

U.S.S.
WEST VIRGINIA



Navy Day

27 October 1945 ★ ★ San Diego, California

Foreword

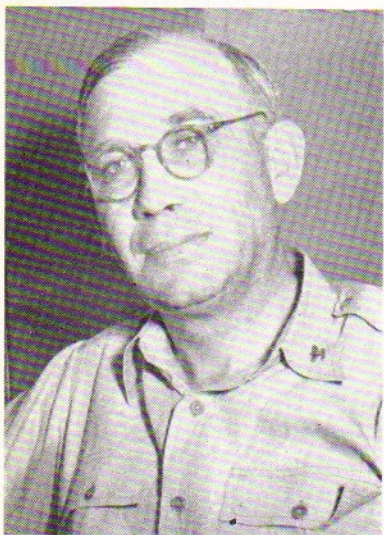
Navy Day, 1945, comes after the greatest naval war in history—a war which destroyed the enemy fleet and placed our forces on the beachheads of final triumph. It is my pleasure to extend to all our guests a warm and hearty welcome to the U.S.S. West Virginia, which had a part in the victory, and which is one of the units of the United States Fleet you—the American people—built with your work and money.

R. W. HOLSINGER,
Captain, U. S. Navy,
Commanding.

COVER PICTURE

West Virginia in Sagami
Bay with Mt. Fujiyama in
background.

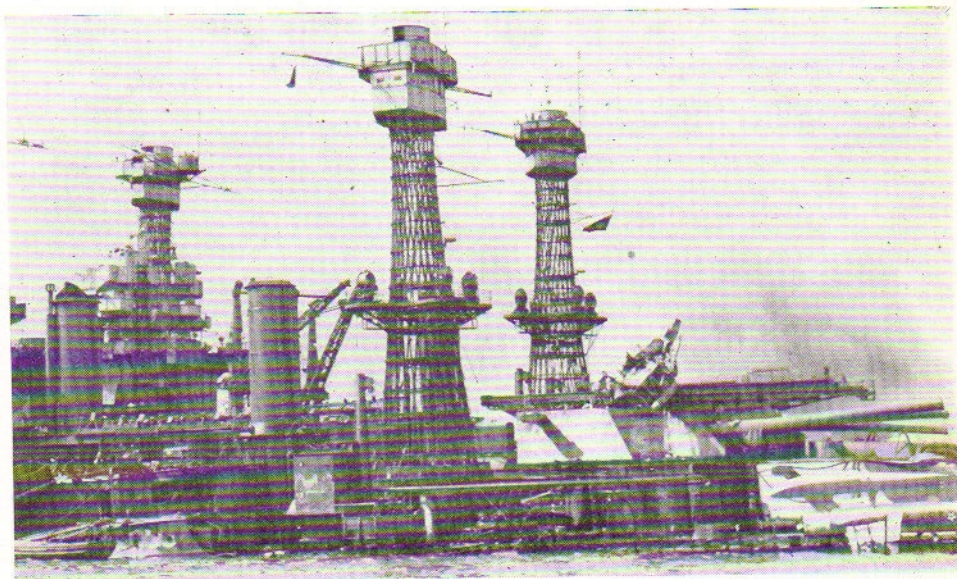
☆☆ The West Virginia is flagship of Rear Admiral Ingram C. Sowell, USN, who commands Battleship Division Four. Admiral Sowell is a native of Lawrenceburg, Tenn. He has flown his two-starred flag from the "WEEVEE" since January of this year.



Captain Raymond W. Holsinger, USN, has been commanding officer of the West Virginia since May 1945. Formerly director of the Production Division, Naval Bureau of Ordnance, Capt. Holsinger lives at Arlington, Va.

Executive officer of the West Virginia is Commander John E. Fitzgibbon, USN, who has had 16 years of sea duty in his 18 years in the Navy. Comdr. Fitzgibbon, who hails from Newark, Ohio, assumed the duties of executive officer shortly before the Okinawa campaign.





AFTER THE FIRE—Battered by aerial torpedoes and bomb hits, the WEST VIRGINIA rests on the bottom of Pearl Harbor. The battleship TENNESSEE is in the background.

Pearl Harbor

Newport News Shipbuilding Company hull No. 48 was commissioned the "U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA"—Battleship No. 48 in the U. S. Navy—December 1, 1923.

