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**United States Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco, California**

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UNITED STATES FLEET POST OFFICE

San Francisco, California

MEMORANDUM TO: ALL HANDS.  
FROM: O in C.  
SUBJECT: Souvenir Booklet.

1. With grateful appreciation and tribute to the young men and women of the United States Navy who were on duty at the Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, during WORLD WAR II, we present this booklet with the hope that your heart and mine may remain through the years Navy blue.

THOSE IN COMMAND.

Enclosure: Herewith.

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DEDICATED

TO

ADOLPH MAURER, CY, U. S. N.

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Adolph Maurer, Chief Yeoman, USN, welfare officer without portfolio, handled duties as confidential aid to the Executive Officers of the Fleet Post Office.

He joined the Navy in 1917 in Peoria, Illinois and served in the Atlantic in World War I. At the close of the war, he was assigned to the United States Naval Transport Service and remained on that duty for sixteen years. While on this assignment he visited numerous islands in the Southwest Pacific as well as in the Philippines, China and Japan. He has crossed the Pacific to the Orient some fifty-odd times.

Mauer served in the Atlantic Convoy Service during World War II, plying from Newfoundland to Iceland and the British Isles; also in the Southwest Pacific, basing in the Fiji Islands.

"The Chief," as he was affectionately known to all, reported for duty at the Fleet Post Office in April, 1943. He is small in stature, very quiet, and has a knack for getting things done to the best advantage of all concerned. What the Chief won't tell us, about himself, his associates will! He was a friend to all; . . . whether it meant getting a seat on a NATS plane or Baked Beans for a picnic.

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YOU'RE ABOARD!

Shown above are personnel offices and entrance to Fleet Post Office, 651 Brannan Street, San Francisco. Many were they that passed through these doors!

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Comdr.

W. J. HEGARTY

U.S.N.R.

#### OFFICERS ALL:

Commanding Officers As They Served:

Captain Edwin H. Dodd, U. S. N. (Ret.) February 12, 1943 to January 15, 1944.

Captain J. C. Clark, U.S.N. (Ret.) January 1944 to November 1944.

Commander Ferd R. Hayes, U.S.N.R., November, 1944 to March 1946.

Commander W. J. Hegarty, U.S.N.R., March, 1946 to June 1946.

Lt. Cmdr. Claud F. O'Hara, U.S.N., June 1946.

Lieut. G. A. Campbell.

Lt. Cmdr.  
Claud F. O'Hara  
U.S.N.



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**OFFICIALLY SPEAKING**

Upper Left: Commendation to Commander Ferd R. Hayes, U.S.N.R.

Upper Right: Officers on duty during 1945.

Lower Left: Major Eugene Bradford, U.S. Marine Mail Chief.

Lower Right: Captain Edward H. Dodd (left) turns C. O.'s office over to Captain J. C. Clark in January 1944.




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ANNALS OF THE  
FLEET POST OFFICE

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World War II has come and gone. The break of a peaceful day has set upon us once again and the fury and weariness of a people at war has passed into but memory. Somewhere in the future men and women will dwell for a few seconds on incidents which happened during World War II. Where were you and what did you do during this war? You'll have many things to tell, won't you? Some of your stories will be about Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. To help you over the rough-spots of those sea stories you will dream of in future days, here is the story of that great Naval shore establishment . . . whose motto was not "the mail must go through" but "the mail did go through"!

Before the war, in the good old peacetime years just before Pearl Harbor, the U. S. Navy received mail direct from civilian post offices. Locations of stations remained permanent and presented no problem as to mail delivery as it was directed to the city and state where each particular naval station was located. In the case of ships and aviation units which were afloat, other arrangements were required. The procedure proved most successful and was simple in operation. This consisted of direct negotiations between the commanding officers of a ship and the postmaster. Ship's mail was sent to the city where it spent most of its time in port . . . in care of the postmaster of that city. The postmaster in turn would have the mail delivered to a designated office on the dock where the ship's mail clerk picked up the mail. Before a cruise the postmaster was advised



of the schedule and the mail was forwarded accordingly. To expedite mail delivery, personnel usually advised their correspondents of the ship's movements and mail was addressed direct to port cities in care of the postmaster.

