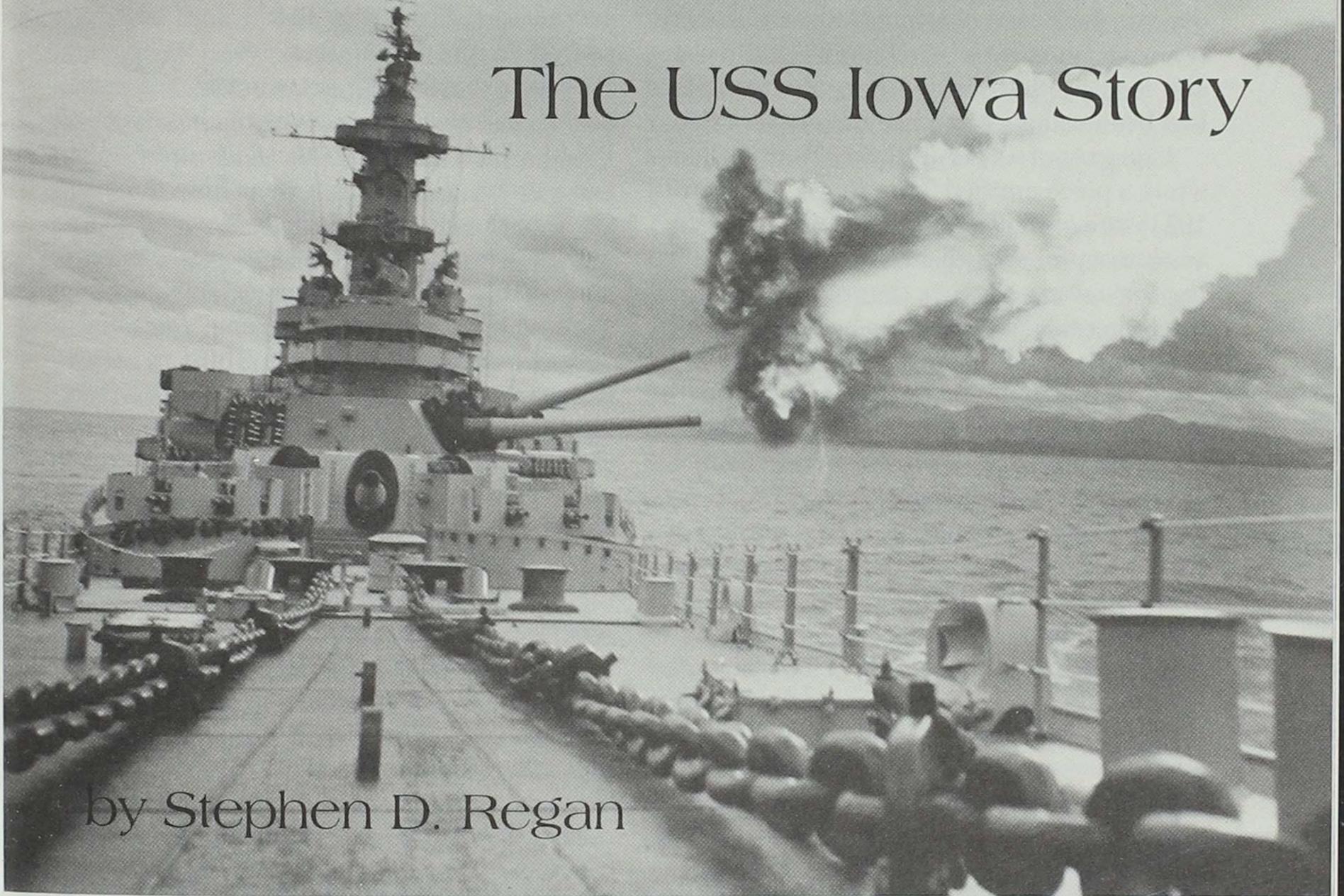


"The Mighty I":

The USS Iowa Story



by Stephen D. Regan

The USS Iowa bombarding North Korea in September 1952. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Every quarter of a century or so, the citizens of Iowa seem to be given the opportunity to reconsider the naval heritage of their most noncoastal state. The new opportunities are due largely to the fact that the state of Iowa is a battleship state *par excellence*. From the BB-4 which was the first battleship to carry the name of the Hawkeye State to the BB-53 and the BB-61, the Battleship *Iowa* has been a newsworthy and, indeed, noteworthy member of the U.S. Fleet. And thus one finds, in looking back through the volumes of the *Iowa Historical Record* and the *Palimpsest*, at least four articles that have dealt with the career of a Battleship *Iowa* or of the Battleships *Iowa*.

In 1898, A. N. Harbert did a pair of articles in

the *Iowa Historical Record*. In the first, which appeared in April 1898, he described the launching of the BB-4 which had taken place only two years before in March 1896, and then he described in some detail what he called "the greatest fighting vessel afloat." In October of that same year, Harbert, in a much longer article, wrote of the role of the *Iowa* in the battle of Santiago Bay on 3 July 1898. Quoting copiously from Captain Evans' account of the battle, Harbert drew a dashing and patriotic picture of the gallant officers and crew of the *Iowa* first taking enemy shells in the heat of the battle and then taking aboard enemy wounded

