



History of The USS Pennsylvania

Charles William Babb served on this vessel during World War II and was aboard on August 12, 1945 when the ship was hit by a Japanese Torpedo Plane.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** was commissioned June 12, 1916, after having been authorized by Congress August 22, 1912. Her keel was laid on October 27, 1913, and she was launched at Newport News Shipbuilding Company, March 16, 1915. America's and the worlds biggest Battleship slid down the skids into her native element at 10:11 am while 20 thousand spectators cheered. Special trains from Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia brought thousands to Newport News. Governor Stewart of Virginia and Governor Brumbaugh of Pennsylvania and Secretary of the Navy Daniels, were among the honored guests.

Miss Elizabeth Kolb of Germantown, daughter of Louis J. Kolb of Philadelphia and a student at National Park Seminary, had been invited to the launching ceremonies by Governor Brumbaugh, who called her "the most beautiful and sweetest girl in Pennsylvania". She arrived with her maids of honor, Miss Katherine Kolb, Miss Katherine Martin and Miss Mildred Harold. Following the prayer and with the words "*I Christen thee Pennsylvania*", Miss Kolb broke a bottle of champagne on the bow and set in motion one of the greatest battleships of all time.

Pre-Pearl Harbor

In the Fall of 1917 when Allied Naval Forces began collecting to form what was to be known as the Allied-British Grand Fleet, Sixth Battle Squadron, there was great unhappiness aboard the USS **PENNSYLVANIA**, flagship of the United States Fleet. The USS **PENNSYLVANIA**, together with the USS NEVADA joined the Fleet in 1916 as the first two oil burning U.S. Battleships, was told that she could not hope to operate with the forces seeking out the German Navy because she was "too modern". Only coal-burning dreadnaughts were to be included in the Allied Force because no tankers could be spared to carry fuel to the British Isles.

Perhaps that disappointment in 1917 had a great deal to do with one of the most remarkable ship histories in World War II. The present crew of the **PENNSYLVANIA** is as happy and proud a crew as can be found in Uncle Sam's front line Forces because it feels it has in generous measure made up for its absence in the battle line on World War I.

The Grand Old Lady of the Fleet has probably housed more gold braid in her time than any other ship. From the morning of October 12, 1916 until the expanding Pacific offensive made impractical the centralization of command on one floating unit, the USS **PENNSYLVANIA** served as a flagship.

As an ally in 1917, Japan sent representatives of its Naval General Staff aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** to observe fleet maneuvers and Admiral Isamu Takeshita, then a Vice Admiral and Vice Admiral Masataka Ando, then a Commander, spent a week aboard. Takeshita later became Commander in Chief of the Combined Japanese fleets, Supreme War Councilor and as a reserve, represented Japan at the Los Angeles Convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1940.

Pearl Harbor

At 0755 on the morning of December 7, 1941, the USS **PENNSYLVANIA** was sitting in dry-dock in the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. Her screws had been removed from their shafts and were resting on the bottom of the dock. She had been scheduled to leave the dock on the sixth and berth at Ten Ten Dock, immediately adjacent, but delays had been encountered, those delays probably saved the ship.

It was a normal quite Sunday morning and there was little activity aboard. The watch had just been set and the Chaplain was making preparations for the eight o'clock mass on the quarterdeck. Virtually all of the Ships Company were aboard. In view of the existing conditions general over-night liberty had not been granted.

Suddenly and with complete surprise, Japanese dive bombers and torpedo bombers roared out of the high overcast. The **PENNSYLVANIA** was one of the first ships in the harbor to open fire. Her 50 caliber machine gun crews had their guns in action even before General Quarters was sounded.

Japanese Planes tried repeatedly to torpedo the caisson of the dry-dock but never succeeded. If they had, a wall of water would have swept into the dry-dock, causing incalculable damage to the **PENNSYLVANIA**. The ship and the surrounding dock areas were strafed severely, and a medium bomb struck the starboard side of the boat deck, and burst inside encasement 9. The crew of the 5"/51 was wiped out, The destroyers CASSIN and DOWNES, just forward of the **PENNSYLVANIA** in the dry-dock, were hit and seriously damaged. The intensity of the fires in the DOWNES caused her fuel oil tanks to explode with further extensive damage. The torpedoes on her deck were armed with warheads, and at least two of these went off with a mighty roar, sending flames more than 100 feet high and showering that section of the harbor with metal fragments. A portion of a torpedo tube weighing about 1,000 pounds was blown onto the forecastle of the **PENNSYLVANIA**, and bomb fragments pockmarked the battleship. At 0945, almost two hours from the time it had begun, the raid ended. The damage in Pearl Harbor was appalling, although it might have been worse. The ARIZONA, the **PENNSYLVANIA**'S sister ship, was smashed beyond hope of salvage. The OKLAHOMA was capsized. The WEST VIRGINIA and CALIFORNIA were resting on the bottom, and the NEVADA had been beached. Of the eight battleships in the harbor only the **PENNSYLVANIA**, TENNESSEE, and MARYLAND had received minor damage. Our light forces had fared better. Three light cruisers had suffered moderate damage, but three other light cruisers and three heavy cruisers had gone untouched. Three destroyers were heavily damaged.

Not quite two weeks later the **PENNSYLVANIA** stood out of Pearl Harbor. She spent Christmas underway and arrived in San Francisco on December 29. The damage caused by the one bomb hit at Pearl Harbor was repaired, and the four 3"/50's on the boat deck were replaced with LL's. Throughout the greater part of 1942 the **PENNSYLVANIA** served in Task Force 1, consisting of seven OBB's, and carried the Task Force Commander, Vice Admiral W.S. Pye. From February through July the Task force operated out of, though sometimes at considerable distance from, San Francisco.

[Oakland, California](#)

Task Force 1 entered Pearl Harbor in mid-August. Except for a couple of practices, the **PENNSYLVANIA** sat at FOX-3, next to Ford Island, from then until the last days of September, at which time she and the IDAHO shoved off for the West Coast and yard periods. The IDAHO went to Bremerton, and the **PENNSYLVANIA** to the Bethlehem Steel Company, San Francisco.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** remained in the yard four months, undergoing modernization and overhaul. Her tripod mainmast was removed and replaced with a fire control tower and a pole mast. The donning tower was removed. The two boat cranes were removed; the two booms were added to take their place. The catapult on top of Turret 3 was removed. New radar's were installed, two search and four fire control, bringing the total to six. But the most extensive changes were made in the AA battery. The 5"/51 broadside guns and the 5"/25 AA guns were replaced with eight 5"/38 dual purpose, twin mounts. The LL's replaced with ten 40-mm quads. Additional 20-mm's was installed. At the completion of the yard period the ship bristled with guns, twelve 14"/45, sixteen 5"/38, forty 40-mm, fifty 20-mm, and eight .50 caliber. At that time the AA battery was as formidable as any in the fleet.

On April third Captain C.M. Cooke was relieved as Commanding Officer of the **PENNSYLVANIA** by Captain T.S. King II. In July Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, Ernest J. King, in a brief ceremony on the quarterdeck of the **PENNSYLVANIA** in San Francisco.

