

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Cooper* (DD-695) in World War II:  
Documents, Photographs and Survivors' Interviews**

Needham, Massachusetts  
Privately published by the editor  
First Edition 2007

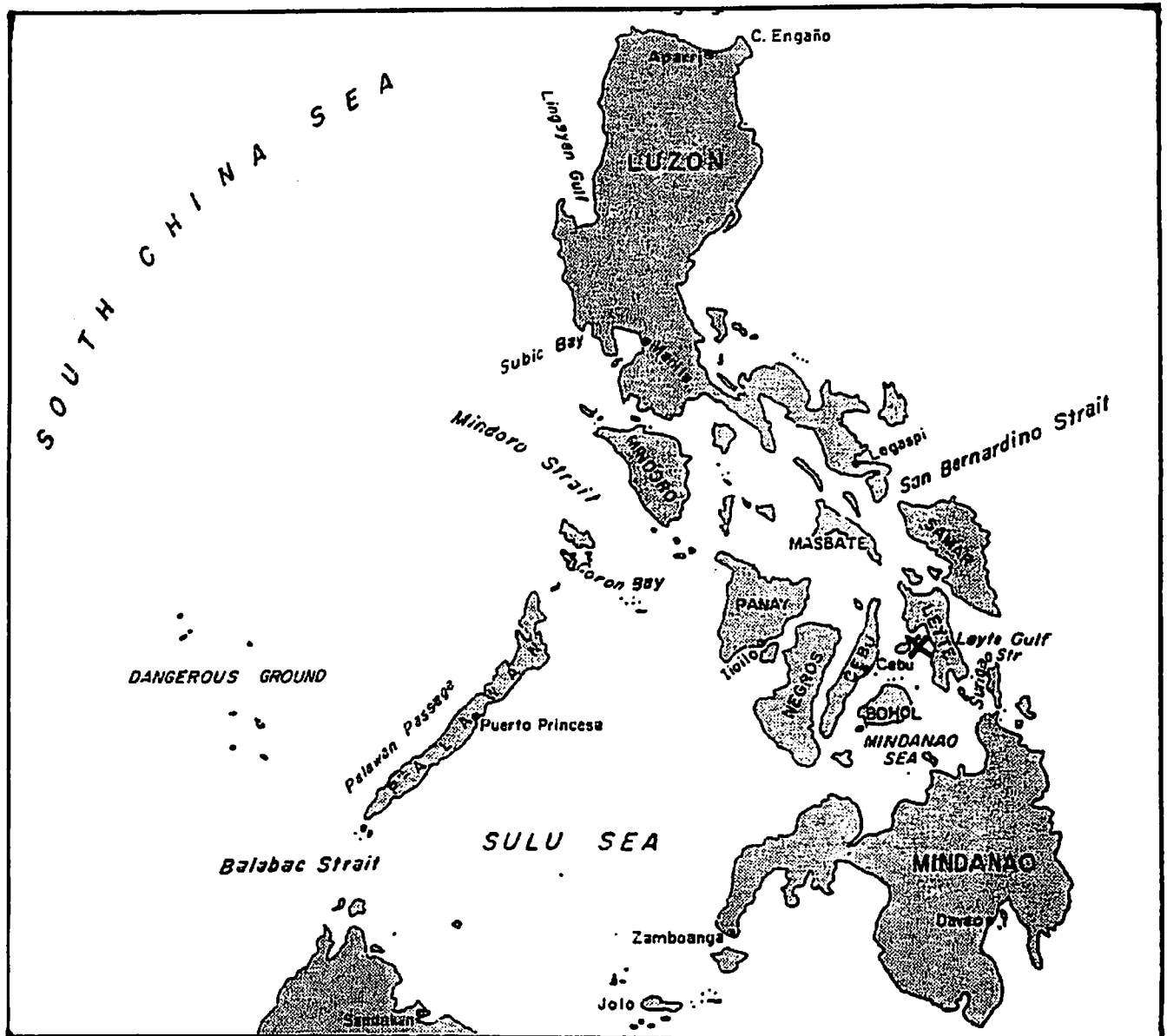


Scanned and electronically published by  
Destroyer History Foundation  
Bolton Landing, New York  
2008

CONTAINS MATERIAL REPRODUCED WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE U.S. NAVAL INSTITUTE.  
LITERARY RIGHTS TO SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS ARE RETAINED BY THE AUTHORS OR THEIR  
DESCENDANTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH UNITED STATES COPYRIGHT LAW.

## USS Cooper (DD-695) in World War II

### Philippine Islands



USS Cooper (DD-695) and two other Allen M. Sumner-class destroyers entered Ormoc Bay, on Leyte's west coast (at 'X' above), around midnight on the night of 2-3 December 1944 seeking to destroy Japanese shipping. Their night surface action began at 0002 on December 3rd and ended for Cooper just 15 minutes later when she was on her side and broken in two by a torpedo hit. During this short period (the ship's first surface engagement!) Cooper fired 300 to 400 rounds from her three twin 5-inch mounts with excellent results: sinking an enemy destroyer and sharing in the destruction of another with only about 4 seconds between salvos. Most of her 168 survivors (47% of her complement) were rescued by 'Catalina' PBV flying boats later in the day. Four days later the U.S. 77th Division established a beachhead at Ormoc and soon linked up with troops pushing westward. Leyte was declared secured on December 26th.

Office of Naval Records and History  
Ships' Histories Section  
Navy Department

HISTORY OF THE USS COOPER (DD 695)

Not all Americans know of the destroyer USS COOPER -- but those who do know her story can be proud of the brief but gallant page she has written in naval history. Here is the story of a ship sinking with her guns blazing; her survivors struggling in the ocean at night with the Japanese survivors of the destroyer she had sunk.

All of this drama had its beginning when the keel for destroyer #695 was laid by the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company at Kearny, New Jersey on 30 August 1943. When #695 was launched on 9 February 1944, Mrs. Elmer Glenn Cooper smashed the bottle of champagne which christened the ship USS COOPER. Mrs. Cooper is the wife of Lieutenant E. G. Cooper, who was killed in an airplane crash while attached to the old carrier LANGLEY during February of 1938.

COOPER was commissioned on 27 March 1944 with Commander J. W. Schmidt, USN, as her first commanding officer. A shakedown cruise which took the ship from New York to Bermuda terminated at Norfolk, Virginia, where post-shakedown availability and exercises prepared the ship for her cruise through the Panama Canal to San Diego during August of 1944.

With her course set to the westward, COOPER arrived at Pearl Harbor, where, on 21 October 1944, Commander Mall A. Peterson, USN, relieved Commander Schmidt as commanding officer of the destroyer COOPER. Two days later the ship's bow was parting water on a westward course again, headed for the war zone.

Joining the THIRD Fleet, COOPER's operations consisted of several strikes on the Manila Bay area, one against Japanese shipping approaching Ormoc Bay and several minor bombing strikes. While with the THIRD Fleet, COOPER participated in an unusual rescue of a fighter pilot who was down in the water within 20 miles of Luzon in the vicinity of Polillo Island. At the time COOPER was ordered to rescue this pilot, the task force was 100 miles east of Luzon, which indicates the extent a fleet commander will go to rescue an aviator who has been engaging the enemy.

With the help of planes orbiting around the "dunked" pilot and the use of radar, the pilot was brought safely aboard COOPER. On the way back to join the task force, COOPER found herself without air protection and had to shift for herself in warding off enemy planes. During the evening of 19 November, a radar plot of bogies showed that the ship had been located and that a rough night was promised. It was still twilight and 45 minutes after the first radar contact, a Jap plane made its way in. Coming in low, he was taken under fire and turned away only to return in about 15 minutes for a second approach. It was apparently a torpedo run and at 2,000 yards the plane turned away and disappeared from the radar screen.

After a few days at Ulithi during November, Destroyer Squadron 60, which included COOPER, proceeded to report for duty in the SEVENTH Fleet by 29 November. Several assignments in the Leyte Gulf were

completed and COOPER, with other destroyers of Division 120, received orders to proceed to Ormoc Bay to seek out and destroy Japanese shipping.

COOPER in company with ALLEN M. SUMNER and MOALE, approached Ormoc Bay at about 2330 on the night of 2 December. The ships were in line with SUMNER to port and MOALE to starboard. Numerous bogies were encountered up to midnight. COOPER took three under fire, the second or third salvo from her five inch batteries causing the plane to burst into flames and crash into the water about 4,000 yards ahead. The second plane was taken under fire by SUMNER and COOPER and is believed to have been damaged but was not seen to crash. Only two salvos were sent after a third plane but with a land background it was lost from radar perception.

The action of the surface vessels is taken partly from memory of the survivors of the COOPER and the records of the ALLEN M. SUMNER and the MOALE. Two minutes after midnight, contact was made with surface ships and a minute later COOPER commenced firing. Her first salvo fell short about 200 yards, but the second struck the Jap ship right between the two forward guns. The Jap ship was a large destroyer carrying troops aboard. The target was then hit repeatedly from stem to stern which threw many of the troops topside into great confusion. After eight minutes of firing, the Jap destroyer was thoroughly wrecked and sinking.

"Cease Fire" was ordered to lay the guns on a second target and in a minute COOPER was firing on a Jap ship of destroyer-escort size. The first salvo hit the target followed by several more hits. Firing was ceased to clear the bearing of USS MOALE as the Jap ships were passing astern.

COOPER came to the right momentarily and then swung left to resume her former course. Just before reaching the formation course, a lucky torpedo struck her amidships on the starboard side. COOPER's guns continued to blaze as she went down. The last salvo ricocheted off the water as the ship heeled over to 45 degrees. Two gun mounts reloaded with this last but were never fired again as the ship was on her side and broken in two in less than thirty seconds.

The entire scene was a Buck Rogers spectacle with guns firing from the ships on both sides, two Jap ships burning, shore batteries firing at our ships from the shore, Jap PT boats in the vicinity, and Jap submarines lurking below the surface of the water. Bombs were dropped from planes overhead and the tracers from the 40 millimeter guns formed an arching glow to the various targets. Torpedo wakes were sighted and the ships heeled crazily from port to starboard with radical turns. The light of a full moon was diffused just enough to illuminate the ships in an eerie setting for this nightmarish action in which a white haze of smothered steam rose slowly from the water, marking the resting place of two Jap ships.

From the time COOPER was hit until the time she went down the commanding officer noted no confusion and heard not a cry. All topside personnel wore kapok life-jackets. Four rubber boats, two life rafts, and three floater nets were adrift in the water for the sur-

vivors, thus permitting the wounded to be out of the water and allowing rest for the tired swimmers. Ample driftwood in the water made improvised paddles.

Japanese survivors in the nearby water acted very friendly in the apparent hope of landing a place on the life rafts, but the rafts were built for saving American sailors and they did a good job of it. Considering the circumstances under which the COOPER was sunk, it is a credit to cool heads and cooperation that of an original 339 men and 29 officers, 158 men and 10 officers were saved.

