

"THE MOUNTAINEER"
IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA (BB-48) REUNION ASSOC.
Robert S. Kronberger, Editor
PO Box 442, Big Bear City, CA 92314-0442; Tel No. (909) 585 3448

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.

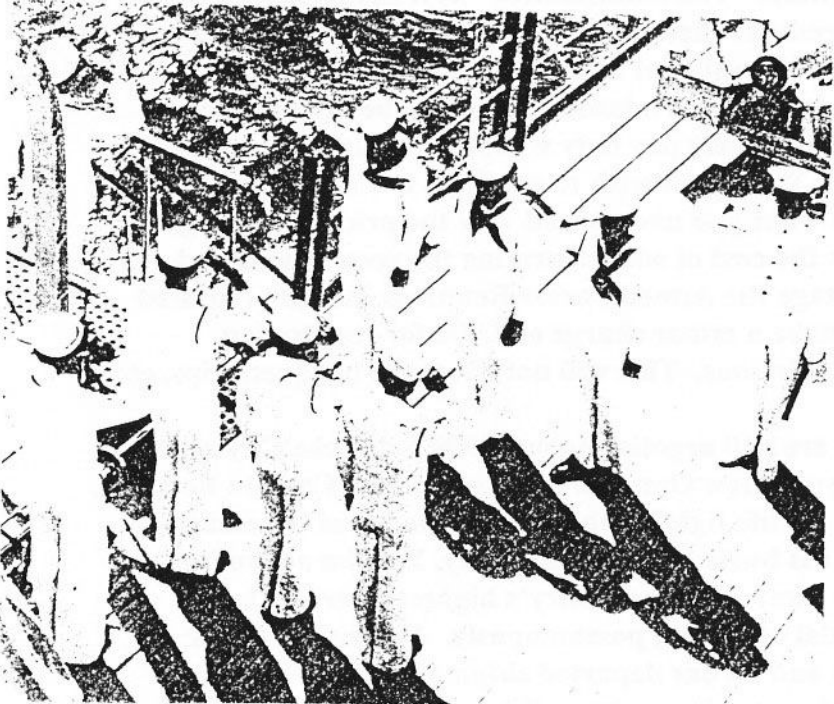
**DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT
MAILING ADDRESS?**

If not please advise us.

From The Quarterdeck

Officer Of The Deck

Bob Kronberger



The time really flies between reunions, and now it is time to make plans for our 1998 reunion in Santa Rosa , California. We have had so much success with our entertainment at the past two reunions, we decided to add a little spice this time. I am sure that everyone will enjoy our selection of professional entertainers. With Harry Fessler, Joe Kinnamian and Tom Bates keeping an evil

FROM THE QUARTERDECK (cont.)

eye on my activities concerning Santa Rosa I can only do good things.

The association is still in a sound condition, due to the generosity of our membership we are able to maintain "*The Mountaineer*" as it should be. It seems as though the inflation has hit our reunions with the reality of life. The price of the banquets, meals and entertainment, seems to be skyrocketing. Our members pay only what the hotels charge the assn. We do not wish to profit on our shipmates, we just want you understand why the prices are rising. Due the cost of administrating the reservations and postage the Armed Forces Reunions Inc., are required to make a minor charge of \$3.00 for registration cancellations. This will not effect the banquet, trips, etc.

We are still negotiating our 1999 Salt Lake City reunion. As you know Our commanding officer, Captain Bennion, lost his life fighting the ship on the 7th of December, 1941 is buried in Salt Lake City. For this action he was awarded our country's highest award, The Medal of Honor, posthumously. We wish to honor him and all our departed shipmates with a memorial service at this reunion. We are now looking at North Central America for our reunion in the year 2000.

I am still looking for a relief to assume the reunion duties after Salt Lake City.

