



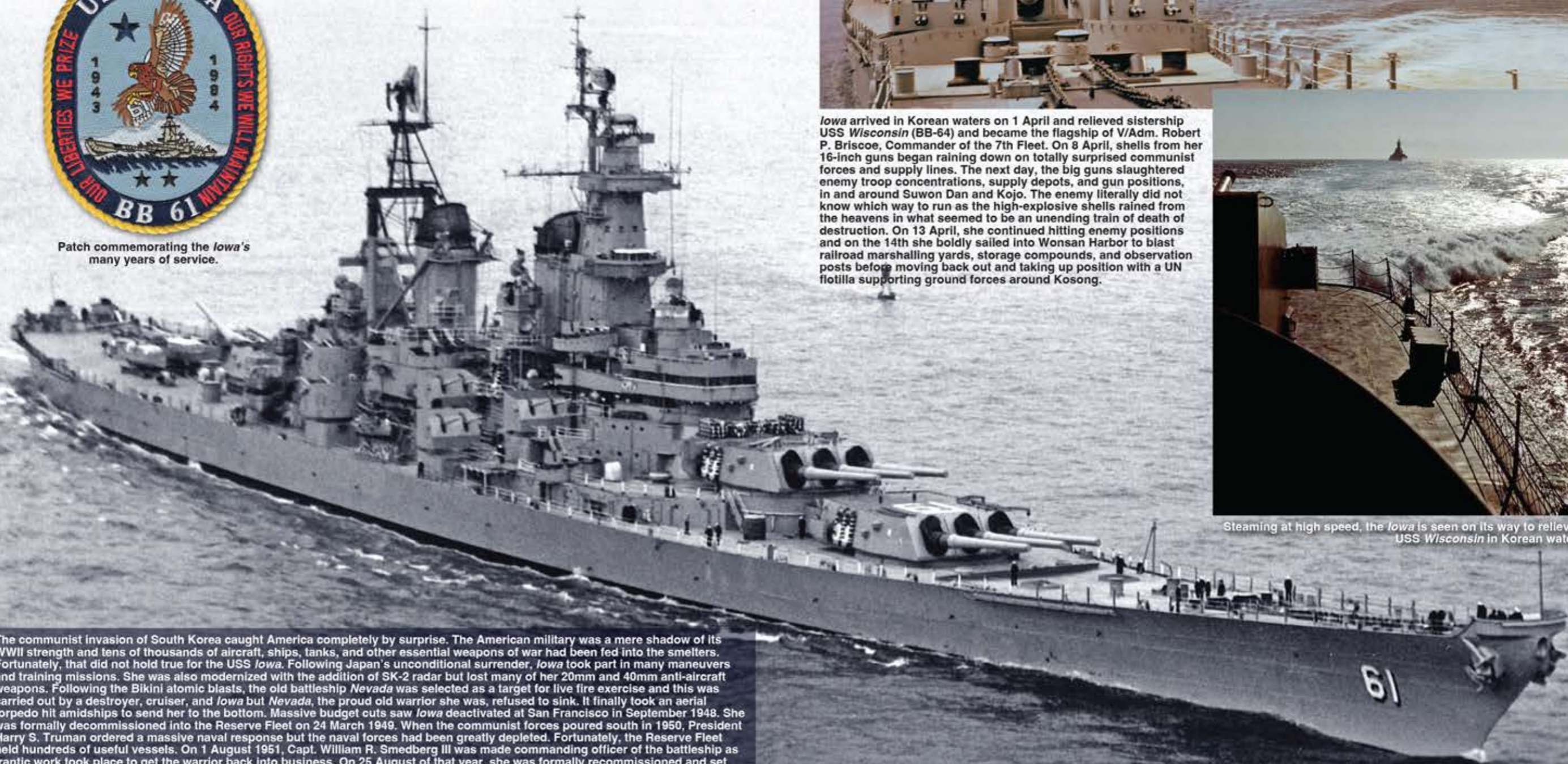
# THEIR GUNS WERE ALWAYS READY

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE MIGHTY IOWA-CLASS BATTLESHIPS – THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL WARSHIPS - PART THREE

BY JAMES THOMPSON



Patch commemorating the *Iowa's* many years of service.



*Iowa* arrived in Korean waters on 1 April and relieved sistership *USS Wisconsin* (BB-64) and became the flagship of V/Adm. Robert P. Briscoe, Commander of the 7th Fleet. On 8 April, shells from her 16-inch guns began raining down on totally surprised communist forces and supply lines. The next day, the big guns slaughtered enemy troop concentrations, supply depots, and gun positions, in and around Suwon Dan and Kojo. The enemy literally did not know which way to run as the high-explosive shells rained from the heavens in what seemed to be an unending train of death of destruction. On 13 April, she continued hitting enemy positions and on the 14th she boldly sailed into Wonsan Harbor to blast railroad marshalling yards, storage compounds, and observation posts before moving back out and taking up position with a UN flotilla supporting ground forces around Kosong.



Steaming at high speed, the *Iowa* is seen on its way to relieving *USS Wisconsin* in Korean waters.

The communist invasion of South Korea caught America completely by surprise. The American military was a mere shadow of its WWII strength and tens of thousands of aircraft, ships, tanks, and other essential weapons of war had been fed into the smelters. Fortunately, that did not hold true for the *USS Iowa*. Following Japan's unconditional surrender, *Iowa* took part in many maneuvers and training missions. She was also modernized with the addition of SK-2 radar but lost many of her 20mm and 40mm anti-aircraft weapons. Following the Bikini atomic blasts, the old battleship *Nevada* was selected as a target for live fire exercise and this was carried out by a destroyer, cruiser, and *Iowa* but *Nevada*, the proud old warrior she was, refused to sink. It finally took an aerial torpedo hit amidships to send her to the bottom. Massive budget cuts saw *Iowa* deactivated at San Francisco in September 1948. She was formally decommissioned into the Reserve Fleet on 24 March 1949. When the communist forces poured south in 1950, President Harry S. Truman ordered a massive naval response but the naval forces had been greatly depleted. Fortunately, the Reserve Fleet held hundreds of useful vessels. On 1 August 1951, Capt. William R. Smedberg III was made commanding officer of the battleship as frantic work took place to get the warrior back into business. On 25 August of that year, she was formally recommissioned and set sail for Korean waters in March 1952 with the paint barely dry on her superstructure.