

Long Beach to Pearl Harbor

It was a jovial group of Iowans who were piped aboard the USS *Iowa* on Sunday evening, November 18, 1951. The ship's band played the "Iowa Corn Song" as we scrambled on deck to be warmly greeted by Captain William R. Smedberg III and his able officers. The sun had set before our arrival, and the sable mantle of night had obscured the *Iowa* from our view until we were almost at the side of the giant craft.

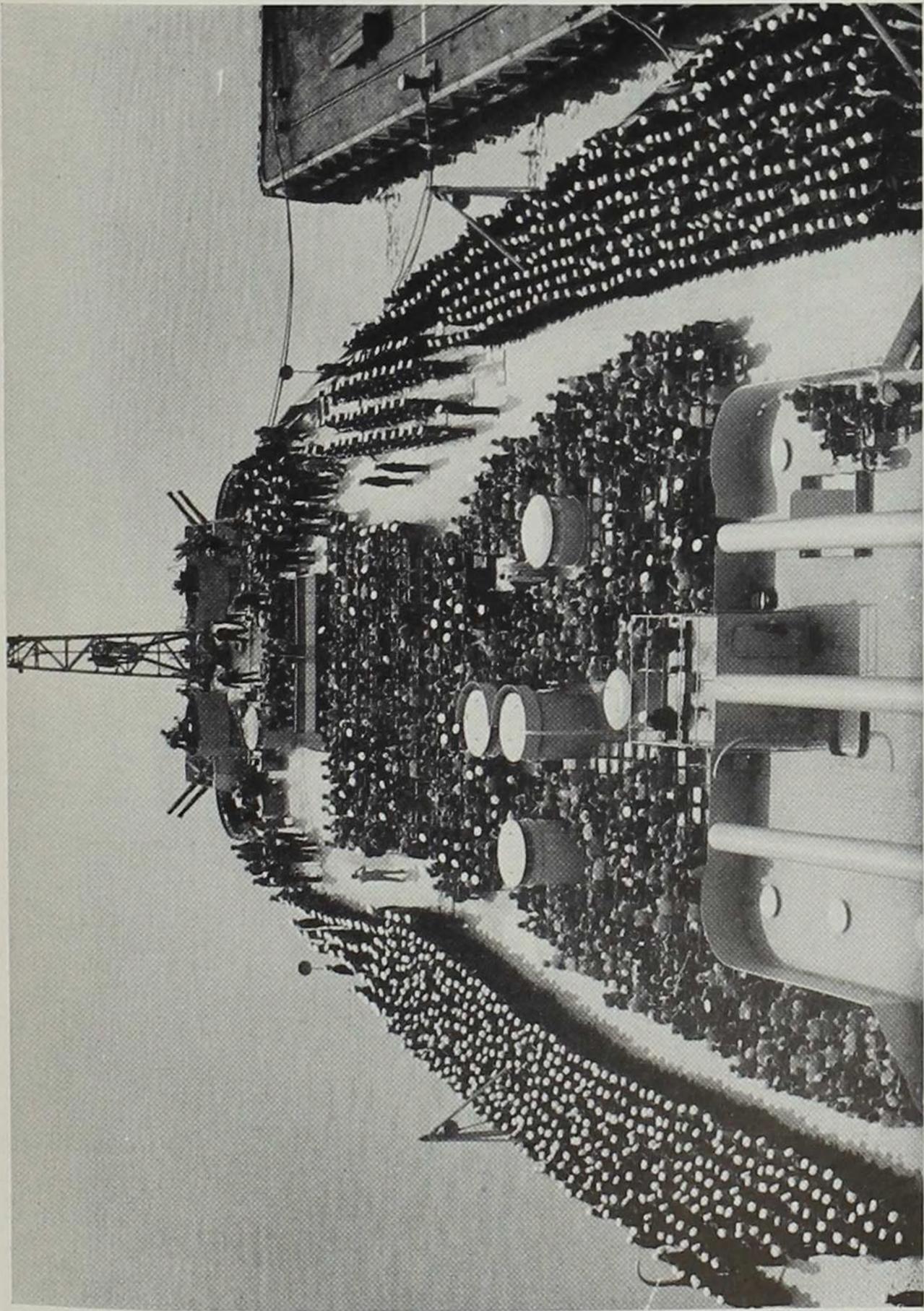
Fourteen Iowans from almost every walk of life had been chosen to make the shakedown cruise aboard the battleship *Iowa*. Five of these men hailed from Des Moines — W. Harold Brenton, A. B. Chambers, Fred W. Hubbell, E. T. Meredith, Jr., and Rudolph W. Weitz. Two came from Davenport — Col. B. J. Palmer and Ralph Evans; two from Iowa City — Virgil M. Hancher and William J. Petersen. Two newspapermen — Al Efner and W. Earl Hall — came from Ottumwa and Mason City respectively. Samuel N. Stevens lived in Grinnell, Fred L. Maytag in Newton, and Craig R. Sheaffer in Fort Madison. Measured by training and occupation, the fourteen were quite diversified — two college presidents, two newspapermen, two radio men, two

