

"THE MOUNTAINEER"

IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA (BB-48) REUNION ASSOC.

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The main function of the "MOUNTAINEER" is to keep the crew members of *West Virginia* informed of the events sanctioned by our association and to promote the lore of which each of us had shared.

Our association does not have, or want to have, a dues program. We subsist off the revenue which is derived from our reunions. We are a non-profit organization and as such; we use our funds yearly to purchase a wreath to be placed December the 7th at the Remembrance Garden of the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in honor of all our shipmates, past, present and future.

We also, in addition to publishing the "MOUNTAINEER" twice between each reunion, use our funds to support other memorials that are common to our tenets.

We believe that the primary purpose of our association is to keep the memory of our ship and shipmates alive as long as one of us is still able to do so.

"WE GOOFED AGAIN"

We sincerely regret an error we made in our last issue of the "MOUNTAINEER". We had inadvertently left the name of "Shipmate" Eugene Henry, off of the 1996 Reunion Muster List. He surely was with us in Norfolk.

"HOW WE VOTED ON THE 1998 REUNION SITE"

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA THE CHOICE FOR 1998

The voting response was indeed encouraging as we received 172 returned ballots and here is how they voted: Central California 44; Minnesota/Dakotas/Wisconsin 36; Corpus Christi, TX 21; Tucson, AZ 19; St Louis, MO 19; Nashville, TN 18 and all others 15 votes.

In view of the election response we are now actively searching for a suitable site in the Bay Area for our 1998 Reunion. Due to the response from our shipmates in the North Central States we are investigating prices and availability's of hotels in that area for our 1999 reunion. In selecting a site we are forced to consider the following criteria: Is the city/site reunion friendly? Is it readily accessible by air, car or train? Hotel facilities- parking, food service, safety of guests, medical services availability and cost of rooms. There are other things also to take into consideration in order for us to have a high-class get-together at a reasonable cost.

We should have complete information available by the Portland reunion.

Another gratifying off-spring from the mail-in voting was the tremendous amount of personnel data we received. We were able to up-date our records and we now are able to serve our shipmates better.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS?

If not please advise us.

or

**If you do not wish to receive the
"MOUNTAINEER"**

Please advise us

FROM THE QUARTERDECK!

"NOW HEAR THIS"

It is always sad to hear that sickness or other disasters have fallen upon our shipmates or their families. Our hearts are always with them in their time of need. I have been asked on many occasions why I don't keep the crew informed of the difficulties that plague our shipmates. First I can not write what I don't know about and secondly, many could believe that I was prying into some personal areas. We have no desire to create any hardship on anyone.

As you know many of our buddies have been effected by the cruel winter weather this year. Many reside in the parts of the country that have been hard hit by flooding, snow, severe wind storms, rail, hail and extremely cold air. We sincerely hope that all of them have a speedy return to a normal lifestyle.

I do know of a few of our shipmates who could use a little cheering up by a card or phone call. First, our congenial hospitality room host, Lou Adams, was severely ill at the time of our Norfolk reunion and his health forced to miss going to the 55th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor. In a visit with him a few days ago he says that he will be "*Fleeted Up*" to top condition for Portland. Also hoping to be at Portland is Pat Galvin, Marine Detachment, he has been incapacitated due to heart surgery complications. Ernie Nelson, Wife Joan passed away. Fred White lost his wife, Sybil, Fred has had a heart attack and is also looking forward to be with us and hopes to be in Portland. Jack O'Neill's brother "Red" of the pay office, has had a hard time lately but he is in good spirits in spite of his problems. Dick Fiske, our "Field Music" reports that both, his wife and daughter, have severely ill. We sincerely hope they and all our other "under the weather" shipmate are doing better. Our prayers are for them all

