet. The battle was a hard one, and the U. S. destroyers were the only ones left of the fleet.

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Destroyer 'X' (It K.O.'d Four Kongos) Puts Into Port

By STUART WELCH

A cocky little destroyer, with two getting wounds in her small frame to testify to one of the most amazing naval encirclements in history, came into the Mare Island Navy Yard this week.

Her temporary name is Destroyer X. She is the only vessel that took part in the second battle of the Philippines whose identity has been kept secret by the Navy—and for good reason.

The Japs want to know her name—after the hearing she landed a mean thrust of their fleet October 24 off Samar Island in the Philippines.

In a three-hour slugging match

with four Japanese battleships of Townsend Hathaway of Bakersfield, only 18 rounds described the start of the battle. "It was early in the morning when I received the emergency signal to Visibility was poor and twice during the three-hour battle, I was forced to come to the bridge. There were a lot of splashes around the carriers and to order two 'crash backs' emergency orders for full speed astern as a defense pattern. The Jap air force is to keep from running into other ships."

At 15,000 yards the Japs fired on the three destroyers but they surged ahead at 25 knots, into the face of almost certain death. The flatboats were protected only by the mosquito-like shells fired to the south.

Destroyer X went ahead of the other two vessels, which had already assumed injuries and were limping along at half speed. As the valiant ship passed the four Jap destroyers at value and attack.

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Inside The News

More details on Page 184

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SECOND CRUISE

JANUARY, 1945—OCTOBER, 1945

Our stay in the States was brief but sweet. By January 14th, the yard at Mare Island was through with us and we were on our way to sea again, just as shipshape as we were at the time of commissioning. On the way out to Pearl, we acted as escort for the old Detroit and began that everlasting training again. If we weren't repelling simulated air attacks, we were making practice torpedo attacks, firing at target sleeves, or holding battle practice.

Pearl Harbor hadn't changed a bit, still no grass-skirted lassies under the palms. For us it meant a week of concentrated training, two days of shooting at Kahoolawe Island, a practice session with an American submarine, and firing torpedoes, with the idle moments filled in with anti-aircraft firing at sleeves and drones. About the only excitement during the whole week was a sub hunt one night, a



ON PICKET STATION

merchant ship claimed that they had seen one and we went out to take a look around, but didn't have any luck.

On the first day of February, we began the second leg of the journey back to the wars. We were in the big time now, off to join Task Force 58. One stop in Eniwetok for fuel and on 13th of February we made a rendezvous at sea with the Task Force. There was no doubt now that we would see more than our share of the action; the very first of the coming operations proved this, we went to the Jap's front porch and knocked on the door. It was the first attack on the home islands. We went to disrupt the airfields in South Japan so that they could not hinder our assault and landings on Iwo Jima, which were to follow in about a week.

Our worst enemy was the weather, the sea



PASSING MAIL

was rough, the wind cold, and the water was like ice. Those long hours at general quarters, with the wind and the rain in our faces, did nothing to improve our dispositions. This went on for three days during which time the carriers launched strike after strike of planes against the Jap homeland, with devastating effect. The Task Force then retired to the southward to Iwo Jima and furnished air cover for the Marines on the island. At this time we began to encounter Kamikazes in increasing numbers. We were lucky ourselves and suffered no damage from them, however, several of the ships in the force were quite badly damaged by these attacks. We took several of the "K" boys under fire, but failed to get one.

After things were under control on Iwo, we made our second trip to Japan to give them

another working over. This time, the weather was even worse. Only a few strikes were launched because the carriers were rolling and pitching so badly that they could not land planes safely. It was so bad that it was useless to even remain in the area, so we left and went to Ulithi in the Caroline Islands—arriving on the first of March.

The two week stay in Ulithi was normal in every respect, about four days to clean up the ship and make minor repairs, the other ten were spent in training. The constant training was hard to take some of the time, we had all done this many times before and it seemed we should be allowed to rest—even just a little rest. We turned to on the drilling though because we were told to and had learned ourselves that, when the shooting



40MM. CREW



FUELING AT SEA

starts, there is no time to ask yourself, "what do I do now?"

On the fourteenth of March we were underway, again headed for the Jap homeland. The winter storms were over and good flying weather had set in—good for us but equally good for the Japs. On the eighteenth we began to be visited quite often by the Nips. With so many ships in the formation, we couldn't always fire but we did what we could. The attacks continued the next day; the U.S.S. Franklin was badly hit and almost lost. It wasn't a one-sided affair though, Jap planes were crashing into the sea in almost satisfying numbers.

The next day we had a bit of fun ourselves, we were detached to sink a small Jap merchant ship which had been sighted about twenty miles away. We found it without any trouble and sank it in fourteen minutes. There was a small gun on the Jap's forecastle but for some reason they made no attempt to use it. We picked up seven prisoners from the water, most of whom were wounded and the doctor had to go to work. None of them would admit of being able to speak English so we turned them over to the flagship to be questioned by an interpreter.

The air attacks slowed up a bit, coming just often enough to keep us at general quarters most of the time. After a week of this our planes had caused enough damage to the Jap

airfields and we started south to cover the landings on Okinawa. On the way down our squadron of destroyers and a few cruisers carried out a night shore bombardment on Minami Daito Jima. Our object, to shoot up the airfield, was carried out successfully. At least we left some good fires to occupy the Japs.

Floating mines were becoming a common sight. They would break away from the Jap fields and float out to sea. We came within a hair of hitting two of them on two occasions, and sank a good number with small arms fire. It wasn't a very happy feeling to know that they were around because it was almost impossible to see one at night and we were constantly expecting to hit one. Never did though, our guardian angel at work again.

The Japs seemed to be making an all-out effort to save Okinawa. The ships over close to the island, firing shore bombardment and acting as pickets, were really taking a beating but we were getting our share too. Remaining at our battle stations most of the time, air attacks, floating mines, and submarine contacts were having their effect on us—one man went so far as to jump overboard. Waiting . . . waiting . . . waiting—that's how we spent our time, waiting for something to happen. Wait for the Japs to come in, shoot at them with everything you have, then wait for them to come back.

Late on the evening of 17 April we made



HIGH RIDE

a radar contact on a sub which submerged as we closed in. We picked him up on the sonar gear and made our first attack. All that night, we and the McCord, who had come to help, made attacks. At five past three in the morning we made an attack and an explosion, not due to depth charges, was heard. He didn't sink then but he was badly hurt. By morning both the McCord and ourselves were out of depth charges. Two planes arrived soon after, each with two depth charges. We would make a normal attack on the sub but drop a dye marker instead of the usual depth charge, then the planes would drop a charge on the dye marker. It wasn't very successful though and we gave it up. Later that morning two destroyers relieved us and they finally sank the sub. We received credit for assisting in this sinking later.

The Heermann was being assigned to picket duty regularly now and it didn't make us too happy. Sitting out there alone, twenty-five miles from the force in the most probable direction of attack, to warn the force of attacking planes, wasn't the safest place in the ocean. Seemed as though the Japs liked to pick off those lone ships. We lost too many ships that way so finally they were sent out in pairs, then later on, in groups of four. How we loved that duty! It was always with a sigh



CHANGING STATION



FILL 'ER UP

of relief that we rejoined the formation after a session on the picket station.

Every once in a while we would retire from the vicinity of Okinawa and rendezvous with a group of tankers. Those were busy days for the "cans." After taking on a full load of fuel, the tanker would give us mail to distribute to the other ships in the group. We spent the rest of the day doing it, going from ship to ship and passing the mail to them by a pulley attached to a line. Sometimes it wouldn't be mail but freight or personnel which only made the job harder. In spite of the work we enjoyed those days for they meant mail from home, the one thing that made life out there bearable.

Time passed by with no change in the daily routine—yes, even air attacks and mines can become routine after so long a time. Finally, on 11 May, we left for Uliathi, arriving on 14 May, for a ten day stay.

While in port this time, the Heerman's personnel, who had been recommended for medals and awards after the battle in the Philippines, received their awards, with appropriate ceremony, on the forecastle. Commodore J. T. Bottom, U.S.N., made the presentations. Congratulations were given back and forth, accompanied by much back slapping.

After our ten day rest was over, we returned to the Okinawa area to finish the job

we had begun. It was over much sooner than we had expected. We made a short trip to Japan, staying in the area only two days, to bomb their airfields a little more, then we left for San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, Philippine Islands.

We spent the rest of June in Leyte Gulf. There wasn't much to see, only the town of Tacloban, and it was no metropolis. There was a good recreation area there though and every one had plenty of beer and a good rest. Some of the gang even went to a USO show, only the second one we had seen in our entire stay in the Pacific. We enjoyed the movies too, even though it did rain almost every time we had one. All in all, we were ready to go when the first of July rolled around.

We were off to spend some more time with the Japs. The Tokyo area was the target, we weren't even going to make the Kamikazes come very far this time. After what had happened down at Okinawa, we were expecting to have a rough time of it. Actually it proved less arduous than the previous operation.

We fiddled around for ten days on the way up, holding various sorts of drills and practices. This time our good friends, the British, were with us. They had a group all their own, consisting of battle ships, cruisers, a carrier, and destroyers. It was good to see some different looking ships for a change, but we liked ours better.

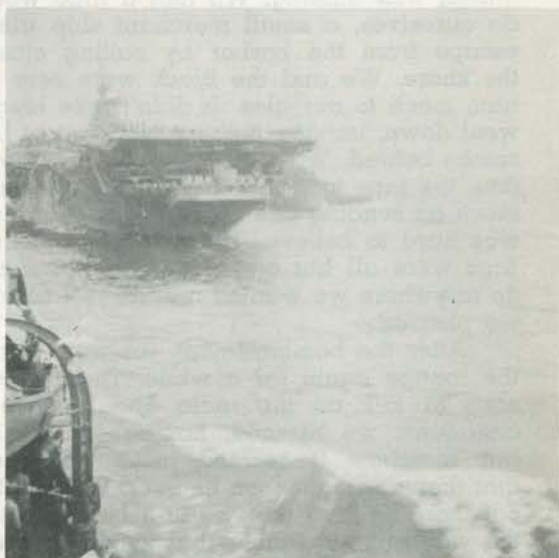
On the tenth of July, the first strike against Tokyo itself was launched. We thought this would bring a heavy raid from the Japs in retaliation but it did not materialize. A few enemy planes came out, only to be shot down by our fighters. On this operation, as on the others, our planes did a fine job of getting the Japs before they even came within range of our guns.

Ours was a fairly steady schedule, stay in close to Japan for two or three days launching strikes, then retire at night to the fueling rendezvous, spend one day fueling, passing mail and running the destroyers to death generally, and return to the strike area that night. In addition, every morning after dawn general quarters, the cans would take fuel from the larger ships. We didn't carry too much oil anyway, so they kept us full in case of an emergency.

On the fourteenth of July something new



CVL



FUEL, FOOD, AND MAIL



MORE MAIL

was added, the first bombardment of the shores of Japan itself. The force consisted of two battleships, three cruisers, and nine destroyers. The Heermann was among the chosen few and we had our name in the papers back in the States. We didn't do any actual shooting at the beach, the big boys took care of that. A town called Kamaishi had an iron works, after the bombardment, the mill, among other things, was missing. We had a little work to do ourselves, a small merchant ship tried to escape from the harbor by sailing close to the shore. We and the Black were sent after him, much to our glee. It didn't take long, he went down, leaving nothing but a lot of black smoke behind. We didn't have a bit of opposition, the Japs took this loss of face without so much as sending one plane out to interfere, it was hard to believe. To us it meant that the Japs were all but out of the fight, we could go anywhere we wanted and do just about as we pleased.

After the bombardment, we went back to the routine again for a while. There was all sorts of talk on the radio about peace negotiations; we listened, hoping for the best, but somehow it seemed almost impossible that the war might soon be over. We had been out there so long that we had begun to think the war was something that would go on forever. There was no let up though, we kept pounding away at Japan just in case they didn't decide to quit.

Two weeks after we had hit Kamaishi we took part in our second bombardment, this time at Hamamatsu. Industrial installations were the target again, but, in addition, there was a railroad bridge we also wanted to hit. This time there was nothing for the destroyers to do, we were for the protection of the big ships as it afforded the Japs a wonderful opportunity to use their suicide boats and midget submarines. They didn't use them though so we just watched the show. On August 9, the final bombardment took place, again at Kamaishi. There was nothing for the Heermann

to do this time either. After the war, we found out that the local inhabitants were amazed that we had even bothered to come back because the destruction had been so complete the first time.