[The North Pacific Campaign](#)

The **PENNSYLVANIA** left San Francisco on February 6 and arrived at Long Beach the next afternoon. The following day Captain W.A. Corn relieved Captain King. During the next two and a half months the ship operated out of Long Beach and conducted practices in preparation for a coming combat operation. The crew naturally could not know what was in the wind, and there were loudly voiced complaints that the **PENNSYLVANIA** would serve as nothing more than a training ship throughout the war. Nevertheless the **PENNSYLVANIA** shoved off from Long Beach on April 23, 1943 and arrived a week later at Cold Bay, Alaska. This bleak harbor lies at the tip of the Alaska Peninsula, and the **PENNSYLVANIA** stood in during a miserable, wet windstorm. No one questioned the aptness of the name, Cold Bay.

Rear Admiral F.W. Rockwell, Commander Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet, hoisted his flag in the **PENNSYLVANIA** and on May fourth a force Consisting of three battleships, the **PENNSYLVANIA**, **IDAHO**, and **NEVADA**, one escort carrier, the **NASSAU**, Transports, and destroyers stood out from Cold Bay. It proceeded to the westward, south of the Aleutian chain, through Amukta Pass into the Bering Sea, and on westward. Its objective was the island of Attu.

[The Aleutians Islands](#)

Japanese forces were known to have occupied the islands in the Aleutians, Attu and Kiska. It was decide to strike first at Attu, the less strongly garrisoned of the two and the westernmost island in the chain. The weather in the Aleutians is notoriously bad. It is cold, the fogs are thick and almost continuous, and the seas are usually rough. More unfavorable conditions for an amphibious operation would be difficult to find.

"Dog" Day was set tentatively for May 8, 1943 but on that day the seas were too heavy to permit a landing. The **PENNSYLVANIA** patrolled first to the northeast of Attu and then with two other battleships and a cruiser force to the west. "Dog" Day was set definitely for 11 May 1943. On the afternoon of May 10, the battle-ships joined with the transports of the task force. That night in a dense fog two approach dispositions were formed, one of the transports and fire support ships, including the **PENNSYLVANIA** and **IDAHO**, to operate in the Holtz Bay-Chinchagof Harbor area and the other of the vessels to operate in the Massacre Bay area.

On the morning of 11 May the task group to which the **PENNSYLVANIA** had been assigned arrived in the vicinity of Red Beach, which had been occupied before daylight by scout troops landed from submarines and an APD. The **J. FRANKLIN BELL** commenced landing troops and supplies on Red Beach while the **PENNSYLVANIA** and **IDAHO** withdrew to the northward and prepared to execute fire support missions as directed.

The **PENNSYLVANIA'S** first bombardment mission was ordered that afternoon. A heavy fog covered the area, and the approach had to be made entirely by radar. Likewise, the bombardment had to be conducted entirely by radar and indirect fire methods, land was never sighted. At 1514 hours the starboard secondary battery opened fire at a range of about 9000 yards. 672 pounds of AA common set for both air and ground bursts were expended during the shoot, and only the secondary battery fired. There was no observation of the fall of shot.

The secondary bombardment mission was ordered the following morning. Again there was a dense fog, and again the approach was made by radar. Both the main and secondary batteries fired, simultaneously during part of the run. The fire was spotted by a shore fire control party and after the fog had lifted, by surface spotters.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** bombarded a third time on the afternoon of the 14th in support of the "Love" hour infantry attack on the west arm of Holtz Bay. This time there was sufficient visibility to make the approach and first leg of the firing run by visual bearings,

but then fog set in and visibility remained low for the remainder of the day. A shore fire control party spotted all firing on the Holtz Bay area. The secondary battery, while firing at targets in the Chichagof Harbor area, was controlled by the ship's planes. The ship was maneuvered in a restricted area entirely by radar for over two hours, during which the main and secondary batteries fired indirect fire at designated target areas without endangering our own infantry 500 yards to the right of the area and scout troops 1500 yards beyond.

This bombardment materially weakened enemy resistance in the west arm of Holtz Bay, permitting our ground forces to advance into and occupy the area.

Torpedoes were fired at the **PENNSYLVANIA** on two occasions. First, on 12 May, as the ship was proceeding to the northward, away from the island, to rejoin the IDAHO, a PBY on anti-submarine patrol suddenly radioed, "Look out for torpedo, torpedo headed for ship". The ship was maneuvered at full speed, and lookouts sighted the torpedo wake passing safely astern. The PBY, which had made the report, flew back along the track of the torpedo and dropped a smoke bomb on the point from which the torpedo had been fired. Two destroyers, the EDWARDS and FARRAGUT, were detached to destroy the submarine. They conducted a relentless attack for about ten hours, until the sub was finally forced to the surface and sunk by gunfire from the EDWARDS, in water more than 1000 fathoms deep. Five days later a definite oil slick covering about five square miles was still visible.

In the morning, two days later the ship's OS2U's were launched and directed to proceed to the Casco, a seaplane tender, anchored in Unnamed Cove, Massacre Bay. The planes and pilots operated from the Casco until the 24th May, strafing enemy positions on Attu.

From the 16th until the 19th the **PENNSYLVANIA** operated with the NASSAU in an area about fifty miles north and east of Attu. On the 19th she headed for Adak. That afternoon, during a false air alert, an explosion occurred in the gasoline stowage compartment in the forward part of the ship. There were no casualties, but there was some structural damage. The **PENNSYLVANIA** paused for one day at Adak and then proceeded to Bremerton. She remained in the Puget Sound Navy Yard through all of June and July, undergoing repairs and overhaul. Also additional radar and radio equipment was installed. On the evening of June 2, while the ship was in dry-dock, a second explosion occurred in the gasoline stowage compartment. Two men on fire watch duty were injured, one seriously and one fatally. **Audley Franklin Johnson, S2c, USNR, Killed Accidentally June 2, 1943**

On August 1, 1943 the **PENNSYLVANIA** departed from Bremerton for Adak. She waited there six days and on August 13 the Kiska Attack Force got underway. Again the **PENNSYLVANIA** was serving as a flagship for Admiral Rockwell. However she had not been assigned the duties of a fire support vessel in this operation, as that would reduce the efficiency of the ship as a command ship, particularly by restricting her freedom of movement. If needed, though, the ammunition was ready. By August the weather in the Aleutians was considerably milder than it had been in May for the Attu operation, although it was still cool by ordinary standards and the area was as always, covered by patches of dense fog.

Assault troops landed without opposition on the Western beaches of Kiska on the morning of August 15, 1943 and pressed inland. By the evening of the 16th it was evident that the island was completely uninhabited, that the Japanese had evacuated under cover of fog some time prior to the landing. The only living creatures found on the island were two ragged, lonely dogs. As a memento of the operation, ship fitters aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** made and presented to Admiral Rockwell a miniature fire hydrant.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** cruised off Kiska for a week and then returned to Adak. From there she steamed southward for Pearl Harbor. In September, with no other job to do at the time, she was assigned the duty of transporting 790 men from Pearl Harbor to the West Coast and of bringing another draft out. The ship remained at San Francisco only five days. She was not to see the States again for over 17 months.