PBY Catalina flying boats did a wonderful job in picking up survivors with the assistance of the Philippines ashore. The PBY's (Black Cats) made an outstanding record in the darkness. The largest load carried by any of the Black Cats was 56 survivors; another had 48 and both planes broke all existing records for rescue work. One of the planes carried a load 3,000 pounds heavier than it had been designed to fly.

The commanding officer, Commander Mell A. Peterson, was recommended for the award of the Silver Star for his courage, daring, and skillful fighting of his ship. The destroyer division officer said "Words cannot express the feelings of the Division Officer at the loss of this splendid ship and so many of her gallant officers and crew. The USS COOPER was seen, by observers of the other ships, to go down with her guns firing, in the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service."

\* \* \*

The USS COOPER (DD 695) earned one (1) battle star on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon for participating in the following operation:

1 Star/Leyte Operation

Luzon Attacks -- 13-14, 19-25 November 1944.

\* \* \*

STATISTICS

DISPLACEMENT	2,200 tons	ARMAMENT	Six 5-inch 38 caliber main batteries. Ten 21-inch quintuple mount torpedo tubes. 40 millimeter anti-aircraft batteries.
OVERALL LENGTH	376 feet 6 inches		
BEAM	40 feet 10 inches		
SPEED	35 knots (plus)		

Stencilled: March 1947

Restencilled: February 1951

## NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE  
UNTIL 6 P.M., (E.W.T.)  
JANUARY 23, 1945

### NIGHTMARE AT ORMOC BAY DESCRIBED BY DESTROYER SKIPPER

"The men of Mars will have to step up production and renovate their methods of warfare if they want to beat what went on in Ormoc Bay the night of December 2, 1944" Commander Norman J. Sampson, U.S.N., skipper of the USS ALLEN M. SUMNER, has concluded.

"Shells, bombs, machine gun fire, surface ships, submarines, PT boats, and planes, all encountered within a period of 30 minutes, are rather nerve wracking, especially when you are not accustomed to taking them all on at one time," Commander Sampson added by way of explanation.

The action so described occurred when three American destroyers made a night raid on Japanese shipping in Ormoc Bay prior to the American landings in that area. It was the engagement in which the USS COOPER was sunk.

At dusk on December 2nd, the SUMNER, the COOPER, and the third destroyer sortied for their mission and started on the long trip up the west coast of Leyte Island to Ormoc Bay. The light of a full moon was diffused just enough by a high "California" fog to make the ships easily visible from the air.

Shortly after departure, there was a slighthint of future events when an enemy plane attacked the small force. It was shot down in flames, and the three ships sped on. Everything was quiet for a while.

"Suddenly, just after 11 o'clock, there was a loud wh o o s h," Commander Sampson related. "A bomb landed about 30 feet off the starboard bow of the SUMNER, and in less time than it takes to tell, fire broke out. I clearly saw the Frances as it passed over the top of the mast, and the main battery went into action."

"From then until 3:06 A.M., the next morning, we were under continuous air attack" Skipper Sampson reported.

The real battle, however, was just beginning. Exactly at midnight, the three American ships found their targets in Ormoc Bay. It was guessed that the Japanese were unloading troops because of the persistence of the air attacks. The first target taken under fire by the COOPER and SUMNER confirmed that suspicion. It was either a troop carrying destroyer or a troop transport -- but soon after American shells started pounding it, it was just a mass of flames.

"Our laddered salvos were also landing in a warehouse or shed, which we saw go to pieces. A crane, used for unloading Jap ships, also toppled over," Commander Sampson reported. "At that moment, we were forced to shift to an air target which was dangerously close. In the meantime, a torpedo wake was sighted on the starboard bow and for a minute or two all guns were firing and the ship was heeling crazily, first to one side and then the other."

"During all this rumpus," Commander Sampson continued, "shell splashes were popping all around the ship. I didn't realize at the time that ships, submarines, PT boats, planes and shore batteries were all firing at us, nor did anyone else. The bombs that kept dropping out of the sky took practically all of our attention."

It was at this point that Commander Sampson saw the stricken COOPER sink, with her guns still blazing. The two remaining ships closed toward the northern part of the bay, the main enemy objectives of the foray having been disposed of. The Americans were still under fire, however, from ships and shore batteries and a Japanese PT which suddenly dashed out from shore was promptly sunk by gunfire.

Then the two ships turned, to find a Jap destroyer heading directly for the SUMNER. Fortunately, he was clearly silhouetted by the flames of the transport and shed. All guns commenced firing.

"The tracers from the 40 millimeter guns were so close together that a truck could have been driven across the path of their arching destruction," Commander Sampson related. "Those so-called supermen and their ship didn't last long. My last glimpse of the scene was a white haze of smothered steam rising slowly from the water. The spot where a Jap destroyer had been was now calm and peaceful.

"Our immediate vicinity, however, was not peaceful. Shells were still landing and bombs were still dropping much too close for comfort. It was time to start thinking of getting out of there -- and fast! Jap planes had begun to strafe us after completing their bombing runs, and there were some uncomfortable near misses."

The SUMNER and her companion shot down eight Japanese aircraft during these attacks. Finally, the two ships pulled away from the trouble spot and headed for safety.

"Each man did the job for which he was trained, and, in some cases, another man's work as well," Commander Sampson stated, in concluding his report. "Main battery loaders practically dropped in their tracks from exhaustion. They moved more than 35 tons of high explosives and sent it screaming at the Japs they had been so long hunting. There were no whimpers from the wounded, and it was evident they desired no sympathy. They just considered themselves unlucky. Others were more fortunate. One look-out who had often needed prodding to make use of his binoculars was actually using them when a bomb or shell fragment struck and demolished them. They saved his life.

"It was particularly gratifying to all of us who took part in the episode to learn that the friendly natives in the vicinity had piled up dead Japs along the beaches the next morning.

"I'm sorry I can't report more fully what happened that night. A nightmare is a difficult experience to describe."

Commander Sampson lists 61 Stevens Street, New Haven, Connecticut, as his usual residence. His wife, Mrs. Margaret Ruth Sampson, is now living at 307 Broadmoor Apartments, Tacoma, Washington.

(Biographical material available in Biographies and Research Section, Office of Public Relations.)



USS Cooper (DD-695) in World War II



The Consolidated PBY Catalina was the Navy's principal patrol bomber flying boat in World War II. The PBY-5 model shown, powered by two 1200-hp Pratt & Whitney engines, had a maximum speed of 191 mph. It was armed with 4 machine guns: 2-.30 cal. in the bow and ventral tunnel and 2-.50 cal. in beam blisters, and either two tons of bombs or two torpedoes. The 104-foot wing provided great lift and carried its entire fuel load. Crew size: 7-9. The 'Black Cats' which rescued Cooper's survivors were PBY-5A's, amphibian models painted black for night reconnaissance/bombing missions. One of these planes took off with 56 survivors - 3,000 lbs. heavier than it was designed to fly.

(National Archives: #80-G-2132)

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NW 908/33  
By SG NARA Date 6-4-07

~~SECRET~~  
ACTION REPORT

USS COOPER

DD 695

SERIAL 00503

7 DECEMBER 1944

U.S.S. COOPER, (DD695), REPORT OF ACTION THE NIGHT OF  
2-3 DECEMBER 1944.

[COVERS ANTI-SHIPING SWEEP. ENGAGEMENT WITH  
SURFACE TARGETS AND WITH ENEMY SHORE BATTERIES.  
COOPER SANK AS RESULT SUBMARINE TORP DO HIT.]

REF ID: A68133	
Authority	By: 16 NARA Date: 12-4-07

~~SECRET~~  
DD695/A16-3  
Serial: 00503

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)  
% Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, Cal.

7 December 1944.

From: Commanding Officer.  
To: Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.  
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Division 120,  
(2) Commander Task Group 77.3,  
(3) Commander Task Force 77,  
(4) Commander SEVENTH Fleet,  
(5) Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: U.S.S. COOPER (DD695), Report of action the night of  
2-3 December, 1944.

Reference: (a) PacFlt conf. ltr. 2CL-44 of 1 January 1944.

Enclosure: (A) Track chart of movements U.S.S. COOPER (DD695), Missing.

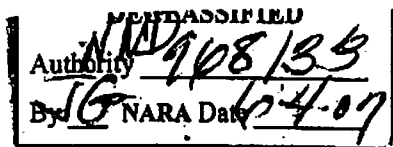
PART I.

1. (a) The U.S.S. COOPER in company with the U.S.S. ALLEN M. SUMNER (DD692) and U.S.S. MOALE (DD693), under the tactical command of ComDesDiv 120, approached Ormoc Bay, Leyte, P.I. at about 2330, zone minus nine, the night of December 2. Course was 020° T, speed 30 knots. Ships were in line of bearing, interval 1500 yards. The U.S.S. COOPER was center ship, with the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER to port and the U.S.S. MOALE to starboard. Guide was in the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER. Numerous bogies were encountered up to midnight, and this vessel took three under fire, one being shot down in flames and seen to crash; the second probably shot down, and the third not believed damaged.

(b) At about 0002, December 3, surface contact was made, confirmed by the division commander, and at 0003 firing was commenced on the starboard bow at a range of 12,200 yards. This same target was also under the fire of the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER. By 0011 this first target, which appeared to be a large destroyer (two mounts forward), with troops aboard, was burning, damaged and sinking.

(c) At 0012 fire was shifted to a second target bearing between 060° and 080° T, range 10,000 yards. This vessel was of a DE size. It was set ablaze and many hits were obtained on the Jap until the U.S.S. COOPER sank at about 0017, December 3. This second target is also believed to have sunk.

2. (a) On December 2, 1944, while operating as a screening unit of Task Group 77.2 in Leyte Gulf, orders were received about 1700, zone minus nine, to form on ComDesDiv 120 in the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER, with the U.S.S. MOALE. Our mission was to proceed to Ormoc Bay to seek out and destroy Japanese shipping. Until about 2300, except for observing one plane shot down early in the evening by unknown vessels, the approach was uneventful.



~~SECRET~~  
 U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)  
 DD695/A16-3  
 Serial: 00505

7 December 1944.

(b) Information intercepted by the U.S.S. COOPER indicated that five vessels of an unidentified type were standing toward Ormoc Bay on December 2. Also, four other vessels were about thirty miles north of these but their course upon sighting by search planes was not towards Ormoc Bay. Channels of approach were reported not believed mined. Brief instructions were transmitted by the division commander concerning the operation.

(c) Natural order in column was maintained until about 2300, when the three ships were placed in line of bearing (090° - 270° T), interval 1500 yards, and the approach into the bay commenced.

(d) A large DD carrying troops (many personnel were seen topside) was the U.S.S. COOPER's #1 target, and a vessel of DE size was #2 target. The surface vessels were close to the beach in Ormoc Bay. The types of planes engaged by this vessel are not known.