Early on the morning of 15 August we received the word we had been waiting for, the war with Japan was over. There was a great deal of celebrating, we even went so far as to have a can of beer apiece for lunch. At the time the good news came, we were out on picket station so we stayed on the alert. We had seen enough of the Japs to know that the peace didn't mean that all of them would quit at once. It was a good idea too. At five after one in the afternoon we made a radar contact on a Jap plane that was closing in on us so we went to general quarters. It was only a few minutes until we saw him, coming out of a cloud in a shallow dive. All the guns opened fire at once, but it was our first shot that got him, it burst right over the cockpit and he went into a spin, crashing into the water about two hundred yards astern of us. We have always felt that this was the last Japanese plane shot down during the war, although no one has ever said so officially.

The shooting was over for us but they gave us another job and we didn't go into Tokyo with the first group as we all wanted to do. Instead we were sent down to the south of Japan to act as a radio beacon to guide all the Army transport planes that were flying in to Japan with the first troops and supplies, and, incidentally, to save the personnel of any planes that crashed into the water while on the trip up. It was boring duty at best and our eagerness to get to Japan only made it worse. Finally on 15 September we started for Tokyo, anchoring there on the sixteenth. We had been steaming for seventy-eight continuous days, the longest period of steady steaming we had done during the war.

We stayed in Japan for two weeks, seeing the sights and collecting souvenirs for the folks back home. There was certainly nothing there

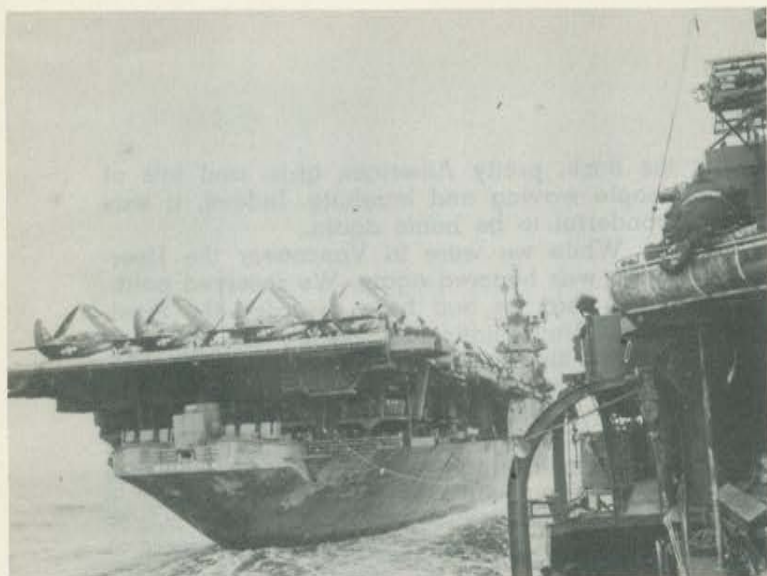
to make us want to stay but we did enjoy seeing the place.

At first we were told that we would be one of the ships that would be out there for a while but someone changed his mind and we left for home on the first day of October. We went down to Okinawa to pick up some Sea-Bee's who were on the way home also and brought them with us.

We made no stops on the way, just a straight run to Vancouver, Washington, to take part in the Navy Day Celebration. What a reception we received! There was a band on

the dock, pretty American girls, and lots of people waving and laughing. Indeed, it was wonderful to be home again.

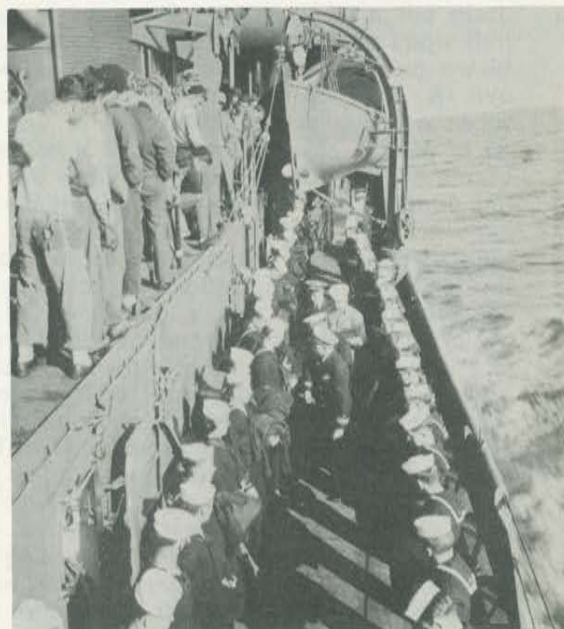
While we were in Vancouver the Heermann was honored again. We received notification that we had been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for the job we had done down in the Philippine Islands on October 25, 1944. That award is the highest the nation can give a ship and we were all very proud to have it. To us it seemed a very fitting way to end the war career of a fine ship and a fine crew.



UPPER: TAKE THIS TO _____.

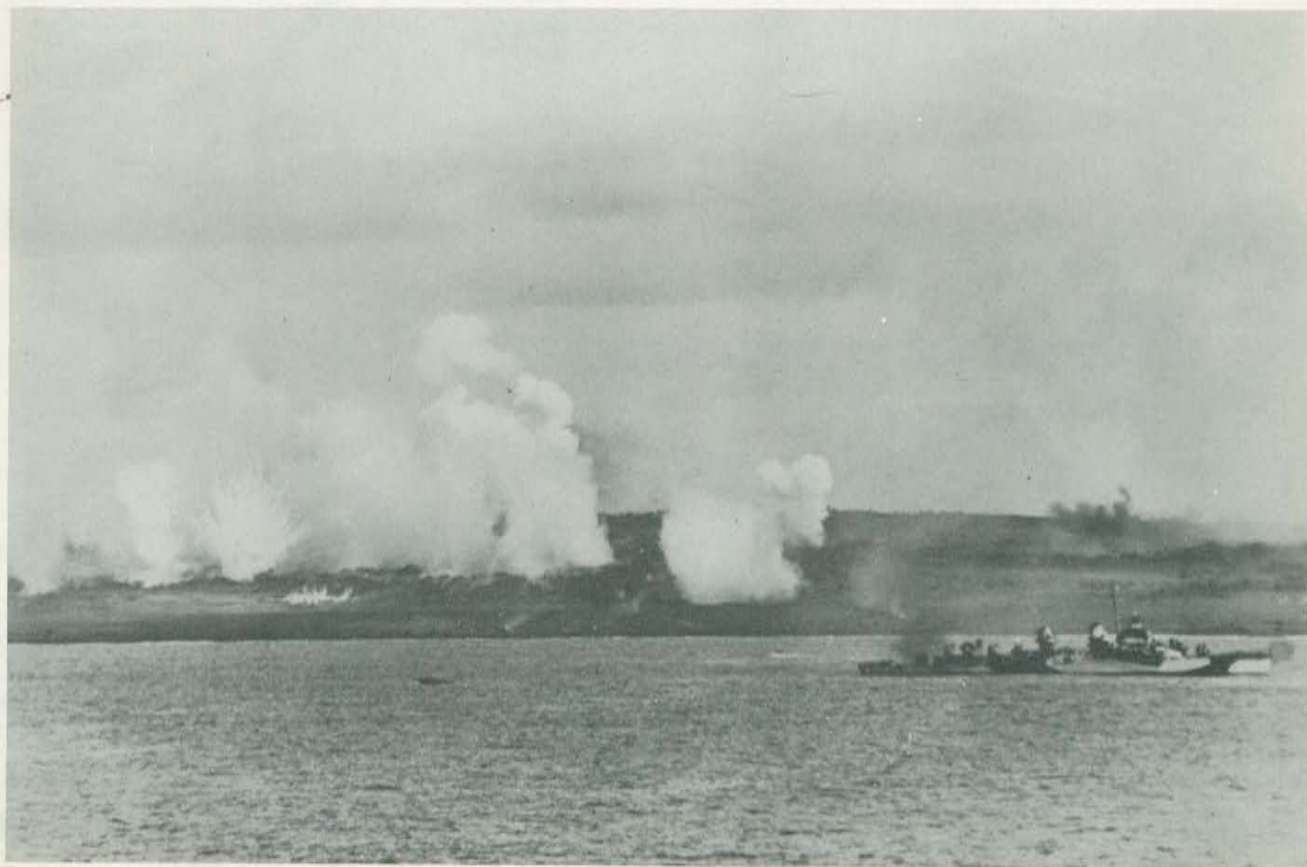
RIGHT: CAPTAIN'S INSPECTION.

LOWER: BATTLE SCORE.





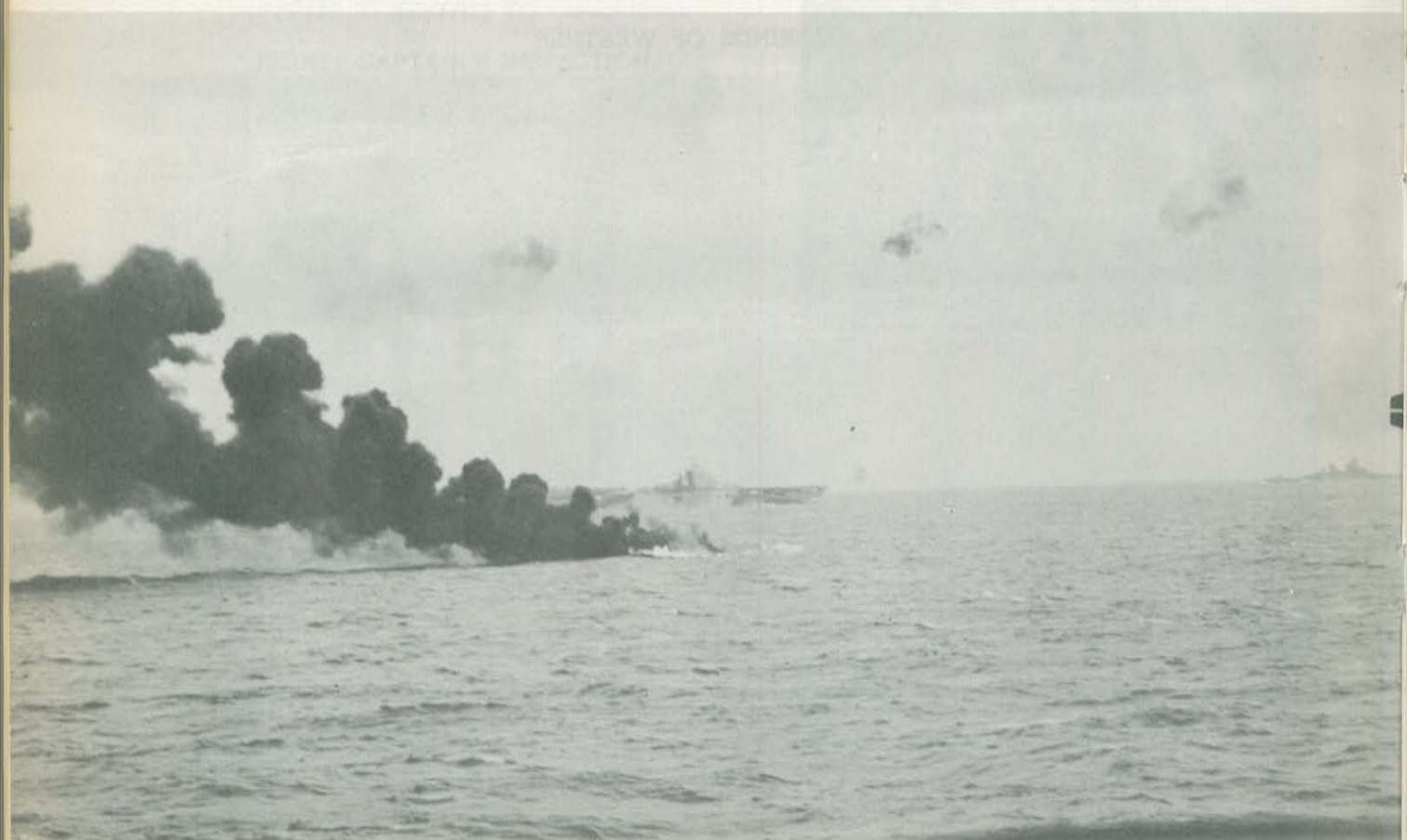
IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER



SHORE BOMBARDMENT



TORPEDO BOMBER



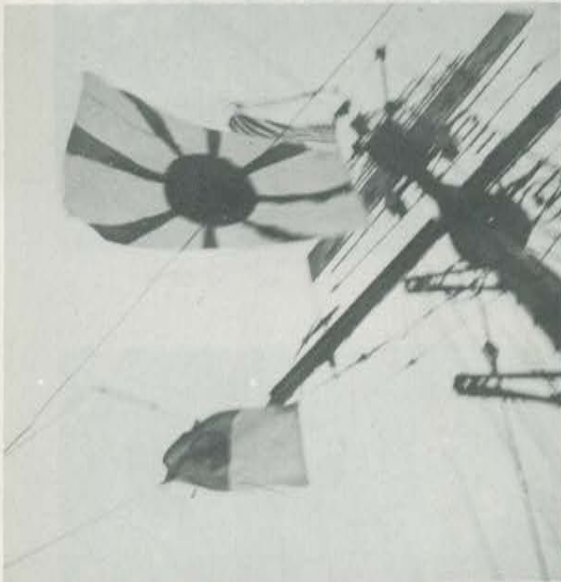
A GOOD JAP



UPPER: SOME TOOK TO THE BRUSH.