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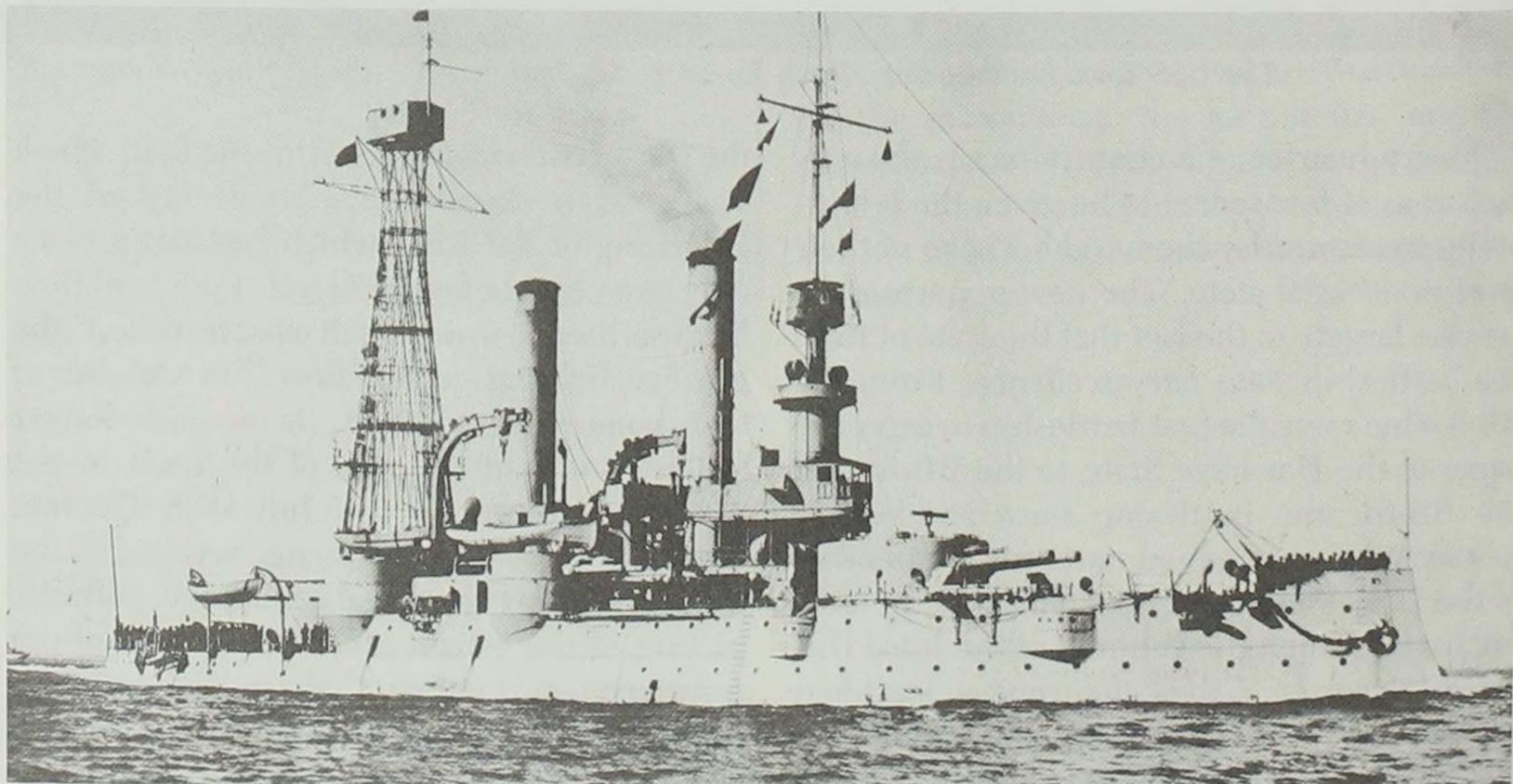
until "Blood was all over her usually white quarter deck and two hundred and seventy-two naked men were being supplied with water and food by those who a few minutes before had been using a rapid fire battery on them."

A quarter of a century later, Ruth Gallaher wrote a piece entitled "The *Iowa*" in the April 1923 issue of the *Palimpsest*. It was, in reality, an obituary for the gallant BB-4. In March 1923 the *Iowa* was no longer the *Iowa* or the BB-4 but rather the BS-4, and she had been sunk by the *Mississippi* in the Bay of Panama in a bit of target practice. Actually the years after the Spanish-American War had not been kind to the *Iowa*. She had not been part of the Great White Fleet on its famous circumnavigation of the globe in the first decade of the century, and by the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, the *Iowa* was suitable only for coastal defense. By 1920 the once grand ship had become a target ship, first for planes and later for her sister ships. Her end was perhaps inglorious but, as Miss Gallaher noted, one admiral seemed to sum it all up rather succinctly: "She was a good ship, and that was good shooting."

Twenty-nine years later, in March 1952, yet another article on the Battleships *Iowa* appeared in the *Palimpsest*, when William J. Petersen, shortly after returning from a shake-down cruise on the newly recommissioned BB-61 which had taken the *Palimpsest* editor and a group of eminent Iowans from the West Coast to the Hawaiian Islands, devoted an entire issue to an account of that cruise, the history of the BB-61, and some notes on other ships which had borne the name, *Iowa*.

Between the BB-4 and the BB-61 there was the short and incomplete career of the BB-53. Laid down on 17 May 1920, the BB-53 was about one-third completed when work on it came to a halt in August 1923. This second *Iowa* fell victim to the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty with its famous 5-5-3 capital ship ratio. Never completed, the BB-53 was sold for scrap a few months after work on it ceased.

But the 1930s brought the authorization of yet another *Iowa* and that was the ship which did such yeoman service in World War II, and then was recommissioned in 1951 for service in the Korean Conflict only to be put back into mothballs in 1958. It was felt by many naval



The first Battleship Iowa, the BB-4. (Mr. and Mrs. Russell Critz, SHSI)

strategists and historians that the decommissioning of the *Iowa* in 1958 marked an end to her career and to the battleship era. As recently as 1976, it was pointed out in a work on battleships that any further naval use of the *Iowa* and its sister ships in class was unlikely due to their age, deterioration, and general obsolescence. In the last two years, however, the situation has changed as the *Iowa* and other battleships of the *Iowa* class have again become newsworthy because of requests made by the president and the Department of the Navy to reactivate the old battleships. Thus *Iowa* remains, in 1983, a battleship state *par excellence* even in an age when many continue to question the use of such vessels in current or future military operations.

And it has now been a little over thirty years since the *Palimpsest* has shared with its readers a bit of the history of the Battleships *Iowa*. The ship, however, is not only again newsworthy, but she remains eminently worthy of historical consideration.

The USS *Iowa* was a pretty impressive capital ship. Three football fields could be laid on her deck, and most Iowa towns could not match the ship in population. If she had wheels she could be picked up for speeding, and her guns were powerful enough to toss a shell the weight of a Cadillac from Cedar Rapids to Iowa City.