industrialists, a banker, an insurance president, a magazine publisher, a building contractor, the mayor of Des Moines, and the state historian.

Most of the Iowans were tired when they boarded the battleship. At 6:00 a.m. that morning the call girl at the Fort Des Moines Hotel awakened me with the pleasant news that it was 16° above zero. I had breakfast with Ralph Evans and Col. B. J. Palmer at 6:30. We taxied out to the National Guard Hangar at the Des Moines Airport where our plane — a 2-motored Navy R4D — was waiting to carry eleven of us to Long Beach. Three of our party, who had gone to the Pacific Coast on business, were planning to meet us there.

Our plane left Des Moines at 8:17 on Sunday morning, refueled at Albuquerque, and arrived at Los Alamitos Airport at Long Beach at 4:15 p.m., having flown the 1,525 miles in beautiful weather in a little over nine hours. We were met by the press and Navy men and, after the usual pictures, were whisked off to Pico Avenue Landing where one of the officer's motor boats and the Captain's gig were waiting to take us aboard.

If anyone in our party was under the impression that the next five days were to be spent sunning on the broad decks of the *Iowa* that notion was quickly dispelled. Even before we sat down for our Sunday night supper of chicken with all the trimmings, Captain Smedberg had placed in our



Official Photo U. S. Navy

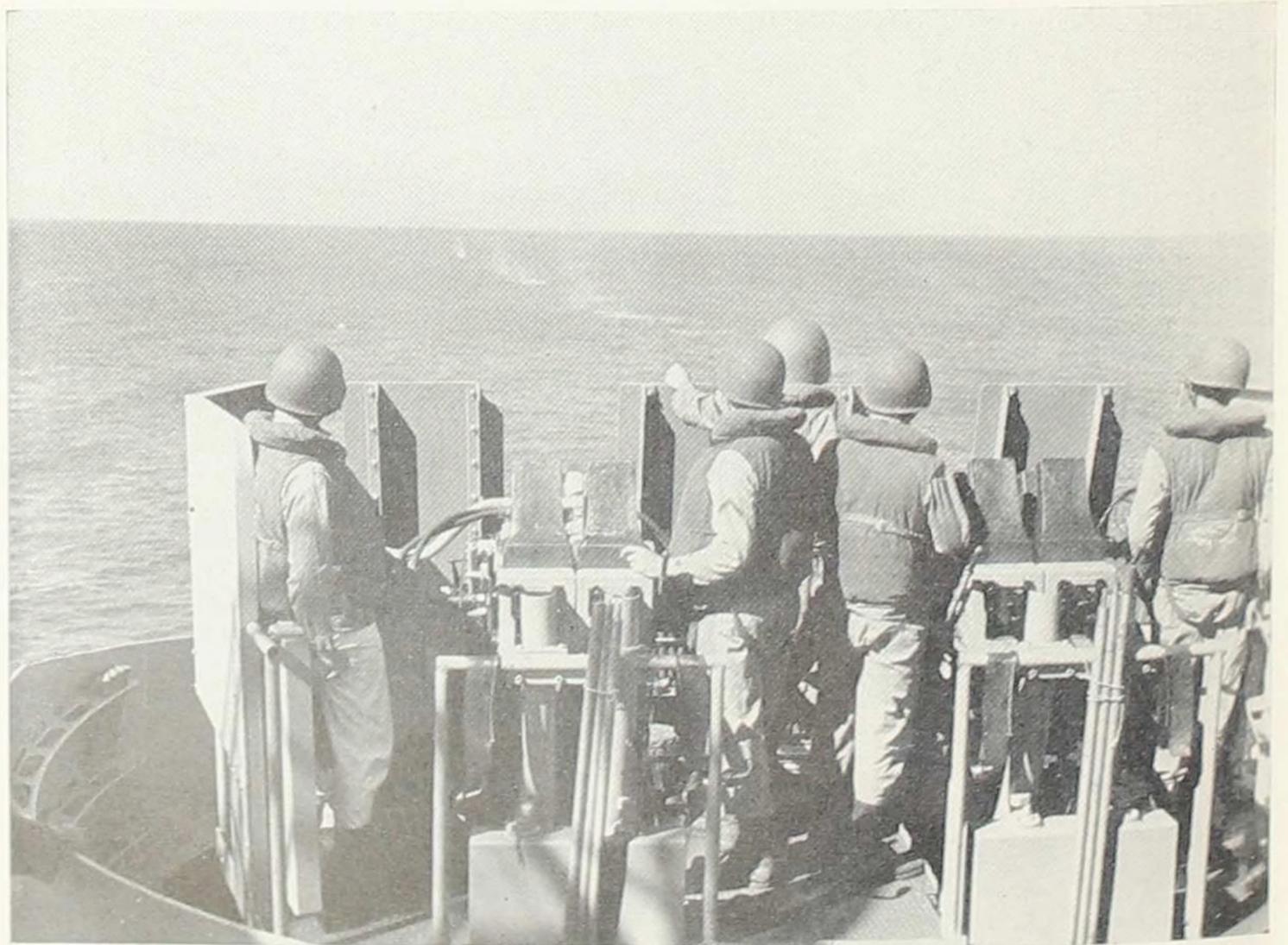
RECOMMISSIONING CEREMONY ON USS IOWA (BB61)

