

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Preston* (DD-379) in World War II:
Documents, Recollections and Photographs**

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USS Preston (DD-379) Crewmembers,

Here is the booklet I've completed on your ship. Don't try to remember who I am. I never served on the Preston, and in fact, was a Boy Scout during World War II. Today I'm an amateur naval historian, still "supporting our boys in uniform" - specifically, survivors of U.S. destroyers sunk during the war. The letter from the Warships and Marine Corps Museum in Sydney, Australia, (at the back of my booklet) explains very well what I do.

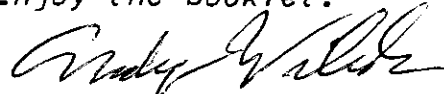
Most of you receiving this letter were located by your shipmate, G. Robert Nealis, a Radioman in 1942. He, in turn was one of the eight survivors I located (so far) by having the VA/St. Louis research 119 survivor's names and then forward a letter from me to the 45 men they had addresses for. Through networking (mostly by Bob) we've located about ten more - and Bob is still going strong!

I hope you and your family enjoy this booklet. I am already working on booklets for a half a dozen other destroyers, so unfortunately, I can not supply you with additional copies. However, others report that copying stores, such as Kinko's, do an excellent job.

I never charge for my booklets, but contributions are appreciated to help cover my costs.

Finally, I'm happy to report that I located Max Stormes' three sons and sent them all copies of my booklet on their father's ship. They were most appreciative.

Enjoy the booklet!



E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
Commander, USNR (Ret.)
(617) 449-0392

cc: G. Robert Nealis

U.S.S. PRESTON

DESTROYER

NAMED FOR

LIEUTENANT SAMUEL W. PRESTON, U.S.N.

BUILT AT NAVY YARD MARE ISLAND CAL.

AUTHORIZED NOVEMBER 1 - 1933

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The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) in World War II

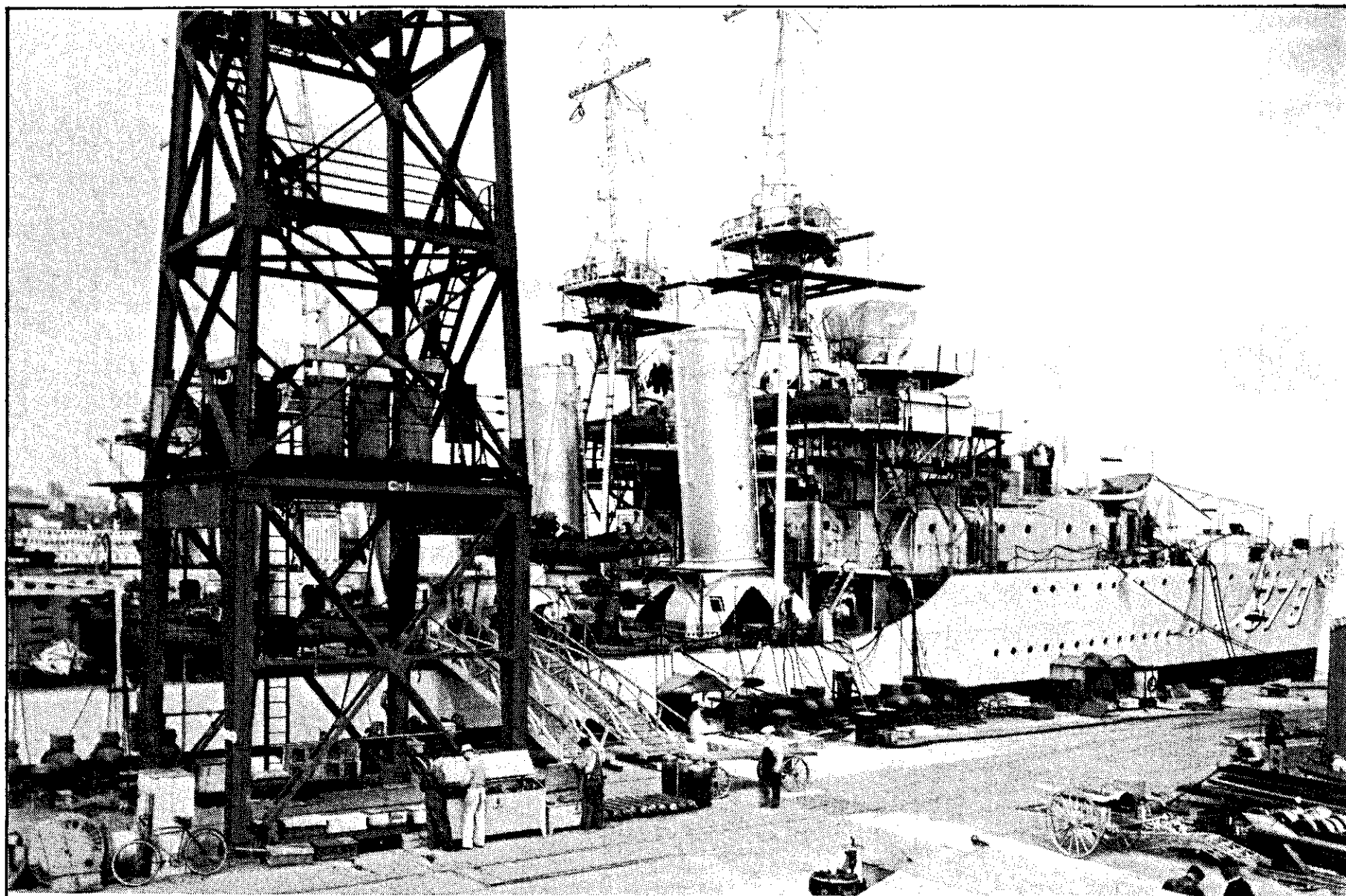
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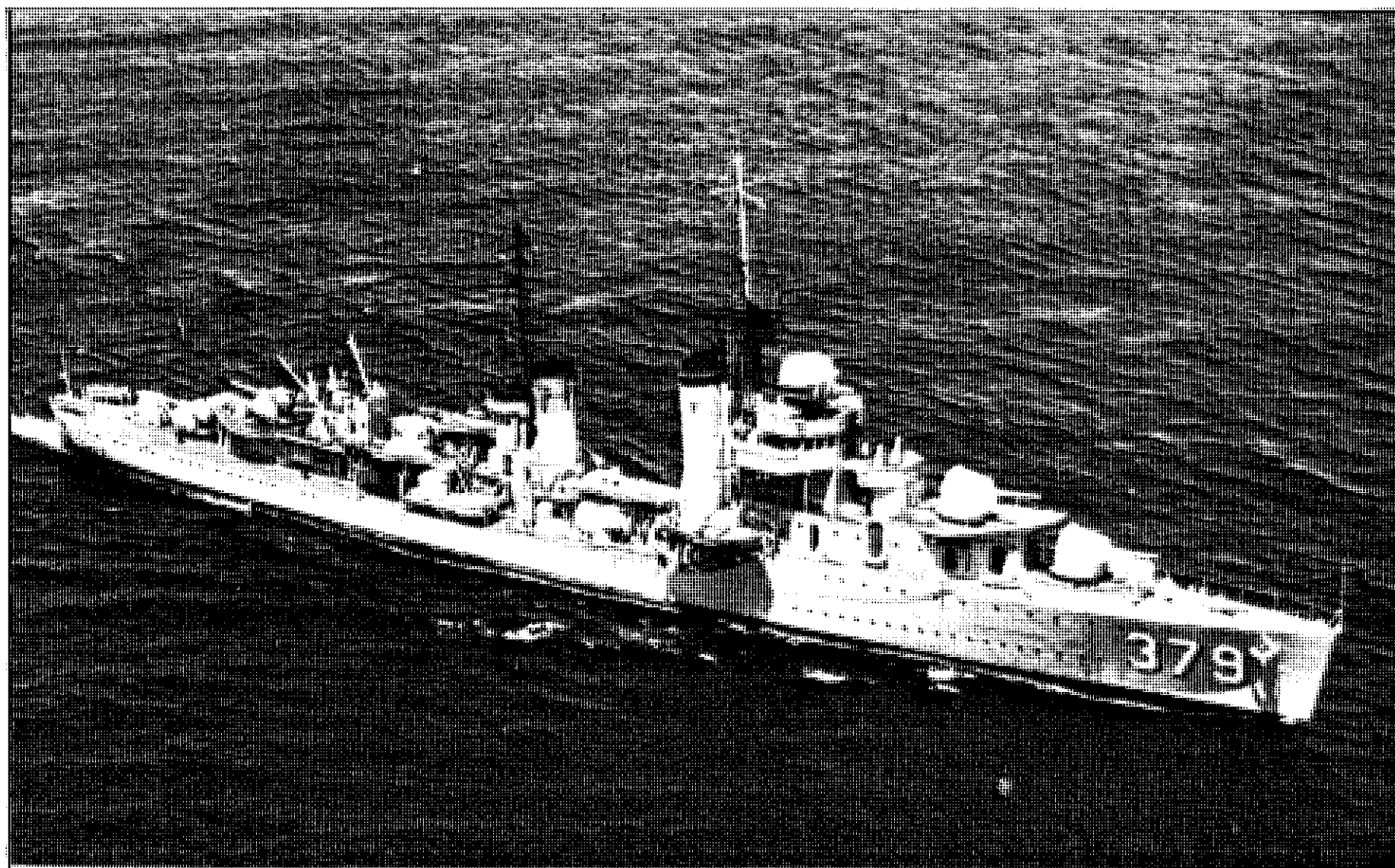
E. A. Wilde, Jr.
July, 2000

Any man who may be asked what he did to make his life worthwhile can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction, "I served in the United States Navy."

- President John F. Kennedy, addressing the new class of midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy on August 1, 1963.*



The Mahan-class destroyer U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) being fitted out at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, on July 5, 1936. She had been christened there on April 22nd by Mrs. Edward H. Campbell, the wife of Admiral Campbell, District Commandant. After being commissioned on October 27, 1936, Cdr. C. D. Swain in command, the Preston conducted peacetime training exercises in the Pacific until the attack on Pearl Harbor marked the United States' entry into the war on December 7, 1941. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)



The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) returning from fleet maneuvers on 28 April 1938. Note the light anti-aircraft armament of just four .50-caliber water-cooled machine guns; two forward of the bridge and two on a platform above the after deckhouse. The pillbox-shaped structure atop the torpedo tubes on the main deck aft of the No. 2 stack served to protect the three-man mount crew from the blast of the forward-facing 5-inch gun mounted just above them. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

HISTORY OF USS PRESTON (DD 379)

Destined to play an heroic role in World War II, USS PRESTON (DD 379) was the third United States ship to be named in honor of Lieutenant Samuel W. Preston, USN, one of the naval heroes of the Civil War. Lieutenant Preston was born in Canada and appointed midshipman from the state of Illinois in 1858. He graduated first in his class at the Naval Academy in 1861 and served in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron until 1865. He was killed while leading his men in attacks on Fort Fisher in January 1865.

The first ship named PRESTON was a coal burning destroyer of 700 tons displacement and 289 feet in length. She was launched on 14 July 1909 and stricken from the Navy list on 15 September 1919, after seeing heavy duty in World War I. The second PRESTON was an oil burning destroyer of 1215 tons displacement and 310 feet in length. She was launched on 7 August 1920 and stricken from the Navy list on 6 November 1941.

The third PRESTON (DD 379), however, became the outstanding ship to bear the name. Built at the Puget Sound Navy Yard during the piping years of peace, the "379" was launched on 22 April 1936, with Mrs. E. H. Campbell, wife of Rear Admiral Campbell, Commandant of the 12th Naval District, acting as sponsor. Seven months later the new destroyer was put into full commission and became an official unit of the U.S. Navy.

After her shakedown cruise and post shakedown overhaul, PRESTON for a few months operated under the Chief of Naval Operations before being assigned to regular operational duty with Destroyer Squadron 2, Battle Force, U.S. Fleet in the Pacific. In June 1940 she was shifted to Destroyer Squadron 5, Battle Force, U.S. Fleet. PRESTON never got a look at the Atlantic but remained in the Pacific throughout the years preceeding the out break of hostilities with Japan. 7 December 1941 found her tied up at Mare Island, California.

PRESTON did not immediately get into the fighting war but engaged instead in patrol and escort operations off the West Coast. Early spring of 1942 found her patrolling and escorting off Main Ship Channel, San Francisco in company with other destroyers. During the latter part of May, while moored at San Pedro, California she received orders from Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet to get underway for Pearl Harbor at the earliest practicable time, and on the 30th she cast off all lines, secured ship for sea, headed westward across the Pacific, destined never to return to the United States again.

By the evening of 1 June PRESTON was far at sea in company with USS MAHAN, USS SMITH and USS LAFLEY. On the 3rd she received a message that Dutch Harbor, Aleutian Islands was being bombed by Japanese carrier-based aircraft. All ships were on the alert at all times during these uncertain early days of the war, for it was not known where the wily Jap would strike next. A foreign fighting top could suddenly loom on the horizon at almost anytime and anywhere. Pearl Harbor was reached on the 6th, however, without incident, where PRESTON fueled, loaded provisions and got underway the following day for a pre-arranged rendezvous with a carrier force.

Enroute to rendezvous PRESTON was part of a screen for USS SARATOGA, USS SAN DIEGO and USS KASKASKIA. Rendezvous was effected on the 10th-- Latitude 33-51 N, Longitude 167-44 7--where USS SARATOGA transferred planes to USS ENTERPRISE. While PRESTON was returning to Pearl Harbor on the 12th she received a message that the Japs were occupying Attu and Kiska islands in the Aleutians. The Japs were making a real attempt to hem the American Navy in from the north, south and west but PRESTON meant to have a hand in destroying some of the threads.

PRESTON remained in the Pearl Harbor area during July, August and September, engaging in firing practices, torpedo practices and anti-submarine warfare training. By the end of September nine months of the war had passed and PRESTON had not encountered the enemy. From 7 August on, when the marines established footholds on Guadalcanal and Tulagi, U. S. forces were no longer entirely on the defensive. The war in the Pacific had entered the offensive-defensive phase and destroyer PRESTON was ready to meet the enemy.

That meeting was not long in coming. On 16 October PRESTON got underway from Pearl Harbor enroute Solomon Islands as part of a destroyer screen for USS SOUTH DAKOTA, HORNET and ENTERPRISE. Early in the morning of the 26th information was received of a Japanese force east of Malaita in the Solomons. All ships immediately went to General Quarters and three minutes later PRESTON received a signal from the Officer in Tactical Command that ENTERPRISE was launching two attack waves. Thirty minutes later, the Japs finally woke up, sighted the American force and immediately launched dive bombers to attack HORNET. As the enemy planes came in over the force, one of them peeled off and made a run on PRESTON, dropping a bomb close off her starboard quarter, shaking her up severely.

At this point action was broken off temporarily because of a brief rain squall. Then at 1042, hardly before the weather had cleared, seventeen enemy dive bombers streaked down out of a low rain cloud and headed for the ENTERPRISE. PRESTON immediately began to lay a barrage of 5-inch bursts above the carrier as the bombers sent bomb after bomb hurtling toward her broad flight deck. The "Big E" escaped without a scratch during this attack but destroyer PORTER took a torpedo hit on her port beam while stopping to pick up a downed American pilot.

Twenty-five minutes after the first attack in which the PORTER was hit, the Japs smashed back at the force again, this time concentrating on the ENTERPRISE. Bombs began falling uncomfortably close to the big carrier until finally at 1107 she took a devastating hit amidships, followed a few minutes later by a bomb hit on her bow. The PORTER, in the meantime, was fighting fires and reported that both firerooms were flooded.

At 1115 the sky above the force was again filled with enemy planes and AA bursts as Jap dive bombers launched a third attack, during which attack a burning Jap plane crashed on the fore's'le of USS SMITH. Eight of the attackers were shot down and three American pilots were rescued from the water, PRESTON rescuing one of them during the height of the attack. A few minutes later the enemy came back with torpedo planes and continued with sporadic attacks until shortly after noon.

PRESTON in this her first action had been a part of one of the "fiercest battles in naval history." The Japs had hit the American force hard but suffered defeat in the end. The Battle of Santa Cruz Islands was the second major Japanese effort to recapture Guadalcanal. Early in the day the HORNET was disabled, and the Japs turned an estimated 84 planes on ENTERPRISE to deliver what was termed at that time the second greatest sustained air attack in history--second only to the attack launched by German aircraft against HMS ILLUSTRIOUS in the Mediterranean Sea. During this engagement PRESTON with sister destroyers turned in a "Hell Done" performance in protecting as much as possible the big ships from enemy aircraft. Fortunately, the newly battle-initiated destroyer came through the ordeal without a scratch.

Enemy planes estimated to have taken part in the attacks on HORNET and ENTERPRISE numbered between 170 and 180. Of that number 56 were shot down by anti-aircraft fire from our own ships and about the same number by our own planes. Our own losses were the HORNET, the destroyer PORTER, which was torpedoed while rescuing personnel of one of our own planes, and 74 aircraft. Enemy losses: two carriers put out of action and four air groups decimated.

PRESTON's next battle, the Battle of Guadalcanal, was to be her last one, for it was during this historic engagement, while attached to Task Force 64, that she slugged it out with enemy cruisers until her decks were a mass of blazing, red hot wreckage, until her guns were knocked out one by one by the heavier shells of enemy cruisers, until, stern first, she sank in the channel between Savo Island and Cape Esperance.

The dramatic story of her last fight begins shortly after midnight on 15 November 1942.... Task Force 64 is formed up in battle disposition in column in the following order: destroyers WATKES, DENHAM, PRESTON and GWIN; battleships SOUTH DAKOTA and WASHINGTON. Visibility is unlimited, sky partly covered with clouds; there is a half moon and no wind. The sea is a flat calm.

At 0020 as the force is making the passage between Savo Island and Cape Esperance the two battleships suddenly open fire on the starboard beam. On board PRESTON lookouts are unable to distinguish the targets. Five minutes later, destroyer WATKES, lead ship in the column, blasts out to starboard with her main battery. Out there somewhere to starboard are the Japs, somewhere off the southern tip of Savo Island. PRESTON is impatient for a target; her guns are trained out; she is ready. Then, at 0030, PRESTON lookouts sight a ship just off the southern tip of Savo Island, broad on the starboard bow, faintly illumined by the half moon. The range is 9000 yards and the skipper gives the order to commence firing.

At this point all ships in the column are firing and PRESTON is hitting dead on her target after two or three salvos. The enemy ship, which appears to be a heavy destroyer or light cruiser, begins to move in to the shadows of Savo Island, but it is too late. PRESTON is hitting and hitting hard. The enemy returns a few salvos which fall short, bursts into flames and begins to burn fiercely. One of the battleship's targets catches fire at the same time so that the whole area is lit up like a 4th of July celebration.

PRESTON shifts fire to another ship in the shadow of Savo Island, range 8000 yards. Within thirty seconds after opening fire on her second target, she is rocked from stem to stern by a pair of six-inch shells from an enemy

cruiser which crash into her starboard side, one hitting between the two fire-rooms, killing all men in them and covering the amidships area with firebrick and debris; the other hitting unexploded in the gun shelter aft of number 2 gun. Several fires break out including one in the TNT of the torpedo war heads which are burst open by the force of the explosion. Number 2 gun jams in train, becomes inoperative; number 2 stack crashes over onto the searchlight knocking it across the starboard torpedo tube.

While damage control parties fight fires and pharmacists rescue wounded, a Jap heavy cruiser is moving in on PRESTON's port side virtually undetected. At almost point blank range the Jap opens fire and part of a salvo of 8-inch shells blasts the crippled destroyer's port side. Instantly the whole after part of the ship from the stack aft is a mass of blazing, red hot wreckage, one projectile exploding in the engine room after it hits the generators; a second between the secondary control station and number 3 gun; a third wrecking number 4 gun. All guns are out of action and all men aft of the after machine gun nest are dead at their stations including the executive officer.

PRESTON is going down. She lists sharply, rapidly to starboard and settles by the stern. At 0036 Captain M. C. Stormes passes the inevitable if tragic word: "All hands abandon ship..." Thirty seconds later the stricken destroyer rolls over on her side, stern going under, bow swinging upward to a vertical position. For two minutes her bow points straight up--and then, hissing waters surging across hot decks, she plunges from the sight of survivors in the water around her. For PRESTON and many of her gallant men the war is over....

STATISTICS

STANDARD DISPLACEMENT	1500 tons	ARMAMENT:	Four 5-inch 38 caliber guns, twelve 21-inch torpedo tubes, and AA guns.
LENGTH OVERALL	341 feet 8 inches		
BEAM	34 feet 10 inches		
SPEED	36.5 knots		
COMPLEMENT	172 plus		

Note: To perpetuate the name of this great and gallant ship in the U.S. Navy, in 1944, commissioned a new destroyer and named it---USS PRESTON (DD 795).

Stencilled 9/24/47

Wartime Deployment of the USS Preston (DD-379)

(Sources: Deck Log and War Diary entries.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Departed</u>	<u>Arrived</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
<u>1941:</u>				
10/04	San Diego	S. Francisco	10/04	To Mare Island Navy Yard for repairs. In dry dock 11/5-15. U/way for post repair trials 12/10. Moored/anchored until 12/16.
12/16	S. Francisco	Pearl Harbor	12/22	Convoy escort with TG 15.6.
12/26	Pearl Harbor	S. Francisco	12/31	Convoy escort with TG 15.6.
<u>1942:</u>				
01/02	S. Francisco	San Diego	01/03	Anchored, San Pedro Harbor.
01/04	San Diego	S. Francisco	01/06	Convoy escort duty.
01/10	S. Francisco	Pearl Harbor	01/17	Convoy escort, TG E-1.
01/17	Pearl Harbor	Christmas Is.	01/25	Escorted 2 cargo ships to Christmas and Palmyra Islands, about 1,000 miles south of Hawaii. Recreation Party went ashore at Christmas Island on 1/25.
01/29	Palmyra Is.	Pearl Harbor	02/02	Escorted cargo ships back.
02/07	Pearl Harbor	S. Francisco	02/19	Convoy escort duty.
02/20	S. Francisco	Bremerton	02/24	Escorted battleships <u>Pennsylvania</u> (BB-38) and <u>New Mexico</u> (BB-40) during gunnery exercises off Cal. before heading for the Puget Sound Navy Yard at Bremerton, Washington.
02/26	Bremerton	S. Francisco	03/03	Joined Task Force 1. Escorted <u>Maryland</u> (BB-46) to San Francisco. Stayed there until 4/15, getting u/way 5 times to screen battleships during exercises.
04/15	S. Francisco	San Diego	05/10	U/way for the S.W. Pacific in TF 1 with <u>Pennsylvania</u> . Reversed course on 4/28. Moored at San Pedro 5/10.
05/13	San Diego	S. Francisco	05/15	Convoy escort.
05/17	S. Francisco	Puget Sound	05/19	Refueled at Seattle on 5/21. Escorted aircraft carrier <u>Saratoga</u> (CV-3) during operations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca on 5/22.
05/22	Puget Sound	San Diego	05/25	Escorted <u>Saratoga</u> to San Diego. Operated with TG 1.5 off San Clemente.
06/01	San Diego	Pearl Harbor	06/06	Escorted <u>Saratoga</u> to Hawaii.
06/07	Pearl Harbor	Pearl Harbor	06/13	Rendezvoused with TF 16 on 6/10. <u>Saratoga</u> transferred planes/bombs to <u>Enterprise</u> and <u>Hornet</u> (CV-8) after the Battle of Midway. Returned to Pearl Harbor to conduct exercises.

1942: (continued)

07/30 Pearl Harbor S. Francisco 08/09 Escorted convoy to S. Francisco. Availability at Navy Yard Mare Is. to 8/15.

08/18 S. Francisco San Diego 08/19 At Destroyer Base, San Diego 8/20-21.

08/22 San Diego Seattle 08/26 U/way to meet eastbound convoy. Escorted it to Puget Sound.

08/27 Seattle Pearl Harbor 09/03 Conducted battle exercises in Hawaiian waters until 10/16.

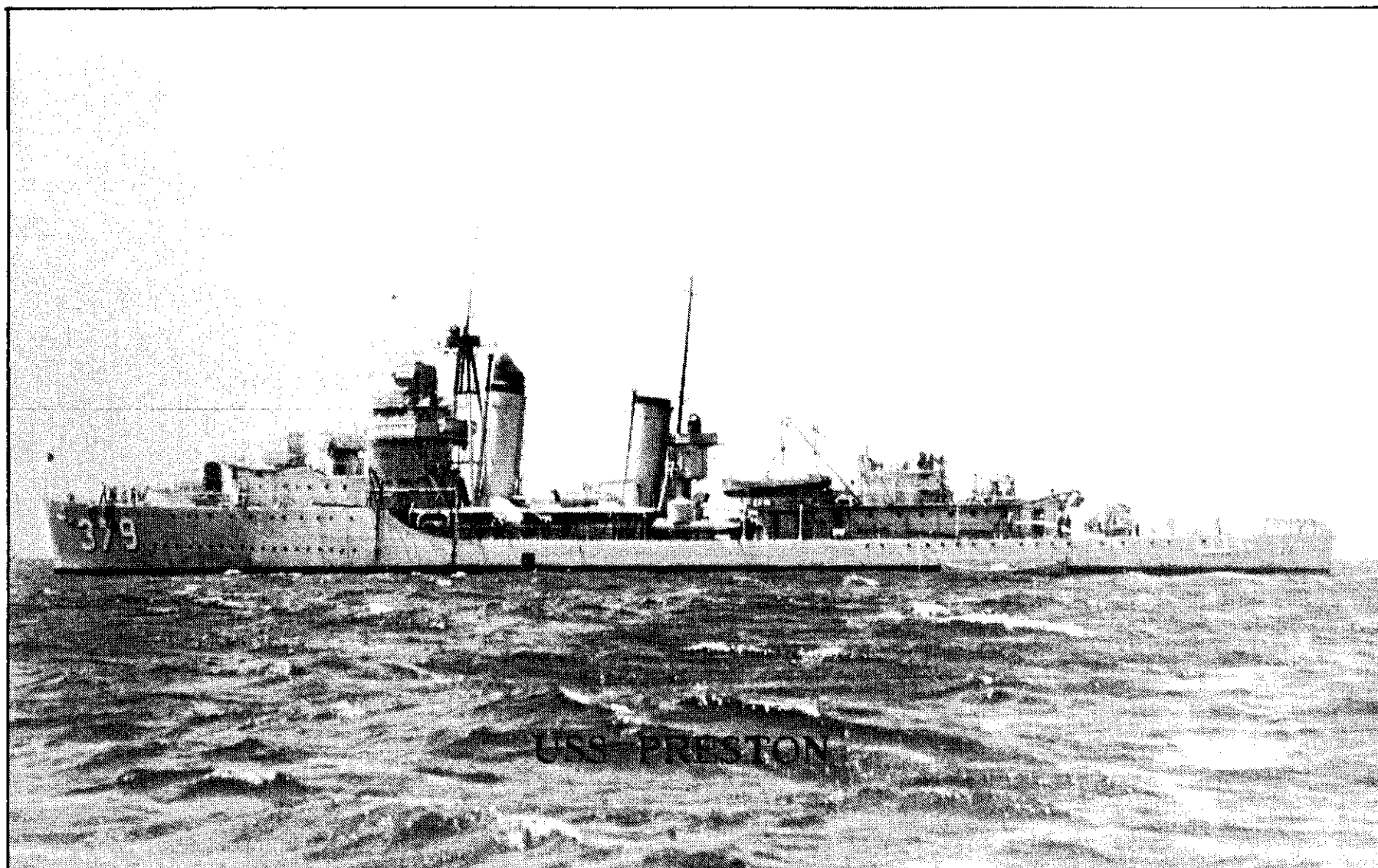
10/16 Pearl Harbor Noumea 10/30 Sailed for the Solomons in the S.W. Pacific with TF 16. Rendezvoused with TF 17 on 10/24 to form TF 61. On 10/26 screened the carriers Enterprise and Hornet during The Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands (200 miles east of the Solomon Islands). Continued on to the advance base at Noumea, New Caledonia, to rearm.

10/31 Noumea (Deck Log and War Diary entries end.) Initially assigned to Adm. Callaghan's Support Group in Task Force 67, but detached prior to the night surface action on 11/13 to join Adm. Lee's TF 64 with the fast battleships Washington (BB-56) and South Dakota (BB-57).

The Preston was sunk by enemy gunfire between Savo Island and Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal, during the surface action on the night of 11/14-15.

* * * * *

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 1999



USS PRESTON

Sixteen of these 1,500-ton Mahan-class destroyers were commissioned in 1936 and 1937. They were refitted in 1941 prior to the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, but they retained their twelve 21-in. torpedo tubes in three quadruple mounts; a centerline mount between the stacks on the forward deckhouse, and two waist mounts on the main deck. These vessels were armed with five 5-in./38 guns, but only Nos. 1 and 2 were fitted with a protective shield for the guncrew. The Preston was the third of the six Mahan-class destroyers sunk in World War II.

(U.S. Naval Institute Collection)

"A Lovely Ship"

Destroyers! Mention the word and the layman's mind will conjure up a picture of a little ship steaming death-defying, head-on into the fire from an enemy battlewagon's heavy guns. In the heavy seaway the little ship is tossing like a cork, with the white water breaking high over her bows. Then suddenly she swerves hard to starboard. There are a couple of splashes on her portside and a moment later appear the bubbling wakes of the tin fish she has sent on their voyage of destruction. And a short while later there is a terrific crash. The enemy's sides and decks are clothed in sheets of smoke and flame from the explosions that tear her inwards apart. And another naval battle is won.

It is an inspiring picture that has adorned many a calendar sent by solicitous ship's chandlers and seed stores to their customers, to be remembered by for the rest of the year. The practice looks different. Whether it's even more romantic than the calendar artist envisioned, or just a drab, humdrum existence, depends very largely on the point of view of the individual man who crews a "tin can." One thing, however, can be said for it: it's most versatile. If Kipling's crack about the liner has of late found an officially sanctioned variation to describe the glamour girl of the Navy, "The Carrier, she's a Lady," then it can safely be varied once again: "The destroyer, she's a workhorse."

