

## THE MOUNTAINEER, USS WEST VIRGINIA

March 2003

### FROM THE QUARTERDECK:

Greetings to everyone:

Still thinking over the good time I had in Corpus Christi. It's a great town with lots to do.

The trip to King Ranch was an experience I will remember for a long time. The work that went into developing the many strains of cattle and horses was very interesting. The size of the ranch is beyond belief, 825,000 acres.

We had a nice visit aboard the Lady Lex. I did not realize carriers as old as the Lady were so huge. Afterward and a couple of blocks away we visited the Texas State Aquarium where we witnessed the many creatures of the sea.

A trip to Ingelside Naval Station, where we were introduced to modern mine warfare was a highlight for myself. Oh how times have changed.

Saturday evening we enjoyed a great dinner. Bob Kronberger was given a plaque and medal for all of the fine work he has done in the past. As all of us know he is a great guy.

At the Breakfast meeting on Sunday we voted on a place to have our reunion in 2004. It was Tucson, Arizona that was chosen by the majority. At the meeting Bob Kronberger suggested that before you nominate a city do your homework. Make sure the city is receptive to military reunions. Cost of accommodations, and sight seeing tours are very important as well as food, local restaurants and etc.

My wife Margot and I took a trip to Boston to look over the area for our 2003 reunion. Boston has so much history and points of interest, I am sure everyone will enjoy it. In our next letter, about June, we will have an itinerary that will satisfy everyone, I am sure. The hotel chosen is The Sheraton Braintree, very close to many restaurants, shopping and places of entertainment. The hotel is newly renovated and has many outstanding features.

The rate is \$75 per room per day. The dates Sept. 9-15, 2003. I am sure everyone will enjoy their stay.

At our business meeting we discussed the number of declining members participating in our reunions and that we should establish a membership dues program in order to maintain. I receive newsletters from other ships that charge dues and will look into it further. Our costs for printing and mailing 750 newsletters has rocketed along with the other expenses we endure. I am sure that the majority feel as I do about carrying on.

We were very pleased to have in attendance Mike Mullins. Mike is the man that put together the West Virginia website, [www.usswestvirginia.org](http://www.usswestvirginia.org). or reach him at, [www.curator@usswestvirginia.org](mailto:www.curator@usswestvirginia.org). He has done a splendid job and deserves a lot of credit. Well done Mike. He would like to hear from you if you have something interesting to add to the website or just a comment. Please log on.

I want to thank everyone who attended the Reunion. We have received so many cards and notes thanking us for a splendid time. We enjoyed it as much as you did and if it wasn't for those that attended it would not have been such a success. There is a lot

involved in putting it together. But it takes the attendees to enjoy it that makes it a success. Thanks again everyone. We will see you in Boston. Joes better half, Margot.

We received a note from Don Martin, informing us that Alton Meyer had a severe stroke and is in a private care home in Baton Rouge. He thought that they would probably appreciate cards and such. Alton's home address is: 4411 Becker Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70809.

Please let us know if you hear of someone that served on the Wee Vee, that might be sick or that has passed. Thanks.

These are the shipmates that were in attendance at Corpus Christi:

Dennis Anderson---F division  
 Nicholas Aiello---4<sup>th</sup> division  
 Lou Balbinot---6<sup>th</sup> division  
 Albert Block---Radio  
 Arnold Bobick---B division  
 Tom Boyd---S division  
 Raymond Bray---R division  
 John C. Brown---2<sup>nd</sup> & B division  
 Marvin Childress---4<sup>th</sup> division  
 Robert Christy---E division  
 Richard Cunningham---5<sup>th</sup> division  
 Jim Downing---postmaster  
 Jack Franklin---6&A division  
 Dale Fravor---S division  
 George Gackle---S division  
 George Geci---6<sup>th</sup> division  
 Joe Goula---1<sup>st</sup> division  
 Ross Huffman---E division  
 Lewis Kader ---SSML  
 Mel Kovachek---Aviation  
 Bob Kronberger---B division  
 Ed Leyendecker---Eng.  
 Hoy Little---8<sup>th</sup> division  
 Don Martin---A division  
 Ed Matlock---9<sup>th</sup> division