(e) Wind: North - 6 knots; Sea - calm; Visibility - 10,000 yards. The moon was rising, and there were numerous alto-cumulus clouds.

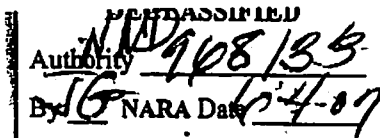
## PART II.

### 1. (a) (1) Air Phase.

At about 2330, zone minus nine, December 2, an unidentified plane on the port bow was taken under fire by the U.S.S. COOPER's 5"/38's at about 6,000 yards. This plane was hit on the second or third salvo, burst into flames, and crashed about 4,000 yards ahead. At about 2335 another plane was picked up on the port bow and taken under fire by 5"/38, range 4,800 yards. It is believed that the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER also fired on this plane. Hits were believed to have been attained, however no visual confirmation of the plane's crashing can be given. Shortly thereafter a third plane, flying low, was picked up at 3,000 yards on the port bow by CIC. The gun director had a solution at 2,000 yards, fire was commenced, but only two salvos were fired as the target could not be retained on the Fire Control radar. All of these planes utilized land background for an approach course.

### (a) (2) Surface Phase.

Upon arrival at the entrance of Ormoc Bay, the SG radar picked up a surface target and fire was opened in accordance with orders of ComDesDiv 120 at about 0003, December 3, range 12,200 yards. The target designated #1 was slightly on the starboard bow and was also taken under fire by the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER. At approximately the same time, the U.S.S. MOALE opened fire on a target to the northward of the U.S.S. COOPER's target. The U.S.S. COOPER's first salvo was about 200 yards short, and the second hit between number one and two gun mounts. Until 0011, target #1 was hit from stem to stern with the U.S.S. COOPER's salvos. On several

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/A16-3

Serial: 00503

7 December 1944.

-----

(a) (2) Surface Phase (cont'd.)

occasions during this eight minute period time permitted the commanding officer to have the pleasure of following the tracers to this target and observing the "ball of fire" as the projectiles detonated. Target #1 appeared to be a large destroyer with two mounts forward. There were large numbers of personnel topside. The enemy ship was in flames, thoroughly wrecked and sinking when fire was ceased to get another ship.

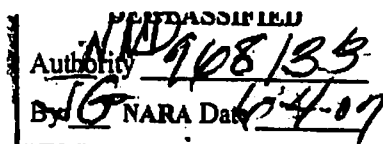
(a) (3) At 0012 the gun director and five inch battery were on target #2, which had been designated by combat, and fire was commenced on a vessel of DE size bearing between 060° and 080° T, range 10,000 yards. A second target just north of ours was also believed to be in this general direction. The first salvo hit, and fire was continued at a salvo interval of about four seconds until check fire was necessary to clear the bearing on the U.S.S. MOALE to starboard. This was caused by the target drawing aft so rapidly due to our speed. The U.S.S. COOPER came right momentarily, resumed fire, and then swung back left, paralleling the formation. Just before reaching the formation course, the ship was hit amidships on the starboard side by what the commanding officer believes was a large type Jap torpedo. The U.S.S. COOPER's last salvo ricocheted off the water close aboard as the ship heeled 45 degrees to starboard. Two gun mounts somehow reloaded with this list, but they were never fired as the ship was on her side and broken in two in less than thirty seconds.

(a) (4) During the surface engagement, enemy planes were plotted astern of us in the vicinity, but none are known to have approached close enough for an attack. Orders were given to the 20mm and 40mm batteries to take care of any planes that were detected visually.

(a) (5) From 0003 to 0017 the commanding officer's impression of the battle was one similar to an artist's conception in one of our popular "picture" magazines. Guns were firing from ships on both sides, two Jap ships were burning, shore batteries were firing at our ships, planes were in the vicinity, and even Jap submarines were present. (This was learned later when U.S.S. COOPER survivors observed two leaving the bay about 0400 the morning of December 3).

(b) Times utilized in this report are zone minus nine. They are a combination of memory by survivors and the records of the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER and U.S.S. MOALE.

(c) Bearings are from memory, and courses were obtained from accompanying vessels and from memory.

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/A16-3

Serial: 00503

7 December 1944.

(d) The navigational track, Enclosure (A), is approximate, and is reconstructed utilizing the U.S.S. MOALE's and U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER's. All records and our own track chart went down with the ship.

PART III.

1. (a) All ordnance material functioned perfectly, and no deficiencies due to lack of training are known or were noted. Fire discipline and communications functioned excellently. Full radar control was used at all times.

(b) Approximate ammunition expenditures are:

(1) Air Action - 5"/38 AAC - 56 rounds with flashless powder.  
(No Mk.32 fuze could be used due to proximity of land).

(2) Surface Action - 5"/38 AAC - 300 to 400 rounds with flashless powder.

(c) Surface gunnery was excellent, and anti-aircraft was good.

2. (a) Enemy surface gunnery was not impressive in this action, as no early splashes were observed close by. Later splashes up to about 5 inch were observed close aboard, especially on the quarters, but it is not known which were from shore batteries and which from surface vessels. No hits by gunfire were sustained by the U.S.S. COOPER.

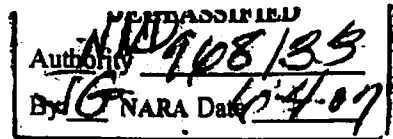
(b) The single torpedo hit that sank the U.S.S. COOPER speaks for itself. The commanding officer feels that with the high speed used, the long torpedo range necessary, and the frequent course changes made, the matter of a hit being obtained was luck.

(c) Since DesDiv 120 was under fire by both ship and shore batteries, it was impossible to determine which of the numerous splashes close aboard were from ships and which from shore batteries. The commanding officer and a number of others observed flashes along the shore for a distance of several miles or so, and a few gun flashes from our targets during the first part of the U.S.S. COOPER's gun phase with each. In general, most of the splashes were astern.

PART IV.

1. The damage to and loss of the U.S.S. COOPER will be the subject of a special report.

2. (a) and (b). The number of hits made by the U.S.S. COOPER on both target #1 (which was believed to be a destroyer) and target #2, which was of DE size, is unknown. Each time there was an opportunity to glance

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/416-3

Serial: 00503

7 December 1944.

PART IV. (Cont.'d).

## 2. (a) and (b) (Cont.'d).

at the U.S.S. COOPER's gunfire performance, the commanding officer observed hits being made. This is corroborated by the Gunnery Officer, Navigator, director crew and bridge personnel. Both enemy vessels had large fires on board, were wrecked and were very low in the water when last seen. Several members of the U.S.S. COOPER's crew saw and talked to a few Japs in the water early the morning of December 3. One Jap sailor was recovered late December 3. Many Japs were in the water December 4. Their presence the day after the rescue of the U.S.S. COOPER survivors is felt due to the offshore current observed in lower Ormoc Bay. No onshore current was observed, and all survivors were carried first south and then west. Since the U.S.S. COOPER survivors had a four or five mile start on the Japs, it was assumed that our enemies would not show up in the middle of the bay until later. The Japs were not seen to make any attempts to rescue their own personnel.

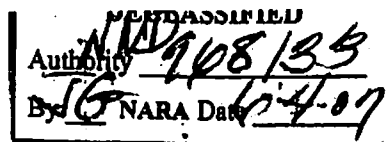
(c) Enemy personnel casualties are believed to have been heavy.

PART V.

1. (a) Communications functioned smoothly, and there were no casualties.

(b) Surface search (SG-1) and fire control radars (Mks. 12 and 22) operated in a very highly satisfactory manner, with no casualties. The air search radar (SC-3) was seriously handicapped by our proximity to land, and lobing.

(c) There were no friendly planes immediately with DesDiv120. A Black Cat conducted searches for the Division, but its performance is not known except that the initial search report was that there were no ships in Ormoc Bay. There were so many plane attacks on the formation that the loss of records prevents any logical discussion by the U.S.S. COOPER. The majority of the attacks were on the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER, which was best silhouetted by the moon. As far as is known, none of the attacks were coordinated ones, but the number of them partially made up for the lack of coordination. It is believed that the Japs fully utilized land background in an attempt to come in undetected, however in most cases it is believed that the SG saved the day since in general all attacks were low. The three planes fired on by the U.S.S. COOPER are fully discussed in Part II.

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/A16-3

Serial: 00503

7 December 1944.

PART V. (Cont'd.)

(d) Enemy surface tactics are not known. Our attack formation chosen and the conduct of the attack left nothing to be desired. Most of the time, the U.S.S. COOPER fought "bows on", and it is believed the accompanying vessels did likewise. The after mount fired occasionally at Target #1 and some at Target #2 during the action by this vessel. The interval of 1500 yards was a very "comfortable" one and permitted freedom of maneuvering on the part of each vessel. Voice signals were few, and exchange of information between ships was easily accomplished direct to CIC.

(e) The only deception utilized was frequent changes of course.

(f) CIC designated targets efficiently, and the fire control party functioned quickly and had rapid and excellent solutions of the problem in all cases.

(g) Navigation was accomplished by both visual bearings and radar.

(h) There were no engineering casualties, and no further comment can be made on this department, for only one man survived from both engine-rooms and firerooms.

(i) Fortunately, the supply department provided hot soup and coffee to all stations about one hour before the action. This undoubtedly contributed greatly to the strength of the survivors the next day while they were still in the water.

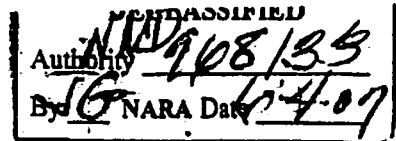
(j) Medical supplies in the rafts were in 5" powder tanks. Morphine was used in a few cases to relieve pain. The only known survivor from the medical department is a pharmacist's mate and he was seriously injured, so the morphine was administered by the "laymen" from their knowledge gained in first aid lectures.

2. The Executive Officer's report undoubtedly could contribute much to the CIC performance, but he and all personnel of CIC are still among those missing.

3. (a) The formation chosen for such a foray into a harbor is believed to have been a wise choice because additional range in flank searching is possible where land background is so prevalent and decreases the efficiency of the radars, and in addition a double check ahead was attainable, which would not be possible in column. The sea room for radical maneuvering in the case of air targets was at hand.

(b) Torpedo targets were not present or were eliminated before the range closed sufficiently. No torpedoes are known to have been fired by any of the ships of the division.



~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/A16-3

Serial: 00503.

7 December 1944.

PART V. (Cont'd.)

## 3. (Cont'd.)

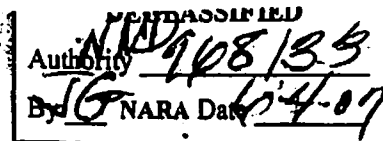
(c) Unfortunately, other operations prevented "briefing" for this mission. This should be done where possible.