Pulling binder, hay rig, threshing machine or the "democrat" for the family on its way to church, it's all one to a farmer's workhorse. A Navy workhorse may be on antisubmarine patrol today: dropping depth charges in their prescribed pattern all over the spot where the cooperating Navy flier believes he has seen the underwater raider; tomorrow, she may be riding herd on a convoy of merchantmen: running breathlessly and tongue-lolling around her flock, shoosing stragglers into line, and then tackling, in the manner of good and faithful sheepdogs anywhere, all enemies regardless of size and number, whether aircraft, surface squadron, or wolf pack. Or they might install a pair of steel ovaries on her decks and give her a load of ugly horned eggs to drop in waters the enemy's fleet is certain to traverse. Then again, they might give her a

pair of paravanes to tow and send her out to sweep the channels leading to a new invasion beach clear of the mines which the enemy himself has sown there, and then the next day convert her into a fast transport and send her in with a deckload of Marine Raiders who are to establish the first beachhead foothold. And while weird landing craft are yet on their way with reinforcements, supplies, tanks and artillery, the destroyer that has landed them will stand by to give the Leathernecks who are digging themselves in on the narrow coral strip whatever fire support her 4- or 5-inch guns are capable of.

Then again, on duty with a task force, the destroyer is in the van and on the flanks of the capital ships, scouting, protecting, running interference and when the actual engagement begins, throwing a smoke screen around the carrier or battlewagon to spoil the enemy's gunnery. When disaster comes, when carrier, battleship or cruiser has received the deadly wound that causes the decks to buckle and burst with the explosion of magazines and fuel tanks, it's the destroyer that rushes in close, though the heat may blister what patches of paint are still left on her sea-bitten plates, and takes off the men still left alive after the unsuccessful battle to save their doomed ship. As the hull of the big capital ship slowly drifts down with the tide, a roaring inferno, yet still floating, it is the destroyer's job to come in and send the once proud craft to the bottom with a torpedo, to save her from the last ignominy of having her dead body defiled by the enemy's hands.

Rescue missions generally are hardly more than mere routine assignments among the manifold jobs that are a destroyer's lot. Many a flier, shot down by ack-ack, or forced down in a gale, later got back in the fight simply because some indefatigable DD would not give up the search. A quart of whiskey for her skipper and ten gallons of ice cream for her wardroom became the traditional price that any carrier gladly paid to a DD for each of its fliers delivered back aboard or safely landed in port.

"Let the DD's do it!" has almost become axiomatic with the Navy whenever there is a particularly unpleasant or difficult job under discussion. Their speed, their maneuverability, their relatively high firepower

for their size, and their comparatively low building price, have made destroyers not merely the most versatile, but ton for ton the most efficient, naval craft ever devised. They are the Navy's true "expendables."

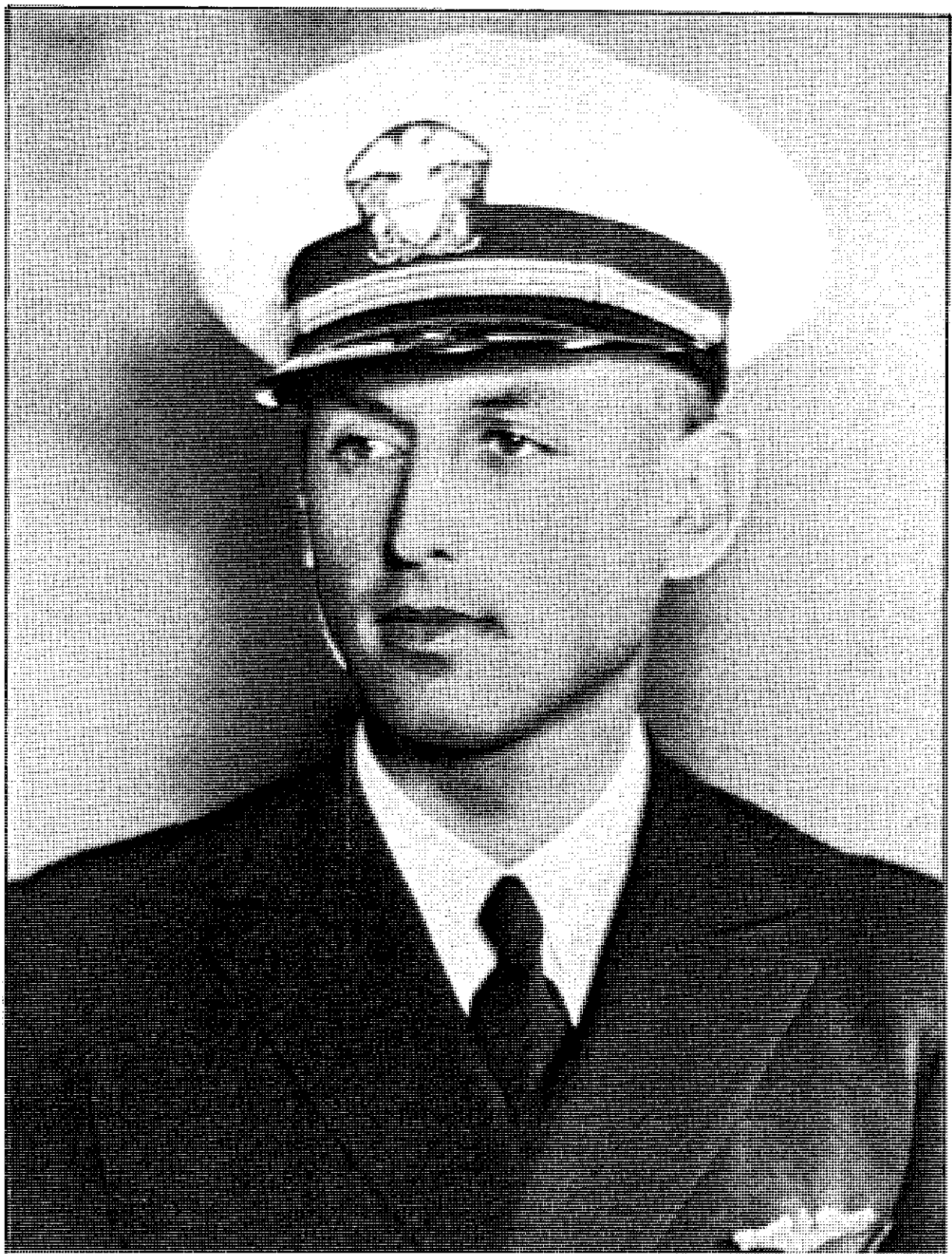
The spirit of the little ships reflects itself in that of their crews. Destroyermen are a bit apart from the rest of our man-of-war men. On their small ships they have to do without many of the comforts the crews of carriers, battleships or even cruisers enjoy. They live in cramped quarters. There is no canteen or ship's service booth where a man might get a coke, an ice cream or western story pulp magazine. Yet the destroyer man, though he beefs about it all and swears it's a dog's life, in his innermost heart glories in the hardships his particular trade imposes upon him. He's inclined to look down on the men from the big ships as "softies." His walk is a "destroyer roll." His hat sits precariously on one eyebrow. He is the bane of the Shore Patrol.

He'll abuse his ship roundly as the most uncomfortable, leakingest, buckingest crate that ever went to sea. But let somebody else pass unfavorable comment on her and he's up in arms. Asked why he wasn't applying for a transfer after he had given a lengthy and extremely critical recital of his ship's famed action, a survivor of the *Borie* put it all in a nutshell. "Me? No, thanks! There's too much red tape on a big ship for me. On a destroyer you know everybody with their good sides and their faults. And everybody knows you. You can't sham on a DD. You gotta be a sailor, mister."

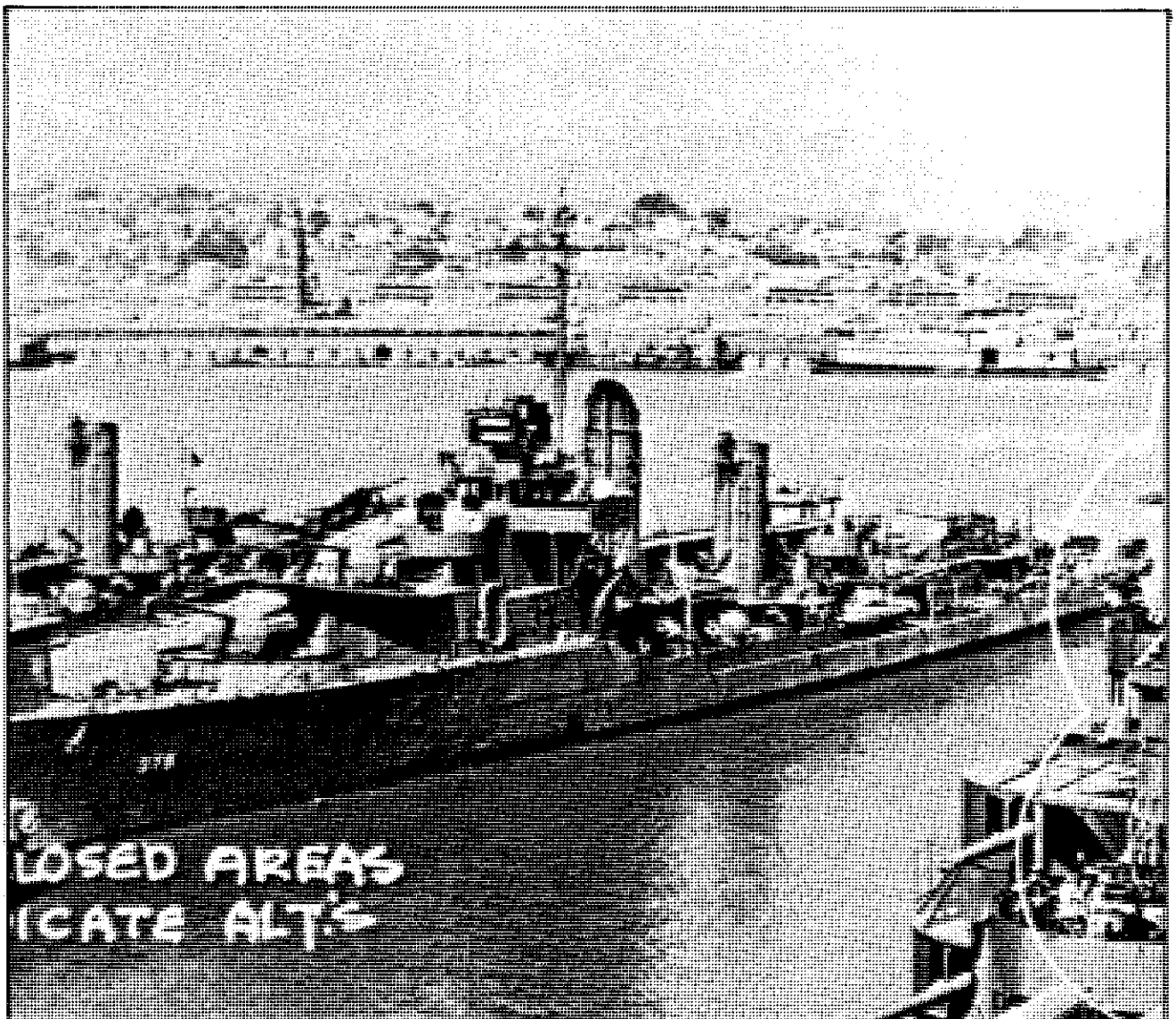
Destroyers get into the blood not merely of the men that serve in them, but of anybody who has been given a chance to get acquainted with them. Even a master of the hard-boiled school of writing like John Steinbeck can wax dithyrambic over a little ship. After spending part of his correspondent's tour of duty aboard a DD he wrote:

"A destroyer is a lovely ship, probably the nicest fighting ship of all. Battleships are a little like steel cities or great factories of destruction. Aircraft carriers are floating flying fields.

"Even cruisers are big pieces of machinery, but a destroyer is all boat. In the beautiful clean lines of her, in her speed and roughness, in her curious gallantry."

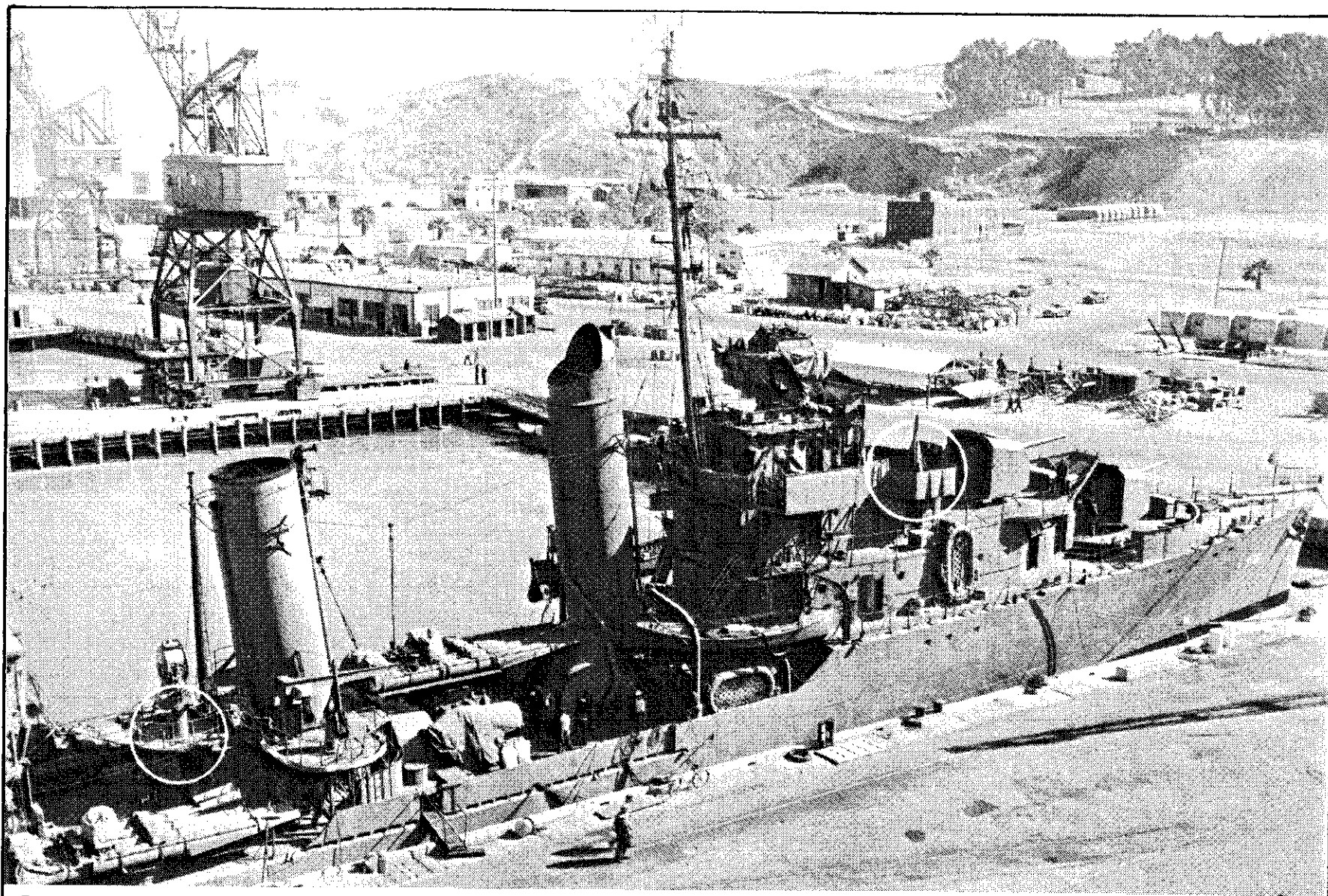


Lieutenant Max G. Stormes, USN (U.S. Naval Academy class of 1924), before he made Lieut. Commander in 1939 and took command of the destroyer U.S.S. Wagston (DD-379) on 31 October 1941. Earlier in his career he had qualified for command of submarines (note his submariner insignia) and commanded a "flush-decker" destroyer, the U.S.S. Tarbot (DD-114).
(Photograph courtesy of his son, John Max Stormes.)



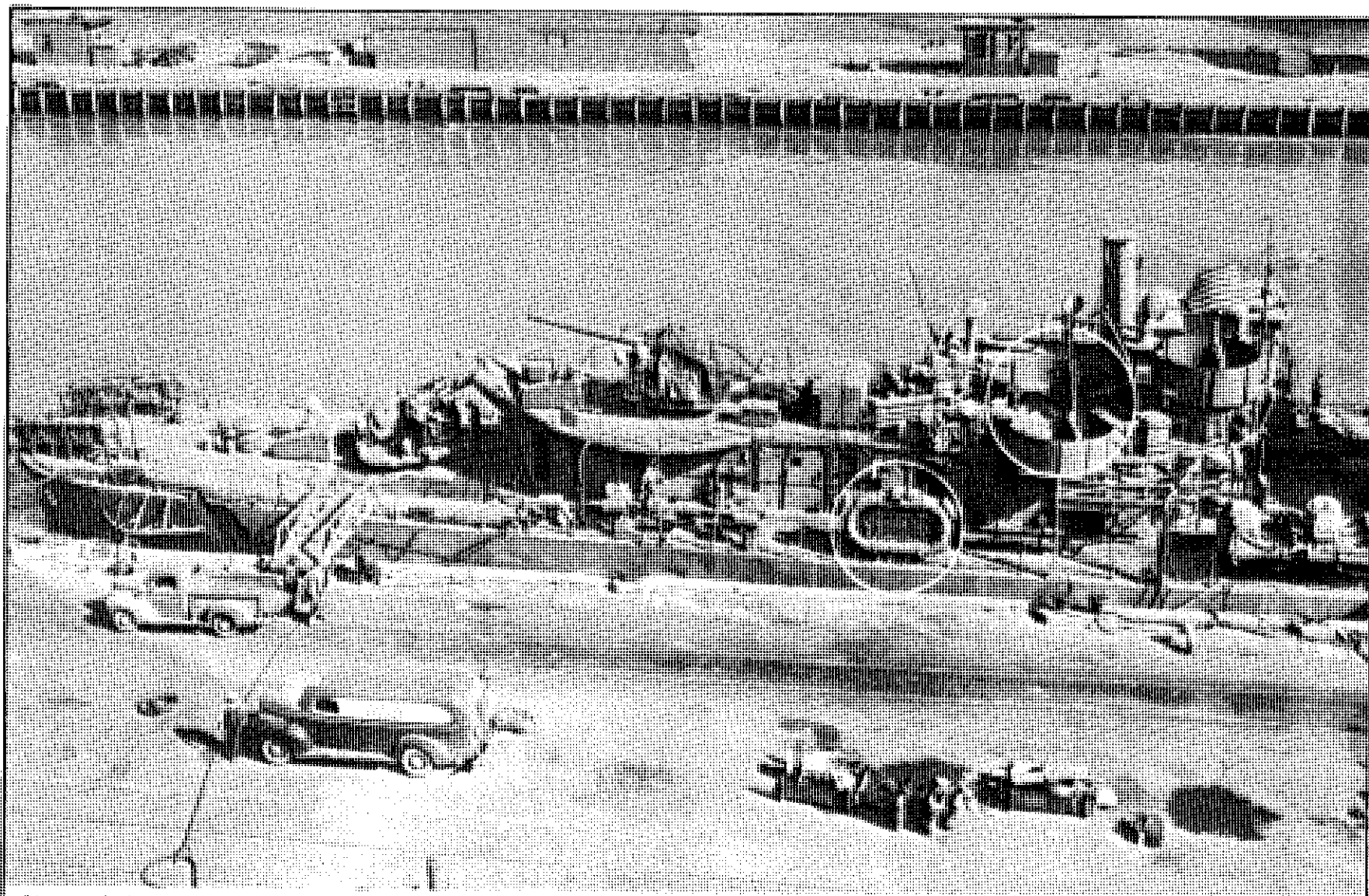
LOSED AREAS ICATE ALT'S

The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) (LCdr. H. C. Stormes) at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, on 15 August 1942. A month earlier another Mahan-class destroyer, the U.S.S. Cushing (DD-376), was also there for a refit. The following two photographs of the Cushing show in greater detail how these sister ships were configured just a few months before they were both lost in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

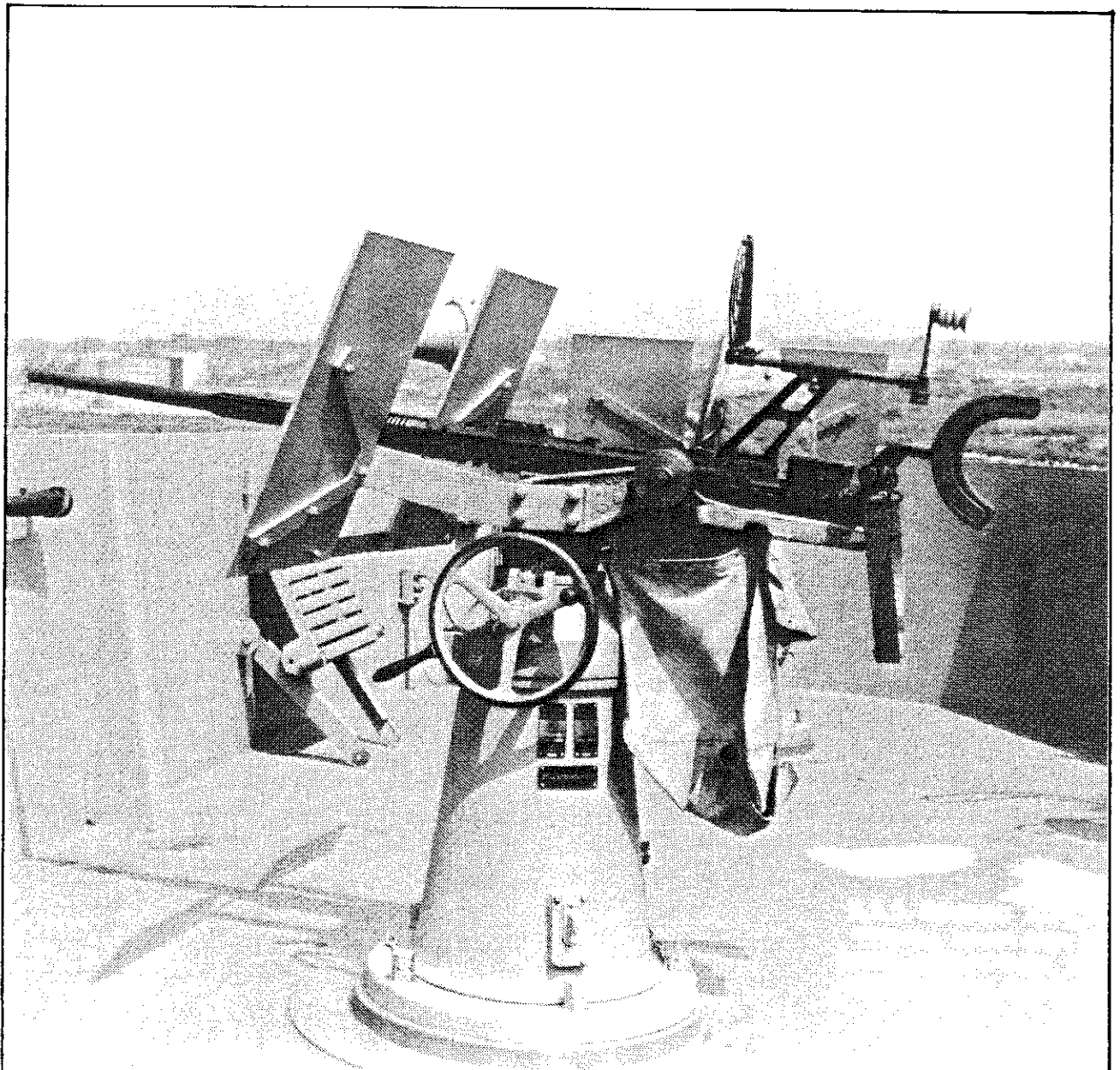


The U.S.S. Cushing (DD-376) undergoing a refit (alterations circled) at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, in July, 1942. Note the changes from her prewar configuration. A pole foremast has replaced the tripod mast, and an SC air-search radar antenna has been fitted at the top. Two 20-mm Oerlikon machine cannons have been mounted forward of the bridge, replacing the two .50-caliber machine guns. Two additional 20-mm's have been added by the after stack, and the searchlight there has been lowered. The tall mainmast formerly aft of this stack has been landed. (The mast shown there in this photograph belongs to a small yard craft alongside to port.)

(Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

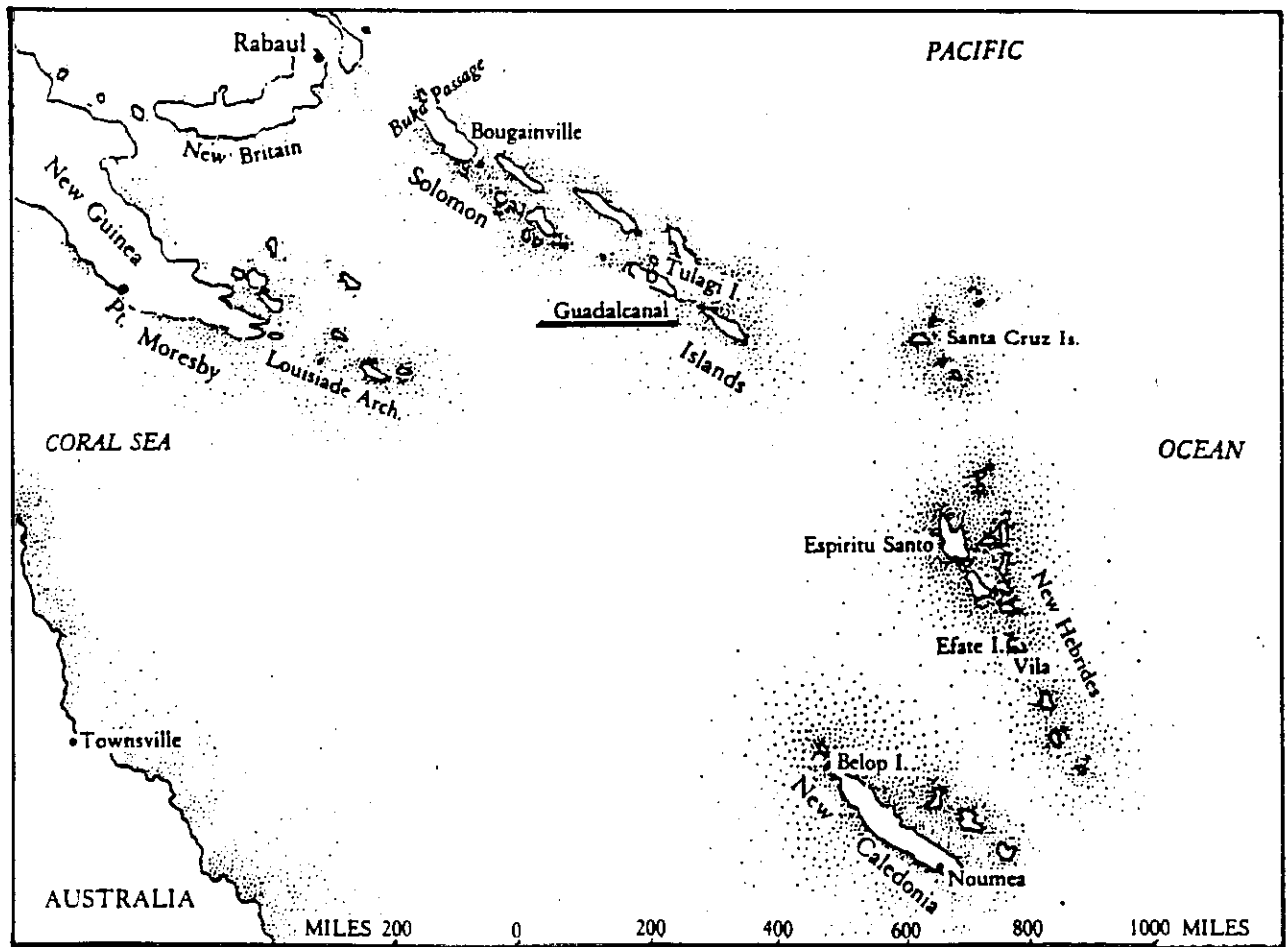


(Mare Island, July 1942) This view shows additional configuration changes. The No. 3 (forward-facing) 5-in. gun has been landed along with the two boats and cranes aft, allowing room for two Carlson 20-mm machine cannons on the shelter deck plus another on its own platform with a stub mainmast (making a total of seven). Eight depth charge projectors ("K"-guns) have been added on the main deck, four on each side, below the redesignated No. 3 5-in. gun. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)



In 1941 the 20-mm Oerlikon air-cooled machine gun began to replace the .50-cal. water-cooled machine gun as the Navy's standard light antiaircraft weapon. (It was also called a machine cannon because it fired explosive shells.) This early Mark 4 version with an open-ring sight required a four-man crew: the gunner, a trunnion operator (to adjust the height of the gun carriage) and two loaders. When fitted with the Mark 14 gyroscopic sight, introduced in 1943, a range setter was also required to enter range data. The Oerlikon had an effective range of 1,600 yards and fired at a rate of 450 rounds/minute. (Official USN Photo.)

Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands in World War II



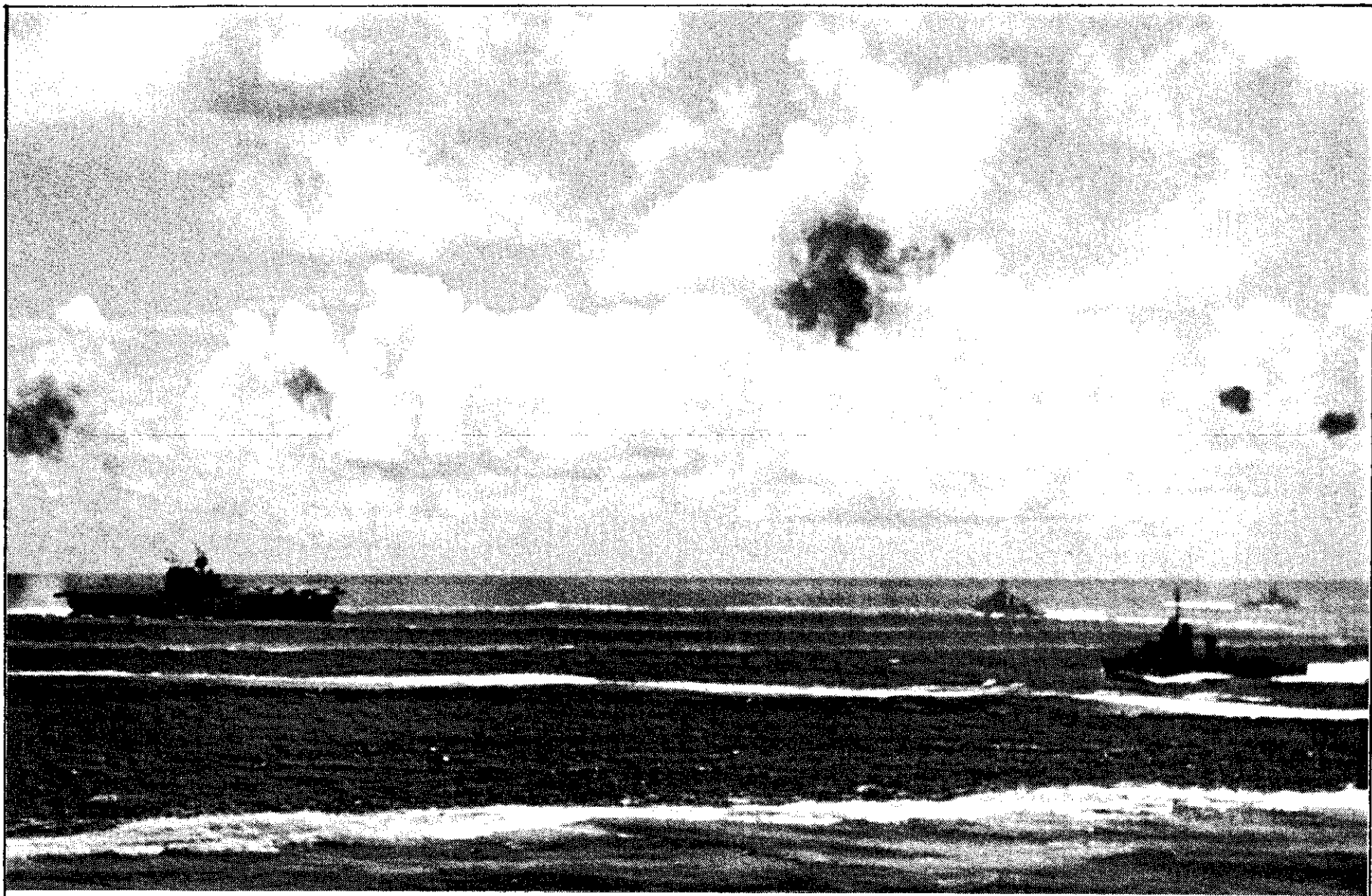
Noumea to Rabaul. (Courtesy Australian War Memorial)

In the summer of 1942 the Solomon Islands, streaming 600 miles southeast from New Britain (upper left), assumed a great strategic importance. For the Japanese, their seaplane base at Tulagi (center) and the airfield they were completing on Guadalcanal formed part of a defensive perimeter for their principal base at Rabaul. For the United States, these bases in the lower Solomons threatened both her supply lines to Australia and her advance bases in the New Hebrides and on New Caledonia.

The decisive Guadalcanal Campaign began on August 7, 1942, when the U.S. Marines seized both Tulagi and the airfield across the bay. It ended six months later when the Japanese evacuated their remaining troops.

The victory was truly a turning point in the Pacific War. A captured Japanese document read, "Success or failure in recapturing Guadalcanal . . . is the fork in the road which leads to victory for them or for us." After the island was secured the Japanese offensive was over, and the Allies began their long island-hopping march to Tokyo Bay.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996



The aircraft carrier U.S.S. Enterprise (CV-6) (Capt. O. B. Hardison) and the other ships in Task Force 16 (RAdm. Thomas C. Kinkaid) under attack by enemy planes at the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands on October 26, 1942. The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) (Comdr. Max C. Stormes), in the Enterprise screen, claimed to have downed two of the attackers with her 20-mm battery. During the battle she expended 350 rounds of 5-inch and 2,460 rounds of 20-mm ammunition. She also rescued eleven airmen from five friendly planes which had to ditch nearby when they ran out of fuel before they could land. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

In Reply

Refer to:

DD379/A16-3

(0391)

MCS:ehs

U.S.S. PRESTON (DD379)
Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California,

31 OCT 1942

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, United States
Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Report of Action - Enemy Air Attack
Against Task Force SIXTY-ONE on 26
October, 1942.

Enclosures: (A) Report of Action of Executive Officer.
(B) Track Chart.

1. This action is considered to have begun at 0840 (Zone Minus 12) on 26 October 1942 at the time this ship went to battle stations. Information of a Japanese force on a south-easterly course east of MALAITA in the Solomon Islands had been received the night before and Task Force SIXTY-ONE (combining Task Forces SIXTEEN and SEVENTEEN) was closing to attack with aircraft from the ENTERPRISE and HORNET.

2. The sea was calm with a moderate swell from the eastward and the wind was force three from 110° True. The sky was clear except for scattered cumulus clouds and an occasional rain squall. No land was in sight, the 0800 position being latitude 8° - 37' South and 166° - 35' East.

3. The conduct of all subordinates was above reproach and although no one officer or man can be singled out for unusually meritorious performance of duty the personnel as a whole were cool and determined in their reactions. Enemy planes were promptly sighted, reported quickly and effectively brought under fire by the control-officer, Lieutenant (jg) R.C. GIBSON, U.S.N. The locally-controlled machine guns were brought to bear and their fire was very effective as evidenced by at least two enemy planes catching fire and dropping into the water.

4. The first attack came at 1042 on this Task Force although Task Force SEVENTEEN was being bombed between 1010 and 1020. Dive bombers descended in the general direction of the ENTERPRISE from a low rain cloud. It was difficult to tell how many of them attacked as it was raining in the general vicinity of the force. In all there were four attacks including dive bombers and torpedo planes.

DD379/A16-3
(0391)

U. S. S. PRESTON (DD379)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

31 OCT 1942

Subject: Report of Action - Enemy Air attack
against Task Force SIXTY-ONE on 26
October, 1942.

5. About 1125 an ENTERPRISE torpedo bombers re-
turned during the action and was landing in the water off the
starboard bow of the SOUTH DAKOTA distant about one thousand
yards from that ship when the battleship's starboard 40 mm and
at least one 5"-38 AA mount opened fire at the plane, as it
was landing out of fuel, and continued to fire for about fifteen
seconds at the crew and their raft in the water. The PRESTON
was maneuvering to continue the fire on enemy planes although
the lookouts and signalmen had been ordered to keep the raft
and plane crew in sight so that we could pick them up later.
As the PRESTON first circled near the raft it was necessary to
turn sharply to starboard to avoid being raked by the battleship's
anti-aircraft fire. This occurred as a lull in the action of
about five or ten minutes was taking place. The PRESTON was
brought alongside the raft and Lieutenant M.D. NORTON, U.S.N.,
of the ENTERPRISE TBF group and his two crew members were hur-
riedly taken on board.

6. The following is a brief narrative during the
attack in which this vessel took part on 26 October 1942:-

GCT	LCT	
2000	0800	Position 8 - 37 S., 166 - 35 E. On course 270°T., 259° psc, speed 28 knots. Information received of Japanese force East of MALAITA, Solomon Islands on a Southeasterly course.
2040	0840	Went to General quarters.
2043	0843	Received signal from O.T.C., "Attacking enemy by aircraft".
2044	0844	Changed course to 110°T., 108° psc., speed 27 knots.
2055	0855	ENTERPRISE AND HORNET launched fighter planes.
2110	0910	ENTERPRISE launched dive bombers and torpedo bombers.
2113	0913	ENTERPRISE completed launching and recovery.
2117	0917	Received signal, "Our force sighted by enemy".
2125	0925	Changed course to 330°T., 321° psc.
2128	0928	Changed course to 110°T., 108° psc.
2132	0932	Changed speed to 24 knots.
2132	0932	Changed course to 330°T., 321 psc.
2134	0934	Formed cruising disposition ONE VICTOR to repel air attack.
2135	0935	Changed course to 110°T., 108° psc.

DD379/A16-3

U. S. S. PRESTON (DD379)

0391

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

31 OCT 1942

Subject: Report of Action - Enemy Air Attack
Against Task Force SIXTY-ONE on
26 October, 1942.

<u>GCT</u>	<u>LCT</u>	
2136	0936	Our planes reported enemy dive bombers headed for HORNET.
2140	0940	Japanese planes reported coming in by Commander Task Force SEVENTEEN.
2155	0955	Observed first bomb explode in water on our starboard quarters (to Southwest) near Task Force SEVENTEEN.
2205	1005	Own force (Task Force SIXTEEN) in rain squall.
2210	1010	Japanese dive bombers reported over Task Force SEVENTEEN.
2220	1020	First attack on Task Force SEVENTEEN completed.
2230	1030	Some of ENTERPRISE Planes returned to vicinity of carrier.
2242	1042	Own force (SIXTEEN) being attacked by about seventeen dive bombers diving from low rain cloud. Manuevered and opened fire to lay barrage over ENTERPRISE of 5"-38 bursts and also fired on enemy planes with 20 mm weapons when within range.
2249	1049	ENTERPRISE planes landed in water on port beam of PORTER.
2300	1100	Changed course to 270°True.
2302	1102	While stopping to recover pilot the PORTER received a torpedo hit between her stacks on the port beam.
2307	1107	Second attack by enemy dive bombers began. First bomb observed hitting ENTERPRISE amidships on starboard side. Seventh bomb observed hit on bow of ENTERPRISE. Counted four enemy planes shot down in flames.
2314	1114	SHAW dropped depth charges in the vicinity of the PORTER. Voice radio message from SHAW reporting PORTER torpedoed amidships, both firerooms flooded, no power.
2315	1115	Attacked by third group of dive bombers.
2320	1120	SMITH observed to be hit forward by burning plane. SMITH's forecastle in flames.
2325	1125	Ceased firing. Counted eight enemy planes down at short range. Observed two drop in water about four or five miles to Westward.

DD379/A16-3

U. S. S. PRESTON (DD379)

0391

31 OCT 1942

Subject: Report of Action - Enemy Air Attack
Against Task Force SIXTY-ONE on
26 October, 1942.

GCT	LCT	
2330	1130	Stopped momentarily to rescue three-man crew of one of own torpedo bombing planes which has landed in water out of fuel near SOUTH DAKOTA. The starboard 5", 40 mm and 20 mm batteries fired on this plane as it landed and afterward as this ship was maneuvering to remain in vicinity of their raft. Personnel recovered:- Lieutenant M.D. NORTON, U.S.N.: SCHMEECKLE, W.M., ARM3c; and GRUBEL, R.J., AMM3c, attached to VT10, USS ENTERPRISE.
2336	1136	Underway at full speed.
2340	1140	Force being attacked by enemy torpedo planes from North and Northeast. Light rain squall generally to North and East. Five enemy planes observed shot down in this attack. Observed one torpedo drop from enemy plane on port quarter of SOUTH DAKOTA but latter avoided it.
2353	1200	CUSHING reported periscope sighted and depth charges dropped (by voice radio).
2400	1200	Position 8 - 34 S., 167 - 41 E. From noon to noon made good 180 miles on course 296° True
0010	1210	Emergency turn signal flying. Being attacked by enemy dive bombers. Four were observed shot down. Light rain squall and low clouds.
0028	1228	Ceased firing - attack completed.
0030	1230	One single dive bomber scored a hit on No. 1 turrett of SOUTH DAKOTA.
0035	1235	Stopped to pick up pilot from fighter plane: Lieutenant(jg) R.S. MERRITT, U.S.N. of VF 72, USS HORNET.
0045	1245	Underway at full speed.
0050	1250	ENTERPRISE recovering planes.
0108	1308	Rescued pilot from fighter plane: Lieutenant (jg) J.D. BILLO, U.S.N. of VF 10, USS ENTERPRISE.
0138	1338	Rescued three men from torpedo bomber, one enlisted man badly wounded: Lieutenant (jg) H.L. TALLMAN, U.S.N.: FELTER, R.R., AOM1c; and CHANTINY, F.J., AOM1c, (badly wounded), of VT 6, USS HORNET.

In Reply
Refer to:

DD379/A16-3

(0391)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MCS:ehs

U. S. S. PRESTON (DD379)

31 OCT 1942

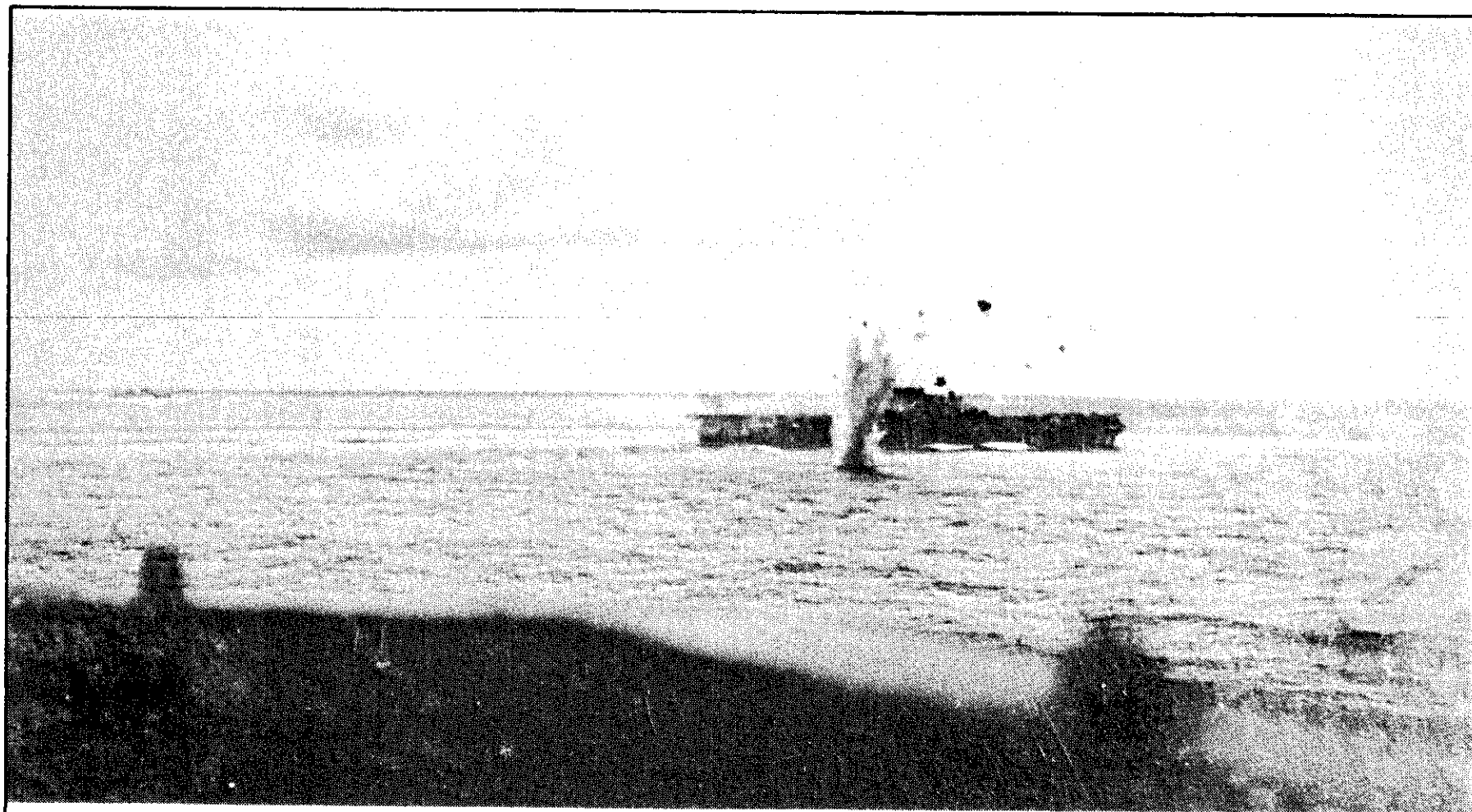
Subject: Report of Action - Enemy Air Attack
Against Task Force SIXTY-ONE on
26 October, 1942.

GCT LCT
0150 1350 Rescued three more men from torpedo bomber, all un-
hurt: Ensign F.D. HOOVER, USN; DOWNING, C.A., ARM3c;
TRUMBULL, E.L., P3c, of VT6, USS HORNET.
0155 1355 Went ahead at speed 26 knots.
0240 1440 Proceeded on course 130° True at 29 knots to overtake
Task Force SIXTEEN.
350 rounds of 5"/38 Caliber and 2460 rounds of 20 mm
ammunition were fired during the attack by this vessel.

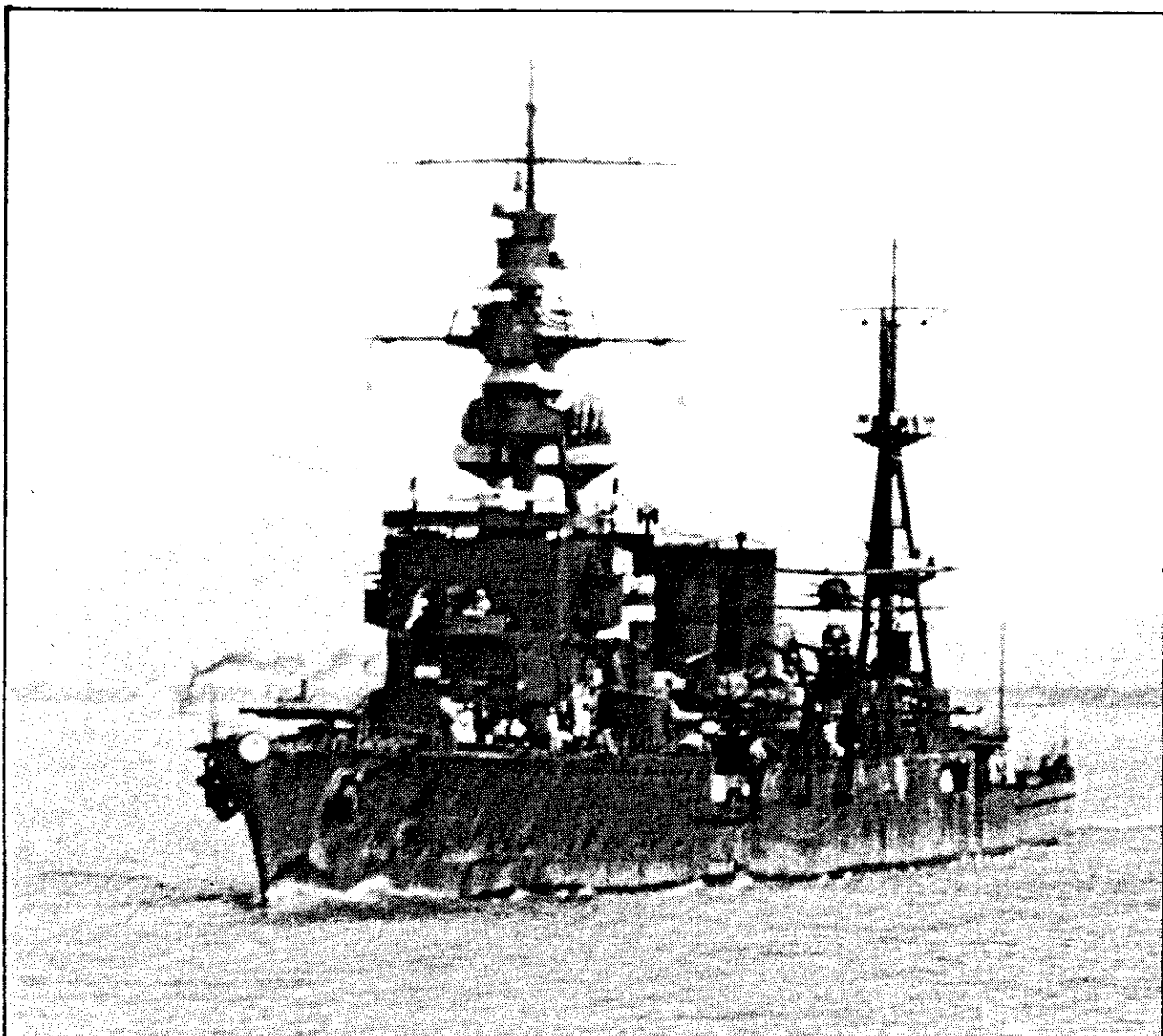
M.C. STORMES.

Copy to:

Comdesron 5 (2) (Less Encl. (B)).
Comdesdiv 10(1) (Less Encl.(B)).



This bomb missed the U.S.S. Enterprise (CV-6) at the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands on October 26, 1942, but two direct hits and a near miss started several fires and caused considerable damage. Within an hour, however, she had the fires under control and was able to resume recovering both her own aircraft and those of the U.S.S. Hornet (CV-8), which was aflame and sinking nearby. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)



The Japanese light cruiser Nagara, shown here in 1938, was the first enemy ship to hit the Preston during the night surface action on November 14-15, 1942. One of the Nagara's 5.5-inch rounds exploded between the U.S. destroyer's two firerooms, instantly killing everyone in those large compartments and starting fires on the main deck. The 5,170-ton Nagara was armed with seven 5.5-inch guns and eight 24-inch torpedoes. She was sunk by the U.S. submarine Groaker (SS-246) on August 7, 1944. (Naval Hist. Center)

From: The Commanding Officer
TO : Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet

Via: Commander Task Force SIXTY-FOUR

Subject: Surface Engagement with Japanese Forces,
November 15, 1942 - report of.

Reference: (a) U.S.Navy Regulations, 1920, Articles 712, 847,
167, and 2028
(b) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 11-L-42.
(c) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 24-CL,
serial 01751.
(d) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 16-CL-42.

Enclosure: (A) Medical Officer's Report.

1. At 0035 November 15, 1942, the U.S.S. PRESTON was sunk while actively engaged in surface battle against Japanese naval forces. The engagement took place in the channel between Savo Island and Cape Esparance, Guadalcanal Island, Solomon Islands. (Approximate Latitude $9^{\circ} 18' S$, Approximate Longitude $159^{\circ} 50' N$.
Note: All times are Minus twelve time zone and are only approximations.

2. Task Force SIXTY-FOUR was operating on detached duty from Task Force SIXTEEN.

3. Task Force SIXTY-FOUR was formed in battle disposition in column in the following order: U.S.S. WALKE, U.S.S. BENHAM, U.S.S. PRESTON, U.S.S. GWIN, U.S.S. WASHINGTON, and U.S.S. SOUTH DAKOTA. Commander Task Force SIXTY-FOUR and Officer in Tactical Command in the U.S.S. WASHINGTON.

4. The visibility was unlimited and the sky partially covered by cirrocumulus clouds. There was a half moon and no wind. The sea was a flat calm.

5. The U.S.S. PRESTON was steaming in column in the order given above on course approximately 290° headed towards the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. The speed had just been increased from 17 to 23 knots. The PRESTON had no fire control radar and the search radar was not employed because of the proximity of land. At about 0020 the U.S.S. SOUTH DAKOTA and U.S.S. WASHINGTON opened fire with their main batteries on a target on their starboard beam. This target could not be distinguished by any one on the PRESTON. At about 0025 the U.S.S. WALKE opened fire on a ship on their starboard beam. At about 0030 a ship was sighted off the southern tip of Savo Island and on the starboard bow of the PRESTON. Fire was opened immediately with all four guns bearing on the enemy ship which appeared to be a heavy destroyer or a light cruiser. Starshells were not used because the target was seen quite plainly in the moon light. The range was estimated at nine thousand yards

SUBJECT: Surface Engagement with Japanese Forces
November 15, 1952 - report of.

November 30, 1942

and salvos spotted to the target. The hitting range was established after only a few salvos and the fire was very effective. The battery was in automatic control using director fire. The enemy ship moved into the shadow of Savo Island but she could still be distinguished and fire on her was continued. Approximately a minute after the PRESTON opened fire the enemy ship returned the fire with her main battery plus what appeared to be 40 m.m. guns. At 0035 this ship caught fire and began to burn fiercely. At about the same time we observed that the ship that one of the battleships had been firing on caught fire also. Fire from the PRESTON was shifted to another ship in the shadow of Savo Island at a range of about eight thousand yards. At 0035½ the PRESTON was hit on the starboard side by two projectiles, probably six inch. One projectile hit between the two fire rooms killing all men in them and covering the amidships area with firebrick and debris. Several fires were started including one in the TNT of the torpedo warheads which were burst open by the force of the explosion. Number two stack fell on the searchlight knocking it over on the starboard torpedo tube. The other projectile hit the gun shelter just aft of number two gun but did not explode. The projectile killed one man, badly injured another and tore a very large hole in the deck. The projectile out the power cable for number two gun and jammed it in train. During this part of the action a heavy cruiser came in on the port side of the column virtually undetected. She opened fire at a very close range. A few seconds after the PRESTON was hit on the starboard side she was hit on the port side by part of a salvo of eight inch shells. As near as can be determined the ship was hit by three projectiles. The whole after part of the ship from the stacks aft was a mass of blazing, red-hot wreckage. One projectile hit in the engine room exploding after it hit the generators. A second projectile hit between the secondary control section and number three gun. The third projectile hit number four gun. Almost every man aft of the after machine gun nest was killed, including the executive officer. The gunnery officer gave the order for guns one and two to continue firing if possible but the force of the explosion had jammed them both in train and elevation and they could not fire. The ship immediately listed sharply to starboard and began to settle by the stern. At 0036 the Commanding Officer, Commander M.C. Stormes, gave the order to abandon ship. In less than half a minute the ship rolled over on its side and sank by the stern. The bow raised vertically and remained in that position for approximately ten minutes. No records, papers, or accounts were saved. After the ship sank, a ship ahead of the PRESTON in column caught fire and later sank. This ship could not be identified. After the other ships cleared they headed out past the western end of Guadalcanal. Some time later the men in the water could see firing west of Guadalcanal but could distinguish nothing of the details. The ship that one of the battleships had hit burned most of the night. There were four large explosions from the ship and about 0400 it evidently sank.

U.S.S. PRESTON (379)

Subject: Surface engagement with Japanese Forces,
November 15, 1942 - report of

6. Due to the confusion of the battle, the damage done to the enemy cannot be very well estimated. However, the enemy ship that the PRESTON fired at caught fire and appeared to have been damaged quite severely. The ship the battleships fired on burned all night and sank after several explosions. The ammunition expended can only be an estimate. During the three minutes firing period it is estimated that the PRESTON expended approximately 120 - 130 rounds of 54-38 caliber AA common projectiles. The 20mm. guns were not used and the torpedoes were not fired.

7. Performance of the ship during action was highly satisfactory. Control of fire was good and felt to have been extremely effective under the circumstances. Visual contacts were limited but the director personnel had been at general quarters for a long enough time to have accustomed their eyes to the darkness. As a result, they were able to stay on the enemy vessel in spite of its evasive tactics. All personnel under fire acted with exemplary courage and a coolness that comes from familiarity with their assigned tasks. Even though the water about the ship was churned by projectiles hitting nearby the volume of fire from the PRESTON continued unabated. Individual acts of bravery cannot be singled out during the action but too high praise cannot be given for the conduct of all men under fire.

8. After the ship was abandoned there were many cases of individual heroism and examples of unselfishness. With a few exceptions, all men in the water were cheerful, optimistic, and willing to follow orders. There were very few complaints and many injured men not only did not complain but tried to aid shipmates. With one exception, all officers lived up to the standards expected of them. They organized the rafts, collected men in the water, gave orders, helped keep up the men's spirits, and administered what first aid could be given under the conditions. No officer can be singled out for individual praise since all did their tasks in a highly creditable manner.

9. The following enlisted men were outstanding in their devotion to duty and unselfishness. Recommendations for suitable citation will be submitted separately.

Thrift, A.L. MM1c, U.S.Navy. This man aided several wounded men in escaping from the battered engine room. After getting off the ship, he carried a wounded man on his back all night. He showed wonderful coolness and was instrumental in collecting men in the water.

Dodge, J.V. RM3c, U.S.avy. This man aided an officer in reaching a raft, towing him some distance through the oil-covered water, although he was himself near exhaustion.

Subject: Surface Engagement with Japanese Forces,
November 15, 1942 - report of

Perkins, W.R., CCS(PA), U.S.Navy. This man was among the first to find a raft but he remained in the water all night allowing the less able to use the raft. He assisted the officers in disposition of men on the raft. By his coolness and self sacrifice he restored spirit and energy of the men. Though blinded by the morning sun, he continued to act as a source of optimism for the crew.

Soika, E.J., CPhm (PA), U.S.Navy. This man, although suffering from a severe scalp wound and several other injuries set a very fine example of coolness and courage. He took care of all the men on the raft that needed medical attention. He was instrumental in maintaining discipline and encouraging others in the water. He aided a wounded officer and assisted him in taking charge of the raft after another officer had left.

Dufour, O.V., TM2c, U.S.Navy. This man cannot be too highly commended for his heroism and devotion to duty. Finding a seriously injured officer on the deck of the sinking ship he risked his life to get the officer clear of the ship. The injured officer could not move by himself so this man put a life jacket on him and towed him until they found a raft. Before he could get the officer on the raft, a ship in the formation came through the group of survivors, Dufour, again risking his life, placed himself between the injured officer and the oncoming ship and pushed the officer clear. He then turned toward the raft which was directly in the path of the ship and saved the raft. He was so close to the ship that he was hit by its side but was not injured. He again found the injured officer and placed him in the raft. All during the night he was a constant source of encouragement and optimism. Too much cannot be said in praise of his actions.