Clyde McClain---3<sup>rd</sup> division  
 Wallie Morgan---N division  
 Jim O'Neill---3<sup>rd</sup> division  
 John Paul---Dental  
 Ken Powell---11<sup>th</sup> division  
 Aubrey Pridgen---F division  
 Morgan Pulver---8<sup>th</sup> division  
 John Raiche---Marine  
 Tony Reiter---4<sup>th</sup> division  
 Al Rellergert---4<sup>th</sup> division  
 Bob Riesing---Marine  
 Clarence Rittinger---5<sup>th</sup> division  
 Bill Roseboom---11<sup>th</sup> division  
 Les Salminen---E division  
 Joe Saragusa---11<sup>th</sup> division  
 Don Seibod---A,B,E,M  
 E.G. Simmelink---R division  
 Bob Sims---S division  
 Herb Spencer---11<sup>th</sup> division  
 Gene Van Horn---3<sup>rd</sup> division  
 Joe Variot---5<sup>th</sup> division  
 Jack Whited---A division  
 Granvil Williams---VG

## BACK TO THE SEA

Routine aboard the "Wee Vee", as on other US war ships, was governed by time (bells), duty rosters (watches) and various administrative combinations. The men were assigned to one of two watches, port or starboard, with half of each division being in each watch. The watches were divided into two sections, so that each division had four sections numbered from one to four. The odd-numbered sections were in the starboard watch and the even-numbered in the port. Under this system, which had been employed aboard since 1923, men were scheduled for work in regular shifts similar, except for emergencies, to a 24-hour-a-day civilian war factory. In those days, black seamen were segregated in fact, if not on paper.

Aboard the battleship, Captain Wiley occupied the top rung of the administrative ladder. His complete authority was governed only by the law known as THE ARTICLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NAVY and by orders from higher authority. At sea, with those exceptions, his authority was absolute, especially in routine daily matters., in keeping with a tradition of control exercised at least since the days of ancient Egypt. On the other hand, if his authority was absolute, so ere his responsibilities. US Navy regulations read simply: "The command is his responsibility and he can neither delegate the duties of it to another nor avoid its burdens nor escape its responsibilities." Wiley was ultimately responsible with his professional neck for everything in his ship, large or small, including her operation, fighting efficiency, and most especially, the lives of the men aboard.

As Captain Wiley's right hand and voice stood Commander King. The "Exec" had no authority of his own, but was responsible to the skipper for keeping order and discipline, for the state of training, and indeed, the overall efficient operation of the ship. He was actually a kind of manager and onto his plate fell all matters of routine business. In the event of Wiley's being killed, incapacitated, or absent from the vessel when she reached to war zone – or before- King would be the man to assume command.

While on watch, the Officer of the Deck assumed the duties of the Commanding Officer and was responsible to him for the ship's proper operation. When, however, any important decision had to be taken or there were changes in the weather, of course, or in plans, the "OOD" reported to the Captain, even if the latter was asleep. At sea, the OOD stood his watch on the bridges, shifting to the quarter deck when in port. To the ship's company, the OOD was a visible representative of the skipper; indeed, it was that officer who allowed the men ashore for liberty and met them upon their return

- Gunnery Officer Commander C.M. Hardison-Gunnery Department
- First Lieutenant and damage Control Officer Lt. Commander F.H. White-Construction and Repair Department.
- Navigator Commander C. M. Sugarman-Navigation Department (with Lt. S.C. Arendts in charge of Communications).
- Engineer Officer Commander J.H. Brownfield-Engineering Department.

- Supply Officer Lt. Commander W. M. Porter-Supply Department.
- Medical Officer Lt. Commander H.E. Wiggins- Medical Department.

Exec. King co-ordinated the work of these officers as well as helping the semi-independent Chaplain Lt. Commander M. F. Williams. To carry out policy, he issued the ships organization bill, detailed instructions as the organization and status of all men. Additionally, he passed along special orders from Captain Wiley, all of which had the same authority as other regulations. Department officers kept all orders on file and published the for their divisions when received.