MIDDLE: NAGATO'S BATTLE FLAG.

LOWER: SNAFU FLAG.





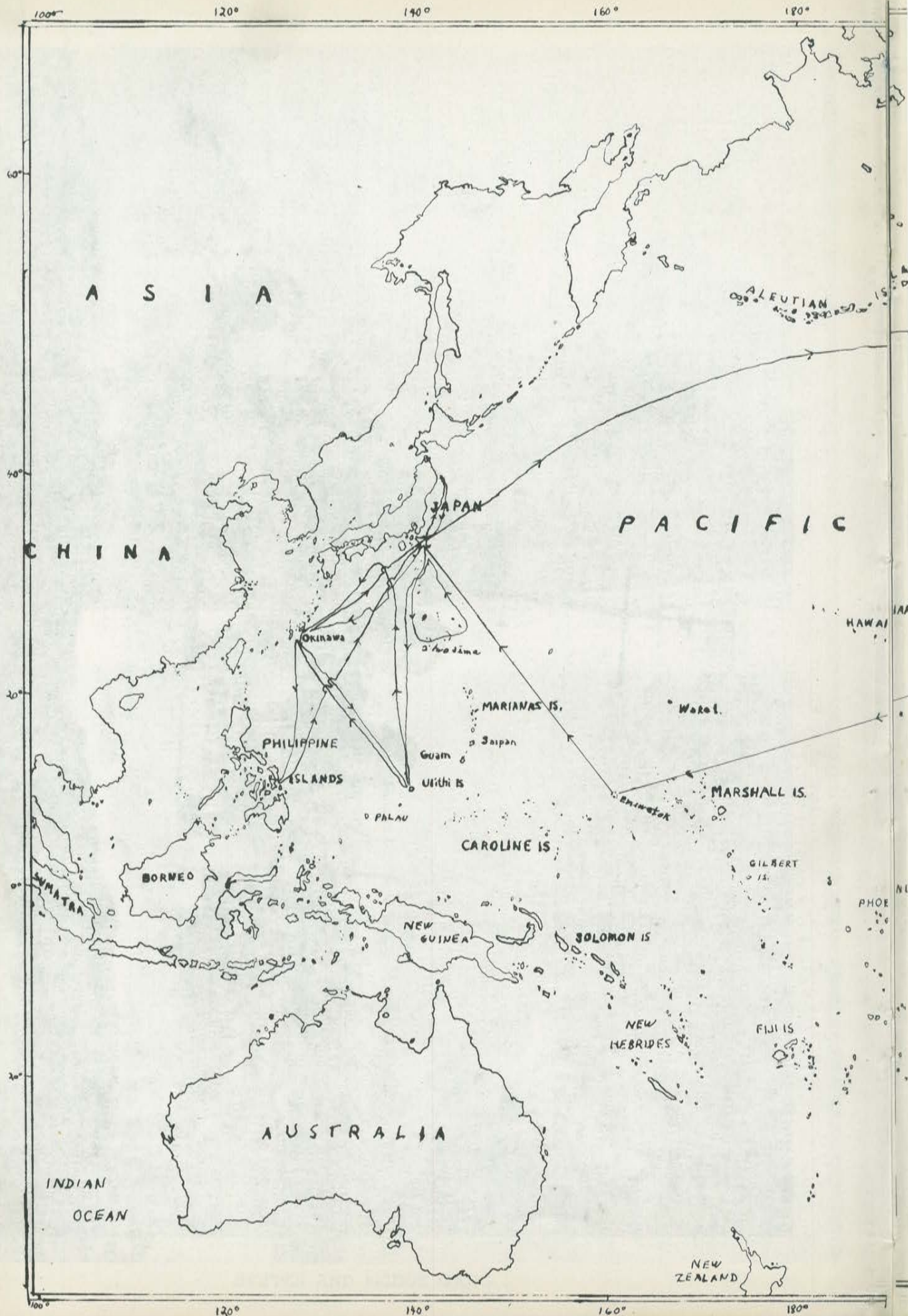
HOME AGAIN

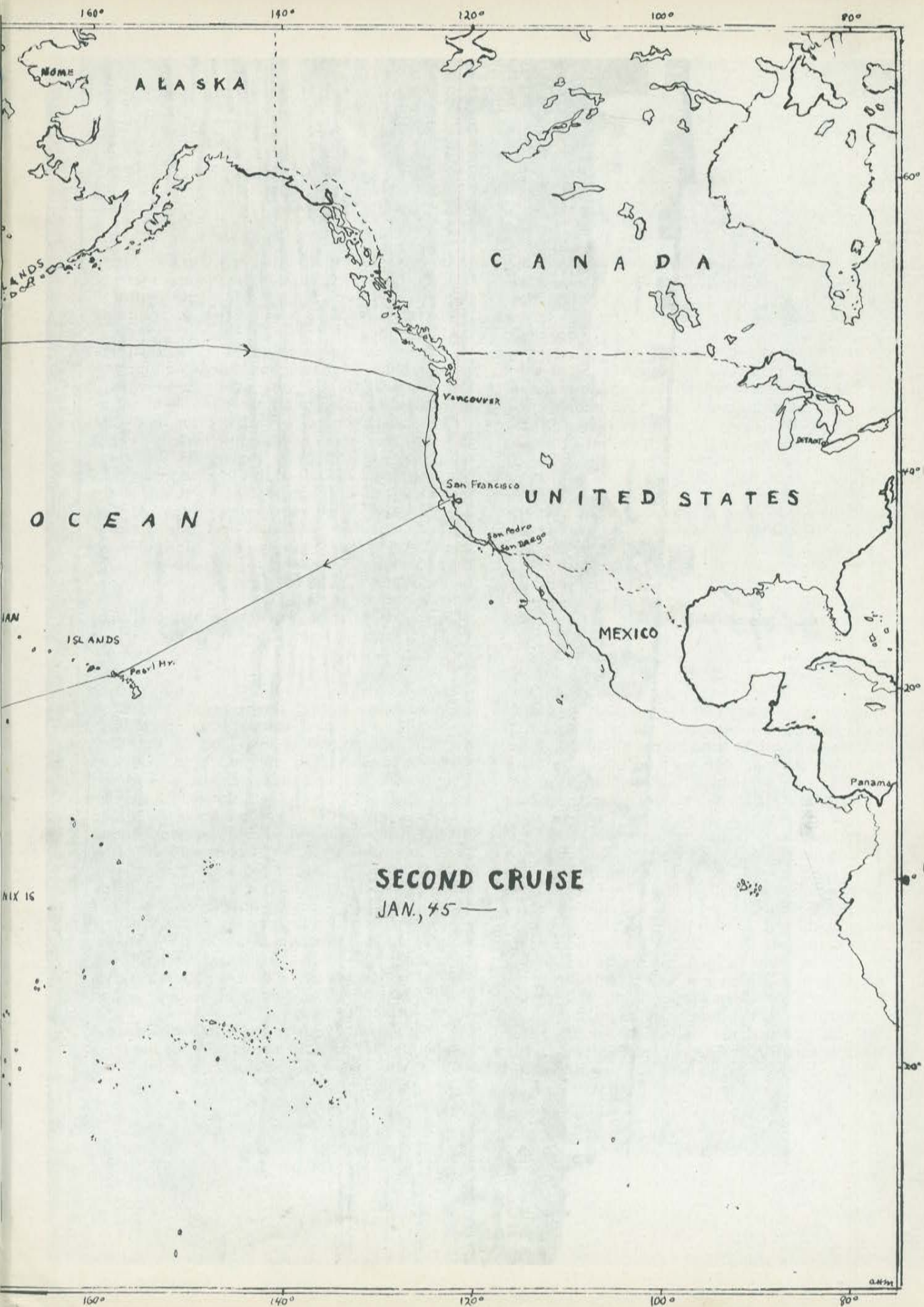


SKIPPER AND BRIDGE GANG



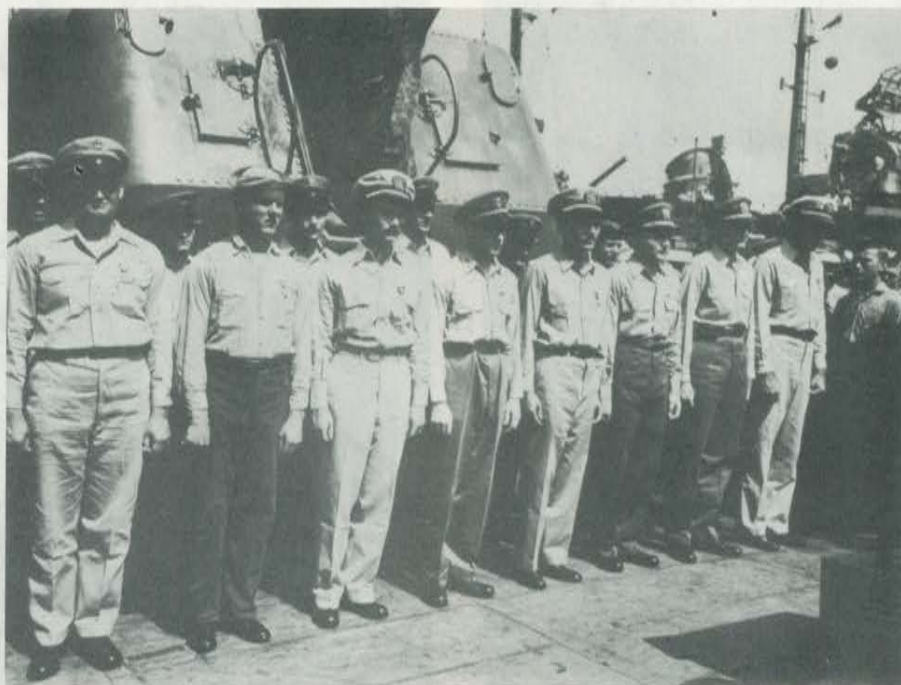
U.S.S. HEERMANN







PRESENTATION OF AWARDS
BY
COMMODORE J. T. BOTTOM, JR., U.S.N.
ABOARD
U.S.S. HEERMANN
AT
ULITHI, SOUTH CAROLINE ISLANDS

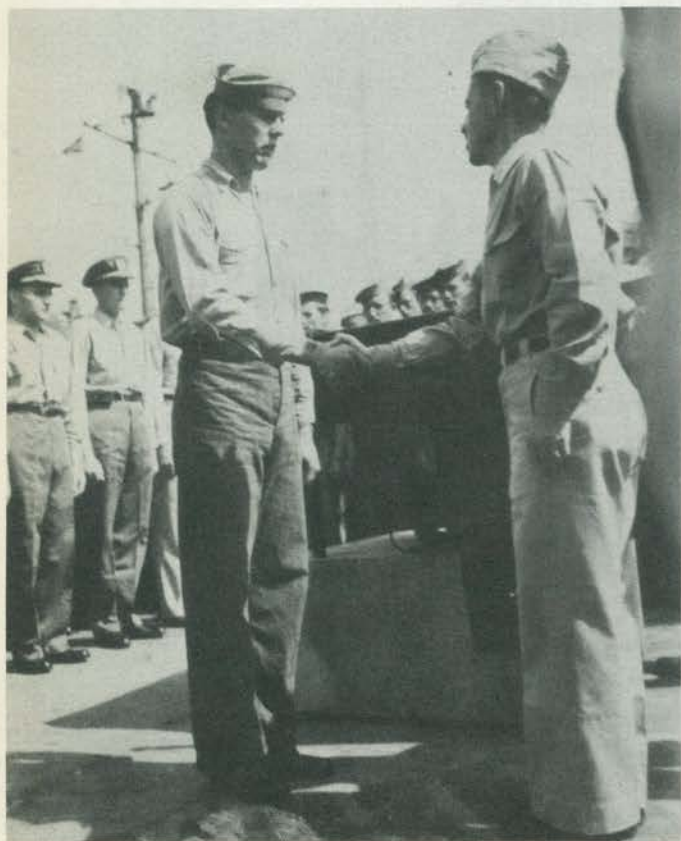




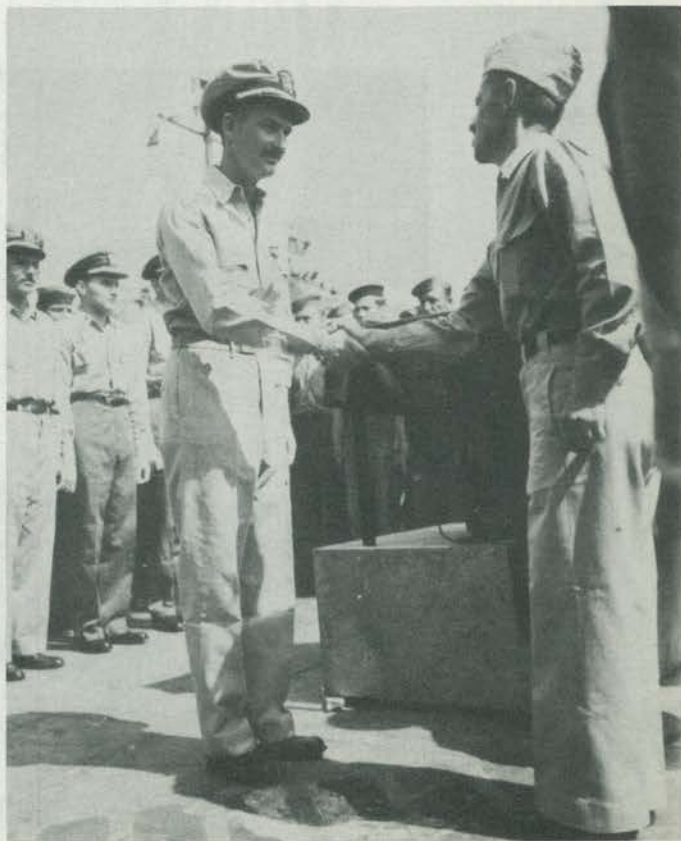
J. P. MILLEY, GQM, U.S.N.
SILVER STAR



H. E. WHITNEY, CY, U.S.N.
SILVER STAR



J. WOOLWORTH, QM1/c, U.S.N.
SILVER STAR



LT. R. F. NEWSOME, U.S.N.R.
BRONZE STAR



LT. W. W. SEFTON, U.S.N.R.
BRONZE STAR



LT. (jg) A. M. SWAIN, U.S.N.R.
BRONZE STAR



E. R. HODGES, CSF, U.S.N.R.
BRONZE STAR



B. A. KRAMER, CMM, U.S.N.
BRONZE STAR



J. D. HOLCOMB, CFC, U.S.N.
BRONZE STAR



R. C. MARTINDALE, SF3/c U.S.N.
NAVY MARINE CORPS MEDAL



R. H. CALLOWAY, STM1/c, U.S.N.R.
NAVY MARINE CORPS MEDAL



LT. J. P. HIRVELA, U.S.N.R.
LETTER OF COMMENDATION



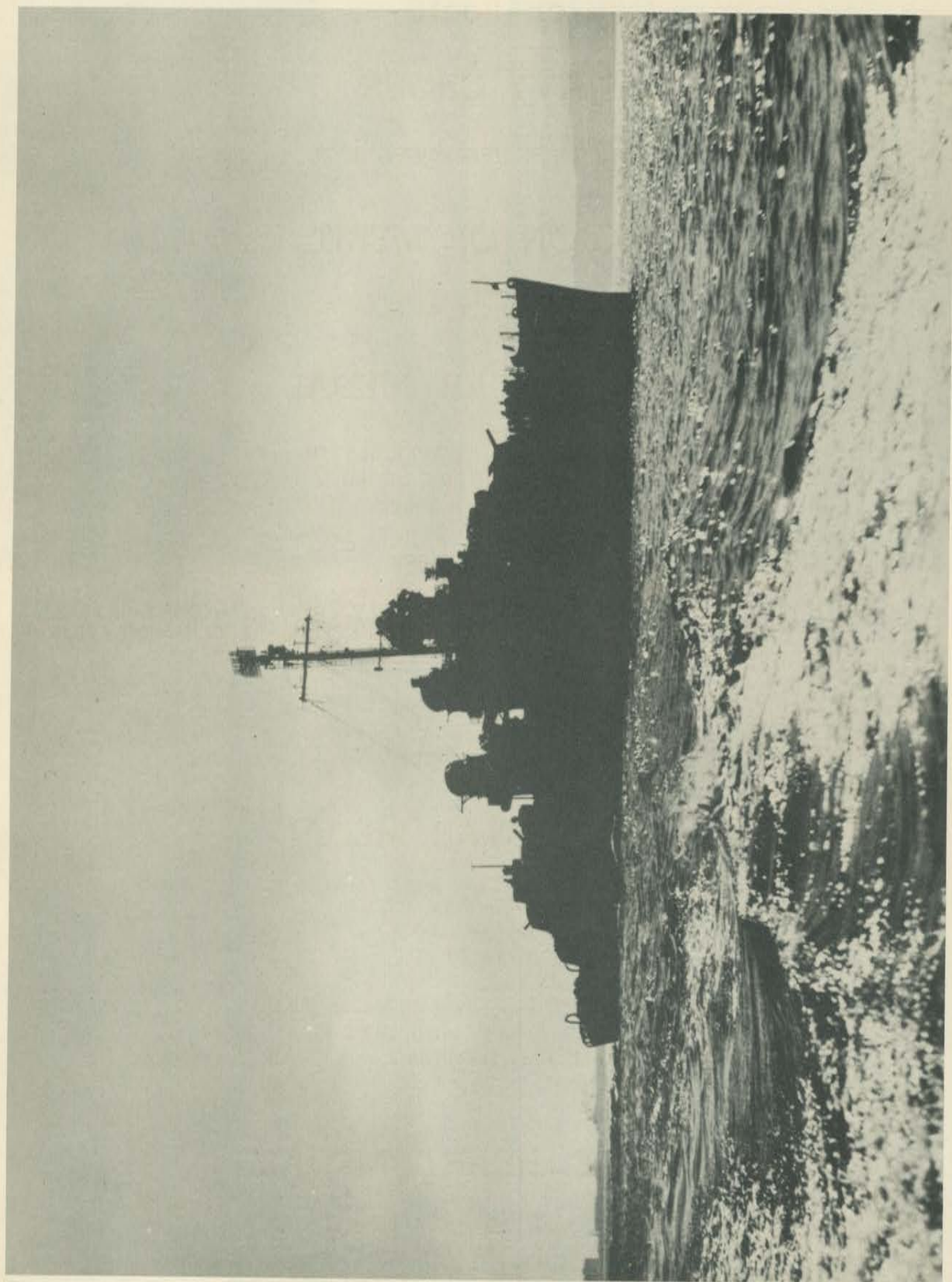
LT. (jg) J. STEINBERG, U.S.N.R.
LETTER OF COMMENDATION



LT. (jg) J. L. McGEHEE, JR., U.S.N.
LETTER OF COMMENDATION



J. H. BOULTON, CGM, U.S.N.
LETTER OF COMMENDATION



Awards Won by Personnel While Serving on Board

NAVY CROSS

COMDR. A. T. HATHAWAY, U.S.N.

LEGION OF MERIT

LT. E. C. BEBB, M. C., U.S.N.

SILVER STAR MEDAL

LT. COMDR. W. L. CARVER, U.S.N.R.

LT. W. W. MEADORS, U.S.N.R.

J. P. MILLEY, Chief Quartermaster, U.S.N.

H. E. WHITNEY, Chief Yeoman, U.S.N.

J. WOOLWORTH, Quartermaster 1/c, U.S.N.

NAVY MARINE CORPS MEDAL

R. C. MARTINDALE, Shipfitter 3/c, U.S.N.

R. H. GALLOWAY, Steward's Mate 1/c,
U.S.N.R.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

COMDR. A. T. HATHAWAY, U.S.N.

LT. R. F. NEWSOME, U.S.N.R.

LT. W. W. SEFTON, U.S.N.R.

LT. A. M. SWAIN, U.S.N.R.

J. D. HOLCOMB, Chief Firecontrolman, U.S.N.

E. R. HODGES, Chief Shipfitter, U.S.N.R.

B. A. KRAMER, Chief Machinist's Mate, U.S.N.

G. A. GWYNN, Chief Machinist's Mate, U.S.N.

PURPLE HEART MEDAL

C. H. KINDIG, Chief Boatswain's Mate, U.S.N.R.

J. H. BOULTON, Jr., Chief Gunner's Mate,
U.S.N.

D. R. HAUKE, Chief Pharmacist's Mate, U.S.N.

J. J. TSCHIRHART, Seaman 2/c, U.S.N.R.

W. E. COLLINS, Seaman 1/c, U.S.N.R.
S. R. URBANSKI, Seaman 1/c, U.S.N.
J. V. BILLOTTI, Seaman 1/c, U.S.N.R.
R. P. BRIGGS, Machinist's Mate 1/c, U.S.N.
W. F. GREENWOOD, Electrician's Mate 2/c,
U.S.N.
E. E. A. HARTMAN, Seaman 1/c, U.S.N.R.
R. E. MELIOR, Metalsmith 3/c, U.S.N.
J. C. MURPHY, Gunner's Mate 2/c, U.S.N.R.
J. C. SCARBOROUGH, Boatswain's Mate 1/c,