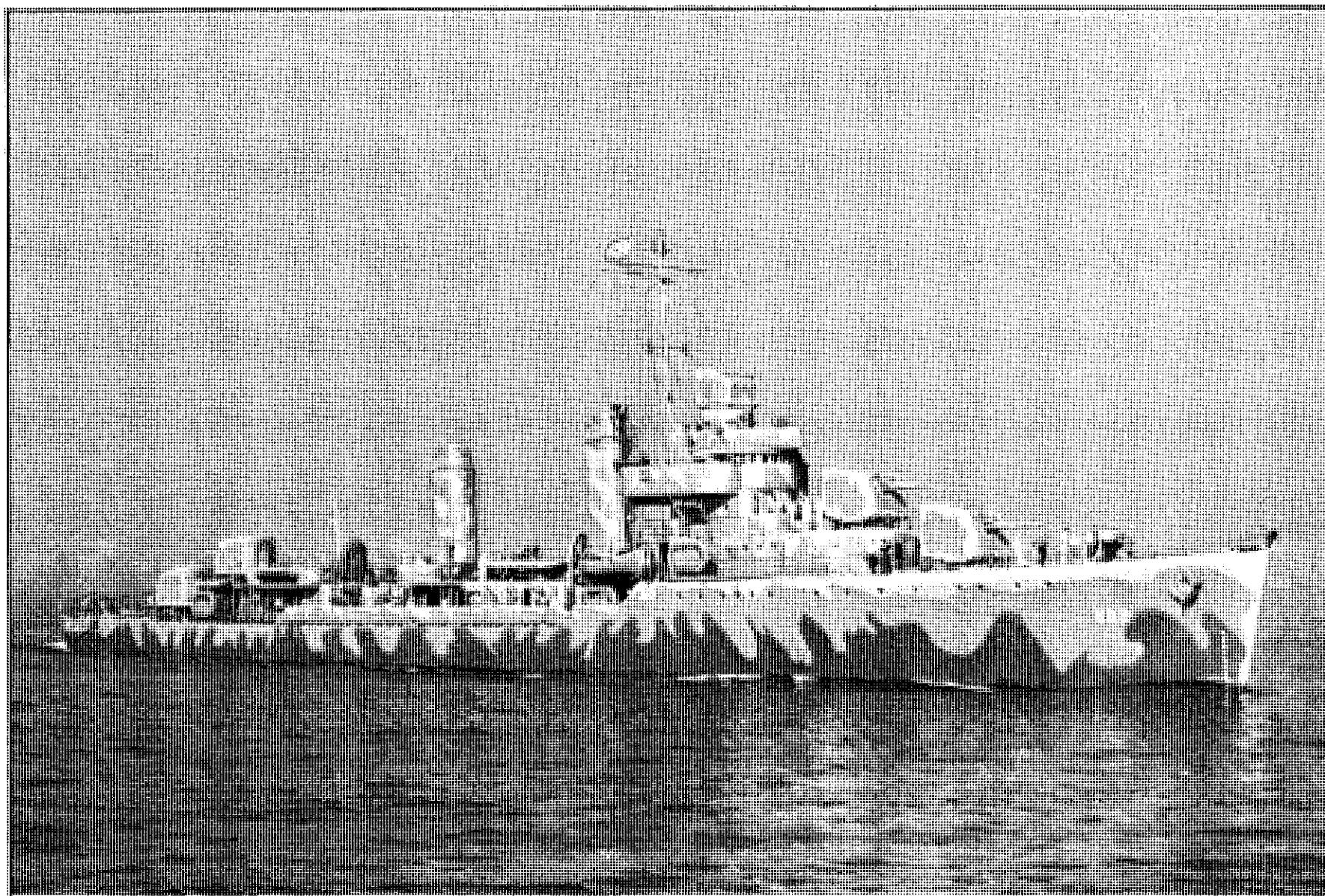
10. Compilation of casualties incurred during action.
Total number on board: 247 men, 15 officers.
Survivors: 135 men, 11 officers.
Missing in action: 88 men, 3 officers.
Killed in action: 24 men, 1 officer.
Wounded in action: 14 men, 1 officer.

W.W. Woods,
Lt. (jg), U.S. Naval Reserve,
Commanding,

R. G. Gibson,
Lt. (jg) U.S. Navy
by direction.

Copies to:

Commander Destroyer Division Ten.
Commander Destroyer Squadron Five.
Commander Task Force 64.
Commander Task Force 16.
Commander South Pacific Forces.
Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.



The U.S.S. Hedge (DD-602) (Lcdr. M. S. Lamb), aided by small craft and floatplanes, rescued 131 Prison survivors (plus 133 from the Wake (DD-415) and 1 from the Rennell (DD-357)) in the afternoon of November 13, 1942, and put them ashore at the Naval Station, Tulagi. Before she was directed to the survivors by aircraft from Henderson Field the Hedge had been pounding what remained of four Japanese troop transports beached on Guadalcanal. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

DD602/AL-1
(002)

USS Meade
Cdr. S. F. MEADE (DD602),
San Francisco, California

(10-rd)

S-E-C-R-E-T

November 18, 1942

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander, SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE.
Via : The Commander, TASK FORCE SIXTY-TWO.

Subject: Rescue of Survivors vicinity Savo Island, November 15, 1942.

Enclosure: (A) List of Survivors from the U.S.S. WALKER, U.S.S. PRESTON, U.S.S. BENHAM - Picked up and delivered to this vessel.

1. This vessel, on November 15, 1942, proceeded to the vicinity of Savo Island, to recover survivors of the previous night's naval engagement and arrived off Savo Island at 1100. The area south of Savo Island, between Savo Island and Cape Esparane was searched by this vessel, aided by the YP boat stationed at Tulagi, a PT boat, several scout planes from Tulagi and Higgins boats. The survivors recovered by the MEADE and the above units are shown in Enclosure (A). In addition, it is believed approximately twelve survivors were rescued from Savo Island by the YP and Higgins boats. All survivors were landed at the Naval Station, Tulagi.

2. The survivors were found scattered over a wide area. The work of the planes and boats in picking up men, was very efficient, especially the YP and Higgins boats which searched close into Savo Island and recovered men from the beaches. An enemy battery is supposed to be located on this island, however, no hostile action was taken by them. During the rescue operations, a SAN FRANCISCO scout plane, which was aiding, crashed. This vessel searched the area, but found no survivors.

3. The general condition of the survivors was very good. Wounded survivors were treated aboard by the ship's doctor and doctors sent from Tulagi. The wounded and description of wounds is indicated in Enclosure (A). One man died in a boat and was buried at sea. Positive identification can be made by survivors upon arrival at Espiritu. A ring recovered from the body will be forwarded to the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

4. In the rescue operations the following points were brought out:

- (a) The extreme difficulty of finding men in the water, even when within one mile of the ship. The present colored Kopack life jacket blends in with the sea, making it difficult to spot. It is recommended that consideration be given to dyeing life jackets yellow or sewing yellow

A Recollection by William J. Cusick¹

We were steaming in column when the battleships opened fire at about 0020. It was an awesome sight. You could see the 16-inch projectiles heading towards their target through the night sky. I noticed a blue light halfway up Savo Island just prior to the opening salvos and called the skipper's attention to it. He seemed to think it had something to do with the coastwatchers.

At that point a radarman kicked over the signal gang's coffeepot as he stepped out of the radar shack. As I bent over to retrieve it I saw a big splash to starboard, which meant the enemy's first salvo was short. Within seconds the second salvo hit in the vicinity of #2 stack. The bridge area was showered with miscellaneous vegetables as the spud locker was in the vicinity of the direct hit. In the interim, our main battery opened up. We started to list to starboard, and at about 0035 the skipper passed the word to abandon ship.

I scrambled down the starboard ladder to the main deck and headed forward. The next thing I knew I was in the water. The first thing I saw was the battleships bearing down on us. Luckily, I was able to swim out of the way. Many of my shipmates were not as fortunate and were run over by the huge ships. The water was warm and the sea calm. You could feel the rumble of what I assumed were depth charges exploding, but there was nothing close by. I managed to get a hold of a life raft with two shipmates on it. The raft was damaged, but there was enough to hang on to. One shipmate was placed in the middle of the raft, as he seemed to be unconscious (in fact, he died before we were picked up).

During the night a Japanese submarine surfaced in the area but did not linger. As dawn broke we had a ringside view of some beached ships being bombed and strafed by our aircraft. About noontime a Navy floatplane landed nearby and told us help was on the way. As the plane became airborne and was gaining altitude it went into a nosedive and crashed. I heard later that both airmen were killed.

Late in the afternoon we were picked up by the destroyer **Meade**. Outside of being oil-soaked and severely sunburned about the face and head I was in good shape. Shortly afterward the **Meade** was strafed by a Jap Zero. There were some casualties but no deaths among our group.

We were put ashore at Lunga Point on Guadalcanal and then transferred the following day to Tulagi. A week later we boarded the **Aaron Ward** for Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. Upon arrival I was reassigned duty in the area. The majority of the survivors were sent home, but I didn't see the U.S.A. until June 1944.

¹ William J. Cusick reported for duty aboard the **Preston** at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in May 1939. When the ship was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on November 15, 1942, he was a Signalmen First Class. He wrote this recollection in December 1996.

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal¹
12-15 November 1942

Vice Admiral Edward N. "Butch" Parker's story² of the five weeks in the life of the U.S.S. Cushing (DD-376) when he commanded that ship in the fall of 1942 includes three congratulatory messages sent to all the participants in this battle. Unfortunately, those who most deserved the high praise and expressions of gratitude - the wounded survivors and those who died - never saw them.

From Commanding General 1st Marine Division (General Alexander A. Vandegrift):

"THE MARINES ON CACTUS (code name for Guadalcanal) LIFT
THEIR BATTERED HELMETS IN DEEPEST ADMIRATION."

* * * * *

From Commander South Pacific Force (Admiral William F. Halsey):

"TO THE SUPERB OFFICERS AND MEN ON LAND, ON SEA, IN THE
AIR AND UNDER THE SEA WHO HAVE PERFORMED SUCH MAGNIFICENT
FEATS FOR OUR COUNTRY IN THE LAST FEW DAYS X YOU HAVE
WRITTEN YOUR NAMES IN GOLDEN LETTERS ON THE PAGES OF
HISTORY AND WON THE UNDYING GRATITUDE OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN
X MY PRIDE IN YOU IS BEYOND EXPRESSION, NO HONOR FOR YOU
COULD BE TOO GREAT X MAGNIFICENTLY DONE X GOD BLESS EACH
AND EVERY ONE OF YOU X TO THE GLORIOUS DEAD: HAIL HEROES!
REST WITH GOD X SIGNED HALSEY"

* * * * *

From Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) (Admiral Chester W. Nimitz) to COMSOPAC (Admiral Halsey):

"WE HAVE ADMIRATION BEYOND EXPRESSION FOR THE UNSWERVING
OFFENSIVE SPIRIT OF YOUR FIGHTING FORCES AND THEIR ABILITY
TO STRIKE DOWN THE ENEMY WHILE ABSORBING HIS BLOWS X
WE REGRET DEEPLY THE LOSSES YOU HAD TO TAKE, BUT THEY
WERE GLORIOUSLY NOT IN VAIN."

* * * * *

¹ Earlier called "Third and Fourth Battles of Savo Island" or "Battle of the Solomons."

² Written by Adm. Parker in 1982 and revised in 1985. Forty copies of his pamphlet were distributed at the Cushing's 1985 reunion, and six additional copies were sent by him to widows and survivors for whom he had addresses. A copy is on file at the Ships' Histories Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C..

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal

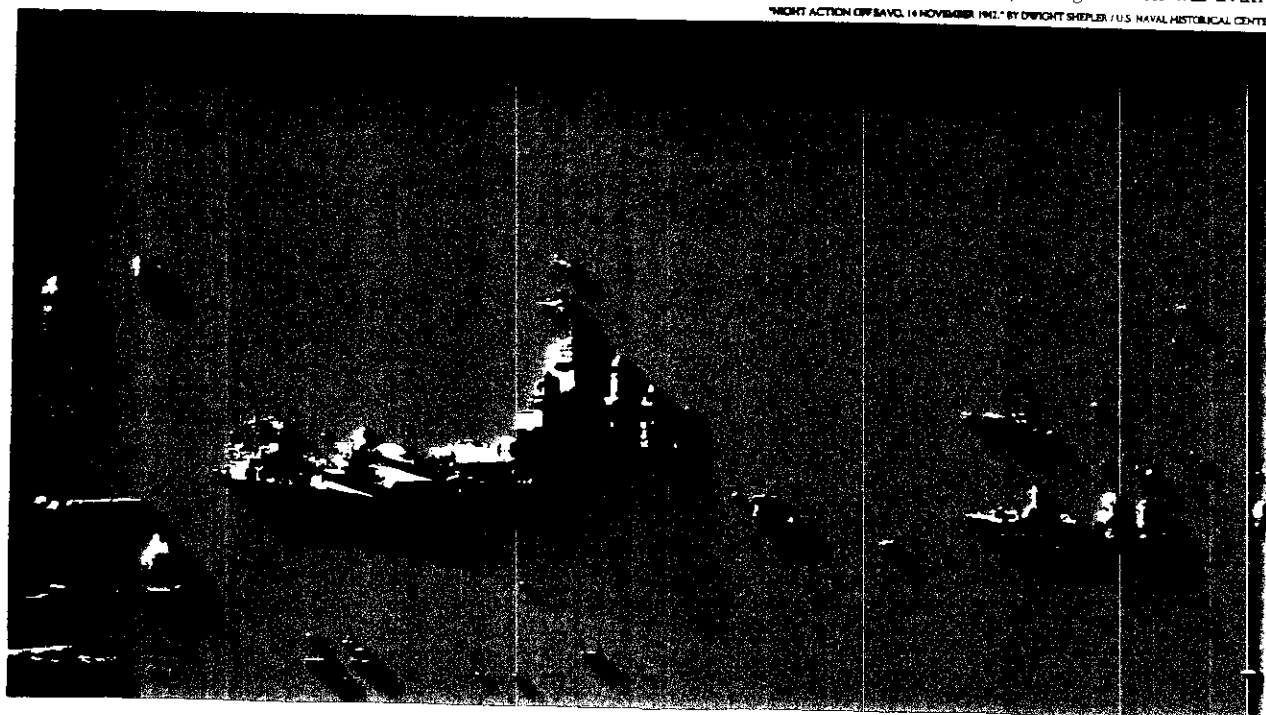
Since 7 August 1942, when U.S. Marines landed at Guadalcanal in the southern Solomons, Imperial Japanese General Headquarters had determined to eject the invaders—the first threat to the integrity of its defensive perimeter—and bring the island back under Japanese control. The resulting contest attained a duration, intensity, and cost that neither side could have foreseen. At stake, as both soon came to realize, was more than possession of a sweltering, disease-ridden, singularly inhospitable South Seas island; the real objective was no less than the strategic initiative in the Pacific.

For months, the outcome of the struggle hung in a precarious balance. Later in the war, when the U.S. Navy had won command of the sea, it could isolate islands on which

landings were made. This was not the case at Guadalcanal, where command of the sea changed at sunrise and sunset. During the day, U.S. aircraft exercised it from Henderson Field, the airstrip the Marines quickly established on the island. After dark, it belonged to what U.S. forces called the Tokyo Express—Japanese ships that steamed down the Slot through the Solomons to land troops and supplies and to bombard Henderson Field. U.S. surface forces challenged these nocturnal forays successfully at the Battle of Cape Esperance in October and the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal in mid-November, and less successfully at the Battle of Tasafaronga later that month.

But before and after these clashes, the Tokyo Express ran on schedule, subject only to interference from U.S. patrol boats and the need to be well on its way back up the Slot by daybreak. Besides night surface actions immediately offshore, two inconclusive fleet actions took place between carrier forces: the Battle of the Eastern Solomons in August and the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands in October. On more than one occasion, only a single carrier was avail-

In November 1942, successful U.S. cruiser, aircraft, and battleship actions represented a turning point in the Pacific.



"NIGHT ACTION OFF GAVO, 14 NOVEMBER 1942." BY DWIGHT SHEPHERD / U.S. NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER

UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE

Naval History - May/June 1995

able to support the defense of Guadalcanal, and U.S. leaders considered the possibility that it might become necessary to evacuate the island.

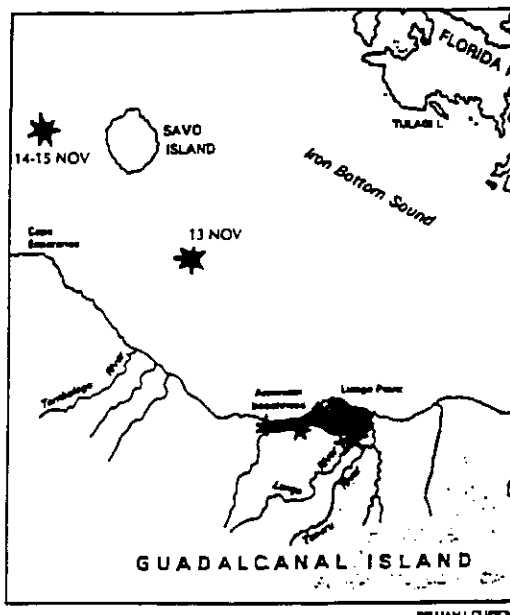
Fortunately, the Japanese Army consistently underestimated the number of Marines and soldiers ashore by 50% to 70%. Consequently, the 30,000 troops landed in detachments fed three successive attempts to overrun Henderson Field—in late August, mid-September, and late October—rather than massing for one great attack. Psychologically, the turning point occurred on 18 October, when pugnacious Vice Admiral William F. 'Bull' Halsey

took over as head of the South Pacific forces, an appointment applauded throughout his new command. Objectively, it came on 12-15 November, in the three interlocking actions that comprised the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal.

Like the majority of engagements in the Guadalcanal campaign, the naval battle had its origins in a Japanese plan to reinforce the island—in this case, with 10,000 men in highspeed transports escorted by a destroyer force led by Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka, the Tokyo Express's indomitable engineer. These troops were to land on Guadalcanal during the night of 12-13 November, while a raiding force commanded by Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe pounded Henderson Field and the Marine positions around it. By coincidence, two heavily escorted U.S. transport groups under Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner reached the island on 11 and 12 November. On the 12th, air patrols reported powerful enemy forces moving toward Guadalcanal, obviously with the intention of attacking the airfield and the transports, if present. Turner seized the opportunity to prepare a surprise. As soon as his transports had put to sea, he dispatched the cruisers and most of the destroyers in their support group to intercept the intruders off Guadalcanal. The enemy formation—correctly believed to include two battleships—presented the home team with heavy odds.

Cruiser Night Action, 13 November

The force Turner had deployed numbered 13 vessels: the heavy cruisers *Portland* (CA-33) and *San Francisco* (CA-38), light cruisers *Atlanta* (CL-51), *Helena* (CL-50), and *Juneau* (CL-52), and eight destroyers. In command in the flagship *San Francisco* was Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan. Also present, flying his flag in the *Atlanta*,



was Rear Admiral Norman Scott, the victor at the Battle of Cape Esperance. Abe's raiding group consisted of the battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima*, light cruiser *Nagara*, and 14 destroyers. Radar contact was made at 0124. Firing began at virtually point-blank range—less than a mile—at 0145, and the opposing formations held head-on courses to pass through one another in the fiercest, most confused melee since Tegetthoff led his flying wedge into the Italian fleet off Lissa in 1866. Callaghan and Scott were killed early in the action, which lasted barely a quarter-hour. At its end, the Japanese withdrew without having shelled

Henderson Field, and Tanaka's transports were ordered back into the Shortland Islands, midway up the Slot. Sunk or sinking were the *Atlanta* and four U.S. and two Japanese destroyers. The *Hiei*, slowed by at least 30 large-caliber hits, was left behind with three destroyers attending her.

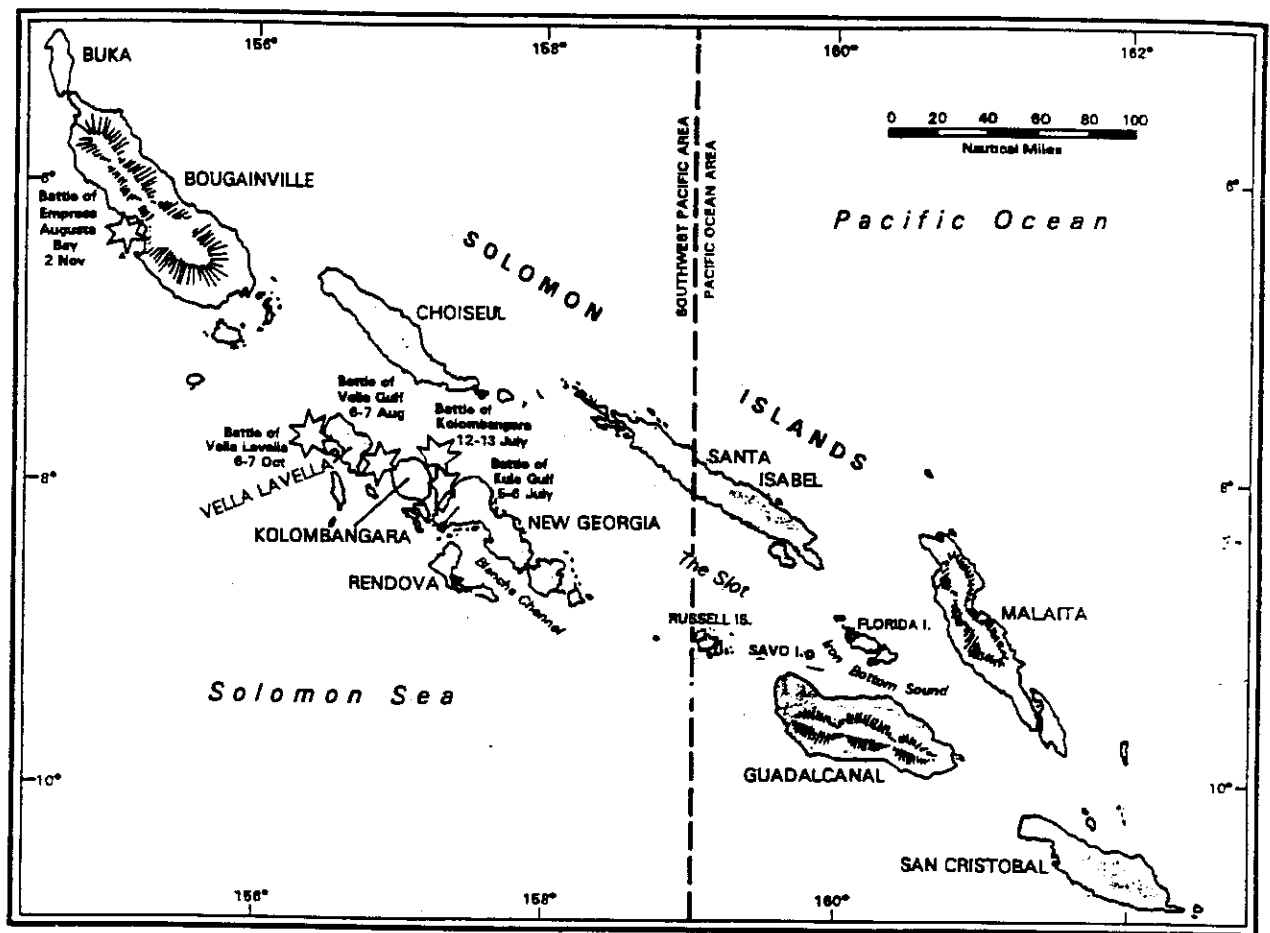
Dawn and U.S. aircraft found the *Hiei* only a few miles from Guadalcanal. Repeated bomb and torpedo runs added to her misery, and around sunset she became the first Japanese battleship to be sunk in World War II. The day's action was not entirely to the Imperial Navy's disadvantage, however. Torpedoes from the submarine *I-26* claimed the damaged *Juneau* as the U.S. force retired from the battle area, and shortly past midnight two heavy cruisers of Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa's Eighth Fleet, called into play that morning, pasted Henderson Field.

Air Action, 14 November

Tanaka's convoy set out for Guadalcanal for a second time at 1300 on 13 November. At first light U.S. reconnaissance flights spotted his transports and destroyers heading toward the island and Mikawa's cruisers moving away from it. In the ensuing air attacks one of Mikawa's six cruisers was sunk and three others damaged, one severely, while six of Tanaka's 11 transports were destroyed and another hit so badly that it had to turn back. His losses notwithstanding, Tanaka pressed on toward Guadalcanal.

Battleship Night Action, 14-15 November

Meanwhile, U.S. and Japanese commanders had been reaching decisions that precipitated the climax of the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Late on 13 November, Halsey ordered the carrier *Enterprise* (CV-6) task force to send its

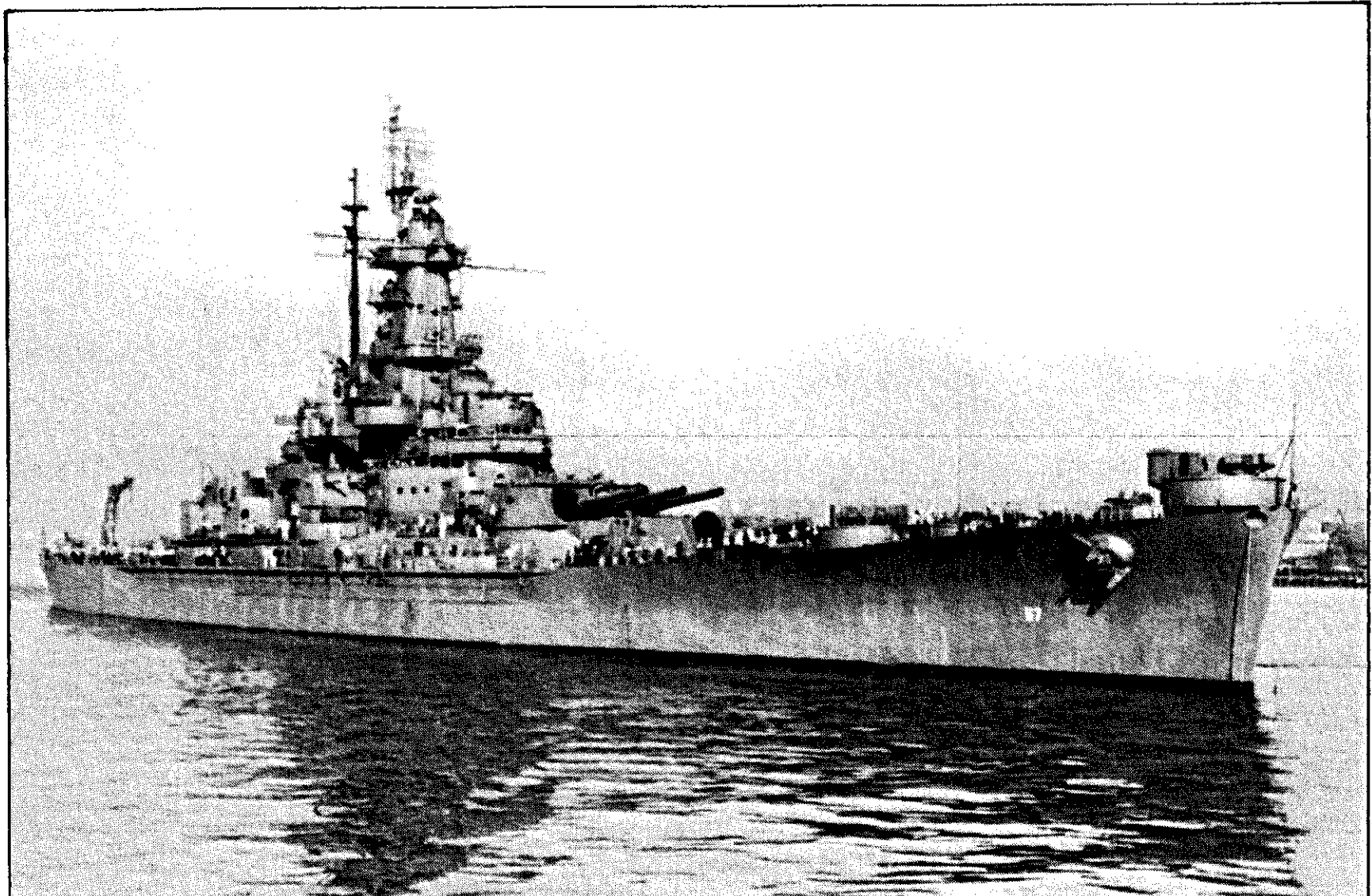


heavy gunfire unit into the cauldron. The surface action group thus formed under Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee consisted of the new battleships *South Dakota* (BB-57) and *Washington* (BB-56) and four destroyers. On the Japanese side, Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo, commanding the Combined Fleet's Advanced Force, made plans to support the landing of Tanaka's transports by attacking Henderson Field. The formation assembled under his personal command comprised the battleship *Kirishima*, heavy cruisers *Atago* (flag) and *Takao*, two light cruisers, and nine destroyers. These deployments set the stage for the first and next-to-last time in the Pacific war that battleships fought their own kind.

