October 7, 1943
Long Island Sound

To the officers and men of the U.S.S. PICKING:

This week marks an all-important turn in your ship's history and in your life on board. Until now your function on the PICKING has been pretty much that of an observer. You've stood watches and handled lines and tended boilers, true, but essentially the ship has belonged to the yard workmen who have been getting it in shape materially. This week begins a period in which you're going to work getting the ship in shape as a fighting unit of the United States fleet. As it stands now, the PICKING is a fine example of destroyer construction. Materially it represents the best efforts of a great shipbuilding company and a huge navy yard. But this vessel isn't going to be worth a tin rowboat as a fighting machine unless its crew knows its various jobs, knows how to handle the material that has been provided. That is what the shakedown is for.

Much of the period is going to be spend at what, in peacetime, used to be a popular vacation resort. The shakedown, for you, though, is going to be the very opposite of a vacation. It's going to be a tough grind and there's no use concealing that. It's going to require concentration and effort and just plain sweat. But its going to be worth it, every minute of it. Its going to repay you in the satisfaction that comes from a successful encounter with the enemy. Its going to repay you in efficiency and security, in flags painted on the bridge, in an ultimate victorious homecoming.

The job begins Thursday when we go out for two days of machinery trials in Long Island Sound. Those of you who work in the engineering spaces will get your first close-up of the ship's power plant really doing its stuff; All of you will see how it maneuvers, how it handles, what speed its capable of.

Saturday marks the opening of the real test. We leave these parts for Bermuda, It will be no pleasure cruise. Every mile of the way down will be through enemy-threatened waters. You don't need to be reminded of the many ships that line the sea bottom close by America's shores - destroyers among them. Because this is our first cruise, because we are a new and untried unit, we must be doubly alert against the menace of Nazi submarines. So the two-day trip to Bermuda will be the PICKING's first experience in precaution against surprise attack.

On the trip also, the ship's guns will get their first workout. Saturday we will fire all our batteries and Sunday there will be shooting again. Officially this will be a test of the ship's structure. Unofficially the firing will introduce many of you to a modern destroyer battery in action. It will be the opening lesson for many of you in the handling of such a battery.

The month in Bermuda, where we will arrive Monday, will be essentially a continuation of such lessons. After an inspection of ship and personnel we will begin a series of thorough and strenuous practices. Daily we'll sail out from the islands to fire our guns or torpedoes or to hold general drills. There will be long and short range battle practices against towed targets to develop accuracy, precision and speed; anti-aircraft practices with plane-drawn sleeves simulating level bombers, dive bombers and torpedo planes; night battle practices to perfect star-shell technique. We'll rehearse surprise torpedo attacks on real targets. We'll learn anti-submarine warfare by tracking real subs.
In all of these drills your aim will be to gain familiarity with the ship and its weapons, to develop individual confidence and proficiency and group teamwork. It will be hard, often discouraging work. There will be some liberty to break it up, but not much. It mustn't be forgotten that the sole reason for making this trip is to train. When its over and we return to New York for a week's post-shakedown overhaul, let's hope that the training has made us a hardened, tough, efficient combat team. We must remember that the easy days are over. We're in the war now.

This memorandum is not to be discussed with anyone except members of the crew of this vessel.

R.L. LAMB, Commander, USN, Commanding.