Eighteen years and six days later that same hull lay on the bottom of Pearl Harbor, torn by six aerial torpedoes and two 500-pound bombs in the Sunday morning sneak attack on the Hawaiian naval base by Japanese carrier-based planes.

It took longer than a year to raise the battered dreadnaught and ready her for the trip to a west coast navy yard to be rebuilt.

By summer of 1944 the West Virginia was prepared to return to the war—completely modernized and equipped to meet anything the enemy had to offer.

Battle for Leyte Gulf

The West Virginia returned to the firing line with the U. S. Seventh Fleet in the invasion of the Philippines at Leyte late last October. Flying the same colors she had flown at Pearl Harbor—that fateful day in 1941—the veteran battleship poured tons of explosives on Japanese shore installations to help pave the way for American landings on the island.

It was at Leyte that the "WEEVEES" drew first blood in her campaign of vengeance. A Japanese "Kamikaze" plane attempted to breach the West Virginia's anti-aircraft defenses, but the ship's gunners soon sent the onrushing Nip to visit his ancestors. During operations in and around Leyte Gulf, the West Virginia assisted in the destruction of five more suicide planes.

Surigao Strait

Only a few days after the U. S. landings on Leyte, the task force of which the West Virginia was a part received word of the approach of elements of the enemy fleet through the Mindanao Sea. To reach the newly-won beachhead and its hundreds of landing craft, transports, supply ships and tankers, the enemy force had to enter narrow Surigao Strait. The Japanese flotilla steamed up the passage on a moonless, starless night, planning to arrive at the congested transport area by dawn.

Waiting at the northern entrance to the strait was the bombardment and support force of the Seventh Fleet; and heading a battleline of six "old" battleships was the West Virginia. As the enemy approached within range the "Open Fire!" order was received, and the "WEEVEE" poured 93 one-ton armor-piercing projectiles into the enemy formation in less than 10 minutes.

When the battle was over the Japanese task force had been annihilated and the West Virginia had sunk an enemy battleship.

Mindoro

In December after a brief respite in the New Hebrides the West Virginia was chosen flagship of the carrier task force covering the Mindoro operation.

With two other battleships, a division of cruisers, six escort carriers and a dozen destroyers, the West Virginia entered the Sulu Sea in the Central Philippines to protect the beachhead forged by General MacArthur's forces at the southern end of Mindoro.

During the operation the ship weathered scores of air attacks, shooting down a Japanese bomber and fighter attempting to reach the carriers.

Luzon

The West Virginia spent Christmas at one of the Navy's advance bases below the equator. The day after Christmas she departed for a rendezvous at sea with the task force scheduled to take part in the invasion of Luzon at Lingayen Gulf.

For nearly a week the Japanese air force pressed home attacks on the force as it approached the main Philippine island. And for three days preceding the invasion the West Virginia pounded shore installations in preparation for landings by the U. S. Sixth Army. On "L" day the Army went ashore, meeting negligible resistance in the bombarded area.

Again enemy air attacks were warded off, and the West Virginia and other warships remained in the area over a month to forestall any Japanese attempt to send the remainder of their fleet against the vital gulf area.

In February the West Virginia departed for a rest and recreation period in the rear area, only to find new orders and another assignment awaiting her.

Iwo Jima

The "WEEVEE" reached her operating base in the morning; and less than 24 hours later, after loading provisions and supplies all night long and filling her tanks with fuel, she departed for Iwo Jima where the Marines were scheduled to land three days later. Her quick response and readiness for combat duty brought the West Virginia a "WELL DONE" from Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

She remained on the scene at the tiny volcanic island until her ammunition supply was exhausted, supporting the Marines who were fighting their way inch-by-inch across the tiny speck of land just 650 miles south of Tokyo.

Okinawa

At Okinawa the West Virginia did more firing—both anti-aircraft and main battery—than in any previous occupation. Off this hotly-contested stepping stone to Japan she received her only damage as a result of enemy action.

A Japanese suicide plane penetrated the screen of anti-aircraft fire the night of the invasion and crashed into her port side, killing four men and wounding 23 others. Less than an hour after the West Virginia was hit the ship's commanding officer reported her "fully operational" to the task force commander.