The action opened with 16-inch salvos from the U.S. dreadnoughts at 2317. By the time it ended approximately an hour and a quarter later, the *South Dakota* had been heavily damaged, two U.S. destroyers had been sunk, and a third was slowly sinking; but the *Kirishima* and a Japanese destroyer had taken such punishment that they had to be scuttled, and Kondo's force was retiring. Although it had not hammered the airfield, it had cleared the way for Tanaka, who ran his four surviving transports ashore on Guadalcanal at 0400. Of the 10,000 men intended to reinforce the island, 2,000 had reached it. In

view of the opposition encountered, the delivery of these troops is a testimonial to the fighting spirit of the Imperial Navy. At a cost of two battleships, a heavy cruiser, and three destroyers, however, this was a testimonial the Japanese could ill afford. Thereafter, the problem of conveying troops to Guadalcanal was overshadowed by the increasingly intractable one of supplying those already there. On 12 December, the navy formally recommended abandoning the struggle for the island, and on the last day of the year Imperial General Headquarters directed a staged evacuation, which took place on 1-8 February 1943. In the words of a Japanese document captured some time earlier, "Success or failure in recapturing Guadalcanal . . . is the fork in the road which leads to victory for them or for us." For Japan, the fork led to defeat. The U.S. Navy was about to begin its long march across the Pacific to Tokyo Bay. ⚓

For further reading: Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1978); David C. Evans, ed., *The Japanese Navy in World War II: In the Words of Former Japanese Naval Officers*, second edition (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986); Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Vol. V: *The Struggle for Guadalcanal* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975).



The fast battleship U.S.S. South Dakota (BB-57), shown here at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, Washington, on August 24, 1944, probably killed some of the Preston's survivors when she inadvertently ran through them during the night surface action on November 14-15, 1942. Life rafts dropped by the South Dakota and the U.S.S. Washington (BB-56) kept some of the survivors afloat until they were rescued by Higgins boats and the destroyer U.S.S. Meade (DD-602) after being in the water about fifteen hours. The South Dakota displaced 35,000 tons (std.) and was armed with nine 16-in. guns plus sixteen 5-in. guns. During this battle she sustained serious damage and had to return home for repairs. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

U.S.S. **Preston** (DD-379)

Recollections of Cdr. Theodore F. Marx, USN (Ret.)*

At age 22 I graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy on 19 June 1942 (class of 1943) and proceeded immediately to Pearl Harbor to meet the **Preston**. At sea a few days later I suffered an acute attack of appendicitis. The ship returned to the vicinity of Pearl and dropped me over the side to a launch from the Naval Hospital. I was taken immediately to the operating room, and my appendix was removed (by the later Surgeon General Dr. Pugh). A week later I was back at sea. We spent the next few months with the **Enterprise**, being sighted by the Japanese in as many places as possible trying to convince them that we had several carriers in operation. We joined Task Force 16 (Adm. T. C. Kinkaid) in time for the Battle of Santa Cruz (26 October 1942). In joining the Task Force we cut sharply across the bow of the **South Dakota** ("Old Nameless") which gave her skipper, Captain Thomas L. Gatch, cause to brag to his officers about the seamanship of the Destroyer Navy. (Capt. Gatch had previously been our Squadron Commander.)

After the battle we were engaged in picking up pilots who were forced to ditch because of damage to their carrier, the **Hornet**. As we were heaving to to pick up survivors, the **Porter** came up astern and signalled us to move on; that she would pick up the ditched pilots. A few minutes later she was torpedoed by a submarine and sank.

A few days later we heard about the battle off Guadalcanal in which our task group of five cruisers and eight destroyers suffered severe losses. This elicited different thoughts from the crew as to what worried them the most. Of those on watch with me in the gun director I remember that one was obsessed with the threat of the Jap cruiser **Mogami**, while another was convinced that he would be eaten by a shark. Suddenly we heard a message from the Flag directing the **Washington** and **South Dakota** to take the four nearest "small boys" and proceed to Guadalcanal. We were the fourth destroyer in line ahead of the **Washington** which was followed by the **South Dakota**. We were steaming at close interval at high speed. We entered Sealark Channel about midnight - I remember a sickening sweet smell of gardenias as we neared the shore. We were directed by the battleships to turn off our radar as we were cluttering their scopes. (We had had radar installed a few months before and had found it to be most unreliable - picking up contacts where there were none and failing to pick up those that were clearly visible.)

Suddenly all hell broke loose; we were completely surrounded by Jap ships. They were difficult to detect because they were very close to shore and presented no silhouette. We managed to get off a few rounds and a salvo of torpedoes before we were hit. We probably were hit by a salvo of 8-inch and perhaps a larger shell or torpedo back aft. The ship rolled about 90 degrees to starboard and sank in about twenty seconds - there was not enough left of her to create any suction as she sank. I remember those twenty seconds - it became bright as day as we exploded, and potatoes rained down on us (the spud locker was located atop the aft portion of the bridge). Amid the roar of explosions

* An excerpt, with very minor editing, from Cdr. Marx's letter to author Eric Hammel written around 1985. Mr. Hammel used some of this material in his book Guadalcanal: Decision at Sea (New York; Crown Publishers, 1988). Ensign Marx was the **Preston**'s Torpedo Officer when the ship was sunk on 15 November 1942 in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal (12-15 November).

you could see and hear the rending of metal as the ship came apart.

I was on the bridge as Torpedo Control Officer, and as the ship rolled over the skipper, Cdr. Max C. Stormes, and I stepped into the water and started swimming, he to the left, I to the right. I never saw him again. He was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously.

As I swam away from the ship I looked up to see the **Washington** bearing down on me. From water level it looked as if her bow went a thousand feet in the air, and she sounded like a freight train. I rode her bow wave out and thus avoided any suction. As she passed, someone threw a cork ring-type life raft over the side. We were able to put some of the wounded on this broken raft and also take turns holding on to the sides. I spoke later to some of the officers of the **Washington**, and they were amazed that anyone from the **Preston** survived. They said they saw a large explosion and the ship disappear. (Actually, we probably lost almost everyone aft and about half of the remainder of the crew.) As the **South Dakota** passed through us there was a blinding flash on her stern as though her stern was blown off - actually it was her scout plane that exploded.

The battle then proceeded out towards the horizon, leaving us alone in relative quiet, broken occasionally by the muffled sound of exploding depth charges that had not been saftied when the ships were sunk. In the distance the battle turned and began to come back towards us. Just as we were beginning to fear that we would be in the middle of the battle again, the battle turned again and disappeared over the horizon. After a few hours in the water I realized that my .45 sidearm was getting heavy. I unhooked the gun belt in front, then put my hands behind me and rehooked it as I always did aboard ship to hang it up, then I just let go. (How much habit affects our behavior!) After about eight hours I realized that I was holding up my kapok life jacket, so I took it off and let it sink. During the night a light appeared nearby, flashed around for a few minutes, and then disappeared. I heard it reported later that a Jap sub had surfaced and picked up a couple of survivors. When they found them to be American they tossed them back overboard and submerged. Although the water was very warm (perhaps 80 degrees) we began to get cold after many hours. Since we were close to shore some of the men began swimming towards Lunga Point. When they got near the shore they were fired upon, so they swam back to our group.

When the sun came up we could see the bow of the **Walke**, still afloat with a Jap hanging on to one end and an American hanging on to the other. About mid morning the **Meade** began shelling the beach on Guadalcanal. They completed their mission about three in the afternoon and proceeded to our area. They picked us up at about three-thirty (after we had been in the water about fifteen hours) and headed towards Tulagi. They gave us a bucket of diesel oil to wash off the black oil that covered us and then a shower to wash off the diesel oil. While we were aboard the **Meade** we were straffed by some Jap planes. As we neared Tulagi we were transferred to landing barges and taken ashore. The seriously wounded were hospitalized at MOB #8. Those who had cracked under the strain were confined, and the rest of us were given a pith helmet, some Marine khakis, a small bottle of brandy, and told to go sit under a tree. We were also told not to pick up any souvenirs, as the area was filled with duds. We did see several wooden bullets which the Japs were using. After a few days and sleepless nights in Tulagi - sleepless because of "Washing Machine Charlie," a Jap plane that flew over every night dropping a few random bombs - we were flown to Espiritu Santo. About two weeks later we were sent to Noumea, New Caledonia, where we boarded a transport and headed back to the States - without escort.

January 17, 1981

Mr. J. A. Walsh
301 E. Pokagon Street
South Bend, Indiana 46617

Dear Jack:

Permit me this opportunity to congratulate you on the article about your WWII experiences on the U.S.S. Walke that is appearing in the current issue of the Guadalcanal Echoes. Rest assured that it brought back vivid memories of events long gone.

First, let me define my personal relationship to your story, and then try to explain some of the details that you and your shipmates may have never known. It happens that I was the pilot of the lone plane that flew over your position near Savo at dawn on Nov. 15th, 1942. Several sorties later I was also the leader of the flight of fighters that first saw and reported your predicament and then devoted all of it's time and effort to diverting the U.S.S. Mesde to your location and rescue. It had already been the most memorable week of my life and most of the events are indelibly etched in my memory, especially those of that morning.

As a result of a severe naval bombardment on the night of Nov. 13th we were required to disperse all land based aircraft to every nook and cranny of the beachhead area on the evening of the 14th. My flight of four P-39 Airacobras was dispersed to a new airstrip called Fighter Two, and we were the very first a/c to use it. Thanks to you and the task force that you accompanied we were spared that anticipated shelling. We were well aware that a major engagement was underway nearby because we could see an almost uninterrupted period of gun flashes against the night sky. Unfortunately my flight was also committed to fly the dawn combat air patrol on the 15th and this meant a long jeep drive over unfamiliar roads in blackout conditions, finding and inspecting the a/c in total darkness, and taxiing out to take-off and launching before dawn from a strange airstrip without benefit of lights. Everything went well until the ground taxi sequence was underway, at which time things started to go to hell in a hand basket. I first became aware of several bright flashes behind me which I could not identify until reaching the end of the runway. At that point I determined that the field was undergoing a shelling from some source. The head enemy cannoner was apparently tracking my other a/c from their running lights, so I instructed them by radio to shutdown and find cover. Then I decided to take off and clear the area before the shelling damaged the runway, which I did in total darkness. On climbout I observed the running lights of another a/c circling Henderson Field. I couldn't believe that it was one of my own flight but I decided to check. As I pulled up alongside this a/c it fired a warning burst of machine gun fire over my canopy, which told me he didn't like my presence and that he didn't belong to me because our guns were fixed and only fired forward. Within a few minutes there was enough twilight to see the outline of four large cargo vessels standing off Pt. Cruz, dead in the water. Because of the intensity of the naval actions in the immediate area

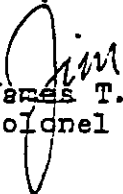
* These remarks regarding the survivors of the USS Walke (DD-416) also pertain to the Preston's survivors because the two ships were sunk very near each other.

intend to make sure that each gets to read your article.

Rest assured sir, there was nothing that day that would have been more important to us than your rescue, had we known of your situation. That probably would have gone double because of our appreciation of being spared another naval bombardment through your efforts. At no time was any priority placed on destroying the remnants of what had been a mighty force several days earlier, it was just that your predicament had not yet been recognized. In a Coral Sea or Midway situation the reverse might have been true, but in this case it just happened and you were the innocent victims. I am not a very religious person but in 30 years of military flying I did see a few happenings that had to be attributed to "someone upstairs". In this case He was a little slow that morning but He must have let it run it's own course until we almost attacked you in the water, and then decided to step in and straighten things out right there.

In six weeks we leave for a return to the South Pacific, a 22 day excursion to all of the old places. I will be sure to lift one to you and your shipmates at the Mendana Hotel bar, Pt. Cruz, Guadalcanal Island on the evening of March 11, 1981.

Respectfully yours,


James T. Jarman
Colonel USAF (Retired)

5918 Cherokee Drive
Shawnee Mission, Ks. 66205

CC: Graydon Cadwell
Guadalcanal Camp. Vets.
Assn.

Bob Ferguson
Marty Ryan



O. V. ("Duffy") Dufour, TMIC, being presented with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal at a ceremony aboard the escort carrier U.S.S. Waka Island (CVE-65) in 1944. Petty officer Dufour was awarded the medal for his heroism in rescuing shipmates when the destroyer U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on 15 November 1942. (U.S. Navy photograph.)

**SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE
OF THE UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER**


In the name of the President of the United States, the Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force takes pleasure in awarding the NAVY AND MARINE CORPS MEDAL to

**O. V. DUFOUR, TORPEDOMAN'S MATE SECOND CLASS,
UNITED STATES NAVY**

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

*For heroism following the sinking of a destroyer on which he was serving during the engagement with Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands area on the night of November 14-15, 1942. While his ship was sinking as a result of being torpedoed, DUFOUR, with complete disregard of his own safety, remained on board for the purpose of rescuing a wounded officer. Having secured the officer in a life jacket, he placed him in the water and towed him clear of the sinking vessel to the vicinity of a nearby raft. When about to be run down by a passing ship, he pushed the officer and raft clear of the oncoming vessel and was himself struck by the side of the ship. Thereafter, he succeeded in placing the officer and several other wounded men on the life raft and remained with them throughout the night. DUFOUR's courage and optimism were an inspiration to his shipmates clinging to the raft. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."



**T. S. WILKINSON,
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy.
Deputy Commander South Pacific Area.**

Temporary Citation

U.S.S. Preston (DD-379)

Citations for Medals and a Commendation Ribbon:¹

RADIOMAN THIRD CLASS JAMES VIRGIL DODGE, UAN

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (V)

"For devotion to duty under adverse conditions while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged during the engagement with Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands area on the night of November 14-15, 1942. After their ship had gone down, DODGE swam to the assistance of a wounded officer and, although himself nearly exhausted, succeeded in towing him through oil-covered waters to a distant life raft. Subsequently he managed to place the officer on the raft from where he was later rescued. His loyalty and courageous conduct were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

* * * * *

CHIEF COMMISSARY STEWARD WILBUR RUSSELL PERKINS, USN

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (V)

"For devotion to duty under adverse circumstances while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged during the engagement with Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands area on the night of November 14-15, 1942. When his ship was sunk during the course of the battle, PERKINS found himself one of a large group of survivors adrift in the oil-covered waters. Discovering a nearby life raft, PERKINS, although the first to reach it, refused to take a place thereon, but instead assisted the weak and wounded to a place of safety. He spent the remainder of the night in assisting shipmates in need of help. His courage and optimism contributed greatly to the morale of those around him. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

* * * * *

(Continued on next page)

¹ Typed from draft citations on index cards at the Washington Navy Yard, Naval Historical Center/Operational Archives. The Preston was sunk in a night surface action (The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal) on November 15, 1942.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
December, 1996

CHIEF PHARMACIST'S MATE EMIL JOHN SOIKA, USN

COMMENDATION RIBBON

"For devotion to duty under adverse circumstances while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged in the engagement with Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands area on the night of November 14-15, 1942. After his ship had been sunk in the course of the battle, SOIKA found himself one of a number of survivors adrift in oil-covered waters. Although suffering from a severe scalp wound and other injuries, he, nevertheless, assisted a wounded officer to a place of safety on a life raft. Thereafter, disregarding his own safety, he treated the injured on the raft and by his courageous activities in keeping the survivors concentrated, he was undoubtedly instrumental in saving several lives. His unselfish conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

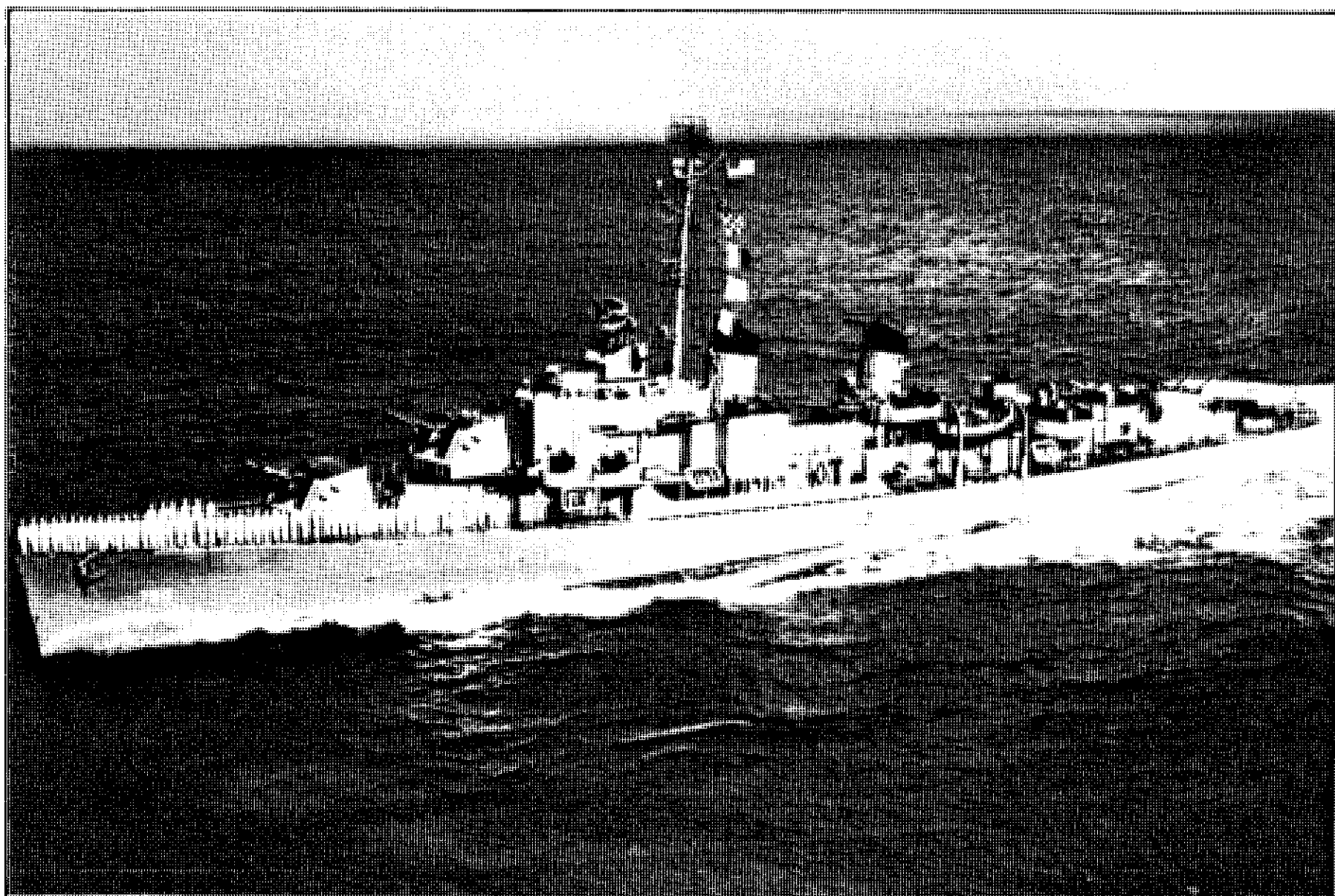
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MACHINIST'S MATE FIRST CLASS ALEXANDER HAMILTON THRIFT, USN

NAVY & MARINE CORPS MEDAL

"For heroism following the attack on a destroyer on which he was serving during the engagement with Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands area on the night of November 14-15, 1942. When the ship was in a sinking condition, and with complete disregard of his own safety, THRIFT remained in the engine room and assisted injured shipmates to escape. When the vessel was abandoned, he towed a wounded man clear of the ship and succeeded in keeping him afloat during the remainder of the night until both were rescued. His shouts of encouragement to other men in the water and his efforts in keeping them concentrated were undoubtedly instrumental in saving the lives of several other shipmates. His courageous and zealous conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

* * * * *



The 2,200-ton Spruance-class destroyer U.S.S. Storrer (DD-740), named after the commanding officer of the U.S.S. Prangley (DD-379) from 31 October 1941 to when she was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on 15 November 1942. Cdr. Storrer was among the 117 officers and men from the Prangley who did not survive the sinking. He was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously. (U.S. Naval Institute collection.)

U.S.S. Preston (DD-379)

Commander Max Clifford Stormes, USN (1903-1942)

Commanding Officer, 31 October 1941 - 15 November 1942

Commander Stormes was born at Big Flats, New York, July 27, 1903. He attended Elmira Free Academy, Elmira, New York, and entered the Naval Academy from the 37th New York District. After graduation in 1924, he served in the USS NEVADA until June, 1926, when he reported to the USS CHEWINK, Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut. He completed the course of submarine instruction in December 1926, and on March 8, 1927, reported for duty in the USS S-33 based at Pearl Harbor, T. H. After his return to the United States in October 1929, he joined the USS V-3, and in April 1930, transferred to the USS V-1, later named the USS BARRACUDA.

From June 1931 until August 1933, Commander Stormes was under postgraduate instruction in General line duties at the Naval Academy, and at the Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Illinois. On August 28, 1933, he reported to the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where the USS CACHALOT was fitting out. He went aboard upon her commissioning, December 1, 1933, as first lieutenant and gunnery officer, returning to the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, in August 1937, for duty there. In April, 1939, he assumed command of the USS TALBOT, and two years later he joined the USS CHICAGO and served as her first lieutenant and damage control officer until October, 1941.

In October 1941, Commander Stormes assumed command of the USS PRESTON. The PRESTON was sunk by enemy action during the Battle of Guadalcanal, November 12-15, 1942, and Commander Stormes was reported missing in action, and was officially presumed dead one year later. He was awarded, posthumously, the Navy Cross with the following citation:

NAVY CROSS

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the USS PRESTON in combat against enemy Japanese naval forces off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, during the night of November 14-15, 1942. Boldly fighting his ship against numerically superior enemy forces, Commander Stormes, by his coolness and courage in the face of grave danger, inspired his men to supreme efforts of determination and endurance to carry on the attack. Although the PRESTON was repeatedly hit by heavy projectiles from numerous enemy vessels, Commander Stormes and his valliant crew kept up a continual and devastating fire against the Japanese ships, inflicting serious damage on the enemy. His great personal valor was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Commander Stormes was also entitled to the Purple Heart Medal, American Defense Service Medal, with Fleet Clasp, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal.

The USS STORMES, destroyer DD-780, has been named in his honor, and is now with the Atlantic Fleet.

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Copied
6 June 1949

A Recollection by Robert G. Gibson*

(A letter to E. A. Wilde, Jr., dated March 4, 1997)

After graduating from the Naval Academy in December 1941, I was ordered to a destroyer in the Pacific. However, before I got to it, it was sunk in late December. A number of us were in the same position and waited in San Francisco for new assignments. About mid-January I was assigned to the **Preston** and joined the ship while it was in the Bay area.

We left San Francisco for Hawaii sometime in January. We, of course, had no idea of the damage at Pearl Harbor, so when we entered there it was a tremendous shock to see all the destroyed ships and buildings. Our first task after getting to Pearl was to escort some Army artillery troops to Christmas Island, south of Hawaii. They were to protect Christmas Island from being occupied. It struck us as being a rather futile gesture, since they had less firepower than our ship.

On the way back to Hawaii an Army bomber circled us for some time and then crash-landed in the ocean. It was on its way to Australia but had missed Palmyra Island where it was to refuel. It was completely lost and was lucky to find us. Several of the crew were injured in the landing, and I think one man died. We delivered them to Palmyra which had a Navy air station - long since closed.

The Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands (October 26, 1942):

This air battle was our first experience in actually shooting at something. I'm not sure how good we were, but we expended a lot of ammo. I recall that we had to cease fire at one point to clear the empty shell casings from the base of the guns. Although we claimed some results, there were so many ships firing in varied directions that it was hard to know what really happened. We were shooting at some planes that were destroyed but who knows what did it.

We were very nervous about subs, since the **Porter** had just been hit by a torpedo. One of the returning planes that could not land on the carrier because of the damage to the flight deck ditched some distance ahead of us. As the plane sank the tail looked just like a periscope, and we opened fire with a vengeance. As the angle changed I could see that it was a tail surface, and I had a hell of a time making my "Cease fire" order take effect. We then picked up the crew and the pilot - a Lt. Norton, who turned out to have been a first classman I knew at the Academy when I was a plebe. He joked later that he would have treated me better if he had known that I was the one to order firing stopped! (Based on your information, I called Norton a few weeks ago and we had a great time comparing notes on what happened since that day in October, 1942.)

After this action - and of course we viewed ourselves as real veterans - we spent some time in Nouméa, New Caledonia, where the harbor was a major logistic center and filled with ships, and in Espiritu Santo, home of the giant red-haired Melanesians - not far removed from cannibalism.

We then proceeded to the Guadalcanal area as part of the task force protecting the area. While there one of the stranger incidents occurred. We had a cook who was a little bit dingy, and one night while we were patrolling off of Guadalcanal he jumped overboard and swam ashore - which is one of the more stupid stunts that one can visualize. He was found by the Melanesians in the

* Lt.(jg) Robert G. Gibson, USN, was the **Preston's** Gunnery Officer when the ship was sunk off Guadalcanal on November 15, 1942. He resigned from active duty as a Lieutenant Commander on September 1, 1953.

sector controlled by the Japanese. They must have figured that the U.S. was going to win eventually, because they took him through the Japanese lines and turned him over to U.S. forces. He missed the night battle and the sinking and eventually was sent to Tulagi on Florida Island. We found him there. I've often wondered whatever became of him.

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal (November 14-15, 1942):

Since I wrote the ship's action report for this battle based on interviews with survivors and my own impressions, it is the best record of the event, so I won't refight this night battle. But here are some of my memories:

We had a search radar which had been installed a few months earlier, but no fire-control radar. Everything was done by visual means. As a result, we had to estimate ranges, and even though it was a bright night it was difficult to get an accurate fire-control solution.

After the tremendous explosion in the aft part of the ship, it started to roll over almost immediately. (I recently met an officer on the destroyer behind us. He was amazed that I was alive since he thought there could be no survivors.) I was in the gun director at the top of the ship. As the ship rolled to starboard I got tangled up in the phone cords and was momentarily trapped. I hurt my leg in the process, but didn't even know it. I stepped off the director into the water. My first thought was to get as far away as possible because of the danger from exploding depth charges. We had been instructed to lie on our backs with buttocks tensed to prevent water pressure from damaging our intestines. Since lying on one's back and getting away fast were incompatible goals, I opted for swimming as hard as I could.

There was much confusion, and I managed to swim directly at the battleship following us. It came out of the gloom looking like the Empire State Building at 30 knots. I was dead ahead of her bow. Now I really swam, and got caught in the bow wave and pushed clear. Someone on the ship had the presence of mind to drop some life rafts which saved a lot of lives. We assembled one way or another - I think we had whistles on our jackets. We put the injured in the rafts and those of us in reasonably good shape hung on the sides or sat on the edges to rest.

It was a long night. We could see gunfire to the north of us and what appeared to be transport ships toward Guadalcanal. Sometime during the night a submarine surfaced not far away. They turned on a searchlight and looked around, but I guess that we were low enough in the water that they didn't see us. We also were coated with fuel oil and were black on black.

As daylight approached we began to worry about sharks. A few small ones approached the rafts but turned away before getting very close. It is probable that the stench of the fuel oil drowned out any blood smells.

Nothing much happened and we were wondering if anyone knew we were missing and alive. Several planes flew over and one circled us. It had a gun turret and they kept the gun trained on us. I'm sure they couldn't tell whether we were friend or foe. We waved vigorously, hoping that we acted like Americans. They evidently were unsure since they flew away a few minutes later.

Finally, early in the afternoon we were picked up by the USS **Meade**. As we came aboard our clothes were cut off, and we were washed down with diesel oil and then hosed off to get rid of the heavy fuel oil. We ended up naked or wearing a pair of shorts - but I still had my .45 pistol!

The **Meade** then went to General Quarters as Japanese aircraft approached.

We survivors were sent to a below-deck compartment, and all the watertight doors were closed. We could hear the guns training and firing and had to sit there completely helpless. These were the worst moments of the whole experience.

To end on a lighter note. We were put ashore at Tulagi and issued some clothing - and ate a lot of Spam. While there - small world department again - some native Coast Watchers arrived in a canoe with a downed Marine flyer - who turned out to be a friend of mine. They had rowed from islands north of Guadalcanal and had crossed the open ocean between the islands - traveling only at night.

Finally, I had a dandruff problem in those days. After being covered with fuel oil and immersed in salt water, cleaned with diesel oil and hosed off with a fire hose, my dandruff was cured. It is not a recommended approach.

U.S.S. Preston (DD-379)

List of Officers, 15 November 1942¹

** <u>Stormes</u> , Max Clifford	Cdr.	USN	Commanding Officer
** <u>Pesante</u> , Juan Bautista	Lt.	USN	Executive Officer
** <u>Warden</u> , John Marshall	Lt(jg)	USNR	Engineering Officer
* <u>Gibson</u> , Robert Gordon	Lt(jg)	USN	Gunnery Officer
<u>Darst</u> , Glenn J.	Lt(jg)	USNR	Communications Officer
* <u>Woods</u> , Wilder Wilson	Lt(jg)	USNR	1st Lieutenant
<u>McDaniel</u> , Leland Stanford, Jr.	Lt(jg)	USN	Ass't. Gunnery Officer
<u>Marx</u> , Theodore Francis	Ensign	USN	Torpedo Officer
* <u>Thornton</u> , Mohns M.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Engineering
<u>Reed</u> , Robert B.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Engineering
<u>Stanley</u> , H. C.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Gunnery Officer
* <u>McKee</u> , Harold Stanley	Ensign	USN	Ass't. 1st LT/Navigator
<u>Sullivan</u> , J. J.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Torpedo Officer
<u>Reuter</u> , F. L.	Lt. (MC)	USNR	Medical Officer
** <u>Goldberg</u> , Alvin J.	Lt(jg) (SC)	USNR	Disbursing Officer

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¹ Source: The last list on file with the ship's deck logs at the National Archives, for the period 1 October to 31 October 1942. All officers rescued by the U.S.S. Meade (DD-602) or later reported as casualties are included in this list, and the total of fifteen officers agrees with the number of officers accounted for in the action report for the surface engagement on 15 November 1942.