After Pearl Harbor, when wartime secrecy shrouded the movement of ships, it became necessary to have a central distribution point. Two main Navy post offices were established - one in San Francisco, California and one in [New York City](#). All mail for ships and stations in the West or Pacific Ocean was directed to San Francisco. Mail for East Coast Stations and the Atlantic Ocean went to New York City. In this manner the locations of ships and stations remained unknown to all with the exception of those charged with routing the mail.

Fleet Post Office, San Francisco was placed into commission on May 1, 1942 with Captain Edwin H. Dodd, now U. S. N. retired, in command. However, it was not until February 12, 1943 that Captain Dodd received written orders which placed him as Officer-in-Charge, Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, including V-Mail Division, Fleet Records Office and for the supervision of handling mail for the Merchant Marine and Armed Guard. At the beginning, Fleet Post Office, San Francisco had a complement of four officers and one hundred seventy-five men. Headquarters were set up at 651 Brannan Street in the building which housed the John Deere Plow Company.

With the commission of Fleet Post Office, addresses which formerly were given to geographical locations of ships were changed overnight to: "In care of Fleet Post Office." This involved the increase of addresses from a comparatively small peacetime Navy of a few foreign stations to a list of over 33,000 addresses of active ships and stations. And with these changes, the Fleet Post Office grew. In 1944, Fleet Post Office had buildings at 651 Brannan Street, 1000

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Van Ness Avenue, 623 Mission Street and at its pier of mail embarkation. Personnel reached an all time height of 6,000 enlisted men and women and approximately 50 officers.

Mail began to flow out of the post office at such tremendous outgoing bulk that the count was beginning to be almost impossible. In 1944, between October 15 and December 15, almost 17 million packages passed through the F.P.O. All packages had cleared the shores of the United States by December 1st. The early parcels reached their destination so early that thousands of people sent the second package in order that a parcel would be received nearer to Christmas.

The actual count for the year 1945 is given in figures below so that you may know the extent of the volume of mail that was handled. This report was taken from the files of Lt. Commander S. B. Rafalovich, U.S.N.R. Comdr. Rafalovich served as Operations Officer and was given much credit for his command of the movements of the mail.

<u>1945</u>	<u>FPO</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>AG&amp;MM</u>	<u>V-Mail</u>	<u>Grand Total</u>
January	71,854,396	2,879,377	1,263,175	75,996,948
February	73,801,403	2,396,981	1,154,198	77,352,582
March	94,952,644	2,920,055	1,367,078	99,239,777

April	93,770,930	2,373,521	982,816	97,127,267
May	96,793,706	2,400,613	935,470	100,129,789
June	93,534,994	2,416,657	737,061	96,688,712
July	99,038,975	3,004,779	555,467	102,599,221
August	96,721,309	3,037,795	410,030	100,169,134
September	90,010,600	2,435,966	215,857	92,662,423
October	96,489,221	2,241,831	76,397	98,307,449
November	72,747,896	1,799,740	_____	74,547,636
December	<u>66,282,868</u>	<u>1,560,498</u>	7,697,549	<u>67,843,366</u>
	1,045,998,942	29,167,813		1,083,164,304

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Not to be forgotten were the 65 civilians who worked at the F.P.O. Fleet Record Office. Of this 65, three saw the beginning and the end of the Fleet Record Office. They were: Mrs. Grace Gray, Mrs. Josephine Moulthrop and Miss Margaret Henley.

The war ended. Fleet Post Office, San Francisco began to fold . . . but the work done there can never die for through their work they kept hope alive . . . and through hope was won the war!