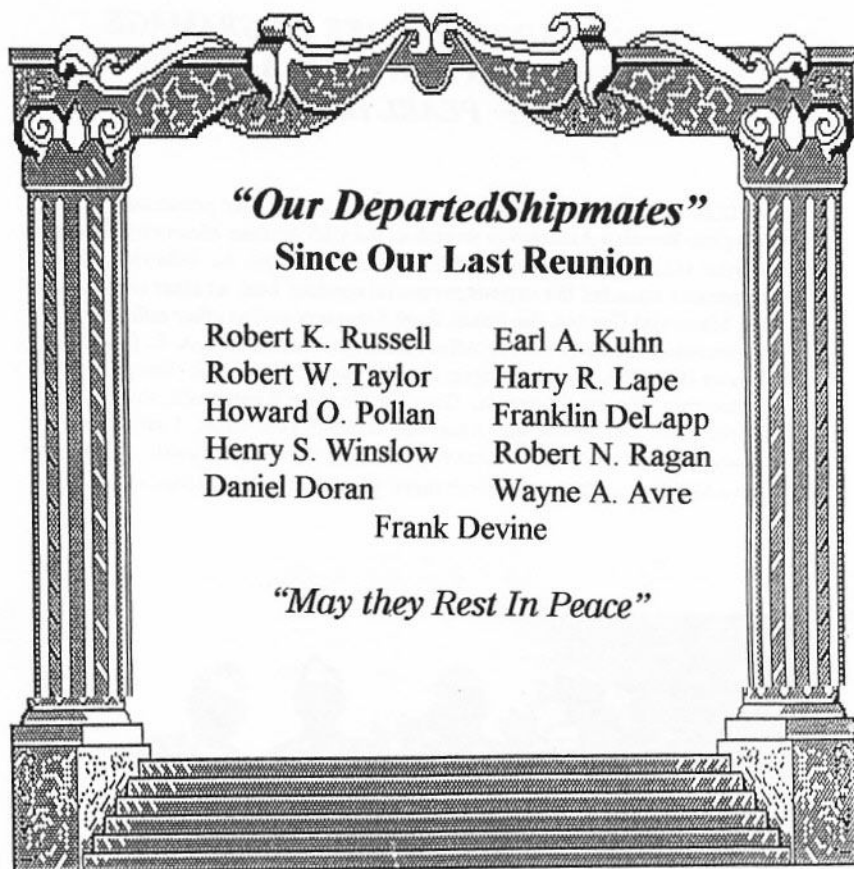
HELP WANTED

It is hoped that a relief can be found for me to take over the 1999 reunion as the "Ancient Mariner" will be past 81 at that time and I am finding it little more difficult to get the job done these days. It would be good to have a standby co-ordinator to take over in case of an emergency

Don't forget if you are flying in to Portland, be sure and call the hotel for your free transportation to the reunion. You can call from the baggage room and the number is

652-1515





"MOUNTAINEER"
Elected to the Number 2 spot in the
"PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION, Inc.

Reunion Co-Ordinator, Robert (Scratch/Geezil) Kronberger was elected to the position of National Vice President at the National Convention held in Honolulu, Hawaii in December, 1996. The PHSA had its beginning as a result of the Ship's Reunion held on December the 7th, 1954. The founders of PHSA included Sam Kronberger, CFC, F Div., Edward Kronberger Sea 1/c, VG Div. Edward Steffa, B Div. and Robert Kronberger, B Div. They were followed later by Chippie Woods, Ray Brown and Mike Kotsmith.

MOUNTAINEERS MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO HAWAII FOR THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF PEARL HARBOR

As Dick Fiske, Mickie Michenovich and Bob Kronberger presented the West Virginia Reunion Association wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial during the official military services on the 7th of December 1996, the following of our shipmates attended the various memorial services held at other sites such as the Memorial Garden, the Punch Bowl Cemetery and at other military ceremonies: James Bellows, Albert Block, Arnold Bobick, A. E. Boyd, John Brown (CY Div), Ben Boosinger, Harry Fessler, Kieth Hill, Joseph Kinnaman, Ernest Mangrum, Gery Porter, John Rauschkolb, Robert A. Reed, Glen Thompson, and Associate Member Tom Bates. Last minute illness prevented Luther Adams from making the trek to Hawaii. There may have been other "Mountaineers" there that I had no knowledge of.