** Killed (* Wounded) when the ship was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on 15 November 1942 according to a machine-generated casualty report prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel in 1946.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
November, 1996

U.S.S. Preston (DD-379)

Muster Roll of the Crew, 15 November 1942

ADAMS, Burton Francis	207-04-74	CEM
ADKINS, Paul Willard	291-10-29	CFC
**BAILEY, Hugh Thomas	632-37-78	S2c
BARKLEY, Charles Wallace, Jr.	356-68-45	S2c
*BARNHART, Chester Arthur	282-93-06	GM1c
BEASTON, Henry Lawrence	382-83-25	F2c
BERRY, Bert Ledbetter	346-93-04	F1c
BRAUER, Carroll Edward	258-21-73	QM2c
BRUSCO, Robert Julius	654-13-72	S2c
BUERK, Martin, Jr.	612-04-33	S2c
**BURKETT, Dallor Frank, Jr.	356-61-75	TM3c
BUSHNELL, William	382-91-22	S2c
**BUTLER, Cecil	604-35-98	S2c
BYERS, Wilfred Melvin	620-48-35	S2c
CADENHEAD, Sammie Lee	356-59-37	S1c
**CAIN, Paul Robert	291-84-33	S2c
CALHOUN, Charles Parker	407-22-22	RM1c
CALLIS, James W.	356-40-20	SOM3c
**CAMBONI, James Peter	610-30-94	S2c
CAMPBELL, Davis Wilson	624-58-62	S2c
CASINGAD, Francisco	120-80-30	OffCk1c
**CHESHIRE, Clarence Edgar	266-19-35	S1c
CHESLEY, James Melvin	660-19-28	F3c
**CHISHOLM, Edwin Julian	295-69-18	EM2c
**CLAYTON, Edward Stewart	360-24-56	S1c
COLLIER, Larue	632-37-97	S1c
**COMBS, Lewis Franklyn	342-08-48	MM1c
COMBS, Thomas Bernard	381-22-04	BM2c
*COOK, James Calvin	266-19-56	FC3c
COOPER, Ray Edward	382-82-40	S2c
CROYLE, Melvin Ray	250-58-55	GM2c
*CUDNER, Russell Johnson	223-87-83	GM2c
*CUMMINGS, Harry Arlo	375-89-58	S1c
CUSICK, William Joseph	243-62-04	SM1c
**CZUPRYNA, Matthew Norman	238-68-73	F1c
**DALLARA, William Andrew	223-89-17	GM3c
*DARCY, Edward Joseph	400-52-01	TM3c
DAUNAIS, Louis Philippe	201-78-38	GM3c
DAVIS, James Arthur	662-31-78	F2c
**DE LAY, Ardean Earl	316-63-36	F2c
**DEMOREST, Kenneth Eugene	385-91-92	S1c
DILLINGHAM, Leon LeRoy	382-80-22	S1c
DODGE, James Virgil	346-86-35	RM3c
DRAPER, Delbert	368-59-50	S2c
DUFOUR, O'Hern Vincent	274-53-80	TM2c

**DUKE, Michael	243-62-35	EM1 c
EDWARDS, Owen Howard, Jr.	356-22-59	FC3c
ELLIOT, George Noble	662-64-66	SOM3c
*ELLIS, Richard Earl	256-34-78	F2c
**ENGLAND, John Franklin	262-60-70	TM2c
**FAZENDIN, James William	342-15-98	EM3c
FERRON, Joseph Francis Armand	201-47-57	CTM
FISHER, David Arthur	356-40-02	QM3c
**FLINT, Chester	287-27-07	S1 c
**FOGG, Forest Denver	274-53-72	SF2c
**FREERKSEN, Floyd Lyle	620-23-37	S2c
*FULLER, Joe William	274-14-47	CMM
GALLAGHER, Duris James	274-81-99	S2c
**GASTON, Orville Eldon	393-45-58	GM3c
**GETTLER, Edward	618-47-04	S2c
GILMORE, Thomas Attie	271-73-10	CBmkr
GODA, Michael Joseph	223-63-20	F2c
GUTHRIE, Foy Ellis	630-21-62	S2c
HAMAR, Lawrence A.	663-60-19	S2c
**HANNIFF, Kenneth Earl	393-26-20	MM1 c
*HANSON, Louis August, Jr.	624-97-18	S2c
**HARMAN, John Henry	382-54-18	F3c
**HARRIS, Henry Joe	360-44-36	F1 c
**HARTER, Jens Wikum	654-74-70	S2c
*HARTNESS, Harold Harry	664-61-31	S2c
**HARVEY, John Clarence	386-16-59	F3c
**HASELL, Herbert	262-44-07	Matt1 c
**HEATH, Benjamin Cook	234-34-32	S1 c
HEBERT, Roger Albert	212-49-54	SC1 c
**HEBERT, Warren Pierre	644-59-28	S2c
**HERKER, Paul Clair	654-75-01	F3c
**HERMES, Edwin Christopher	625-50-96	S2c
**HILL, Samuel Arkush	642-00-05	S2c
HINTON, Harold Joyce	341-73-06	BM1 c
**HIRT, Joseph	368-39-37	SF2c
**HOGG, Earl Robert	655-00-45	S2c
**HOLTSE, Frederick William	393-56-59	F3c
**HOWARD, Ira Milton	654-73-98	S2c
HUBBARD, Arthur George	381-03-71	CRM
**HUDAK, Michael John	243-52-19	WT1 c
**HUDLIN, Spincer Willie	356-20-33	Matt1 c
HUDSPETH, Allen K.	376-37-03	F3c
HUGHES, Harry Gaston	654-20-23	FC3c
**HUGHES, Wallace Leland	376-01-32	Cox
**HUNZEKER, Arthur Edward	654-99-21	S2c

**IGNATIUS, Harry Anthony	409-14-82	S1c
JACKSON, George H.	625-50-85	S2c
*JENSEN, Frederick Arthur	700-08-03	F3c
**JIMENEZ, Bernardo Leopold	670-76-85	S2c
**JOHNSON, Raymond Russell	680-30-12	S2c
JOHNSON, Saxon Lathey	356-59-41	S2c
**KEITH, Elmer	347-06-75	S2c
*KENT, Carl Pennington	360-38-97	S1c
KING, Roy	376-45-34	S2c
KIRCHBERG, Edward William	620-23-28	S1c
KLOPF, Gordon Jack	404-96-64	F2c
**KNOWLES, Deyon Frantz	660-37-42	S2c
**KRAFT, Lewis Elmer	654-73-36	S2c
**KUHN, Harvey Lee	316-63-37	SK1c
LAMARAND, David Clair, Jr.	300-23-70	GM3c
**LANGLEY, Archie Clinton	644-57-78	S2c
**LANGLEY, Loyd	644-57-77	S2c
**LARSON, Arthur Earl	341-90-27	MM1c
**LaRUE, Latham Lofton	624-58-62	S2c
LEE, Robert Carter	368-46-97	Y2c
LEMMONS, George Warren	393-48-79	S2c
LILLY, "W". "B".	274-53-71	S1c
LINDELY, Myron Llewellyn	328-71-39	RM3c
**LINEAR, Walter, Jr.	296-05-03	Matt1c
**LISAK, John Julius	300-13-48	Bmkr2c
**LONDON, James Robert	640-31-15	S2c
LONG, Paul Clifford	386-01-17	S1c
**LOUCK, Kenneth Wayne	300-13-57	CM3c
**LOWE, Orison Theodore	634-06-57	MM2c
**MAITRE, George Edward	311-92-14	S2c
**MARBURY, Allen Gaston	644-41-35	S2c
MARKUM, Marvin Lee	359-71-13	CMM
MARSH, Marshall L.	356-52-14	S2c
**MATHERLEY, Edward James	640-31-45	S2c
McCANN, Dewey Albert	346-86-90	S1c
McCHESNEY, James Malcolm	393-55-89	S1c
*McDONALD, Harvey Arthur	660-12-92	S1c
*McGUIRE, Glenn	664-17-21	SOM3c
**McMANN, Milton Lewis	386-00-46	S2c
**McWILLIAMS, Harold Scott, Jr.	258-22-03	EM2c
MEADOWS, Dwayne Morris	372-37-51	F1c
MELTON, "Q". "L".	360-58-20	S2c
MICHALEK, Gerald Richard	300-22-06	S1c
*MICHALEK, LeRoy Alvin	300-13-62	MM2c
**MICHELY, Fred Phillip, Jr.	337-34-97	MM2c

**MODEN, Stanley Theodore	376-02-48	MM2c
**MOORE, Edwin Eugene	287-38-52	TM3c
MOORE, Homer Estes	295-17-58	CGM
MOORE, Esta Omer	654-56-80	F3c
MOORE, John Thomas	644-38-28	S2c
MORGAN, Hayden Hart, Jr.	258-22-11	FC1 c
MORGAN, James Pierpont	360-37-50	S2c
MORRIS, Robert Edward	272-18-28	RM2c
**MOSSHOLDER, Loyd Walter	346-71-35	WT2c
**MOUSER, Dwight Walter	279-56-34	TM1 c
**MULLIGAN, Harold Arthur	316-66-64	S1c
**MUMAN, Randall McClelland	620-22-31	S2c
MYERS, Floyd Devoun	279-55-98	S1c
NAINBY, Frank Goodwin	403-75-98	RM3c
NEALIS, George Robert	405-10-76	RM3c
NELSON, William Hugo	296-11-55	S2c
NELSON, Johnny Monroe	356-77-83	S2c
NEOKRATIS, Andrew	300-13-36	MM2c
*NEWMAN, Francis Gilbert	356-27-01	S1c
NEWMAN, Joe Mat	644-40-62	S2c
NEWMAN, John Harvey	628-07-15	SOM3c
**NEWSOME, Edward Earl	265-83-03	Bmke2c
**NOWAK, Robert Chester	403-57-05	F2c
**OSBORNE, Charles Joseph	342-25-90	MM2c
*OSTA, Mario	600-05-09	S2c
OSTA, William	600-05-13	S2c
PAGE, James Clifton	375-98-53	S1c
PARKER, Charles Elmer	664-18-35	SOM3c
PERKINS, Denvai	279-71-26	MM2c
PERKINS, Wilbur Russell	201-22-61	CCStd
**PERSONS, Robert Gerald	618-39-71	S2c
**PETERS, Charles, Jr.	296-02-76	F2c
**PETERSON, Ernest Vernon	380-95-50	WT1 c
PETERSON, William Andrew	283-35-85	F1c
PETERSON, Willard Waldemar	662-35-08	RT2c
**PHILLIPS, Gifford Eugene	342-53-97	S1c
**PICARD, Melvin Peter	300-59-76	F2c
POTTER, Donald Gust	614-03-36	F2c
**PRICE, William Edward	311-48-43	TM3c
**PROCTOR, William R.	342-47-57	F2c
PROKOP, John Charles	283-37-57	S2c
**PUGH, Leonard "X"	620-06-68	F1c
**RANNELLS, Raymond Lawrence	393-32-98	S1c
REBMANN, Dale Sterling	620-22-29	S1c
*REDDEN, Robert Eugene	626-02-53	S2c

**REED, Alvin Simms	624-01-76	S1 c
*RHODES, Carlton	356-33-24	OffStd3c
*RHODES, Robert Lee	640-29-50	S2c
**RICHMOND, Elmer Eugene	341-66-77	WT1c
**RICHTER, Thomas Claude	385-77-15	MoMM1 c
**RIGGS, Forest Stephen	385-77-27	MM2c
**ROGERS, Eugene Owen	664-46-30	S2c
ROSE, John Franklin	616-58-66	F3c
**RUSS, James Sanford	337-71-92	S1 c
**SADLER, Leonard Morris	300-59-77	F3c
SALAMIN, Stanley	311-48-40	TM3c
SAUNDERS, Harold Wilbur	612-02-98	S1 c
**SAVO, Viljo-Albert	393-33-49	EM1 c
**SCAFF, Henry Franklin	356-60-27	SM3c
**SCOTT, Aaron Eugene	321-30-40	BM2c
SEAY, Dewey Matison	630-13-38	S2c
SHAFFER, Francis John	630-13-60	S1 c
SIMMONS, Richard William, Jr.	371-91-41	MM1 c
SIMON, Dave	624-54-87	F3c
**SIMPSON, Louis Gordon	274-37-43	WT2c
SLAUGHTER, James Hankins	279-71-19	Cox
SMITH, Arvid Burman	262-43-91	FC2c
**SMITH, Francis Joseph	258-22-61	SM3c
SMITH, Sherrill Francis	262-43-87	Cox
SMITH, William Hays	376-02-91	Cox
**SOARES, Norton Henry	376-14-41	SM3c
*SOIKA, Emil John	214-00-02	CPhM
SPILLMAN, James Howard	274-49-97	SC2c
**STAPLETON, George William, Jr.	381-31-56	F1 c
**STINCIC, Edward Thomas	283-61-57	S1 c
**STRAND, Nels Axel William	328-55-82	Bmkr2c
STRUNK, Archie Franklin	321-48-86	PhM2c
STUEMKE, Edward Henry	328-35-96	CY
SUMMERS, George Ed	346-85-78	F1 c
SUND, Chester Vernice	341-42-42	CSK
**SWANSON, Leo Frank	648-02-63	SC3c
**TAYLOR, Franklyn Seymour, Jr.	393-16-74	CMM
**THOMAS, George Firman	654-56-10	S1 c
THOMAS, Guy Wayne	375-99-21	SK3c
THOMAS, Lloyd LeVerne	620-22-30	S2c
**THOMPSON, Charles Pershing	382-16-54	MM2c
**THOMPSON, Raymond Dale	356-77-72	S2c
THOMSEN, Eugene Arthur	321-52-87	TM2c
THRIFT, Alexander Hamilton	375-88-38	MM1 c
**TILTON, Howard Joseph	376-41-69	F2c

TRIMBOLI, Joseph Edward	283-37-05	F1c
**TRIPLETT, June Vaughn	337-35-33	F1c
**TRUE, George Sumner	360-01-80	WT2c
TUCKER, Robert Griffith	393-34-60	S1c
URSOLOM, Zacarias	376-71-71	Matt2c
**UZZELL, George Washington	382-14-12	S1c
VANFOSSSEN, Roy Clinton	393-65-56	F3c
**VELASQUEZ, Gilberto	624-58-66	S2c
WARD, Charles Kay	356-36-55	FC3c
WALKER, Max V.	337-49-25	S2c
**WATSON, Claud Newman	267-99-33	CWT
WATSON, Eben Douglas	393-65-37	F3c
*WATTS, John Gordon	654-28-03	S2c
**WEIL, Herbert Bernard	382-31-21	SC3c
**WELCH, Warren Henry, Jr.	624-80-89	S2c
**WHITE, Roy Thomas	287-56-07	F2c
**WHITE, William Joseph	372-45-15	S2c
WILLIAMS, Lewin James	356-39-28	F2c
**WILSON, Louis Carter	337-02-80	Msmth1c
WINNEN, Alvin Theodore	382-27-71	S1c
WIRHOL, Burch	660-30-97	S2c
*WOODS, Leonard	272-86-32	S2c
WOODWARD, Ralph Raymond	654-28-22	S1c

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Notes:

1 Source: The ship's personnel diary on microfilm at the National Archives. Report Of Changes sheets through 11/10/42 were examined, and the muster roll for the quarter ending 9/30/42 was updated to reflect transfers, men received and changes in rate

* Wounded (** Killed) when the ship was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on November 15, 1942, according to a machine-generated casualty report prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel in 1946.

Summary of Casualties:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 11/15/42</u>
Officer	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>15</u>
Enlisted	<u>113</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>248</u>
TOTALS	<u>117</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>263</u>

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
May, 2000

A Recollection by Robert B. Reed¹

I reported on board the USS **Preston** (DD379) on September 19, 1942. The **Preston** was a two-stacker **Mahan**-class destroyer built at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, and commissioned in 1936. She was armed with a main battery of four 5-inch/38 dual-purpose guns, twelve torpedo tubes, seven 20-mm Oerlikon antiaircraft guns and an array of depth charges for use against submarines.

The captain was Commander Max C. Stormes, USN, U.S. Naval Academy class of 1924; very competent, yet outgoing and personable. As you will see, it was my good fortune that Captain Stormes was a "movie camera buff" and took amateur movies of his children at home. I had purchased a Bell & Howell magazine-loading 16mm movie camera in San Francisco with several magazines of film. The Captain informed me that cameras were illegal aboard Navy vessels, but that he would see what he could do. He went over to see CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester Nimitz) and came back with an "Authorization to use personal camera for the convenience of the Navy," together with a large stack of film magazines. We spent many enjoyable hours discussing photography. I would have my first opportunity to use my camera in the coming battle of the Santa Cruz Islands.

Being a new Ensign, I caught a lot of flack and all of the undesirable jobs they could lay on me. As an Engineering Officer trainee I started in the firerooms. In training we rotated through all the engineering spaces so we would know all the inner workings of the ship's propulsion and auxiliary systems. My battle station for General Quarters was the forward fireroom. I hated the fireroom. You had to enter through an airlock since the firerooms were kept under pressure, and this ran your eardrums through an obstacle course.

The **Preston** joined Task Force 16 on 4 October 1942 and after refueling and provisioning sailed for the Solomon Islands on October 15th. TF 16 consisted of the carrier **ENTERPRISE** ("The Big E"), the fast battleship **South Dakota**, the heavy cruiser **Portland**, the antiaircraft cruiser **San Juan** and a destroyer screen consisting of the **Porter** (Flag), **Mahan**, **Cushing**, **Preston**, **Smith**, **Maury**, **Conyngham**, and the **Shaw**. On Oct. 24 our Task Force rendezvoused with the **Hornet**'s TF 17, consisting of the heavy cruisers **Northampton** and **Pensacola**, the antiaircraft light cruisers **San Diego** and **Juneau** and six destroyers: **Morris**, **Anderson**, **Hughes**, **Mustin**, **Russell** and **Barton**. We had received reports that an enemy force was in the vicinity, but the action didn't start until the morning of 26 October. Although the combined task forces were designated TF 61, they were separated by about 10 miles. TF 17 with the carrier **Hornet** was between us and the Japanese carrier force.

We went to general quarters an hour before daybreak. After daylight the Captain relieved me of my fireroom duty, and I picked up my movie camera from my stateroom and repaired to the bridge so that I could listen to the action over the TBS radio channel. The **Enterprise** turned into the wind and launched her planes at about 9:00 A.M. (local time). Around 10:00 A.M. the **Hornet** reported that she was under attack by numerous dive bombers and torpedo planes. Meanwhile we heard that the attack groups launched by the **Hornet** were working over the Japanese fleet. We on the **Preston** were sweating out the first attack on our carrier, since we knew it must be imminent. We had a little excitement when the **Shaw** reported sighting a submarine periscope. We heard that the **Hornet** had been severely damaged and that her returning planes, most low on fuel, were being diverted to the **Enterprise**. One of the planes ditched near

¹ Excerpts, with very minor editing, from the "World War II" chapter of the autobiography he wrote for his children in 1995.

us and we started over to pick up the pilot. Our Squadron Commander on the **Porter** directed us to return to the screen and said that the **Porter** would rescue the pilot. I was watching the rescue operation through my glasses, and no sooner had she stopped dead in the water than a torpedo hit her amidships. The explosion disabled her boilers and thus her propulsion system. I did not hear whether the **Shaw's** submarine attack was successful or not. (Many years later it was reported by the Japanese that they had no submarines in this immediate area, and it is conjectured that it was a loose torpedo with a damaged gyro running wild.)

While this was going on the first wave of Jap planes appeared overhead. It seemed as if all hell broke loose as the whole "trigger-happy" fleet opened up with everything they had. The air was instantly polka-dotted with black puffs of exploding antiaircraft shells. We only had our 20-mm Oerlikons and our 5-inch/38's, but they were going full blast. I wandered around the deck taking movies of the action. The torpedo planes were commencing their runs, and we were turning our fire power toward them when the range was clear of other ships. This was a problem since all ships maneuver independently when under attack, and the torpedo planes come in low, usually not over 50 feet. Dropping their torpedo from a higher altitude could damage the projectile when it struck the water. Thank heavens they were only interested in the carrier and larger ships. Apparently their torpedoes were set to run deep, somewhere around 30 feet, well below the average destroyer's keel depth of about 13 feet. This doesn't mean it didn't have its hazards. A damaged torpedo can be broaching or loping along the surface and be deadly to a destroyer. The entire group was steaming at flank speed and maneuvering with maximum rudder to avoid the bombs and torpedoes. It was a sight to see the "Big E" making turns so tight that the flight deck looked steep enough for her planes to slide off into the sea. The weather as I recall was a low broken ceiling, and at the moment we were crossing the **South Dakota's** bow, at perhaps 2,000 yards, a dive bomber came out of the clouds and dropped a bomb on her number two 16-inch turret with a tremendous blast of black smoke. I happened to be taking pictures at this instant and recorded the whole episode on film. As I recall, the bomber was shot down as it turned down her starboard side. He had approached and dropped his bomb from the port side. I saw several torpedoes apparently intended for the carrier running hot and straight toward the **Preston** only to pass under our keel. However, I must say it is very stressful to see that track of bubbles coming toward you straight as an arrow at 50 knots! Fortunately, we were blissfully unaware of the power of one of those Japanese "Long Lance" torpedoes. We later discovered that they would cut a destroyer in two pieces like a giant cleaver.

As far as we could tell at that time the **Porter** had been torpedoed by a submarine and was finally ordered abandoned and sunk. The flag and all personnel were transferred to another ship and the **Shaw** was ordered to torpedo her. What followed caused an uproar that resounded all the way to Washington. The **Shaw** fired several torpedoes at the **Porter** in an attempt to sink her, but they all malfunctioned! It chilled us to think that we had 12 torpedoes and most of them could be defective. You risk your life and your ship to get within torpedo range and your torpedoes may be duds?! Food for thought.

The attack continued sporadically until about mid afternoon. We became a little more relaxed when we realized that we were not the primary target. We fired pretty continuously as long as we were able to acquire clear targets. I watched many 20-mm guns wear out their barrels. The gunner's mate would then remove the old barrel with his asbestos gloves, throw it overboard, and

install a new one. We had rescued eight or ten "fly boys" by late afternoon. Around 4:00 P.M. the OTC ordered TF16 to retire to the south toward New Caledonia to lick its collective wounds. "The Big E" had taken three bombs but was still operational. The **Hornet** had been so severely damaged that she had to be sunk by shellfire. Like the **Porter** our torpedoes rattled off her hull to no avail. A sad commentary on our readiness.

We proceeded south to Nouméa, New Caledonia, for reprovisioning and repairs. The Japanese Fleet, unsure as to how much damage we had sustained, was reluctant to pursue us and retired to the northwest. We thought we were going to have some time in port but it was short lived. I had intended to take my film over to the public relations officer, but other duties kept me busy. In general, the Naval campaign in the Solomons was not going well at all. We had lost more than we could afford of our most important ships. We had lost one of the two carriers we had in the South Pacific as well as six cruisers, several destroyers and merchantmen since the previous August. We had only one operational carrier in the South Pacific, and she was damaged. A precarious situation at best. Our forces could not seem to get out of their complacent, overconfident, lethargic, peacetime mode. The Japanese had shown themselves to be competent, opportunistic "sharpshooters," as witnessed by the wreckage left in what was to be called "Iron Bottom Sound." My communication watch gave me a chance to read the top secret traffic and some of it was alarming. Admiral "Bull" Halsey was bent on keeping the **Enterprise** out of harm's way, well south of Guadalcanal. In my estimation we would have lost Guadalcanal if we had not managed to retain air superiority, meager though it was. The Navy and Marine pilots based at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal were in the top echelon of the heroes who made the Japanese pay for every foot of their progress. They did this in spite of being half dead with malaria, dysentery, dengue fever and fatigue. It was difficult to get enough sleep with the nightly forays of "Washing Machine Charlie," who would come cruising over the field during the late night hours and drop a random bomb or two. He didn't do any real damage, but frequent trips to the foxholes took their toll on the already weakened personnel. More than one pilot presumed dead or missing-in-action came walking into camp two or three days after he was shot down. The Florida Island natives had suffered severely at the hands of the hated Japanese and helped whenever they could. They rescued many downed pilots and returned them to Henderson Field whenever they had the opportunity - sometimes even ferrying them across Sealark Channel at night in their dugout canoes.

Early in November communications traffic indicated that a large enemy task force, consisting of battleships, cruisers and destroyers escorting many troop transports, was approaching Guadalcanal from the northwest. It didn't take long for Admiral Halsey to react. One night I was sitting in the mess hall watching a Merle Oberon movie when a radioman came down from the communication watch and whispered that we had just received orders to standby to get under way. We had been replenishing our ammunition and had been flying "Baker" all morning. (Baker is a solid red flag flown from the yardarm, indicating to all hands that the smoking lamp is out, and notifying surrounding ships that we were loading explosives.) The ship had been refueled and provisioned, and we were ready for assignment. It was easy to see that the officers were rather apprehensive about our prospects for action with the exception of our Executive Officer, Lt. Juan Pesante, USN. He seemed quite unperturbed by the possibility of more action.

About mid-afternoon on November 8th we stood out of the harbor at Nouméa, New Caledonia, and formed up with Task Force TARE. We were in company with two cruisers with several transports and destroyers. We proceeded northwest toward

Guadalcanal. We and another destroyer were detached to escort the fast minesweeper **Southard** to Aola Bay on the north coast of Guadalcanal to land the 2nd Marines behind enemy lines. While the Marines were debarking the **Preston** stood by to provide antiaircraft protection in the event of an air attack. I was on the fantail with several other officers watching the operations when we noticed a strange cloud formation approaching over the island from the west. It slowly formed a giant "V" with the sun at the bottom where the sides joined. It was so pronounced that several of us wondered if it was a supernatural omen of victory? I pondered its significance in the dark days ahead.

On November 10th we were detached from Task Force TARE and assigned to Task Force KING. This was the battleship attack force, under the command of Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee, Jr., USN. The situation was getting pretty tense. Our forces were planning to unload several transports of troops and supplies at Henderson Field and were expecting heavy air attacks and possibly an attack by naval bombardment force. Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Callaghan's cruiser and destroyer force from our base at Espiritu Santo was in position north of Guadalcanal to intercept any Japanese attempt at night shore bombardment of the landing area during the night of November 13-14, 1942. History records no other naval battle as fierce and destructive as the surface engagement of this night. It has been described as "a barroom brawl with the lights shot out." Although our fleet had SG surface-search radar, and a few ships had fire-control radar, the outcome of the battle suggested that we did not use it effectively. On the other hand, Japanese logs indicate their lookouts with high power glasses detected our fleet visually before we spotted them with radar. This leads to many unanswered questions. The Japanese fleet was mainly west of Savo Island, and our's was east of Savo between Guadalcanal and Florida Island to the north. The fleets proceeded to close until they literally merged, although both sides had previously detected the other. The result was an unbelievable melee of friend and foe trying to identify and attack their enemy, each side sometimes firing on their own ships. The Japanese seemed to be more adept at night battles than we were. At around 7,000 yards a Jap destroyer would flick on his searchlight to illuminate his target, and the other ships that could bring their guns and torpedoes to bear would pour out furious and intensive fire of all calibers on the hapless vessel until someone shot out the searchlight. Thereafter the target usually provided sufficient illumination from its own fires and explosions to continue to draw enemy fire.

On November 14th we were in company with the battlewagons **South Dakota** and **Washington** and the destroyers **Benham**, **Walke** and **Gwin** as we rigged for battle. In the afternoon we formed a column consisting of the **Walke** and the **Benham** first section, and the **Preston** and the **Gwin** second section at 300-yard intervals followed by the **Washington** and **South Dakota** at 5,000-yard intervals. Since there were transport ships as well as heavies reported in the Japanese attack group, the general consensus was that it was a resupply and bombardment mission focused somewhere around Cape Esperance for troop landing and resupply, with the bombardment force continuing on to within shelling distance of the airfield.

As it was getting dark the ship prepared to go to General Quarters. Things were quiet but there was a strange tension in the air. Captain Stormes seemed more solemn and concerned than usual. I was sitting in the wardroom having my "umpteenth" cup of coffee when Ensign Goldberg, our supply officer, came in and joined me. His face was flushed and he was visibly upset. "I have a feeling we're going to get frapped tonight," he said quietly. I replied "I don't know what to expect," thinking of my battle station in the forward

fireroom. Down there all you can do is say your prayers, stoke the furnaces to capacity and hope for the best.