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**GOBS  
ON THE  
JOB**

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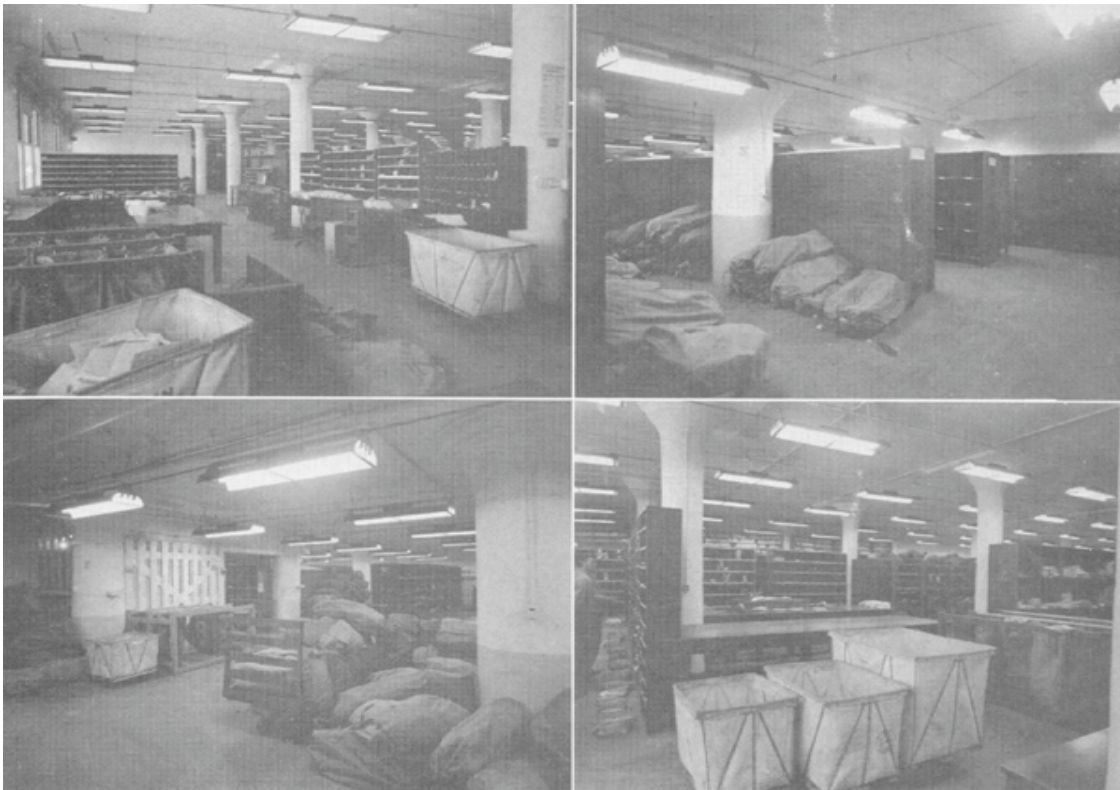


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### AIR MAIL

Air mail is by far the most popular of all mailing systems and it is no wonder that it was the largest department in the Fleet Post Office. Beginning back in the early days of the war, in May, 1942, the airmail division started out with a small number of crewmen distributing only 23 mail pouches per day. Only a year later the figure had grown to 130 pouches per day. By another year, it had risen to an average of 495 pouches per day. It has been estimated that approximately 1,300,000 letters were dispatched each day.

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### **FIRST CLASS**

Known to civilians as ordinary (3 cent) mail. In one year over 254,870,734 letters passed through this section.

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### **ARMED GUARD AND MERCHANT MARINES**

With approximately 350 personnel these men at AG&MM kept mail rolling to armed guard crews as well as merchant marines in the Pacific throughout the war!



## PARCEL POST

The second largest section of the Fleet Post Office is the Parcel Post and Prints Section. Its complement of 520 daily handled thousands of sacks of parcel post and newspapers.

The section used the first and third decks of the Fleet Post Office Building at 651 Brannon Street. The Parcel Post and Dispatch Sections moved into a new building in Oakland in September, 1946.

The new building called for 200,000 square feet of working space, plus 35,200 square feet for loading docks. There was a separate building of 25,000 for offices, lockers, and a cafeteria. The location of the new building was near Camp Knight in Oakland. This was just north of the Bay Bridge leading out of Oakland, California.

This new building was urgently needed for a long time, since the daily average of sacks worked had increased from 3,642 in March, 1944, to 8,859 in March, 1945. The daily average for October, the peak month during the 1944 Christmas rush, was 22,228 sacks. In 1945 an estimated 30 million parcels passed through the Fleet Post Office during the Christmas rush.

