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# Destroyer

# X

U.S.S. HEERMANN

DD - 532



WAR HISTORY  
OF THE

USS

HEERMANN





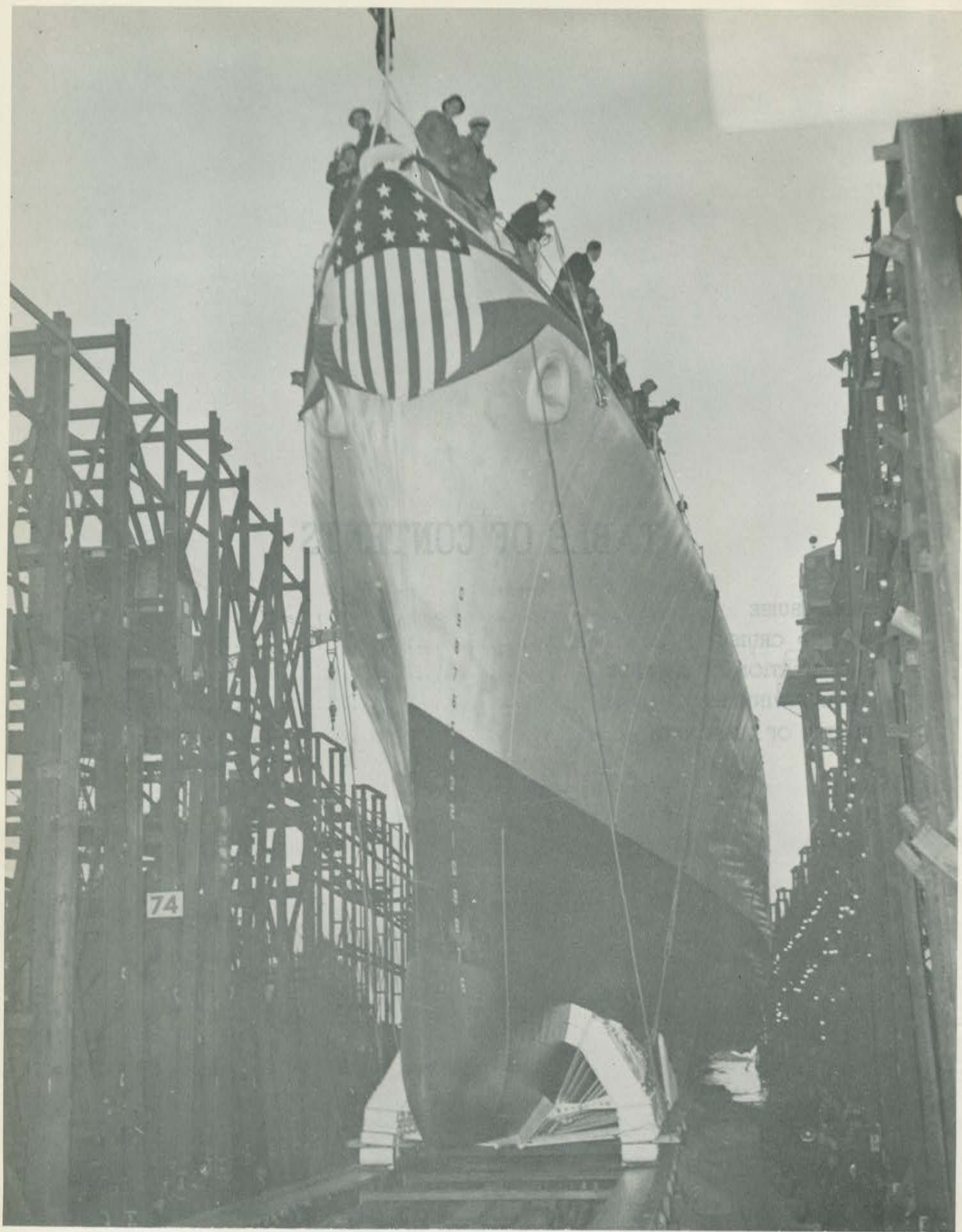
## *This Record . . . . .*

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| FIRST CRUISE .....           | 9  |
| SECOND CRUISE .....          | 31 |
| PRESENTATION OF AWARDS ..... | 47 |
| AWARD WINNERS .....          | 53 |
| ROSTER OF PERSONNEL .....    | 57 |



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

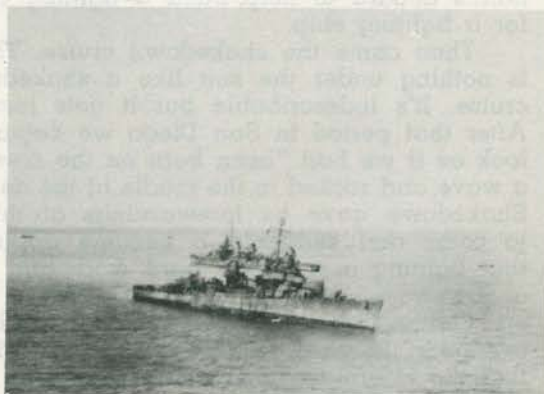
came aboard to convert all the Pollywogs into honorable Shellbacks. This ancient ceremony, which takes place upon the "crossing of the line," is a little difficult to explain. About the closest thing to it is the initiation of a freshman into a college fraternity, except that it is more violent if anything. 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.

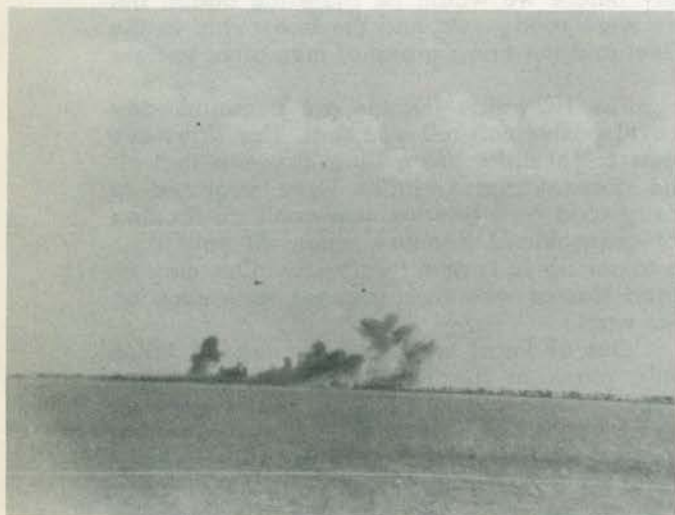
On the night of twenty November, we approached the atoll, and with the light of day



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.