The night had some low-hanging clouds and it was rather dark. You could make out a person standing near you, but you might not recognize him. Everyone looks the same in a helmet and a kapok lifejacket in the dim light. With overwhelming dread I was preparing to enter my "black hole," the airlock, and descend to the fireroom when the Captain called down from the wing of the bridge, "Ensign Reed, why don't you stay on deck with the forward repair party and see if you can get some pictures of the action. This one is a big one!" I said the most fervent "aye aye, sir" I had ever uttered in my life. I retrieved my camera and took up my new battle station amidships, between the stacks. This was under the quad torpedo mount which stood about 10 feet above the main deck on the centerline. In this position I could move from port to starboard and back with no impediments among the forward repair party. I could hear the TBS radio circuit blaring on the bridge but couldn't make out the words. I did hear Admiral Lee give the order, "Commence firing!" Looking aft along the starboard side, I could see the **Washington's** main battery trained out to starboard. At 5,000 yards I could still feel the concussion of her first salvo. What a sight! I could see the red tracers on all nine of the 16-inch shells, grouped together for all the world like a flight of airplanes. On the up trajectory the salvo disappeared into the low-hanging clouds, and an instant later I could see them emerging from the clouds on the down side of the trajectory. They hit their target some 9 miles away with devastating results, thanks to our new fire-control radar. The target burned and exploded sporadically all night. About this time the **Gwin** fired a spread of starshells in the direction of the enemy ships hugging the southwest coast of Savo Island. In the light provided by the parachute flares of the starshells I could see Savo and flashes of gunfire along the coast. I couldn't make out individual ships, but I could see streaks of tracers headed in our direction. By now the **Preston** had acquired her first target and had commenced firing the 5-inchers in the direction of the attackers. Neither our 20-mm's nor our torpedoes were within range. We had another great disadvantage in this kind of a night battle. We did not have flashless powder this early in the war, as the Japs did. So, as we opened fire we betrayed our position by the flashes that lit up the area around the ship and gave the enemy a good point of aim. Fear was rippling through the repair party, and personally, I felt the paralysis of fear engulfing me. Our group had no duties except to stand by until damage was sustained. This is much worse than being busy doing something you believe to be useful. You have too much time to think. Suddenly the Japanese cruiser **Nagara** got our range with her 5.5" guns, and her first salvo hit the firerooms. I felt the shock and the ship quivered and started slowing with the loss of steam pressure to the turbines. Steam, firebrick and debris came pouring out the stacks. We had been cruising at 23 knots, but now we were coasting to a stop. For some reason I turned to look aft, and at that instant I remember seeing an enormous yellow flash and then nothing. How long I was unconscious from the concussion I cannot tell, however it couldn't have been long. When I came to I was lying on the deck a little to port of the centerlined torpedo mount. The enlisted talker next to me was down and motionless. I never knew whether he survived or not. I looked aft and the No. 2 stack was tilted backward and seemed to be leaning on the searchlight platform. What alarmed me most was two of the torpedo warheads had been ripped open and were rolling around on the deck with the exposed TNT on fire. The thought of that fire reaching the detonators was a chilling proposition. Canned goods, potatoes, cabbage and all manner of food provisions were falling straight down out of the sky, having been propelled upward by the explosion of the after magazines. They

pounded my steel helmet and shoulders as I ran for the ladder to the bridge on the port side. As I reached the first level, the same level as the #2 gun, I encountered a seaman who I later surmised was one of the gun crew. He was screaming that he had been hit. I tried to quiet him and get him to lie down until I could get the doctor. At that time I had no idea how badly we were damaged. I raced up the remaining ladder to the starboard wing of the bridge, intending to report to the Captain and receive orders. There wasn't a soul on the bridge. The Captain had already ordered "Abandon ship." My quandary lasted I would guess less than a minute as the ship slowly capsized to starboard. My questions were all answered by circumstance. I climbed down through the rigging and dropped into the warm tropical water of Iron Bottom Sound.

The next concern I had was the depth charges. Having killed fish in White Oak Creek with the shock of a rifle bullet, I had the notion that if the **Preston's** depth charges exploded it would be like "shooting fish in a barrel" and would kill all the survivors in the vicinity. But Captain Stormes, God rest him, had sent the Chief Torpedoman aft when we went to general quarters and had him pull the booster charges out of our depth charges, set them on safe and throw them overboard. They were now as safe as if they were filled with sawdust. However, I didn't know this when I abandoned ship so I swam away toward Savo as fast as I could, supposing that it was not occupied by the enemy. At perhaps a couple of hundred yards I stopped and turned to look at the ship. By this time the bow was sticking straight up out of the water and was silhouetted against the night sky. While I watched there was a soft "pop," and she slid silently under the waves, gone forever.

Then, looming out of the darkness as big as a mountain came the battleship **South Dakota** heading straight toward me. For some reason I was not greatly disturbed at the time. It seems that at times like this we traverse the entire length of our emotional spectrum so there is no response left. We do whatever we can automatically without thought. I paddled back toward the **Preston**, about 10 or 15 feet out of her path. As she passed I was caught up in the giant bow wave created by her high speed and was carried clear of the suction of her screws. I learned later that we apparently lost several men including Captain Stormes to the **South Dakota**. They had been seen in the water prior to the time she came through the survivors but were never seen again. The **Washington**, on the other hand, had discreetly come left to port to clear the foundering destroyers and leave them on her starboard side. She had then resumed course, continuing the battle with her secondary batteries as she passed the burning ships on their port side well clear of the survivors.

It is interesting to note that the subsequent action report by the **Preston's** senior surviving officer, Lt.(jg) Woods, indicated that naval gunfire was witnessed on the port side of the ship and that the **Preston** was hit by a salvo on the port side. I personally saw flashes from the port side which I assumed was another enemy ship holding us in a crossfire. However, after studying the **Washington's** action report I now believe that this gunfire came from her secondary 5-inch batteries firing over us as she passed the destroyer column to her starboard. For the remainder of the engagement the **Washington** found no enemy vessels in this sector, lending credence to my theory.

There were conjectures that the **Preston** had been torpedoed, but from my later investigations I believe this to be the scenario of what really happened. Upon acquiring a target visually under the **Gwin's** starshells the **Preston** opened fire with her main battery. Using the flash of our guns as an aiming point, the enemy ship (later determined as probably the Japanese light cruiser **Nagara**) commenced firing at us. In the flash from our guns I could see geysers of water

on both sides of the ship as she straddled us. Moments later she was on target. When she hit our firerooms the ship started slowing as she lost headway. The **Nagara** continued firing, and the ship's forward motion brought the after deckhouse and magazines in line of fire. The magazines exploded with the devastating effects witnessed by the surrounding ships. Massive holes were ripped in the deck and adjoining structures. Undoubtedly it violated the watertight integrity of every compartment aft of the #2 stack. I believe this accounts for the loose and ruptured torpedo warheads rolling around under the mounts. The top deck of the after deckhouse was the storage area for the ship's fresh and canned provisions as well as Secondary Conn. When I regained consciousness after the explosion it was raining cans of condensed milk, potatoes, cabbage and other vegetables straight down out of the sky, implying an explosion under the deckhouse. Other shells hit aft, killing the gun crews and exposed personnel.

Lt.(jg) Woods, who was in charge of the after repair party, told me this story while he was in the hospital in Tulagi a few days later. He was standing near the port side of the after deckhouse when the explosion occurred. The sudden upward movement of the deck injured the joints in his ankles, knees, and hips, but he managed to get to the rail so that he could abandon ship. He reported a large hole in the deck with a beam across to the scuppers. In trying to cross on the beam he lost his balance and fell into the engine room. Burned and further incapacitated by escaping steam he abandoned hope. He told me, "I gave up and knew I was a goner - so I decided to get it over with by taking a deep breath of saltwater. I took a deep breath and it was air! To my amazement the incoming rush of water as the ship settled had floated me up through the same hole in the deck!" Some of the men in the water took him in tow and put him in the life raft dropped by the **South Dakota** as she plowed through the other survivors.

After the **South Dakota** left us behind our battleships continued to engage the enemy in a running battle. The **Washington** fired her main battery of 16-inchers at the Japanese battleship **Kirishima**. Each 9-round salvo hurled over 10 tons of armor-piercing steel and explosives at the enemy vessel. The target was soon steaming in circles with her steering machinery damaged, many fires and severe internal damage. She sank later in the early morning hours of November 15th. The **South Dakota** had a run of bad luck. She was plagued by several electrical failures at critical times during the battle, and in one period when she had no surface-search radar she strayed into searchlight range of the enemy and took a heavy shelling of large caliber shells into her superstructure with a substantial loss of life. The **Washington**, though she had many close calls from torpedoes, sustained no damage at all.

The Japanese retired back northwest toward their base at Rabaul, New Britain Island, and we were credited with winning the battle. It is sad to relate that during the battle the Japanese used their torpedoes effectively, while our torpedoes were too underpowered and short of range to be useful at all. Admiral Lee was celebrated for this victory and his very effective use of radar. In addition to the warships lost by the Japanese, their transports with reinforcements of men and supplies for the suffering Japanese troops fell upon evil days. Only two of the eleven that left Rabaul made it to Cape Esperance as the result of our surface and persistent air attacks. One was the **Yamazaki Maru**, and the other was the **Kinugawa Maru**. They were beached at full speed early on the morning of the 15th. They passed me while I was floating in the water at about 200 yards. I could see troops frantically running up and down the decks in preparation for the landing. They appeared to be in full battle gear. No one paid any attention to me - I was just another survivor floating around and represented no threat. Those ships are still there today, two rusted-out hulks partially carried away by sal-

vagers and souvenir hunters. But wait, I'm getting ahead of my story.

As soon as the excitement of the **South Dakota's** romp through our survivors died down I commenced swimming slowly but resolutely toward the distant shadow of Savo Island. I entertained the illusion that it wasn't very far and that I could make it by morning. Thank God I didn't reach it, for it was crawling with Japs! I was alone and still wearing my helmet, and I had my Colt .45 automatic strapped to my waist. My clothes were the usual officer khaki pants and shirt and low-cut shoes. Somehow I felt better wearing shoes and sox.

When the day dawned bright and clear it brought some new fears. At night I couldn't have seen a shark, but now I could see about 100 feet down into the crystal-clear water. I forced myself to look down once in a while, and you can imagine my relief when I didn't see what I was expecting. I formulated a plan in case I saw a shark. I would pull out my .45 Colt, shake out the water, and fire it toward the shark from about a foot above the water, hoping the shock wave would scare him off. Thankfully, I never had to try it. Apparently the shock of all the heavy explosions of the night battle had cleared them out of the immediate area. The Savo Island area was known to be heavily infested with sharks since it was traditional for generations of Islanders to set their dead adrift for the sharks.

In the late morning a couple of cruiser float planes entered the area to assist with the rescue, and a little after noon the destroyer **Meade** (DD602) came over from Tulagi on the rescue mission. But first they had to try their hand at the "sitting ducks." They shelled the two transports for about 45 minutes before they decided they had had enough fun. The **Meade** then lowered two boats which went around methodically picking up the most seriously wounded and taking them back to the ship. The float planes gathered three or four people at a time by having them hang on to their float struts and then taxiing close to the boats where they were let go. Somehow I had drifted much further out than most of the survivors, and I was getting concerned that they might miss me. I believe a Douglas SBD spotted me and radioed my position to the boats, for I saw one of the boats turn and head in my direction and keep coming until they saw me. I was very low in the water by this time. The kapok jackets finally got water-soaked. I probably would have lasted another 3 or 4 hours at most. I waved frantically, and at last I heard someone yell, "There's one." What lovely words! It took two seamen to drag me into the boat. I was so stiff and waterlogged that I couldn't stand or walk without help. But thank God there was something solid underneath me at last. I was more fortunate than most because I had inadvertently stayed out of the fuel oil which covered much of the area. Some of the men got fuel oil and saltwater in their eyes, causing excruciating pain. I was fortunate in that my major discomfort was sunburn on my face. The action of the direct sun coupled with the reflected sunlight off the water made a vicious combination. Occasionally, the salt water would lap at my face, removing skin oils and making it even more susceptible to burning. By the time I was rescued my cheeks were bleeding. However, this was nothing when compared with the misfortunes of other survivors.

The **Meade** was taking survivors aboard as fast as her boats could deliver them. I was carried on board, taken to the fantail and stripped down to my skivvies. There were piles of oil-soaked clothing everywhere. We had another scare when a Zero came over Cape Esperance at low level and strafed us. There were some casualties. I was carried forward in my shorts wearing only my .45 automatic. As I entered the wardroom an appalling sight greeted my eyes. Around the bulkheads in a sitting position sat the seriously injured. Corpsmen were frantically administering morphine from little throw-away dispensers to whoever

moaned. Two doctors were working frantically over two men on the wardroom dining table with corpsmen standing by as stands for plasma bottles. The general scene looked like a slaughter house. The steel deck was covered with blood and slick enough that occasionally someone would slip and fall. The grisly sight of bones projecting from compound fractures, skulls lacerated and bleeding over the person's face making them unrecognizable and broken and twisted legs left me humbly grateful that I had been delivered from such a fate.

After a quick once-over that revealed no apparent injuries I was unceremoniously dumped into the first available bunk in officer's country. No sleep here. The shock of the wardroom carnage and the prospect of another Zero attack left me wide eyed with nerves as taut as fiddle strings.

Late that afternoon the ~~Meade~~ entered Tulagi's harbor and tied up. By this time I was able to walk without help. The Marines who had taken and occupied Tulagi came swarming around eager to help in anyway they could. They were grateful that the Navy had saved them from taking another pounding from the Jap bombardment force. A Marine Captain took me in tow and delivered me to the Marine Quartermaster to outfit. Now this quartermaster was a clown. He would ask you what you wanted, but before you could get words out of your mouth he would interrupt with a "We ain't gottim." He asked me what size shoe I wore, and before I could answer - "Twelves, that's all we got," he said with a grin (I wear an 8½). Big shoes do have one advantage; you can carry an extra pair of socks in the toes. The Captain was in charge of White Beach Barrage Balloon #9, and he and his officers were kind enough to find a bunk for me in their tent. At this time I hadn't begun to experience the effect of the shock and exposure that was to follow. By the next day I started having breathing difficulties and checked in at the medical facility. I had some relief from my breathing difficulties, but sleeping became so difficult that I dreaded to see nightfall.

Tulagi (code name "Ringbolt") is a beautiful little island off the southwest coast of Florida Island. It is approximately 2 miles long and about ½ mile wide. It lies about 22 miles, slightly northeast, across Iron Bottom Sound from Lunga Point on Guadalcanal. It is said to be one of the best natural harbors in the world. Its Japanese garrison had been attacked the same day as the initial landing on Guadalcanal. After they had cleared away the main resistance they still had problems with snipers. At night they would come out of the caves where they had been hiding and climb to the top of coconut trees. Then they would patiently wait, out of sight in the foliage, until daybreak when they would try to get an officer in their sights. Platoon leaders and squad leaders were their favorite targets. One captain told me that 2nd Lts. were referred to as "the vanishing Americans." They countered by removing all their officer insignia and uniforms and wearing regular enlisted uniforms.

The Captain told me one interesting story about a tough old Marine Sergeant and his men treeing a sniper one night. They couldn't shoot because the gun flash would give away their position. The sniper, who spoke perfect English, began talking to them from his perch somewhere up there in the dark. "You Americans will never get me. I'm smarter and better educated than any of you. I have a degree from the University of Washington." The old Sarge told him, "You might have gone to the University of Washington, but you are going to hell in the morning." With the first light the Marines started methodically machine-gunning the top of all the palms in their vicinity until he fell out of his hiding place.

The most disagreeable situation I found on Tulagi was the drinking water. I surmised that General Vandergrift had become tired of having so many men out of action from bouts of malaria because they wouldn't take their Atabrine (a quinine substitute to prevent malaria, which was indigenous to this area). His

solution to the problem was to lace the drinking water with this foul-tasting medicine. So all day long you couldn't get away from its unpleasantness; from brushing your teeth, your morning coffee, breakfast eggs (a mixture of powdered eggs and water), koolade and whatever else used water. The tropical climate required us to drink a lot of water, so General Vandergrift had us trapped. At that time it was hard to appreciate that it was for our own good, and he probably got "cussed" as much as the Japanese for his drinking water.

One day my Marine Captain friend decided that it was a propitious time to celebrate our naval victory by breaking out a pint of bourbon he had hidden in his duffle bag. We didn't intend to ruin the last drop of decent whiskey on the island by mixing it with that damned water. The best we could come up with was canned grapefruit juice, warm at that. After the first couple of drinks it wasn't all that bad. A couple of hours later he was taking me down to the beach to let me fire the 20-mm machine guns under his command. Fortunately for us we ran into one of his buddies returning from the movies who talked him out of it. If we had fired those guns the whole island would have gone to "Condition Red," the Marines would have headed for their battle stations, the torpedo boat squadron stationed in a nearby cove would have come roaring out looking for the enemy. We would have been court-martialed, and I would probably still be in the brig!

My breathing difficulties increased to the point that they decided to evacuate me to our advance base at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, on the first available ship. This turned out to be the USS **Ballard** (AVD-10), a WW1 "four-stacker" destroyer converted to a seaplane tender. While en route we received a radio message to look for the survivors of the light antiaircraft cruiser **Juneau**, severely damaged in the night surface action of November 12-13 in Iron Bottom Sound. Later, she took a torpedo from a Jap submarine east of San Cristobal Island and sank with few survivors. After searching for about a half day one of the lookouts spotted something on the horizon. It turned out to be one man on the rim of a balsa wood life raft with a net bottom. As we approached we could see twelve or fifteen sharks swimming lazily around the raft, apparently waiting for their next meal. We lowered a boat and rescued the man. His name was Allen Heyn. After he got over his delirium and became rational he told a grim story. The sharks had picked them off one at a time until he and a good friend were the only ones left. Heyn said that he held on to his friend as long as he could until his legs dangled in the water. The sharks then ate away his legs and finally dragged him off the raft and devoured him.

Heyn was a big strapping specimen who looked like a weight lifter. I remember that he had a broad face and a wide gap between his two front teeth and a head of jet-black hair. The sharks had taken a big bite out of his left buttock about the size of ones hand. I remember visiting him in sick bay where he would sit up in bed yelling for more water while sitting on his injured buttock. The loss of the **Juneau** and most of her crew of 700 was one of the great tragedies of the war.

We arrived at Espiritu Santo without further incident, and I was transferred to the hospital ship **Solace**. The **Solace** dropped me off at an Army hospital at Suva in the Fiji Islands. I spent about a month there before boarding the transport **Mt. Vernon** for my return to the States (Mare Island Hospital, Vallejo, California). Three months later I returned to active duty, helping to commission the USS **Hopewell** (DD681), and two more years of the Pacific War.



The monument overlooking Purvis Bay, an inlet in Florida Island, about twenty miles northeast of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Dedicated on April 30, 1944, this bronze plaque reads: "In memory of the officers and men of the United States Navy and Allied Navies who gave their lives - - Iron Bottom Bay - - 1942-43 - - Dedicated by Members of the Iron Bottom Bay Club - - Port Purvis, Solomons Islands - - 20 March 1944." U.S. Navy ships lost in the vicinity include seven cruisers and fifteen destroyers. (Official U.S. Navy photograph taken in 1945.)

NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE
MORNING NEWSPAPERS
JUNE 5, 1944

PLAQUE DEDICATED TO OFFICERS AND MEN LOST IN "IRON BOTTOM BAY"

A bronze plaque, the first and only battle memorial so far erected in the Solomons Islands, was dedicated April 30, 1944, to the officers and men of the United States and Allied Navies who died in the fierce battles in "Iron Bottom Bay."

The plaque was unveiled on a small palm-studded hill overlooking Purvis Bay, inlet in Florida Island, British Solomons Islands. On the hill now stands the Iron Bottom Bay Club, an officers' recreation center built by the Seabees. In the bay below, approximately a half million tons of ships of the U.S. Navy, and of the enemy lie on the bottom. It was there that such noble men of war as the cruisers ASTORIA, VINCENNES and CHICAGO were sunk in battle. About 270,000 tons of Jap ships sank there.

The Reverend James Edwards, representing the Anglican Bishop of Melanesia, unveiled the memorial before a gathering of Naval officers and enlisted men on the hill, site of the original episcopal residence of the Bishop of Melanesia, which was dismantled by the Japs. The land is owned by the Church of England. A Protestant and a Catholic chaplain of the fleet gave the invocation and benediction.

Rear Admiral Robert W. Hayler, U.S.N., of 800 East Washington Street, Muncie, Indiana, who participated in the last sea action fought in Iron Bottom Bay -- the Battle of Tassafaronga, November 30, 1942 -- spoke briefly. He paid tribute to "all those members of the Allied land, air and sea forces who in the beginning fought against such fearful odds and in every case accomplished what they set out to do."

"Our enemy overran Tulagi early in April, 1942" Rear Admiral Hayler began. "On May 4, just two years ago, one of our carrier task forces struck Tulagi and sent to the bottom some four ships -- thus starting a series of actions which resulted literally in paving the bottom of the sea in this vicinity with ships.

"On July fourth of the same year, the Japanese landed in considerable strength on Guadalcanal and a little more than a month later, on August 7th, our troops landed here and at Guadalcanal. It was many months thereafter before we had forces and equipment really adequate for the tasks assigned us.

"It is altogether fitting," Rear Admiral Hayler continued, "that this tablet be erected in the Purvis Bay Area, because it was on this side where our troops first landed and where we suffered our greatest losses."

Addressing Reverend Mr. Edwards, Rear Admiral Hayler said:

"You and your associates will have no difficulty in remembering those early days. And since your work will continue long after ours is done, we give this memorial into your keeping. In so doing we know that it will remain a lasting tribute to those for whom it is dedicated, and a source of inspiration and courage for those who come hereafter."

Reverend Mr. Edwards said in reply that he was proud to accept in the name of his Bishop the "sacred duty of caring for the shrine. It will be cared for with respect love and dignity. God grant that we may always be inspired by their deeds"

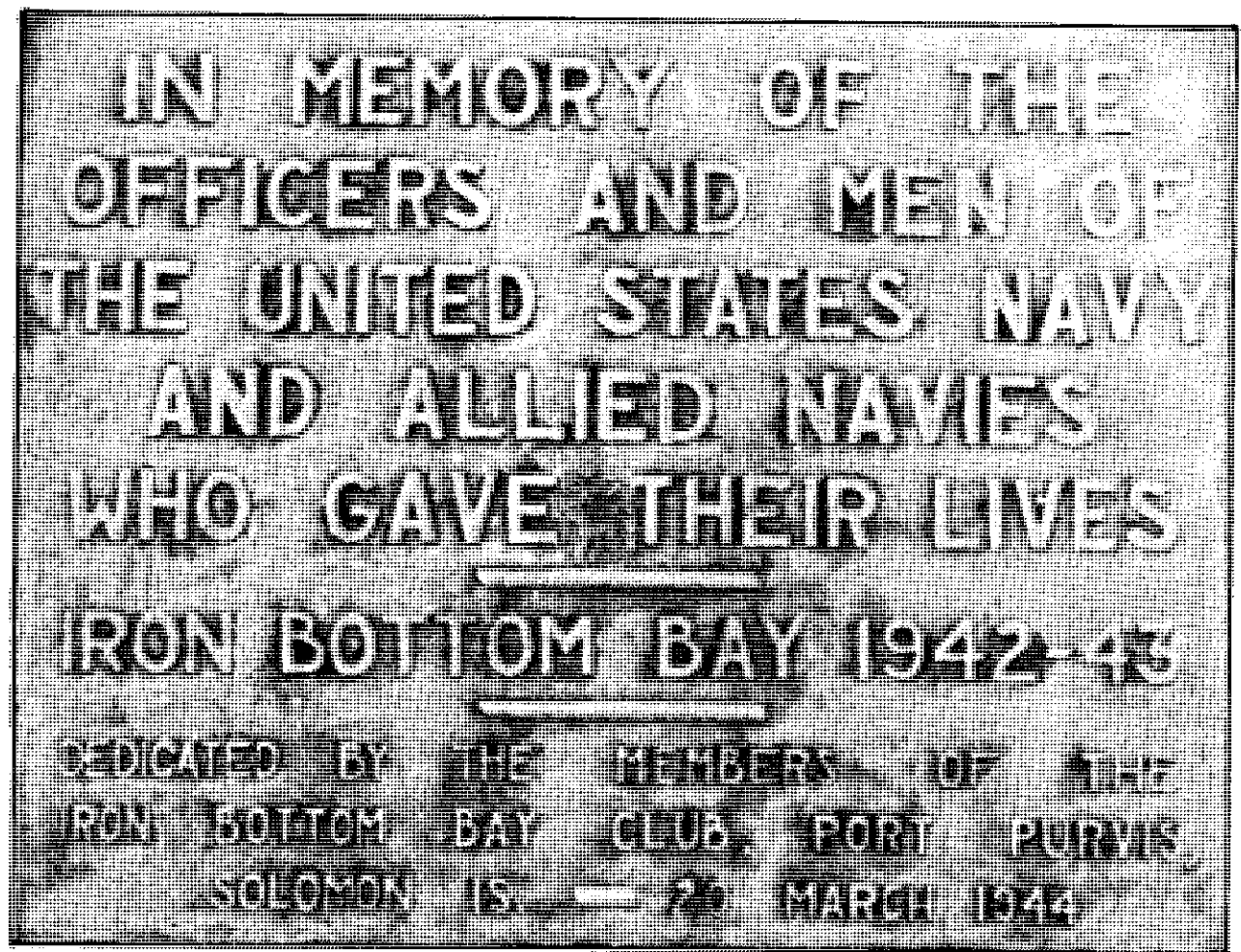
The plaque carries this inscription: "In memory of the officers and men of the United States Navy and Allied Navies who gave their lives -- Iron Bottom Bay -- 1942-43 -- Dedicated by Members of the Iron Bottom Bay Club -- Port Purvis, Solomons Islands -- 20 March 1944".

United States ships that went down in the Iron Bottom Bay and vicinity were: ASTORIA, QUINCY, VINCENNES, ATLANTA, JUNEAU, NORTHAMPTON and CHICAGO, cruisers; JARVIS, USS BLUE, DUNCAN, BARTON, CUSHING, LAFFEY, MONSSEN, PRESTON, WALKE, BENHAM, DEHAVEN, and AARON WARD, all destroyers; the destroyer transports COLHOUN, GREGORY, LITTLE, the tanker KANAWHA; the transport JOHN PENN; fleet tug SEMINOLE; two cargo ships and four PT boats. The Australian cruiser CANBERRA also was lost there.

Japanese ships sunk in the area include two battleships, three cruisers, eleven destroyers, eight transports and seven other auxiliaries.

Captain Andrew G. Shepard, U.S.N., 235 Cobbs Hill Drive, Rochester, New York, first president of the Club, composed the words on the plaque. Frank Czajkowski, Quartermaster, Second Class, USNR, of 20 Milton Avenue, Amsterdam, New York, designed the lettering. A fleet tender made the plaque.

The Club was an outgrowth of several small and inadequate officers' recreation centers-- the Club Des Slot, the APD Beach and the PT base recreation center -- to which officers came between battles of the Solomons. Rear Admiral A. Staunton Merrill, U.S.N., of Natchez, Mississippi, formerly a Task Force Commander in the South Pacific, is credited with the initiative in the movement to build the club. He since has been ordered to Washington as Director of the Navy's Office of Public Relations. Captain Grayson B. Carter, U.S.N., El Cordova Hotel, Coronado, California, is currently president of the Club, and was present at the unveiling.



"For us who were there, or whose friends were there, Guadalcanal is not a name but an emotion, recalling desperate fights in the air, furious night naval battles, frantic work at supply or construction, savage fighting in the sodden jungle, nights broken by screaming bombs and deafening explosions of naval shells."

- Commander James C. Shaw, the major contributor to Volume V of Samuel Eliot Morison's History of United States Naval Operations in World War II: The Struggle for Guadalcanal (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1949). Rear Admiral Shaw, USN (Ret.) died on December 4, 1988.

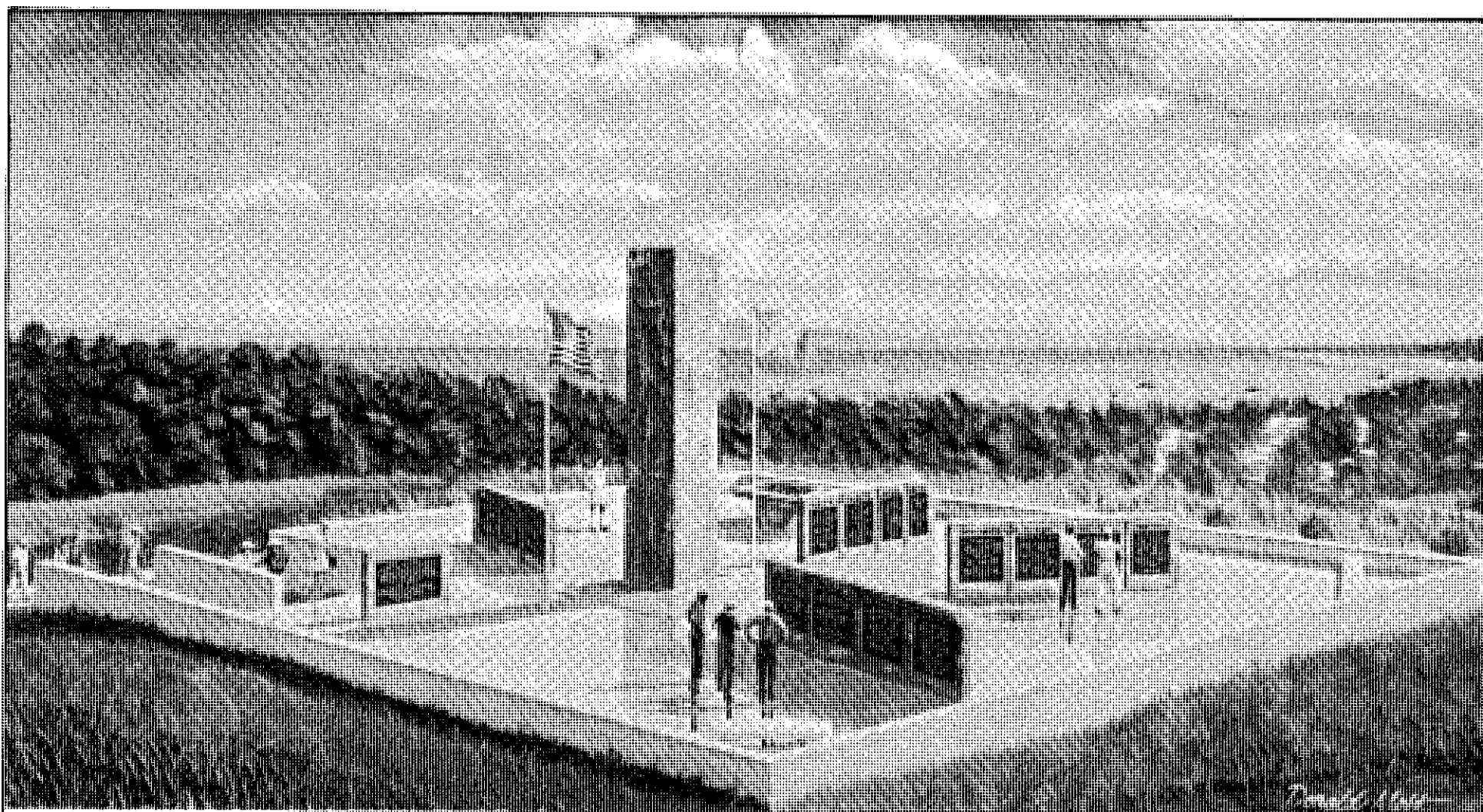
Editor's Note: Rear Admiral Shaw's widow, Elizabeth R. P. Shaw, has graciously shared with me the letters her first husband, Commander Van O. Perkins, USN, wrote in 1944 relating how he arranged the dedication ceremony for this monument at Purvis Bay, Florida Island. The intent was "to make this a permanent part of America," in recognition of the hard fighting and great personal sacrifices which characterized the Guadalcanal Campaign. Commander Perkins was killed in action aboard the U.S.S. Birmingham (CL-62) on October 24, 1944, during the invasion of the Philippines.