**AND  
PRINTS**



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**LOCATOR**

**SECTION**

Here the addresses of 33,000 ships and stations were kept secret and on hand so that mail could be rushed to men in the Pacific.

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THE UNITED STATES NAVY'S



## FLEET RECORD OFFICE

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## CARDS OF VICTORY

By JO MOULTHROP

Of the United States Navy's Fleet Records Division, Pacific

This is the story of the United States Navy's Fleet Records Division, born December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor.

Row upon row of small white cards . . . millions of them, standing primly in hundreds of file trays . . . bore witness to the deeds of the men and women who comprised the personnel of the world's greatest Navy.

The cards were more than mere records of the Navy's men and women, of their stations, their changes in ratings or rank. They were truly "cards of victory," each one bearing testimony of the American will to avenge Pearl Harbor and wipe out the aggressors.

Some cards are no longer white. These tell the story of men moved from station to station, ship to ship, across the Pacific and up from the South Seas to the north. Here is one that will bear no further legend; its last marking reads, "Died in Action."



Each day of each month, as the war moved on in history, new cards were added to the trays and old cards brought up to date. Just as a historian records each major event for the enlightenment of the world's generations to come, so did the Navy's "victory cards" record, although in minuter detail, the steady progress of the march on Tokyo.

Purpose of the cards was two-fold. First, to provide a means of forwarding mail to men far from home. Second, to help administrative officials trace individuals with a minimum of lost time.

The complexity of modern Naval warfare becomes more apparent when the Fleet Records cards are studied. The process of moving men to the ocean fighting fronts and to supply bases loomed tremendous when seen through the personnel cards. Despite this complexity, however, it became even more apparent that the Navy was not a top-heavy, bureaucratic figure of speech, but an acutely living, breathing force of individuals. . . of men named Jones, Smith, Kowalewski, Lischka, Fernandez.

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From Aab to Zyzneski, from first to last, from five-star Admiral to apprentice seamen the cards were filled with personal achievements, and each one bears within its marking pathos, glamour, perhaps true heroism, and sometimes tragedy.

The man who "founded" the system is Chief Yeoman Frank E. Holec, now retired. He was aboard the proud old battleship [WEST VIRGINIA](#) when it was sunk at Pearl Harbor, and fought his way to shore through burning oil and flying shrapnel to play a part in Naval history.

Once ashore, Holec assembled a crew of volunteers and, from the oil smeared, water stained, shell torn scraps of paper available, instituted the Fleet Casualty Records Office, now the Records Division of the Fleet Post Office.

Since that time, the handful of records has grown to a collection of more than 2,000,000 cards, kept up to date by a system of reports from every ship and station of the Navy.

The war proved long, but the way to victory was certain. The men and women of the Fleet Records Division proved it by their cards.

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## V-MAIL

To conserve space a new type of mail came about during World War II

. . . . that of Photographing your writing and sending by file to distant ships and stations.



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### **MARINE MAIL**

At 1000 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, 500 Marine men and women carried on the work of getting mail to the Marines overseas under the supervision of the U.S. Navy. They were a part of the Fleet Post Office.

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THE ORCHESTRA

ORGANIZED: FEBRUARY 1945

DISBANDED: JANUARY 1946

## ENGAGEMENTS TOTALED WERE:

22	F.P.O. chow music engagements.
22	Other unscheduled chow engagements.
16	Stage door canteen appearances.
12	F.P.O. dances.
8	Officer's F.P.O. Dances.
5	St. Mary's U.S.O. Appearances.
6	Apostleship of the sea U.S.O.
20	Other engagements.

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## F.P.O. ORCHESTRA BECAME "SPOTLIGHT BAND" OF THE 12thND

On the 14th of December 1944 the first F.P.O. notice was issued to all personnel requesting all individuals who had any experience with musical instruments to report such information to the Executive Officer. This was the start of the F.P.O. band. Gordon Patton, MaM 2c, was aboard at the time and was appointed as director of the organization. Within a short while approximately fifteen people joined the band and were given auditions. Their first appearance was at the officers party at the Tivoli Café on January 21. Five members of the band made up a unit for this affair.