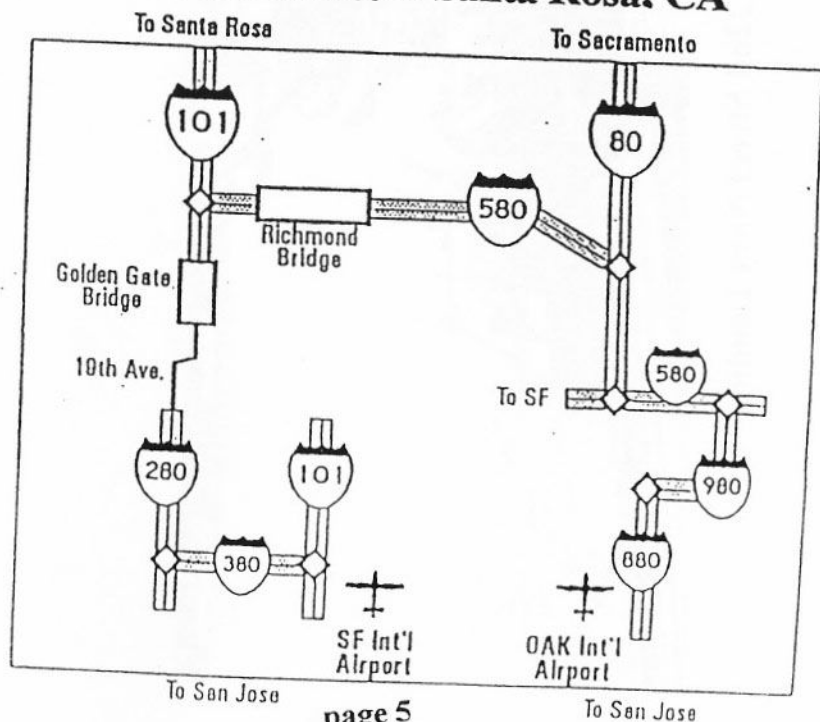
Our Departed Shipmates

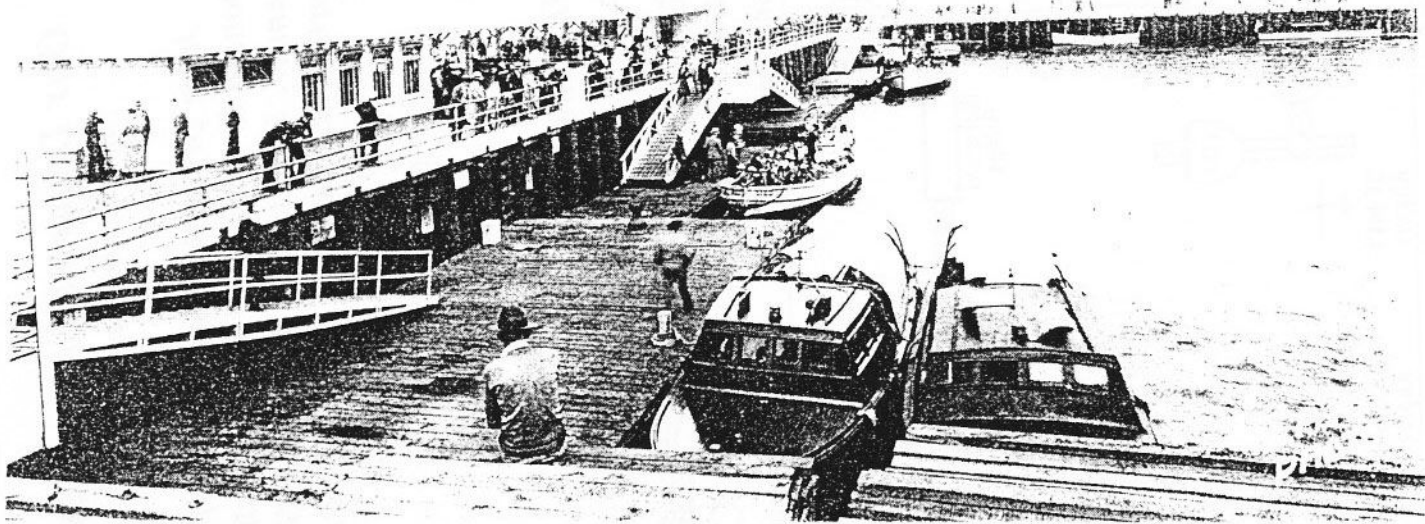
Since our last newsletter

John Organek George Boroff
Donald K. Davidson Earl C. Bishop
William W. Hardeman Rudolph J. Gobbeo
Charles Nicholas W. R. "Blitz" Altman
Strulyn C. King
Norman C. Lee