4. (a) Since all records were lost, the times and events have been reconstructed as best possible. The commanding officer realizes in some instances there may be as much as a five minute error, but has attempted to piece together information obtained from survivors combined with his own memory. In some cases the average of a number of times was taken.

(b) For an hour or so after being in the water, gunfire on air targets by the U.S.S. A. M. SUMNER and U.S.S. MOALE was observed as they proceeded southward. Shortly after the U.S.S. COOPER was sunk, one of the ships passed nearby at high speed in a southerly direction and may have thrown life rafts to our survivors. Under the existing circumstances the rescue of any of the U.S.S. COOPER personnel by either of the accompanying vessels would have been foolhardy, and undoubtedly would have resulted in another ship being lost or seriously damaged.

(c) The rescue of the survivors in enemy-held territory was mainly accomplished between about 1400 and dark on December 3 in an outstanding performance by PBY Black Cats. One officer and twenty-two men who were ashore were rescued on December 4. The largest load carried by any of the "Cats" was fifty-six survivors. One other had forty-eight, and both of the above loads broke all known existing records.

(d) All topside personnel in the U.S.S. COOPER wore kapok life-jackets. After the men became tired and could not easily hold on to the rubber life rafts, these jackets were "worth their weight in gold". There were about four rubber boats, two life rafts and three floater nets for the survivors. This permitted the wounded to be out of water and also allowed rest for "tired swimmers". Whether the boats and rafts were blown off the ship or launched in the few seconds available before the ship sank is not known at this time. The few paddles observed by the commanding officer had their blades shattered, so apparently they were lashed too tightly to the rafts. However, ample driftwood was available for improvised paddles.

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. COOPER (DD695)

DD695/A16-3

Serial: 00503

7 December 1944.  
-----PART VI.

1. The personnel performance was magnificent, and the U.S.S. COOPER went down fighting. The calmness and coolness exhibited by all hands in their first surface engagement was exemplary. From the time of the hit until the ship had disappeared in less than one minute, the commanding officer noted no confusion and heard not a cry. To date there are one hundred and fifty-eight (158) enlisted men and ten (10) officer survivors out of three hundred and thirty-nine (339) enlisted men and twenty (20) officers on board. Of the survivors twenty-seven (27) enlisted men and three (3) officers required hospital care and are in the U.S.S. HOPE. The remaining survivors suffered only from exposure, cuts and bruises. A detailed survivor list, casualty report, and instances of outstanding performances will be the subject of special letters.

M. A. PETERSON.

Advance copies to: Cominch,  
CinCPac (2),  
ComSEVENTHFlt,  
ComDesRon 60 for info.

**DECLASSIFIED**

Narrative by: Commander Nell A. Peterson, USN  
USS COOPER.

Commander Peterson tells briefly some of his experiences in the sinking of his destroyer, the USS COOPER in the Ormoc Bay on 3 December 1944. His recording supplements his action report and an account of the Ormoc Bay operation by the Captain of the USS ALLEN M. SUMNER.

Film No. 328  
Recorded: 19 January 1945

Copy No. 2 of three copies.  
Rough Transcript: Arienta, 12-25-45  
Smooth Transcript: Scherff, 2-14-46

**OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY**

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Narrative by: Commander Mell A. Peterson, USN  
USS COOPER (DD 695)

Commander Peterson:

This is Commander Mell A. Peterson, USN, #63201. My war experience follows:

On December 7, 1941, I was on ComSerFor Staff as Fleet Camera Officer. At this time ComSerFor was in the USS ARGONNE in Pearl Harbor. I continued on those duties until August of 1942 at which time I was ordered to the staff of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, as an Assistant Fleet Gunnery Officer. My duties in general on this staff were concerned with ammunition, training, fleet readiness and ordnance material.

In the first part of August 1944, I was detached and after some training was ordered to command the USS COOPER. I took command of the COOPER on October 21, 1944, at Pearl Harbor and two days later, she sailed for the battle zone.

The COOPER's operations until November 29, were with the Third Fleet and consisted of several strikes on the Manila Bay area, one against Japanese shipping approaching Ormoc Bay and several other minor bombing strikes. While with the Third Fleet the only unusual operations in which the COOPER participated was the rescue of a fighter pilot who was down within 20 miles of Luzon in the vicinity of Polillo Island. At the time we were ordered to get this pilot the Task Force was approximately 100 miles east of Luzon, approximately in the same latitude as Manila. I bring this out to show the great length to which a Fleet Commander will go to rescue one aviator who has been engaging the enemy.

~~TOP SECRET~~

TOP SECRET

The COOPER proceeded by herself to within 20 miles of this enemy-held territory with fighter cover during most of the time and when fighter cover wasn't available, through emergency communications we were able to borrow sections of planes returning from strikes on Manila area who had ample gas to stay with us for a short while.

We were successful in picking up the pilot who, at the time we left the formation, was 80 miles away. This was accomplished by using radar on the orbiting planes above the pilot in the water. While approaching this downed aviator we plotted another orbiting plane with emergency IFF about 30 miles northwest. After our first successful rescue, it then being about four in the afternoon, and borrowing some more planes from flight leaders coming back from striking the air field near Manila, we proceeded ~~at~~ 30 miles toward the orbiting planes with the emergency IFF, who we had contacted by radio, not knowing his call, but somehow we were able to do it and again we were successful in picking up another one of our strike pilots.

#### ATTACK BY JAP PLANE.

At approximately sundown our regular fight cover was low on gas and it was apparent that we would have to shift for ourselves in getting back to the task force. At this time we were a hundred miles west of them.

In the evening twilight radar plot of bogies showed that we had been located and it was apparent it probably was going to be a rough night. This was borne out in about 45 minutes when the Jap started his first approach and we took him under fire. He turned away and in another 10 or 15 minutes started a second approach and was turned away at about 2,000 yards, probably damaged. He then started a third approach and for some unknown reason disappeared from all of our radars and that was the last enemy action which was taken against us that night.

Due to the weather we were unable to regain our station with the task force until late the next afternoon. I bring this point out to show that valuable new destroyers with about 350 officers and men were sent in to pick up very valuable pilots and in my opinion that is the reason that our aviation arm has done such an outstanding job in the war because there is no question but what the pilot feels that he will be rescued if it is humanly possible should he have to crash land.

After a few days in late November in Ulithi, DesRon 60, which included the COOPER, proceeded to Leyte and reported for duty in the 7th Fleet on November 29th. After several assignments in the Leyte Gulf

[REDACTED]

area with units of Task Group 77.3 and 77.3, DesDiv 120, less the INGRAHAM, received orders late the afternoon of December 2nd, to proceed to Ormoc Bay to seek out and destroy Jap shipping. An official record of this of the performance or action of the COOPER in this bay is contained in the COOPER serial 00503 of 7 December, to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.

In addition to the COOPER's action report a rather graphic description of the battle in Ormoc Bay on the night of December 2-3, is contained in a recent letter written by the Captain of the ALLEN M. SUMNER for publication. This is with a Lieutenant Brown in Room 1011, Navy Department. This graphic description is written in words that would be published unofficially and actually does tell a more or less picturesque story of what went on.

The plane attacks between shortly after 11 and 12 the night of December 2nd, were not in a concentrated form but there were so many of them that it seems as if co-ordination was unnecessary to make them effective. Our anti-aircraft in general was excellent and no ship received any direct hits although the SUMNER had a near miss.

#### HECTIC SURFACE ENGAGEMENT.

The surface engagement was a rather hectic one because of the apparent large number of guns of all calibers up to perhaps five inch firing from the shore, which fire was mingled with that of any of the Jap ships that were present. The COOPER and SUMNER originally concentrated on a rather large destroyer, in my opinion, although it has also been called a transport by other people and this vessel was hit almost immediately, fires were started. With binoculars it was very easy to see the large number of people on the topside running around in a rather confused manner.

The second target of the COOPER was hit almost immediately and set on fire and we were firing at this target when hit by what I think was a torpedo. The last salvo of the COOPER was fired a split second after the torpedo had ricocheted from the water close aboard. The ship immediately heeled to 45°, hesitated for about five seconds at which point I think she broke in two and then the forecastle section listed immediately to 90°.

Many of my men estimated the ship went down in 36 seconds. By official report, it was less than one minute at which time there was nothing to see except debris-covered water. A few of my men in the water talked

DECLASSIFIED

with Japanese who probably were from a small ship sunk by the SUMNER and MOALE approximately 15 minutes after the COOPER sank. They were at this time very meek and one group admired a rubber boat that had floated clear and stated they didn't have anything like that in their Navy. I think at this time the COOPER survivors in the boat paddled away as fast as they could.

We were in the water for approximately 15 hours. About 1/3 or 1/4 of the survivors could be on a raft, in a floater net or in a rubber boat at one time. Some of my people landed on northwest Leyte and on Panson Island where they were taken care of by the Philippine guerillas in a rather magnificent fashion from a jungle point of view.

The PBIs which rescued the survivors of the COOPER landed at about 1400 on December 3, under a very strong fighter cover. The moment the PBIs landed, the island of Panson looked like it opened up and loosed tremendous numbers of canoes or bancas.

The Philippine guerillas apparently have an organization to take individuals in the water or groups of survivors to the PBIs so that they do not have to taxi all over that area and pick up small groups. The leader or commodore of the banca fleet which cared for our survivors was Jose — from Panson Island. He had, as his executive officer, an eight-year old boy whose only words of English were "We are your friends".

The little boy was very desirous of having a souvenir. All I could give him was a flashlight from my lifebelt.

The performance of the Philippine guerillas was outstanding and they cared for my people in a very fine fashion. Except in the cities, I think they hold all of the Philippines for it is not safe for a Jap to walk down a road alone.

On northwest Leyte, in the mountains, Lieutenant Orr of the COOPER and 22 men were kept the night of December 3rd. These men were outfitted from a small stores of Japanese clothing which somehow had been collected by the natives.

The actual rescue of the COOPER's survivors was accomplished in two days. All but Lieutenant Orr and his party were picked up the first day by five or six PBI trips. A world's record for weight carrying was established in the first two. One plane with Lieutenant Joe Ball had a total of 64 on board, which included 56 survivors. Another with Lieutenant (jg) Essary as pilot had 45 survivors. No one knows how they all got in the plane. However, the plane was approximately 3,000 pounds heavier than the designers said that it would fly.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

With this record is a sketch showing approximately how 64 people look within a PHV. A total of 158 enlisted men and 10 officers were rescued from Japanese-held Ormoc Bay by this very daring venture.

On December 4th, large numbers of Japanese were observed in the middle of the bay. These undoubtedly came from the ships which were sunk by DesDiv 120 that were unloading very close to the beach. In general the currents are strong offshore and since COOPER survivors had about a four or five mile head start on the Japs, This explains the large number of Japanese that were observed. I assume the Filipinos took care of them in their customary very efficient fashion.