Under the organization bill or command chart, Navigator Sugarman was responsible for the safe navigation of the West Virginia and for all navigation equipment, including compasses, charts, sextants, the conning tower, the bridge, and steering gear. It was his job to furnish all information about the "WEE VEE'S" location, approximate times of arrivals, and passages through dangerous waters.

Communications Officer Arendts came under Sugarman's department, but administered his duty as a separate activity. The lieutenant had charge of receiving and dispatching all messages and reports, both verbal and written, and oversaw the efficiency of all radio equipment. The Signal and Radio Officers, the ship's Secretary and Clerk, and various Radio Electricians completed his "C" Division.

Gunnery officer Hardison, sometimes called "Guns," was the man in charge of the "Wee Vee's" offensive armament. Under his province came all of the guns, fire control equipment, ammunition, handling rooms, and the magazines where powder and shell were stowed at low temperature. The ship's Marine Detachment as well as all aviation personnel on board reported to Hardison, who was also responsible for training the crew in the manning and firing of the guns and catapults. "Gun's" department was subdivided into several divisions, with the primary ones for the big rifles number 1-4 and the secondary batteries 5-16. Each of these gun divisions as far as possible included only one class of gun, e.g., 40 mm, each with a division officer in charge.

The fire control subdivision of Hardison's shop was led by Commander Robert Crawford, Jr., and consisted of the plotting room officers, officer assistants, and various technicians. This organization was charged with the upkeep and operation of the complicated fire control gear for the main battery, including the ranger finders, radar directors, and range predictors which feed data to the Combat Information Center (CIC), plus the phone circuits to convey information and instruction within the ship. The several AA divisions handle the 5-inch and smaller guns, their fire control apparatus, and ammunition supply. On board the WEST VIRGINIA, the Marines made up one of these AA divisions, No. 7.

The lookout subdivision was a new organization born of experience aboard other ships thus far in the war. The men of this unit were trained and expected, by shift, to scan the sea and air at all points at all times when the dreadnought might be subject to attack.

Finally as noted, Hardison controlled the aviation subdivision, which consisted of the three personnel for both the Kingfishers and the catapults. Due to Wiley's disposition, aviators aboard the West Virginia were not as sometimes happened elsewhere, snubbed or segregated.



First Lieutenant White enjoyed one of the most thankless duties on board, that of Construction and Repair boss or "ships janitor." In addition to his general maintenance hat, he wore the title of Damage Control Officer, which made him responsible for the ship's watertight integrity under all conditions. In his never-ending job, the Lt. Commander continually inspected the maze of compartments which went to make up the battlewagon "from truck to keel and from stern to stem," compartments with which he had become intimately familiar especially after December, 7 1941.

Engineer Brownfield was chief of the so-called "Black Gang" and in charge of the West Virginia's engineering plant, including the main engines, boilers, turbines, the electric generators, and all electrical equipment not under the control of Hardison or Arendts. Employing evaporators and distillers, he made all fresh water used aboard while his refrigerating plant kept sufficient food cold to last upwards of a quarter of a year. Hundreds of men were required to operate the "Wee Vee's complicated engineering plant, most of whom were specialists like machinists, boilermakers, electricians, and water tenders. Brownfield also reigned as the ship's "oil king" the man charged with her fuel oil, the storage bunkers, pumps, and piping. Even in those years before our "energy crisis." Battleship engineers had to keep accurate and detailed accounts of every drop of oil on board so that skippers could know at any moment how long they could extend operations or prepare for new missions. As we will see in a later chapter, this knowledge would prove especially useful to Captain Wiley on February 16, 1945.

Supply Officer Porter was one of the most popular officers aboard the "Wee Vee" for the simple reason that he was the fellow charged with the crew's feeding and supplying the ship and men with all necessities of life, comfort, and fighting strength. His galley, famous even before Boatswain Thompson first wrote about it back in 1930, had the latest in electrical ranges, ovens and steam kettles. The potato-peeling machine and electric dishwasher continued to relieve some of the most unpopular tasks of military life, tasks universally hated by soldiers of the US Army who called them "KP." Using only the best food, Porter arranged the menus and watched over the cooks to see that the chow was well and appetizingly prepared. Elsewhere, the Disbursing Officer, who was also a member of the "S" Division, kept accounts and presided over that most happy event for bluejackets: pay day.