[The Gilbert's & Marshall's](#)

After numerous practice shoots, including a bombardment of Kahoolawe, and then rehearsal assault landing on Maui, the **PENNSYLVANIA** left Pearl Harbor on November 10, 1943 for the Gilbert Island Campaign, our first assault on Japanese positions in the Central Pacific. The **PENNSYLVANIA** carried the 5th Amphibious Force Commander Rear Admiral R.K. Turner, and was a part of the Northern Attack Group, whose objective was Makin Atoll. This atoll lies slightly north of the equator, but the route of the task force, in an attempt to confuse the Japanese led to the south of the equator and then northwestward from the vicinity of the Phoenix Island. The task force, composed of four battleships, four cruisers, three escort carriers, transports and destroyers, approached, Makin Atoll from **PENNSYLVANIA** southeast on the morning of the 20th. Ukiangong Point, the southernmost point of Butaritari Island, was picked up by radar at 0348 at a range of 23 miles. At 0436 the task force deployed, the fire support ships proceeding to their assigned areas and the transports to the transport area. At 0640 the **PENNSYLVANIA** opened fire on Butaritari Island with her main battery, initial range 14,200 yards (8.1 miles). At 0700 the secondary battery joined in, and the bombardment was continued until 0821, when it had to be broken off abruptly for an air strike which commenced a few minutes earlier than scheduled. During the brief shoot the main battery expended, in 2", 3", and 6" gun salvos, 403 rounds of high capacity ammunition and the secondary battery, 246 rounds of AA common. In general, all the target areas were well covered, and the bombardment was considered fully effective.

The heat was a decided handicap, temperatures in the after magazines mounted to as high as 115°, and during the bombardment seven men in the magazines fainted and several others were temporarily incapacitated from the combined effect of the heat, fumes from the powder bags, and their own exertion.

As flagship of the 5th Amphibious Force, the **PENNSYLVANIA** carried 24 radio transmitters and 41 receivers. The communications on "Dog" Day and thereafter until retirement from the area required the manning of all this equipment plus about 25 remote operating position, 127 radiomen were being used. At no time during the entire operation was there a casualty, which disrupted communications.

Just before general quarters on the morning of November 24, 1943, as the **PENNSYLVANIA** was returning to a screening sector off Makin after her usual night retirement, a tremendous explosion took place off her starboard bow. At almost the same instant a screening destroyer reported a sound contact. The disposition immediately executed an emergency course change. For several minutes after the explosion a large fire lighted up the entire area. It was not at once apparent to those aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** what had happened, but word soon came through that the "Liscombe Bay", a CVE, had been torpedoed. She sank shortly with tremendous loss of life.

On the 25th and 26th the task force was taken under determined night air attack by torpedo planes. It was estimated that at times on the evening of the 25th there were as many as fifteen torpedo planes inside the destroyer screen of that disposition. None of our ships, however, were damaged.

On the 30th the **PENNSYLVANIA** left the Makin area for Pearl Harbor. During the first part of January 1944, she conducted various practice shoots and took part in another practice assault on Maui. On January 22, she shoved off from Pearl Harbor for another major operation. This time against Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein Atoll is the largest atoll in the world, its lagoon measuring sixty miles in length. The assault force was divided into two parts, one to strike at Roi and Namur Islands at the northern end of the Atoll and one at Kwajalein Island at the southern end. The **PENNSYLVANIA** was assigned to the southern group.

At 0618 on the last day of January the main battery of the **PENNSYLVANIA** opened fire on Kwajalein Island. It was still dark at the time, and as the first salvo thundered out, a sailor standing top-side yelled in the direction of the island, "**Reveille**".

The secondary and 40mm batteries joined in and the bombardment continued throughout the day. During most of the firing the ship, discovering that at short ranges enemy guns and fortifications could not only be neutralized but actually be destroyed by using the individual guns and fortifications as points of aim, was held between 2000 and 4000 yards from the beach. By this method Japanese guns, blockhouses, pillboxes and blockading sea walls built along possible landing beaches were demolished. Ammunition dumps and fuel stowage's were seen to blow up and burn. Large numbers of the enemy troops were killed.

At one time the 14" high capacity projectiles being used seemed to be taking no effect on a blockhouse built into the seawall. The Gunnery Officer ordered a shift to armor piercing projectiles. The first one fired hit the blockhouse, penetrated the thick concrete wall leaving a hole some three feet in diameter, and burst inside. It seemed reasonable to assume that everything and everyone inside the blockhouse had been destroyed, but just for good measure one more AP was fired that exploded inside the blockhouse, after passing through the hole left by the other projectile.

At 1000 and again at 1600, high and low tides, four reconnaissance boat teams approached to within 100 yards of the landing beaches, taking soundings, studying the reefs, currents and landing facilities, and getting all other available data. The

PENNSYLVANIA and **MISSISSIPPI** were assigned the task of covering these boat teams from close range, but enemy guns did not fire upon the boats.

The **PENNSYLVANIA'S** air spotters did outstanding work during the Kwajalein Campaign. They were invaluable not only in spotting fall of shot but also in picking out targets that could not be seen from the ship.

On the morning of February 1, 1944, the **PENNSYLVANIA** carried out her scheduled bombardment before, during and after the landing on the island by army troops. Although Kwajalein Island was heavily fortified, all troops made the landing unopposed.

On the evening of the third the **PENNSYLVANIA** entered the Lagoon and anchored near Kwajalein Island. Heavy fighting was still in progress on the northern end of the island, where the Japanese were slowly being driven, and the **PENNSYLVANIA** had a front row seat. During the day shell fire, dive bombing, and strafing were clearly visible from the ship, and at night there were continuous streams of tracers crisscrossing over the island, while fire support ships lay close inshore and maintained star-shell illumination. All this was to become commonplace to the crew of the **PENNSYLVANIA** in later operations, but now it was novel and exciting.

With the success of the Kwajalein Operation ensured the **PENNSYLVANIA** proceeded to Majuro Atoll, which had just been occupied, to replenish ammunition. On the afternoon of February 9, 1944, an ammunition ship, the **MAUNA LOA**, was alongside to the starboard, and 14" powder tanks were being received on the forecastle and then struck below. Suddenly one tank, which had just been received aboard and which was sitting with about 20 others on the starboard side of the forecastle, exploded and burned furiously. Within a few seconds hoses from the **MAUNA LOA** and the **PENNSYLVANIA** were brought into action, and after a short period the fire was extinguished.

There were several men burned or otherwise injured by the accident but there were no fatalities. The fact that the heat from the fire failed to set off the surrounding powder tanks was amazing, and it undoubtedly saved the **PENNSYLVANIA** and the **MAUNA LOA** from a disaster.

Shortly after midnight on February 10, 1944, 14" powder tanks were again being taken aboard, this time from a lighter alongside to Port. One tank had been struck below to the handling room of Turret One and was being lifted across the coaming of a door into the right ready service magazine where it exploded, flames swept over the powder cans stacked in the magazine. Again, by some sort of miracle, no powder charge ignited, the magazine and others adjacent were promptly flooded. On this occasion there were numerous casualties, of whom four died. One of which was Charles David Burchell.