Unfortunately, America's battleships were like a blocking back in a football game—they were always the playmakers but never the heroes. In naval warfare the swift but defenseless aircraft carriers were the primary vehicles for attack. As bigger and faster carriers were built, however, bigger and faster battleships were needed to support them. The biggest and most powerful of America's dreadnoughts was the *Iowa* (BB-61).

Specifically, the teakwood-decked behemoth was an 887-foot, 55,000-ton battlewagon carrying nine 16" guns, twenty 5" guns, and

twenty 40mm anti-aircraft guns. It took almost 3,000 men to sail her at speeds well over thirty-three knots. In the world of battleships, only Japan's *Yamato* and *Musashi* were bigger. The *Yamato*, for example, displaced over 72,000 tons, and she carried nine 18.1-inch guns.

The *Iowa's* keel was laid down on 27 January 1940. It was appropriate that Mrs. Henry Wallace, wife of the Iowa-born vice-president, and an Iowan herself, sponsored the ship and christened her in August of 1942. Captain John McCrea, a former aide to Franklin D. Roosevelt when he was undersecretary of the Navy, was the first commanding officer of the *Iowa*. Shortly after the *Iowa* joined the active fleet, three other ships were built as *Iowa* class ships. They were the *New Jersey*, the *Missouri*, and the *Wisconsin*.

After her shakedown cruise, the *Iowa* was selected to carry President Roosevelt on the initial leg of his trip to Teheran where he was to meet with Stalin and Churchill. The president acknowledged that he was extremely proud to be aboard the United States' biggest warship, especially when it was under the command of an old friend.

The president boarded the *Iowa* in November 1943 with no fanfare because he wanted to be treated just like one of the hands. And so he was treated. When he entered his stateroom he found a note taped to the wall stating merely that the occupant would eat in the Flag Mess, abandon ship in Admiral Lee's motor whaleboat, and be permitted use of the first superstructure port and starboard for promenade. Thus did his former aide let it be known that Franklin D. Roosevelt was just another passenger.

To keep the crew alert, and no doubt to impress the president, several defense drills were performed, but during one of the routine drills the *Iowa* made a sudden swerve, listed heavily, and lurched to full speed which sent crew, materials, and president flying across

decks. A torpedo had become dislodged from an escorting destroyer and it would have struck the *Iowa* had not an alert watch called a torpedo sighting to the bridge where the appropriate course changes were made.

Fleet Admiral King, traveling as an advisor to the president, demanded an immediate court-martial and removal of the destroyer captain. The president, however, felt that experienced men were in short supply and thus he intervened personally on the captain's behalf. It was the second time the president had intervened in a matter concerning the *Iowa*. In July 1943 the *Iowa* had cut a hole in her hull in a grounding incident at Casco Bay, Maine. President Roosevelt, after a review of the incident, had ordered his former aide exonerated of all blame in the matter.

After playing host to the commander-in-chief, the *Iowa* became the flagship in Battleship Division 7 and spent the remainder of 1943 in the Atlantic on *Tirpitz* watch, which was designed to keep that feared German battleship penned up in Norway. On 2 January 1944 the *Iowa*, however, was ordered to the Pacific to support Rear Admiral F.C. Sherman's task group in an attack on the Marshall Islands.

Although they scraped their sides on the locks, the *Iowa* and her sister ship, the *New Jersey*, squeezed through the Panama Canal and reached the Pacific in time to assist in the bombardment of Majuro and Kwajalein prior to the landing of General H.M. ("Howlin' Mad") Smith's marines. In late February the *Iowa* was assigned to Task Force 58 under the remarkable Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance for an attack on Truk. At Truk she was responsible for a portion of the 265 enemy aircraft destroyed and was in on the sinking of the Cruiser *Katori* and the Destroyer *Maikaze*. The *Iowa* finally completed a rather heady first month in the Pacific with a strike at Saipan.

Rear Admiral Willis Lee, when ordered to form a task force of six battleships and a fast

carrier for an attack on Japanese shipping around Mili Atoll, took his flag aboard the *Iowa* and from there directed the sinking of several enemy ships with no American losses. It was in this action, however, that the *Iowa* suffered her worst damage of the war when she sustained two direct hits. But for all practical purposes, even two direct hits caused slight damage and only two members of the crew were injured.

During the next two months the ship was called on to support British landings at Aitape, Humboldt Bay, and New Guinea and to protect carriers operating in those regions. Although such actions produced no great war stories, the *Iowa's* assistance was nevertheless important.

As early as June 1944 it was apparent that Japan, unable to protect or even supply her island-based troops, was in serious trouble. The Imperial Navy recognized that Task Force 58, which had grown substantially to include not only the *Iowa* but six other battleships, fifteen carriers, twenty-one cruisers, sixty-nine destroyers, and many other ships, was a primary cause of mounting Japanese losses. It was of paramount importance to the Japanese Navy to defeat Task Force 58.

Dividing their air strike force into four sections, the Japanese attacked the Task Force on 19 June 1944. The tenacious Americans, however, warded off each successive wave. When the engagement, often referred to as the "Great Mariannas Turkey Shoot," was over, the Japanese had lost 346 planes as against thirty planes lost by the U.S. Navy. It marked the end of any real hope for a Japanese naval victory since they were left with barely three carriers and 100 operable aircraft.

No doubt the results of the Battle of the Philippine Sea were received with elation on the decks of the *Iowa* but, on the admiral's bridge, Admirals Lee and Halsey voiced their frustration for they knew that Japan's battleships and most of its cruiser force had not

Office of the State Historical Society

New Appearance for News for Members

This issue of News for Members inaugurates a new format for the Society's newsletter. Hereafter, News for Members will be published and bound inside the Palimpsest. Four issues of the newsletter will be produced each year, as before, and the content will remain very similar to that which has proved so successful over the years. We have revived some features and added new ones—a calendar of coming events and a descriptive series about Iowa organizations.

You will note that the new style has forced us to drop the volume and number designations from our masthead. We hope that this will not cause too many problems. We will run the current month and year at the bottom of each News for Members page instead.