Adm. Chester W. Nimitz speaking — August 25, 1951



Official Photo U. S. Navy

SCRUBBING DOWN THE DECK OF THE USS IOWA



Official Photo U. S. Navy

GUNNERY PRACTICE ABOARD THE BB61



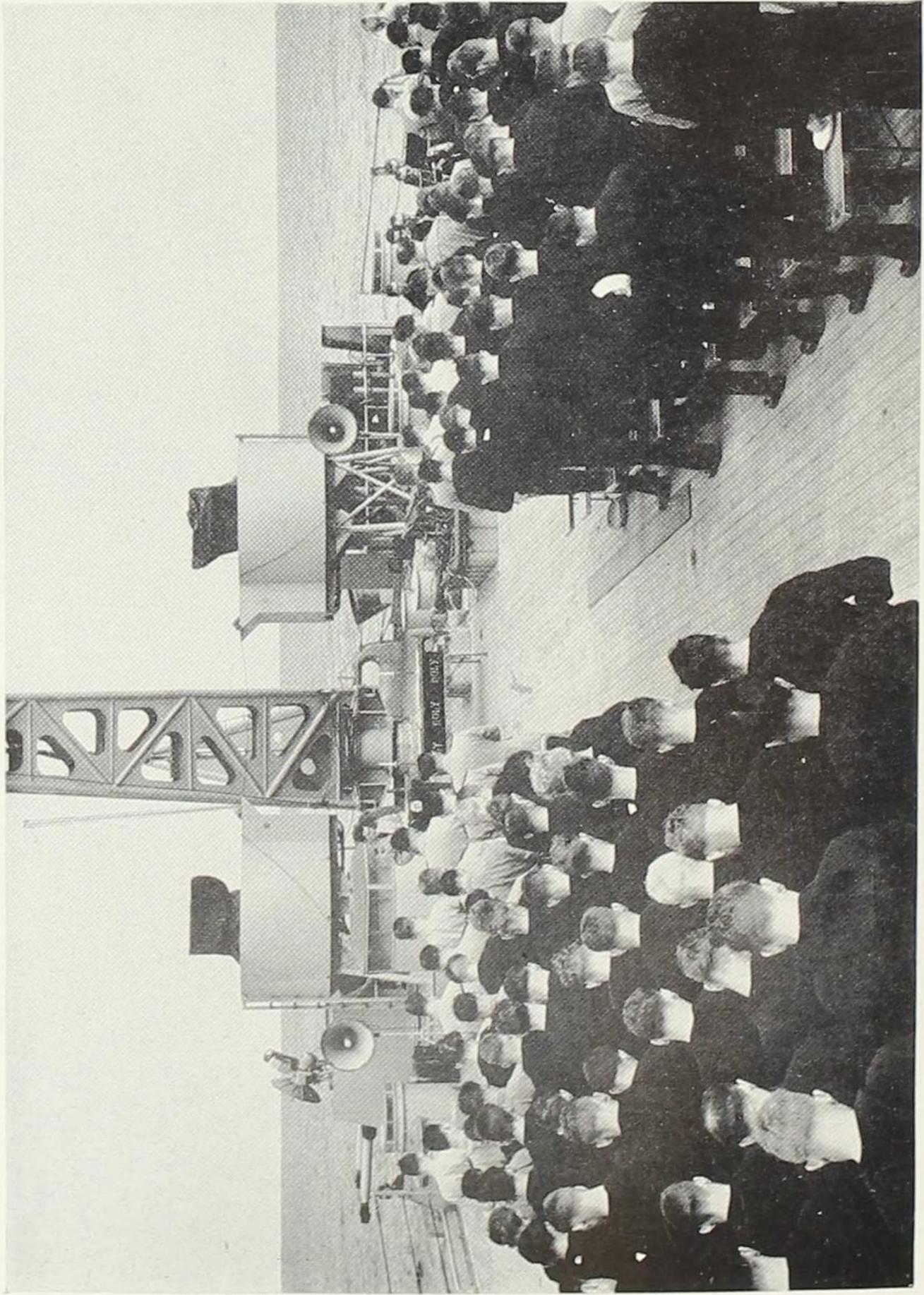
Official Photo U. S. Navy

FOURTEEN IOWA GUESTS OF NAVY ABOARD USS IOWA
Cdr. C. R. Stephan (left) and Capt. Wm. R. Smedberg III (center)



Official Photo U. S. Navy

SILVER SERVICE GIVEN BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO SECOND IOWA
Now displayed in Captain's Cabin of Iowa (BB61)



Official Photo U. S. Navy

GUESTS JOIN OFFICERS AND CREW IN THANKSGIVING SERVICE

hands a thick mimeographed information booklet outlining our activities for the next five days aboard the *Iowa*. So, after seeing Fred Astaire in *Three Little Words* on the fantail (or stern) of the *Iowa*, and having taken one last lingering look at the twinkling lights of Long Beach, we all went to bed early in preparation for a busy morrow.

The *Iowa* was scheduled to get underway for Pearl Harbor on Monday morning, November 19. Most of us had breakfast early in the wardroom, and had then taken a brisk turn around the deck — the equivalent of a six-block walk from stem to stern and back again. All of us were fascinated by the giant anchor chain, whose links weighed ninety pounds each. Finally, a last picture having been taken by the press of the *Iowa* guests scrubbing down the deck in their foul-weather coats, we all hurried to the 05 level to watch the under-way operations.