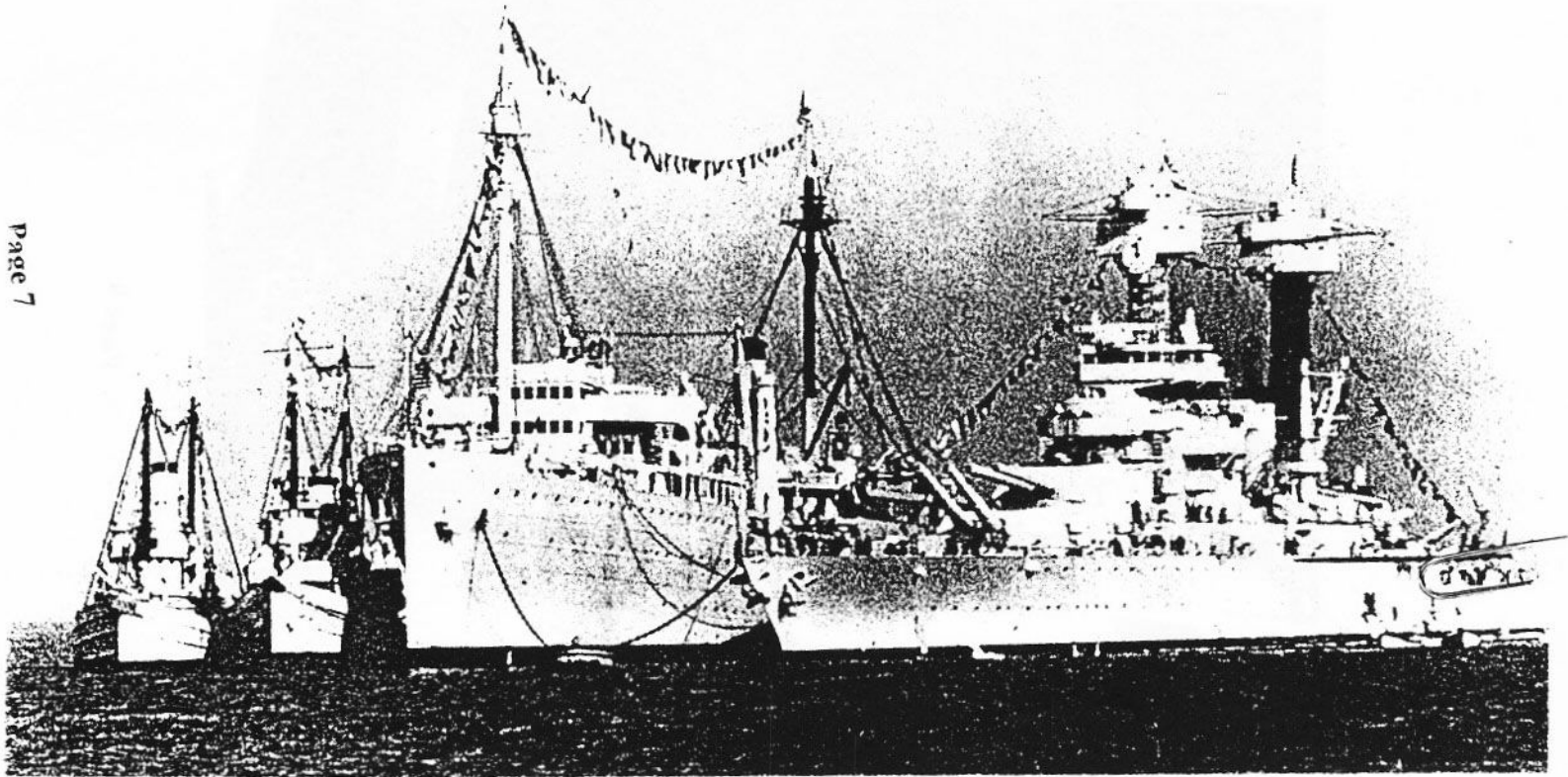
"May They Rest In Peace"
"They Are Gone But Not Forgotten"