While the change in newsletter format was prompted by budgetary considerations and mailing costs, we believe that it is an improved design which will allow the Society's publications program area a greater degree of flexibility and responsiveness in serving the membership of the State Historical Society and the people of Iowa.

William Cochran Assumes Administrative Position

Variety has been a constant in the career of William M. Cochran, the Administrator of the State Historical Society, both before and since joining the staff in December of 1981.

Appointed to be Administrative Assistant to then Acting Director of the Society Loren N. Horton, Bill was immediately involved in several major projects. He was responsible for the planning and promotion of many of the 125th Anniversary ceremonies, including those at Old Capitol in Iowa City in January and the Society's Annual Banquet in Des Moines in June 1982.

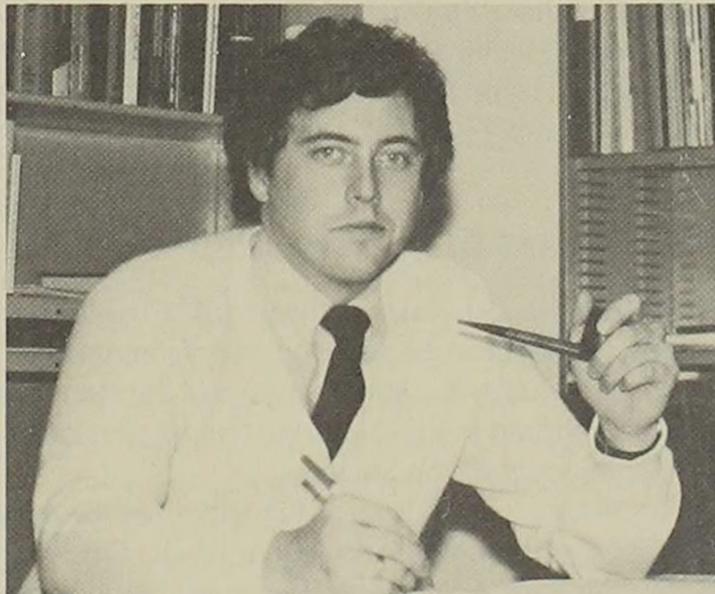
During the spring of 1982, the Society published his "The Public Library and Local History" as Number 15 in its series of *Technical Sheets*. Its appearance coincided with the beginning of a survey Bill is conducting of local history materials in all the public libraries in Iowa. The survey itself has been completed and the data gathered is now being analyzed by computer preparatory to publishing the results.

When the Iowa State Historical Department was reorganized as of July 1, his duties changed considerably. Among his new responsibilities are supervision of the administrative support staff, coordination of activities among the heads of the program areas of the Society, and facilitating communication between Iowa City and the Department offices in Des Moines.

Born in Nevada, Iowa, Bill grew up in New Hampton, in northeast Iowa. He attended Cornell College and the University of Iowa, receiving a Bachelor of Liberal Studies from the latter in 1979. Since then he has continued to pursue part-time graduate study toward a degree from the University of Iowa School of Library Science, which he hopes to complete next year.

Prior to his appointment with the Society, he worked for a year as librarian for Hansen Lind Meyer, one of the nation's leading architectural/engineering firms, and was responsible for the library and records management programs at their home offices in Iowa City and a branch office in Chicago. He also worked for a year in the purchasing department of Ar-Jay Building Products, a Cedar Rapids wholesale distributor.

His current schedule of work and study leave little time for recreation, but when time permits he enjoys reading in a variety of subject areas, playing chess, and following University of Iowa athletics.



Beginning with this issue of *News for Members*, a calendar of upcoming events which Society members might be interested in attending will be published. We hope to include a wide variety of meetings, as we recognize the broad range of interests among Society members.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS, 1983

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| March 10-12 | Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebraska |
| March 29 | South Central Chapter, Iowa Archaeological Society, Mount Ayr |
| April 6-9 | Organization of American Historians, Cincinnati, Ohio |
| April 6-10 | Society of Architectural Historians, Phoenix, Arizona |
| April 13-16 | National Genealogical Society, Ft. Worth, Texas |
| April 16-17 | Iowa Archaeological Society, Des Moines |
| April 17 | National Library Week |
| April 22 | Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States, Iowa City |
| April 23 | Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association (ILHMA), Des Moines |
| May 7 | "Early Iowa Revisited" — bus tour to northeast Iowa* |
| May 21 | Iowa Genealogical Society, Iowa City |
| June 4 | Northwest regional ILHMA, Sergeant Bluff |
| June 4-9 | Special Libraries Association, New Orleans |
| June 5-9 | American Association of Museums, San Diego, California |
| June 11 | Southeast regional ILHMA, Oskaloosa |
| June 18 | Southwest regional ILHMA, Indianola |
| June 24-30 | American Library Association, Los Angeles |
| June 25 | Northeast regional ILHMA, Cedar Rapids |
| June 25 | Annual Meeting and Banquet of the State Historical Society, Ames |

*The University of Iowa Center for Conferences and Institutes is sponsoring this bus tour. It will include a tour of northeast Iowa geological, archaeological, and historical sites. Experts from each field will offer pre-tour lectures and on-site information and explanation. The tour will be conducted by Loren N. Horton, Historian at the State Historical Society. For more information, contact the university's Center for Conferences and Institutes liaison, Gertrude Schmidt, at (319) 353-5505.

New Award to be Presented

Roger B. Natte, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mary K. Fredericksen, editor of the *Palimpsest*, wish to announce at this time the establishment of a Trustees' Award. The award will be given annually to the individual who, in the opinion of the membership of the State Historical Society, wrote the best article published in the *Palimpsest* in the previous calendar year. The award will be presented at the annual banquet of the Society.