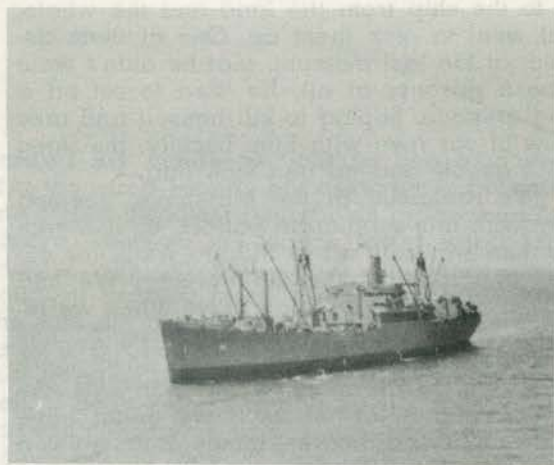
Port Purvis, Florida Island, is a land locked harbor, completely surrounded by high hills which kept out the sea breeze. A hotter place you could not find. It very seldom rained during the day, but the moment that movies would start on the forecastle, down it would come in torrents. The natives there 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

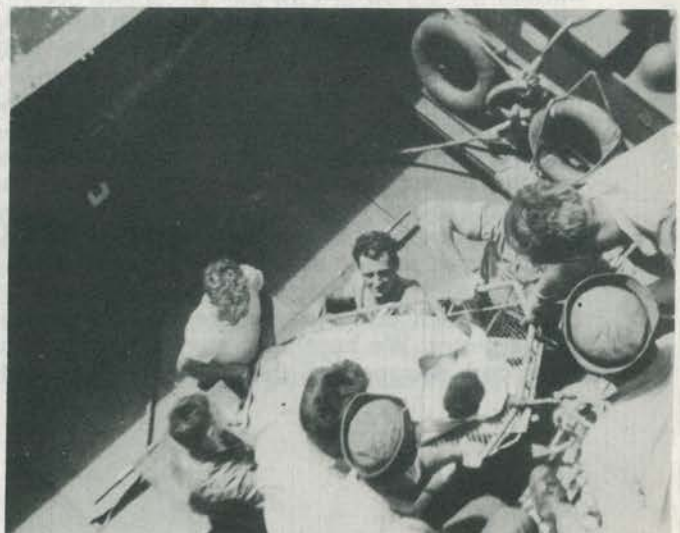
was too long. Then we were on our way home—it was what we had dreamed of for a long time and here it was. There's no mistaking a ship that is homeward bound, even if she's not flying a homeward bound pennant. There is a little something on the faces of her crew, there is even something about the way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

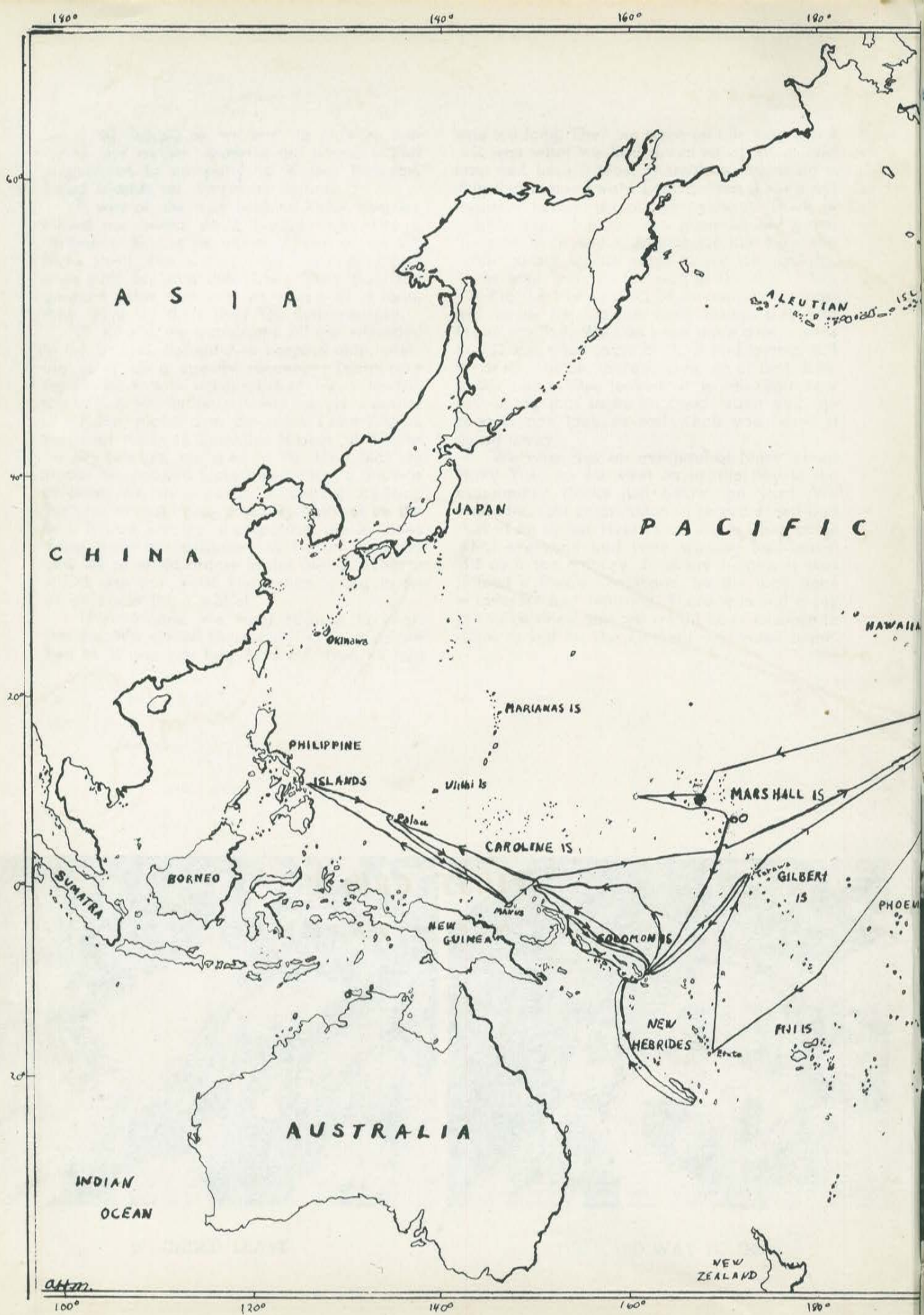
We were due for overhaul at Mare Island Navy Yard so we went on up the Bay to the ammunition docks just below the yard. We unloaded that ammunition in record speed and moved on up the river to our dock. Then came what everyone had been waiting for—leave. All over the country, in many homes, it was indeed 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.

