

The Story of

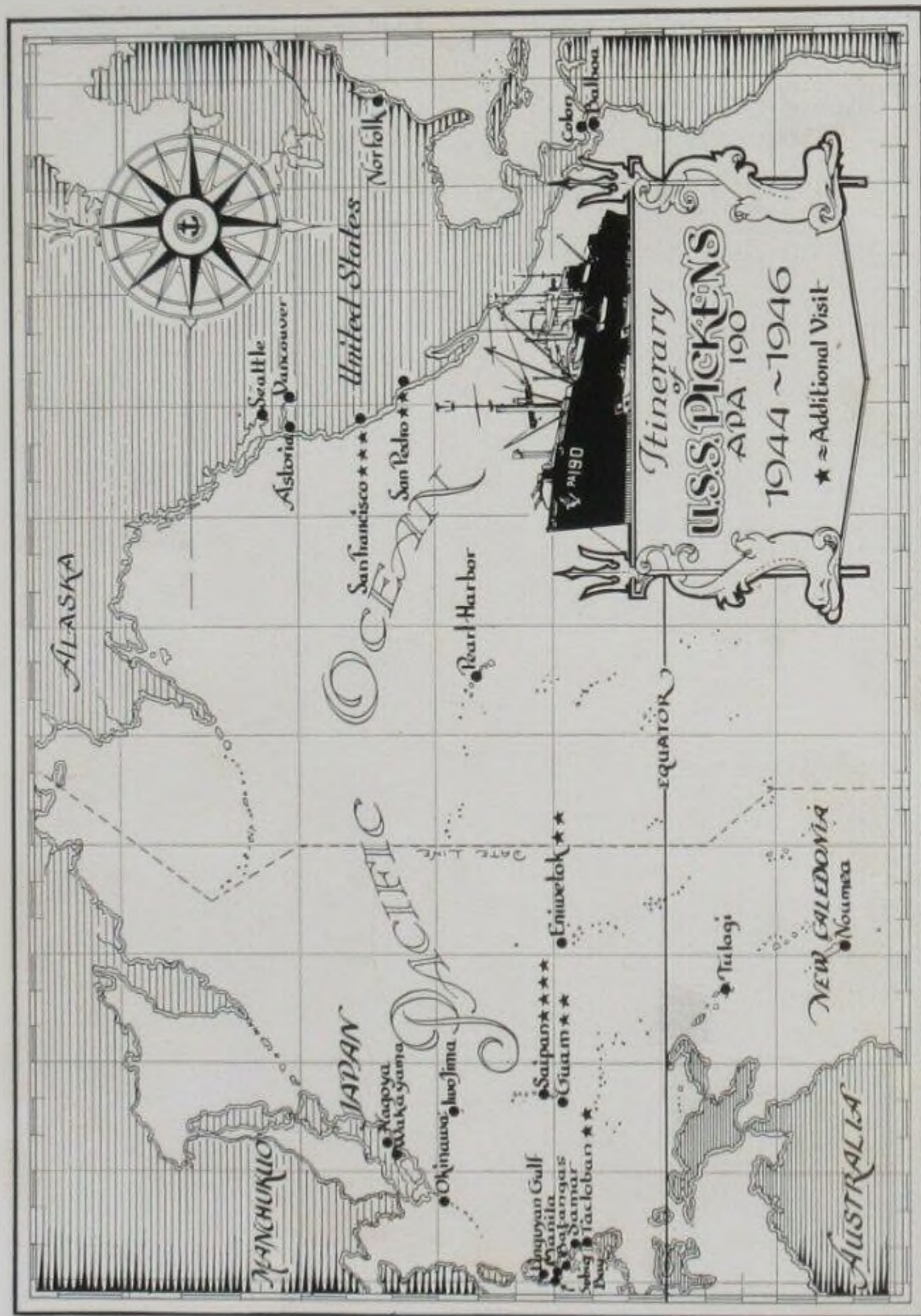
THE PICKENS



USS PICKENS--APA 190

September 1944

April 1946



A Message To My Shipmates



COMMANDER J. V. McELDUFF, U.S.N.
Commanding Officer

At Okinawa you picked up more than seven hundred and thirty survivors; you assumed the functions of the Division Flag Ship and led two divisions into the attack. You took it in stride, as you smilingly took everything else in stride. You had fortitude and "guts." You had everything essential to the making of a real fighting man. You had everything it takes and a lot left over.