Captain Wright:

Captain Peterson, was there any signs of Japanese submarines operating in this area?

Commander Peterson:

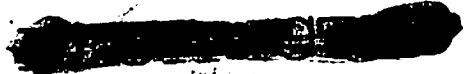
About 4 in the morning from a very low height of eye it was observed that two submarines of medium size stood out of Ormoc Bay. We did not know of their presence until this time. They passed within about 100 feet of one group of my survivors. The submarines were on the surface in the very bright moonlight that prevailed all that night. The torpedo, if it was a torpedo, might have been fired from either destroyers or submarines. There is always a possibility in mineable waters of it being mined, although no mines are known to have been in Ormoc Bay.

An additional comment on the survivors follows:

~~After an hour or so in the water, I thought of trying to concentrate everyone to assist any rescue vessels or planes that might possibly be sent in. However, strafing of one group of survivors in the water by a Francis made it evident they could see even a small raft in the brilliant moonlight and a large group of people in floater nets, the two rafts we had and the four rubber boats would stand out like a sore thumb. As a result no concentration of personnel was ordered.~~

Until about 5:30 or 6 o'clock in the morning we heard droning over us constantly one Francis and one Rufe. They apparently were only on a routine patrol watching for anybody entering Ormoc Bay. We saw no other planes until about 10 o'clock when at 10 or 12,000 feet we saw four P-38s on a morning fighter sweep.



  
Just before the two submarines were seen to stand out, two of the new type Jap APDs proceeded in the direction of Cebu close to the shore of Leyte. At this time I noticed what I believed was an unusual recognition signal. We could hear police whistles blowing almost constantly during the passing of these ships. It possibly was a recognition signal to their shore stations that the ships were friendly.

END

After a Japanese torpedo broke their destroyer in half off Leyte, a group of Sailors put their trust in divine intervention, luck, and local Philippine resistance fighters.

**O**n the night of December 2, 1944, my destroyer, the USS *Cooper* (DD-695), and her sister ships, the *Allen M. Sumner* (DD-692) and *Moale* (DD-693), were ordered to enter western Leyte's Ormoc Bay and destroy Japanese ships carrying reinforcements to the port of Ormoc. We arrived in the bay shortly before midnight and made immediate radar contact with the enemy. The order came to commence firing. I was a seaman first class in the ammunition handling room under gun mount #1. The 33rd round had just been loaded into our gun when I heard a dull thud. Someone shouted, "We've been hit!" and our skipper, Commander Mell Peterson, gave the order to abandon ship.

Just then the power failed and the lights went out. The quickest way for me to escape was up the ladder through the gun mount. My first thought was to climb out on deck and jump over the side, but it wasn't that easy. When I reached the gun mount the ship had such a starboard list the water was already pouring into the escape hatch. Pawing my way in the dark-

ness, I found the hatch where the hot shells were ejected, climbed through it, and fell some 15 feet.

I hit the water and was in over my head before hitting a stanchion. Now that I was outside the mount, the flashes of explosions and tracers provided light by which to see. Japanese shore batteries were firing shells. Not realizing how fast the ship was sinking, I reached up and grabbed hold of a rung on the ladder of mount #2. I hung on until my hand was under water. Hearing trapped men screaming, "Please God save us, have mercy upon us," I thought to myself: "Poor souls, they're some really good buddies. What a helluva way to die." The *Cooper's* skipper officially logged the ship as being on her side broken in less than 30 seconds and disappearing in less than a minute.

While swimming away from the ship to avoid the suction she created in going down, I realized I wasn't wearing my life jacket; I'd left it on board ship. I had to find something buoyant. Just then, there was a heavy churning of water nearby—one of our sister ships passing within 100 feet of me. I cursed at them for not stopping to pick us up but realized they couldn't jeopardize their ship and some 350 men just to pick up a few men.

After the ship passed, I could hear injured men crying for help and others calling for their buddies: "Have you seen Joe?" "I wonder if Al made it out." "Did Bob get off?" I recognized a single call for help. It was Lieutenant John Orr, our deck officer. He had been cut on the forehead over the left eye and was bleeding, which caused temporary blindness. Offering me one of his two life jackets, he said: "For God sakes let me stay with you. I'm blind."

The lieutenant and I swam toward a life raft. On the way, we came upon a life jacket that looked peculiar because it was floating in an upright position. Reaching out to grab the collar, I very quickly withdrew my hand; under that collar, I had stuck my fingers into a headless man's neck. It petrified me. I waited a few minutes before making up my mind to try to identify the man. Tracers still provided enough light to recognize two tattoos on one of his arms.

EARL H. TAYLOR

Seaman First Class Earl H. Taylor (left) earned a commendation from the skipper of the USS *Cooper* (DD-695) for his service in the destroyer, which was sunk during a night action in Leyte Island's Ormoc Bay.

It's odd what you think about at a time like this. I had known this man for ten months and didn't even know his first name. All I knew was that he had a wife and children back in the States. I felt sorry for them; news of this will bring heartbreak.

On reaching what we thought was a raft, we found it was actually a floater net. A person was on the far side of it, an officer's mess attendant. I swam over to him and, hearing the man groan, asked if I could help. He said: "Please don't try to move me. I'm paralyzed from the waist down, and I think my back is broke." The lieutenant suggested we take the net in tow and try to make it to the land I could see eight or ten miles away, Leyte Island.

From the time the ship sank, about 0012, until 0230, there was quite a bit of noise and confusion, then all of a sudden almost complete silence. Some of our crew were swimming toward our float. They told of having to fight Jap survivors in the water with knives. (Before the enemy torpedo hit the *Cooper*, our destroyers had sunk four troop ships, a destroyer, a destroyer escort, and shot down two enemy planes.) After that, we challenged everyone we encountered in the water to determine friend or foe.

Continuing on our way toward land, we heard almost no noise except the splash of water from our paddling. Suddenly, the lieutenant said: "Sh-h-h. I hear something." All of the 14 men now on the floater net were silent. Not far off we heard the sound of engines that Lieutenant Orr identified as Jap subs. The boats—two, maybe three, of them—were headed in our direction. As they drew closer,

In that kind of desperate situation, many things from your past suddenly come back and you live a lifetime in just a few minutes.

the lieutenant said, "Men, if you've never prayed before you'd better start right now and I mean it, because if they see us, it will be like shooting fish in a barrel."

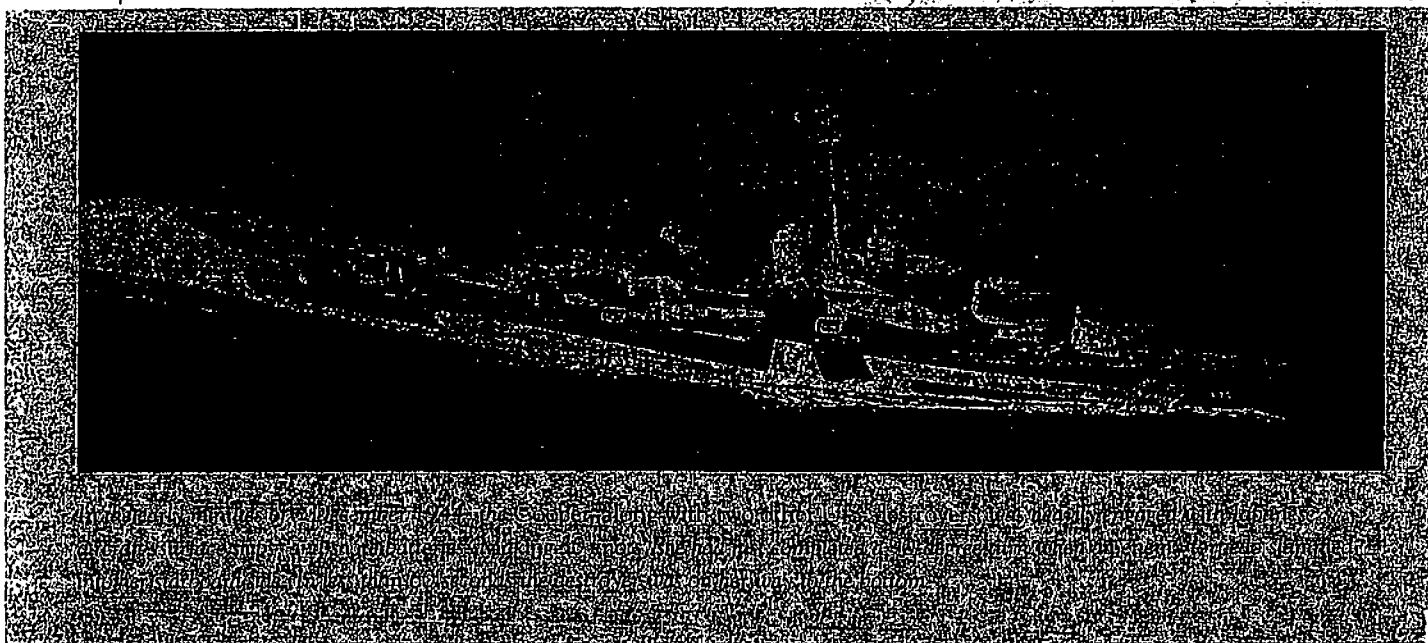
I slowly lifted my head toward the sky. My God, what chance did we have? A clear sky, not a cloud in sight, and the stars

were shining. Our only advantage was that there was no moon. Thoughts ran through my mind: "I've been to church, I've prayed to God, Lord forgive me my sins. . . . God, I didn't mean to hurt those people. . . . God, forgive me for stealing watermelons when I was a kid."

In that kind of desperate situation, many things from your past suddenly come back and you live a lifetime in just a few minutes. You're sorry you've sinned against His commandments innumerable times. You wonder, and there's doubt. Is God listening now? Do you think he heard you before? Erase this fear. Wasn't God with you when you swam away from that sinking ship?

I again looked up to the sky. This time it seemed as if I was seeing beyond the stars. Tears were running down my cheeks, and I had an unexplainable feeling. I wasn't praying for myself, but for those 13 other men on the net. I finished my prayer and bowed my head until my chin was in the water. I softly mumbled "Amen." I heard others do the same and saw some make the sign of the cross.

The subs were closer now. Their engines sounded about 50 to 75 yards away. Then it happened. Out of what a few seconds before was a clear sky came, not just rain but a tropical squall. The rain was so heavy you could only see a short distance. We could hear the sub engines and



sailors yelling in Japanese, but one by one the boats passed us by, and soon the sound of their engines faded away in the distance. By then it had stopped raining, and once again the stars were shining. We were amazed at what had happened. As we continued paddling toward the enemy-occupied shore, I no longer was afraid.