Roads leading to Santa Rosa, CA

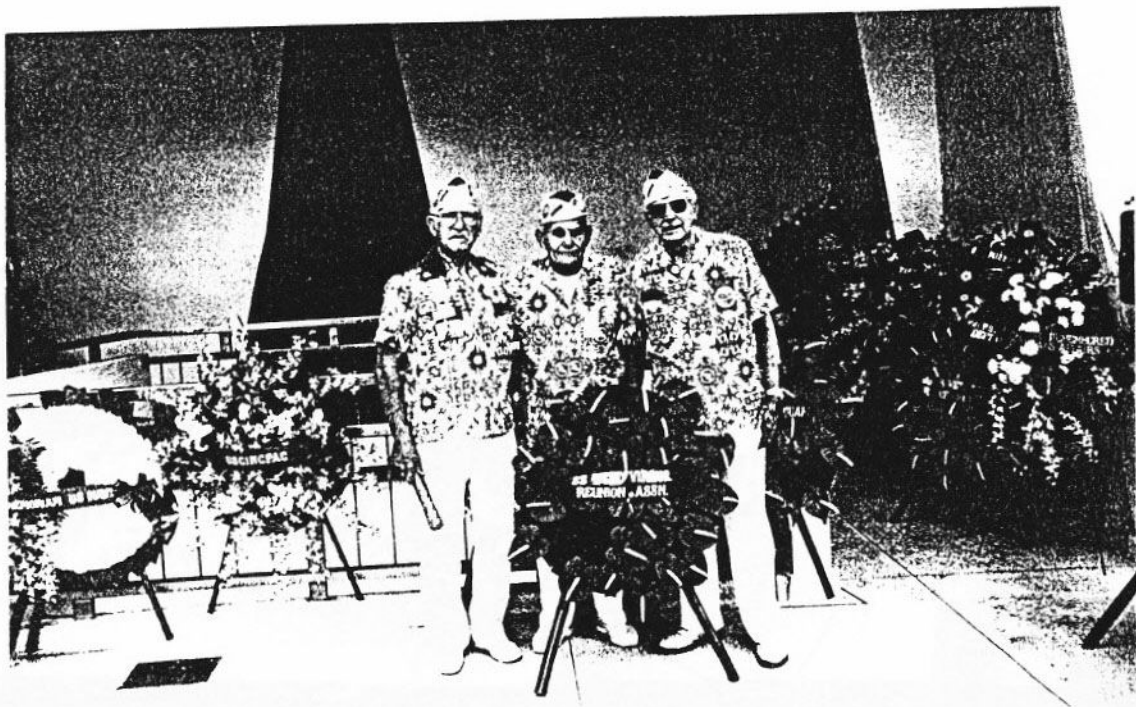




San Pedro, California 1933, 22nd Street Navy Landing



Moored Along Side Of A Repair Ship in San Pedro Harbor 1933



Arizona Memorial, December 7th, 1997
Richard "Dick" Fiske; Thomas "Mickey" Michenovich and Kieth Hill
Place The U.S.S. West Virginia Reunion Association Wreath On The
Memorial In The Memory Of All Our Departed Shipmates

HOTEL LOCATION

Sonoma County Hilton is located at 3555 Round Barn Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. The hotel is fifty miles north of San Francisco off Highway 101. It is nestled in the heart of California wine country. The area offers 110 world-class wineries, golf, and shopping at Santa Rosa Plaza and Coddington Mall.

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NEARBY RV PARK

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WHEELCHAIRS

Empire Hospital Supply will rent a standard wheelchair for \$25/week and deliver to the Sonoma County Hilton at no charge. Please call Empire (707) 584-7753 should you need a wheelchair at the reunion.