U.S.N.
P. STRECKER, Gunner's Mate 3/c, U.S.N.R.
J. J. WOOLWORTH, Quartermaster 1/c, U.S.N.
R. H. YOUNG, Quartermaster 3/c, U.S.N.R.
G. A. Gwynn, Chief Machinist's Mate, U.S.N.
J. G. KLIMAS, Machinist's Mate 1/c, U.S.N.R.
B. A. KRAMER, Chief Machinist's Mate, U.S.N.

LETTER OF COMMENDATION

COMDR. A. T. HATHAWAY, U.S.N.
LT. J. P. HIRVELA, U.S.N.R.
LT. A. M. SWAIN, U.S.N.R.
LT. (jg) J. STEINBERG, U.S.N.R.
LT. (jg) J. L. McGEHEE, Jr., U.S.N.
J. H. BOULTON, Jr., Chief Gunner's Mate,
U.S.N.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to

TASK UNIT SEVENTY-SEVEN POINT FOUR POINT THREE, consisting of the U.S.S. FANSHAW BAY and VC-68; U.S.S. GAMBIER BAY and VC-10; U.S.S. KALININ BAY and VC-3; U.S.S. KITKUN BAY and VC-5; U.S.S. SAINT LO and VC-65; U.S.S. WHITE PLAINS and VC-4; U.S.S. HOEL, U.S.S. JOHNSTON, U.S.S. HEERMANN, U.S.S. SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, U.S.S. RAYMOND, U.S.S. DENNIS and U.S.S. JOHN C. BUTLER

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against powerful units of the Japanese Fleet during the Battle off Samar, Philippines, October 25, 1944. Silhouetted against the dawn as the Central Japanese Force steamed through San Bernardino Strait toward Leyte Gulf, Task Unit 77.4.3 was suddenly taken under attack by hostile cruisers on its port hand, destroyers on the starboard and battleships from the rear. Quickly laying down a heavy smoke screen, the gallant ships of the Task Unit waged battle fiercely against the superior speed and fire power of the advancing enemy, swiftly launching and rearming aircraft and violently zigzagging in protection of vessels stricken by hostile armor-piercing shells, anti-personnel projectiles and suicide bombers. With one carrier of the group sunk, others badly damaged and squadron aircraft courageously coordinating in the attacks by making dry runs over the enemy Fleet as the Japanese relentlessly closed in for the kill, two of the Unit's valiant destroyers and one destroyer escort charged the battleships point-blank and, expending their last torpedoes in desperate defense of the entire group, went down under the enemy's heavy shells as a climax to two and one half hours of sustained and furious combat. The courageous determination and the superb teamwork of the officers and men who fought the embarked planes and who manned the ships of Task Unit 77.4.3 were instrumental in effecting the retirement of a hostile force threatening our Leyte invasion operations and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