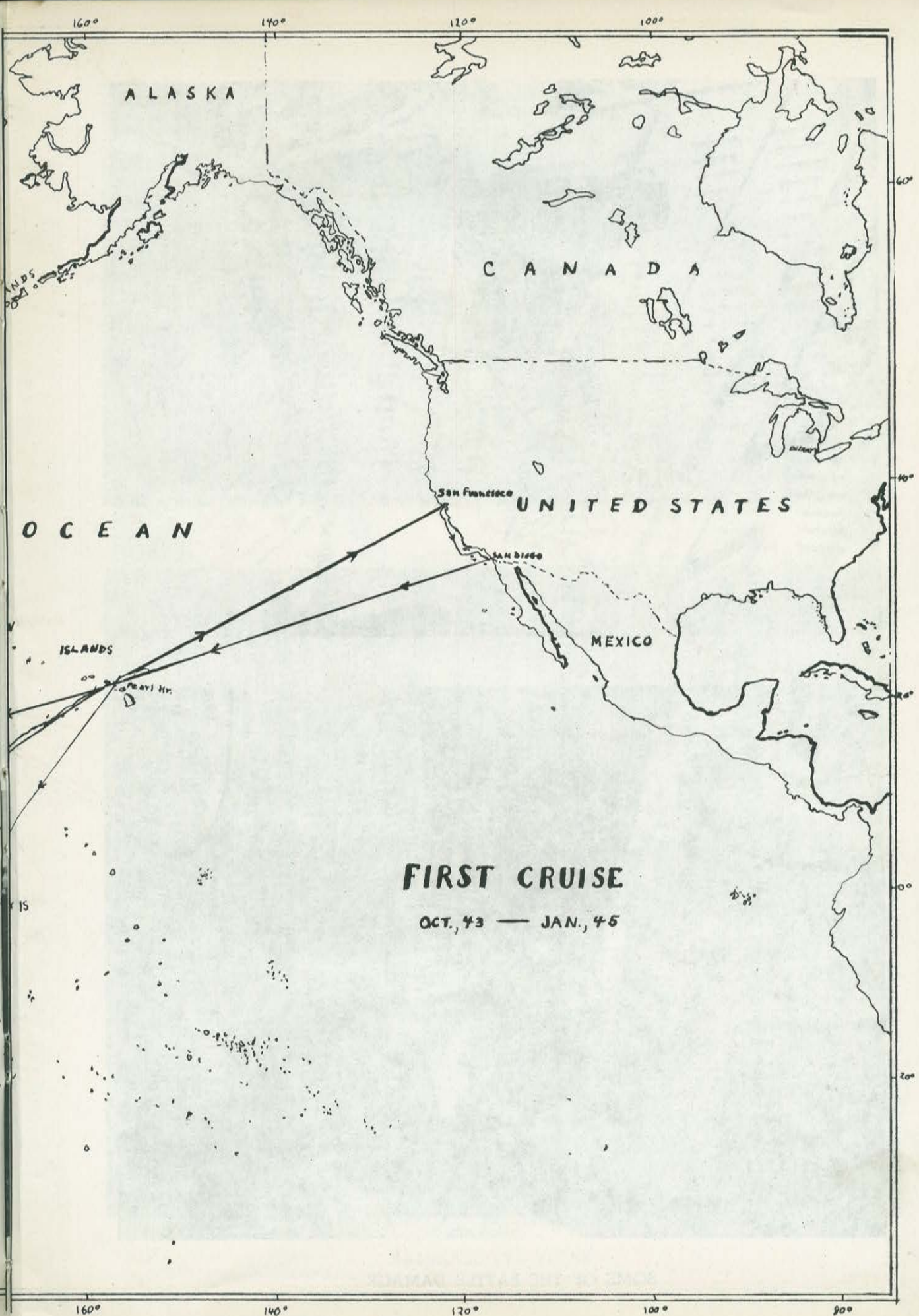


WOUNDED LEAVE



THE HARD WAY TO GO



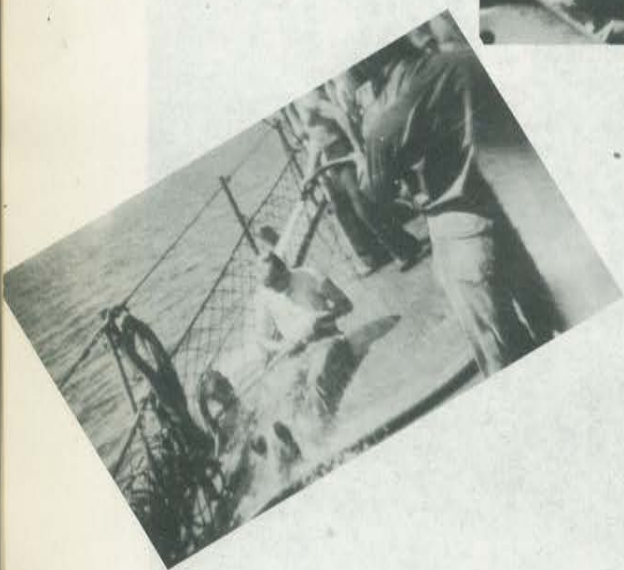
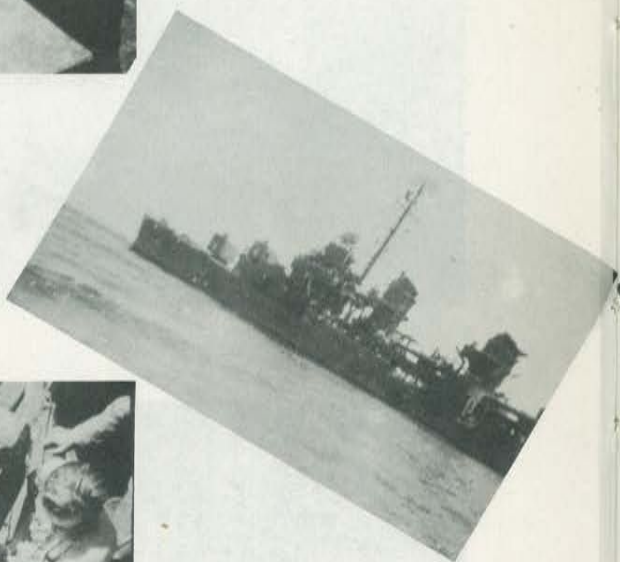




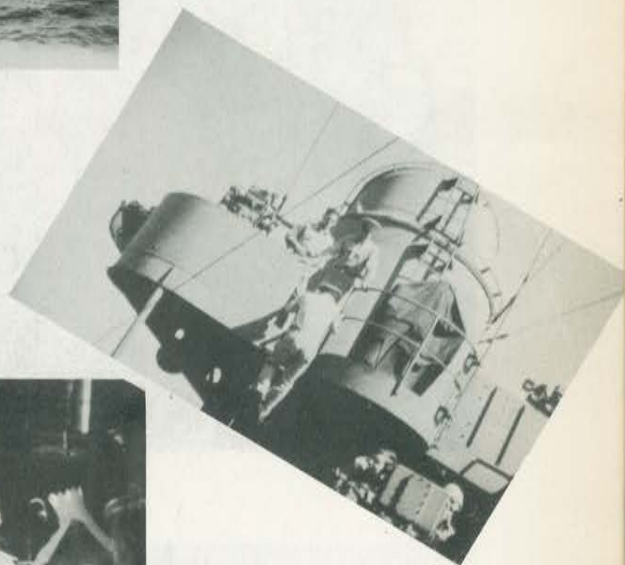
SOME OF THE BATTLE DAMAGE



KAMIKAZE EYE VIEWS .