With the necessity after each of the powder explosions of condemning all of that lot of powder already received on board and of transferring it off the ship and then receiving another load. It looked very much as though the **PENNSYLVANIA** would not complete loading ammunition in time to take part in the next operation. But, by the afternoon of the

12th, after more than seventy-nine hours of almost continuous work, the job was finished. Forty-five minutes later the ship got underway.

The operation against Kwajalein Atoll had proved so successful that the operation against Eniwetok Atoll, the westernmost in the Marshall's, was undertaken earlier than originally planned, At 0900 on the 17th of February 1944 the **PENNSYLVANIA** steamed boldly through Deep Entrance into Eniwetok Lagoon, her entire 40mm and 20mm batteries blazing away at the enemy-held islands of Japan, to starboard, and Parry, to port, each about 1000 yards away. She proceeded up a swept channel in the lagoon to a position off Engebi Island and at 1125 commenced bombarding enemy installations. This action was continued throughout the day.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** and **TENNESSEE** were assigned the duty of protecting the reconnaissance boat teams, and when they made their approach to the landing beaches at 1700, the **PENNSYLVANIA** covered them with main and secondary battery fire. They completed their mission without interference.

On the morning of the 18th the **PENNSYLVANIA** bombarded Engebi before and during the approach of the assault waves to the beach. During approximately eighty percent of the bombardment the beach areas were enveloped in heavy smoke and dust, and this cover drifted down on the ship, making it extremely difficult and at times impossible to pick out the targets.

When Engebi had been secured, the **PENNSYLVANIA** moved southward through the lagoon to the vicinity of Parry Island. On the 20th and 21st she delivered preparation fire on this island. Parry, who is just over a mile long and less than 600 yards wide, was subjected to a naval bombardment that for volume of fire per square yard had never been equaled elsewhere. At the beginning of the bombardment the island was covered with a dense growth of palm trees extending down to the waters edge, and at its conclusion not a single tree remained standing. The ground was littered with broken tree trunks and palm fronds. The air spotter of the **PENNSYLVANIA** reported that all visible installations were destroyed, trenches demolished and unserviceable, and areas he designated as containing Japanese troops covered with blood upon completion of the firing periods.

He further reported that the Japanese appeared to become hysterical during the bombardment and ran frantically up and down a trail on the far side of the island, into the bushes, and out into the water.

On the morning of the 22nd the **PENNSYLVANIA**'s secondary and 40mm batteries delivered supporting fire prior to the landing on Parry. During the assault LCI 440, which had an observation party aboard and was lying off the landing beach, received a direct hit by a medium caliber projectile and suffered numerous casualties. With most of his crew in desperate need of medical attention, the skipper of the LCI steered his craft for the nearest large ship, the **PENNSYLVANIA**. When the LCI came along the starboard quarter of the battleship, her deck was literally running with blood. Casualties were promptly taken aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA**, and the injured given medical treatment until they could be transferred to a hospital ship later in the day, Three officers from the

COLORADO, who had been in the observation party aboard the LCI, were returned to their ship.

While the LCI was still alongside, the **PENNSYLVANIA** was taken under fire by an enemy shore battery and was later straddled several times. From the size of the splash and the fragments recovered aboard later it was estimated that a 75mm gun or mortar was firing. There were no casualties.

After the conclusion of the Eniwetok Operation there was a lull of almost four months before the next amphibious operation in the Central Pacific. The **PENNSYLVANIA** steamed to Majuro and then southward to Havannah Harbor, Efate, in the New Hebrides. There she lay through most of March and April. At one time, when the Japanese had been surging toward Australia, Efate had been one of our most advanced bases, but now with the front lines far to the northward Efate was in the backwash of the war. There was little activity of any kind. Life aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** settled into an inflexible routine, Recreation Parties were sent to "**PENNSYLVANIA Beach**", where the men were doled two cans of beer apiece and where they could go swimming and hunt for cat-eyes, or barter with the natives for coconuts and grass skirts.

CAPTAIN C.F. MARTIN relieved Captain Corn on April 23, 1944. Shortly before this time scuttlebutt had begun to circulate that the ship would make a visit to Sydney, Australia, and for once the scuttlebutt was right. The **PENNSYLVANIA**, **NEW MEXICO**, and **IDAHO** arrived in Sydney on the 29th and stayed exactly one week. To their crews, Sydney turned out to be just about what Paris was to our troops in France during World War I. The sailors had a little difficulty in dealing in pounds and shillings and in understanding certain Aussie expressions but had no difficulty at all with the girls. The **PENNSYLVANIA** gave two dances, one for each watch, at the Sydney town Hall. Half of the female population of the city must have been present.

After this brief vacation, which was the only thing of the sort that the crew of the **PENNSYLVANIA** received during a period of seventeen months, the ship returned to Efate for a short while and then continued northward into the Solomon's. She steamed westward along the north shore of Guadalcanal, past the beaches where the first landings had been made two years before, past Henderson Field, and then across Iron Bottom Bay, named for a good part of the U.S. and Japanese fleets, to Port Purvis, Florida Island. Using Port Purvis as a base, the **PENNSYLVANIA** sortied three times to bombard simulated targets on Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal, and to take part in a practice amphibious assault. She then returned to Efate to replenish ammunition, after which she proceeded northward again to Roi.

[The Mariana's Campaign](#)

On June 10, 1944 the **PENNSYLVANIA** as one of a force of battleships, cruisers, escort carriers and destroyers, put to sea bound for Saipan, the first of our objectives in the Mariana's. That night a destroyer in the screen of the disposition reported a sound contact. An emergency ships left 90 degree was ordered. As a result of the maneuver, the

PENNSYLVANIA collided with the **TALBOT**, an APD. The **PENNSYLVANIA** sustained only minor damage, but the **TALBOT** was forced to put into Eniwetok for emergency repairs. It was not until some time after the accident that those aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** learned that the **TALBOT** was carrying, for underwater demolition work, a large amount of TNT.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** bombarded Saipan for only one day, June 14, 1944 the day prior to the assault landing. The targets were Japanese installations in the Nafutan Point-Magicienne Bay area. Some damage was effected, although the long ranges at which the bombardment had to be conducted limited it. Enemy guns on Nafutan Point are known to have been knocked out.

On "Dog" Day the **PENNSYLVANIA** cruised up and down off the northeastern shore of Tinian, which lies just south of Saipan, ready to take under fire any enemy batteries which might open up on our landing beaches on Saipan. Four times during the day enemy fire or other activity was observed on Tinian, and each time the **PENNSYLVANIA** took enemy planes under fire.

On the afternoon of June 22, 1944 the force anchored in Garapan Anchorage, off the western coast of Saipan, to refuel destroyers. At dusk a Betty slipped around a large hill on Saipan and was over our force before it had been sighted or picked up by radar. It dropped its torpedo almost on top of the **PENNSYLVANIA** and was gone before any ship fired a shot. The torpedo landed in the water just a few yards off the starboard bow of the **PENNSYLVANIA**, and a few seconds later the sound of an explosion came from the direction of the **MARYLAND**, anchored about 600 Yards astern. The task group, with the exception of the **MARYLAND**, promptly got underway.

