

Leo. C. Maples
Dalton, Ga. 30721

Jan. 27, 2004

I went on board the USS SOUTH DAKOTA in Oct. of 1943. I was one of the replacements for the men who were killed in the 2nd Battle of the Salvo Islands and the Battle of Santa Cruz. The battle of the Salvo Islands; if I am remembering correctly, was where The USS SOUTH DAKOTA got the nickname " Battleship X " as the U.S. Navy wanted the Japanese to think that they had sunk the ship and the Japanese did think that they had sunk her. The first battle that I was in was the battle of the Gilbert Islands. This battle was immediately following the Battle of Santa Cruz.

I was in the 2nd division and assigned to #2 gun turret on the shell flats. A lot of good men were lost in air and navel battles. I lost some good friends when the #2 gun turret exploded. The ship won 32 battle stars. I am very proud of my service to my country. I was in 30 of those battles. I have lost a good deal of my hearing because of the noise and concussion of firing those guns, but it was a small price to pay for freedom!

I left the ship after the war was won in December of 1945. I was onboard ship for about 2 years and 2 months. I got off the ship in Calif.; as I could not wait to get home to Ga.