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount *payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS* in the form of check or money order (no credit cards or phone reservations accepted). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 14, 1998. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
 P.O. Box 11327
 Norfolk, VA 23517
 ATTN: USS WEST VIRGINIA

OFFICE USE ONLY
 Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS AUGUST 14, 1998

	PRICE PER	x	NO. OF PEOPLE	=	AMOUNT
Mandatory registration fee which covers administrative and hospitality room expenses.	\$18	x	_____	=	_____
Thursday City Tour	\$34	x	_____	=	_____
Friday Wine Country Tour	\$37	x	_____	=	_____
Friday evening snacks and entertainment	\$10	x	_____	=	_____
Saturday harbor cruise	\$37	x	_____	=	_____
Saturday Night Banquet					Mark your choice(s)
London Broil	\$30	x	_____	=	_____
Chicken Rissoto (stuffed w/ sun-dried tomatoes & basil)	\$30	x	_____	=	_____
Sunday Breakfast Buffet	\$15	x	_____	=	_____

TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE TO ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. _____

PLEASE PRINT
 NAME (for nametags) _____

DIVISION _____ YEARS ON BOARD 19 _____ - 19 _____

SPOUSE AND GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES _____ NO _____

ARE YOU FLYING? _____ DRIVING? _____ RV? _____

FULL REFUNDS WILL BE SENT FOR THE ABOVE MENTIONED ACTIVITIES IF CANCELLATION IS RECEIVED BY 9/11/98 (Less a \$3 processing fee). AFTER THAT DATE, REFUND AMOUNT WILL DEPEND ON VENDOR POLICIES. PLEASE CALL (757) 625-6401 (9am-5pm EST). YOUR CANCELED CHECK WILL SERVE AS YOUR CONFIRMATION.

**REMOVE THIS PAGE FROM THE NEWSLETTER
 and mail to the Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (Address Above)**

BIOGRAPHY OF A BATTLESHIP

(Continued)

"We Raised Our Ship From The Deep"

This chapter of the biography of *West Virginia* relates to efforts of those "Mountaineers" who remained with *West Virginia*, recalled to *West Virginia* or assigned to her during the reconstruction period. Most government and naval authorities, upon viewing the sunken *West Virginia*, believed that the "Mountaineer" ship would never float again much less ever becoming a ship of the line during the war with Japan. Yet our salvage crew, under the leadership of Lieutenant Commander W. "Willie" White still had faith in their abilities and proved to them all that *West Virginia* would live again and contribute to the defeat of her adversary in battle.

The enthusiasm and spirit of the salvage crew deserves high praise. With less than 500 men at any one time, they took on a hopeless and almost impossible job. Despite of all the odds existing against them, they were able to clean up the ship, remove the dead, take off every weight that could be moved, they set up and manned an antiaircraft battery of nine machine guns and was successful in reducing the draft to a level where docking of the ship in Dry Dock No. 1 was feasible. At the same time they established temporary living quarters on Ford Island, built a walkway to the ship and restored the ship's galleys allowing the commissary department to serve three meals a day to all hands commencing with the 27th of April, 1942.

It was estimated that *West Virginia* was struck by at least 7 torpedoes; the exact number was questionable due to the finding of two unexploded torpedoes under her keel at a later date. The extensive damage to her port side also created speculation as to how many explosive devices actually struck the ship. At least three torpedoes struck below the ship's armor belt, some hit the armor belt and one or two entered the ship through holes in the hull made by the first torpedoes as the ship was settling to the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Of those exploded above the armored third deck; one hit the steering gear and demolished portions of the after end of the ship. The rudder was blown from the ship into the harbor bottom. Two airborne bombs hit the ship, but fortunately, they were both duds.

The exploding torpedoes virtually opened the entire port side of *West Virginia*

The salvage experts and shipyard officials decided that cofferdams to be filled with concrete would be required to reclaim her damaged port side. The proposed cofferdams would be designed to cover the major holes extending from the waterline to the bilge. Two large patches would be required for this purpose. The steering room could be isolated from the other damaged sections of the ship therefore patch would be needed there and the rudder was to be retrieved from the harbor bottom after the ship was dry-docked.

The two bombs dropped on the ship, that did not explode, were converted from 15 inch armor piercing projectiles. One bomb struck and penetrated the armored top of number three turret and the other passed through the fore top and was later found amid the rubble of the second deck. *West Virginia* suffered further damages by being wedged against the *Tennessee* and the forward quay. Serious damages to *West Virginia* was caused by the intense oil fires that burned within her structure for at least 30 hours. The fires were fueled by the oil and heat emitting from *Arizona* as well as *West Virginia's* own hull. The extreme heat from the fires created warping of a substantial portion of deck and bulkhead plating amidships. As fire was extinguished in one area of the ship it would only break out elsewhere.