Bob Kronberger, Dick Fiske, Tom Michenovich

BIOGRAPHY OF A BATTLESHIP

"USS WEST VIRGINIA-(BB-48)

PART I

From the Dictionary of American Fighting Ships

West Virginia (Armored Cruiser No. 5) was renamed *Huntington* on 11 Nov. 1916 in order to free the name *West Virginia* for Battleship No. 48.

The second *West Virginia* (BB-48) was laid down on 12 April, 1920 by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry dock Co.; launched on 17 November, 1921; sponsored by Miss Alice Wright Mann, daughter of Issac T. Mann, a prominent West Virginian; and it was commissioned on 1 December, 1923, with Captain Thomas J. Senn in command.

The most recent of the "super-dreadnoughts," *West Virginia* embodied the latest knowledge of naval architecture; the water-tight compartmentation of her hull and her armor protection marked an advance over the design of battleships built or on the drawing boards before the Battle of Jutland.

In the months that followed, *West Virginia* ran her trials and shakedown and underwent post-commissioning alterations. After a brief period of work at the New York Navy Yard, the ship made the passage to Hampton Roads, although she experienced trouble with her steering gear while enroute. The steering gear was thoroughly overhauled while in Hampton Roads.

West Virginia put to sea on the morning of 16 June, 1924. At 1010, while the battleship was steaming in the center of Lynnhaven Channel, the quartermaster at the wheel reported that the rudder indicator would not answer. The ringing of the emergency bell to the steering motor room produced no response; Captain Senn quickly ordered all engines stopped, but the engine room telegraph would not answer ---it was later discovered that there was no power to the engine room telegraph or the steering telegraph.

The Captain then resorted to the use of the voice tube for sending orders down to main control from the bridge. He ordered full speed ahead on the port engine; all stop on the starboard. Efforts continued apace over the ensuing moments to steer the ship and keep her in the channel and this failed to check headway from the edge of the channel. Unfortunately all efforts failed; as the ship lost headway due to an engine casualty and *West Virginia* grounded on the soft mud bottom. Fortunately, Commander, (later Admiral) Harold R. Stark, the executive Officer reported:

not the slightest damage to the hull had been sustained.”

The court of inquiry, investigating the grounding, found that inaccurate and misleading navigational data had been supplied the ship. The legends on the charts provided were found to have indicated uniformly greater channel width than actually existed. The findings of the court thus exonerated Captain Senn and the navigator from any blame.

After repairs had been effected, *West Virginia*, became flagship for Commander, Battleship Divisions, Battle Fleet, on 30 October, 1924 thus the beginning her service as an integral part of the “backbone of the fleet”---as the battleships were regarded. She soon proved her worth under a succession of commanding officers--most of whom later attained flag rank. In 1925, for example, under Captain A. J. Hepburn, the comparative newcomer to battleship ranks scored first in competitive short range target practices. During Hepburn’s tour *West Virginia* garnered two trophies for attaining the highest merit in the category,

The ship later won the American Defense Cup-- presented by the American Defense Society to the battle ship obtaining the highest merit with all guns in short range firing--and the Spokane Cup, presented by that city’s Chamber of Commerce in recognition of the battleship’s scoring the highest merit with all guns at short range. In 1925, *West Virginia* won the Battle Efficiency Pennant for battleships---the first time that ship had won the coveted “Meatball.” She won it again in 1927, 1932 and 1933.

During this period, *West Virginia* underwent a cycle of training, maintenance, and readiness exercises, taking part in engineering and gunnery competitions and the annual large-scale exercises, or “Fleet Problems.” In the latter, the Fleet would be divided up into opposing sides, and a strategic or tactical situation would be played out, with the lessons learned becoming part and parcel of the development of doctrine that would be later tested in the crucible of combat.