NAVY PHOTO ARCHIVE  
REF ID: A66666





"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--'



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

BY WILLIS W. KRESGE

His ship, which cannot be identified other than as a product of the Bethlehem Steel Co., sank here last year. It was under way when the damage report came from the Island Navy Yard. Her sister ships, the U. S. S. *Huel* and U. S. S. *Johnston*, were sunk in the violent harrowing action that aided in keeping the powerful Jap force from invading the Leyte Gulf and crippling the powerful 7th fleet.

## Heermann's Men Lauded For Battle

Continued from Page 1

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

Meanwhile word came that the submarine *Jalisco*, 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 fire, according to an Associated Press dispatch, and will lay over at Astoria till tomorrow. All of the vessels were due to arrive at their destination, says the dispatch.

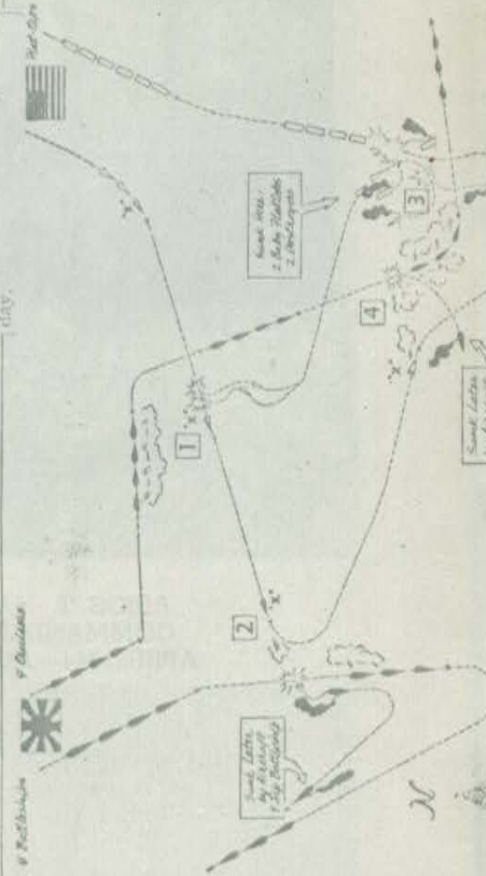
With the Jallac, which will join the destroyer Heermann here, are the leafish, bound for Portland, Ketchikan, due at Longview and Lamprey set for Astoria. The report stated the subs would not reach the Columbia river lights until 3 p. m. to-



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

## Two Bombing Forays Ended The St. Lo

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



# 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 a destroyer, one a torpedo boat, and one a minesweeper—were in the Philippines when the Japanese fleet came in. The three U. S. destroyers—one of them a destroyer, one a torpedo boat, and one a minesweeper—were in the Philippines when the Japanese fleet came in.

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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 man 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 Bakerfield, 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 35 knots, into the face of the three destroyers was approach 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.

"I went on in," continued the

### Inside The News

More details on Page 18.1

Continued from Page 1

The disabled battleship under its No. 4 turret. The four battleships were fired 270 degrees and fired north.

Commander Hathaway saw that the Japs pulled away and Admiral Sprague gathered his group together—that there was left. The destroyers Johnston and Hoel, the Hoel was recommended by Commander William D. Thomas of San Francisco had been sunk. The little ship then moved in to carrier Gambier Bay was sunk while

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### These Bay Region Men Were There With Destroyer 'X'

The following Bay Area personnel of Destroyer X, participated in the second battle of the Philippines: James H. Boulton, Modesto; James A. Brewster, Fort Bragg; Walter H. Browning, Berkeley; Walter H. Carney, Vallejo; Rudolph Domina, Haverford; Terry Garcia, Sacramento; Eugene F. Gault, Daly City; Luther P. Hella, Eureka; Raymond M. Jett, Hayward; William K. Klein, San Francisco; Joseph P. Lemons, Richmond; A. Lohr, Martinez; Albert A. Lynn, San Francisco; Robert C. Martin, Clearwater; Owen R. McWhann, Highland; Alvin K. McWhann, Santa Clara; Alvin K. McWhann, San Jose; Darwood Phillips, Sanger; Robert A. Henson, Alameda; Charles Roberts, Sausalito; Warren J. Rudick, Oakland; Fred L. Stetson, Eureka; William A. Venable, Oakley; Anthony Venable, Sacramento; Roy Zappa, Modesto; and Lieutenant Jg. Max Thelton Jr., Berkeley.

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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 Heermann'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.

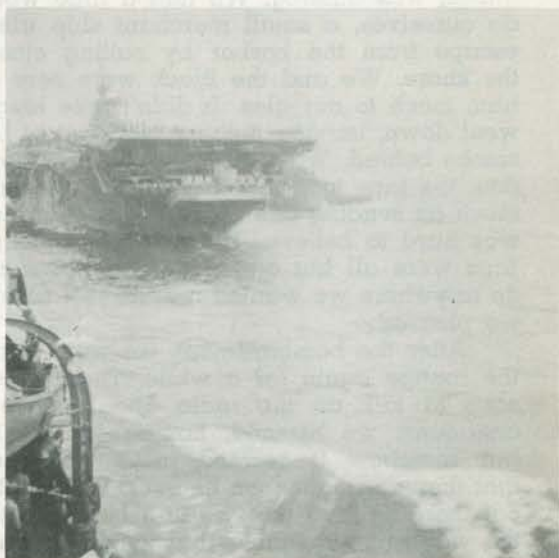
On the tenth of July, the first strike against Tokyo itself was launched. We thought this would bring a heavy raid from the Japs in retaliation but it did not materialize. A few enemy planes came out, only to be shot down by our fighters. On this operation, as on the others, our planes did a fine job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

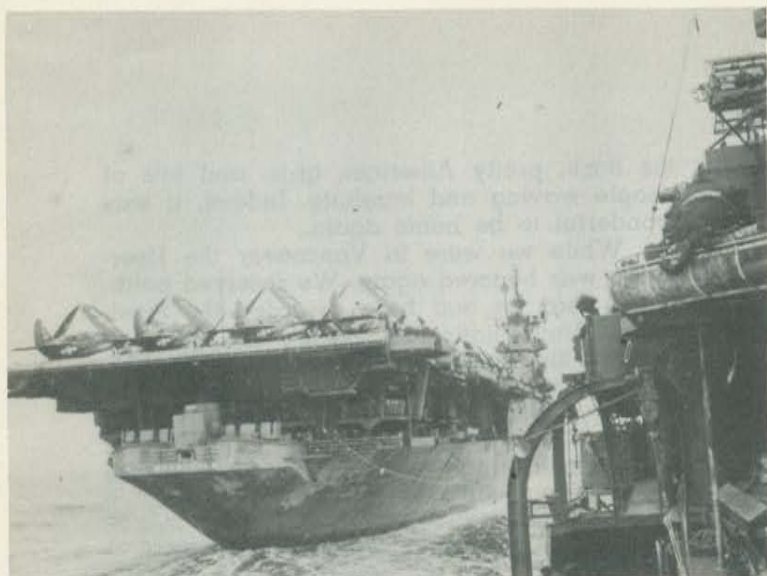
to make us want to stay but we did enjoy seeing the place.

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.