The members of the Board of Trustees and the editorial staff of the *Palimpsest* hope that the members will take the time necessary to record their choice for the 1982 award on a postcard and mail it to: Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor, The *Palimpsest*, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Slide Show Available

A slide show describing the various functions of the State Historical Society is now available for loan to interested groups. The 50 slides (for carousel slide projectors) are accompanied by a text for easy presentation. The slides highlight the many program areas of the Society, including the library, manuscripts, oral history, educational and community services, and publications. This overview of the Society is suitable for any group interested in the activities of the State Historical Society. There is no charge for borrowing the slide show, but borrowers are expected to pay return postage. If you are interested, please write to Alsatia Mellecker, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY has been scheduled for June 25, 1983, at the Scheman Continuing Education Building on the campus of Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Reservation information will be included in the next issue of *News for Members*.

March 1983

Diaries a Valuable Historical Record

In our continuing effort to familiarize members with the research resources available at the Society, the following descriptive essay about the Society's diary collection, prepared by David Kinnett, Manuscripts Librarian, is especially important.

The manuscript collection contains personal diaries of about two hundred individuals, mostly nineteenth century Iowans. Some diaries recount experiences of only a few weeks such as the brief journal of Jacob Krehbiel (September 11-30, 1850) which is the record of an immigrant's departure from his home in Germany and part of his journey that led to settlement in Lee County, Iowa. Others, such as the diary of Joshua R. Williams, a student, teacher, salesman, and farmer, include 103 volumes and document in great detail the daily life of a middle class citizen in Iowa from 1896 to 1957. Diaries are among the most democratic types of writing. They require little formal education or wealth, only pencil and paper and an inclination to record one's observations and impressions. Diaries of such nineteenth century citizens as Governors Kirkwood, Carpenter, and Larrabee have been deposited with the Society but there are also diaries of small farmers and anonymous foot soldiers who served with Iowa regiments in the Civil War.

Diaries can be especially valuable because they record the lives of ordinary citizens, the obscure and forgotten who are frequently ignored by journalists or biographers and often treated by historians as statistics rather than individuals. The thirty year journal of Emily Hawley Gillespie, 1858-1888, is a meticulously detailed record of life and work on an average-size farm in Delaware County and how the author felt about her lot in life. Equally remarkable is the sixty-three year daily journal of domestic and social life in Iowa City that was kept by Adaline Kimball Jones between 1859 and 1922. Mrs. Jones was a careful chronicler of her own domestic labors and she also left a valuable record of social manners and customs in a small town and university community.

In diaries we can find eyewitness descriptions of local and national public events that were covered in the newspapers, but we can also find accounts of private fishing trips, family picnics and Sunday dinners in farmhouses. Some diarists took up the art in order to record travels. Around twenty diaries in the collection were written by emigrants and gold seekers who went to California between 1849 and 1865. One of the most complete is the travel journal of George Magoo, who left Muscatine in 1852 and spent almost two years in the California goldfields describing in his journal the trials and rewards of a miner's life. Other diaries record very little movement. The journals of Amos Currier and Edward Lucas were written largely in Southern prisoner of war camps during the Civil War.

Nearly every occupation of nineteenth century Iowa society is represented in the diary collection. There are, for example, twenty-four volumes of diaries of Ephraim Adams (1855-1882), one of the early Congregational ministers in the state and seventeen volumes of diaries of his wife Elisabeth. There are three volumes of diaries of the Civil War surgeon Charles Lothrop. There are diaries of university students and rural teachers, newspapermen and telegraph operators, seventy Civil War soldiers and half a dozen pioneer farmers and homesteaders in Kansas and Nebraska as well as Iowa.

Diaries usually document the trivial, the minutiae of history, the details that occupied the common and mundane lives of housewives and farmers, the boredom and tedium of the ordinary soldier in a Civil War camp or prison, the forgotten practices of domestic and farm labor in a different age, the lost arts of nineteenth century miners and craftsmen. Diaries give modern readers a glimpse into the lives of Iowans of a different time and allow those mostly forgotten people to explain in their own spontaneous and unguarded words what was important to them and how they spent their time. Besides teaching the reader about different centuries and conditions of life, diaries also introduce the reader to new people and because they are a most personal and candid type of writing it is possible he may learn something about human nature and his own nature.

Members Respond Generously to Appeal for Iowa Maps

A special thank you to everyone who responded so generously to my request for official Iowa road maps and county plat books and maps. Good descriptions accompanied the maps—mentioning place, date, publisher, and size—and made the maps very easy to identify.

We are still missing official state road maps for 1922-1936, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1951, 1957, and 1959, however. Also, land ownership maps and atlases from all time periods are always a very welcome addition to the collection. I hope that you will remember the Society's collection when you have a map or atlas which you no longer wish to keep or which you are interested in sharing with others by lending it to the Society for microfilming.—Nancy Kraft, Map Librarian.

March 1983

Historical Organizations in Iowa

The large number and variety of Iowa historical organizations has suggested the need for a News for Members series which describes individual organizations and provides information about how people might become members.

Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association

This organization was formed to provide an association of county and local historical societies and museums. It is independent of the Iowa State Historical Department but cooperates with it, and with other state, regional, or national organizations with similar objectives. The Association strives to develop an active interest in local, state, and national history. It promotes mutual assistance among historical societies and museums and provides the opportunity to meet together, discuss common problems, and share experiences. The Association offers consultative services, technically qualified or professionally trained personnel, and needed information for organizing and administering local and county historical societies and museums. Other services include advice for members about acquiring, preserving, maintaining, and operating museums, historic landmarks, and historic sites. The Association cooperates with other organizations in commemorating historic events, identifying and marking historic sites, preserving historic landmarks, and observing historic dates. For more information about the Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association, contact: Barbara Gearhart, Box 157, Hopkinton, Iowa 52237.

Iowa Genealogical Society

The purpose of this organization is to create and foster an interest in genealogy, especially as it pertains to the preservation of genealogical and historical data concerning the ancestors, founders, and early settlers of our country. It is also intended to aid individuals in their own genealogical research and in compiling their family histories. The Society has established a genealogical library and maintains it through contributions, donations, and exchanges. It publishes a quarterly periodical containing Iowa-related genealogical information and data, and seeks to be helpful to those working to improve their knowledge of genealogy and to those doing genealogical research. For more information about the Iowa Genealogical Society, contact: Roy C. Roba, 902 West 16th Street, Davenport, Iowa 52804.