James Forrestal
Secretary of the Navy



THE END

Abade, Isidore, 201 Madison Street, New York, New York
 Abbey, Edward H., 138 25th Avenue, San Francisco, California
 Abbott, Eyrle E., Box 224, Amherst, Texas
 Abraria, Chas., 625 North 4th Street, San Jose, California
 Adams, Irving Q., 10 Brackett Avenue, Stoneham, Massachusetts
 Adams, Jean E., 7309 South San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, California
 Aegater, Harold P., 116 Irving Street, Waterloo, Iowa
 Agnew, Dwight M., No. 4 Hillside Cottages, Route 1, Greenend Avenue, Middletown, Rhode Island
 Albrecht, Moragan W., Route 4, Box 119, Chehalis, Washington
 Alexander, Chas. B., 5839 Cote Brillant, St. Louis, Mississippi
 Ameker, Marion, Route 3, Box 170, Orangeburg, South Carolina
 Anderson, Earl W., Grand Rapids, Michigan
 Anderson, Richard W., Route 4, Bentonville, Arkansas
 Anderson, Roy G., USS Coss (DE444), c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.
 Archer, Paul C., USS Blue Ridge (AGC2) FPO San Francisco, California
 Arndt, Everett B., Mt. Holly, North Carolina
 Auger, Raymond J., 665 Essex Street, Lawrence, Massachusetts
 Auwaeter, Edward A., 1760 Broderick Street, San Francisco, California
 Baquera, Simon P., 1804 East Vernon Avenue, Los Angeles, California
 Barber, Prentiss N., 534 East D Street, Ontario, California
 Baron, Rene W., 109 Lilley Avenue, Lowell, Massachusetts
 Barrett James R., 619 Lorenz Avenue, Pittsburgh 20, Pennsylvania
 Bates, Alabert C., 362 Millbury Street, North Richmond, California
 Beahm, William H., 537 Wyandette Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
 Beal, Theodore R., 1726 1/2 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Santa Monica, California
 Bebb, Edwin C. Dr., 508 Fillmore Street, Wichita Falls, Texas
 Bedell, Raymond G., R. D. 1, Averill Park, New York, New York
 Bell, Lewis W., USS Sierra (AD 18), FPO San Francisco, California
 Belzeski, Peter V., USS Taussig (DD 746), FPO San Francisco, California
 Benjamin, Marvin E., 209 East 4th Street, Keokuk, Iowa
 Bennett, Robert G., 830 Seminary Street, Napa, California
 Benson, William E., USS Gyatt (DD 712), FPO New York, New York
 Berry, Unizum J., Harlem, Montana
 Berryman, Bruce B., 550 34th Street, San Francisco, California
 Berto, Carleton E., Route 1, Box 54, Sumner, Washington
 Biagini, Attilio E., 351 West 47th Street, New York, New York
 Bialkowski, Michael, 906 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, New York
 Biesucci, Raphael, 78 Herman Street, East Rutherford, New Jersey
 Biggs, Chas. E., Receiving Station, Navy Base, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Bilderback, Glenn A., Route 3, Rupert, Idaho
 Bilotti, John V., 13 Company Street, Warren, Rhode Island
 Birdsong, Elmer J., 7316 Southeast Duke Street, Portland, Oregon
 Bissett, Robert J., General Delivery, Logan, Kansas
 Blais, Joseph A., 14 Howard Place, Springfield, Massachusetts
 Blasczynski, Henry, 2136 South 15th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Bolen, Ralph L. B., c/o Fern Kelley, Box 43, Grass Valley, Oregon
 Bordy, Phillip E., Silver Creek, Nebraska
 Bourn, Raymond P., 608 5th Street, Modesto, California
 Bowen, James R., Route 5, Wellington, Texas
 Bowerman, Harold D., 3216 Cleveland Street, Dallas, Texas
 Bowers, Russel C., 3416 Piedmont Avenue, Oakland, California
 Bradley, Lenard, Route 2, Campobello, South Carolina
 Branam, James C., Avenue D, Route 10, Knoxville, Tennessee
 Branscom, Francis L., Worthington, Missouri
 Breen, John M., 8836 Burnette Avenue, Detroit, Michigan
 Brenner, William, 1402 North Marshall Street, Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania
 Bresgal, Robert E., 1618 East Mission Street, Spokane 15, Washington
 Briggs, Ralph P., 628 South Lincoln Avenue, Aurora, Illinois
 Brown, Cleveland L., Box 726, Boulder City, Nevada
 Brown, Leland J., 4946 South 1250 West, Murray 7, Utah
 Brown, Mosby J., Warrington, Virginia
 Brown, Marvin J., USS Saginaw Bay (CVE 82) Boston Group 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Brown, Paul D., 16 Warren Street, North Plainfield, New Jersey
 Brown, Raymond E., 1318 West 219th Street, Torrance, California
 Browning, Walter F., French Corral, California
 Brumbaugh, Loyd F., Whiteface, Montana
 Brunette, Norman L., 56 Lafayette Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts
 Bundy, Robert L., 1024 Cotey Street, Cadillac, Michigan
 Burns, Hugh J., 180 India Street, Brooklyn, New York
 Burris, Rex D., Box 363, Kettle Falls, Washington
 Burton, William Jr., 28466 Glenwood Street, Inkster, Michigan
 Byrnes, James F., USN Receiving Station, Brooklyn, New York
 Calcote, Dal Mone, 10410 Foothill Blvd., Oakland, California
 Caldwell, Elmer Gene, Route 3, Milton Florida
 Caldwell, Wade, Naval Torpedo Station, Key Port, Washington
 Calkins, Wendel F., Box 397, Lambertson, Minnesota
 Calloway, Raymond H., 109 Church Street, Spackenhill Road, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.
 Campbell, I., General Delivery, Plainview, Texas
 Carnes, Wesley Henry, 702 Sheridan Street, Vallejo, California
 Carroll, John T., 4225 Nicholas Avenue, SW, Washington, D. C.
 Carver, William L., 2094 Fairhaven Circle NE, Atlanta, Georgia
 Carway, Thomas B., Route 1, Box 16, Silsbee, Texas
 Castellano, Peter P., 153 Perry Street, Elgin, Illinois
 Cater, Arnold Allen, 1414 North Meade Street, South Bend, Indiana
 Caterton, David J., 806 12th Street, Rock Island, Illinois
 Chagnon, Vedun E., 2561 Beal Street, Detroit, Michigan
 Chism, Cecil C., R. R. 1, Sikeson, Missouri
 Choy, Dai Mon, 1629 G. Waikahalulu Lane, Honolulu, Oahu, T. H.
 Clayton, Lloyd T., Winslow, Arizona
 Clinton, Robert Seldon, 20 Gooch Street, Melrose, Massachusetts
 Clunan, Thomas P., Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island
 Cober, Millard W., 1435 1/2 Shineah, Los Angeles, California
 Cockram, Odem, Ringgold, Louisiana
 Colby, Ronald J., Box 183, Woodstock, Vermont
 Coleman, John R., Mill Street, Montoursville, Pennsylvania
 Collins, James H. F., Lawson YMCA, Room 1024, 30 W. Chicago, Ave., Chicago, Ill.
 Collins, Walter E., 405 4th Street, NW, Minot, North Dakota
 Collins, William G., 1225 West 89th Street, Los Angeles, California
 Conrad, Edward, USS DeGrasse (AK 223) FPO San Francisco, California

Considine, Chauncey, C., 3857 Harriet Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Cooper, Willard J., Dist. Staff Hqs., 12th Naval District, San Francisco, California
 Coppola, Nichols 1145 Boynton Avenue, Bronx 59, New York
 Cox, Fred F., USN A. B., Navy 3237, FPO San Francisco, California
 Craft, William A., R. R. 1, Clinton, Indiana
 Crawford, Chas. J., Box 33, Blue Creek, Washington
 Criedit, Leo R., 4 Angel Street, Haverhill, Massachusetts
 Cugnitti, Francis A., 429 Fillmore Street, Riverside, New Jersey
 Cummings, Calvin A. Jr., 1412 South West 9th Street, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
 Curci, Frank A., Box 398, Hallandale, Florida
 Curtis, William A., Winston, Virginia
 Cutright, Davis W., 235 West Main Street, Grafton, West Virginia
 Danielson, Daniel N., 6711 Fishburn Avenue, Bell, California
 Davis, Floyd Jr., N.T.C., Gulfport, Mississippi
 Davis, Harold E., Route 1, New Lexington, Ohio
 Davis, Raymond W. Jr., 22 Elizabeth Street, Pemberton, New Jersey
 Davis, Vernon, USN Hospital, New Orleans, Louisiana
 Deal, Lenlee B., Route 2, Box 6-Y, Kannapolis, North Carolina
 Dean, Harry F., 111 Garrison Avenue, Jersey City 6, New Jersey
 Dean, Kenneth E., USS Chicago (CA 136) FPO San Francisco, California
 Degrio, Richard M., 2227 Northwest 49th Street, Miami, Florida
 De Julius, John, 470 Hudson, Monongahela, Pennsylvania
 DeLorenzo, Thomas, 606 Pearson Street, New Castle, Pennsylvania
 Denton, Wesley W. Jr., 9616 Mallison Avenue, South Gate, California
 DePadua, Ralph A., Receiving Station, New York, New York
 De Pedro, Nicholas M., 200 Graham Avenue, Coatesville, Pennsylvania
 Derov, Nick, Route 1, Adah, Pennsylvania
 Derzak, Joseph T., 156 2nd Street, Coaldale, Pennsylvania
 Deschanden, Robert E., 336 1/2 Sacramento Street, Nevada City, California
 DeSimone, Vincent, USN Advanced Base, Navy 131, FPO San Francisco, California
 Dewitt, William F., Deer Park, Maryland
 Diener, Norman E., Receiving Barracks, USMT and D Center, Shoemaker, Calif.
 Dignan, Clarence, USS Bancroft (DD 598) FPO New York, New York
 Dills, Curtis H., 2008 West 26th Street, Vancouver, Washington
 Dixon, Elwood R., 7792 Knox Street, Hayward, California
 Dodson, William W., USS Taussig (DD 746), FPO San Francisco, California
 Doherty, Francis J., 57 Baldwin Street, Boston, Massachusetts
 Dorland, Robert J., 113 Elmira Street, San Francisco, California
 Douma, Rudolph, R. R. 1, Box 497, Hanford, California
 Driscoll, Daniel A., 182 Rockwell Avenue, Elmira, New York
 Drumm, John J., USN Receiving Station, Seattle, Washington
 Dulac, Irving G., 4512 Monroe Street NE, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Dunlap, William T., Box 105, Jermy, Texas
 Eaton, Russell S. Jr., 139 North Street, Milford, Connecticut
 Eayrs, Alvin D., 1634 Shasta Street, Susanville, California
 Efferson, Leonard Z., 114 Royal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana
 Eldridge, Clayton Roger, 1909 Maple Avenue, NE Canton, Ohio
 Eldridge, James, 15 South Iowa Avenue, Atlanta City, New Jersey
 Enger, Theodore R., 707 East 9th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana
 Erickson, Norman E. W., 14 Vega Street, New Britain, Connecticut
 Evenrud, Olaf A., Balfour, North Dakota
 Fagella, George A., 1494 67th Street, Emeryville, California
 Falls, Randolph W., Portales, New Mexico
 Fairry, Jennings B. Jr., Victory Homes Apt. 19C, Marysville, California
 Fairley, Charles J., 127 South Ann Street, Baltimore, Maryland
 Fanning, Charles E., Route 5, Box 23-A, Medesto, California
 Farley, John J. Jr., 528 South 5th Street, West Missoula, Montana
 Farlow, Everett D., 220 D Street, Salem, Oregon
 Farris, Donald D., Route 2, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
 Fass, Ernie, 2873 West 22nd Street, Brooklyn, 24, New York
 Fazekas, Bill J., USS New Orleans (CA 32), c/o FPO New York, New York
 Fehr, Gilbert L., Route 1, Emporia, Kansas
 Feist, Frank F., Balfour, North Dakota
 Fernald, Robert N., 16 Alto Loma, Benicia, California
 Fields, Eugene L., R. R. 2, Montgomery, Indiana
 Fitz, Glenn R., Route 2, Snohomish, Washington
 Fister, Fred L., 580 Frebis Avenue, Columbus, Ohio
 Flinn, Frederick T., Austin YMCA, 501 North Center Avenue, Chicago, Illinois
 Flood, Ellsworth L., 1408 Lenox Avenue, Philadelphia 40, Pennsylvania
 Floyd, George B., 513 St. Charles Avenue NE, Atlanta, Georgia
 Floyde, D. Thompson, 55 Park Street, Salem, Oregon
 Foot, Henry M., 534 East Summit, Butte, Montana
 Ford, Walter D., 809 Augusta Road, Wilmington 67, Delaware
 Fornaro, Guy J., 5 Linwood Square, Roxbury, Massachusetts
 Foy, David C., 7712 Ridgeland Drive, Chicago 49, Illinois
 Foster, Ervin, 1960 Euclid Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah
 Franz, Norman L. Jr., 29 East Orange Grove Street, Arcadia, California
 Frazier, Orville, C., Cincinnati, Ohio
 Frey, John A., 30 South Street, Grafton, Massachusetts
 Frick, Roland E., Box 871, Oakdale, California
 Fritsch, Paul E., USS ARD 7, c/o FPO San Francisco, California
 Fuentes, Domingo Jr., 1103 Seib Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey
 Gaggero, Frank A., 7211 South East Holgate Blvd., Portland, Oregon
 Gann, Richard V., 2205 Holly Street, Austin, Texas
 Garcia, Tony Jr., P.O. Box 473, Winters, California
 Garnick, Joseph, Route 1, Wellsburg, West Virginia
 Gasman, Raymond H., 206 North 19th Street, Escanaba, Michigan
 Gehring, Herbert H., 1710 South 6th Street, Alhambra, California
 Gentry, Elis O., 201 Morris Street, Franklin, Kentucky
 George, Thomas H., 2471 Iowa Avenue, South Gate, California
 Ghalson, Clarence M., Naval Receiving Station, New Orleans, Louisiana
 Giese, William O., 2423 Aldrich Avenue, North Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Gilbert, Harry W., 156 Springfield Avenue, Springfield, Massachusetts
 Gobel, Robert E., USS Killen (DD 593), USNRB, San Diego 36, California
 Godzik, Joseph H., 22 Slason Street, West Rutland, Vermont
 Gollnick, William C., 5351 Forest Glen Avenue, Chicago 30, Illinois
 Gomez, Larry C., 430 West 34th Street, New York, New York
 Gonzales, Elmer H., c/o General Delivery, Gonzales, Louisiana
 Graff, Eugene F., 99 Theta Avenue, Daly City, California
 Graham, Haldane C., Route 4, Box 26 Pasatiempo, Santa Cruz, California
 Grange, John Stewart, 5640 Case Avenue, North Hollywood, California