The WEST VIRGINIA carried several physicians in addition to Medical Officer Wiggins, not including Dentist Sines, and a staff of pharmacists mates adequate to care for all sick or injured. The Sick Bay had the finest facilities, including operating rooms and the dental officer. Wiggins worked hard to carry out his duty of maintaining the crew's good health and was usually quite successful in his practice.

Another "Wee Vee" activity which proved extremely popular was the ship's service organization. Managed by a service officers, sometimes Commander Porter and sometimes Chaplain Williams, this unit comprised such facilities as the laundry barber-shop, tailor shop, ice cream counter, and wholesale store. Profits from these enterprises were turned into a general welfare fund for the purchase of athletic equipment, radios, books and magazines, and other comforts designed to make life aboard more pleasant.

The daily schedule on board the WEST VIRGINIA varied somewhat depending on her location and mission. The following general schedules, drawn from the 1940 edition of the BLUEJACKET'S MANUAL and still accurate, reflect these differences.

## ROUTINE AT SEA:

0200 Relieve wheel and lookouts.

0350 Call the watch section.

0400 Relieve the watch, muster the watch section and lifeboat's crew, light smoking lamp, call ship's cook of the watch. Five minutes before sunrise station details at running lights, turn off at sunrise, relieve lookouts and station masthead (In the warzone, the Air Defense gong would also sound sending men to the AA batteries until after sunup).

0500 Call Idlers and section of the watch sleeping in, coffee.

0520 Pipe sweepers.

0530 Turn to, smoking lamp out, execute morning orders.

0600 Relieve the heel and lookout, trice up clotheslines.

0645 Hammock stowers haul back hammock cloths.

0700 Up all Hammocks.

0715 Hammock stowers stop down hammock cloths, mess gear, light smoking lamp.

0730 Breakfast, shift into the uniform of the day during the meal hour.

0800 Relieve the watch (both sections on deck), muster watch and lifeboat's crew.

0815 Turn to, smoking lamp out.

0830 Sick call.

0845 Sweep down, stow away wash-deck gear, take down towel line, clear up decks for quarters.

0910 Officers' call, divisions fall in for quarters.

0915 Quarters for muster and inspection, physical drill, and drills as prescribed.

1000 Relieve the wheel and lookout watch.

1030 Retreat from drill, pipe down washed clothes, if dry, sweep down.

1145 Mess gear.

1200 Dinner

1230 Relieve the watch, band call.

1300 Turn to, pipe sweepers, smoking lamp out.

1315 Drill call, if ordered.

1400 Relieve the wheel and lookout.

1415 Retreat from drill, pipe sweepers, turn to.

1530 Pipe down washed clothes, if up.

1600 Relieve the watch, muster watch and lifeboat's crew.

1630 Sweep down, knock off ship's work, light smoking lamp. Five minutes before

sunset station detail at running lights, turn running lights with senior ship present, station bridge lookouts, inspect lifeboats. (In the war zone, the Air Defense gong would also sound sending men to the AA batteries until after sundown.)

1730 Clear up decks.

1745 Mess gear.

1800 Supper, relieve the wheel and lookout.

1830 Turn to, sweep down, wet down decks for scrubbing clothes.

### **1900 Band call, band concert for crew until 2000**

2000 Call the watch, relieve the wheel and lookout, relieve the watch, muster watch and lifeboat's crew, turn out all but standing lights and lights in officers' quarters and chief petty officers mess room.

2100 Smoking lamp out, turn lights out in chief petty officers' mess room

2200 Relieve the wheel and lookout, turn out lights in officers' quarters unless an extension has been granted..

2350 Call the watch.

2400 Relieve the watch, muster the watch and lifeboat crew.

Needless to say, when the WEST VIRGINIA eventually entered the war zone, some of the detail in the latter table changed to fit combat circumstances. Times of Air Defense alert, for example, would moves with the sun-as well as the Japanese.