Iowa Chapter, The Victorian Society in America

This organization was formed to develop public appreciation and understanding of nineteenth century artistic expression. The merits of Victorian architecture, design, literature, music, and decoration are explored. The Victorian Society works to protect important examples of the nineteenth century period. It offers advice about the techniques of preserving Victorian buildings and of adapting the buildings to modern uses. The Victorian Society encourages the maintenance and preservation of archives, books, records, and all materials relating to Victorian architecture, arts, and artifacts, and it works with other organizations having similar purposes. For more information about The Victorian Society in America, contact: Patrice K. Beam, 815 West 4th, Indianola, Iowa 50125.

Iowa Archaeological Society

The aim of this organization is to study and preserve Iowa's past. The Society seeks to gather, record, and publish archaeological information in cooperation with regional professional archaeologists. They publish a yearly *Journal* containing formal reports and a regular newsletter containing short articles of local interest and announcements of Society business. The Society holds an annual meeting, other occasional meetings, conducts field trips and field schools when excavations are in progress in the state, and maintains liaison with several affiliated regional chapters. For more information about the Iowa Archaeological Society, contact: Dan Zwiener, Rural Route 1, Sloan, Iowa 51055.

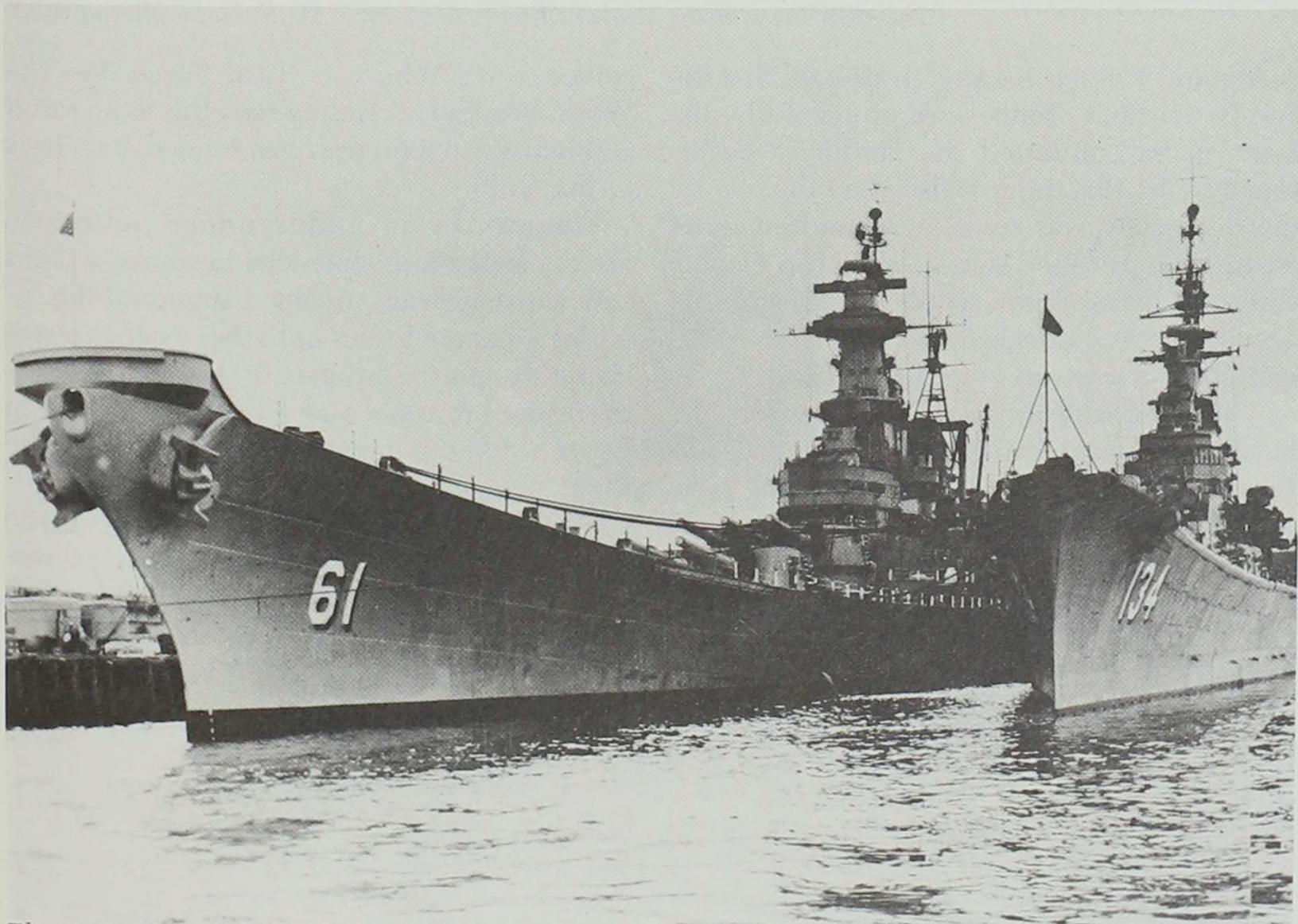
shared the fate of the carriers. Halsey, at times more reminiscent of an old gunfighter than of a modern naval officer, wanted a shoot-out between the *Iowa*, America's largest battleship, and the *Yamato*, Japan's biggest capital ship.

Halsey's shoot-out was thwarted, however, by a series of command changes that bounced the *Iowa* between Spruance's 5th Fleet and Halsey's 3rd, while Admiral Marc Mitscher, a pioneer aviator and a former carrier skipper, assumed command of the Task Force. In the midst of all the changes, the *Iowa's* helm passed to Captain Allen Rockwell McCann.

In support of amphibious landings in the Philippines in October 1944, the Navy positioned one task force in southern Leyte Gulf and another, under Halsey and including both the *Iowa* and the *New Jersey*, at the San Ber-

nardino Straits. Both task forces were initially to assume a defensive posture.