Granger, Donald H., 40 V Street NW, Washington 1, D. C.
 Green, Emmett C., Cambridge, Idaho
 Greene, Joseph B. Jr., 4126 Greene Avenue, Shively, Kentucky
 Greene, William O., USS Naval Hospital, Chelsea, Massachusetts
 Greenwood, Wilfred T., Lake Preston, South Dakota
 Greenwood, William F., Receiving Station, Boston, Massachusetts
 Guerin, Harold V., 2541 41st Street, Sacramento, California
 Gwynn, Glenn A., Box 102, Versailles, Ohio
 Haan, Daniel P., Route 3, Lennox, South Dakota
 Hall, Howard E., 837 Newton Street, Waterloo, Iowa
 Hall, Thomas B., 611 North Division Avenue, Cleveland, Oklahoma
 Hall, Walter M., USS Lowry (DD 770), FPO San Francisco, California
 Halverson, Norman G., Sioux Rapids, Iowa
 Hamond, Thomas W., 113 Madison Street, Paterson, New Jersey
 Hammons, Arthur E., Box 745, Oak Harbor, Washington
 Hamond, George J., USS LST 876, FPO San Francisco, California
 Hampton, Harry L., Box 563, Palisade, Colorado
 Hanek, John H., Route 2, Freewater, Oregon
 Hapgood, Warren H., USS PCE 847, FPO San Francisco, California
 Harcrow, Franklin L., Route 1, Glencoe, Alabama
 Harger, Lotice L., [No Address Available]
 Harkness, Worthy L. Jr., Altan, Alabama
 Harper, Elmer L., 416 SW Haley Street, Pendleton, Oregon
 Harper, Kenneth A., Route 1, Box 24, Lavernia, Texas
 Harrison, Van C., 3548 Jordan Road, Oakland, California
 Hartman, Emmett E., 1510 Franklin Street, San Francisco, California
 Harvey, E. Johnson, 4720 Oakland Avenue, South Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Harvey, Robert M., Route 2, Box 113, Danville, Virginia
 Hathaway, Amos T., 11 Grafton Street, Chevy Chase 15, Maryland
 Hauk, Dorsal Ray, US Naval Hospital, Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois
 Hayes, Leonard C., Box 25, Oakdale, Nebraska
 Helwig, Charles T. Jr., 111 Soth Columbus Street, Aberdeen, Mississippi
 Henderson, Lyman R., Box 63, Mitchell, Nebraska
 Henley, Floyd Eric, Norphlet, Arkansas
 Herrington, Clarence L., Route 1, Summerland, Mississippi
 Herrington, Harold James, 414 North 8th Street, Santa Paula, California
 Higginbotham, Wyatt 510 Cordova Street, Dallas 10, Texas
 Hiller, Walter, 205 University Avenue, Los Gatos, California
 Hill, Frank T., 517 Sierra Street, Reno, Nevada
 Hines, James Wesley Jr., 707 East Hermosa Drive, San Gabriel, California
 Hirvela, John P., 227 East Aurora Street, Ironwood, Michigan
 Hixson, Grover L., Hixson, Tennessee
 Hobbs, Gilbert E., Box 815, Maracopa, California
 Hock, Wallace E. Lee, 1101 2nd Avenue, Fairbury, Nebraska
 Hodges, Edward R., 635 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Portsmouth, Virginia
 Hoines, Floyd L., 512 Fyanconia, Street, San Francisco, California
 Holcombe, Hohn D., Star Route, Branson, Missouri
 Holden, Thomas R., 307 South Harrison Street, Delavan Wisconsin
 Holder, Bobbie A. Jr., 2076 Clark Avenue, Detroit, Michigan
 Holladay, Seth D., Box 177, Pima, Arizona
 Hollandsworth, Fred D., USS Samaritan, FPO San Francisco, California
 Holm, Rolland L., General Delivery, Viborg, South Dakota
 Holtz, Duthier F., Belvidere, Nebraska
 Horton, Edmund L., USS Miami, FPO San Francisco, California
 Hough, William S., 35 Cypress Street, Greenfield, Massachusetts
 Howard, Olaf G., Box 242, Belle Glade, Florida
 Howell, Charles H., Route 3, Box 231, Plant City, Florida
 Howell, Claude R., 3323 Division Street, Los Angeles, California
 Hudson, Carl R., Route 1, Sand Springs, Oklahoma
 Hudspeth, Jarald C., Route 1, Geneva, Alabama
 Hughes, H. R. Jr., Route 3, Eldorado, Oklahoma
 Humphrey, Lindsey A., 1433 12th Street, Galena Park, Texas
 Hunter, James F. Jr., 310 Clay Street, San Francisco, California
 Hurley, William S., 419 West Water Street, Mayfield, Kentucky
 Hurt, Harmon C., 601 Nicholas Road, Dayton, Ohio
 Hutchinson, George S., 243 1/2 East Firestone Blvd., Downey, California
 Ingram, Charles Joseph Jr., 625 East Woodward Street, Stonewall, Mississippi
 Irwin, Edward T., Route 1, LaFollette, Tennessee
 Iverson, Elwood W., LeRoy, Minnesota
 Jack, Chester, Box 213, Chilquin, Oregon
 Jackson, Ray, 56 Washington Terrace, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Jacobson, Ralph H., Route 3, West 3rd Avenue, Longmont, Colorado
 Jaggard, Robert S., Box 605, Iowa City, Iowa
 James, Lonnie, 705 West Goenennet Lane, Savannah, Georgia
 James, William H., Camel Oil Co., Atascadero, California
 Jarvis, Raymond M., 913 Blossom Way, Hayward, California
 Jeffries, Thelbert K., 3345 Hudson Street, Detroit, Michigan
 Jemison, Judge Jr., 621 63rd Street, Fairfield, Alabama
 Jimenez, Joe M., 2011 Santa Ana Blvd., Los Angeles 2, California
 Johnson, Ivar R., 908 8th Street, Rawlins, Wyoming
 Johnson, Claude, 111 Work Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee
 Johnson, George W., 2735 Garfield Avenue, Camden, New Jersey
 Johnson, Gordon R., 224 North Mount Vernon, San Bernardino, California
 Johnson, Robert L., 1440 6th Street, Alameda, California
 Jonas, Gordon T., Gripple Creek, Virginia
 Jones, Robert O., 1501 Mary Allen Street, Van Buren, Arkansas
 Judd, Harvey E., 3238 21st Avenue, West Seattle, Washington
 Jung, Albert W., USS Compton (DD 705), FPO New York, New York
 Juniell, Roosevelt, 2323 Ogden Street, Denver, Colorado
 Kabgktem, Clifton, 10761 West Minister Avenue, Los Angeles, California
 Kaiser, Peter J., USS Macon (CA 132), FPO, New York, New York
 Karpovitch, Joseph J., US Naval Hospital, St. Albans, Long Island, New York
 Kauffman, Jay L., 408 Brady Street, Elkhart, Indiana
 Keating, Edward M., P.O. Box 1096, Rancho Santa Fe, California
 Keis, Donald W., USS Franks (DD 554) USNRB, San Diego 36, California
 Keith, Walter M., 631 L Street, SE, Washington, D. C.
 Kersat, Edward H., USS Boyd (DD 554), USNRB, San Diego 36, California
 Kindig, Curtis H., 1831 G Avenue, National City, California
 King, Bert E., 619 East 6th Street, Reno, Nevada
 King, Ernest J., 2694 47th Street, San Francisco, California
 King, James W., 14 Huse Street, Bath, Maine
 King, William T., US Naval Hospital, Treasure Island, San Francisco, California
 Kislowski, Stanley J., Lawrence, Massachusetts
 Kismoe, Jack D., 1452 Alomitos Avenue, Long Beach, California
 Klapp, Elmer C. Jr., 81 May Street, Buffalo, New York
 Klein, William, 1615 South Street, West Missoula, Montana
 Klimas, Joseph, 4670 Dewey Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri
 Kloncz, John USMB NAB, Mare Island, California
 Knudsen, Paul P., 4660 South 32 West, Salt Lake City, Utah
 Kocent, Walter S., 2200 Fleet Street, Baltimore, Maryland
 Kondratieff, Igor, Route 3, Box 111, Clay Center, Kansas
 Korossy, Frank F., 702 Larch Avenue, Inglewood, California
 Kramer, Berthold A. Jr., Bayside, Texas
 Kropidowski, Henry J., Route 4, Box 187, Stevens Point, Wisconsin
 Kusiak, Stanley, USS Laffey (DD 724), FPO San Francisco, California
 LaCerte, Armand L., 8927 Ashcraft Avenue, Los Angeles, California
 Lae, Richard, Box 62, Fullerton, California
 Large, Nolan L., 171 Whitney Way, Dinubeau, California
 Larson, Warren A., Box 13, Lubbock, Minnesota
 Laubach, Earl R., Milford, New Jersey
 Laubach, Earl R., Bainbridge, Maryland
 Laughon, Robert A., Box 25, Davenport, Washington
 Laughon, Robert A., Box 25, Davenport, Washington
 Lawlor, Charles A., 15 Smelter Hill, Great Falls, Montana
 Lawson, Delbert F., 3885 Whittle Avenue, Oakland 2, California
 Lawson, William A. Sr., 131 North Adams Street, Westmont, Illinois
 LeFevre, Stanley D., Route 2, Box 55, Orem, Utah
 Lemos, Joseph P., 1340 Kelsey Street, North Richmond, California
 Leunge, Hayne H., 47 Lorain Court, Pontiac 15, Michigan
 Lewis, Robert M., 620 West Main Street, Lebanon, Indiana
 Lilly, Terry E. Jr., Doctor, 5714 McGee Street, Kansas City, Missouri
 Linna, Arthur, 335 Marquette Street, Ishpeming, Michigan
 Lipinski, John Martin, 3718 Bailey Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio
 Loan, Donald M., 1095 South Dacotah Street, Los Angeles 23, California
 Loar, James Wallace, 360 Hinman Avenue, Columbus, Ohio
 Lobbeld, Eugene A., US Naval Advanced Base, Navy 131, FPO San Francisco, Calif.
 Long, George R., Osage, Minnesota
 Long, James L., 1392 Lisle Street, Columbus, Ohio
 Longe, Raymond L., Mallets Bay Road, Route 3, Winooski, Vermont
 Loveless, Leonard A., 1200 East Blackford Avenue, Evansville, Indiana
 Lovely, Ronald L., 2709 Maple Street, La Grande, Oregon
 Lovett, Clyde R., Neodesha, Kansas
 Lowder, Victor T., 201 Lexington Avenue, Redwood City, California
 Lowe, Douglas H., 2712 Egan, Dallas, Texas
 Luckett, Donald T., Route 2, Milton, Kentucky
 Lyon, Albert A. Jr., 2133 Balboa Street, San Francisco, California
 Lynch, Eugene R. Jr., 323 Clark Avenue, Barboursville, Kentucky
 McBride, Samuel L., USS Taussig (DD 746), FPO San Francisco, California
 McCanless, Elmo M., Box 21, Tagus Ranch, Tulare, California
 McCloud, Clinton A. Jr., Route 3, Schermerhorn, Rhode Island
 McDaniel, Fred L., 636 Tuscaloosa Avenue SW, Birmingham 7, Alabama
 McDuff, John R., Route 2, Box 10-4, Gladewater, Texas
 McGehee, John L. Jr., 1470 Peabody Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee
 McGinnis, William W., 1810 Polk Street, Wichita Falls, Texas
 McGowan, Owen R., 1217 East Base Line, Highland, California
 McGrothers, Frank J., 39 Innis Avenue, Columbus, Ohio
 McLarty, Darrell F., 1230 Southeast Ivon Street, Portland, Oregon
 McPherson, Leo C., 213 3rd Street, SE, Minot, North Dakota
 McWilliams, Irving D., 709 Jefferson Avenue, East Point, Georgia
 MacBride, G. E., 16911 Strathmore, Detroit 27, Michigan
 Mackin, James C. Jr., R. D. 4, Frankfort, New York
 MacNiel, Jay R., 15866 Turner Avenue, Detroit 21, Michigan
 Madden, Thomas H., Route 3, Bardwell, Kentucky
 Maddox, Taylor, Box 632, Marlan, Kentucky
 Madsen, Ronald H., Route 1, Reverton, Utah
 Mager, Melvin M., 1821 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California
 Maisel, Charles B., 26-7 East 23rd Street, Oakland, California
 Maneks, John H., USS Skagit (AKA 102), FPO San Francisco, California
 Manning, John S., Wrightsville, Georgia
 Manuel, Loftin J., Route 1, Pine Hall, North Carolina
 Manuz, Gasper J., c/o NSP Co., Keeler, California
 Marinari, Dante San, 2009 18th Street, Washington, D. C.
 Marks, Kenneth E., 1165 Park Avenue, New York, New York
 Marlow, Alvin T., Gray, Georgia
 Marrow, Walter C., General Delivery, Bay Minette, Alabama
 Martel, Alfred R., 9117 118th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
 Martin, Robert D., 2040 West 110th Street, Chicago 43, Illinois
 Martinson, Robert L., Pine City, Minnesota
 Mascaro, Leonard J., 1064 Patricia Street, Detroit, Michigan
 Massey, James W., 2341 Lawrence Avenue, Toledo, Ohio
 Maupin, Marion C., TDD Unit Utility Wing, Atlantic, Georgia
 Maynard, Thomas M. Jr., 650 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts
 Meador, Dale, Route 2, Tyler, Texas
 Meadors, William W., 522 2nd Street, Albany, Georgia
 Meadows, Charles E., 1007 Howard Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania
 Medeiros, Anthony K., 1407 Main Street, Santa Clara, California
 Melior, Robert E., 4441 NE, 68th Avenue, Portland, Oregon
 Melis, William T., 215 Norfolk Street, Ironwood, Michigan
 Mellander, John R., 31 Alexander Street, Watsonville, California
 Mendel, Daniel L. Jr., NTC, San Diego, California
 Merman, Carol W., Comdt. 11th Naval District, San Diego, California
 Merrill, Howard B., 1846 Carol Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota
 Metcalfe, John S. Jr., 2739 West 32nd Avenue, Denver, Colorado
 Micek, Herbert A., Duncan, Nebraska
 Milley, John P., USS Rodman (DMS 21), FPO New York, New York
 Millan, George R., 6540 Beck Street, Oakland, California
 Miller, Billy L., Box 213, Valentine, Nebraska
 Miller, Gerald L., US Naval Receiving Station, Seattle, Washington
 Miller, Gerald T., 618 State Street, Hudson, New York
 Mincey, Charles W., 223 North Olive, Orange, California
 Mitchell, Joe J., Permanent Shore Patrol, 11th N. D., Los Angeles, California
 Mooring, Joseph G., 225 Anderson Street, Rocky Mountain, North Carolina