Let us now return to the ship's shakedown cruise and imagine if we can the various departments in action. Over and over, Captain Wiley, his officers and men, practiced, each day becoming more efficient.

It is an hour before dawn as the WEST VIRGINIA, under escort of two destroyers, steams off Catalina at a comfortable 12 knots. Suddenly, the quiet on board the practicing battleship is broken by shrill bugle call over the public address system. "General Quarters General Quarters! All Hands Man Your Battle Stations," orders the strong voice of a boatswain's mate. Dropping cups of coffee, drowsy men now fully awake proceed quickly and orderly to their stations.

As the men scramble, Captain Wiley has come to his own post, usually either the bridge or conning town. With him are Navigator Sugaman, who will be the OOD, LT. Arendts, and the "N Watch," made up of a fresh helmsman, quartermasters, signalman, messengers, and "talkers" for the many battle telephones. By means of phone, Wiley can give orders to any or all parts of the vessel and receive reports or information. Arendts and his men stand ready to give or relay any orders or information received by various means from within or without the ship.

Meanwhile, Exec King and his assistants have manned a second ship control station aft, ready in case of emergency to take over. Below in Central Station is a third group complete in similar detail, except that there is no means of contact other than telephone reports. Engineer Brownfield at his post in the main engineer room is ready to quickly and accurately answer all phone requests for changes in speed or electricity.

Commander Hardison is also on hand in the fire control tower. Wiley will soon give him a target and orders to commence firing. After that, it will be the responsibility of the gunnery division to fulfill the "Wee Vee's" mission. Hardison notes with satisfaction that the Assistant Gunnery Officer is up in "sky control" ready to direct the 5 inch and smaller

AA batteries. In view of the quick attacks possible by enemy aircraft, "Guns" has been delegated to him the authority to open fire on any unidentified warbirds or "bogies" coming within range. In case of dive bombers, torpedo planes, or later, the Kamikazes, authority to commence fire on enemy aircraft close inboard will be further delegated to individual gun captains.

By now the darkness of night has been replaced by the color of dawn's early morning. Lookouts scanning the horizon report an enemy ship (actually an escort destroyer playing the role or, according to Baumrucker's notes, towing a target) giving range and distance. On any given day, the same data might have been provided by the new radar gear. The target might also be a land objective, keeping in mind that the battleship's upcoming role will be primarily in shore bombardment. Let's assume that it is a shore target.

Now is the time to launch the planes and the "Wee Vee" swings into the wind. Twice the catapults are fired and two Kingfishers are airborne. Their pilots and radiomen fly off to spot, with the aid of grid charts and visual sightings, the fall of shot. Somewhere aboard, radar or another lookout makes out the dim shape of a target (town, road junction, quay, etc.) and all await confirmation of the range from aloft.

When the necessary data is received, Commander Hardison, binoculars in hand, gives the order, "Load." Inside the four 16 inch turrets, the men work together as a team in the confined spaces. Powder comes out of the magazine and is conveyed mechanically to the gun breeches, while the huge 2,100-lb. Shells come up tubes from the shell rooms. In a matter of seconds, shell and powder are rammed home. The great guns, like eight fingers, search through the air until they are laid, each on the bearing and at the angle calculated by radar or fire control or spotter as best for dropping a deadly load on the enemy's precise location.

On the bridge, Captain Wiley is kept fully informed during these preliminary stages. At the right moment, Hardison rings up to say that: "The target is in range, sir." "Commence firing," the old airman replies. The whole ship shakes as nearly nine tons of steel depart, to reappear a minute later as a mushroom growth of dust in the target area.

A report comes in from the radioman in Plane No. 1—"Up 200, left 40." A correction is cranked into the fire control gear and a second salvo booms out in the wake of the first. Soon the observation planes are radioing, "No change, No change!" The great bullets spatter their objectives.

Suddenly, someone suggests that the ship is under aircraft attack. Let's examine here in detail the response expected of men manning the many 20mm guns.