The Japanese, in a textbook operation, divided their naval force into three fleets: the Northern, the Southern, and the Central Forces. The Northern Force was to sail north of Leyte Gulf and act as a decoy to lure the *Iowa* and the *New Jersey* away from their positions while the Southern and Central Forces, with the *Yamato*, were to attack the remainder of the U.S. fleet in a pincer movement. The Japanese, however, suffered from a version of Murphy's Law (anything that can go wrong, will go wrong), as the decoy Northern Force under Admiral Ozawa went unseen while the Central Force was spotted by a submarine on 24 October, and the Southern Force was mauled by Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf.



The Battleship *Iowa* berthed next to the Cruiser *Des Moines* at Norfolk, Virginia, in May 1956. (George Ver Steeg Collection, SHSI)



The USS Iowa in the Hudson River, May 1957. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Admiral Thomas Kinkaid presumed that the San Bernardino Straits were protected by the *Iowa* so he continued the landings. Unfortunately, by this time, Halsey had discovered the decoy and was some two hundred miles north of his assigned station when the *Yamato* and the Central Force sailed unmolested into Leyte Gulf and attacked the extremely small collection of destroyers and escorts.

A stunned Kinkaid asked Halsey where the fast battleships (referring to the *Iowa* and *New Jersey*) were. At 0830 he pleaded for the *Iowa* to return to Leyte but Halsey was busy attacking the meaningless decoy force. A desperate Kinkaid sent an uncoded message at 1000 asking "Where is Lee x Send Lee." Lee commanded Task Force 34 which included the *Iowa*, the *New Jersey*, and four other battleships.

A worried Admiral Chester Nimitz, monitoring signals back in Pearl Harbor, intervened when he sensed an impending defeat and asked Halsey, "Where is Task Force 34?" Unfortunately, with coding and padding of words to confuse the enemy, the message Halsey re-

ceived was "Where is Task Force 34. The World Wonders." Halsey took this as an insult and refused to send the *Iowa* immediately back to the Gulf.

Meanwhile an undergunned American force, playing hide-and-seek in smoke screens and occasional rain squalls, hammered the superior Japanese forces until they beat a retreat back through the Straits. By the time Halsey overcame his anger and returned the *Iowa* to Leyte Gulf the Japanese were clear of the Strait.

Probably the last great ship-to-ship battle had been fought at Leyte Gulf. The big showdown between the *Yamato* and the *Iowa* had not taken place largely because of Halsey's impatience, his failure to follow orders, and his almost neurotic desire for action of any kind. The *Iowa* had been built to counter the *Yamato* and to protect U.S. carriers. In what many historians consider the largest sea battle of all time, the *Iowa* should have fulfilled all of those purposes. She did not. The exact situation for which she had been built, for which her men had been trained, and for which she had been

ordered into position in Leyte Gulf had come to pass. But proper use was not made of the *Iowa* at Leyte Gulf.

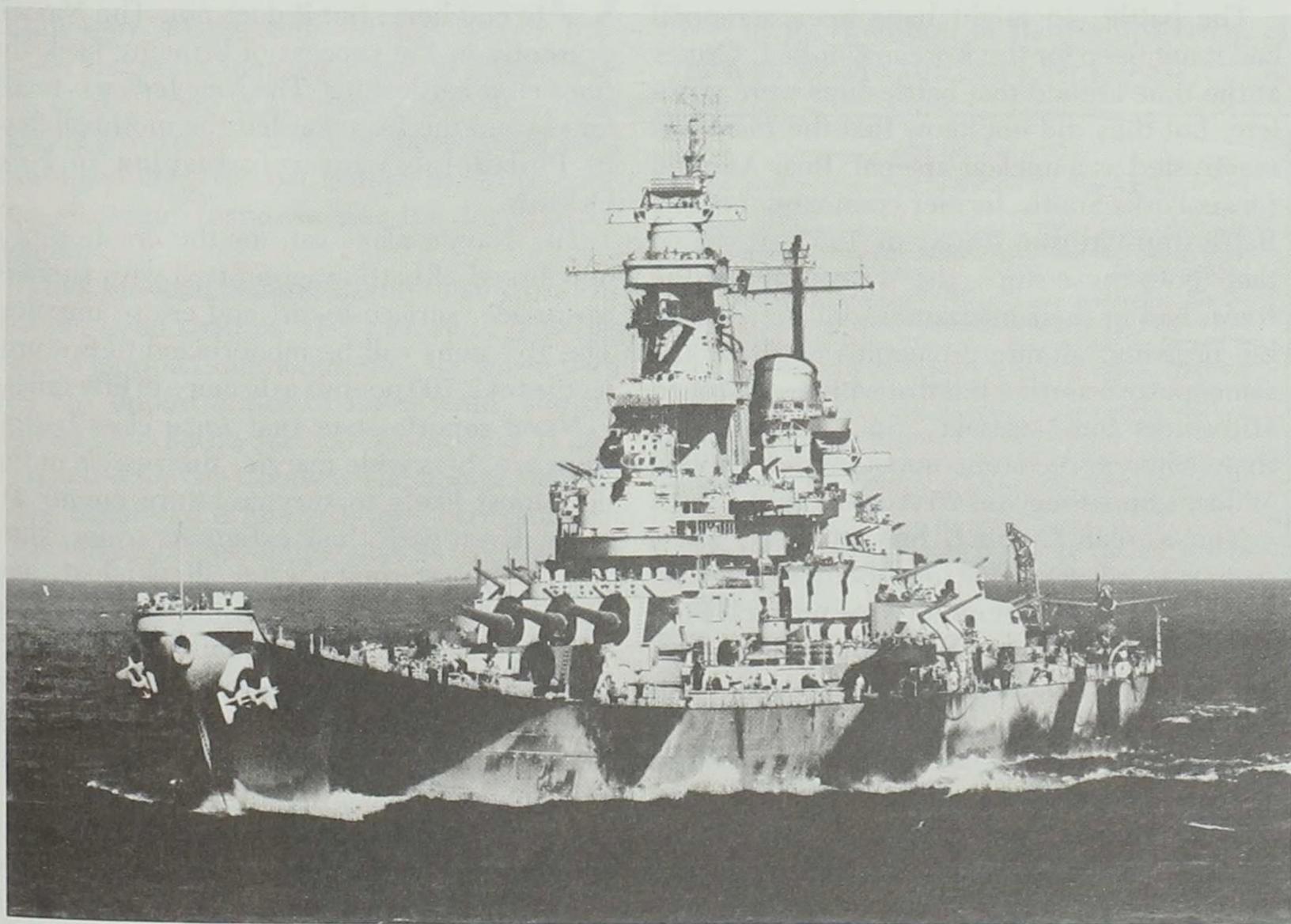
The significance of Halsey's action was clear. He failed to follow orders, he did not protect his charges, he made no rapid response to calls for assistance during the battle, and he allowed the Japanese battleships to escape. Had the battle ended in a defeat for the U.S. forces, Admiral Halsey might well have been responsible for a peace based upon something other than unconditional surrender. Only his popularity and his image in the press saved him from a court-martial. Almost all naval historians have criticized him for his part in the battle.