Huge wooden cofferdams were built that consisted of enormous wooden sections some, 50 feet in length and braced with steel. When placed along side the ship they were weighted and lowered by floating cranes and then attached to the ship's hull by salvage divers by the use of bolts. These cofferdams were designed to form one tremendous outer wall on the port side of the ship. Rubber hoses were used as a seal between the hull and the cofferdam.

With the cofferdams in place, and all other evolution's were considered ready; a barge containing a large cement mixer began pouring 325 yards or 650 tons of underwater concrete into the cofferdams. The cement settled some 4 feet deep about the uneven portions of the hull, hardening and making the undersides of the cofferdams watertight. As soon as the patches were completed, divers were deployed to certify the soundness of the patchwork, and to determine the completeness of all underwater temporary repairs.

The salvage crew commenced the removing of weights still within the ship and accessible. This was done in order to help reduce the draft of the vessel. An electric powered skimmer was used to unload the remaining tonnage of fuel oil contained in the ship's tanks. The crew also removed items such as the

regular ship stores, canteen supplies and ordnance consisting of the 16 inch and lesser sized projectiles and powder. Nine electric driven deep well pumps then began the pumping out of muck within the body of the ship. As the main propulsion plant became de-watered, ship's force working parties made secure the protection of personal property and then commenced the laborious task of cleaning out and gas-freeing the spaces, in addition to the rebuilding and repairing of the steam plant. Electrical specialists began the overhaul and cleaning of the alternators and motors. Rotten stores and provisions were flushed out as soon as they could be reached.

With great dignity, 66 bodies were sent ashore. In order to remove the bodies, it was the practice to stop the pumping in time to leave about 2 feet of water above the deck and the bodies were then floated into large canvas bags. These body bags were securely tied and transported to the Naval Hospital at Aiea for correct identification and burial. The *West Virginia* came afloat on the 17th day of May, 1942 and crossed the sill of No. 1 Dry Dock on the 16th day of June, 1942. In dry dock *West Virginia* received the full attention of the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard personnel and facilities. It had been agreed upon that the ship would be undocked to make way for any battle casualty, but none appeared. The shipyard completed a great deal of work on *West Virginia* prior to her departure for the Puget Sound Navy Yard.

The "Wee Vee" departed Pearl Harbor under her own power on May 7th, 1943. On July 4th, 1944 *West Virginia* left the Puget Sound Navy Yard to join the mighty Pacific Fleet as a modernized formidable fighting vessel.

I have tried to tell this story about the old "*Sea Raider*" as I knew it along with a lot of research and the Navy's Dictionary of Ships. As I pondered over the tales of *West Virginia* I began to realize that many more stories and memories existed that has never been brought to the mind of our shipmates, especially that of the unglamorous salvage phase in the life of *West Virginia*. I will add a few items of interest to the saga of the "*Rise From The Deep*".

Julia Gatchel sent me a letter from LCDR W. White praising the efforts of the members of the salvage effort.

Captain Jack O'Neill remembers, as a Quartermaster, chipping paint outside the old galley until Bos'n Weaver took pity on him and assigned him to the Captain's Gig with "Dutch" Kanzenback and later he went back to the bridge.

He also remembers of a Destroyer Repair Unit coming aboard to help in repairing the ship, but some of them took on a side job of looting the ship's crew's lockers.

It seems as though "Red" O'Neill, a storekeeper and Pedro Di Marco relieved the shipyard of A large washing machine destined for a cruiser but ended up on "Wee Vee". When Willie White saw it on the pier prior to its being lifted aboard he turned and vacated the area so he would not be a witness to it being placed aboard *West Virginia*.

A large contingent from the sunken *Yorktown* was on its way to the states but were sidetracked and ended up on *West Virginia* and were a great asset to the reconstruction effort.

The following are a few remarks made by Captain White to the Naval Academy Alumni Association: A survey of prior salvage operations in the area indicated that if we were to save the ship, cooperation with the salvage engineers must take precedence over any of the ship's activities and that efficient employment of the ship's force must be paramount. The *West Virginia* had always possessed a fine ship's spirit, so to foster this, a decision was made to spare no effort to conserve the men's energy and to make the crew as comfortable as possible during this difficult oil soaked job. This decision was vigorously pursued during the entire salvage operation.