The 20mm AA gun is used for close in work, high angle. Aboard the West Virginia, each is mounted on a pedestal and can be trained through 360 degrees and elevated from minus 5 degrees to 87 degrees. The gun fires in automatic only, no single shots. It can be fired as long as the trigger is pressed and there is ammunition in the magazine, which holds sixty rounds. Every crewman knows that the rate of fire is about 450 rounds per minute...; at 36 degrees of elevation, the maximum range is approximately 5,500 yards.

The "Wee Vee" 20mm guns each have a three-man crew, consisting of the gunner, a trunnion operator and a loader. The gunner aims and controls the fire of the gun. He aids in cocking the gun and is the fellow who actually gets into shoulder bars, fastens the



strap, locates the target through the cross-hairs, tracks, and fires when the target comes within range or as directed by the battery officer, and orders a change of empty or partially empty magazines when necessary. In case of a stoppage, the gunner clears the gun and directs others helping him to do so. After action, he aids in uncocking and securing the piece and may load cartridges into the magazines.

The trunnion operator, in preparation for firing, unlocks the cradle and mount and assists the gunner in cocking the gun. As the gunner tracks and fires, the trunnion operator continuously adjusts the trunnion to the proper elevation by turning the column, and raising the hand wheel; by watching the gunner's knees, he can often obtain cues for raising or lowering the column. He also helps the loader during all of this by checking the proper seating of the magazine on the breech casing. In case of a stoppage, this man helps the gunner by uncocking the gun and may perform other duties assigned by the gunner. After action, he helps to secure the piece and may load cartridges into the magazines.

The loader is the sailor who keeps the gun supplied with ammunition by loading full magazines onto the breech casing of the gun. A well-trained man can achieve a rate of up to one load every eight seconds. It is his job, with help from the gunner, to observe the magazines and replace empty ones with full as the action continues. After action, he helps to uncock the piece and secure it.

On the commands noted below, members of a 20mm crew would perform the duties indicated by a battery officer or gun captain:

General quarters-The gun is cocked. The trunnion operator unlocks the cradle so that the piece may be elevated and depressed.

Stations-The gunner straps himself into the shoulder rests while the trunnion operator and loader take their stations.

Stand By- The loader picks up the loaded magazines.

Half Load-The loader partially seats the magazine.

Load-The loader fully seats the magazine, checks to see that it is properly seated, removes his hand from the magazine and watches it to note when it is empty or when a jam occurs. When the magazine is empty, he removes it, lays it down, picks up another and repeats the loading operation.

Track-The gunner elevates and trains the gun for the target while the trunnion operator continuously adjust the column, so that the gunners knees are slightly bent.

Commence Firing-Prepares to fire. When the target comes within range and the gun is properly aimed, he squeezes the trigger lever and holds it down until the magazine is empty or the target is past or downed. He may elect to fire in three to five second bursts. Meanwhile the trunnion operator continuously adjusts the column and checks on the position of the magazine catch lever when the magazine is removed by the loader. The loader in turn replaces empty magazines as necessary

Cease Firing-At this command or when the ammunition is exhausted, the gunner releases the trigger. On Cease Fire, he turns the safe fire button to "safe" and unhooks the strap from the shoulder rest releasing himself from the gun. In combat, he does not unhook the straps until so ordered by the battery officer. After action, the piece is secured.

Far below the main decks, Lt. Commander White as Damage Control Officer is stationed in the comparative stillness of central Station. From here, he ran exercises in conjunction with the other drills. His attitude is always quite serious; thoughts of Pearl Harbor never seem far away. Let's watch White's people in action.

"Central" is the nerve center from which all activities would be directed in the event that the West Virginia was seriously hurt. More than most, the Damage Control Officer knows every cupboard in her blueprint, every valve, socket, bulkhead, or pipe. His damage control parties are stationed in critical spots, one forward, one aft, one amidships, one topside. We shouldn't forget Engineer Sugerman's special gang here; they are busy training to care for any and all damages to engineering equipment.