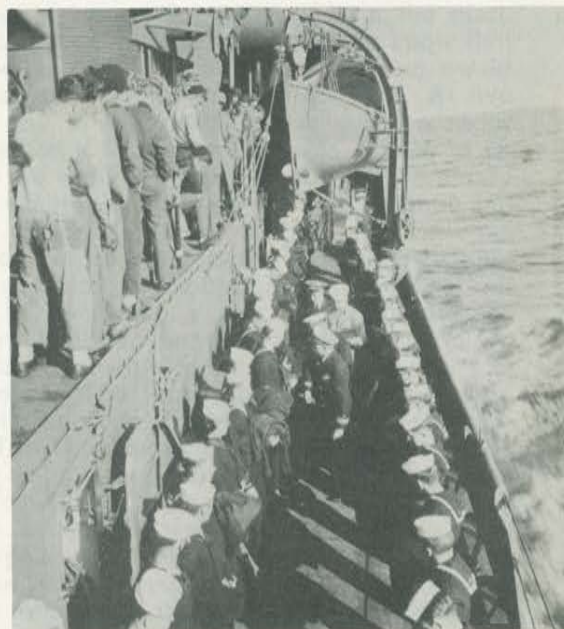
While we were in Vancouver the Heermann was honored again. We received notification that we had been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for the job we had done down in the Philippine Islands on October 25, 1944. That award is the highest the nation can give a ship and we were all very proud to have 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

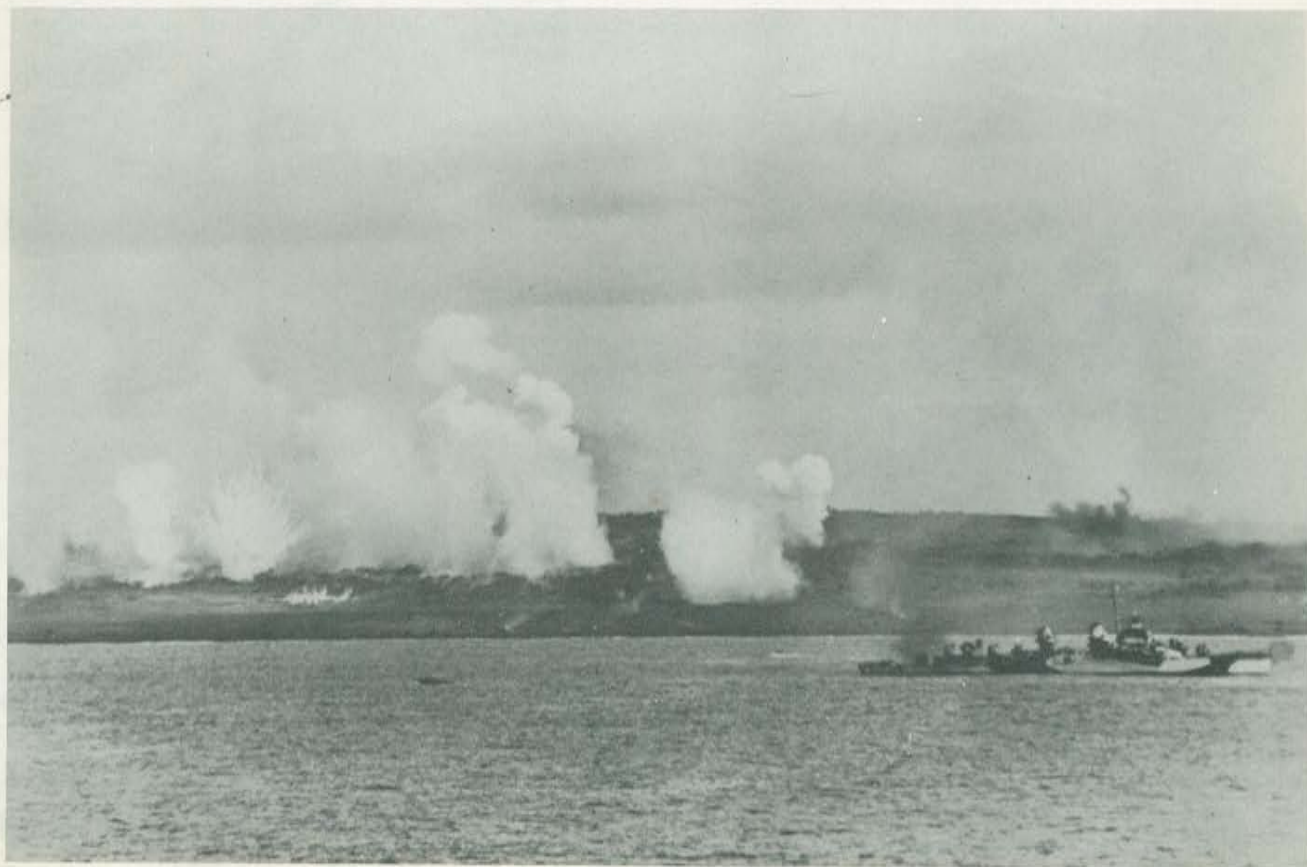
RIGHT: CAPTAIN'S INSPECTION.

LOWER: BATTLE SCORE.