He said that messing was furnished by shore activities. Not only was time lost going to and fro, but ours was dirty work, which did not allow us to shift uniform at every meal. The crews galley was destroyed, but with a minimum of repairs the officer's galley was placed in commission. An awning was rigged over the boat deck, tables and benches placed and three meals a day were served from then on in our outdoor mess hall. Canvas covers were made and placed on the benches for use during the noon meal. Soiled work clothes were permitted to be worn and the only requirement was that face and hands be washed before eating. Wardroom and CPO messes were set up in the starboard casemates from which the guns had already been removed. When the crew worked at night, so did the galley.

I remember Smokey Stienhauer WT1/c and myself WT1/c rebuilding the fire room by day, relieving the shipyard of its shellac by night and distilling it into liquid refreshment for recreational purposes. The process was; take 1 can of

condensed milk and empty it into a regulation bucket add one gallon of shellac, stir the contents until the shellac came to a ball, remove the shellac ball and distill the residue. The result was 3 quarts of pure grain alcohol.

COPY

U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA

From: The Commanding Officer.
To :

Subject: Salvage of the U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA - Excellent Assistance and Cooperation of Officers and Men in Connection with.

Reference: (a) Commandant, Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, T.H., letter BB48/L11-1(92784AA) PL5(92784AA) dated June 10, 1942.

1. Reference (a) is quoted below for your information:

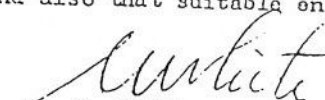
"1. Following the successful salvaging of the USS WEST VIRGINIA the Commandant takes pleasure in recording his appreciation for the fine assistance and cooperation rendered throughout the salvage operations by the officers and men of the WEST VIRGINIA.

2. The part of the salvage work assigned to the ship's force is recognized as the most unpleasant and the least glamorous of all aspects of salvage work and it is therefore worthy of particular note that the spirit of your officers and men was at all times on the highest possible plane. The work was tackled and completed in the traditional Navy spirit of doing the job assigned and doing it well. In spite of the great shortage of enlisted personnel available to fill out the crew adequately for the job, a vast amount of work was accomplished, which in fact exceeded the expectations of the Salvage Officer of the Yard.

3. The Commandant congratulates the Commanding Officer and the officers and crew of the WEST VIRGINIA on this demonstration that the old WEST VIRGINIA spirit is still in the ship. With this spirit among you she will be in the battle line again soon, as hard hitting and as accurate as ever.

4. It is suggested that a copy of this letter be attached to the report of fitness of each officer and to the service record of each enlisted man concerned."

2. The Commanding Officer feels that you contributed directly to this fine work and has ordered that a copy of this letter be filed with your record and also that suitable entry be made thereon.


W. WHITE,
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy,
Commanding

USS WEST VIRGINIA BB-48
SONOMA COUNTY HILTON - SANTA ROSA, CA
SEPTEMBER 16 - 20, 1998

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

1000 Arrival and registration until 1800. Hospitality room open. Evening on your own.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

0730 Registration continues until 0830.

0900 Board bus for a tour of San Francisco. See Mission Dolores, the Twin Peaks, and some of the most beautiful views of the Pacific coastline. Then on to Chinatown, past the Transamerica Building, Union Square, the financial district, and City Hall.

1230 Free time for lunch and shopping on your own at Fisherman's Wharf. Choose between many restaurants featuring traditional and ethnic entrees. Of course, seafood is the favorite. Your guide will give you plenty of suggestions.

1430 Reboard bus to return to the hotel by 1530.

\$54/Person includes bus and guide. Lunch is not included.
Evening on your own. Hospitality room open.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

0830 Board bus for a tour to the famous wine country.

0930 Visitors to St. Supery will find a warm, friendly welcome and an educational wine experience like none other in the Napa Valley. St. Supery's knowledgeable staff will guide you through the history of winemaking in the Valley and offer you a glimpse into the future by viewing an ultra-modern winemaking facility. The most comprehensive offering is the guided tour of the Wine Discovery Center, which begins in the display vineyard; guests are free to wander among the vines, taste the grapes, and take photographs. A walk through Atkinson House invites guests to spend a moment in the Valley of a bygone era. Inside the winery, through meticulously designed exhibits, the visitor is introduced to the making of fine wines from the soil to the bottle. The tour ends with a conducted tasting of St. Supery wines.