White's four parties are expected to fight fires, prevent flooding, or repair physical damage. By quick pumping and counter flooding he reminds his men, a ship can be kept stable if hit. Although much of this battleship's damage control is new, built right in as a result of detailed compartmentalization of her underwater construction, much remains in the hands of the men who may combat blazes or contain water intake. "Remember Pearl Harbor," White lectures; think of the lessons our men used that day to save this proud ship.

Elsewhere in conjunction with white's drills, Medical Officer Wiggins is running his own tests. Doctors and their assistants in the Sick Bay and in emergency dressing stations, rigged in the wardroom forward and the chief petty officers' quarters aft, practice reception for men playing as casualties. Often they work over surgical themes or weave bandages about supposedly broken limbs. Fake blood makes the gaming seem real.

Throughout the days of her shakedown these drills and many others were run on board the West Virginia with great frequency, sometimes many times on the same day. High Speed drills tested the "Wee Vee's" renewed power plant while newer officers and old challenged their abilities to maneuver in company escort vessels, sometimes while practicing air alert. By the last week of August, Captain Wiley was breathing easier as his men learned their places and the purposes of their practice. The Chaplain was now assisting the doctors while the Supply Officer and his assistants were able to lend a hand to Lt. Ardent's Communications department, specializing in coding and decoding messages. Mess boys manned some of the 20mm AA guns or were part of ammunition supply parties. The bandsmen became stretcher-bearers while the cooks split their times between making quick meals and gallons of coffee and serving in ammunition supply parties. There was a job for every man and a man for every job. The skipper was right-the six weeks were grueling.

Following a week in San Diego for leave, the West Virginia weighed anchor for Pearl Harbor on September 7. Seven days of steaming and drilling brought the dreadnought to Hawaii where she tied up at the same quay on "Battleship Row" as occupied on Dec. 7, 1941. This time, however, a torpedo net was provided to protect her exposed side. Shortly after dawn on September 18, the "Wee Vee" departed Pearl Harbor for a four-day cruise off Hawaii, during which time she undertook many drills, including a practice bombardment of Kahoolawe and night AA firing at drones. After returning to her berth late on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the ship was re-supplied with ammunition and Captain Wiley received his final sailing instructions. Early on Sept. 24, with one old destroyer

as escort, the "Wee Vee" left the now greatly-changed scene of her earlier disaster and headed west, crossing the International Date Line on Sept. 30. Four days later, she was over the Equator where, deep in potentially dangerous waters, time was still found to engage in an ancient tradition of Navy Men. "Pollywogs" by the hundreds were initiated "into the deep in the salty presence of King Neptune and his royal party."

As the battlewagon drove on towards the war zone, battle drills intensified and a sobering awareness came over the men that such exercises would be for real. Toward the end of the first week in October, the West Virginia dropped anchor in Seeadler Harbor off Manus in the Admiralty Islands. Here she gained admittance to Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid's US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. All aboard were proud and anxious; the "Wee Vee" was at long last back in the war.

TAKEN FROM "THE MOUNTAIN STATE BATTLESHIP" USS WEST VIRGINIA,  
BY: MYRON J. SMITH JR.

A Memorial Service was held on Sat. Oct 19, 2002, honoring those shipmates who passed Away since our 2001 reunion. They are as follows:

David Althouse  
Bruce Anderson  
J.W. Bailey  
George Caldwell  
Joe Corenza  
Bill Cowden  
Jessie Ray Hale Jr.  
G.H. Haynes  
John Henry Hedger  
John Hrew  
Raymond F. Joerger  
Don Jones  
Herman Kimble  
John Lovel  
Kenneth Lutz

R.A. (Speck) Martin  
Kenneth Messenger  
Fred Passoth  
Albert Peterson  
George Rasmussen  
Richard (Dick) J. Rockett  
Gordon Rude  
James Schembri Sr.  
Florian Schooley  
Blane Sharp  
William Schriber  
John Stevens  
Leonard Szwejk  
Glen Thompson  
E.G.. Winstead

Located within minutes of Boston and Cape Cod and across from New England's largest upscale Shopping mall, there's never a shortage of things to see and do when you stay at the Sheraton Braintree Hotel. From world-class shopping and restaurants to premier theaters and museums, Choosing what to do next will be your toughest decision.