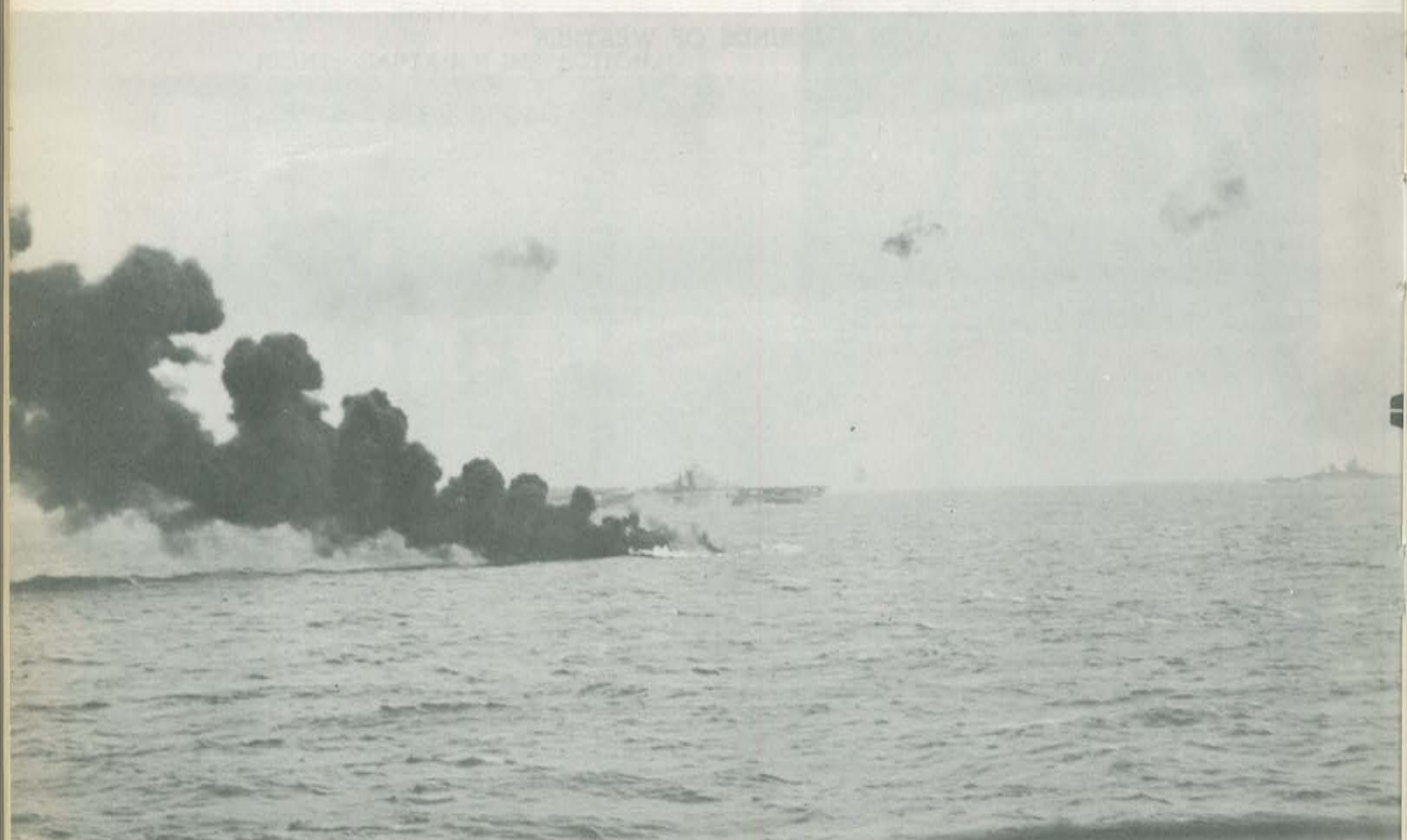
IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER



SHORE BOMBARDMENT



TORPEDO BOMBER



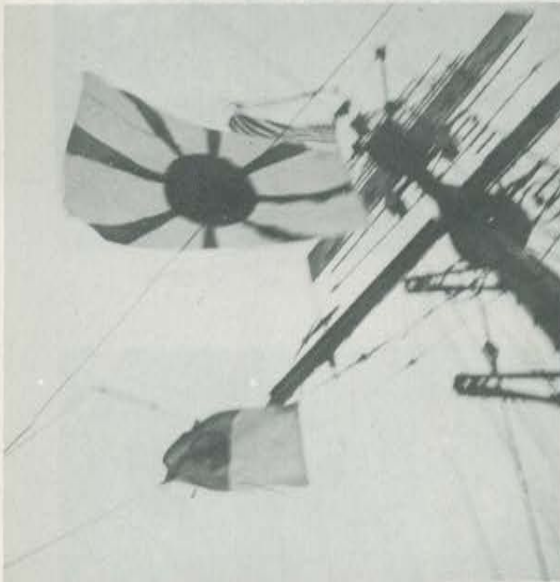
A GOOD JAP



UPPER: SOME TOOK TO THE BRUSH.

MIDDLE: NAGATO'S BATTLE FLAG.

LOWER: SNAFU FLAG.