During the Okinawa conquest and at Ie Shima, where Ernie Pyle met death, the "WEEVEE" fired nearly 1,300 rounds of 16-inch ammunition against enemy defenses on the islands.



RISING SUN SETS—West Virginia anti-aircraft guns point menacingly toward the horizon.

Occupation of Japan

The Japanese acceptance of Allied terms found the West Virginia lying at anchor in Okinawa's Buckner Bay, preparing to depart on a mission that would have taken her to the China coast.

Instead of heading west into battle, she proceeded northward to join Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet, which was preparing to enter Sagami Bay just south of Tokyo as the advance occupation force.

The West Virginia was the first "old" battleship to enter Tokyo Bay. She steamed into the great harbor and anchored off the Japanese capital prior to V-J Day.

When the day of final surrender was at hand the "WEEVEE" was the only victim of the Pearl Harbor debacle present for the ceremonies.

The day of reckoning had arrived!



HOME AT LAST—After more than a year in the Pacific war zone, the "WEEVEE" puts into San Diego Harbor.

Homeward Bound

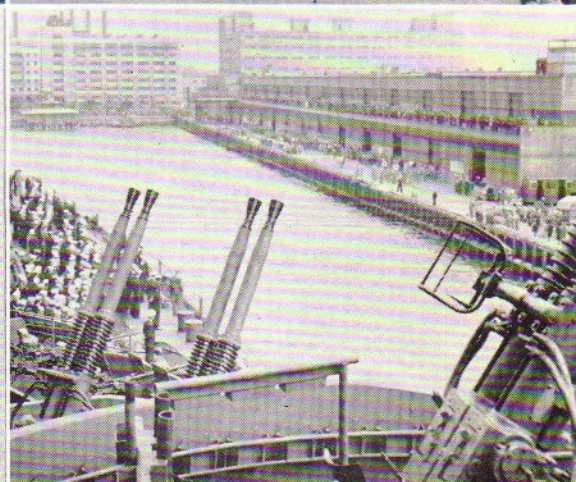
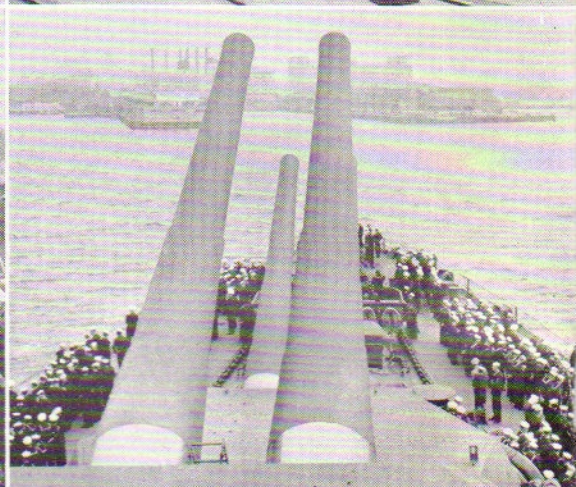
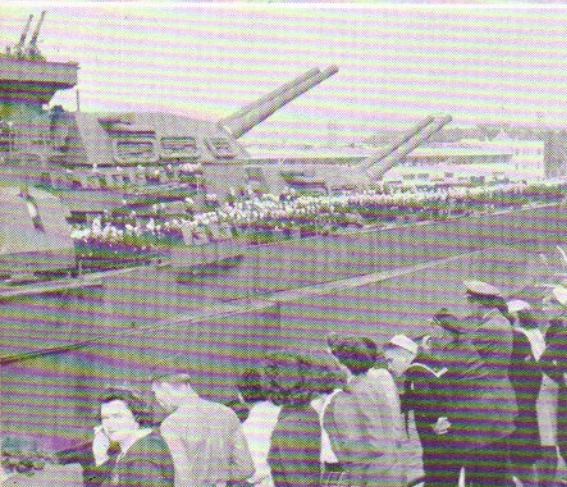
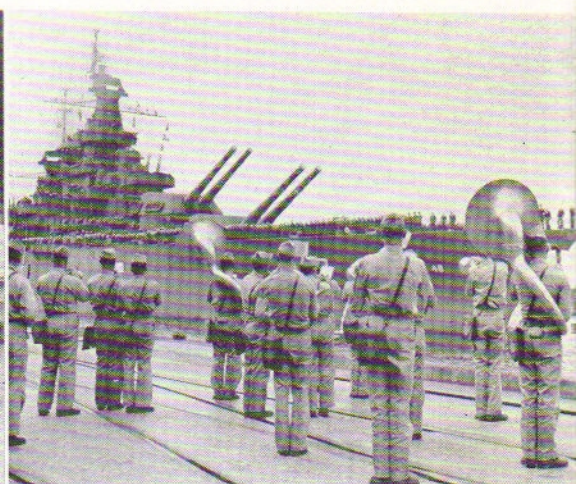
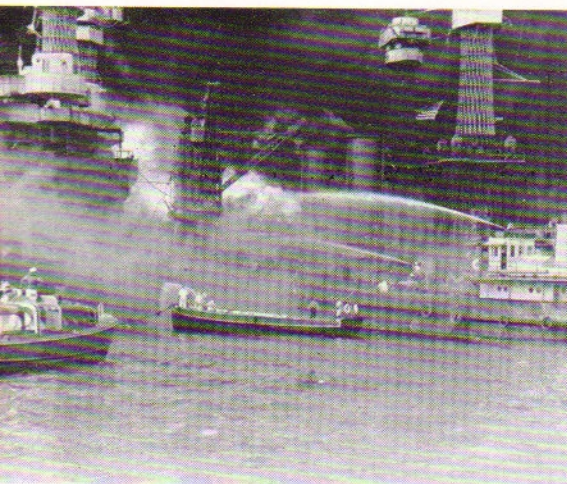
Shortly after the Nip capitulation the West Virginia began her long return trek to the continental United States. She halted at Okinawa only long enough to take aboard several hundred Pacific war veterans going home to be discharged.