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
March, 1995

The Monument at Purvis Bay, Florida Island,
Solomon Islands, as it looked in August, 1993.
(Dedicated on April 30, 1944)



Photograph courtesy of Joseph G. Micek, AUS, treasurer of the Guadalcanal Solomon Islands War Memorial Foundation. Mr. Micek reports that the Officer's Club at the top of the small hill no longer stands, but that the area immediately around the monument is fairly well kept up. (EAW)



The American WWII Memorial overlooking Point Cruz and Iron Bottom Sound, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, was dedicated on August 7, 1992, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landings there by the U.S. Marines in World War II. About 20,000 people attended the ceremony, including many service personnel and over 500 foreign visitors. Many of the local residents walked for days in order to witness the dedication. Panels list the U.S. and Allied ships lost or damaged in the campaign and describe the seven naval battles fought in nearby waters. The polished red granite used in the walls with the panels and in the 24-foot high pylon were delivered to the site by the Royal Australian Navy. The Guadalcanal-Solomon Islands War Memorial Foundation raised \$500,000 and the U.S. Government authorized \$750,000 to cover construction costs. (Picture and panel inscriptions courtesy of Joseph G. Niecek, the Foundation's Treasurer and Project Manager.)

WALL: 2 - TITLE: VESSELS SUNK OR DAMAGED I
04/25/1991 PANEL 106 - TYPE D - FACE L

U.S. AND ALLIED NAVAL VESSELS
SUNK DURING THE GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN
7 AUGUST 1942 - 9 FEBRUARY 1943

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

HORNET, WASP

HEAVY CRUISERS

ASTORIA, CHICAGO, NORTHAMPTON, QUINCY,
VINCENNES, CANBERRA (ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY)

LIGHT CRUISERS

ATLANTA, JUNEAU

DESTROYERS

BARTON, BENHAM, BLUE, CUSHING,
DE HAVEN, DUNCAN, JARVIS, LAFFEY,
MEREDITH, MONSSEN, O'BRIEN,
PORTER, PRESTON, WALKE

MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS

PT-37, PT-43, PT-44, PT-111,
PT-112, PT-123

TRANSPORTS

COLHOUN, GEORGE F. ELLIOTT,
GREGORY, LITTLE

FLEET TUG SEMINOLE

U.S. AND ALLIED NAVAL VESSELS
DAMAGED DURING THE GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN
7 AUGUST 1942 - 9 FEBRUARY 1943

BATTLESHIPS

NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH DAKOTA

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

ENTERPRISE, SARATOGA

HEAVY CRUISERS

CHESTER, MINNEAPOLIS, NEW ORLEANS,
PENSACOLA, PORTLAND,
SALT LAKE CITY, SAN FRANCISCO

LIGHT CRUISERS

BOISE, HELENA, SAN JUAN,
ACHILLES (ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY)

DESTROYERS

AARON WARD, BUCHANAN, FARENHOLT,
GWIN, HUGHES, LA VALETTE, MAHAN,
MUGFORD, O'BANNON, PATTERSON,
RALPH TALBOT, SMITH, STERETT

DESTROYER MINESWEEPER ZANE

CORVETTE

KIWI (ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY)

MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT PT-59

TRANSPORTS

BARNETT, ZEILIN

CARGO SHIPS

ALCHIBA, ALHENA

SEAPLANE TENDER MC FARLAND

WALL: 1 - TITLE - THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN
04/25/1991 PANEL 104 - TYPE C - FACE R

THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN

FROM THE INITIAL LANDINGS ON 7 AUGUST 1942 TO THE JAPANESE EVACUATION OF GUADALCANAL IN FEBRUARY 1943, THE U.S. AND THE JAPANESE NAVIES WERE ENGAGED IN SEVEN SPECIFIC NAVAL BATTLES. IN ADDITION, THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, NUMEROUS SMALLER NAVAL ACTIONS TOOK PLACE INVOLVING CRUISERS, DESTROYERS, NAVAL AIRCRAFT, MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS AND SUBMARINES IN WHICH PLANES AND SHIPS OF BOTH SIDES WERE DAMAGED OR SUNK. SO MANY JAPANESE AND AMERICAN SHIPS OF ALL CLASSES WERE SUNK, INCLUDING TRANSPORTS AND CARGO SHIPS, THAT THE WATER AREA BETWEEN GUADALCANAL AND FLORIDA ISLAND BECAME KNOWN AS "IRONBOTTOM SOUND."

THE FIRST SIX ENGAGEMENTS WERE MAJOR NAVAL BATTLES: FOUR OF THESE WERE NIGHT GUNFIRE ACTIONS AND TWO WERE CARRIER-AIR BATTLES. THE SEVENTH (RENNELL ISLAND) WAS A TYPICAL SEA-AIR BATTLE SIMILAR TO MANY OTHERS FOUGHT DURING THE GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN, BUT THE ONLY ONE OF SUFFICIENT MAGNITUDE TO BE RECORDED IN AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY WITH A NAME OF ITS OWN.

1. SAVO ISLAND, 9 AUGUST 1942
2. THE EASTERN SOLOMONS, 24-25 AUGUST
3. CAPE ESPERANCE, 11-12 OCTOBER
4. THE SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS, 26-27 OCTOBER
5. NAVAL BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL, 12-15 NOVEMBER
6. TASSAFARONGA, 30 NOVEMBER
7. RENNELLS ISLAND, 29-30 JANUARY 1943

WALL: 2 - TITLE: BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS
04/25/1991 PANEL 105 - TYPE B - FACE L

THE BATTLE OF THE SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS
26-27 OCTOBER 1942

ON 26 OCTOBER U.S. AND JAPANESE FLEETS OPERATING EAST OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND NORTH OF THE SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY LAUNCHED AIR STRIKES AGAINST EACH OTHER. ALTHOUGH THE U.S. FLEET INCLUDED TWO LARGE CARRIERS, HORNET AND ENTERPRISE, THE ENEMY FLEET WAS NUMERICALLY STRONGER WITH TWO LARGE AND TWO LIGHT CARRIERS.

BY MID-MORNING U.S. AIRCRAFT HAD BADLY DAMAGED A LARGE CARRIER, A LIGHT CARRIER AND A HEAVY CRUISER WHILE JAPANESE AIRCRAFT PUT HORNET OUT OF ACTION. LATER A U.S. DESTROYER WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED BY A TORPEDO AND SUNK. BATTLESHIP SOUTH DAKOTA, FLEET CARRIER ENTERPRISE, A LIGHT CRUISER AND ANOTHER DESTROYER HAD BEEN HIT BY DIVE BOMBERS. DURING THE NIGHT HORNET WAS ABANDONED AND WAS SUNK. ON 27 OCTOBER THE ACTION WAS BROKEN OFF AND BOTH SIDES WITHDREW.

THE NAVAL BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL
12-15 NOVEMBER 1942

12 NOVEMBER THIS GREAT BATTLE BEGAN ABOUT 1400 HOURS WITH JAPANESE AIR ATTACKS ON U.S. TRANSPORTS UNLOADING TROOPS AND SUPPLIES. THE ENEMY LOST A LARGE NUMBER OF PLANES BUT A U.S. HEAVY CRUISER AND A DESTROYER WERE DAMAGED.

13 NOVEMBER SHORTLY BEFORE 0200 HOURS 13 NOVEMBER A DEVASTATING NIGHT ACTION WAS JOINED SOUTHEAST OF SAVO ISLAND. THE FIGHTING WAS AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE THAT THE OPPOSING FLEETS BECAME INTERMINGLED. U.S. LOSSES WERE TWO LIGHT CRUISERS AND FOUR DESTROYERS SUNK. THE FLAGSHIP, A HEAVY CRUISER, DAMAGED THE AFTERNOON BEFORE BY ENEMY AIRCRAFT WAS STRUCK REPEATEDLY BY NAVAL GUNFIRE. ANOTHER HEAVY CRUISER WAS HIT BY A TORPEDO AND A LIGHT CRUISER AND THREE DESTROYERS WERE DAMAGED BY NAVAL GUNFIRE. THE JAPANESE LOST TWO DESTROYERS SUNK AND THREE DESTROYERS DAMAGED. THEIR GREATEST LOSS WAS A BATTLESHIP SO HEAVILY DAMAGED BY NAVAL GUNFIRE THAT U.S. CARRIER-BASED AIRCRAFT AND MARINE PLANES FROM HENDERSON FIELD WERE ABLE TO SINK IT LATE IN THE AFTERNOON.

14 NOVEMBER AFTER MIDNIGHT 13-14 NOVEMBER A JAPANESE NAVAL BOMBARDMENT UNIT SHELLLED HENDERSON FIELD. AT DAWN THE BOMBARDMENT UNIT WAS ATTACKED BY MARINE AND NAVAL AIRCRAFT FROM HENDERSON FIELD AND AIRCRAFT FROM THE APPROACHING U.S. CARRIER ENTERPRISE. THE ENEMY LOST A HEAVY CRUISER. ALSO TWO HEAVY CRUISERS, A LIGHT CRUISER AND A DESTROYER WERE DAMAGED.

IN THE AFTERNOON AN ENEMY REINFORCEMENT GROUP OF ELEVEN DESTROYERS AND ELEVEN TRANSPORTS WAS LOCATED STEAMING TOWARD GUADALCANAL. ALTHOUGH SEVEN OF ITS TRANSPORTS WERE SUNK, THE JAPANESE CONTINUED ON THEIR ASSIGNED MISSION AFTER TRANSFERRING THE TROOPS TO THE DESTROYERS. LANDING OF THE TROOPS AND SUPPLIES BEGAN ABOUT 0400 HOURS THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT 14-15 NOVEMBER A U.S. TASK FORCE OF TWO BATTLESHIPS, WASHINGTON AND SOUTH DAKOTA, AND FOUR DESTROYERS OPENED FIRE ON A SECTION OF THE ENEMY'S FLEET EAST OF SAVO ISLAND. TWO OTHER GROUPS OF THE JAPANESE FLEET WEST AND SOUTH OF SAVO ISLAND QUICKLY ENGAGED THE U.S. FORCE. A JAPANESE DESTROYER, SEVERELY DAMAGED, WAS SUNK THE NEXT DAY. OF THE FOUR U.S. DESTROYERS ENGAGED, TWO WERE SUNK. THE OTHER TWO WERE DAMAGED AND ORDERED TO RETIRE. ONE OF THESE WAS SUNK LATER BY U.S. FORCES.

15 NOVEMBER AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT 14-15 NOVEMBER THE TWO U.S. BATTLESHIPS MET THE FOURTH AND STRONGEST GROUP OF THE ENEMY FLEET. SOUTH DAKOTA WAS CAUGHT BY ENEMY SEARCHLIGHTS, WHEREUPON THE ENTIRE ENEMY FLEET CONCENTRATED ITS FIRE ON IT, IGNORING WASHINGTON. THIS WAS FATAL TO THE SECOND JAPANESE BATTLESHIP WHICH WASHINGTON PUT OUT OF ACTION IN SEVEN MINUTES. TWO ENEMY HEAVY CRUISERS WERE ALSO DAMAGED BY THE TWO U.S. BATTLESHIPS. DUE TO THE CONCENTRATED FIRE, SOUTH DAKOTA WAS FORCED TO RETIRE AND WASHINGTON TURNED NORTHWEST TO LURE ENEMY SHIPS AWAY FROM SOUTH DAKOTA. THE JAPANESE FLEET FOLLOWED BUT SOON WITHDREW. THE DAMAGED JAPANESE BATTLESHIP WAS ABANDONED AND SUNK.

AT DAYLIGHT ARMY, NAVY AND MARINE AIRCRAFT ATTACKED THE FOUR REMAINING TRANSPORTS OF THE REINFORCEMENT GROUP. A LONE U.S. DESTROYER FROM TULAGI APPEARED AND DESTROYED THE TRANSPORTS.

THUS ENDED THE GREATEST SEA BATTLE OF THE GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH THE U.S. NAVY LOST MORE COMBATANT SHIPS, THE ENEMY LOSS OF TWO BATTLESHIPS AND ELEVEN TRANSPORTS WAS FAR MORE SERIOUS. THE JAPANESE NEVER AGAIN SENT LARGE NAVAL FORCES INTO THE WATERS AROUND GUADALCANAL. THE BATTLE WAS DECISIVE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THAT ISLAND.

WALL: 2 - TITLE: VESSELS SUNK OR DAMAGED III
04/25/1991 PANEL 108 - TYPE C - FACE L

JAPANESE NAVAL VESSELS
SUNK OR DAMAGED DURING THE
GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN

<u>SHIP</u>	<u>SUNK</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>
BATTLESHIPS	2	
AIRCRAFT CARRIERS		1
LIGHT CARRIERS	1	1
HEAVY CRUISERS	3	5
LIGHT CRUISERS	1	2
DESTROYERS	11	20
SUBMARINES	6	
TRANSPORTS	13	
CARGO SHIPS	5	

"They fought together as brothers in arms; they died together and now they sleep side by side. To them we have a solemn obligation - the obligation to insure that their sacrifice will help make this a better and safer world in which to live."

- Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, at The Surrender on board the U.S.S. Missouri (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945.

The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379) in World War II

Photograph Credits

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source Code/Ident. No.</u>
Historical plate	NA 19-N-16675
Fitting out, Mare Is. N. Yd., 7/5/36	NA 19-N-17700
Aerial, starboard bow, u/way, 4/28/38	NA 80-G-425597
Anchored, prewar, port quarter	NI Order w. photocopy
Pierside, Mare Is., port bow, 8/15/42	NA 19-N-33052
USS <u>Cushing</u> (DD-376) fwd. half, 7/15/42	NA 19-N-31930
<u>Cushing</u> , after half, M.I., 7/15/42	NA 19-N-31931
20-mm Oerlikon mount (Mk. 4), 1942	NA 19-N-31965
USS <u>Enterprise</u> (CV-6) u/attack 10/26/42	NA 80-G-33370
<u>Enterprise</u> , near bomb miss, 10/26/42	RW N-202B
IJN <u>Nagara</u> , under way, port bow, 1938	NH NH 96193
USS <u>Meade</u> (DD-602), stbd. bow, 6/42	NA 19-N-30842
USS <u>South Dakota</u> (BB-57), 8/24/44	NA 19-N-70911
Award ceremony, USS <u>Wake Island</u> , 1944	-- (O. V. Dufour)
USS <u>Stormes</u> (DD-780), port bow, u/way	NI Order w. photocopy
Monument, Purvis Bay, Fla. Is., 1944	NA 80-G-275700
Monument plaque (on above)	NA 80-G-240318

* * * * *

Key to Sources:

NA National Archives II
8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001
Still Picture ref.: (301) 713-6625, Ext. 234
(Request addresses/price lists of private vendors)

NI U.S. Naval Institute Photo Service, Beach Hall
291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402
Phone: (410) 295-1022; FAX: (410) 269-7940

RW Real War Photos, P.O. Box 728, Hammond, IN 46325

NH Naval Historical Foundation Photo Service
Washington Navy Yard
1306 Dahlgren Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20374-5055
Phone: (202) 433-2765

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
March, 2001

The U.S.S. Preston (DD-379 in World War II

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Miscellaneous:

- Article, "The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal," by Dr. Jack Sweetman. Naval History, May-June, 1995.
- "Battle Books" at the National Archives for a list of the Preston's casualties on 11/15/42 (a machine-generated casualty report prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel c. 1946).
- Deck logs, Preston. (National Archives)
- Personnel Diary (muster rolls), Preston, on microfilm at the National Archives.
- War Diary, Preston. (National Archives)
- WWII citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
March, 2001

2006 ADDENDUM

Dedication in 1944 of the Monument at Purvis Bay, Florida Island, British Solomon Islands, to honor ". . . the officers and men of the United States and Allied Navies who died in the fierce Battles in 'Iron Bottom Bay'" during the Guadalcanal Campaign, August 7, 1942 to February 9, 1943.

Editor's Note:

Around 1995 Elizabeth ('Bettsy') R. Perkins Shaw sent me copies of several handwritten letters she had received early in 1944 from her first husband, Commander Van Ostrand Perkins, USN (K.I.A.). In 2002 most of his letters were included in Bettsy Shaw's memoir, Beside Me Still, published by the Naval Institute Press shortly after she died. However, his letters regarding the dedication ceremony were edited out by the publisher.

This addendum consists of typed excerpts from these letters plus a remarkable photograph of the dedication ceremony which I discovered only a few years ago (National Archives II: 127-GW1008, #80929).

*E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
June, 2006*

Florida Island Monument on Purvis Bay
(Dedicated on April 30, 1944)

Excerpts from letters written to Mrs. Elizabeth R. P. Shaw by her first husband, Cdr. Van Ostrand Perkins, USN (KIA '44) in 1944:

Today was one of those days - in fact, it was the first busy one I've had in a long time. I was away from the ship all day and couldn't write more on this letter this morning and afternoon, as I expected to, and get it in the mail. It will go tomorrow.

Well, my busy day was about the memorial ceremony we plan to have. I went with a Captain Carter on what I thought would be an hour's visit with the Admiral to iron out the details. The Admiral set the date for this Sunday and indicated what he would like to have and who he wanted to have invited, etc.. Well, I am the "glad hand boy", so I got the list of guests typed up and arranged and started the dust flying on some of the details. Like getting the chaplains lined up and telling them what we want, getting the band arranged for and so forth. Then this afternoon Captain Carter gave me one of his fast boats and I went five miles or so up the line to another part of the naval settlement extending tidings and invitations to certain U.S. naval and New Zealand-Australian naval people. I didn't get back to the ship until after five. It was an interesting boat ride I had though, because I'd never been up to that part of the area before. There are no roads as I've said, and it's all jungle between here and there - so all communication has to be by boat and not by cars.

Tomorrow I have to go over to _____, about 20 miles across the bay, and call on more dignitaries and invite them, get a Vice Admiral to agree to make a speech and arrange for photographers and publicity from a Photographic Squadron. That will be another full day's job I fear.

I enjoy doing this, however, for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that I get off the ship all the time and am getting a regular Cook's tour of this area, seeing it at close hand. Much of it is well known and famous which I've seen from the distance but have never really been close to. Of course it is all so built up now by us that it would be unrecognizable almost to those who first landed.

It is amazing what kind of people Americans are. We land in the middle of the jungle and in no time have a little area cleared, through which we build roads, put up piers, storehouses, shops, etc. - and where there are roads you must watch to see that you aren't run over by jeeps, giant trucks and everything on wheels. There is nothing permanent here, and I doubt if much money has been wasted, but we certainly do move in on a place with our machinery. I'll bet we have more trucks, steam shovels, tractors, etc. in a small area like this than all the contractors in the Philippine Islands had together, and if the Japs judged us by our efforts in the Philippines, how wrong they were.

There must be much consternation in Tokyo these days, because

in the Pacific the war is humming along at a great rate; probably even better than most of us realize.

* * * * *

We had a meeting of the Board of Governors of the Club, and I find that on the Board are a Captain, four Commanders, four Lieut. Comdrs. and two Lieuts.. I am glad I have the job, because this being in such a history-making area, they have plans to make it a sort of permanent part of America by erecting a suitable plaque and having the little monument dedicated with a large ceremony and so forth. So I, having a very personal interest in any dedication, volunteered to serve on the committee for the arrangements of this ceremony. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to know that they are going to do something to commemorate and make a permanent record of the achievements that resulted from the hard fighting and unimaginable hardships and work that has taken place in this area. You probably have to have fought over it and come back to get the feeling that I have. People who arrive today can't ever imagine what it was like "in the old days."

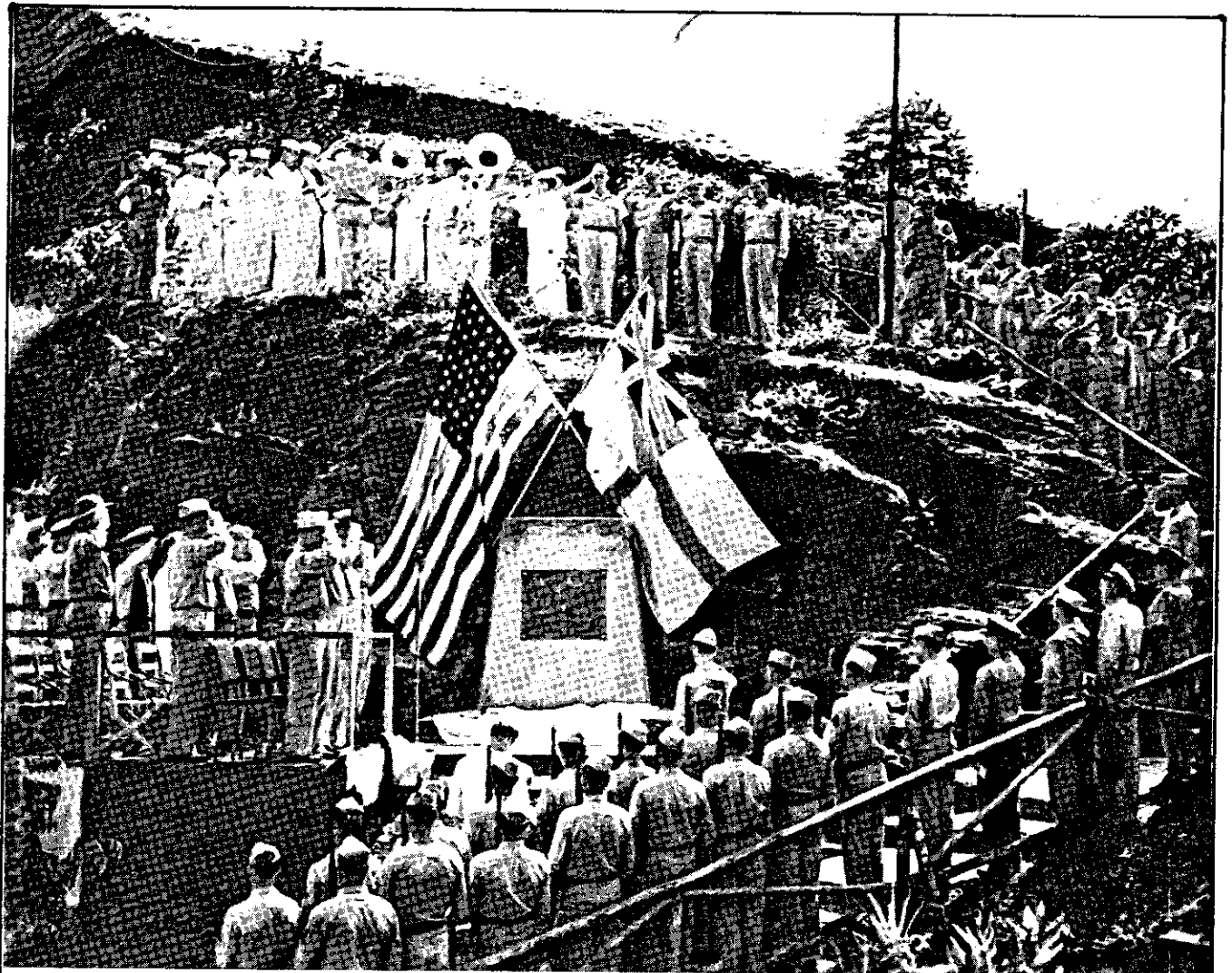
* * * * *

I've enclosed the little program for our ceremony which took place this morning. It went off very well and very smoothly I thought, and I had a front row place to stand - right where the activities were. There were numerous cameramen taking pictures, and I expect that they will send me a set in as much as I asked for it, organized them and gave them all some beer afterwards.

Friday I flew over to _____ in one of our planes to line up and invite the "big wigs" stationed there and the press. It certainly was a delightful trip. It was a beautiful day, and it was nice to fly and to see some of the country from the air, as scenically - and from a distance - it is very grand looking.

After we landed I got a jeep and driver from one of the officers, and in driving around inviting the guests I had a good chance to look things over and was duly impressed by the activity, accomplishments and mud.

I saw Ronnie Rankin this morning at the ceremony and expect to have a few beers with him later this afternoon. I also bumped into two people you don't know. One was the ex-Chief Boatswain's Mate of the Atlanta - he is now an officer - and the other, a lad who was on one of the destroyers that got sunk that unforgettable night. We were together in the hospital in New Zealand. It certainly was nice to see those two again. I always like to see old friends, and particularly when we have something great in common.



A bronze plaque, dedicated "In memory of the officers and men of the United States and Allied Navies who gave their lives at Iron Bottom Bay, 1942-43," was unveiled on April 30, 1944. The plaque overlooks Purvis Bay, an inlet in Florida Island, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, about twenty miles northeast of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. U.S. Navy vessels sunk by the enemy in the Bay and near vicinity included seven cruisers, twelve destroyers and three destroyer transports. (Archives II, College Park, MD)

About The Editor

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Commander, USNR (Ret.), received his commission through the NROTC Program at Dartmouth College in 1950. Following graduation he saw action off Korea aboard the USS Douglas H. Fox (DD-779) when this destroyer dueled with numerous North Korean shore batteries in the Sea of Japan. Many of the photographs he took during this period have been donated to the Naval Historical Foundation, and two of them appeared in the coffee-table book, The Navy, published by the Foundation in 2000. After completing three years of active duty he began a civilian career in public accounting and later in management positions at Raytheon Company in Waltham, Massachusetts.

In 1993 he developed a strong interest in naval history and began editing a series of illustrated ships' histories primarily of U.S. destroyers sunk in World War II. Primary source documents such as action reports, ships' war diaries, medal citations and muster rolls are included in these histories as well as many firsthand accounts. His booklets are not for sale, but he sends complimentary copies to the survivors and to the families of crewmembers killed on these vessels.

Commander Wilde is a life member of the Naval Historical Foundation and the U.S. Naval Institute.

Historical Compilations by the Editor:

(Destroyer/Destroyer Escort Hulls in World War II)

<u>United States Ship</u>	<u>Date Sunk/ (Damaged)</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Killed/ Wounded¹</u>
<u>Aaron Ward</u> (DD-483)	04/07/43	Guadalcanal	42/139*
<u>Barton</u> (DD-599)	11/13/42	Guadalcanal	164/32
<u>Borie</u> (DD-215)	11/01/43	North Atlantic	27/00
<u>Colhoun</u> (APD-2)	08/30/42	Tulagi	51/18
<u>Corry</u> (DD-463)	06/06/44	Normandy	24/55
<u>Cushing</u> (DD-376)	11/13/42	Guadalcanal	72/67
<u>DeHaven</u> (DD-469)	02/01/43	Guadalcanal	168/40
<u>Douglas H. Fox</u> (DD-779)	(05/17/45)	Okinawa	10/36
<u>Drexler</u> (DD-741)	05/28/45	Okinawa	158/54
<u>Duncan</u> (DD-485)	10/12/42	Guadalcanal	48/35
<u>Emmons</u> (DMS-22)	04/06/45	Okinawa	60/78
<u>Fiske</u> (DE-143)	08/02/44	North Atlantic	33/65
<u>Glennon</u> (DD-620)	06/10/44	Normandy	25/49*
<u>Halligan</u> (DD-584)	03/26/45	Okinawa	160/43
<u>Hammann</u> (DD-412)	06/06/42	Midway	84/63
<u>Laffey</u> (DD-459)	11/13/42	Guadalcanal	59/114
<u>Lansdale</u> (DD-426)	04/20/44	Mediterranean	49/76
<u>McFarland</u> (AVD-14)	(10/16/42)	Guadalcanal	12/13
<u>Meredith</u> (DD-726)	06/09/44	Normandy	35/28
<u>Monssen</u> (DD-436)	11/13/42	Guadalcanal	145/37
<u>Perry</u> (DMS-17)	09/13/44	Angaur/Peleliu	8/17
<u>Preston</u> (DD-379)	11/15/42	Guadalcanal	117/26
<u>Spence</u> (DD-512)	12/18/44	Luzon, P.I.	315/24
<u>Strong</u> (DD-467)	07/05/43	Cent. Solomons	45/61
<u>Walke</u> (DD-416)	11/15/42	Guadalcanal	82/48

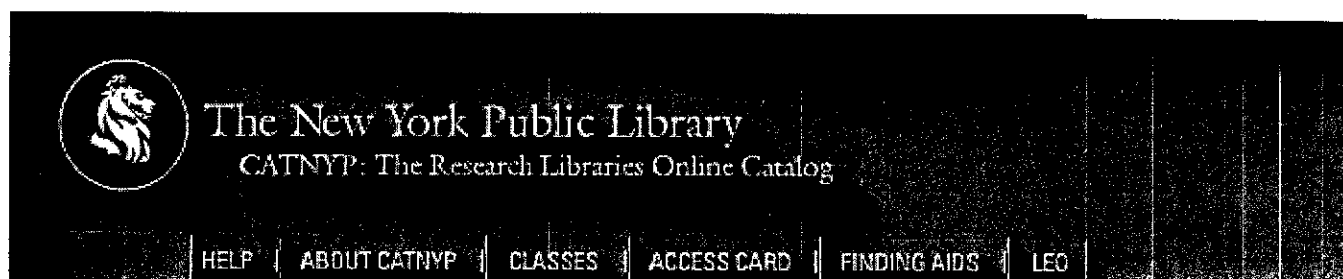
* * * * *

Notes:

* Total for two engagements with the enemy

1 Including those presumed dead more than a year subsequent to the date they were reported missing either due to enemy action or by drowning.

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
Commander, USNR (Ret.)
June, 2005



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