The first public appearance occurred on 14 February when they played for the USO at Harrison and Fremont streets, San Francisco. The first F.P.O. dance in which the whole orchestra played was on 2 March at the Veterans' Auditorium. Thereafter, the reputation of the F.P.O. orchestra had grown constantly and they entertained at various USO's, at the Stage Door Canteen, and the Yosemite Naval Hospital at Yosemite National Park.

The next important engagement for the orchestra was June 8 when they made their first recording at the Office of War Information. These recordings were used for short wave broadcasting to all the Allied Nations and to our armed forces overseas.




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## THE NEWSPAPER:

In the following reprinted editorial, you will find the history of the F.P.O. Newspaper . . . . "Letter Pusher"

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### LETTER PUSHER

Published at the Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California, by the Welfare and Recreation Department, without cost to the United States Government, under BuPers Manual directive, arts, E7601 to E7604. The **Letter Pusher** receives Ship's Editorial Association Material.

OFFICER IN CHARGE

Commander W. J. Hegarty, USNR

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Lieutenant-Commander C. R. O'Hara, USN

WELFARE AND RECREATION OFFICER

Lieutenant Leon Szura, USNR

EDITOR

Martha Piper Thomas, Y3c

ARTIST

Dick DiMattos, S1c

### EDITORIAL

It has been said that the author who speaks about his own books is almost as bad as a mother who talks about her own children. But please, mates, may I speak a final word in this last edition of "Letter Pusher"?

You see, we've been publishing this sheet for one year now and the time is here (with this issue, in fact) when we put the typewriter in the desk, roll the copy into a file and shove off! As it happens, I've fed copy to the machine in front of me for 14 months now and it in turn, through a long process, somehow reached you. But with a farewell word there will be no copy reaching you again so stand by for a word of thanks from a grateful editor.

As a crew you have been the finest mates in the world! You read this junk every time we print and are kind enough to keep your opinions behind my back. We have pictured you to death - even shot at you with flash bulbs! We've dug your life histories from every spot of the United States. We manage to find the corniest jokes

ever told - and mostly retold - but bless you all, you've stood by and read such as it was because it was your paper.

Hints and help from left to right enabled me to shove this to you and where did they come from? Well, they popped in from the crew who were always willing to cooperate. My deepest appreciation and thanks to: first, the contributors to various editions; next, to those who backed the paper - its readers; and last, to the boys who begged for copies overseas.

Mates, this paper began behind a dinky typing desk in the Fleet Records Typing Section in February of 1945. The first news sheet was a typewritten, carboned copy sheet containing Fleet Records news. From that grew the idea of a newspaper for the entire Post Office, although it was not the first time an idea such as this had arisen. Plans, requests and a sample issue were submitted and in March the o.k. to print came from Washington. With limitations too numerous to name, the staff put out the first issue - a multilithed edition - bearing the name "Letter Pusher" after a group of judges chose the name in a contest for such.

The staff dwindled . . . and dwindled . . . and dwindled! Then there was one! Now I stop for a moment to join you in thanking the members of the early "slave day newspaper." For their help and loyalty to the paper, laurels to: James Bodey and Dick DeMattos, artists; Frank Drachman; business manager; Corporals Cal Watson and Emily Sewall from the Marines; Hazel Jordan for her contributions to each edition; Vic Ritchey for the first multilithed copies; and to civilian Jo Moulthrop, Fleet Records Typing head, for her encouragement and help in the early days. Appreciation also goes to the three advisory officers - Lieuts. E. A. Schmidt, Sidney Ritt and Leon Szura. My special thanks goes to Lieut.-Comdr. C. F. O'Hara.

"Here's to the press: the tongue of the country . . . may it never be cut . . . the newspaper: may it fight like an army in the defense of right . . . with strong columns and good leaders . . . the pen: may it ever be a sword to pierce wrong doings and falsehood to the heart . . . the press: where it is free, the people are free . . . where it is fettered, they are slaves."