The light of dawn began to show on the horizon, and soon it was daylight. We continued making our way toward shore through the morning and, after swimming 14½ hours, finally reached the beach. We could see four planes high overhead, American fighters flying cover for PBVs landing on the water far in the distance to pick up what was left of the *Cooper's* crew. I later learned that the skipper was among the men rescued. The planes were very overloaded. One had 56 survivors on board and had to taxi across the water for miles before the pilot could gain enough momentum to get it in the air.

After we carried the wounded into the shade under some palm trees, everyone proceeded to take off his wet clothes and hang them over some bushes and tree branches to dry. The lieutenant, who was standing next to me, gave me a poke in the ribs: "Listen, someone's coming over there." I was amazed. For a man who couldn't see, he'd sure developed a quick knack for hearing things.

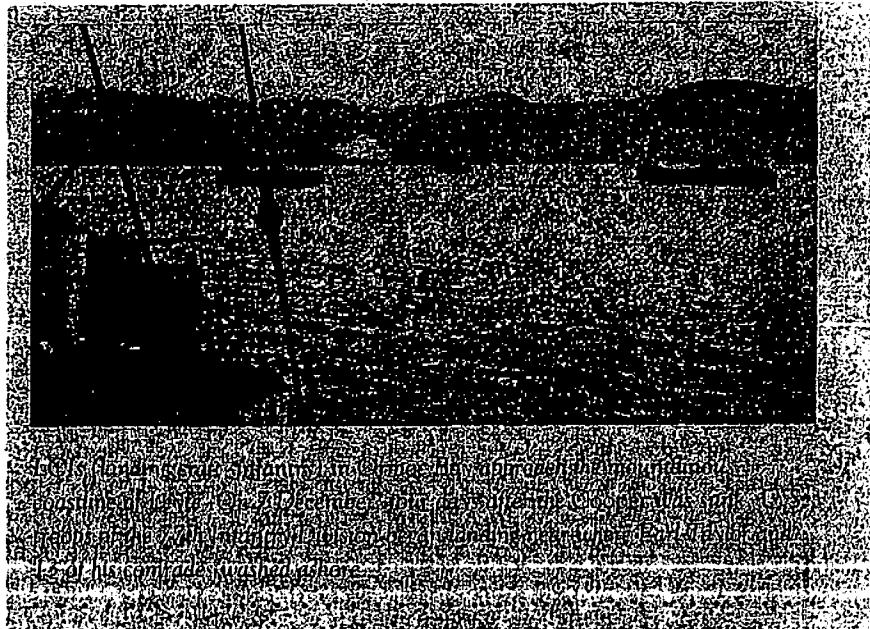
Through the brush appeared a Filipino. He staggered toward us, and for a few seconds I thought he was injured. As he came closer we could see he was merely exhausted. Catching his breath, he asked, "Americanos, where you go?" We explained to him we were headed for a house high on a hill, which we had seen while in the water. We had tried to swim toward it, but the current was so strong it had swept us about eight miles east of the house. "No, no, house is Japs outpost," he said. "They will kill you. No go there; you go with me." I nudged the lieutenant, and as I looked at the others, I asked, "What do you think?" Lieutenant Orr replied: "Perhaps we had better go with our new friend. We have got to start trusting someone."<sup>1</sup>

We then heard some sort of a commotion down the beach to the east of us. To our amazement nine Philippine women and two men came running toward us with pots in their hands. All of us quickly scurried about trying to get into our clothes. The people brought boiled chicken, rice, and, best of all, water. Its value far surpassed that of gold.

The native women fed the wounded first, and then a young native girl came over to me. She said, "Señor, you eat." I sat down beside a palm tree as she dished me some chicken and rice. I was really embarrassed as she knelt beside me, for I was not yet fully dressed. But I'm sure the

embarrassment was all mine because she didn't even seem to notice. As she wiped my brow with a towel, she said: "You tired señor. I feed you." I grinned and said to myself, "Man, this is really living." Meanwhile, several more native men arrived with makeshift stretchers to carry the wounded. After we were through eating, the men gently put our wounded on their stretchers, and we proceeded down the beach to the east.

We didn't know where these people were taking us, but at that point I don't think any of us much cared. We had walked for about an hour when we came upon a group of



natives armed to the teeth with guns and knives. Their leader, riding a small horse and carrying a huge American flag, introduced himself: "I was a sergeant in the American Army, and I have escaped from the Japanese." He told us his men had found one of our shipmates floating in the water. "We're going to give him a military burial with a gun salute and all the trimmings," he added. I tried to caution the sergeant about gunfire with the enemy so close by, but he assured me that neither he nor any of his men were afraid of the Japs. So this man was buried with a gun salute, flag, and all the military honors at these people's disposal. After the burial, the sergeant suggested we go inland.

We traveled for several hours up small trails. The Filipinos offered to carry us along the steep paths, but I assured them they were doing enough by carrying our wounded for us. We had gone about five miles when we came to what appeared to be a vehicle-traveled road. It led us to a large plantation house occupied by several Philippine families. The sergeant introduced us to the residents, most of whom had been tortured by the Japanese. We talked with an elderly lady who had been blinded with hot pokers. The




A PB-34 Black Cat rescue plane was shot down after rescuing a downed bomber crew. On 4 December, Taylor saw in the distance a downed PB-34, also from the squadron, salvaging a Cooper survivor, and one of VPB-34's planes later flew him to safety.

sergeant's brother had 28 poker burns on his chest. We met women who told us of being raped, burned, or knifed, and talked with men and women who had eyes burned out, fingers cut off, or had otherwise been horribly maimed. These people suffered all these and many more horrors. How could anyone blame them for their hatred of the Japanese?

We spent four days and three nights at the plantation house, and at 0700 on the fourth day we received word from a native runner that a PBY will be waiting on the other side of the island. The plane will start its engines at 1125 and need to take off at 1130 whether we were there or not. We had to leave our wounded behind, because to travel that far that fast with them would be hopeless.

Along the way, in each little village or hut we passed, people offered us food or water and tagged along with us. After walking for what seemed 20 miles, we started down

a hill overlooking the PBY in a small cove. I looked all around and was amazed. There must have been a thousand natives walking down the hill with us. I yelled at the sergeant, "All these people, it's a very nice gesture, but get them out of here before the Japs spot them!" He replied: "This is not a gesture. After all, the Japanese would have to kill about a thousand of us to get to you and your shipmates." Then he smiled.

Soon, I was wading out to the plane as its engines started. I looked back at the Filipinos with tears in my eyes. We had a short acquaintanceship, but it was really hard to bid them farewell.<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Lieutenant Orr was later a deck officer on the USS Indianapolis (CA-35) and unfortunately was one the more than 800 Sailors who died after the cruiser was torpedoed on 30 July 1945.

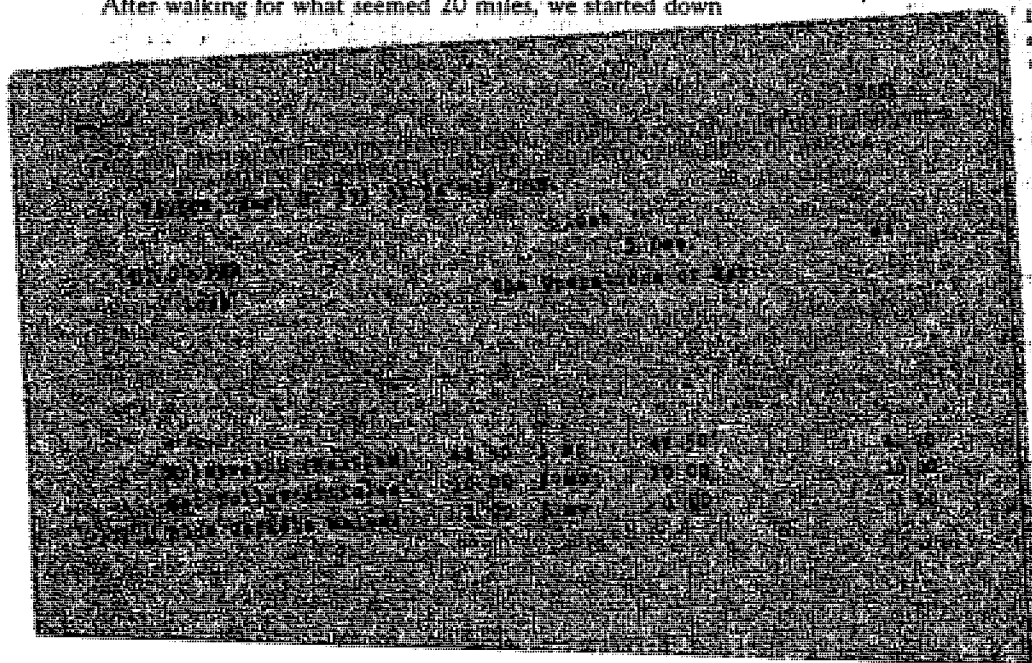
<sup>2</sup>Five Navy "Black Cat" PBYs and an Army OA-10A rescued 168 Cooper Sailors; 191 of the destroyer's men and officers did not survive her sinking or the subsequent ordeal in the waters off Leyte.

Mr. Taylor was discharged from the Navy in October 1945 and subsequently worked for the Vancouver, Washington, Police Department for more than 20 years. Terrence O. Propravak assisted him in preparing this article.

.....  
BRIAN H. TAYLOR

On board a receiving ship in San Francisco in February 1945, Taylor filed this claim for personal property lost when the Cooper went down, and then had to wait seven months to receive his \$52.20 check.

UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE



### "Pray for a Miracle"

(See E. H. Taylor, pp. 58-62, April 2007  
*Naval History*)

Captain Akihiko Yoshida, Japan  
Maritime Self Defense Force (Retired)

◆ I would like to comment about the Japanese destroyers' action fought against the USS *Cooper* (DD-695) and two other

Allen M. Sumner (DD-692)-  
class destroyers.

As the author noted, in December 1944 the Imperial Japanese Army intended to reinforce troops at Leyte. The Imperial Japanese Navy, despite suffering serious damage at the Battle of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf, provided troop-convoy escorts to Ormoc Bay in western Leyte.

At midnight, 2 December, a small troop convoy arrived at the bay escorted by two small, shabby, wartime-built destroyers, the *Kuwa* (*Mulberry Tree*) and *Take* (*Bamboo*).

Destroyers of this type, named after trees or flowers, were built under the rapid reinforcement program of 1944 and they typically were of low performance. They had a maximum speed of only 27 knots, had a 1,200-ton displacement, and carried three 5-inch/40-caliber dual-purpose guns, one quadruple Type 93 Long Lance torpedo mount, and 25-mm antiaircraft weapons. These could never be a match for the

latest gold-plated Allen M. Sumners, but they fought furiously against their stronger enemies.

As the convoy began unloading, at about 0030 on 3 December, a hawk-eyed lookout in the *Take* sighted the Americans. A perilous fight began.