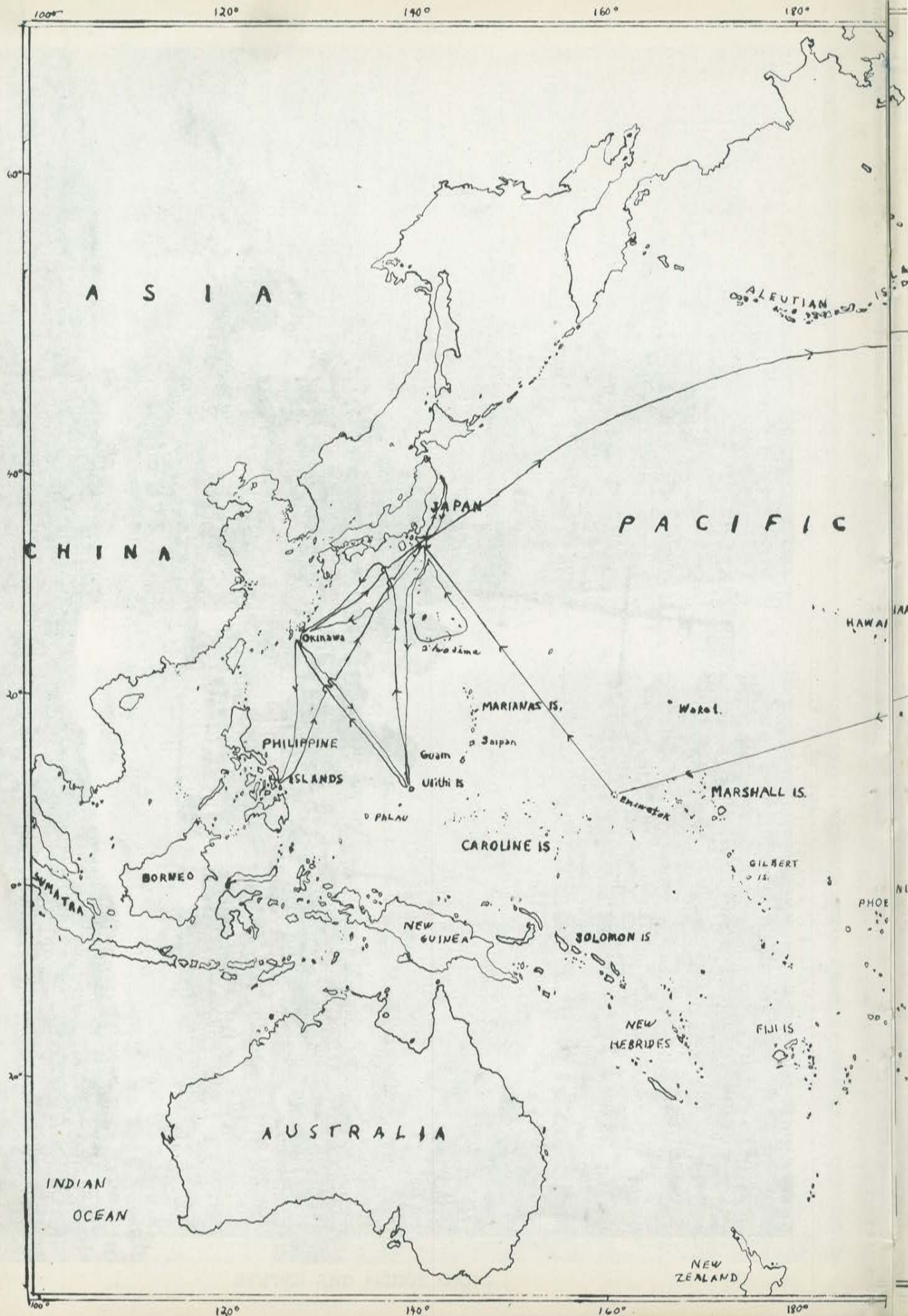
HOME AGAIN

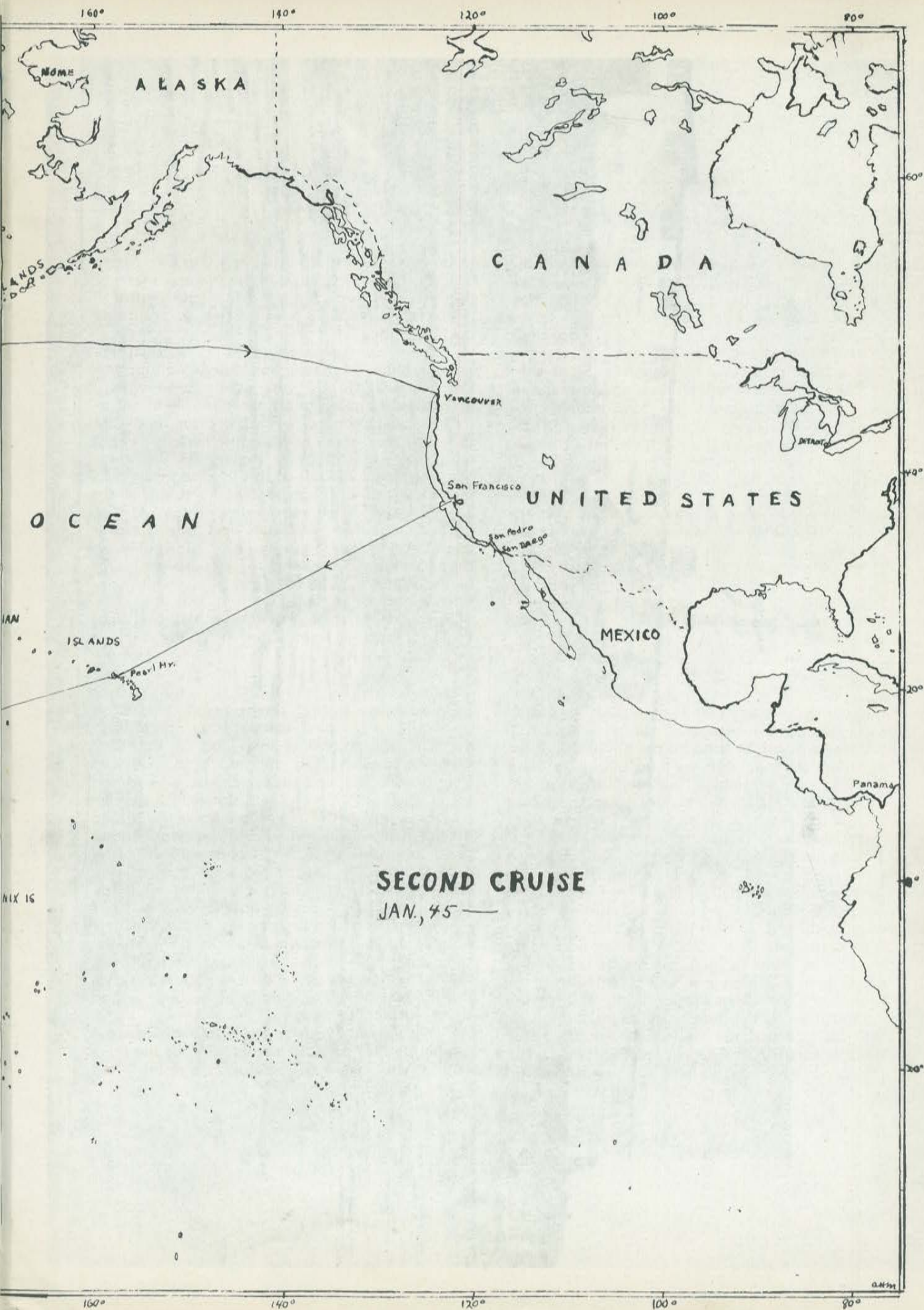


SKIPPER AND BRIDGE GANG



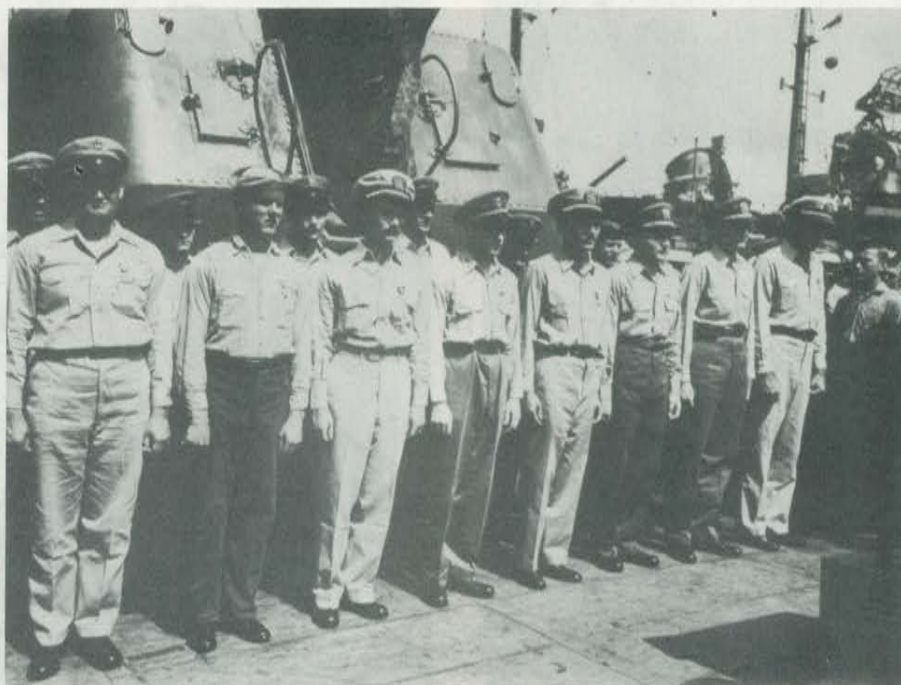
U.S.S. HEERMANN







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

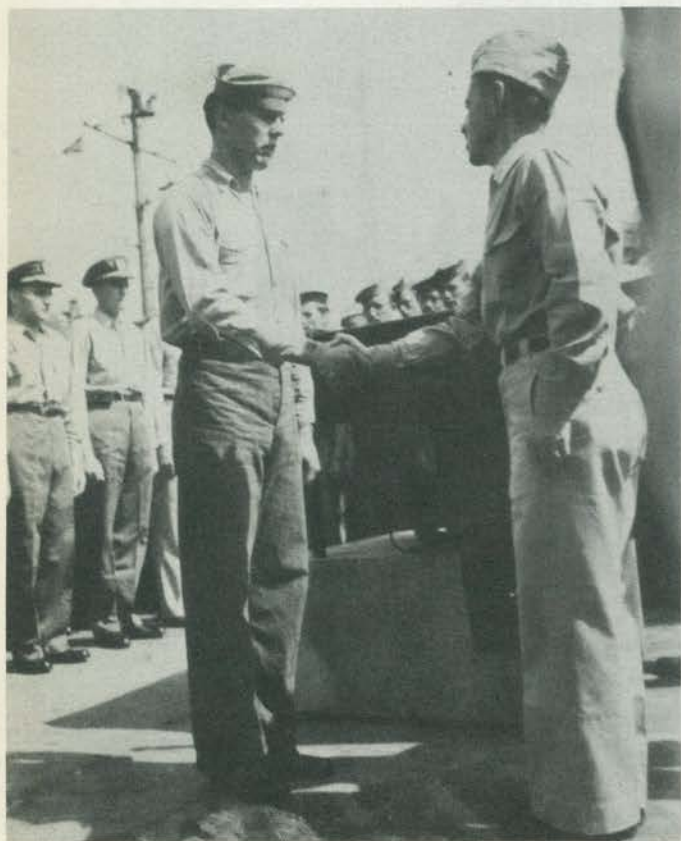




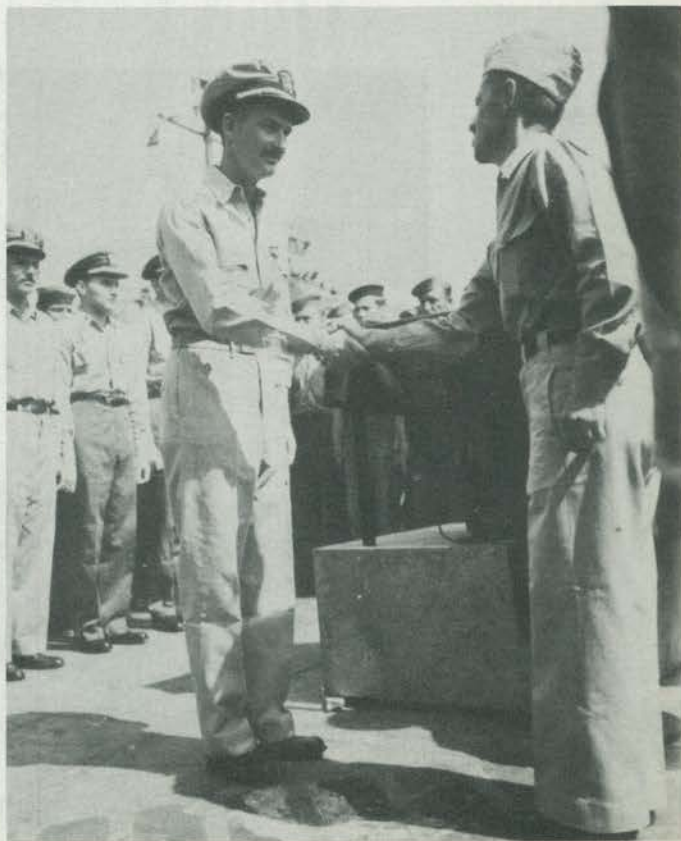