During 1925, the battleship took part in the joint Army-Navy maneuvers to test the defenses of the Hawaiian Islands and then cruised with the Fleet to Australia and New Zealand. In fleet exercises subsequent to the 1925 cruise, *West Virginia* ranged from Hawaii to the Caribbean and the Atlantic, and from Alaskan waters to Panama.

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the *WEST VIRGINIA REUNION*
Call: 1-800-492-8700**

In order to keep pace with technological developments in ordnance, gunnery, and fire control -- as well as engineering and aviation --- the ship underwent modifications designed to increase the ship's capacity to perform her designed function. Some of the alterations effected included the replacement of her initial 3 -inch antiaircraft battery with 5-inch/25 caliber dual purpose guns; the additions of platforms for 50-caliber machine guns at the foremast and maintop; and in addition to catapults on her quarter-deck, aft, and on number three or "high" turret.

In the closing years of the decade of the 1930's, however, it was becoming evident to many that it was only a matter of time before the United States became involved in yet another war on a grand scale. The United States Fleet thus came to be considered a grand deterrent to the country's most probable enemy -- Japan. This reasoning produced the hurried dispatch of the Fleet in Hawaiian waters in 1940, following the conclusion of Fleet Problem XXI in April.

As the year 1941 progressed, *West Virginia* carried out a schedule of intensive training, basing on Pearl Harbor and operating in various task forces and groups in the Hawaiian operating area. This routine continued even through the unusually tense period that began in late November and extended into the next month. Such at-sea periods were usually followed by in-port upkeep, with the battleships mooring to masonry "quays" along the southeast shores of Ford Island in the center of Pearl Harbor.

On Sunday, 7 December 1941, *West Virginia* lay moored outboard of the *Tennessee* (BB-43) at berth F-6 with 40 feet of water beneath her keel. Shortly before 0800, Japanese warplanes, flying from a six-carrier task force, commenced their well planned attack on the Fleet at Pearl Harbor. *West Virginia* took five 18-inch aircraft torpedoes in her port side and two bomb hits--those bombs being armor-piercing shells fitted with fins. The first bomb penetrated the superstructure deck, wrecking the port casemates and the galley caught fire immediately, with the subsequent detonation of the ready-service projectiles stowed in the casemates.

The second bomb hit further aft, wrecking one Vought OS2U Kingfisher floatplane atop the "high" catapult on turret III and pitching the second one on her top on the main deck below. The projectile penetrated the 4-inch turret roof, wrecking one gun in the turret itself. Although the bomb proved to be a dud, burning gasoline from the damaged aircraft caused some damage.

The torpedoes, though, ripped into the ship's port side; only prompt action by LT.

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From The Baggage Area**

Claude V. Ricketts, the assistant fire control officer who had some knowledge of damage control techniques, saved the ship from the fate that befell *Oklahoma* (BB-37) moored ahead. She, too, took torpedo hits that flooded the ship and caused her to capsize.

Instances of heroic conduct on board the heavily damaged battleship proliferated in the heat of battle. Captain Mervyn S. Bennion, arrived on his bridge early in the battle, only to be struck down by a bomb fragment hurled in his direction when a 15-inch "bomb" hit the center gun in *Tennessee's* Turret II, spraying that ship's superstructure and *West Virginia's* with fragments. Bennion, hit in the abdomen, crumpled to the deck, mortally wounded, but clung tenaciously to life until just before the ship was abandoned, involved in the conduct of the ship's defense up to the last moments of his life. For his conspicuous devotion to duty, extraordinary courage, and complete disregard of his own life, Captain Bennion was awarded a Medal of Honor, posthumously.

West Virginia was abandoned, settling to the harbor bottom on an even keel, her fires fought from on board by a party that volunteered to return to the ship after the first abandonment. By afternoon of the following day, 8 December, the flames had been extinguished. The Garbage lighter, YG-17, played an important role in assisting those efforts during the Pearl Harbor attack, remaining in position alongside despite the danger posed by exploding ammunition on board the battleship.