The *Kuwa* was immediately hit and sunk by the concentrated fire of the *Sumner* and *Cooper*. Luckily, the *Take* was not hit by fire from the *Moale* (DD-693). Lieutenant Commander Tsuyoshi Unagi, the ship's brilliant young commanding officer, charged the enemy. Although his ship missed its first torpedo launching opportunity, the indefatigable Unagi and his men circled to attack again. The *Take* then launched four Long Lances. Torpedo officer Lieutenant Hiroshi Shiga (later a captain in the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force) saw a huge column of water climb a destroyer's broadside and

recognized it as a torpedo hit. No Japanese saw the ship sink. At that moment, the *Take* was hit by one shell in the forward engine room, which flooded it. After the action, the *Take* resumed her duties to safely escort the now-empty transport ships to Manila on just one shaft.

I was Shiga's operations officer when he later commanded a destroyer. His only recollection of the battle at Ormoc Bay was the sadness he felt at hearing voices from the dark sea calling out "*Take!*"—the voices of survivors of the *Kuwa*.

USS Cooper (DD-695) in World War II

List of Casualties; Sinking on 12/3/44<sup>1</sup>

KILLED IN ACTION<sup>2</sup>

Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>File No.</u>	<u>Rank</u>
HODNETT, William P., Jr.	085086	*LCDR
SCHUBART, William H.	102337	LT
KLORES, Stanley	118817	LT
ROMM, Edward D.	248314	LT
ROOKUS, John A., Jr.	189104	LTjg
KILLIGREW, Jeremiah J.	227176	LTjg
LEWITT, Richard H.	295497	LTjg
BENNETT, Belton A., Jr.	307941	LTjg
PERKINS, Harrison O.	309882	LTjg
HOFFMAN, George J., Jr.	324059	ENS

Enlisted:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
AARON, John D.	847-54-08	STM1
ALOE, Thomas J.	818-96-72	SEA1
AMMERMAN, Richard L.	249-60-80	SEA1
AMO, Charles H.	825-39-98	SEA2
ARCANJO, Antone	801-98-27	F1
BACHLEDA, Edward J.	869-22-04	RDM3
BAKER, Charles C.	712-08-04	F1
BARGER, William R.	295-91-79	GM1
BARKSDALE, Marion N.	836-81-61	ST3
BARRY, Marion C.	359-90-65	CBM
BASS, William	811-68-19	F1
BEATTY, Wilson A.	656-13-09	TM1
BEAUDRY, Thomas G.	825-43-63	SEA2
BENNETT, Howard F.	643-45-61	SEA1
BENOIT, Leonard G.	202-24-81	SSML2
BLOOMBERG, Arthur	643-20-19	SEA1
BODENRADER, James F.	803-30-47	SEA2
BOLTZ, Stanley J.	818-98-79	F1
BOMZER, William	712-09-62	SEA2
BONNETT, Chester H. L.	851-01-41	MM3
BONSALL, Paul W.	817-39-66	SEA1

\* \* \* \* \*

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> According to a machine-generated list at Archives II, College Park, MD, prepared by BuPers after the war in the 'Battle Books' (Record Group 24) listing casualties by battle/campaign by ship.
  - <sup>2</sup> Including those: (1) killed in action (Code 0121); (2) presumed killed/drowned due to enemy action more than a year subsequent to date reported missing (Codes 6421 and 6232); (3) who died of wounds - result of enemy action (Code (Code 0131)).
- \* Graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.

KILLED, Enlisted (continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
BOOTH, Charles D.	360-04-01	CFC
BOUFFARD, Louis E.	825-40-96	F1
BOUNDS, Robert D.	753-12-29	SEA1
BOWMAN, Harold G.	806-25-99	SEA1
BRACH, Alphonse Frank	807-26-02	F1
BRIGGS, Carl	894-48-58	F1
BRIGULIO, James A.	803-30-54	SEA2
BROOKS, Joseph P.	556-51-51	SOM1
BROOKS, Robert L.	657-40-41	GM3
BRUNKARD, John W.	825-39-54	SEA2
BYRNE, Thomas H.	238-62-15	CPHM
CAMPBELL, Philip G.	896-44-92	SEA1
CARLIN, Joseph B.	603-64-94	EM3
CARNAHAN, Harry T.	250-58-29	WT1
CASOLIN, Henry G.	814-82-50	F1
CHIN, Yat K.	815-05-91	SEA1
CHORICH, Michael J.	305-35-42	MM3
COLVIN, Gilbert R.	823-99-51	SC3
COLLINS, Walter M.	838-54-46	STM1
CONNALLON, William J.	809-60-41	SEA1
COSSU, John	827-89-19	BKR3
CROSS, John H.	614-46-13	MM2
DANIELS, William J.	312-96-32	SEA1
DAVIS, Bernard H.	965-86-16	RDM3
DELNOCE, Salvatore J.	712-08-73	SEA2
DERRICK, Earl L.	357-90-74	SEA1
DEVEREAUX, Lloyd E.	870-68-27	RDM3
DON, Irving	815-03-78	SEA1
DORITY, Norman V.	825-43-58	BM3
DRAVECK, Michael E.	601-52-83	RM3
DUNKLE, James I., Jr.	633-18-19	SEA1
DUPRIEST, John G.	938-51-71	F2
ELLIOTT, Iver P.	265-94-82	CWT
ELLMAN, George	646-29-85	SK2
FAGAN, Edward C., Jr.	677-20-12	RDM3
FAGG, James M.	411-28-07	SEA1
FARNSWORTH, Rolland K.	372-02-07	FC1
FELTS, Charles E., Jr.	835-63-10	SEA2
FINKELESTEIN, Louis	815-08-68	F2
FLIPPIN, Alton E.	295-57-64	BM1
FOLEY, Dan E.	851-74-35	TM3
FOREHAND, Fred R.	842-38-51	SEA1
GAPINSKI, Leonard	306-54-35	F1
GARDNER, Delmar	668-46-80	SC3
GARMAN, Clarence C.	856-20-36	F1
GELINAS, Ernest D.	212-60-76	EM2
GERBER, Milton A.	808-23-57	SEA2
GOOLEY, Albert F.	823-95-40	QM3
GOVANTES, Roy B.	831-28-68	STM1



KILLED, Enlisted (continued)

GUILFORD, Eunice, Jr.	866-92-15	RDM3
HALL, James A.	863-78-50	MM3
HALL, Marion C.	835-90-37	PHM3
HAMM, Miron C.	879-38-50	RDM3
HEPBURN, Harold P.	880-53-16	F1
HERTRICH, Donald W.	328-50-33	CMM
HOFFMAN, Howard E.	883-40-53	RDM3
HOLTZAPPLE, Kenneth C.	258-27-60	WT2
HOUSER, Robert	381-18-80	MOMM1
HOWE, Carlton S.	579-48-24	SEA2
HOWE, Martin B.	818-96-92	Y3
ICART, John P.	244-45-82	EM2
JACQUES, Louis A.	825-72-80	SEA2
JENSON, Gordon C.	705-24-92	Y1
JOHNSON, Charlie C.	266-21-02	CEM
JOHNSON, Lawrence H.	658-42-72	MM2
JOHNSON, Omar H.	393-41-10	RM2
KINNEY, William T.	575-78-82	CM2
KONNYU, John	711-22-37	MM3
KRANZ, Arthur C.	858-57-46	B3
KRESSE, Joe A.	844-32-66	TM3
KRONBERG, Robert D.	723-49-62	EM3
KUYKENDALL, Monte G.	631-20-07	SEA1
LAMADRID, Strphen R.	711-51-73	F1
LEONE, Samuel J.	732-10-93	SOM2
LEWIS, Elmer C.	666-91-61	F1
LIMPERT, Oliver R.	668-40-39	SF1
LITTLE, Charles E.	624-98-27	MM2
MARINELLI, Fred	811-46-27	F1
MARKO, Frances C.	293-59-11	SEA1
MAY, Peter J.	639-67-01	SEA2
MCGINNIS, Harvey A., Jr.	629-56-02	F1
MOAK, James A.	274-38-15	WT1
MOREAU, Forrest L.	607-59-27	MM2
MORENO, Raul A.	300-43-28	BM2
MURDOCK, John G.	305-42-16	WT2
NICKERSON, Leeland C.	306-15-47	GM3
NOLEN, Crit R., Jr.	644-59-52	SEA1
OCKER, Leroy M.	869-61-64	EM3
PALEK, Bernard P.	819-68-31	SEA1
PALLAK, Louis A.	615-68-25	F1
PARKER, Carl L.	393-57-55	SEA1
PEARCE, Joseph J.	890-86-37	SEA1
PETERSON, Melvin E.	664-36-89	EM1
PETERSON, Richard M.	328-64-35	CRM
PILLARD, Arnold A.	321-16-63	CMM
POLITO, William M.	224-10-64	WT1
POPE, Stanley E.	801-55-94	RT1
RECTOR, Samuel O.	893-00-57	F1

KILLED, Enlisted (continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
REED, William J., Jr.	762-12-48	F1
REYNOLDS, Harold L.	851-03-48	MM2
RICHARDSON, John D.	620-99-90	FC3
RICHIE, Raymond F.	706-96-57	MM1
RIDDLE, Carl W.	648-73-55	FC3
RILEY, William W.	726-71-17	SEA1
RITCHIE, Robert O.	886-40-88	EM3
ROSE, Lyman G.	234-21-66	MM1
ROSENA, John A.	250-81-65	WT2
ROURKE, Harold K.	858-23-71	WT2
RUNION, Charles A.	336-64-96	CMM
SANTANGELO, Anthony J.	817-41-65	FC3
SCHADE, Arfred R.	316-58-76	BM1
SCHATZ, Arthur J.	818-89-74	F1
SCHELLHASE, Joseph A.	755-90-49	SOM3
SCHLENKER, Oscar C.	638-79-28	MM2
SCOVILL, Allen	942-60-14	EM3
SEBENS, Franklin	385-86-14	WT1
SEBESTA, Rudolph, Jr.	862-16-32	MOMM2
SEMENTUH, John G.	405-09-60	RM1
SEYMOUR, Raymond W.	573-05-24	MM3
SGAMBATI, Sam	282-89-21	F1
SHANNON, Thomas E., Jr.	205-03-77	MM1
SHORT, Clyde B.	863-86-85	F1
SHOTAK, Robert L.	890-76-04	M3
SMITH, Guy M.	827-52-39	SEA1
SMITH, Thomas F.	642-69-55	SOM2
SOPER, James C. E.	836-96-79	F2
SPAINHOWARD, Luther E.	867-97-36	F1
SPENCER, Robert O.	382-37-82	WT2
SULEK, Eugene A.	893-02-69	MM3
SULLIVAN, David J.	755-06-39	SEA2
SULLIVAN, Harold W.	942-96-78	F1
TALLEY, Alton M.	577-27-21	F1
TARR, Joseph E., Sr.	942-98-08	F1
TAVIS, Edward G.	888-10-42	F1
THIEDE, Frank A.	962-33-84	F1
THOMAS, Harold C., Jr.	378-39-56	RM3
THOMPSON, James M.	956-34-21	MM3
TOCZEK, Walter E.	818-88-34	SEA1
TRAPP, Harold W.	942-57-92	F1
TRAVIS, David B.	940-94-88	F1
TREMBLAY, Norm R. F.	606-20-45	WT2
TRUAX, Paul E.	942-98-29	MM3
TURON, Louis A., Jr.	651-47-43	FC3
VANWASSON, Raymond C.	942-90-13	MM3
VAUGHN, Claude, Jr.	295-79-77	SK1
VILHAUER, Robert	306-39-26	RM3
VLASEK, Jerry J.	858-50-01	F1