By June 25, the Japanese Fleet had been mauled and turned back by aircraft of the 5th fleet, and the **PENNSYLVANIA** departed from the Saipan area. She remained at Eniwetok from June 28 until July 9, 1944 when she left to resume the Guam Operation. On the July 12, 13 and 14 the **PENNSYLVANIA** bombarded in preparation for the eventual assault and landing on Guam. Fire was delivered in coordination with the **NEW MEXICO** and was directed at predetermined targets and targets of opportunity, the object being destruction rather than neutralization. Upon the completion of firing on the evening of the July 14, the **PENNSYLVANIA** returned to Saipan to take on more ammunition.

The pre-assault bombardment was again resumed on the morning of the July 17. In support of underwater demolition operations, the **PENNSYLVANIA** executed close-in protective fire support, covering all points from which fire might be brought to bear on demolition parties. At the same time she continued deliberate destructive fire on predetermined targets. This type of fire was continued on July 18, 19 and 20.

Early on the morning of the July 21, the **PENNSYLVANIA** assumed a position between Agate Beach, where one of the two landings on Guam was to be made, and Orote Peninsula at 0539 she commenced bombarding the beach areas in immediate preparation for the assault. This firing was continued throughout the period that troops and equipment were being loaded into landing craft and landing waves were being formed. The ship lay generally between 2000 and 3000 yards, and at times only 1500 yards, from Orote

Peninsula. At 0830, when the assault waves headed in for the beach, the main and secondary batteries went to rapid fire. A tremendous barrage was laid down on the beach area to provide protection for the landing waves. When the first wave reached a line 1000 yards from the beach and any further fire on the beach itself would endanger our own troops, the **PENNSYLVANIA** lifted her fire back into the hills. Not until twenty minutes after the first troops had landed did she cease firing.

Upon establishment of the beachhead, the **PENNSYLVANIA** stood by to execute whatever fire support missions might be called for by shore fire control parties. From July 21 through July 30 she delivered supporting and harassing fire and star-shell illumination. On the last day of July and 1 August the same types of missions were executed from positions off the northwest coast. Many times the ship fired at enemy troops while our own troops were close to the enemy positions, but in no case did a projectile from the ship fall dangerously close to our own troops.

In the Guam Operation alone the **PENNSYLVANIA** expended not counting the false start on 16 June almost 1800 rounds of 14", 10,000 rounds of 5", 14,000 rounds of 40mm and 1600 rounds of 20mm. This is probably a greater amount of ammunition than any other ship has ever fired during a single operation. And it was done without any personnel or material casualties.

Air spotters reported that the **PENNSYLVANIA** put out of action fifteen planes, six large guns, eight medium guns, three 5" guns, twelve 3" guns, nineteen dual purpose guns, two coast defense guns, eight large AA guns, four twin mounts, nine heavy AA guns, twelve machine guns, two anti-boat guns, numerous mortars, and much field artillery. The ship discovered and destroyed a very large ammunition storage near Adelup Point, at the time of the landing and permanently silenced them.

On the morning of August 3, 1944 the **PENNSYLVANIA** fired her last fire support mission and then shoved off for Eniwetok. She lay at anchor there for two weeks and then proceeded southward to Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides, then northward again to take part in another practice assault on Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal and finally into Port Purvis. She stood out from Port Purvis on September 6, 1944 with the Palau Bombardment and Fire Support Group.

[The Palau Campaign](#)

For three days prior to the landing on Peleliu, the **PENNSYLVANIA** bombarded Japanese installations on the island. The object was again the complete destruction of known targets. On the morning of the 15th of September the **PENNSYLVANIA** delivered the same sort of intensive fire support before and during the landing that had been given at Guam. Fifteen minutes after the first wave had hit the beach, enemy mortars were observed firing on the beach from inland. The secondary battery took them under fire and neutralized the area.

On the morning of the September 12, 1944 APD "NOA" collided with a destroyer west of Peleliu. The NOA was badly damaged and quickly sank. Survivors were picked up by the

NOA's boats, which had been launched before she went down and they were brought to the **PENNSYLVANIA**. They remained aboard one week, through all the ensuing firing missions.

Three days later in the afternoon several large caliber shells landed close to the **PENNSYLVANIA**. The ship cleared the area. Again the following morning, as the ship was laying to about 5000 yards south of Peleliu, a medium caliber projectile splashed and exploded 50 yards off the port bow. As the ship was maneuvered clear, two more splashes were caused by ricochets from friendly tanks on the island rather than enemy fire.

At Angaur the **PENNSYLVANIA** delivered a bombardment so devastating that there was no return fire from the enemy emplacements on the rocks and cliffs flanking Red Beach.

Peleliu and Angaur, the 2 southernmost islands in the Palau group and the only ones we assaulted, afford no fleet anchorage. To replenish ammunition, the **PENNSYLVANIA** was directed to Kossol Passage, at the northern end of the Palau Islands. Kossol Passage is nothing more than a large expanse of water, surrounded by a submerged coral reef. Babelthuap, the largest island in the Palau's and a Japanese strongpoint, lies a few miles to the south.

On September 25, 1944 the **PENNSYLVANIA** left Kossol Passage and proceeded southward to Seadler Harbor in the Admiralty Islands. On the first of October she entered a floating dry-dock for emergency repairs to number four strut bearing, which had caused trouble since April when considerable vibration developed in 4 shaft. At Sydney, divers had reported excessive clearance in the strut bearing. Thereafter, whenever possible, divers had effected such repairs as they could and had managed to keep the shaft turning. At Manus the ship was allowed but seven days in dry-dock, a period inadequate to accomplish a thorough repair job, even if the dry-dock had the facilities, which it did not.

[The Philippine Campaign](#)

On October 12, 1944, the **PENNSYLVANIA**, serving as one of the six battleships in Rear Admiral Jesse B; Oldendorf's Bombardment and Fire Support Group, and under the general command of Vice Admiral Thomas Cassin Kinkaid, Commander Central Philippine Attack Force, got underway from Seadler Harbor for the Philippines. The ensuing operation was to become the most memorable of the war in the Pacific especially to the crew of the **PENNSYLVANIA**. The Pennsylvania's bombardment, while not as prolonged as at Guam, was heavy; she was subjected to incessant air attacks; she participated in a major (and her only) surface engagement; and she remained in the area longer than during any other operation.

On the morning of the October 18, 1944 the Bombardment and Fire Support Group arrived off the eastern entrance of Leyte Gulf. At 0805 a special column, consisting of three cruisers and one battleship, the **PENNSYLVANIA**, was formed, and this column fell in astern of minesweeping group and proceeded into and across Leyte Gulf. At 1407

the **PENNSYLVANIA** reached assigned fire support station off the eastern coast of Leyte and commenced bombardment. As usual, fire was directed at predetermined targets and targets of opportunity, the object being destruction whenever possible. Chief emphasis however was placed on covering beach reconnaissance and underwater demolition teams and minesweeping units operating in Leyte Gulf and San Pedro Harbor. This action was continued until 1714 when the ship took its retiring position within Leyte Gulf.