Later examination revealed that *West Virginia* had taken not five but six, torpedo hits. With a patch over the damaged area of her hull, the battleship was pumped out and ultimately refloated on 17 May, 1942. Docked in Drydock No. One on 9 June, *West Virginia* again came under scrutiny, and it was discovered that there had been not six, but seven torpedo hits.

During the ensuing repairs, workers located 70 bodies of *West Virginia* sailors who had been trapped below when the ship sank. In one compartment a calendar was found, the last scratch-off date being 23 December. The task confronting the nucleus crew and shipyard workers was a monumental one, so great was the damage on the battleship's port side. Ultimately, however, *West Virginia* departed Pearl Harbor for the west coast and a complete rebuilding at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, at Bremerton, Washington.

**NOTE: THE FINAL EPISODES OF THIS STORY WILL APPEAR IN
THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE "MOUNTAINEER"**

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UNITED STATES NAVY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

P.O. BOX 96570
Washington, D.C. 20077-7685

Tell a friend: Join 233,000 Shipmates in the Navy Log

Navy Log Enrollment—Share this form with a Sea Service friend or relative or use as a gift or tribute, sponsor an eligible friend, relative or ancestor. A \$25 donation (fully tax-deductible) is requested for each Log enrollment. A photo may be added to the Log at any time for additional \$25 donation.

LS97

Name: _____
First Middle Last Suffix (Jr., III, etc.)

Address: _____
(For deceased leave blank)

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Rank/Rate: _____ Corps/Specialty: _____

Birthplace: _____ Date of birth: _____ / _____ / _____
Month Day Year

Branch: (circle one)

USN USNR

USMC USCG

USMM

From (mo./yr.) _____

To (mo./yr.) _____

If you wish to include a photo, an additional \$25 contribution is requested (total \$50). With soft pencil, print your name and location and year taken on the back of the photo and on the next line below. Photos cannot be returned.

If photo is enclosed: Year taken: _____ Location: _____

Sponsor name: _____
(If different from Log Entrant named above) First Middle Last Suffix

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

"WEST VIRGINIANS AT WAR EXHIBIT OPENS"

(This news item was sent to us by a shipmate from an un-named newspaper)

The "West Virginians at War" display at the West Virginia State Museum includes the permanent home of the USS West Virginia collection.

Just in time for Veterans Day, the West Virginia State Museum has created a new exhibit area titled "West Virginians At War."

In addition to new displays, the exhibit space on the lower level of the Cultural Center Museum houses the permanent display of USS West Virginia artifacts and models.

The battleship was part of the United States Naval Fleet sunk in Pearl Harbor on the 7th of December, 1941.

The USS West Virginia exhibit includes a more than 7-foot-long model of the ship, recently donated to the museum by Joe Lake of Rockford, Ill.

The area also includes a two-year special topic area dealing with W.W. I.

This exhibit displays numerous well-preserved uniforms, rifles and documents from 1917 and 1918. Many returning WW I veterans, apparently aware of their place in history, donated war memorabilia to the state in early 1919 and 1920, giving the museum a wealth of artifacts from this age.

The exhibit includes a group of one Browning weapon that was used at the battle of Blair Mountain, one of the two largest armed confrontations in U.S. Labor history.

Plans for future exhibits in the two -year special topic area include other 20th century conflicts.

This new addition to the museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. weekends. For information call 558-0220

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Artifacts of the two ships on display at the state museum in Charleston, W. Va. From left: the bell and wheel from the battleship; various small artifacts from the battleship, and the triptych from the armored cruiser.
West Virginia State Archives

MONARCH HOTEL - CLACKAMAS
PORTLAND, OREGON
503-652-1515

HOTEL LOCATION

The Monarch Hotel is located at 12566 SE 93rd Avenue, Clackamas, Oregon 97015. The hotel is on the new Interstate 205 with easy access to I-5 and I-84. The Monarch is just 20 minutes south of Portland International Airport, downtown Portland, and the new Rose Garden Arena, home of the NBA Trailblazers. Located directly across the street from The Monarch is the Clackamas Town Center, one of the Northwest's largest and most popular regional shopping complexes.