KILLED, Enlisted (continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
WAGNER, Maynard W.	942-95-83	MM3
WALDT, Lawrence F.	827-51-58	SEA1
WARKENTIEN, Ralph R.	291-26-13	CMM
WELKER, Leland G.	923-12-48	WT3
WENRICH, James L.	404-90-87	CEM
WILLIAMS, John A.	855-20-13	SEA1
WILLIAMS, John A.	975-50-47	SEA2
WILSON, Marvin	867-97-78	F1
WILSON, Thomas W.	360-11-85	SC1
WOERFEL, William M.	869-54-83	MM3
WOOD, Charles K.	866-09-23	RM3
WOODMAN, Reedus O.	975-50-46	SEA2
ZACCARDELLI, John V.	862-48-56	SEA1

\* \* \* \* \*

WOUNDED IN ACTIONOfficers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>File No.</u>	<u>Rank</u>
ENGLEBERT, Edwin S.	239621	LT
MANSELL, John C.	212497	LTjg
RODIE, Edward B.	269232	ENS

Enlisted:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
ALEXANDER, Charles W.	376-27-54	MM1
ANDREWLEVICH, Thomas B.	249-64-62	SEA2
ANSPACH, Earl M., Jr.	620-16-67	WT3
ARGULEVICZ, Adam, Jr.	601-24-14	Sea1
BAILEY, Marshall A.	575-13-74	SEA1
BALESTRIERI, Louis	815-42-83	SEA2
BAXTER, Earlon F.	269-04-22	SEA1
BEAMAN, Kenneth H.	648-85-34	SEA1
BELTER, Joel K.	347-12-79	SK3
BENN, Sydney	624-52-72	CY
BICKERS, James E.	668-77-40	SEA1
BIEHL, Fred C.	300-90-73	SEA1
BLACK, David A.	951-44-83	SEA1
BOLLINGER, Joseph G.	822-64-28	SEA1
BOWERS, Benjamin	246-18-34	SEA1
BOWMAN, Francis E.	819-54-28	SEA2
BRADY, William J.	819-33-26	SEA1
BURLESS, Stephen P.	250-60-19	TM2
BUSH, Walter B.	630-66-93	SEA1
CARNELLI, Donald P.	808-23-52	SEA2
CHAFFEE, Robert E.	825-50-19	SEA2
CHAREST, Alfred J.	803-30-48	SEA2
CHESLOSKEY, Ernest J.	819-68-85	F1

WOUNDED, Enlisted (continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
COLEMAN, John C.	659-68-84	SEA2
COYNE, Jack L.	870-23-30	SEA1
DALTON, George W., Jr.	819-68-36	SEA1
DAVIDSON, Clarence M.	609-45-71	SEA1
DENESHA, James F.	667-45-98	SEA2
DENNIS, Austin F.	806-24-79	SEA1
DEPAOLA, James	803-18-99	SEA1
DIAMOND, Mandel	854-79-99	SEA1
DUCHNOWSKI, Stanley	212-60-60	Cox
FAYETTE, Albert D.	854-06-54	FC3
FLEMING, John F.	801-68-71	SEA1
FREDERICKS, William A.	602-35-59	GM3
GELLRICH, William F.	800-95-21	SC3
GUTENKO, Sigmund	299-43-42	CCS
HAESCHE, Thomas P.	642-91-39	PHM2
HAMILTON, Cecil B.	621-58-29	SEA1
HARRIS, Ellis M.	834-80-47	SEA1
HARRIS, Raymond J.	633-34-28	F1
HIGH, Ray B.	274-45-22	SEA1
HOGAN, Thomas J.	852-81-77	SEA1
HUFF, Harvey K.	952-73-35	SEA2
HUGUELET, George C.	726-82-18	SEA1
HUMMER, Raymond M.	827-32-34	EM3
INCALLS, Raymond J.	941-47-69	SEA2
IOIA, Joseph J.	706-54-55	Cox
JANIS, Samuel R.	810-43-91	F1
JEFFRIES, Justin N.	279-51-08	CEM
JERNIGAN, Luke E.	290-92-80	CMM
KRESS, Frank J.	280-08-34	SEA1
LINCOLN, Glen D., J.	648-38-64	SEA1
LOOMIS, Donald R.	565-46-62	SEA1
LUNDY, Cluster	840-06-10	STM1
MALCOLM, Norman R.	202-00-09	TM2
MASULIS, Albert A.	610-49-13	GM2
MOORE, Macil T.	266-03-64	SEA1
MORGAN, Joseph R.	602-39-65	SEA1
ONEILL, John T., Jr.	212-45-15	TM3
QUEENAN, Martin J.	801-71-83	SEA2
RIEXINGER, Earl J.	245-72-05	WT3
RUCKER, Willie	261-86-86	ST1
RUMMERFIELD, Walter G.	840-98-41	FC3
SHELL, Edwin A., Jr.	246-02-11	SOM3
SCIBEK, Edward T.	807-71-75	SM3
SIMS, John A.	386-80-98	SEA2
SMITH, Carl E.	878-09-59	RT1
SMITH, Robert L.	575-27-50	Y2
STEVENSON, Richard L.	654-79-99	Y3
SULLIVANT, Jack R.	338-48-55	SEA1
VOGEL, Gene D.	250-51-40	BM2

WOUNDED, Enlisted (continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>
WALL, Claud R.	274-32-37	CK1
WILBANKS, James C.	272-17-27	GM2
WILLIAMS, William W., Jr.	262-78-78	CQM
WOODS, Eugene	807-61-74	SEA1
YOUSSE, Howard B.	876-70-33	SEA1

\* \* \* \* \*

Summary of Casualties:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 12/3/44*</u>
Officers	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>20</u>
Enlisted	<u>181</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>339</u>
TOTAL	<u>191</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>359</u>

53%

\* Number of survivors (total of wounded and not wounded) obtained from the action report dated 7 December 1944, page 8.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
August 2007

The Washington Times, Washington, D.C.

Monday, May 30, 2005

# Plaque honors 191 U.S. sailors lost on Cooper in 1944

By Shelley Widhalm  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

World War II Navy veteran Edward "Skip" Scibek remembers holding on to his rosary beads for 15 hours the night the USS Cooper sank near the Philippines.

"I don't recall the explosion," said Mr. Scibek, 83, a Connecticut resident who was a signalman 3rd class aboard the Cooper. "When I woke up, I was in the water. I had no idea where I was or what had happened."

Scuba diver Robert Lalumiere of Lebanon, N.H., dived 720 feet Saturday to lay a plaque on the Cooper, which sank Dec. 2-3, 1944, during the Battle of Ormoc Bay in the Philippines. The plaque honors the 191 men who lost their lives on the American destroyer. Mr. Scibek and 167 others survived, rescued by Catalina flying boats.

"It's a commemoration," says Mr. Lalumiere, 50, a scuba hobbyist. "It's an unmarked grave; 191 men died on that ship, and nobody's ever put anything on it

for them."

The USS Cooper Memorial Project honors the "Navy sailors lost that night and who continue to stand watch for their country for all eternity," the 40-pound bronze plaque proclaims.

Mr. Lalumiere, a specialist in large equipment repairs, got interested in diving in 2000 when his work took him to Ormoc City on Leyte island. A year later, he started to train in deep shipwreck diving.

During a dive in 2002, Mr. Lalumiere found the Japanese destroyer Kuwa that had sunk the Cooper. The Kuwa was 330 feet below the surface and about a mile from the Cooper, he said.

"The whole story intrigued me," said Mr. Lalumiere, whose father had served in the Navy during World War II in the North Atlantic. "I telephoned a couple of the survivors. ... They really struck a soft spot in my heart. They fought a hard battle, and they all said, 'I wish I could do

something for my shipmates.' "

The plaque will give them the chance.

On Dec. 2, 1944, the Cooper, with the American destroyers USS Moale and USS Allen M. Sumner, steamed into Ormoc Bay, a supply depot port for Japanese forces.

The battle that ensued was one of the least known in the Pacific theater of World War II, said Irwin J. Kappes, 80, of Pin-ton Falls, N.J., who served as a radarman on the Moale.

"The Japanese were concerned that if Leyte fell to the Allies, then the entire Philippine archipelago would fall as well," Mr. Kappes said.

Japanese forces fired on the Cooper, Moale and Sumner from the eastern shore of Ormoc Bay. The three destroyers returned fire as they began to retreat.

"The Cooper was suddenly hit by a torpedo. She broke in half and went down in about 30

seconds," Mr. Kappes said. "We were stunned by the fury of the attack and by the firing of our own ship, all the noise and excitement. It's a terrible strain for a young fellow to be under."

Mr. Lalumiere identified the site of the Cooper sinking with the help of William "Ron" Babuka, 41, son of late Seaman 1st Class Sumner William "Bill" Babuka. Mr. Babuka had graphically represented the Battle of Ormoc Bay using handwritten ship logs that represented the course, speed and time of the three ships' movements. He created a map and put it on the Internet.

Mr. Lalumiere contacted Mr. Babuka, a computer programmer living in Ithaca, N.Y., in the summer of 2003 to ask him about the accuracy of the map, which showed where the ships engaged Japanese forces. Mr. Babuka agreed to work to improve the map while focusing on the navigational aspects to

help Mr. Lalumiere with his dives.

In the meantime, Mr. Lalumiere used Mr. Babuka's map and local knowledge and found the Kuwa. Mr. Babuka then got documentation of the Moale's course from Mr. Kappes. Mr. Lalumiere compared the Moale's course with the map and confirmed that he was diving in the right area to find the Cooper.

"It's an amazing thing. He's risking his life to put a reminder for all future generations who these men were," Mr. Babuka said.

William Dallam, 79, of Harrisburg, Pa. said he was glad to put the battle to rest.

"It really is an emotional story," said Mr. Dallam, secretary and treasurer of the Battle of Ormoc Bay Association, who served as a gunner on the Moale the night the Cooper sank. "Even years later, it's hard to talk about. ... There's some guilt, because we left [Cooper survivors] behind. It was Navy protocol."