Morgan, Max R., Eklake, Montana
 Mueller, Alfred E., 4932 West Grace Street, Chicago 41, Illinois
 Muetze, Arvin C., 82 Clayton Avenue, San Jose, California
 Muller, Carl Antone, 214 East Center Street, Canton, Mississippi
 Munson, Paul R., 3021 Lincoln Park Drive, Los Angeles, California
 Munson, Phillip D., 3012 Lincoln Park Drive, Los Angeles, California
 Murray, Morris G., TADCEM, Shoemaker, California
 Mussato, Norman L., 3128 East Rosedale, Fort Worth, Texas
 Musser, Elden C., Harbor, Oregon
 Musulman, Joseph A., 1523 Avenue I, Ensley, Alabama
 Myall, Jonas M. Jr., 1377 Warren, Long Beach, California
 Myers, Charles Allen, 307 East Monroe Street, Paris, Illinois
 Myers, Courtland P., 26112 Marbonne Avenue, Bonita, California
 Nanning, Alfred D., 2867 Octavia Street, San Francisco, California
 Nappoleon, Attilio, 85 Miller Avenue, Penns Grove, New Jersey
 Natividad, Felix, USS ABSD-5, FPO San Francisco, California
 Naylor, Andrew G., Box 45, Tulelake, California
 Nelson, Daniel A., 3974 South Whitnall Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Newby, Alfred W., US Naval Hospital, Astoria, Oregon
 Newman, Herbert L., Crow Stage Route, Eugene, Oregon
 Newsome, Robert F. Jr., 609 Tucker Street, McKinney, Texas
 Nicholas, Charles R., P.O. Box 1013, Hattisburg, Mississippi
 Nicholas, Walter N., 1044 North 14th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Nichols, Lester Marcell, Route 1, Shawnee, Oklahoma
 Nixon, Otto L., 581 Leeton Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri
 Norman, G. C. Jr., Van Court, Texas
 Occhipinti Thomas, 420 East 119th Street, New York, New York
 Oliver, James L., 6321 NW, 13th Court, Miami, Florida
 Olaszewski, John Clement, 236 North Elizabeth, Wichita, Kansas
 Owens, Arthur E., 454 Green Street, Los Alamitos, California
 Owens, John E., 39 Alpine Pass, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Paden, Ralph, 809 Grant Avenue, Waterloo, Iowa
 Panelli, Raymond D., Box 245, Monte Rio, California
 Pankratz, Arthur J., 57 Lyton Place, St. Paul, Minnesota
 Parker, Alonzo O., Box 100, Port Allen, Louisiana
 Parr, Jack L., 514 Dell Avenue, Flint, Michigan
 Parsons, Donald J., Box 305 Hays Street, Hays, Kansas
 Patterson, Ralph W., 844 7th Street, Fortuna, California
 Pederson, John E., USS Crockett (APA 418), FPO New York, New York
 Perkins, Calbert W., 4521 Ravenwood Street, St. Louis, Missouri
 Peters, Alvin N., White Lake, South Dakota
 Peters, Richard R., USS Howard W. Gilmore (AS 16), FPO New York, New York
 Peterson, John R., USN Recreation Station, Shoemaker, California
 Peterson, Marvin L., 611 Gleason Street, Austin, Minnesota
 Phillips, Corwin U., 501 5th Street, International Falls, Minnesota
 Phillips, Durwood, 1420 Cambridge Avenue, Fresno, California
 Pickrell, Earnest H., 635 1/2 South Liberty Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia
 Pietens, Elmer, 299 Rhine Street, Daly City, California
 Poilek, Alex R., Brown Avenue, Grapeville, Pennsylvania
 Polakowski, James R., 6736 Selma Avenue, Hollywood, California
 Ponder, Joseph K., R. 3, Box 372, Indianapolis, Indiana
 Pool, Leasel D., 1307 La Street, Little Rock, Arkansas
 Popham, Leslie D., Upton, Wyoming
 Porter, Emmett, 4019 Market Street, Houston, Texas
 Porzeinski, Stanley, 4736 Wren Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri
 Potozney, Andrew J., 1375 Front Street, SW, Warren, Ohio
 Provin, Charles J., 1041 Third Magnolia Avenue, Los Angeles 6, California
 Queirolo, George J., 2318 Mason Street, San Francisco, California
 Quick, Robert E., 949 Clayton Way, Denver, Colorado
 Ragsdale, Noah C. Jr., US Naval Hospital, Treasure Island, San Francisco, California
 Randy, Lawrence V., 313 East Kilieha Avenue, Easton, Pennsylvania
 Randy, Lawrence V., 313 East Kilieha Avenue, Easton, Pennsylvania
 Ray, Nelson E., R. 6, Box 354 H, Dayton 9, Ohio
 Reardon, John P., USS Saginaw Bay (CVE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Reed, Albert W., 1445 2nd Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana
 Reed, Arthur M., USS Haraden (DD 585), FPO San Francisco, California
 Reed, Frank M., USS Sawannee (CVE 27), FPO New York, New York
 Reggep, George N., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Reid, Leslie N., Emmett, Idaho
 Reider, Richard A., USS Chenango (CVE 82), FPO New York, New York
 Reiners, Joseph C. Jr., USS Sawannee (CVE 27), FPO New York, New York
 Reisen, Russel R., 3451 NW Burma Street, Portland, Oregon
 Richard, Theron J., USS Chenango (VCE 82), FPO New York, New York
 Richardson, Duane W., Receiving Station, Brooklyn, New York
 Richter, Ray F., 108 North 12th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Richter, Richard G., 10446 Scoville Avenue, Sunland, California
 Riehle, Dudley H., USS LSM 231, FPO San Francisco, California
 Riley, Malcolm O., 1044 West Misthlo Avenue, San Antonio, Texas
 Risem, Robert A., 2432 Burnett Way, Sacramento, California
 Riska, Chester, 3137 Carrolton Street, Saginaw, Michigan
 Roberts, Charles M., 15 Connelly Court, Salina, California
 Robinson, Billie S., USS Saginaw Bay, Boston Gp., 16th Fleet South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Rodgers, August J., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Roedel, Charles R., 205 South Defiance Street, Archobold, Ohio
 Roemer, Frederick P., In-Service Craft, Navy Base, Terminal Island, San Pedro, Calif.
 Roemmick, Walter C., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Roesner, James E., USS Saginaw Bay, Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Rogers, Raymond C., 103 Iroquois Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan
 Romano, Ned P., Naval Air Technical Training Center, Jacksonville, Florida
 Root, Allen M., 210 Euke of Gloucester, Annapolis, Maryland
 Rose, Harold L., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, Boston, Mass.
 Rosel, John, USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Ross, Donald L., USS Chenango (VCE 82), FPO New York, New York
 Ross Frank W., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Roubicek, Richard B., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Rowlands, Edwall, A., Loomis, Washington
 Roy, Homer J. Jr., USS Chenango, FPO New York, New York
 Royce, William L., Training and Distribution Center, Camp Elliott, San Diego, Calif.
 Ruberg, Irving J., USS Chenango, FPO New York, New York
 Rucick, Warren I., 442 Alturas Avenue, Modesto, California
 Rumley, Lee E., Naval Barracks, Naval Base, Bremerton, Washington
 Rundell, Charles E., 147 South Holly Street, Medford, Oregon
 Ruppman, Elmer L., USS Saginaw Bay, Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, Boston, Massachusetts
 Rutter, Robert P., 308 Cabot Street, Newtonville, Massachusetts
 Ryan, John F., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Ryan, John T., USS Ingraham (DD 694), FPO San Francisco, California
 Ryan, Leo R., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Sacco, Ralph O., 2712 North Ruby Street, Spokane, Washington
 Salik, Robert, USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Sallee, Joseph W., 484 Garden Way, Yuba City, California
 Sanchez, John D., Veterans Adm. Hospital, Los Angeles, California
 Sanders, Theodore R., USS Chenango (VCE 28), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Sanders, Thomas J., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Sauder, Frederick William, 701 Leahy Street, Muskegon Heights, Michigan
 Savoldy, Howard T., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Sawyer, Lyle H., R. B. 1, Marion, Michigan
 Scanlan, William M., (No Address Available)
 Scarborough, James C., Receiving Station, Shoemaker, California
 Schafer, James F., USS EBERLE (DD 430) FPO San Francisco, California
 Schawartz, Stanford F., Receiving Station, San Pedro, California
 Schenk, Robert F., Receiving Station, San Pedro, California
 Schies, Richard J., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Schilling, Richard L., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Schleiger, Louis F., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Schmetzer, Russell N., USS McCracken (APA 198), FPO San Francisco, California
 Schneider, Dale C., 605 North Hayes, Pocatello, Idaho
 Schulte, Arthur M., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Schultz, William F., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Schumack, William A., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Schuraytz, Irving M., USS Chenango (VCE 29), FPO New York, New York
 Schurgot, Paul D., Jr., USS Saginaw Bay (VCE 82), Boston Gp., 16th Fleet, South Boston Annex, USNRB, Boston, Massachusetts
 Schutz, John J., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Scialo, Dominick, Receiving Station, San Pedro, California
 Scoggins, Grady H., 1510 Charnelton, Avenue, Eugene, Oregon
 Scottia, Nicholas Jr., USS McCracken (APA 198), FPO San Francisco, California
 Scrivner, Douglas W., 408 Broadway K, Irvine, Kentucky
 Seager, Lewis G., USS Chenango (VCE 28), FPO New York, New York
 Sears, Walter A., Columbus, Montana
 Sefton, William H., 4567 St. Charles Place, Los Angeles, California
 Seward, Raymond H., USS West Virginia (BB-48), Seattle Gp., 19th Fleet, USNS, Seattle, Washington
 Sheehan, John P., 50 Chelasford Street, Lawrence, Massachusetts
 Sherman, Gordon B., US Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida
 Shelburn, Herbert E., 811 North Bleinest Street, Wellington, Kansas
 Shelton, Abe, 115 Division Avenue, Birmingham, Alabama
 Shuptrine, William J., P.O. Box 403, Irving, Texas
 Siegmund, Roland H., Rt. 1, Box 87, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
 Sievers, Charles R., 1123 Princeton Street, Santa Monica, California
 Simmons, Charles M., USN Receiving Station, Treasure Island, San Francisco, Calif.
 Simpson, Enos L., 205 Lincoln Street, Houston, Texas
 Slusher, Edward C., Route 2, Lexington, Missouri
 Smart, Maurice H., 104 East Newton Street, Boston, Massachusetts
 Smith, Edward J., USN Personnel Separation Center, Great Lakes, Illinois
 Smith, Gordon S., 21605 Thatcher Street, Detroit, Michigan
 Smith, Paul Raymond, Amory, Mississippi
 Smith, Thomas A., 1572 Alemeda Street, Birmingham, Alabama
 Smotherman, Charles, P.O. Box 18, Brookings, Oregon
 Snyder, Joseph B., US Fleet Service Schools, Norfolk, Virginia
 Snyder, Robert F., 108 Walnut Street, Bordentown, New Jersey
 Sorecon, Melvin M., 5871 Glenwood Street, Duluth, Minnesota
 Spriggs, Walter J., 1345 North Parker Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana
 Spry, Dale C., 7005 South Oak Street, Tacoma 9, Washington
 Spykes, Weldon L., Hermileigh, Texas
 Stahoski, Wayne Edward, Box 54, Whitehall, Wisconsin
 Stansifer, George L., Box 155, Tillicum, Washington
 Starke, Rae T., 1535 Lake Street, Niles, Michigan
 Steinberg, Julius, 310 Riverside Drive, New York 25, New York
 Stewart, Donald Bissit, East 60 Davis Canyon, Miami, Arizona
 Stokes, Ralph L., Route 4, Box 57, Texarkana, Arkansas
 Stouten, Robert D., 545 Carrier Street, NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 Strecker, Paul, 525 9th Street, Greeley, Colorado
 Strutz, Arthur C., Box 184, Omro, Wisconsin
 Strycker, Lowell, Box 35, Wakarusa, Indiana
 Stubbs, Lyle C., 845 West A Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
 Swain, Alexander M., 500 Main Street, Greenfield, Massachusetts
 Swan, Harry, Box 132, Crown Point, Indiana
 Swanson, Robert L., 1014 Minor Avenue, Seattle, Washington
 Syppott, Francis Jr., Route 4, Fairmont, West Virginia
 Tackett, Henry A., 2909 Burton Street, Fort Worth, Texas
 Taft, Darrell Barlow, 798 East 39th Street, Salt Lake, Utah
 Takach, Edward W., 319 Lincoln Avenue, Mingo Junction, Ohio
 Tarto, Jack J., 1234 Flood Street, New Orleans, Louisiana
 Tarzan, Lazer, J., 1325 Madrell Court, NE, Canton, Ohio
 Taulbee, James E. Jr., 151 Carlisle Avenue, Lexington, Kentucky
 Taylor, Clark E., 827 Prince Street, Grinnell, Iowa
 Taylor, Winford D., 2983 SW 3rd Street, Miami, Florida
 Teubner, Walter F., 10268 Cheviot Drive, Los Angeles 34, California
 Thacker, Harvey M., 6164 Aldonia Street, Los Angeles, California
 Thelen, Max Jr., 136 Alvarado Road, Berkeley, California