From 0830 until 1555 the following day the **PENNSYLVANIA** continued the bombardment of Leyte. On the mooring of "Able" Day, two days later, she delivered fire in support of the landing. Negligible enemy gunfire was observed coming from the beaches. Of the **PENNSYLVANIA'S** bombardment on this morning, CBS overseas correspondent, Willey Edwards, had this to say in a radio broadcast.

The boys call the **PENNSYLVANIA** "Old Falling Apart" because she turns out such a volume of gun fire you'd think she was falling to pieces. Actually she is solid and sound although one of the oldest U.S. battlewagons. Recently in a Pacific bombardment action somebody yelled to me, come here and look The old Pennsy is hit and she is on fire. It turned out the old gal shoots so fast and so much that at times she really does look like she is afire.

Throughout the nights of October 20 & 21, 1944, the **PENNSYLVANIA** delivered harassing and night day illumination fire. Twice during October 21 the ship took position and executed call fire missions with her main battery.

On the morning of October 24, 1944 it became apparent that a major naval engagement was developing. Our carrier search planes had located two Japanese forces; each composed of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. One, the Central Force, was in the Sibuyan Sea headed for San Bernardino Strait, from which it could strike southward for the eastern entrance to Leyte Gulf. The other, the Southern Force was in the Sula Sea, headed for Surigao Strait, the southern entrance to Leyte Gulf. That afternoon carrier searches revealed still another Japanese force, this composed of carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers, to the northeast of Luzon, standing down toward Leyte Gulf. The Japanese Navy was sailing against us in full force.

Throughout the afternoon PT boats carrying full loads of torpedoes streaked past the **PENNSYLVANIA**, headed southward through Leyte Gulf for Surigao Strait. At 1826 the six battleships, three cruisers, three light cruisers and destroyers in Admiral Oldendorf's force formed battle disposition and steamed southward for Surigao Strait. Throughout the night the six battleships, **WEST VIRGINIA**, **MARYLAND**, **MISSISSIPPI**, **TENNESSEE**, **CALIFORNIA**, and **PENNSYLVANIA** steamed slowly back and forth across the northern end of the strait, waiting.

At 0130 in the morning of the 25th PT boats stationed well down in Surigao Strait encountered the oncoming enemy force and attacked with torpedoes. Next our destroyers, on either flank of our enemy's line of approach, attacked with torpedo's and guns. The Japanese force steamed on. Then, at 0325, the **WEST VIRGINIA** opened fire, followed shortly after by the other battleships and cruisers. The Japanese had run head on into a

perfect trap. Admiral Oldendorf had executed the dream of every naval tactician, crossing the enemy's "T". He had known that the Japanese units would have to advance northward through the confined waters of Surigao Strait in column. By deploying his own battle line across the mouth of the strait, he had placed the enemy units in a position where they would be subject to the concentrated fire of our force while able to reply least effectively. Now, the fire was murderous, Almost before the Japanese could train their guns, they lost two battleships and three destroyers. The other two ships in the force, a heavy cruiser and a destroyer turned and ran, but the cruiser was sunk the next day by carrier attack.

A fact that will be forever galling to the men who were aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA** that night is that the ship never opened fire. General Quarters were sounded at 0130 when the first contact report came through and battle stations were manned in record time, Gun crews stood by for two hours feverishly waiting for the word to commence firing. It never came. There was good reason, but it could do little to relieve the disappointment of not having had a hand in the sinking of two Japanese battlewagons when the chance finally came.

Shortly after daybreak, the Central Force of the Japanese Fleet engaged a group of CVE's operating east of Samar to screen the upper end of Leyte Gulf. The Japanese Force had been attacked heavily by carrier planes the day before and had suffered severe losses and much damage, but it had, nevertheless continued on through San Bernardino Strait. Our CVE's and their destroyer escort screen now put up the most valiant fight of the war against most overwhelming odds while retiring towards Leyte Gulf.

Vice Admiral Kinkaid, the Commander of the Seventh Fleet, at once ordered Admiral Oldendorf to dispatch one division of battleships, one division of cruisers and half the destroyers in his group to assistance of the Escort Carriers. The **PENNSYLVANIA** was designated as one of the three battleships to go. Before the battle force had sorted from Leyte Gulf, however, the gallant CVE's with their persistent air attacks had turned back the Japanese who then commenced retiring toward San Bernardino Strait.

Leyte was the first operation in which the **PENNSYLVANIA** encountered heavy enemy air attacks. They began as the first group was entering Leyte Gulf on the morning of the October 18, 1944 and continued during the days and nights following. At first the attacks were of the sneak variety, single dive bombers coming in and making individual dives or glides on the smaller combatant vessels or on ships in the transport area. All attacks were made under cloud cover and in the majority of cases were undetected until the plane was either in its dive or glide or had dropped its bomb and pulled out. The early attacks were not pressed home, and few hits were observed. On the 25th of October, following the night action in Surigao Strait, a large number of planes appeared and made attacks on the smaller vessels of the screen From then until the first of November the attacks increased both in intensity and determination. Vals, Bettys, and Zeros made numerous suicide attacks. All torpedo attacks were very determined and only defense against them became absolute destruction of the attacking planes. From November 1 to 25, 1944 when the **PENNSYLVANIA** finally left Leyte Gulf, the attacks subsided.

While in Leyte Gulf, the **PENNSYLVANIA** shot down, either by herself or with "assists" from other ships, ten enemy planes and possibly damaged others heavily. On the

morning of the 25th ten Vals made a simultaneous run on a destroyer close aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA**, AA batteries of the battleship shot down four of the planes and drove the others off. On the night of October 28 a Betty headed in to make a torpedo run on the disposition. The control watch tracked the plane in, opened fire, and shot it down with the 5" battery. The elapsed time from starting to track to cease firing was one minute and thirty seconds. Eight guns fired a total of 68 rounds. No other ship fired at the plane. There was no doubt about the kill. The next morning the Betty was found partly afloat with two good Japanese and 3 live ones. The latter, after a little persuasion, were made prisoners.

Leyte Gulf was almost completely land-locked. The proximity of land made it difficult and at times wholly impossible to pick up enemy planes by radar. This threw the burden of sighting and identifying enemy planes on the sky lookouts. They did an outstanding job. On occasions planes were sighted and identified at 50,000 yards.

On November 23, 1944 a Judy appeared from behind a dark rain cloud at a range of about 3,500 yards. Within ten seconds the plane had been sighted, identified, and taken under effective AA fire.

Crews of the AA batteries of the **PENNSYLVANIA** stood watch-and watch for a period of twenty-four days and nights followed by fourteen nights. In addition Air Defense or General Quarters for air defense purposes was sounded 113 times. This figure moreover does not include routine morning and evening General Quarters.

On the night of November 1 the **PENNSYLVANIA** again steamed in battle disposition, ready to repel a Japanese force reported standing for Surigao Strait. The report later proved to be false.

On November 25, 1944 the **WEST VIRGINIA** relieved the **PENNSYLVANIA** and at long last departed from Leyte Gulf. She had been the first of the battleships to enter the gulf, and she was the last to leave.