All stations have newspapers but all editors do not have a crew such as ours to write for. The copy is choking in the machine and I doubt that a goodbye will print. Good luck to all of you wherever you go - MAKE NEWS - the "Letter Pusher" press has gone to bed!

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### **THROUGH THE PORT HOLE**

Here you have pictures of activities aboard the good ship. A page of remembrances!

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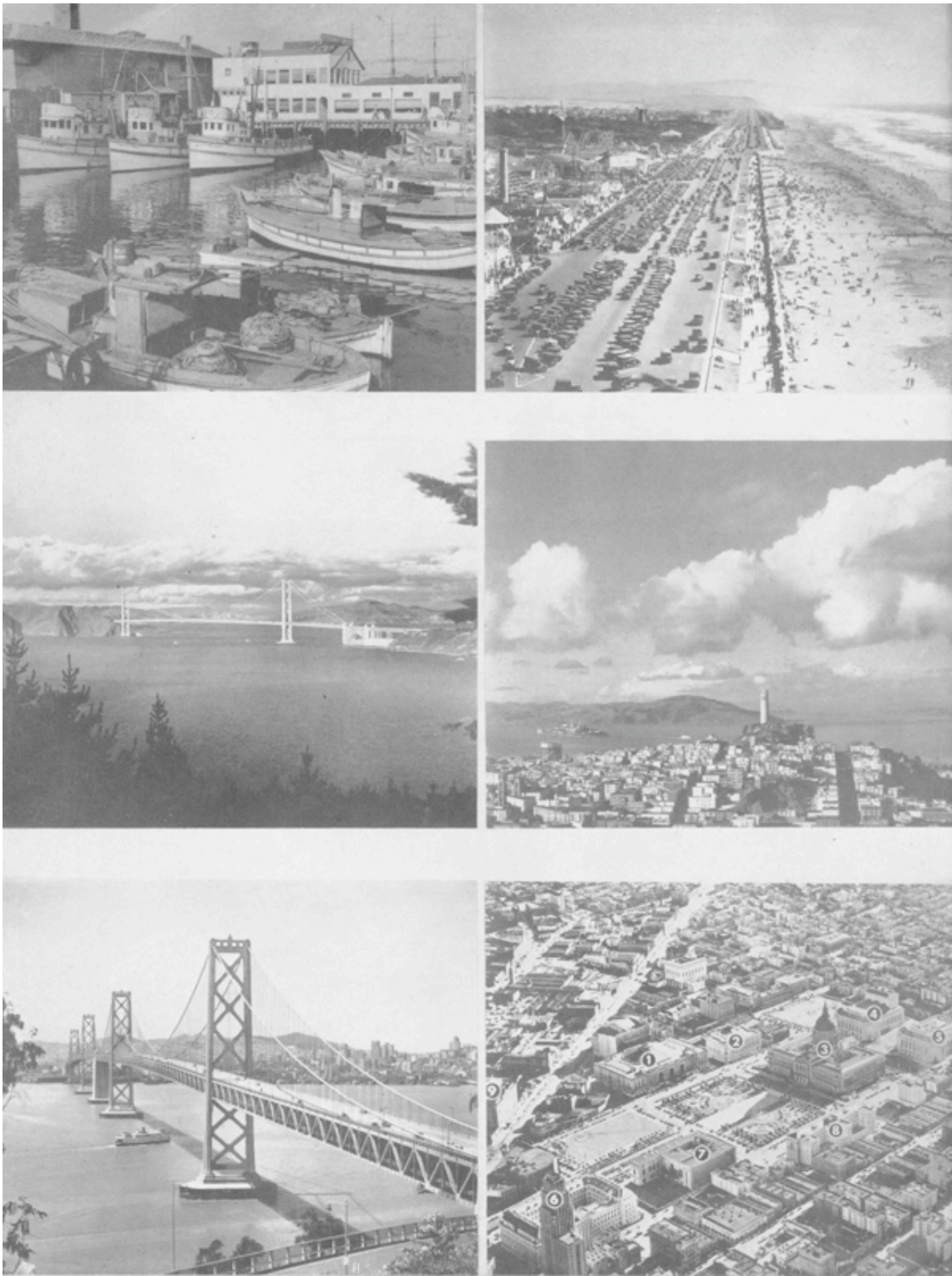




### LIBERTY CITY

This strange, beautiful city of the Golden West . . . this city known as San Francisco . . . sitting on hills that overlook a harbor . . . this city that belongs to the memory of every F.P.O. crew. Here is the remembered Powell Street cable cars, the Mission Dolores, Fisherman's wharf, the Golden Gate and the Oakland Bay Bridges, Coit Tower, the Beach, Chinatown and the Ferry Building!