As the anchor of the *Iowa* was finally weighed, the mighty warship moved slowly out to sea. Below us the entire crew stood at attention, saluting each United States ship as we slipped out of port. The United States Marines aboard the *Iowa* were especially impressive. Soon the breakwater was passed, the speed of the *Iowa* increased, and Long Beach gradually faded from the horizon. Catalina itself was faintly visible through the typical California mist, but it, too, quickly disappeared behind the wake of our speeding craft.

After a pleasant lunch with the officers, the Iowa guests were invited to Captain Smedberg's quarters which President Roosevelt had occupied on his trip to Teheran, and which is said to contain the only bathtub in the United States Navy. For the next two hours Captain Smedberg presented us with facts and figures about the *Iowa*, and discussed naval strategy in the Pacific. Captain Smedberg had been graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1926. Asked if he agreed with those who felt that battleships were outmoded, and just what his frank opinion was on the role of the battleship in naval strategy, Captain Smedberg replied:

Almost my entire career at sea has been spent in destroyers and cruisers. Until my present assignment in command of this great ship, the *Iowa*, I have had a sailor's belief that battleship duty was inferior to cruiser or destroyer duty.

I still think that about the old battleship duty. But I have changed my mind 180 degrees in the past three months, with the discovery that these four mightiest fighting units in the world, the *Iowa* and her sister ships, the *Missouri*, the *New Jersey*, and the *Wisconsin*, are not battleships — in the old sense of the word.