Directions to the hotel:

- Traveling northbound on I-205, take the Sunnyside Road Exit 14. Turn left onto Sunnyside Road at the top of the off-ramp. Go to the second stoplight and turn left. This is 93rd Avenue and will lead to the entrance of the Monarch parking lot.
- Traveling southbound on I-205, take the Sunnyside Road Exit 14. Turn right onto Sunnyside Road at the top of the off-ramp merging into the far left lane. Turn left at the first stoplight. This is 93rd Avenue and will lead to the entrance of the Monarch parking lot.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

To make your room reservation, please call the Monarch Hotel at 1-800-492-8700. Tell them you are with the USS West Virginia reunion to receive your group rate of \$65 (+ tax) per night. Reservations must be made by July 27 at which time all remaining rooms in the group block will be released to the general public at more expensive rates.

HOTEL EXTRAS

This full service hotel offers guests cable television with complimentary sports and movie channels, voice mail, complimentary morning coffee, same-day laundry and valet service, on-site guest laundry facilities, direct dial telephones (not through the front desk) with message light, and hair dryers upon request. The hotel features an open courtyard swimming pool. A jacuzzi, located outside, is open year-round. A 20 mile jogging/bike path and guest discount passes to a nearby health club offer guests another opportunity to relax and stay fit. The hotel gift shop is located in the lobby for guests' convenience.

Handicapped rooms as well as non-smoking rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservation. The hotel offers free parking to guests. Check in time is 3pm; check out is 12noon. Those not registering with a credit card will need to leave a \$25 deposit for incidentals.

Dining facilities at the hotel:

- Sam's Fine Dining, features Oregon foods and wines and is open for breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch. Hours are 6am-10pm Monday-Thursday; 6am-11pm Saturday/Sunday.
- Sam's Lounge features complimentary hors d'oeuvres Monday through Friday 5pm - 7pm, as well as a large screen TV for your favorite sporting events.
- Room service is available 6am-10pm/11pm on weekends.

AIRPORT SHUTTLE

If you are flying into Portland International Airport, the hotel offers complimentary shuttle service. From the baggage claim area call 652-1515 for transportation to the hotel.

NEARBY RV PARK

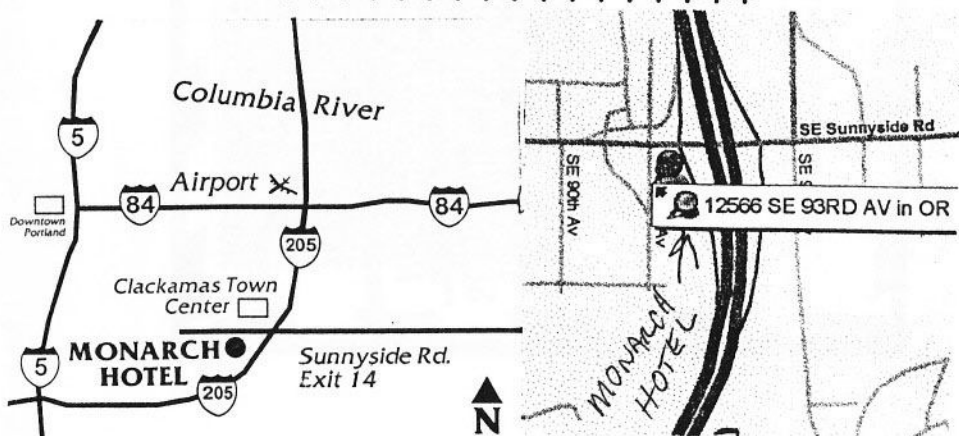
The hotel has RV parking without full hook-up. The nearest RV park with full hook-up is Town and Country RV and Mobile Home Park about 5 minutes away. From the hotel, head north on I-205 and take Exit 16 (Johnson Creek Boulevard). Turn left onto 82nd Avenue and proceed to the next light. Go through the intersection (Otti Road) and the park is immediately on the right. For more information and reservations, call (503) 771-1040.