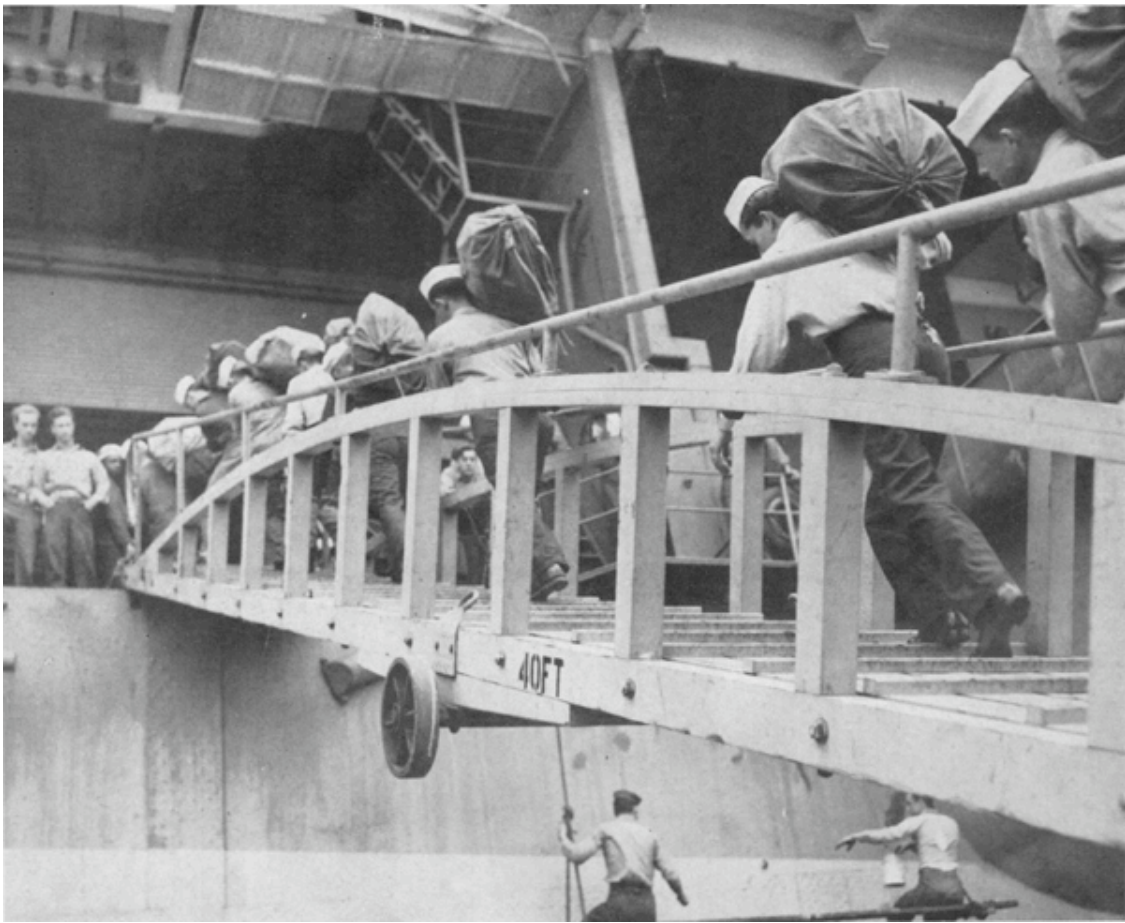
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THUS IT WAS ENDED!



With the sound of Taps, the F.P.O. San Francisco  
closes a chapter in the history of World War II.

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*18 September 2007*