1100 Reboard bus for Vintage 1870, an old winery converted into a collection of unique shops, boutiques, and restaurants. Enjoy lunch on your own and free time to shop.

1300 Reboard bus for the Sutter Home Visitor's Center, housed in the original winery building. Take time to shop in the gift shop and savor a taste of wine. Enjoy a walk through the White Zinfandel Garden, a horticultural wonderland containing over 800 plants and flowers. Highlights include a large rose garden, a diverse collection of daylilies, lilacs, and more. Century-old palm, cedar, citrus, and oak trees also grace the property.

1430 Reboard bus to return to the hotel by 1530.

\$37/Person includes bus, guide, and winery tour. Lunch is not included.

1930 After dinner on your own, enjoy a reception with entertainment.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

0930 Board bus for Pier 39.

1030 Board one of the Blue and Gold Fleet's 400 passenger harbor tour ships for a narrated cruise. See two of the world's most incredible man-made structures: the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge, and come within yards of the famous island of Alcatraz.

1145 Lunch on your own and free time at Pier 39. This landmark brings together the best of San Francisco, including continuous free entertainment by the city's premier street performers, fine restaurants, casual dining, and a huge selection of specialty shops. View the "wall of menus" for lunch options.

1330 Reboard bus to return to the hotel by 1430.

\$57/Person includes bus, escort, and cruise. Lunch is not included.

1800 Cash Bar.

1900 Banquet is served, followed by entertainment.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

0800 Informal Church Service.

0830 Farewell Breakfast, followed by a business meeting.

Driver & Guide Gratuities are not included in the tour prices.

**SONOMA COUNTY HILTON
SANTA ROSA, CA
(707) 523-7555**

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HOTEL RESERVATIONS
(800) 679 2242

1998 W Va REUNION

September 16th-20th 1998

Santa Rosa, California

II Sonoma County

Hilton
Santa Rosa

54 Miles North of San Francisco

Commuter Air Or

Bus Service from Oakland or

San Francisco Airports

IMPORTANT NOTICE

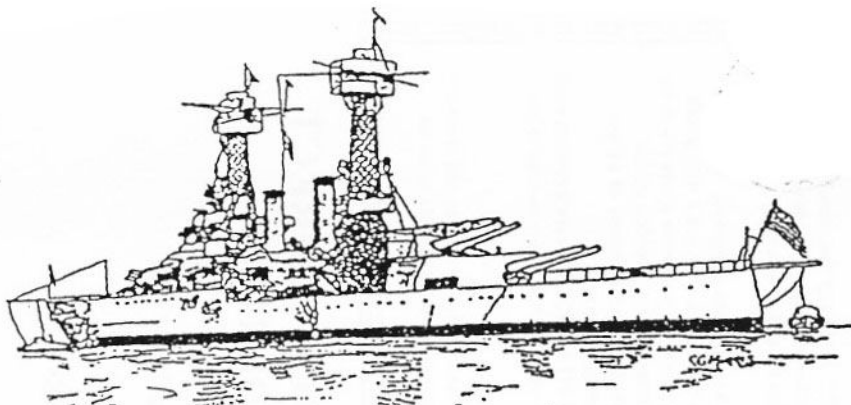
HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Toll Free (800) 679 2242 or (707) 523 7555 (Pay Call)

YOU MUST STATE THAT YOU ARE ATTENDING THE

U.S.S. West Virginia Reunion

RESERVATION CUT OFF DATE: AUGUST 15, 1998



U. S. S. WEST VIRGINIA

Reunion Association
c/o Robert S. Kronberger
PO Box 442, Big Bear City, CA 92314-0442

FIRST CLASS MAIL
Date Orientated Material



POSTMASTER: PLEASE RUSH
THIS NEWSLETTER TO:

VISIT THE USS WEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM
924 EMERSON AVE., PARKERSBURG,
WV 26104