Thomas, Wallace D., USS Cubera (SS 347), FPO New York, New York
 Thompson, Alvin J., Box 103, Hettinger, North Dakota
 Thompson, William H., 1238 South D Street, Oxnard, California
 Tibbs, Marvin E., Route 4, Fairmount, West Virginia
 Tickle, Stanley G., 5442 5th Avenue, Los Angeles 43, California
 Tindall, John A., R. R. 2, Chester, Illinois
 Tolliver, Ralph, 309 Hemlock Street, Benham, Kentucky
 Tompkins, John D., Naval Recruiting Station, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
 Toth, John Z., 513 West Mahoney Avenue, Girardville, Pennsylvania
 Towler, Herbert W., 724 Lime Street, Waterloo, Iowa
 Trautman, Frank A., 5129A Gilmore Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri
 Trojan, Frank J., 735 North Levitt Street, Chicago, Illinois
 Trotter, Oliver R., Star Route, Sevierville, Tennessee
 Troy, William E., Box 101 Alturas, California
 Trumbo, Earl L., 133 North Washington, Hobart, Indiana
 Turner, Walter H., USS Robert F. Keller, (DE 449), FPO San Francisco, California
 Unzicker, Junior O., Star Route, Lamar, Nebraska
 Urbanski, Stanley R., 990 East Jessamine Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota
 Usemann, James J., 2426 Atwood Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin
 Valcq, Norman J. J., 1105 West Vliet Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Valencia, Henry C., 583 Clifton Street, Los Angeles, California
 Valled, John Raymond, 3935 Chatsworth, Detroit, Michigan
 Van Allen, Donald R., Route 1, Box 11, Greenville, Michigan
 Van Deusen, Clifford E., 1727 West 5th Street, Red Wing, Minnesota
 Van Steenberg, Richard M., Mitchell, Nebraska
 Vasile, Biagio C., 369 Suydan Street, Brooklyn, New York
 Veigas, Anthony, USS Apc 10, FPO San Francisco, California
 Velarde, Jose B., 1531 Ruez Lane Ramona Gardens, Los Angeles, California
 Vengley, William A., Route 1, Box 85, Oakley, California
 Venturelli, James J., 206 Walnut Street, Oglesby, Illinois
 Verret, Daniel L., Box 247 B, Jeanerette, Louisiana
 Vettel, Raymond E., 6823 Woodmar Avenue, Hammond, Indiana
 Vinson, Frank J., 346 25th Avenue, San Francisco 21, California
 Vincent, Robert C., Box 711, Central Point, Oregon
 Vitanza, Colga, 701 Avenue W., Brooklyn 23, New York
 Von Zell, Theodore E., 538 Edna Street, Montebello, California
 Vowel, Everette L., Route 1, Noxapater, Mississippi
 Wachowiak, Joseph P. Jr., c/o Marie Popham, 424 West Broadway, Glendale, Calif.
 Wade, Arthur Thomas, Route 2, Ewing, Kentucky
 Wahala, Michael, 3148 East 66th Street, Cleveland, Ohio
 Walker, Charles Laure, c/o Marie Popham, 424 West Broadway, Glendale, Calif.
 Walker, Claude L., 132 South Orchard Drive, Burbank, California

Walton, Francis G., 10824 South Hale Avenue, Chicago 43, Illinois
 Wamser, Dale E., 614 South Findlay Avenue, Los Angeles, California
 Wampler, Randolph Jr., R. R. 2, Palestine, Illinois
 Ward, Stanley L., 3674 Turner Avenue, Fresno, California
 Weaver, Oscar L., 152 South Madison Street, Nappanee, Indiana
 Weinstein, Jack C., Glidden, Wisconsin
 Well, Robert S., 4915 N. E. 42nd St., Portland, Oregon
 Wells, James G., RFD 1, Bellville, Ohio
 Welsh, James R., 118 W. Patriot St., Somerset, Pennsylvania
 Welx, John E., 35 Spring St., Delaware, Ohio
 Wenzel, Alfred L., Mainila, Iowa
 Whaley, Dewitt T., 1716 Ave. D., Kearney, Nebraska
 Whitefield, Doctor F., 9 Grant St., Redlands, California
 Whitney, Harold E., Naval Recruiting Station, Los Angeles, California
 Wilder, Paul P., 2363 Autumn Ave., Memphis, Tennessee
 Wiley, Merrill R., 145 W. North St., Spanish Fork, Utah
 Willare, Karl, 2125 Harrison St., Apt. 301, Oakland, California
 Willis, Robert E., 739 Eastern Ave., Ashland, Ohio
 Wilmes, Wesley W., 518 S. Knox Court, Denver, Colorado
 Wilson, Darwin G., Randolph, Nebraska
 Wilson, Raymond G., Jr., 1541 Accommodation Ave., Columbus, Ohio
 Wilson, William E., U.S. Naval Receiving Station, Seattle, Washington
 Wilson, William W., 3944 Gundry Ave., Long Beach, California
 Wilsteae, Harold L., Hunington, Utah
 Winkeiman, Virgil, Jr., 1800 Esplanade, Apt. 5, Klamath Falls, Oregon
 Winter, Edwin E., 1206 Stedman St., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
 Wisniewski, Frank J., MM1/c, USS Iowa (BB61), c-o FPO, San Francisco, California
 Wolfe, Martin L., 404 Valley Road, Coatesville, Pennsylvania
 Womack, J. B., Box 296, Madison, Alabama
 Wood, Oblelee, Carlon Hill, Alabama
 Woolf, James M., 1814 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo, California
 Woolworth, Jack, Jr., 9646 Lemona Ave., San Francisco, California
 Wright, Virgil L., 3827 Virgil St., Omaha, Nebraska
 Yarnall, William K., 11 Springfield Ave., Merchantville, New Jersey
 York, James E., 1102 23rd St., Portsmouth, Ohio
 Young, Ray M., RFD 1, Spanish Fork, Utah
 Young, Robert H., Route 1, Box 224, Bend, Oregon
 Ziegler, Fritz G., 445 S. Bridge, Visalia, California
 Zikmund, Thomas J., 30-64 34th St., Astoria, New York
 Zeman, Anthony F., Box 337, Alliance, Nebraska
 Zimmer, Lawrence L., 510 Roth St., San Francisco, California
 Zinkand, William C., 2033 5th Ave., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

U.S. Navy: Recruiters