For my money, they are Super-Cruisers. There is nothing that a cruiser can do that these magnificent ships cannot do better.

We can steam greater distances without refuelling. We can make greater speed than either destroyer or cruiser in any kind of a heavy sea. We are practically unsinkable. We can outshoot any other ship afloat. And we can take

great punishment and still bring most of our men back.

You asked what the role of a ship like the *Iowa* and her 3 sister ships is in time of war? As I see it, these ships have several functions which they can perform better than any other type.

You have read of the *Missouri's* accurate support of our troops in Korea at ranges inland of more than 20 miles. The *New Jersey* has been doing the same and you will soon hear of the same solid support from the *Wisconsin*.

There is no battery in the world capable of dealing out such destruction to the enemy, as mobile, as protected, as accurate, and as concentrated as these 16 inch guns which can hurl almost 50,000 pounds of metal at a target each minute. That is our bombardment-and-support-of-troops function.

Then we have a tremendous anti-aircraft battery which can help to protect any task force to which we may be assigned. We can steam great distances at high speeds with carrier task forces to help protect them from air and surface attack while they strike an enemy where he least expects an air strike.

And finally, what to me seems one of our most important potentials is the assurance these ships help to provide that we can protect our transports and supply ships which are vital to the flow of materials to our soldiers and marines ashore.

These four ships have no equal on the seas of the earth. As long as the task force combination of our carriers, these super-cruisers and our cruisers and destroyers can guarantee the use of all seas of the world to the United States and deny their regular use, in time of war, to any other nation, all the oceans become formidable barriers to all nations but the one with seapower. To that nation enjoying naval superiority, these oceans become highways of invasion — if we need them.

In the three months that we have been back in the service of the nation, my crew and I have come to believe so strongly in the tremendous mobility and power of this great ship that we want you to understand what it can do, and what it means to us.

During our five days on the *Iowa* we were divided into small groups and moved each day to a different table in the wardroom mess so that we eventually met all of the officers. Breakfast was served anytime from 0700 to 0745. Luncheon and dinner hours were as follows:

	Underway	Not underway
Lunch	1200-1300	1200-1300
Dinner	1800-1900	1830-1930

The meals aboard the *Iowa* were excellent, the crew faring equally as well as the officers. Our meal with the warrant officers was unforgettable, not only because of its quality but also because of its interest. We followed this particular meal by another special tour of the refrigeration plant of the *Iowa* where I found crates of eggs from Harlan, Mallard, and Audubon.

The next morning we were invited to assemble in the wardroom for our first tour of the ship. Our official schedule read as follows:

Tuesday 20 November:

Guests are invited to assemble in the Wardroom on the starboard side. Go forward on the deck past the two main battery turrets, and on up to the eyes of the ship. Direct attention to #1 and #2 turrets, 40 mm gun mounts,

anchor windlass operation, and information on anchor operation. Go aft on the port side to the fantail. Points of interest: teak decking, number of complete decks, height of ship, boat or plane crane, helicopter landing space. Return up the starboard side to the ladder at frame 132. Go up to the 01 level, forward and up at frame 117, forward to starboard passageway at frame 99 and up to the 09 level. After a short stay at this level, the group will return to the main deck, stopping at each level to note its functions and facilities.

Lest the average landlubber becomes confused, it might be suggested that when the Navy speaks of 09 level, it is the same as the ninth floor, only on the *Iowa* we clambered up ladders and through hatches that most of us would never have dreamed of negotiating before we went aboard the ship. A few of us actually got to the 011 level, which was just about as far as one could go.

On this same day we went forward and watched gunnery practice — the first time most of us had ever witnessed it except in the movies. One universal observation was made: some of the crew needed more practice! Since Captain Smedberg had specialized in gunnery we had little fear the crew would improve.

After lunch on Tuesday we all assembled aft to meet the members of the crew who were from Iowa. More than thirty young Iowans were aboard, and we now learned why the band played the "Iowa Corn Song" so beautifully — Band Director Brumbaugh had begun his career at Panora!

Other lads hailed from such towns as Audubon, Belle Plaine, Chapin, Clarence, Cresco, Des Moines, Eldridge, Montezuma, Woolstock, Remsen, Quimby, and Volga.

