



FROM
THE
QUARTERDECK

I would first like to introduce myself to those who may not know me. My name is Joseph D. Variot (Joe). I served in the 5th Division. My post was mount 3 secondary battery 5"-38. I never while serving on the Wee Vee amounted to much more than a swab jockey and had moved all the way up to Seaman first class.

I had entered the Navy under the name of Carl W. Newton. Reason: I had just turned 16 and was too young to be accepted. This was my third try at enlisting in the Navy in a period of about eighteen months. Newton just turned 18 and did not want to be drafted. He let me use his identification, birth certificate, drivers license and etc. and it worked. Guess what? Four months later he was drafted. I was discharged in 1946 and re-upped regular Navy shortly afterwards. I served for about nine years total when I decided I needed more money to carry on.

I could really never get the Navy out of my system, and about four years ago inquired into the U. S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. Shortly afterwards, I was asked to start a new unit in Northern Michigan. I did so, and named it Michigan Mountaineers. We put together a flag using a broadside view of the West Virginia. Since our start we have moved up to about 55 cadets and 11 officers and instructors. It's really a satisfying contribution of time. Enough said of me.

Our last reunion in Salt Lake City was a great success. The side trips were great. For those of you who could not make it, you really missed out. The Tabernacle and copper mines are in themselves worth the trip, to say nothing of the camaraderie of seeing our shipmates of years gone by. The bull sessions get better every year. Where does Bob get all those stories?!

I want to salute the efforts of Arlow Webb in trying to obtain the recognition of a Unit Commendation for the USS West Virginia and her meritorious service 17 Oct 1944 to 27 Feb 1945. Arlow had sent a letter to Senator Byrd of West Virginia, 4 Apr 99 and again, 25 July 99 requesting his help in obtaining this citation. Senator Byrd then forwarded the request to Mr. B. A. Wilson, Head Awards and Special Projects Office. By direction of Chief of Naval Operations, Mr. Wilson acknowledged receipt of the request and promised to get back to Arlow Webb within six weeks.

I only really got to know Arlow Webb and his wife Jeanne about fifteen months ago. We met aboard the USS Missouri when representing the USS West Virginia in a ceremony in Hawaii, when the Mighty Mo was turned over to the state government as a monumental museum. It is tied up close to the mooring block used by the Wee Vee when sunk at Pearl Harbor, 7 Dec 1941. We were there through the request of the American Battleship Association and Association President Dave Graham. Also from the Wee Vee and in attendance were John Cowden, Don Seibold, and Dick Fiske. Needless to say we were outnumbered easily 500 to 1, by the crew of the Missouri. I believe there were 11 other Wagons represented. Even though outnumbered, we found things to do among our crew and Arlow with Jeanne at his side kept things going. I would like to point out they are a great couple and wonderful host and hostess. We had the pleasure of staying at their beautiful home in Portland for a couple of days after the reunion.

For those of you who might be interested in joining the American Battleship Association, the fee is \$5.00 per year. Or a lifetime membership for ages 17 to 49 is \$100, ages 50-74 is \$75, and ages 75 and over is \$50. Write to:

Dave Graham, A. B. A.
P. O. Box 711247
San Diego, CA 92171

They have a lot going on.



SURIGAO STRAIT

Remembering the Last Battleship Battle

The early morning hours of 25 October, 1944 marked an historic event for six "old" battleships of the U.S. Navy. The *California*, *Maryland*, *Mississippi*, *Pennsylvania*, *Tennessee* and the *West Virginia* lined up across the mouth of Surigao Strait. This resulted in the maneuver which is called crossing the "T" and won the Battle for the U.S. Forces. This engagement was the last Battleship-to-Battleship confrontation in history.

A reunion of the Crews who served on the "old" battleships and who fought in this historic battle is being considered for late October 2000, during the 56th anniversary of the Battle of Surigao Strait. **This would include men from all six battleships and would be separate from our regular reunions so as not to interfere with our own schedule.** However, before we can go further in planning this event, we need to know your interest in such a reunion.

A location has not been selected at this time. A city in the central part of the country would probably be more suitable to most of you. Cities such as Memphis, TN and Austin, TX have been suggested. An Austin reunion would allow us to visit the Adm. Chester Nimitz museum in nearby Fredericksburg, TX. The museum houses plaques commemorating each of the battleships involved in Surigao Strait and other historic items from other naval battles of World War II.

To all hands of the 6 Battleship crew: We need a head count so even if you can't attend please fill out this short form below as soon as possible and return it to **Mike Hulen, P.O. Box 97, Swifton AR 72471-0097** so we can determine if there is enough interest to have this reunion.

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- Yes, I am interested in attending a Surigao Strait Battle Reunion October 23-26, 2000.**
 - I would be attending the event myself.**
 - There would be _____ other family/friends attending with me.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ship: _____



**U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA
REUNION ASSOCIATION**



**C/O JOSEPH VARIOT
4564 CEDAR RIVER ROAD
MANCERLONA, MI 49659**

The Mountaineer



**POSTMASTER:
PLEASE RUSH
THIS
NEWSLETTER TO:**