J. P. MILLEY, GQM, U.S.N.  
SILVER STAR



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



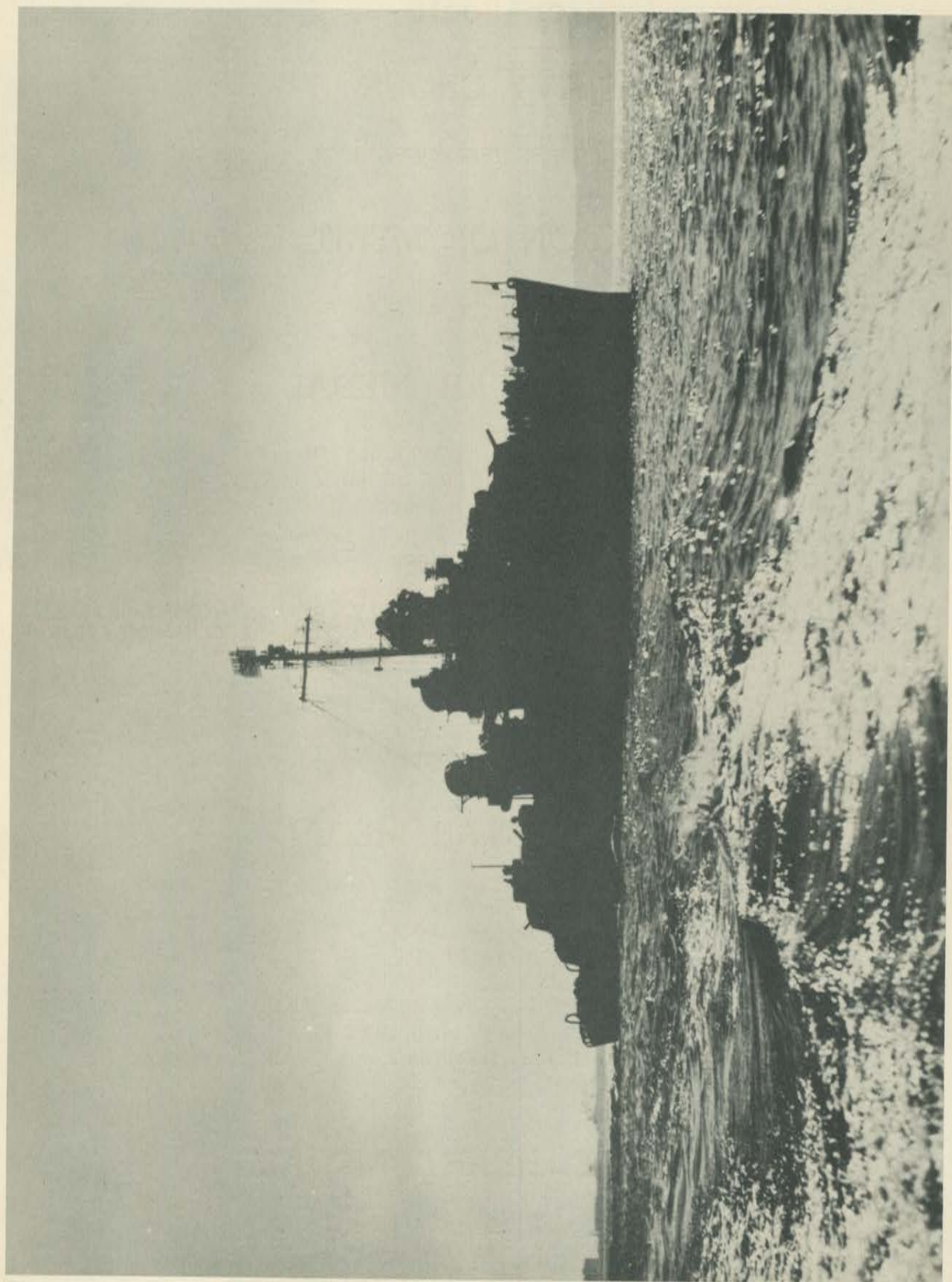
LT. (jg) J. STEINBERG, U.S.N.R.  
LETTER OF COMMENDATION



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  
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