Everyone aboard was confident that the ship would be sent home for a long overdue yard period, with of course a little leave attached. For months past the ship had always been going back to the States "after the next operation" but now there could be no question of it. Unfortunately there was. When the ship arrived at Manus, she was directed to prepare for another amphibious operation. She could not even be assigned another period in the floating dry-dock at Manus. From Manus the **PENNSYLVANIA** proceeded to Kossol Passage to take on ammunition. She remained there two weeks, through Christmas, and on the Jan. 1st, 1945 got underway with Vice Admiral Oldendorf's Lingayen Bombardment and Fire Support Group. On the 3rd of Jan. 1945 the force reached Leyte Gulf and, without stopping, proceeded southward through Surigao Strait, then westward through the Mindanao Sea, then northwestward through the Sulu Sea; out into the South China Sea, and on northward, past Manila Bay, to Lingayen Gulf, at the northwestern corner of Luzon. Heavy and determined air attacks began on the evening of January 4, 1945 and continued on January 5. The **OMMANEY BAY**, a CVE, was hit by a suicide plane and destroyed by the resulting fire. Many other ships were damaged. On the morning of the Jan. 6th, 1945 the **PENNSYLVANIA** commenced bombarding target

areas on Santiago Island at the mouth of Lingayen Gulf, In mid-afternoon the ship proceeded into Lingayen Gulf to execute counter battery fire in support of the minesweeping forces The ship retired from the Gulf at night. The air attacks reached all time peak that day and severe damage was done to our forces.

However at daybreak the next morning the entire bombardment force entered Lingayen Gulf to deliver supporting and destructive fire. At 1230 the **PENNSYLVANIA** took position to render counter-battery fire in support of underwater demolition teams. A single enemy gun directed its shells at those teams and the **PENNSYLVANIA** immediately knocked it out. The support group retired from the Gulf that night and returned the next morning to continue the pre-assault bombardment. There was however, a distinct scarcity of targets, for although the Japanese had landed at Lingayen themselves, they were unprepared for our attack there.

During the night of the eighth the bombardment group remained in Lingayen Gulf. At 0705 on the Jan. 9th, 1945 the **PENNSYLVANIA** took station for delivery of supporting fire in protection of the landing waves. The landing beaches were effectively covered and targets of opportunity as reported by spotting planes, were either destroyed or neutralized. There was no enemy opposition to the landing.

Early on the morning of the tenth Japanese speed boats made an attack on our ships in Lingayen Gulf from a stream emptying into the western side of the gulf. They attacked some LST's drawn up on the beach near the mouth of the stream, but were destroyed without effecting any damage. General Quarters was sounded aboard the **PENNSYLVANIA**, but the ship itself was not taken under attack.

Two hours later, during the dawn period, enemy planes made attack on the force in Lingayen Gulf. A partial smoke screen covered the ships but evidently the tops of the large ships projected through the screen and served as targets for Japanese planes. During a period of 31 minutes four bombs landed in the water close to the **PENNSYLVANIA**, On the afternoon of the tenth the **PENNSYLVANIA** executed her last fire call mission. A concentration of enemy tanks was located inland, and a shore fire control party spotted the main battery to them. Twelve rounds did the job.

From January 10, 1945 until the January 17, the task group patrolled in the South China Sea off Lingayen Gulf. On the 17th the **PENNSYLVANIA** returned to the gulf and remained there at anchor for a month. Enemy air attacks dropped sharply in intensity and frequency, during the nights sentries aboard ships at anchor in the gulf kept up a staccato of fire at objects floating in the water, all of which proved to be nothing more than trash.

After leaving Lingayen Gulf, the **PENNSYLVANIA** traveled back through the Central Philippines to Leyte Gulf and from there southeastward to Manus. Again hopes were high that the ship would be routed from there to the West Coast. These hopes vanished when Commander in Chief directed the Commander Naval Base Manus to report whether or not the base was able to make the temporary repairs to the **PENNSYLVANIA** for participation in the "next operation". The base made an inspection and reported that the **PENNSYLVANIA** needed extensive repairs to the main, secondary, and close range batteries and the fire control system for main battery, radar, and radio equipment. The

port condenser needed to be re-tubed; considerable hull work needed to be done to the starboard blister; number 4 strut bearing needed extensive repairs; and that satisfactory temporary repairs to get the ship ready in time for the next operation were beyond the capacity of the local facilities.

CinCPac then directed the Commander Naval Base Manus to send the **PENNSYLVANIA** to Pearl Harbor for further routing to San Francisco. But before the **PENNSYLVANIA** could shove off from Manus, the strut bearing needed temporary repairs. The ship divers went to work. After forty-three dives, day and night, with a total of sixty diving hours, they completed the necessary work.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** departed from Manus on February 22, 1945, stopped briefly at Majuro, stopped again at Pearl Harbor, and passed under the Golden Gate Bridge on the morning of March 15, 1945. Then proceeded to Hunter's Point for dry-docking.

At Hunter's Point the **PENNSYLVANIA** was given a thorough overhaul. The main battery turrets and secondary battery mounts were regunned. The 14" guns were replaced with the guns from the USS Oklahoma. Additional close range weapons and new and improved radar and fire control equipment were installed. During the yard period 27 days leave was granted to all hands. The first leave party, half the ship's company, left the ship by ferry even before she proceeded into Hunter's Point.

At this time the **PENNSYLVANIA** had set a record of which she could well be proud. She was the only battleship to take part in every combat amphibious operation in the Pacific Ocean Areas and the two largest operations on the Southwest Pacific Area from May 4, 1943 to February 10, 1945, from Attu through Lingayen.

On June 5, 1945, Captain Martin was relieved by Captain Martin was relieved by Captain W.M. Moses. The ship made three trial runs out of San Francisco and then spent ten days in the San Clemente - San Diego area, executing every conceivable type of practice. She returned to San Francisco, made one more trial run, and on July 12, 1945 departed for Pearl Harbor. She arrived on July 18 and shoved off July 20 for an additional four-day training period. This was cut short, and the **PENNSYLVANIA** returned to Pearl Harbor on the 23rd and headed westward the next day.

In route to Saipan, the **PENNSYLVANIA** made a slight detour by way of Wake Island; which had long since been by-passed in our advance across the pacific, to drop her calling card. With due regard for the formalities, the Japanese returned theirs. The shore battery was silenced. The bombardment lasted only from 0900 to 1500 and was accompanied by air attacks from the CVL CABOT.

Okinawa

The **PENNSYLVANIA** steamed on to Saipan, replenished the ammunition expended at Wake and continued on to Okinawa. On the morning of August 12 she entered Buckner Bay and went alongside the TENNESSEE, which was at anchor, to receive Vice Admiral

Oldendorf and his staff, When the shift had been made, the **PENNSYLVANIA** cast off and proceeded to her own berth.

At 2045 that evening, as the **PENNSYLVANIA** lay quietly at anchor, a Japanese torpedo plane somehow slipped in over Buckner Bay without any warning and launched its torpedo at the indistinct silhouette of a large warship. One of the crew of the **PENNSYLVANIA** later wrote home, "We did not get the Japanese plane, but we sure blasted the hell out of his torpedo!"