Your efforts have made this the most satisfying and happiest cruise I have had in thirty years of service. This cruise has meant more to me than any promotion or any other assignment could possibly mean.

We have survived every stress and strain without even the slightest internal dissension. This means we have had a happy ship and real shipmates. All ships strive for such perfection but practically none ever quite realize it.

It has been a pleasure and an honor to be your Commanding Officer.

Officers and men of the *Pickens*, I salute you.

J. V. McELDUFF,
Commander, U.S.N.
Commanding

ON the eve of decommissioning may I extend greetings?

We commissioned the good ship *Pickens* not quite two years ago. Your efforts produced an effective and efficient unit of the Amphibious Force. At Iwo Jima and Okinawa you proved your worth. In subsequent duty in the Magic Carpet you operated efficiently.

Letters we have received indicate that no other Attack Transport ever maintained the *Pickens*' standard for feeding, caring for troops and keeping them happy. You accomplished your mission with effective courtesy.

We have had exciting times. We have had trials and tribulations but no obstacle has been too great for the excellent spirit of the *Pickens* to hurdle.



LT. COMMANDER V. A. BRIEN, U.S.N.R.
Executive Officer



UNDERWAY

At long last, it was a wonderful experience to feel the *Pickens* alive beneath your feet, to hear the wind in the rigging, and to set out upon a new ship to work together in the harmony and determination which would bring eventual victory. With the increasing demand for transports with which we could carry the battle closer and closer to enemy shores, the *Pickens* was immediately underway for Seattle, San Francisco, and San Pedro to load stores and equipment which were to provision and equip her for the job ahead. And not long hence she set sail westward to engage in further training operations in the Hawaiian Islands, and upon her arrival in Pearl Harbor on 29



TIME OUT FOR THANKSGIVING

October, 1944, she began the most interesting period of her final preparations. Engaged in amphibious training operations with elements of the 98th Infantry Division and the 4th Marine Division off Kauai, Maui, and Oahu, 11 H. long days and nights were spent in perfecting the landing operations which were necessary to the defeat of the enemy.



TRAINING AT PEARL HARBOR

"The Navy always cares for its own!" A good motto, and in the majority of cases true. At least the men aboard on Thanksgiving Day, 1944, found it so. In the midst of training exercises, and at a time when in many parts of the world the sledding was tough indeed, we took "time out" for some roast Tom Turkey with all the trimmings . . . all you could eat and more too! This was the beginning of the unanimous opinion eventually formed by the vast majority of the passengers the *Pickens* was destined to carry throughout the coming two years, that she had the "best food in the Navy."



FIGHTING - COMBAT WITH JAPS

THREE days after Christmas, 1944, elements of the 25th Marines, 4th Marine Division, 30th Replacement Battalion, 4th Tank Battalion, and Reconnaissance Company of the Headquarters Battalion were taken aboard with their cargo, and the *Pickens* joined Transport Division 44. This, finally, was the real thing! But there yet remained nearly a full month of training in the islands, serious training, for both crew and passengers knew their very lives depended upon the adequacy of such preparation.

Remember the boxing matches! Those marines were really in earnest, and you'd think they were bent on killing each other rather than the Japs. But it was good training for the fighting to come, and it provided many laughs for all aboard . . . at a time when there wasn't too much reason to be so jolly about the whole deal.

On 27 January, 1945, the U.S.S. *Pickens* left Pearl Harbor in company with Transport Divisions 43 and 45, carrying units of the

4th Marine Division enroute to Iwo Jima! We were routed south, by way of Eniwetok, Marshall Islands to take on fuel and supplies, and Saipan, where we joined Transport Group Baker, and then headed into the middle of our first operation.

The entire topography and plan of Iwo was memorized weeks ahead of schedule, and relief maps like this helped in the process. The beaches were studied by coxswains, beach-party men, and marines alike. It paid off to know your way around when you hit the dirty shores of Iwo, and these were lessons that everybody learned sooner or later. Some learned too late! We arrived in the Transport area off the island on the morning of 19 February.



Iwo Jima