From the Ryukyus the "WEEVEE" journey to Pearl Harbor, and thence to San Diego, where an enthusiastic crowd greeted her arrival.

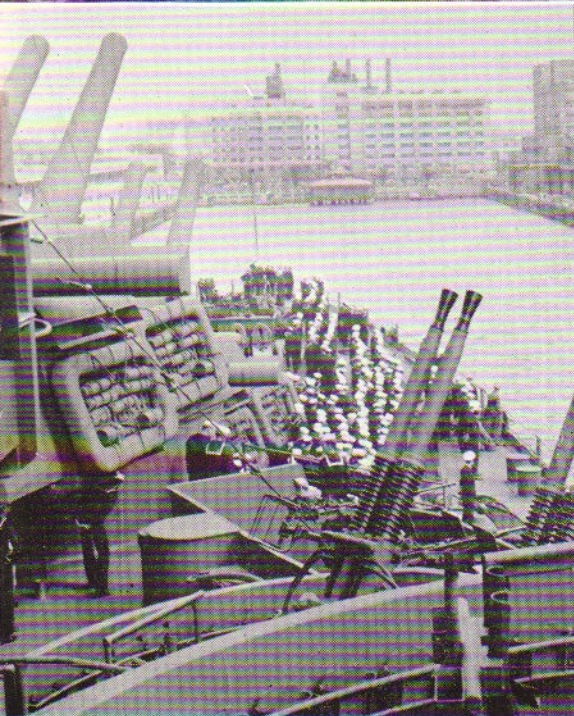
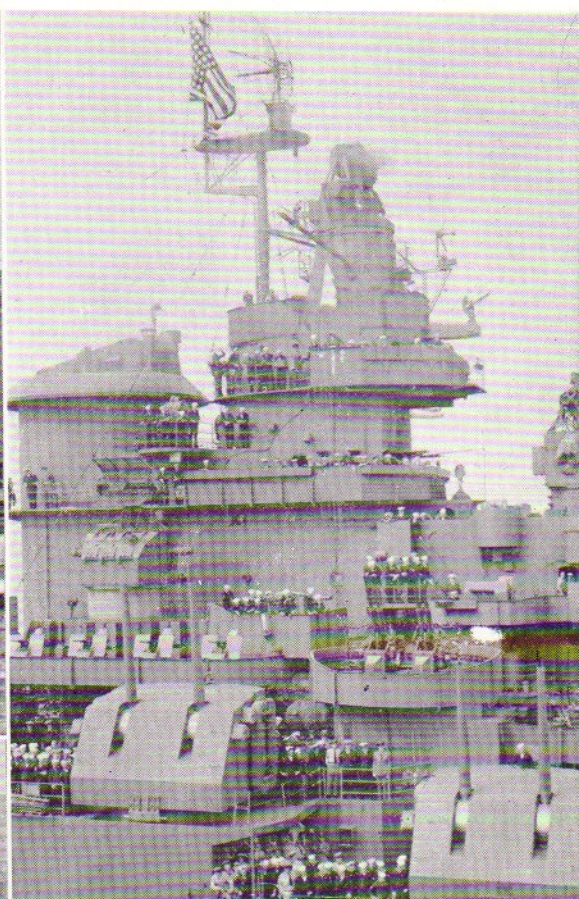
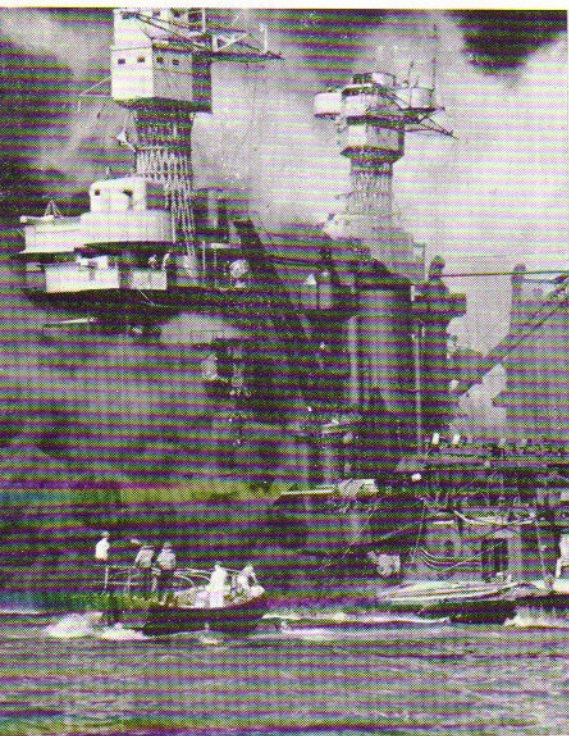
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During her year in combat, the West Virginia knocked down eight Japanese planes, and assisted in the destruction of a dozen more.

Her 16-inch guns fired nearly 3,000 rounds at the enemy, while 24,000 rounds were hurled against the Japanese by her secondary battery. In addition, nearly 40,000 small caliber projectiles were used in warding off enemy air attacks.



Battling flames after the Pearl Harbor attack ☆ ☆ Marine Band greets "WEEVEE" at San Diego ☆ ☆ It won't be long now ☆ ☆ Surrender—or else! ☆ ☆ "Task Force 48" arrives ☆ ☆ Look at those girls, wow!



Rescuing West Virginia sailor at Pearl Harbor ☆ ☆ A sight for
sore eyes ☆ ☆ Quarters for entering port ☆ ☆ Tied up—U.S.A.,
we are here!

War History in Brief

1941

Sunk at Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7.

1942

Raised from the bottom, May 30.

1943

Returned to U. S. to be rebuilt, May 7.

1944

Repairs completed—ready for trial run in Puget Sound, July 4.

Shakedown training off California, July 22-August 30.

Set course west—off to the war—September 8.

Entered Leyte Gulf with Seventh Fleet, October 18.

Bombarded landing areas, October 19.

Invasion of Philippines at Leyte, October 20.

Sunk one enemy battleship off Surigao Strait, October 25.

Flagship of Mindoro covering force, December 2-14.

Christmas below the equator, December 25.

1945

Invasion and bombardment of Luzon, January 6-February 10.

Bombarded Iwo Jima, February 19-March 1.

First trip to Okinawa, March 24-April 24.

Hit by Japanese suicide plane, April 1.

Returned to Okinawa Gunto, May 17.

Operation officially completed, June 22.

Joined Third Fleet and entered Sagami Bay, Japan, as part of the advance occupation force, August 27.

Entered Tokyo Bay, September 1.

Homeward bound, September 20.

Arrived at San Diego, October 15.