Thanksgiving aboard the *Iowa* was a memorable one. Our Thanksgiving dinner was eaten with the crew, each guest having an Iowa boy as his partner. The dinner, served piping hot, was a marvel in quality and quantity — turkey noodle soup, saltines, roast tom turkey, oyster dressing, candied sweet potatoes, snowflake potatoes, giblet gravy, French peas, cranberry sauce, buttered asparagus, quartered lettuce, 1000 island dressing, ripe olives, sweet mixed pickles, hot parkerhouse rolls, butter, coffee, pumpkin pie, ice cream, fruit cake, cigarettes. In the evening we enjoyed a Thanksgiving supper with the officers which happily did not add as many pounds to our waist lines.

The spiritual side of the day was not forgotten. The band played appropriate church music, and our chaplain conducted a dignified and thought-provoking Thanksgiving service. An afternoon band concert was preceded by a male quartet composed of Craig Sheaffer, Samuel Stephens, William J. Petersen, and W. Earl Hall. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining brightly, and many of us found time to take our first sunbath.

Religion has a prominent place for men aboard the *Iowa*. Each morning the chaplain gives a short prayer; every Sunday and holiday appropriate

services are held aboard the ship. The chaplain is always available for spiritual guidance. Even the ship paper — *The Iowan* — serves as a guide to a better life. What more appropriate tribute than the following could be made on Mother's Day?

Human nature has its twists. One of these is the habit of taking for granted the best things life offers, even mother love. That is why each year in mid-May Americans must deliberately turn off their machines, climb down from their tractors, roll down their desks, lock their safes, prepare to pay tribute to the most wonderful reflection of the goodness of God — their mother.

This tribute will take different forms. Some, conscious of an incalculable debt, will purchase an expensive gift; others, with childhood memories of their mother's never failing comfort, will send her an exotic arrangement of her favorite flowers. And others, for whom spiritual values have ruled supreme from evenings long since passed when they learned to lisp their first Amens at mother's knee will kneel this Mother's Day before God's Altar to pray His choicest blessings on her who joined Him in creating and conserving them.

In return countless mothers' faces will light up Sunday as these varied protestations of love and affection come pouring in. And in Mother's mind for the thousandth time that inaccurate if excusable conclusion will again occur: "How fortunate I am to have the best son in the world!"

If only we would try to become the sons our mothers think we are.

In preparing a half-hour radio broadcast to Iowans and the nation for shipmate Ralph Evans, all of us emphasized different things that impressed us. Samuel Stephens, president of Grin-

nell College, was particularly impressed by the high spiritual and moral tone which has just been mentioned. Virgil M. Hancher, president of the State University of Iowa, emphasized the fine medical staff and care available for the officers and crew. Cdr. R. W. O'Neil headed the medical staff while Cdr. K. K. Bridge was in charge of dentistry. Dr. O'Neil is one of fourteen survivors of the cruiser *Juneau* which was sunk during World War II with a loss of 700 men, including the five Iowa Sullivan brothers.

W. Earl Hall was amazed and delighted with the up-to-date print shop which issues *The Iowan* and is responsible for all printing in this floating city of 1,800 men. The influence of the medical men is revealed by the following editorial which appeared in *The Iowan* on January 26, 1946, when the *Iowa* was lying in Tokyo Bay.

LET'S PREVENT IT

Dysentery is a disease of the intestines which breeds in the living spaces, heads and galleys of crowded ships. It has been occurring in epidemic form among the crews of American ships in the Tokyo Bay area during the past month. The germs which cause it are carried from person to person on dirty mess gear, dirty fingers, contaminated food and water. To prevent an epidemic becoming started in this ship is a task requiring the efforts of all hands. The galley, scullery and messing compartments must be kept sparkling. Food and mess gear must stay out of living spaces. Heads must be cleaned continuously. Personal cleanliness of each individual aboard is very important.

An epidemic of dysentery would paralyze the whole ship for weeks, to say nothing of the agony it would cause to its victims. Let's prevent it!

In my own turn I was especially impressed with the ship's library which exceeded my fondest expectations. Stocked with 4,000 volumes, the library contained not only the best in novels, travel, adventure, and mystery stories, but also had whole sections on history, biography, economics, education, psychology, religion, philosophy, engineering, navigation, and a score of other fields. The library was in charge of the chaplain and was filled with readers whenever I looked in on it. In addition, many of the men took volumes to their bunks.