Halsey had deprived the *Iowa* of the chance to participate in a spectacular victory. Shortly thereafter, the battleship steamed home under a new skipper, J.L. Holloway. The *Iowa* re-

ceived a warm welcome in San Francisco and was overhauled at the shipyard at Hunter's Point. The *Iowa* then went to sea again in March 1945 for a shakedown and training cruise off San Pedro.

The battleship was soon back in action as Rear Admiral Oscar Badger's flagship for Battleship Division 7. She supported carrier actions off Okinawa before retiring to Ulithi for supplies in May. She then rejoined her old friends in Task Force 38, under Vice Admiral John McCain, for strikes against Kyushu, one of Japan's home islands.

During the summer of 1945 the *Iowa* blasted away at installations on Honshu and Hokkaido. With Captain Charles Wellborn, Jr., at her helm, she raided Nagoya and Tokyo just prior to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The *Iowa's* twin sister, the



The *Iowa* entering Majuro Harbor in February 1944. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Missouri, was selected as the site for the surrender ceremonies, however, in deference to President Harry Truman. Ironically, Halsey requested that his flag be raised on the *Iowa* during those ceremonies.

With the coming of peace, the Navy evidently had difficulty figuring out what to do with the *Iowa*. She stayed in Japanese waters for barely a month. Then she returned to Long Beach via Seattle. By January 1946, however, she was back in Tokyo Bay as flagship of the 5th Fleet. The *Iowa* then returned home in April 1946 and for the next two years she served as a Naval Reserve training vessel, acting as a floating classroom for midshipmen from the Naval Academy and reserve personnel. The USS *Iowa* was finally decommissioned 24 March 1949.

The battleship might have been scrapped had it not been for the Korean Conflict. Critics at the time argued that battleships were obsolete, but they did not know that the *Iowa* was reactivated as a nuclear arsenal. Rear Admiral Lewis Parks Smith, former commander of the Battleship-Cruiser Force in 1953, revealed that "both these ships, the *Wisconsin* and the *Iowa*, had in their magazines, and were capable of firing, atomic projectiles of about the same power as the bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Such was the ship that Congress recommissioned under Captain William Smedbury on 25 August 1951.

The Korean Conflict, however, was not a serious naval war. The *Iowa* became the flagship for the 7th Fleet under Vice Admiral Robert Briscoe and, later, Vice Admiral J.J. "Jocko" Clark. The latter led a mock amphibious assault on Kojo in hopes of exposing the enemy, but he failed in his objective and thus helped convince the military establishment that the Korean Conflict was no war for a ship like the *Iowa*. Shortly after the Kojo operation, the battleship was ordered to Norfolk, Virginia, for overhaul.

For the next six years the *Iowa* moved from assignment to assignment and from ocean to ocean as the Navy tried to find a place for her. She served as flagship for NATO exercises in 1953 and 1957, and between those exercises, she joined a Battleship-Cruiser Force under Rear Admiral R.E. Libby. As a member of that force, the *Iowa* showed the colors in Scotland and in Mediterranean ports as well as in South America.

With her electrical system outdated and badly worn, the USS *Iowa* was ultimately berthed beside the *Wisconsin* in Philadelphia and decommissioned on February 24, 1958. The *Iowa*, the *Wisconsin*, and the *Missouri* were later to be cannibalized to rebuild the *New Jersey* which saw action off Vietnam.

One might expect the story of the USS *Iowa* to end here, but it does not. The Navy is presently in the process of bringing back the *Iowa* class battleships. The *New Jersey* is ready for sea and the *Iowa* has left the mothball fleet in Philadelphia for refurbishing in New Orleans.

The Navy's plans call for the creation of a new breed of battlewagon fitted with surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and cruise missiles. The 16" guns will be modernized to fire projectiles of 2,700 pounds a distance of fifty miles.

Naval reports state that *Iowa* class battleships are, by a wide margin, the vessels in the fleet most likely to survive future enemy attacks. Even with their extensive armor, they are the fastest rough water ships afloat, and they have the longest cruising range of any conventional ship. Their size allows for comfortable quarters for their crews, ample space for new weapons systems, and a stable platform for Vertical Take Off/Landing (VTOL) planes and helicopters.

Reactivating the four *Iowa* class battleships adds new fuel to the ongoing debate in military circles about the superiority of air power over sea power. Yet the battleships will add signifi-



The Iowa steaming out of Wonson Harbor after a day's bombardment in April 1952. (U.S. Navy photograph)

cantly—by 40 percent—to the Navy's firepower and to the number of capital ships which can be deployed at any time. And given continuing government concern about future third world conflicts, the battleships might provide the strategic response needed for limited conflicts.

Thus the final chapter of the *Iowa* story has not yet been written. Her history to date has been a glorious and honorable one. Even with the lost opportunities of Leyte Gulf, she received nine battle stars in World War II and two in the Korean Conflict. The *Iowa* is the fifth most decorated of the sixty-one battleships in U.S. history. One might almost say that the *Iowa* was given an honorable name and it achieved an honorable record. May she con-

tinue in the tradition of Battleships *Iowa*, of which all Iowans can justly be proud. □

Note on Sources

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