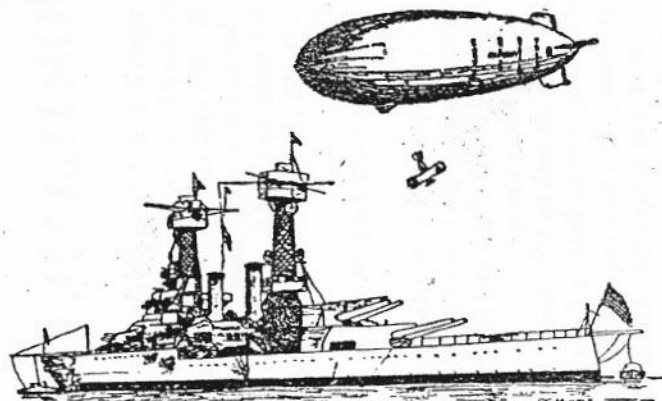
FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS CALL:
1-800-492 8700
YOU MUST TELL THEM YOU ARE WITH
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"Liberty Call"

PORTLAND, OREGON

- When** : August 27th to August 31st, 1997
- Where** : Monarch Hotel and Conference Center
- Located At** : Off I-205 with easy access to I=84 and I=5, Physical Address, I=205 and Sunny side Road, Exit #14. Street Address 12566 SE 93rd Avenue, Clackamas, Oregon
- Telephones** : (503) 652 1515, FAX (503) 652 7509, For Reservations (800) 492-8700
- From Airport** : Complimentary Airport Shuttle form Portland International Airport
- Landmark** : Across the street from the Clackamas Town Center Mall,
- Things to Do**: Planned Tours of the City of Portland, Mt. Hood and Timberline Lodge, The North Coast and Maritime Museum and a Columbia River Cruise.
- Other Sites** : Shop the Mall with its 185 Stores, Two full service restaurants, The Dorothy Hamill Skating Centre, and a food court featuring 22 eateries. You may visit Mt. St. Helen's National Volcanic Monument and many other attractions.
- Entertainment**: We will have a large hospitality room (open as long as any one wants to use it. Swim Call will be sounded "weather Permitting". Entertainment is planned for the Friday night Reception and the Saturday Night Banquet. Sunday Morning we will have "Church Call" followed by breakfast and our business meeting.





U. S. S. WEST VIRGINIA

MANEUVERS WITH MACON IN SOUTHERN
WATERS

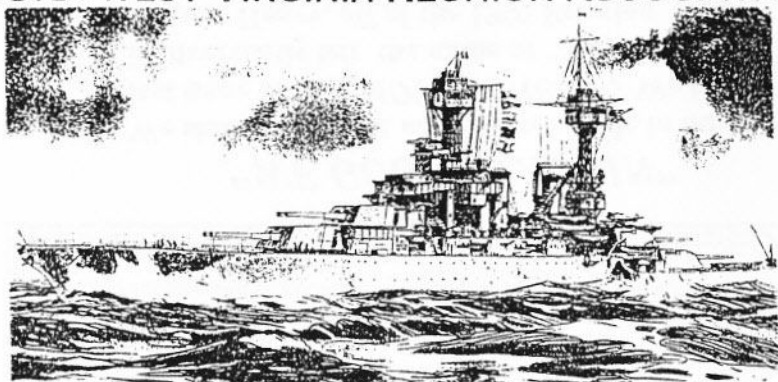


21190

1136 W 23d St.
San Pedro, Calif.

Armament: 8 16-in. (1x2), 10 5-in. (10x1), 4 3-in. A.A. (8x1) guns; 3 aircraft (3 catapults)

U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA REUNION ASSOCIATION



C/O ROBERT S. KRONBERGER, Post Office Box 442
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VISIT THE USS WEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM
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