# USS West Virginia BB 48

## REUNION ASSOCIATION

C/O

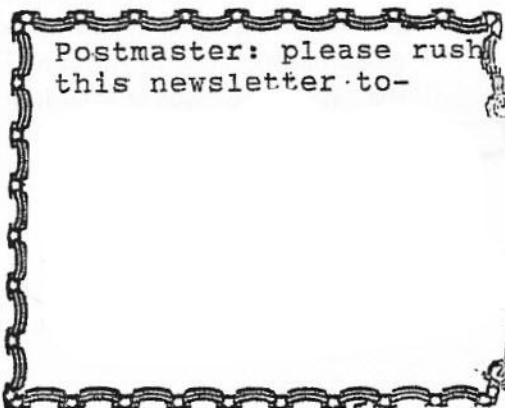
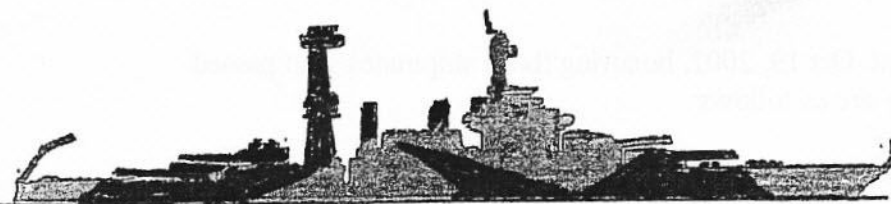
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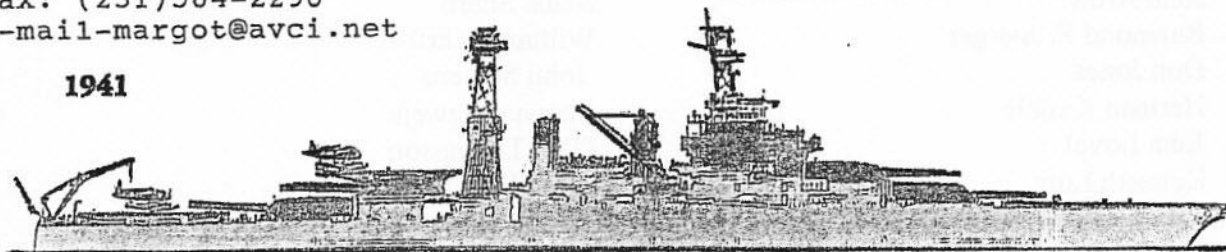
Date Orientated Material



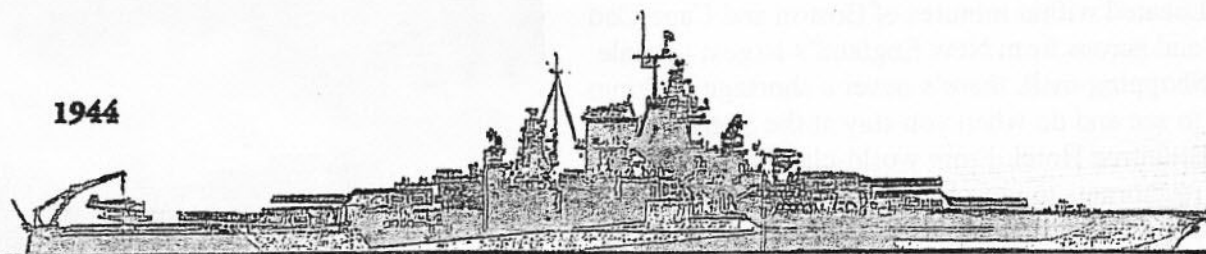
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**COLORADO CLASS BATTLESHIP - USS WEST VIRGINA (BB48)  
AS OUTFITTED IN THE WINTER OF 1941**

**1941**



**1944**



**COLORADO CLASS BATTLESHIP - USS WEST VIRGINA (BB48)  
AS OUTFITTED IN THE SUMMER OF 1944**