The torpedo hit well aft on the **PENNSYLVANIA**'s starboard side and did extensive damage, Many compartments were flooded and the ship settled heavily by the stern. But, by the Herculean efforts of the ship's repair parties and the prompt assistance of two salvage tugs, the flooding was brought under control.

Nineteen men in a living compartment just inboard of the scene of the explosion and one other man were killed by the force of the blast. Ten others were injured.

The following day the **PENNSYLVANIA** was towed into shallower water where salvage operations were continued.

On the night of August 13, 1945 the **PENNSYLVANIA** saw her last action of the war. An enemy suicide plane made a run on the ships in the harbor and crashed in flames on the deck of a cargo ship about 1000 yards off the starboard beam of the **PENNSYLVANIA**. The secondary battery of the **PENNSYLVANIA** tracked the plane by radar and fired 13 rounds. The 40mm fired 30 rounds.

On the morning of August 15, Captain Moses spoke to the ship's crew over the loudspeaker system and informed them that the President had just announced Japan's acceptance of the Allied surrender terms. There was no wild cheering as there had been a few nights before, when Japan's first offer to surrender had been reported. Instead there was a minute of utter silence as the men paid homage to their shipmates who had lost their lives so very near the end.

The **PENNSYLVANIA** remained in Buckner Bay a little over 2 weeks while salvage operations proceeded. All compartments not open to the sea were pumped dry and the ship was made as seaworthy as possible. On August 18, 1945 the ship departed from Okinawa, towed by two tugs in tandem, another tug standing by to assist if needed. The group proceeded tortuously toward Guam, making as little as two knots when the seas were heavy, and never more than seven.

On September 6 the **PENNSYLVANIA** arrived in Apra Harbor, Guam. The next day she entered ANSD3. In dry-dock a large sheet steel patch was welded over the torpedo hole and repairs sufficient to permit her return to the United States under her own power were completed. The ship left dry-dock on October 2, moored in the harbor to take on 100 Navy and Marine passengers for transportation to the States and shoved off on the morning of October 4, 1945.

The ship proceeded toward Puget Sound in company with the cruiser **ATLANTA** and a destroyer, the **WALKE**. On October 15 the ship stopped while divers went over the side

inspect the patch. Marine sentries armed with rifles stood by on deck to ward off sharks. They scored one "probable". Two days later, No. 3 shaft suddenly carried away inside the stern tube and the shaft slipped aft. It was necessary to send divers down to cut through the shaft letting the shaft and propeller drop into the sea. On this occasion the sentries made one "sure kill".

Shipping water and with only one screw turning, the **PENNSYLVANIA** limped into the Puget Sound Navy Yard on October 24, 1945, a crippled but proud ship.

Since her first action at Pearl Harbor she has steamed almost 150,000 miles. Her self discipline had been excellent at all times, no man was ever lost overboard except by enemy action, she had never hit any friendly troops, installations, ships or planes and never had to report "not ready" for any operation. Nearly 150 officers and almost 1000 petty officers were trained and transferred from the **PENNSYLVANIA** during this period. She probably fired more ammunition than any other ship in history.

In recognition of her record the **PENNSYLVANIA** was honored with a Navy Unit Commendation, which was presented by Rear Admiral Ralph W. Christie, Commandant of the Navy Yard, Puget Sound on the Quarterdeck of the ship as she lay in dry-dock at Bremerton on November 3.

Two days later Commander William M. Kaufman, the Executive Officer relieved Captain William M. Moses as Commanding Officer.

Though hit at Pearl Harbor and again at the very end of the war, her career between the two disasters was distinguished enough to make any man proud to number himself as a member of her crew. So stands the war record of the United States Battleship USS **PENNSYLVANIA** BB-38, a happy and good ship.

[Navy Unit Commendation](#)

Text of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded to **USS PENNSYLVANIA** is as follows:



*"For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific war area from May 4, 1943 to February 10, 1945. Operating under ten separate commands, the **USS PENNSYLVANIA** was the only battleship to take part in every amphibious operation during this period from Attu in the Northern area to Lingayen in the Philippines. Imperiled by perpetual fog, she served as flagship of the task force commander during the Aleutians campaign and navigated in poorly charted waters to deliver her accurate broadsides on predetermined but invisible targets; intensive fire from her batteries blazed the way for our assault waves in the Gilbert's, the Marshall's and the Mariana's silencing the enemy's heavy coastal guns, locating and neutralizing*

*camouflaged emplacements and rendering steady support for our land forces. A gallant and dependable veteran, the **PENNSYLVANIA** completed nearly thirty years of unfailing service by her deadly close in bombardment and gun fire support in the recapture of the Philippines, fulfilling her prolonged and vital mission without casualty to herself or her personnel by Japanese fire. Handled superbly in the face of many obstacles throughout this period, the **PENNSYLVANIA** achieved an illustrious combat record, reflecting the courage, skill and brilliant teamwork of the Officers who plotted her course, the Pilots who spotted her gunfire and the operational force which aided in maintaining her fighting efficiency."*



Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon



The USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38) earned eight (8) battle stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon, for participating in the following operations:

1 Star - Pearl Harbor-Midway - December 7, 1941

1 Star - Aleutians Operation & Attu Occupation - May 11 to June 2, 1943

1 Star - Gilbert Islands Operation - November 13, 1943 to December 8, 1943

1 Star - Marshal Islands Operation

Occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls - January 29 to February 8, 1943

Occupation of Eniwetok Atoll - February 17 to March 2, 1944

1 Star - Marianas Operation

Capture and Occupation of Saipan - June 11 to August 10, 1944

Capture and Occupation of Guam - July 12 to August 15, 1944

1 Star - Western Caroline Islands Operation

Capture and Occupation of Southern Palau Islands - September 6 to October 14, 1944

1 Star - Leyte Operation

Leyte Landings - October 10 to November 29, 1944

1 Star - Luzon Operation

Lingayen Gulf Landing - January 4 to January 18, 1945

By Directive dated February 2, 1946, the USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38) was to be disposed of.

So what happen to the USS Pennsylvania?



The USS Pennsylvania was used in "Operation Crossroads" as a target ship for Atomic Bomb testing. Following the first Atomic explosion at Bikini Island on July 1, 1946 and then a second explosion on July 25, 1946, the USS Pennsylvania did not sink. Almost two years later, February 10, 1948, the USS Pennsylvania was towed to the Island of Kwajalein in the South Pacific and a small crew went aboard and opened the "Sea Valves" and removed the Evaporator cover plates and sent the "Grand Old Gal" to the bottom of the sea. So ends one of the greatest chapters in Naval history. She takes with her the hearts and minds of all who served and with whom she shared a place of Patriotism, Honor and Tradition..... Ken Munro

USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB-38)

Overall Length - 612 Feet

Beam - 106 Feet

Speed - 19 Knots

Displacement - 33,100 Tons



**USS Pennsylvania, BB-38
USS Colorado, BB-45
USS Louisville, CA-28
USS Portland, CA-33
USS Columbia, CL-56**

The date was January 7th, 1945 (plus or minus a day or two) and it was taken in Lingayen Gulf, they were in route to continue support fire for the Luzon invasion.