We were all amazed with everything we saw, from the up-to-date laundry to the three shoe cobblers who put on 650 pairs of heels and 250 soles monthly. The soda fountain manufactured 9,600 gallons of ice cream per month, while the eight barbers gave 7,400 haircuts monthly. Just as at home, there always seemed to be a line waiting for a haircut.

The statistics on the amount of food carried aboard the *Iowa* startled most of us. The refrigerator afforded storage for 100 tons of fresh fruit and vegetables and 84 tons of meat, fowl, butter, eggs, etc. Despite the fact that 7 tons of food were consumed daily, the *Iowa* carried enough aboard to last 119 days. The longest period the

ship had been away from port without anchoring was 67 days, hence she had never taxed herself in this respect.

One of the highlights of our inspection, and we saw everything in the *Iowa* from stem to stern and from lower Broadway to deck 09, was the afternoon we spent in the huge 16-inch gun turrets. These three turrets are one of the most complex pieces of equipment man has devised. It took us all afternoon to go through one of them. Each turret is as tall as a five-story building, going down almost to the very bottom of the ship. Each turret weighs 2,200 tons — the weight of an entire destroyer. One of these nine 16-inch guns shoots a projectile weighing as much as a Ford car — and costing almost as much as one. Six bags of powder, weighing a total of more than 600 pounds, are used to send the projectile on its death-dealing way. The nine big guns of the *Iowa* — the biggest guns in the world today — will fire 50,000 pounds of explosives per minute against other ships or shore installations. The *Iowa* had demonstrated her tremendous hitting power during World War II. Her defensive power against air attack was equally effective in the Pacific.

The *Iowa* docked at Pearl Harbor on Saturday morning. We were warmly greeted by Admiral A. W. Radford, an Iowan and a graduate of Grinnell, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific and U. S. Pacific Fleet. We heard lectures on the

Navy in the Pacific and in Korea — the work of the fleet, and air arm, and the marines all being emphasized. We inspected all navy bases at Pearl Harbor. We visited the submarine diving tower (escape tank) and three of us submerged to 142 feet in the submarine *Besugo*. We paused respectfully at the shrine of the sunken *Arizona* at Ford Island. Finally, we flew back from Honolulu to Alameda, California, in a Navy *Mars* flying boat on Thursday night, and were back in Des Moines on Friday evening, having traveled 8,000 miles in twelve days — 5,600 by airplane and 2,400 by battleship.

Soon after our return Fred Maytag received a letter from Captain Smedberg indicating that the *Iowa's* crew was equal to any emergency. The letter read as follows:

At sea
Pearl to Long Beach.
Friday, 14 December 1951

Dear Fred:

If my typing is odd, at the moment, it is because I am trying to keep my mind occupied while we are tearing along at better than 30 knots, in the middle of a full power run. For several hours I toured the engine rooms and fire rooms and sat on the bridge but I found each minute was like an hour, so retired to my sea cabin just behind the bridge to help the time pass more quickly. You may have heard us talk about several reduction gear bearings which were considered suspect. We started working up to full power a couple of days ago and had gone several hours at 29 knots when one of those bearings started to let

go. An alert watch and immediate slowing of the affected shaft kept any damage from being done but we could not keep on. My amazing Engineer, Commander Brinckloe, suggested to me that if I would be willing to lock the one shaft and steam on the other three for about 36 hours his engineers and machinists would work around the clock and replace the "wiped" bearing in time for us to try the run again before we got to the Shipyard. Since such experience is invaluable, both from the point of view of the actual work itself and to our morale within the ship, I gave him the go-ahead. Thirty-six hours later he had not only fitted and replaced the bad bearing, which was in terrible shape when we got it out, but he had removed and improved a second bearing which had threatened a high temperature rise. We now have four hours at 28 knots or above behind us, without any trouble, and need only to continue for four more hours at this very high speed. I'll add a P.S. to let you know whether we make it or not. If we do, it will be a great feather in our cap. We already know that we can do that job — which the Shipyard estimated would take them four working days — and that will give us confidence in the days when we are in the forward area.

Sincerely yours,

W. R. Smedberg III

P.S. We *did* it. We completed a magnificent run without a sign of a casualty and with the plant running like a sewing machine. This is the *first* full power trial completed by this ship in 6½ years!!!

W. R. S. III

It is men of such mold who have won our victories on the sea in the past. Happily for us, such men still serve our Nation in these troubled times.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN