

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *DREXLER* (DD-741) in World War II:
Documents, Photographs, Recollections**

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7/28/44

ENSIGN HENRY CLAY DREXLER, U.S. NAVY (DECEASED)

Ensign Drexler, born in Braddock, Pennsylvania, August 7, 1901, was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy from Delaware in 1920. He was graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1924, and for several months was under instruction at the Navy Yard, New York, New York. On October 4 he joined the U.S.S. TRENTON, light cruiser. Sixteen days later, October 20, 1924, Ensign Drexler, while serving as one of the hunnery observers during trial firing of the TRENTON's guns, attempted to extinguish a charge of powder which had been accidentally ignited in a powder hoist. He was killed in the explosion.

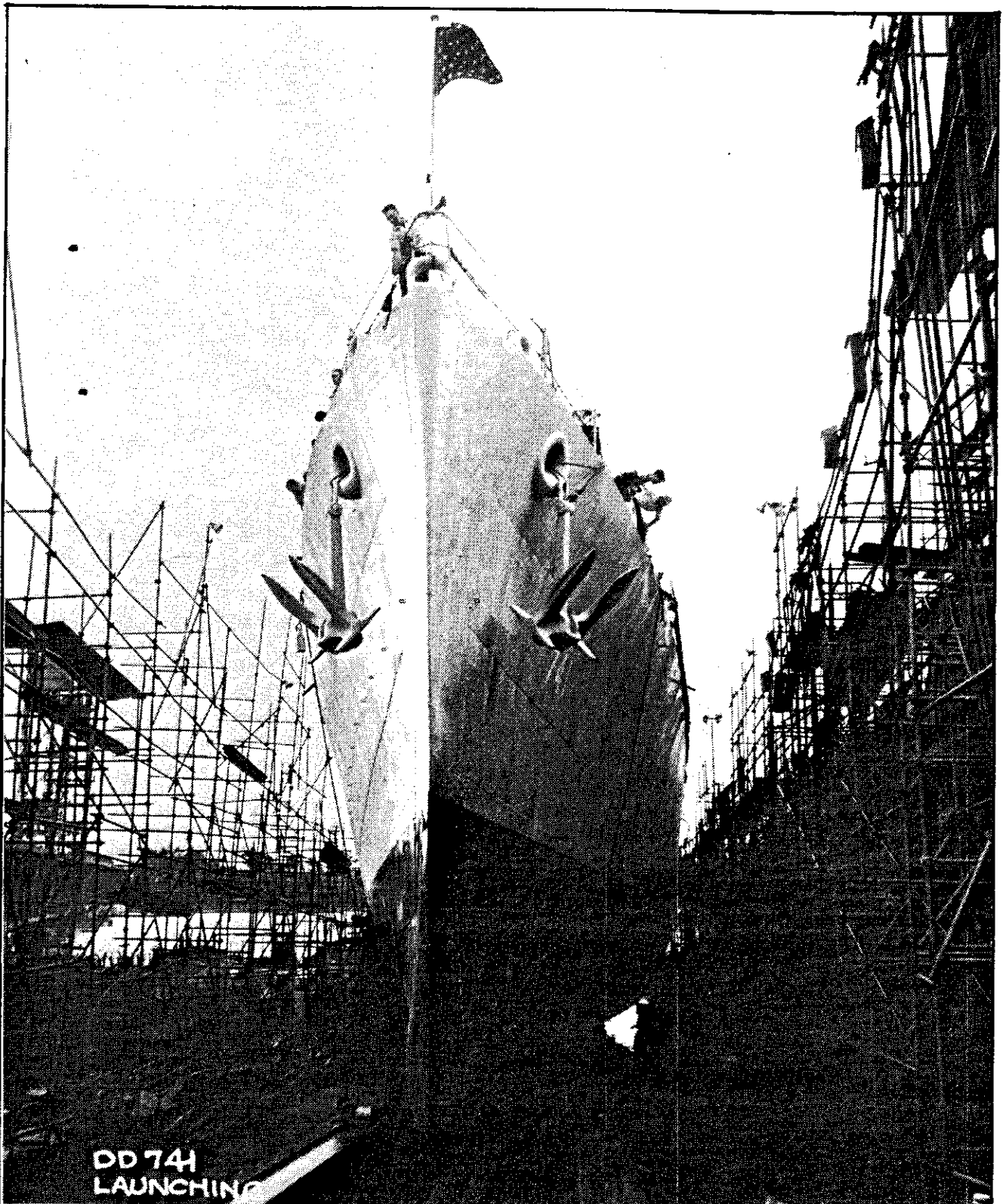
For his heroism on this occasion, Ensign Drexler was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross by the Navy, and by Act of Congress, February 9, 1933, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, with similar citations. The citation for the Medal of Honor follows:

"For extraordinary heroism in the line of his profession on the occasion of a fire on board the USS TRENTON. At 3:35 on the afternoon of 20 October 1924, while the TRENTON was preparing to fire trial installation shots from the two six inch guns in the forward twin mount of that vessel, two charges of powder ignited. Twenty men were trapped in the twin mount. Four died almost immediately and ten later from burns and inhalation of flame and gases. The six others were severely injured. Ensign Drexler, without thought of his own safety, on seeing that the charge of powder for the left gun was ignited, jumped for the right charge and endeavored to put it in the immersion tank. The left charge burst into flame and ignited the right charge before Ensign Drexler could accomplish his purpose. He met his death while making a supreme effort to save his shipmates."

A destroyer, the U.S.S. DREXLER, (DD-741) named in honor of Ensign Drexler, will be launched soon at the plant of the Bath Iron Works Corporation, Bath, Maine, when his mother, Mrs. Louis A. Drexler, of Burwood, Dever, Delaware, will act as sponsor.



Mrs. Louis A. Drexler was selected by the Navy Department to sponsor a destroyer named after her son, Ensign Henry Clay Drexler, USN. She christened the U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, on September 3, 1944. Ensign Drexler graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1924, only four months before he was killed. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)



DD 741
LAUNCHING

The 2,200-ton, Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer USS Drexler (DD-741) as she slid down the ways into the Kennebec River at Bath, Maine, on September 3, 1944. Just ten weeks later, she hoisted her commission pennant at the Boston Navy Yard on November 14th, Cdr. Ronald Lee Wilson, USN, in command.
(Official U.S. Navy Photograph)

DESTROYER SLIDES FROM IRON WORKS SUNDAY AT NOON

Drexler Named in Honor of Navy Hero

A mother, whose son gave his life in a brave and desperate attempt to save the lives of 20 of his shipmates, acted as sponsor at the launching Sunday at the yard of the Bath Iron Works Corporation, of one more fast and powerful first line destroyer, the USS Drexler, named for this heroic young lad, Ensign Henry Clay Drexler, USN. Not in the stress and self sacrificing atmosphere of battle was this brave deed consummated, but in the normal and peacetime line of duty 20 years ago. Ensign Drexler on Oct. 15, 1924, was a member of the forward gun turret crew of the cruiser USS Trenton in a routine gunnery practice maneuver. The crew was preparing to fire the guns on the twin mount in this turret when two charges of powder became ignited. Twenty men were trapped, four dying almost immediately, 10 later from inhalation of flames and gases, and six survivors being severely injured. Ensign Drexler jumped for the charge

of powder on the right side of the turret and while endeavoring to put it in an emersion tank, the right hand charge exploded and ignited the charge Drexler was attempting to extinguish.

The Navy Cross and Medal of Honor were posthumously awarded the 23-year-old Annapolis graduate, a native of Braddock, Pa., for his extraordinary heroism aboard the Trenton to which he had reported from the New York Navy yard a month before.

Ensign Drexler's mother, Mrs. Louis Ashton Drexler of Dover, Del., was accompanied to Bath for the launching by her husband, Lt. Comdr. Louis A. Drexler, USN, brother of the late Ensign Drexler and who is on active duty with an amphibious force in the Pacific. Also in the party was Miss Ann Scott of Bethany, Beach, Del., a friend.

A beautiful late Summer day presented a perfect setting for the launching of this 15th destroyer to go over from the local shipbuilding plant this year. By 2.30 in the afternoon, the time of the launching, the Carlton bridge and Maine Central Railroad station platform was lined with interested spectators who were afforded an excellent view as the craft slid from the northernmost ways of the big shipyard.

The Drexler's launching kept the Bath Iron Works' production schedule up with its 1943 record, despite a manpower shortage which the company is trying hard to overcome at this time.

UNITED STATES SHIP DREXLER

Tuesday 14 Nov. 1944
(Day) (Date) (Month)

1445 Destroyer with Hull Number 242 from Bath Iron Works moored portside to on west side of Pier 2, Boston Navy Yard. Ship cleared of visitors and working crew from Bath Iron Works. 1500 The officers and men of the USS Drexler detail, marine guard of honor and band fell in on the fantail. 1505 Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, USN, Commandant of the First Naval District and his aide came aboard. 1508 Commander R.L. Wilson, USN, Prospective Commanding Officer reported ready for commissioning. 1511 Admiral Gygax read the commissioning directive and ordered that the ship be placed in commission as the United States Ship DREXLER. 1515 National anthem played by band. Colors and commission pennant hoisted. 1518 Flag of Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, USN, Commandant of the First Naval District broken in USS Drexler. 1520 Invocation delivered by Chaplain. 1525 Admiral Gygax addressed the ship's company. 1530 Admiral Gygax turned the ship over to Commander Wilson. 1532 Commander Wilson read his orders and accepted command of the USS DREXLER. 1535 First watch posted and inspected. Lt. G.M. Lee, USN took the first watch as officer of the deck

R. G. Bidwell
R. G. BIDWELL, Lt. Cdr., USN.

12-16 Moored with standard mooring lines. Receiving all services from dock. Personnel attached to this vessel are (Officers as on attached addenda. For enlisted men refer to Receiving Station (Fargo Building) Boston, Mass. orders NM6/P16-4/MM of 14 November and Receiving Station, Bath, Maine orders NM54/P16-3/MM of 14 November 1944.) 1535 Inspected the first watch. 1545 commissioning ceremonies completed. 1550 Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, USN, Commandant of the First Naval District and his aide left the ship. Flag of Rear Admiral Felix Gygax, USN, was hauled down and commission pennant was hoisted. 1555 Ship opened to inspection by Commissioning guests.

C. M. Lee
C.M. LEE, Lieut. USN.

16-20 Moored as before. 1652 Ship cleared of commissioning guests. 1715 Commenced loading stores. 1930 Mustered crew on stations; no unauthorized absentees.

W. T. McQuilkin
W.T. MCQUILKIN, Lt. (jg), USNR

20-24 Moored. 2130 Completed loading stores.

N. M. Pappas
N. M. PAPPAS, Ens. USNR.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

R. L. Wilson
R. L. WILSON, Comdr.

U. S. N.

COMMANDING.

R. G. Bidwell
R. G. BIDWELL, Lt. Cdr.

U. S. N.

NAVIGATOR

LIST OF OFFICERS
ATTACHED TO AND ON BOARD THE U. S. S. DREXLER (DD711)

, COMMANDED

BY R. L. WILSON, Commander,

U. S. N.

DURING THE PERIOD COVERED BY THIS LOG BOOK, WITH DATE OF

REPORTING FOR DUTY, DETACHMENT, OR DEATH, FROM 14 November, 19 44

TO

30 November, 19 44

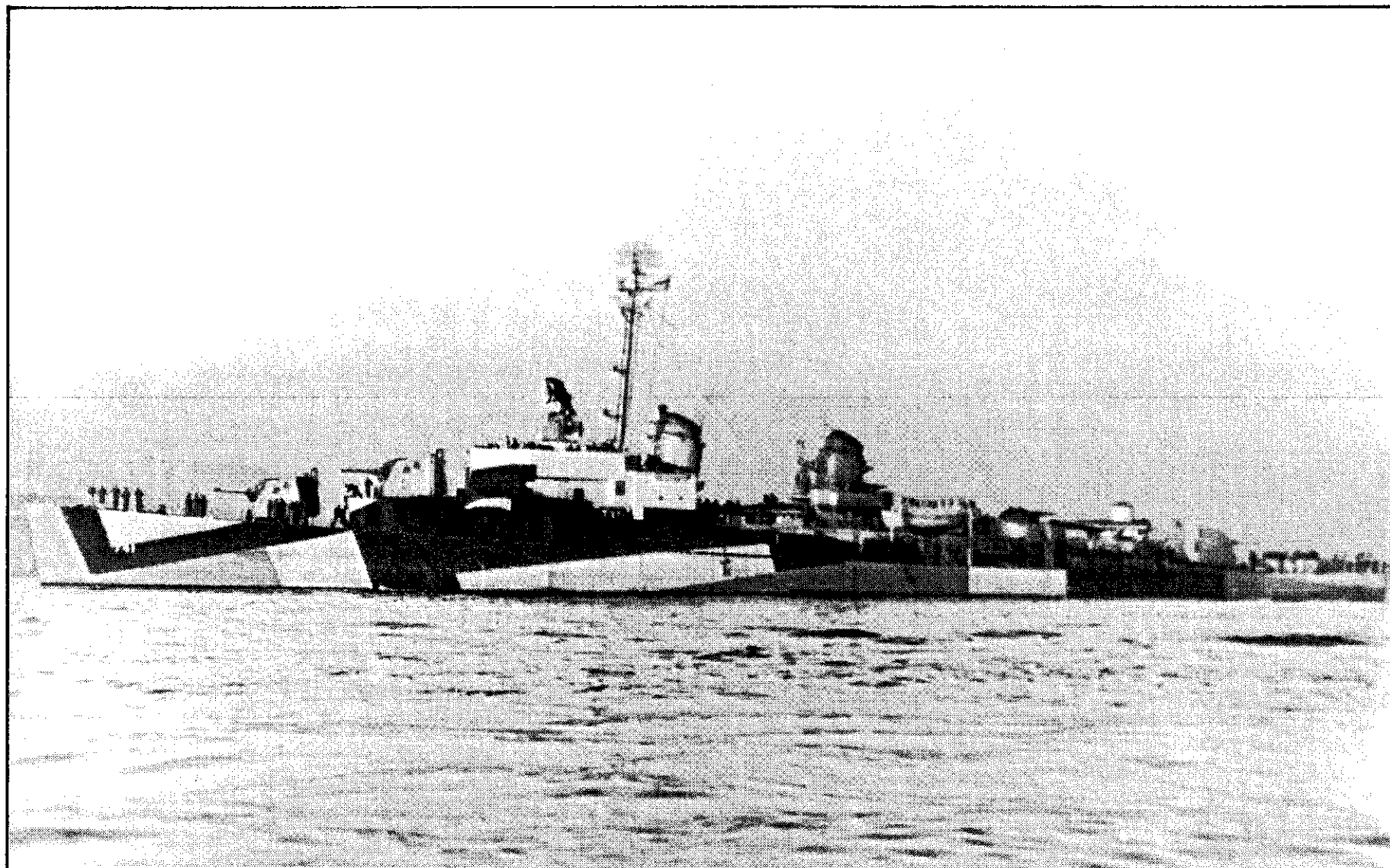
NAME AND FILE NUMBER (Show file No. below name)	RANK	DATE OF REPORT- ING ON BOARD DATE OF DETACHMENT (Show detachment date below report- ing date)		PRIMARY DUTIES	NAME, RELATIONSHIP, AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN (Show address at which BuPers may most readily communicate with next of kin in an emergency)
WILSON, 7516	R. L.	Comdr.	14 Nov. 1944	Commanding Officer	Fritzi Louise Wilson (Wife) 1935 Bonsallo St. Los Angeles (7), Calif.
BIDWELL, 81281	R. G.	Lt. Comdr.	14 Nov. 1944	Executive Officer. Navigator.	Helen Jane Bidwell (Wife) The Anchorage, New City, Rockland county, N. Y.
LEE, 123592	C. M.	Lieut.	14 Nov. 1944	Gunnery Officer.	Rose Margaret Lee (Wife) 320 Washington St. Morgantown, W. Va.
HICKS, 126827	E. C.	Lieut.	14 Nov. 1944	1st Lieut & Damage Control Officer	Ann Virginia Hicks (Wife) 113 Hill Street LaGrange, Georgia
WEATHERLY, 104976	E. N.	Lieut.	14 Nov. 1944	Engineer Officer.	Beverley (n) Weatherly (Wife) 520 Tecan Street Albany, Georgia
RUPERT, Jr. 165770	W. D.	Lieut.	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Gunnery Officer.	Mrs. Walter D. Rupert (Mother) 1323 23rd St. N.W. Canton (3), Ohio
WALLACE, Jr. 170860	A. J.	Lieut.	14 Nov. 1944	Communications Officer.	Eleanor Bennett Wallace (Wife) 73 Sumac Street E. Gloucester, Mass.
McQUILKIN, 188349	W. T.	Lt. (jg)	14 Nov. 1944	Torpedo Officer.	D. E. McQUILKIN (Father) 405 Washington Ave. Roanoke, Va.
RILEY, 185689	J. G.	Lt. (jg)	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Navigator Interceptor Officer.	Mrs. Joseph Riley (Mother) Savage, Minnesota
KAYE, 141419	R. S.	Lt. (jg)	14 Nov. 1944	Radio Specialist	Mr. Harry Kaye (Father) 36 Browne Street Brookline, Mass.
LEWIS, 202270	K. R.	Lt. (jg)	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Gunnery Officer	Iris Keen Lewis (Wife) 4224 2nd Rd. Apt. #1 N. Arlington, Va.
HOOD, 269788	G. W.	Lt. (jg)	14 Nov. 1944	Navigator Asst.	Beulah S. Hood (Mother) 527 S. Florida Ave. Columbus, Kansas
WARRICK, 326832	F. W.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Eng. Officer.	Edna Garman Warrick (Wife) 620 Kansas Ave. Walsenburg, Colorado
FORBES, 377313	D. H.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Commun. Officer.	Florence Maxine Forbes (Wife) 112 Veazie Street Old Town, Maine
FELTES, 339432	A. W.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Sound Officer	Nicholas R. Feltes (Father) c/o Bastian Morley and Co. Inc. La Porter, Indiana
STALTER, 336096	H. G.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Gunnery Off.-Recog. Off. Lkt. Illum. Off.	Irene Esther Stalter (Wife) 208 W. Washington St. Lisbon, Ohio
HILL, 336118	P. D.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Radar Officer (AE)	Helen Josephine Hill (Wife) 33 Waterford St. Lynn, Mass.
PAPPAS, 37769	N. M.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. First Lieutenant	Dorothy Maurer Pappas (Wife) 3455 S. Hoover Los Angeles, Calif.
KESSOCK, 180441	J. M.	Ensign	14 Nov. 1944	Asst. Engineer	Mrs. Bessie Kessock (Mother) 14 N. Walnut St. East Orange, N. J.
GRANT, 256291	C. H.	Lt. (jg) (SC)	14 Nov. 1944	Supply and Disb. Officer.	Patricia Donald Grant (Wife) 1550 La Veredo Berkeley, Calif.
THOMPSON, 171450	P. D.	Lt. (jg) (MC)	14 Nov. 1944	Medical Officer.	Mary Lou Thompson (Wife) 824 E. South Temple Salt Lake City, Utah

EXAMINED AND FOUND TO BE CORRECT:

R. G. BIDWELL, Lieut. Comdr.,

U. S. N.

NAVIGATOR.



This completion view of the Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) was taken in Boston Harbor after she was commissioned there on 14 November 1944. Twin 5-in./38 gun mounts distinguished this class from earlier U.S. destroyers. Other design features were twin rudders, for improved maneuverability, and an enclosed main-deck passageway providing sheltered access to machinery spaces, an important safety feature in heavy seas. The Drexler displaced 2,200 tons and was 376½ feet long. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)

Division of Naval History
Ships' Histories Section
Navy Department

HISTORY OF USS DREXLER (DD 741)

Having served for only six months during World War II, the destroyer USS DREXLER had a brief though busy career. She was sunk by a Kamikaze plane during the operations at Okinawa.

USS DREXLER was named in honor of Ensign Henry Clay Drexler, USN. Ensign Drexler was born on 7 August 1901 in Braddock, Pennsylvania, and was appointed midshipman in 1920. He was awarded the Medal of Honor and Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism aboard USS TRENTON on 20 October 1924. He was killed in an effort to save shipmates after two charges of powder had ignited as USS TRENTON was preparing to fire trial installation shots from her 6-inch guns.

The keel of the destroyer DREXLER was laid on 24 April 1944. She was launched on 3 September 1944 with Mrs. Louis A. Drexler, mother of the ship's namesake, serving as sponsor.

DREXLER was first commissioned on 14 November 1944 at the Navy Yard, Boston, Massachusetts. Commander R. L. Wilson, USN, assumed command of the new destroyer as her first commanding officer.

A fitting out period was conducted from 14 November through 5 December 1944. The destroyer sailed on her shakedown cruise on the 5th for Bermuda, arriving there on the 8th.

Shakedown was completed in Bermuda on 9 January 1945, and DREXLER got under way for the Navy Yard, Boston, Massachusetts, for post-shakedown availability. The nine-day post-shakedown availability was completed on 20 January, when the ship sailed for Hampton Roads, Virginia.

DREXLER got under way on 23 January in company with SHUBRICK, escorting the carrier BON HOMME RICHARD en route to Port of Spain, Trinidad. After their arrival, the ship sailed with SHUBRICK en route to the Canal Zone.

The destroyer remained in Balboa from 2 to 10 February, when she got under way for San Diego, California. DREXLER had a 3-day availability after her arrival at the Repair Base, in San Diego. On the 13th she set course for Pearl Harbor.

DREXLER conducted antiaircraft gunnery practice and shore bombardment exercises in the Hawaiian Islands area during her stay in Pearl Harbor. The ship sailed again on 23 February 1945, en route to Guadalcanal in company with Task Unit 12.5.8. This Task Unit was composed of SUWANEE and CHANANGO.

DREXLER next sailed to Ulithi, departing on 27 March 1945, en route to Okinawa. Upon her arrival at Okinawa the destroyer assumed patrol duties on a radar picket station.

At 0831 on the morning of 4 May, the radar scope picked up an enemy plane at a distance of approximately 32 miles. When the plane came within range, DREXLER immediately commenced firing all guns. The enemy aircraft commenced

attacking USS WADSWORTH. Numerous 40-millimeter hits were observed. DREXLER ceased firing when WADSWORTH came into her direct line of fire. The enemy aircraft was seen to crash close aboard the port quarter of WADSWORTH.

As the plane crashed, lookouts reported another plane at a distance of approximately five miles. However, the plane turned and fled before she could be fired upon.

The next action for DREXLER occurred on 28 May 1945. On this date DREXLER, together with USS LOWRY, sailed from the transport area at Hagushi Beach, Okinawa, and proceeded to their assigned Radar Picket Station.

At approximately 0700 on this date, an enemy plane identified as a "Nick" was sighted at a range of seven miles, and at an altitude of 2,000 feet. As DREXLER was about to open fire, four Combat Air Patrol planes attacked the enemy aircraft and shot it down. As this plane was observed going down, a second plane was sighted on the starboard bow of the column. This plane, a twin-engine bomber, started its approach in a long shallow glide, circling toward the head of the column.

As there was no time to execute a column movement, DREXLER came sharply to the left, and opened fire at the same time the aircraft dove on LOWRY. The plane missed LOWRY, passing directly over her. It almost crashed and seemed to stumble into DREXLER in its effort to recover.

DREXLER checked her fire momentarily as the plane passed over LOWRY, then opened fire again as the plane came in. The plane crashed into the starboard side. The side of the ship was holed from about ten feet into the forward engine room to abaft the after engine room.

The auxiliary steam lines in the engine rooms and the main steam lines in the after fireroom were ruptured. The 40-mm. gun from Mount No. 43 was blown from its foundation, and some of the personnel were knocked off the mount.

The 40-mm. gun in Mount No. 44 was put out of action due to the explosion of 40-mm. ammunition in the vicinity. In the area where the plane hit the ship was sprayed with gasoline which started fires. The repair party brought the fire under control expeditiously and had it out before the second plane hit.

When the second plane hit, a large volume of steam was noted coming from the engineering spaces on the starboard side. Realizing it would be impossible to maintain the speed of 25 knots, and in order not to drain all the steam from the boilers, two-thirds standard speed was rung up immediately. This was a precautionary measure until some information could be obtained on the extent of the damage.

Within a half minute after this plane hit, a second bomber was sighted making a dive on USS LOWRY, which was on DREXLER's starboard beam. The plane was taken under fire and numerous hits were observed, which caused it to spin in astern of LOWRY and splash.

Following this, all main power in the forward section of the ship was lost. None of the personnel in this part of the ship survived. At 0703 a

third bomber was sighted on the starboard bow at a distance of approximately 10,000 yards.

The bomber made a circling approach in a shallow glide to come in from dead ahead. The fighter planes and DREXLER's gunfire caused the plane to miss on the first pass. The kamikaze bomber made another suicide run down the port bow, banked, and passed directly over the ship, just aft of the No. 2 stack. The 20-mm. guns on the port side fired on the bomber, and many hits were scored.

The Japanese bomber then managed to level off, circle around and come in from ahead. Having just missed the bridge, the plane clipped the signal hall-ways and crashed into the boat davits and superstructure deck just abaft the midships passageway. There was a tremendous explosion which rocked the ship violently from stem to stern. Parts of the ship were blown hundreds of feet into the air. This bomber was heavily loaded and apparently the explosion blew off the sides of the ship.

DREXLER, which already had a small list to the starboard, was a little down by the stern, and was starting to list rapidly to the starboard. Personnel were forced to start abandoning ship upon their own initiative.

The destroyer turned over flat on her starboard side and then sank stern first, disappearing from sight 49 seconds after the second suicide hit. Many men were trapped because of the quickness with which the ship sank. The rapidity with which the ship rolled over made it difficult for the trapped men to get up ladders, through a hatch, or even climb across the deck bulkhead or overhead.

LCS(L) 114 recovered approximately 150 survivors of USS DREXLER. LCS(L)s 55 and 56 recovered the remaining survivors.

USS DREXLER earned one Battle Star on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the Okinawa Gunto Operation during the period 25 March to 28 May 1945.

* * * * *

STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	376 feet
BEAM	40 feet
SPEED	34 knots
DISPLACEMENT	2,200 tons

* * * * *

Compiled: June 1953

Retyped: January 1998
E. A. Wilde, Jr.

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741)

Obituary for Captain Ronald L. Wilson, USN (Ret.)
1909-1966*

Commanding Officer: 14 November 1944 to 28 May 1945

RONALD LEE WILSON '32

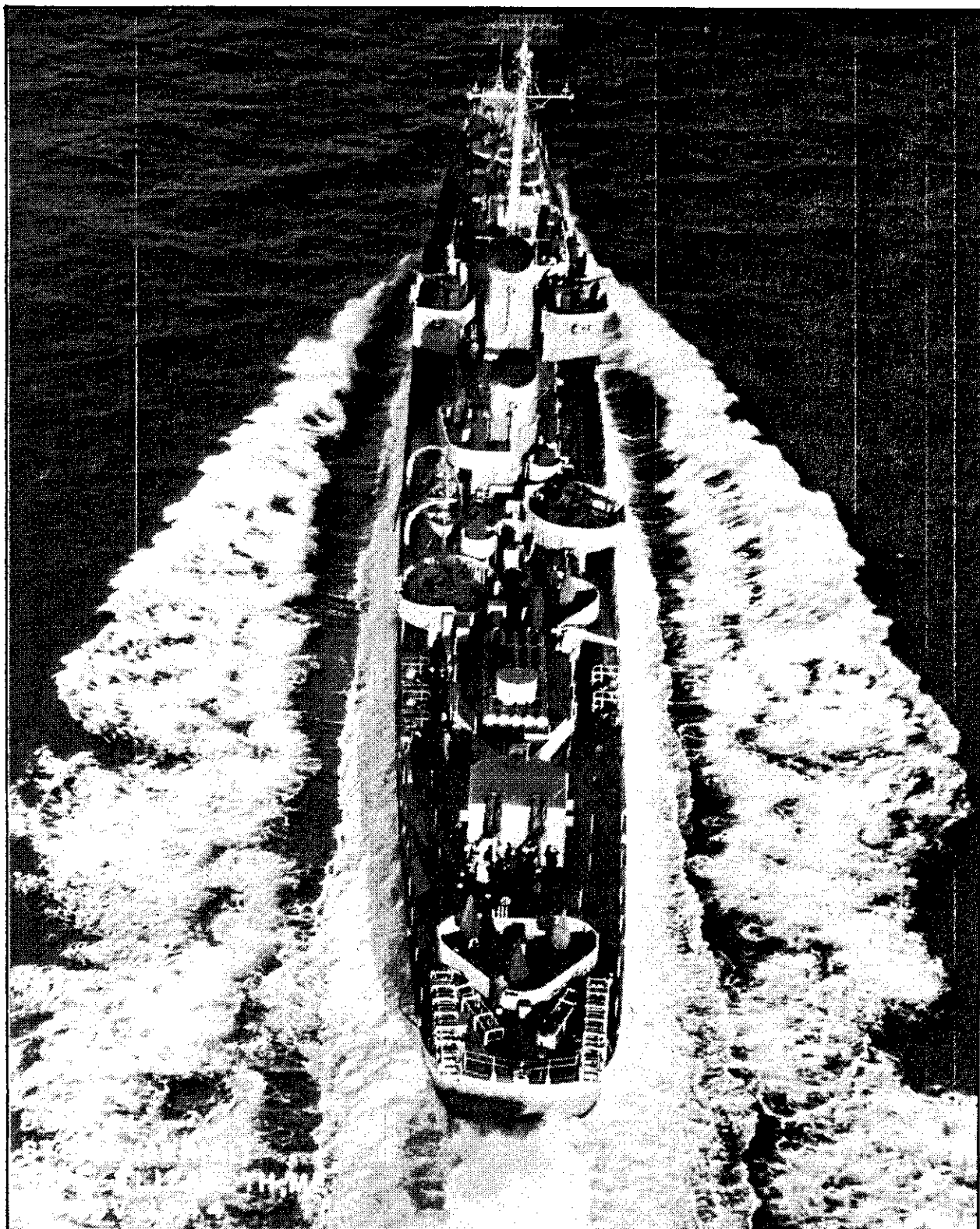
Capt. Ronald L. Wilson, USN (Ret.), of Altadena, Calif., died of a heart attack at Pasadena on 18 Jan.

Capt. Wilson was born in Marion, Ill., and was graduated from the Naval Academy in 1932. He attended the University of Southern Illinois before entering the Academy, and later attended the Naval Postgraduate School at Annapolis and received his Master's degree in radio engineering from Harvard University. He was serving on the Staff of Commander Destroyers, Battle Force, Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor at the time of the Japanese attack. He remained there until November 1942 when he served on the Staff of the Representative of Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet in the South Pacific.

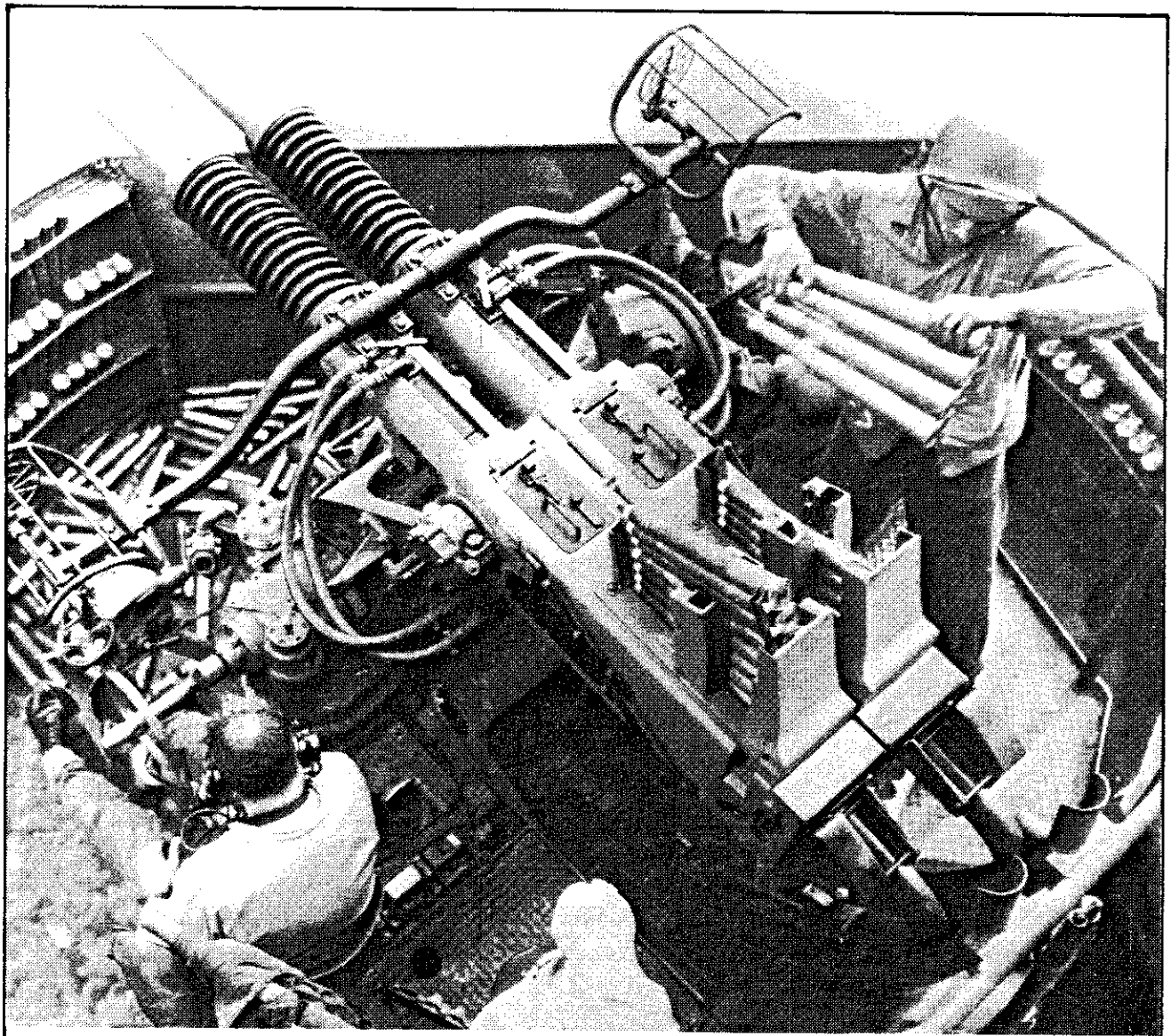
After commanding USS SEMMES he took over the command of the DREXLER, which was sunk in May 1945 by kamikazes. After hospitalization on Saipan he had duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, then served on the staff of Commander First Task Fleet, and the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific. He also served in the Office of Naval Material. For services during the war he was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

Survivors include his widow, Fritz Louise, of 2910 Santa Rosa Ave., Altadena; three sons: Lt. James R. Wilson '60, John Allen and Jack Lowell Wilson, and a daughter, Mrs. James N. Jean.

* Shipmate magazine, April 1966

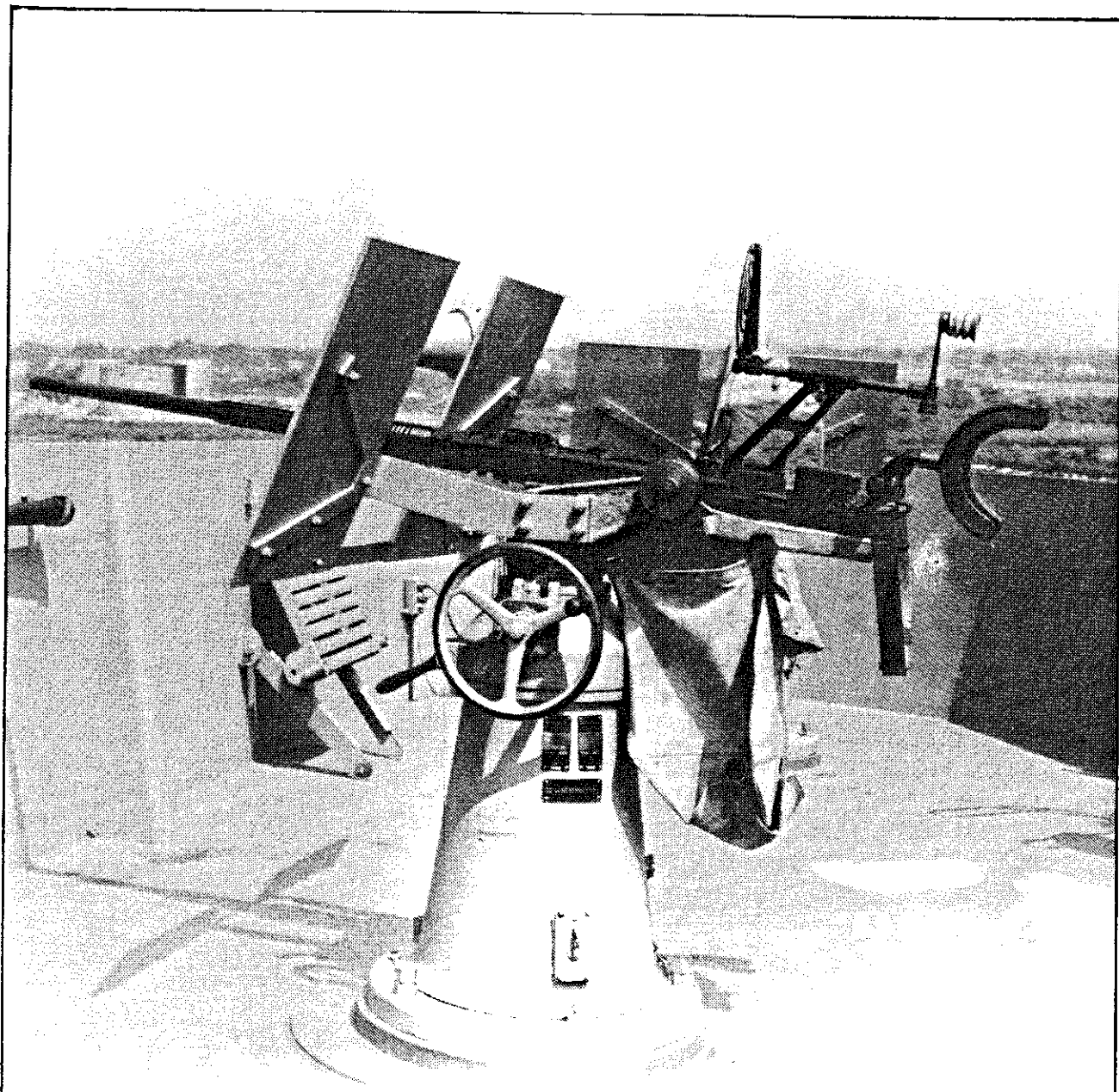


The 2,200-ton U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) off Cape Elizabeth, Maine, during a trial run in November 1944. This aerial view shows all of her 40-mm. Bofors gun mounts: Mounts 41 and 42 (twins) abreast the forward funnel, and Mounts 43 and 44 (quads) offset abaft the second funnel. The three anti-aircraft guns on her pantail are 20-mm.'s. (U.S. Navy Photograph.)



The 40-mm Bofors gun fired a two-pound explosive shell with an effective range of about 2,800 yards. It was primarily an antiaircraft weapon, but destroyers also used their 40-mm's against enemy strongpoints when they provided close-in gunfire support during landings. The gun crew for a twin mount consisted of a pointer, a trainer, a gun captain and four loaders (two for each barrel). The Bofors was capable of firing about 160 rounds/barrel/minute, but the number of rounds actually fired depended on the ability of the loaders to provide an uninterrupted supply of ammunition.

(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.)

*Excerpt from Destroyers in Action
by Richard A. Shafter.**

"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, shoos 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 reenforcements, 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.

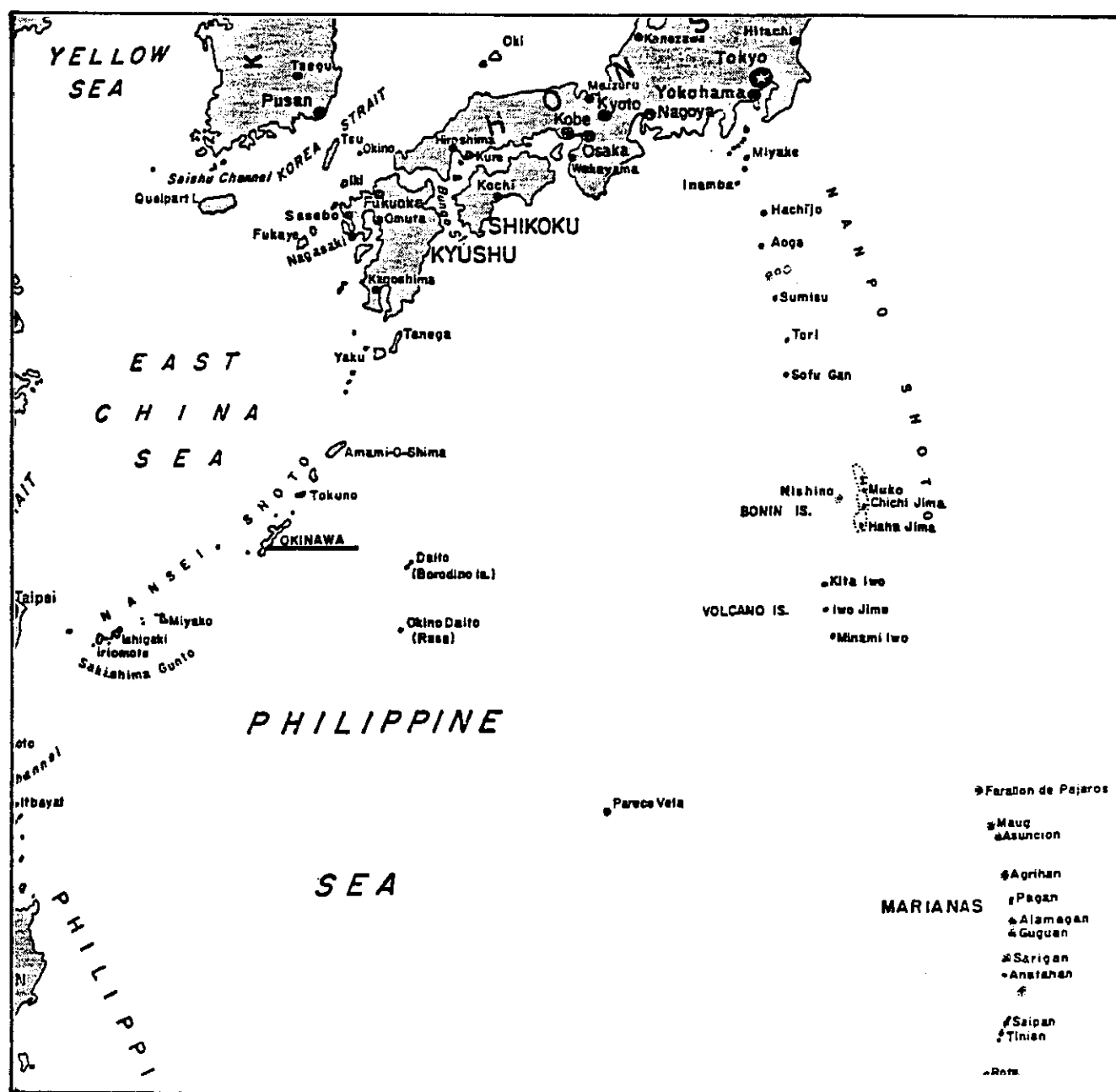
He'll abuse his ship roundly as the most uncomfortable, leakingest, buckingest crate that ever went to sea. But let somebody else pass unfavorable comment on her and he's up in arms. Asked why he wasn't applying for a transfer after he had given a lengthy and extremely critical recital of his ship's 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."

Northwest Pacific, Showing the Approaches to Japan



The U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) was lost in the Pacific War's final campaign, at Okinawa, 300 miles south of Japan's home island of Kyushu. Okinawa was invaded on 1 April 1945 because the Allies needed a major air and naval base for the assault on Japan, planned for later in the year. There were five airfields in this island group and two protected bays on the main island's southeast coast - plus a large sheltered anchorage at Kerama Retto, 15 miles to the west. This victorious Campaign ended officially on 2 July 1945, after 30 naval ships and craft had been sunk and 368 damaged. Close to 5,000 sailors were killed and an equal number were wounded.

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ACTION REPORT

ORIGINAL

USS DREXLER

DD 741

SERIAL 0115-45

16 JULY 1945

ACTION REPORTS FOR PERIOD 23 FEBRUARY 1945 TO
28 MAY 1945.

[COVERS SCREENING ACTIVITY DURING OKINAWA
OPERATIONS. IN TASK GROUP 51.5. SUNK
MAY 28 1945.]

132465

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Serial 0115-45

Care of Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California,
16 July 1945.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander-In-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Squadron Sixty-Three.
(2) Commander Task Group Thirty-One Point Five.
(3) Commander Task Force Thirty-One.
(4) Commander Third Fleet.
(5) Commander-In-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Action Reports, for period 23 February 1945 to
28 May 1945.

Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 712,874(6).
(b) Pacific Fleet Confidential letter 1CL-45.

1. (a) During the period 23 February 1945 to 26 March 1945, this vessel operated with Carrier Division 22 during the rehearsal for, and movement to staging points for the occupation of Okinawa. From 27 March 1945 to 2 May 1945 this vessel operated with Carrier Division 22 during the approach to Okinawa and while that unit served as Support Carrier Unit Three for the occupation.

(b) The DREXLER was part of the A/S and AA screen of Support Carrier Unit Three and also acted as plane guard. The ships of this force were never under direct attack during the period covered by this report, although many enemy aircraft were picked up by radar and on several occasions enemy planes closed to short range at night. No bonafide submarine contacts were made by vessels in the screen. This vessel sank three enemy horned-type drifting mines in the waters off Okinawa. The DREXLER also served as screen for the USS SANGAMON (CVE 26) during two rearming trips to Kerama Retto and was detached from duty with Support Carrier Unit Three on 2 May 1945 after escorting the USS CHENANGO (CVE 28) to Kerama Retto.

2. During the period 2 May 1945 to 28 May 1945 this vessel operated under Commander Task Group 51.5 and Commander Task Group 31.5 as a Radar Picket Support ship, and in the Transport screens and also participated in the occupation of Tori Shima. All of the action reports for individual actions during this period had not been completed when the ship sank, and the data used to compile the reports as well as one of the officers concerned were lost. As it is impossible to reconstruct these reports except for the barest outline, the actions are cited below together with other ships which were in company so that reference may be made to reports submitted by these ships.

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Subject: Action Reports, for period 23 February 1945 to
28 May 1945

(a) From 3 to 7 May, the DREXLER was Radar Picket Support ship in Radar Picket Station Nos. 3 and 5. In Radar Picket Station No. 5, this vessel assisted in shooting down one Zeke which crashed close aboard the USS WADSWORTH (DD 516). An action report for this period was submitted.

(b) About 10 to 12 May, the DREXLER was a part of the force under Commander Destroyer Squadron 63, Captain C.A. Buchanan, USN, which occupied Tori Shima. No action report submitted.

(c) About 14 to 18 May, the DREXLER was Radar Picket Support ship in Radar Picket Station No. 15. The USS GAINARD (DD 706) was the Radar Picket. This group was under attack for three nights, approximately four hours each night. The DREXLER splashed one twin engine bomber close astern and assisted in splashing two other enemy planes, type unknown. No action report submitted.

(d) About 24 to 26 May, the DREXLER was Radar Picket Support ship in Radar Picket Station No. 15. The USS AMMEN (DD 527) was the Radar Picket and the USS STORMES (DD 780) was also a support ship and OTC. This group was under attack for about nine hours the first night. Results of firing were undetermined except for one possible splash. The USS STORMES (DD 780) was hit the next morning and was relieved by the USS BOYD (DD 544) (ComDesDiv 92). No action report submitted.

(e) At other times, when not on Picket duty, this vessel was in the transport AA screen and inner and outer transport screens, on one occasion taking one enemy plane under fire at night with undetermined results. No action reports submitted.

(f) An action report covering the engagement on 28 May 1945 during which the DREXLER was sunk has been submitted.

R. L. WILSON
Comdr., USN

Copy to:

ComInCh - Advance-Direct (1)
CinCPac - Advance-Direct (3)
ComDesPac - Direct (1)
ComCorDiv-22 - Direct (1)

CDS63/A16-3
Serial: 0104

COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON 63

c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.
18 August 1945.

~~D-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~ **DECLASSIFIED**

Second Endorsement to:
CO DREXLER Conf. ltr.,
DD741/A9-8, Serial 0115-45
of 16 July 1945.

From: Commander Destroyer Squadron SIXTY-THREE.
To: Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Transport Screen (CTG 31.5).
(2) Commander FIFTH Amphibious Force (CTF 31).
(3) Commander THIRD Fleet.
(4) Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: USS DREXLER(DD741); Action Reports, for period 23 February to
28 May, 1945.

Reference: (a) CTG 51.24(ComDesDiv 126) serial 02 of 15 May, 1945 (Action
Report-Capture of Tori Shima, Okinawa Gunto, 11-13 May, 1945).

1. Forwarded.
2. Reference (a) covers the performance of the USS DREXLER while operating directly under the command of ComDesRon 63(then ComDesDiv 126) as a unit of the Tori Shima Attack Group (TG 51.24), 11-13 May, 1945.
3. The DREXLER'S performance of duty during this period was at all times outstanding and contributed to the success of the operation.

Charles A. Buchanan
CHARLES A. BUCHANAN

Copy to:
ComDesPac
Comdr. Ronald L. Wilson, USN
c/o BuPers.

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION REPORT

ORIGINAL

USS DREXLER

DD 741

SERIAL 0109-45

12 MAY 1945

ACTION REPORT - ANTI-AIRCRAFT ACTION OF 4 MAY 1945

COVERS ACTION WHILE PATROLLING IN
RADAR PICKET STATION FOR OKINAWA
OPERATION IN TASK GROUP 51.5.

128495

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DD741/A9-8/A16-3/dcm
Serial: 0109-45

~~DECLASSIFIED~~ T I A L

U. S. S. DREXLER
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

12 May 1945.

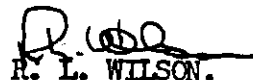
From: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. DREXLER (DD741).
To : The Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via : (1) Commander, Task Unit 51.5.
(2) Commander, Task Force 51.
(3) Commander, FIFTH Fleet.

Subject: Action Report - Anti-Aircraft Action of 4 May 1945.

Reference: (a) PacFlt Conf. ltr 1CL-45.

Enclosure: (4) Subject report.

1. In accordance with reference (a), the following report (Enclosure A) of action against an air attack (single suicide bomber) on the morning of 4 May 1945 is submitted.


R. L. WILSON.

cc: ComInch (Readiness Division)(1)
CinCPac (3)
ComDesPac (1)
ComDesRon 63 (1)

FILMED

U. S. S. DREXLER
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

Anti-Aircraft Action Report - 4 May 1945.

1. On the morning of 4 May 1945, this vessel in company with the U.S.S. WADSWORTH (DD516) was patrolling in Radar Picket Station #3 modified, Lat. 26° 39' N, Long. 128° 22' E. This vessel was in condition I Easy. At 0831 the SC Radar picked up a bogie bearing 040°T, distant 32 miles. Control was coached on target and commenced tracking. Control, while in full Radar control lost the target at 14,000 yards. Combat next reported bogie at 3½ miles. At this time enemy plane was sighted visually by control as it emerged from cloud cover. Enemy plane immediately started a 30° dive. This vessel commenced firing all guns. The enemy plane then definitely committed itself to attacking the WADSWORTH. Hits by this vessel's 40mm were observed. Control did not get solution until after firing commenced. Several 5" bursts were seen close astern of target, but did not contribute to destruction of the target. Fire by this vessel was ceased as WADSWORTH came into line of fire. The enemy plane, a Zeke, was seen to crash close aboard the port quarter of the WADSWORTH. As the plane crashed, lookouts reported another plane bearing 175°T, at approximately 5½ miles, position angle 3. This plane turned and fled before fire could be opened.

2. This force consisted of the U.S.S. DREXLER (OTC) as fire support ship, U.S.S. WADSWORTH acting as fighter director ship, and U.S.S. LCS(L) 52, U.S.S. LSM(R) 197, U.S.S. LCS(L) 18, and U.S.S. LCS(L) 85; operating in accordance with orders of C.T.G. 51.5. This vessel got underway at 1055I, 3 May from Hagushi Anchorage, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands to relieve the U.S.S. SPROSTON (DD577) as support vessel on Radar Picket station #3 arriving on station at 1537I, 3 May 1945. Previous to this time, and during the present operation, this vessel had operated with Task Unit 52.1.3. Every opportunity to track air targets, both visually and by radar, was used. Other than one burst practice, smoke bomb practice and sinking miscellaneous floating objects, no actual firing practice had been conducted since 27-28 March after leaving Ulithi.

Our forces at the outset of the action consisted of the U.S.S. DREXLER (DD741), U.S.S. WADSWORTH (DD576) 1000 yards on the port quarter of this vessel, and U.S.S. LCS(L) 52, U.S.S. LSM(R) 197, U.S.S. LCS(L) 18, U.S.S. LCS(L) 85 in column, bearing 258°T, distance 4 miles. This force patrolling in assigned area Lat. 26°38'N, Long. 128°21'E. Enemy forces sighted consisted of two Zekes.

3. Weather on the morning of 4 May was as follows: Surface visibility was unlimited, the sky was 6/10 covered by cumulus and semi-cumulus clouds, wind was 7-10 kts. from 050°T. Sea was fairly calm. This vessel steaming at 10 kts. on various courses in condition I Easy. At 0831 CIC reported a bogie bearing 042, distance 33 miles, closing. When bogie was 25 miles distant, control was coached on target and solution obtained soon after. This vessel increased speed to 25 kts. and changed course to 090°T to put target on the port beam. At 14,000 yards, the target still could not be seen visually because of cloud formation and at this time control lost the target. CIC attempted to coach control back on the target and reported range as 7,000 yards. At this time control sighted target visually and as soon as guns were on target, commenced firing. Plot did not have a solution but obtained one while plane was in it's suicide dive. As the target emerged from the clouds it turned toward our force and immediately

ENCLOSURE (A) (1)

U. S. S. DREXLER
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

commenced it's dive at angle of approximately 30°. Target angle was 000 and it appeared that the enemy was diving on this vessel. Soon after opening fire the plane turned slightly and definitely committed itself to diving on the WADSWORTH. All guns were firing, although it was outside of 20mm range except for the last few seconds of it's dive. Hits were observed by this vessels 40mm. 5" bursts were seen close astern of target but apparently were not effective. Firing was ceased as the WADSWORTH came into our line of fire and the enemy plane, identified as a Zeke, was seen to crash close aboard on the port quarter of the WADSWORTH. As the enemy plane was in the last few seconds of it's dive, this vessels lookouts reported an enemy plane bearing 1750T, distant 5 miles, position angle 3. Control immediately attempted to pick up target which was on the starboard beam, but never saw the target. Observers, who did see it, reported that it was definitely an enemy plane, Zeke type, and that as the 1st Zeke crashed, the second one turned and disappeared into cloud cover. CIC did not pick up this second target. The Combat Air Patrol reported other Zeke's in the vicinity but none were sighted.

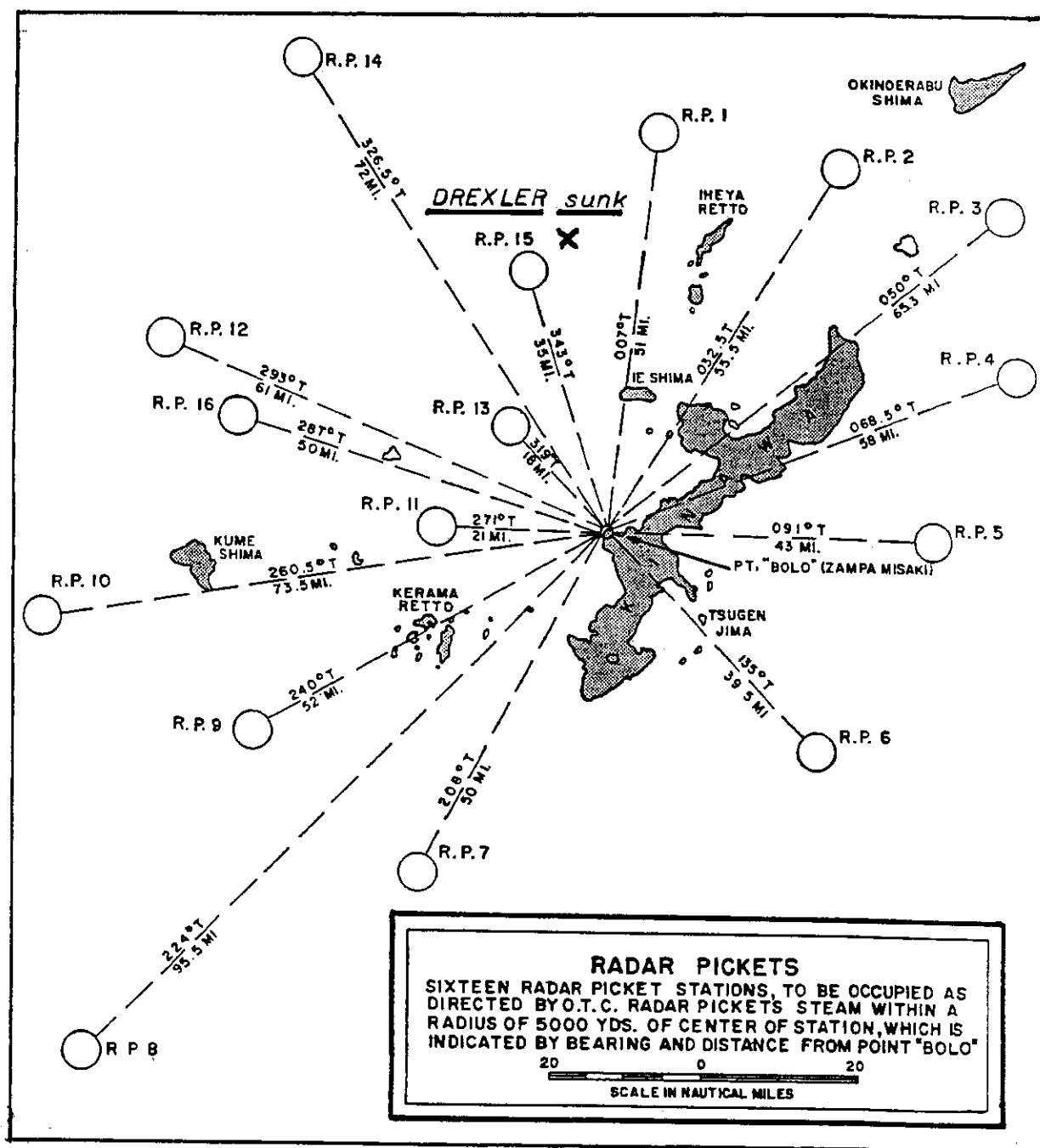
4. The performance of all CIC and Ordnance material and equipment was excellent. Fire discipline was good except for 20mm firing beyond their effective ranges. The 5" battery was fired in full automatic control, master key, rapid continuous fire. Range finder ranges were used. 40mm were controlled by Mk.51 Director. 20mm gunners have constantly been instructed to use Mk.14 sights, but the majority of them used tracer control.

Seven 5"/38 cal. projectiles Mk.40 nose fuze and eight 5"/38 cal. projectiles Mk.18 nose fuze all with SPDN powder; 45 rounds of 40mm and 190 rounds of 20mm were fired.

5. No damage was sustained. One Zeke was splashed by this vessel, and WADSWORTH.

6. It is believed that the two Zekes intended to make a coordinated attack with one diving out of the clouds on the port side and the other making a low approach on the starboard side. Apparently they were not timed together and the second Zeke, for some unknown reason, did not press home it's attack, but fled. Control did not see target and consequently did not open fire. For the first few seconds it appeared that the enemy intended to dive at this vessel for the target angle was 000, however it definitely committed itself to the WADSWORTH after this vessel commenced firing. It is believed that this vessel assisted in splashing one Zeke. This was the first action for over 75% of this vessel's crew. All hands conducted themselves in accordance with the high traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

ENCLOSURE (A) (2)



The radar pickets deployed in sixteen stations surrounding Okinawa protected the invasion fleet by giving an early warning of enemy air attacks. Fighter-director teams were embarked on a destroyer in every station so that when radar detected enemy aircraft the combat air patrol (CAP) assigned to their station could be vectored out to intercept the planes before they could attack the transport and gun-fire-support ships.

After the initial landings two destroyers were normally assigned to each station along with several support craft. The latter provided additional antiaircraft firepower, but they soon became known as "Pall Bearers" due to the frequency of their rescue operations. Sixteen destroyer types were sunk during the Okinawa Campaign from 3/26 to 6/21/45 (12 DD's, 1 DMS, 3 APD's), and many more were damaged.

KAMIKAZE FLIERS SINK THE DREXLER

Destroyer Lost Off Okinawa
With 210 Casualties—Third
Foe Hits on a Second Try

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12. (AP)—Three Japanese suicide bombers crashed into the destroyer Drexler off Okinawa on May 28 and sank her in less than two minutes with 210 casualties, the Navy reported tonight.

The story was told by the Drexler's skipper, Comdr. Ronald L. Wilson of Marion, Ill., who describes as "fantastic" the action of the third enemy suicide pilot. The Japanese flier made two passes at the crippled vessel before sending her to the bottom.

Commander Wilson and fifty-one crew members were wounded and 158 men were killed. Commander Wilson attributed the high casualties to the rapidity with which his ship sank and the fact that she rolled over almost immediately.

The first attack was at 7:02 A. M. The Drexler had been at general quarters all night. One suicide plane had been shot down by combat air patrol when another appeared.

The foe dived through a hail of fire, aiming at a companion destroyer 800 yards away. It missed, and the pilot leveled off just enough to crash directly into the Drexler's starboard side.

Exploding in the after fire room,

the Kamikaze plane also damaged the forward and after engine rooms. Gasoline fires blazed up but were quickly extinguished. Commander Wilson laid this success to the damage control officer, Lieut. Eugene C. Hicks of La Grange, Ga., who was killed soon afterward.

The second suicide plane headed in thirty seconds after the first hit. Despite power failure, fires and shock, the Drexler's gunners scored on it with a 5-inch gun and the enemy's crash did little damage.

Seconds later the third Kamikaze attacked. Guns of the Drexler and two Marine Corsair pilots scored many hits as it came in. The enemy pilot missed his mark and zoomed over amidships.

"It was so apparent he would crash that the Marine pilots veered off," Commander Wilson said. "But the Jap didn't crash at all. He flew a tight circle to attack a second time. Again the ship's guns took up the fight with the alert Marine pilots, who observed what had happened.

"All during the circling maneuver a few feet above the water the Japanese plane was further riddled, but it completed the circle and crashed onto the deck of the Drexler."

The enemy plane struck the destroyer at the base of her No. 2 stack. The explosion blew parts of the ship hundreds of feet and started a big fire.

The Drexler rolled over rapidly on her starboard side and her bow lifted high out of the water, then sank stern first.

The Drexler was built at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Me., and commissioned on Nov. 14, 1944.

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION REPORT

DECLASSIFIED

ORIGINAL

USS DREXLER

DD 741

SERIAL 01

26 JUNE 1945

ACTION REPORT, INVOLVING LOSS OF USS DREXLER (DD 741)

[COVERS SUCCESSFUL SUICIDE PLANE ATTACKS
ON VESSEL ON RADAR PICKET STATION OFF
OKINAWA 28 MAY 1945.]

131614

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San Francisco, California,
26 June 1945.

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DECLASSIFIED - OPNAV INST 5500.30
BY *[Signature]* DATE *9 May '60*

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander-In-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Squadron Sixty-Three.
(2) Commander Task Group Thirty-One Point Five.
(3) Commander Task Force Thirty-One.
(4) Commander Third Fleet.
(5) Commander-In-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Action Report, Involving Loss of U.S.S. DREXLER (DD741).

Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 712,874(6).
(b) Pacific Fleet Confidential letter LCL-45.

BRIEF SUMMARY:

1. (a) In the early morning of 28 May 1945, (East Longitude date) this vessel in company with the U.S.S. LOWRY (DD770) and LCS(L)55 and LCS(L)56 was patrolling Radar Picket Station No. 15 modified (Bearing 353° T., distance 40 miles from Zampa Misaki Point, Okinawa Shima, in the Nansei Shoto) in accordance with verbal orders of Commander Task Group 31.5.

(b) This group was subjected to a heavy, coordinated, determined attack by approximately six enemy suicide planes. Initial contact was made by radar on one or more bogies at 28 miles, bearing 035° T. On the basis of information obtained on this raid the destroyers were deployed so as best to bring all guns to bear on the contact. This raid closed and was sighted visually directly on the starboard beam of the column formation at about 6-7 miles, and consisted of one plane, a Nick. As we were about to open fire on this plane 3 or 4 combat Air Patrol planes attacked it and sent it down in flames. Simultaneously, a second plane, a twin engine bomber identified as a Frances, was sighted visually sharp on the starboard bow of the column at about 7 miles, elevation 2000 feet, circling toward the head of the column and at the same time in a shallow glide on the destroyers. The DREXLER came left sharply and opened fire immediately at about 12,000 yards range, firing directly over the U.S.S. LOWRY as the plane closed. The plane appeared to be making its suicidal dive on the LOWRY which was 800 yards on the starboard beam of the DREXLER as a result of our turn. This plane was hit but came on in, missed the LOWRY by a few feet passing directly over her, and looked as if it was going to crash; however, it recovered and seemed to stumble into this vessel striking between the main deck and waterline at frame 114, just slightly forward of the starboard 40 MM Quad mount. The ship in this vicinity was sprayed with gasoline which started a fire, but the fire was quickly brought under control. The starboard 40 MM quad was knocked from its foundation, and

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ **DECLASSIFIED**Subject: Action Report, Involving Loss of USS DREXLER (DD741)

steam lines in the engine rooms and after fireroom were ruptured. Almost immediately a second Frances was taken under fire slightly abaft the starboard beam as it was diving on the USS LOWRY. This plane was splash-
ed by a direct 5" hit from the DREXLER and crashed astern of the LOWRY. A third Frances was sighted sharp on the starboard bow making a circling approach in a shallow glide to come in from ahead. By this time the ship was dead in the water, all 5" mounts were in local control. The Radar Picket Corsairs plus our own gun fire forced it to miss this vessel on its first pass. It came down the port side, winged over and crossed the ship just aft of No. 2 stack almost striking the water on the starboard side. It was taken under fire again by the Starboard 20 MM guns and mount 41 twin and one Corsair. Many 20 MM hits from this vessel were observed at this time, as well as the fire from the Corsair. Although smoking and apparently about to crash the plane recovered, circled low over the water, came in from ahead, executed a 90° bank and hit this vessel on the port side just abaft the midships passageway. The ship was listing slowly to starboard, and after this second hit turned over rapidly on its side, lifted bow high out of the water and disappeared from sight within 49 seconds.

PRELIMINARIES

2. (a) The U.S.S. DREXLER together with the U.S.S. LOWRY (DD770) got underway at 0130(I), 28 May 1945 from the Transport area at Hagushi beaches, Okinawa, in accordance with TBS orders of Commander Task Group 31.5 and proceeded to Radar Picket Station No. 15 modified, arriving on station at 0415 and relieving the U.S.S. AMMEN (DD527) and U.S.S. BOYD (DD544) (Comdesdiv 92). This vessel was the picket support and the Commanding Officer, USS DREXLER, was OTC. The USS LOWRY was the Radar Picket. The DREXLER and LOWRY commenced patrolling station in column formation, 800 yards between ships, on East and West courses reversing course ½ hourly by simultaneous turns. Speed was 15 knots. The U.S.S. DREXLER was on the Eastern end of the column. The LCS(L)55 and LCS(L)56 were the picket support craft and had been directed to patrol on East-West courses, reversing half-hourly, 3-4,000 yards to the Northward. Since early forenoon of 27 May the Japs had been very active in the air. The DREXLER had been in the Transport AA screen from this time until about midnight at which time she anchored in the Transport area. The ship had been at General Quarters or condition ONE Easy since before sunset. By 0500 28 May there were no further reports of enemy contacts and condition ONE Easy was again set.

(b) Previous to this date, since 2 May 1945, this vessel had acted as Radar Picket Support Ship in Radar Picket Stations Nos. 3 and 5, and

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DECLASSIFIEDSubject: Action Report, Involving Loss of U.S.S. DREXLER (DD741)

twice before in Radar Picket Station No. 15. In Radar Picket Station No. 5 this vessel assisted in shooting down one Zeke that crashed about 50 yards off the port quarter of the U.S.S. WADSWORTH (DD416). During the first tour of duty on Radar Picket Station No. 15, we were under attack for three nights, approximately four hours each night. This vessel splashed one twin-engine bomber close astern and assisted in splashing two other enemy planes, type unknown. During the second tour on Radar Picket station 15, modified, we were under attack for approximately nine hours the first night. Results of firing were undetermined except for one possible splash. It should be pointed out that not all Jap planes are aflame when they crash and it is difficult at night to determine these splashes. At other times when not on a Radar Picket Station or replenishing at Kerama Retto this vessel was in the Transport AA screen and inner and outer Transport screen, on one occasion taking one enemy plane under fire at night with undetermined results. Also during this period the DREXLER engaged in a shore bombardment during the occupation of TORI SHIMA

CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ACTION

3. (a) On the morning of 28 May 1945 the sky was clear except for scattered alto cumulus clouds, surface visibility unlimited, wind direction North, force 2, sea calm with small waves. At approximately 0643(I) a bogey contact was picked up on the SC-Radar bearing 035°(T), distance 28 miles. This vessel, already in condition of readiness ONE-Easy, went to General Quarters. The course at this time was 090°(T), speed 15 knots. The combat Air Patrol investigated this contact and reported a PBM. Upon hearing this report the Commanding Officer reported to CIC a vapor trail could be seen very high in the same direction and that it was his opinion the PBM was not our bogey contact. This was reported to the U.S.S. LOURY by CIC. Shortly thereafter a PBM was sighted about five miles distant on a different bearing. At about 0650 Destroyers executed a reversal of course on signal by simultaneous turns. The normal time to reverse course according to the patrol plan in effect was 0700, but course was reversed at about 0650 in order to keep in close vicinity of the support craft. Speed was increased to 20 knots at about this time. "Flash Red-Control Yellow" was sent to the support craft. As the contact closed a slight change in bearing to the right was noted (040°(T)). Based upon this information a change of course of 60° to the right was executed by column movement at about 0655 in order to put the contact abeam of the column. The course was then 330°(T). Speed was increased to 25 knots. Almost immediately after increasing speed an enemy plane identified as a NICK was sighted bearing about 060°(T), range 7 miles, elevation about 2000 feet. The time was approximately 0700. As

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we were about to open fire on this plane 3, or 4, CAP planes attacked it and sent it down in flames. Its target angle was 000° when sighted. As this plane was observed definitely going down, a second plane was sighted visually sharp on the starboard bow of the column, range 14,000 yards, altitude 2000 feet. This plane, a twin-engine bomber identified as a Frances, started its approach in a long shallow glide, circling toward the head of the column. As there was not time to execute a column movement, the DREXLER came left sharply and opened fire at the same time at approximately 12,000 yards, continuing fire as plane dove apparently at the USS LOWRY. During the latter part of plane's approach this vessel was firing directly over the LOWRY as the plane had us in line. By this time we had swung about 70° to the left, the USS LOWRY was approximately on our starboard beam. The plane missed the LOWRY, passing directly over her; almost crashed and seemed to stumble into the DREXLER in its effort to recover. The DREXLER checked fire momentarily as plane passed over LOWRY, then opened fire again as plane came in. The plane struck the starboard side, in a bank, the main impact hitting at frame 114 between main deck and water line, slightly forward of the starboard 40 MM quad mount. The time was 0702 (I).

(b) The starboard side of the ship from the Forward Engine Room to the After Engine Room, approximately frame 105 to 135, was heavily damaged. The side of the ship was holed from about 10 feet forward of the after bulkhead of the Forward Engine Room aft through the After Engine Room. The auxiliary steam lines in the After Fireroom, Forward and After Engine Rooms, and the main steam line in the After Fireroom were ruptured. The After Fireroom was abandoned and secured from topside. The main distribution board in the After Engine Room was demolished. The After Engine Room lost all steam and power. The after Diesel Generator started immediately and furnished power to 5" mount No. 3 and the steering engine until the ship was hit again. The Forward Fireroom was undamaged but steam was lost in about a half minute, due to the broken auxiliary steam line in the Forward Engine Room. 40MM mount No. 43 was blown from its foundation and some of the personnel were knocked off of the gun mount. 40MM mount No. 44 was put out of action due to explosion of 40MM ammunition in vicinity. The ship in vicinity of plane hit was sprayed with gasoline which started fires, the worst fires being on 40MM mount 43 and the life raft in vicinity. The Repair Party brought the fire under control expeditiously and had it out before the second plane hit.

(c) When the plane hit, the Commanding Officer noted a large volume of steam coming out of the engineering spaces on the starboard side. Realizing it would be impossible to maintain 25 knots, and in order not to drain all the steam from the boilers, two-thirds standard

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speed was rung up immediately until some information on extent of damage could be obtained. Actually, speed was reduced to zero due to broken steam lines.

(d) Within about a half minute after this plane hit a second bomber (Frances) was sighted making a dive on the USS LOWRY, which was approximately on our starboard beam at this time. This plane was taken under fire; hits were observed and a direct 5" hit from this vessel caused it to spin in astern of the LOWRY and splash. Immediately after this all main power forward was lost. The after diesel generator was already furnishing power to 5" mount No. 3. The forward diesel generator started and ran intermittently but did not supply power forward, due possibly to overload, short circuits, or broken relays. None of the personnel in this part of the ship were survivors.

(e) At about 0703 (I) a third bomber (Frances) was sighted on the starboard bow at 8-10,000 yards. 5" mount No. 3 got off a few rounds in local control before plane got too sharp on the bow. 5" mounts 1 and 2 were in local control, manual operation, but could not train fast enough to keep on target for effective fire. Mount 1 got off a few rounds. Mount 2 did not fire but had both guns loaded. 40MM twin mount No. 41 and the starboard 20MM mounts also took the plane under fire. The Radar Picket Corsairs (two) also attacked from extremely close quarters astern of the bomber and followed it in through our gunfire. The bomber made a circling approach in a shallow glide to come in from dead ahead. The F4U Fighters and our own gunfire forced him to miss on his first pass. He came down the port bow, banked and passed directly over the ship aft of No. 2 stack. The 20 MM guns on the port side fired on the bomber and many hits observed. The plane was seen smoking and appeared about to crash on the starboard quarter. The starboard 20 MM guns opened fire, and one F4U attacked him again at close quarters and many hits were again observed. However, it managed to level off, circle around and come in from ahead, just missing the bridge, clipping the signal halyards, banking 90° and crashing the boat davits and into the superstructure deck just abaft the midships passageway. There was a tremendous explosion which rocked the ship violently from stem to stern; parts of the ship were blown hundreds of feet in all directions; an immense oil fire shot several hundred feet into air. This bomber was heavily loaded and apparently the explosion blew the sides of the ship out. It did not appear that the back was broken. The warheads from neither torpedo mount were set off. The depth charges were not set off and none detonated when the ship went down. The ship, which already had a small list to starboard from the first hit and was a little down by the stern, started listing rapidly to starboard. Personnel started abandoning ship upon their initiative. Word was also given to abandon ship.

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The ship turned over flat on her starboard side and then sank stern first disappearing from sight 49 seconds after the second hit. Many personnel were trapped because of the quickness with which the ship sank. This was further aggravated by the rapidity with which the ship rolled over, thus making it difficult to get up a ladder, through a hatch, or even climbing across the deck. There was also a very positive downward "suction" as the ship went down. The surface of the water was covered with oil and debris; the oil continued to burn for over an hour in a great column which divided later into two columns. A great many lives were saved by empty 5" powder cans which floated clear when the ship sank. Only one floater net got clear and it was badly wadded up. Three life rafts were cut loose, and the others did not release.

ORDNANCE

4. (a) All ordnance equipment functioned efficiently in this engagement as it had in past performances. 5" mounts were fired in full automatic control using rangefinder range, rapid fire, until the second bomber was shot down. After this, all mounts were in local control. Mounts 1 and 2 were trained, pointed, and loaded by hand.

On the first plane the starboard 40 MM guns were controlled by their Mk 51 directors. Both 40 MM quads were put out of action by the first hit. Thereafter only 40 MM twin mount 41 fired at the second bomber which was splashed and at the third bomber which hit us. The shield around this mount and the ammunition on it were damaged by the first hit. Ammunition was supplied for this mount from 40 MM twin 42.

The port 40MM twin mount 42 did not fire because on both passes the third bomber came in so sharp on the bow down the port side, the mount would not bear.

All starboard 20 MM guns fired on the first attacking bomber. The midships 20 MM guns by No. 2 stack or their personnel were put out of action by the first hit. The remaining 20MM guns on the starboard side continued to fire to the last at the second bomber which was splashed and at the third bomber which hit us. The port 20 MM guns under the bridge and the aftermost 20 MM gun on the fantail fired on the third bomber as it came down the port side. The 20 MM fire was accurate as many hits could be seen and the bomber was smoking. However, the 20 MM are not very effective against this type of plane.

(b) These Jap bombers (Frances) were very fast, speeds as high as 350-400 knots being obtained in their glide dive. They are also capable of absorbing much punishment from machine guns. The bomb

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load on the second bomber that hit us must have been at least 2000 pounds. Two bombs were noted on it, one under each wing.

DAMAGE

5. (a) The damage sustained has been given in paragraph 3. The only point to add here is that it is the firm conviction of all survivors that had the ship received no further hit after the first it would have been saved. The condition of loading of the ship was 100 percent allowance of ammunition aboard, approximately 93 percent maximum capacity fuel oil and feed and fresh water tanks full.

(b) Two twin engine bombers identified as Frances were accounted for by suicide hits on this vessel. One of the same type was splashed by a 5" hit from this vessel. One Nick was shot down by the CAP as the action started. At least one Val was shot down by the CAP after the ship was sunk.

SPECIAL COMMENTS and INFORMATION

6. (a) This attack was well coordinated and determined. There is no doubt that the objective on that morning was the destroyers in Radar Picket Station 15. It was not a surprise attack; however, it is interesting to note that the Japs were down a little earlier in the morning than usual. The pilots were not amateurs or hurriedly graduated students; they were good pilots and knew how to handle their planes.

(b) The radars were in excellent operating condition and CIC was definitely alert. The bombers must have made their approach low or they would have been picked up at greater range. Normal ranges on this picket station were 50-60 miles.

PERSONNEL PERFORMANCES AND CASUALTIES

7. All hands conducted themselves in accordance with the highest traditions of the Naval Service. Personnel casualties were very high and have been covered in a separate report. This is a matter of great sorrow and personal loss to the Commanding Officer. Recommendation for awards is being made the subject of separate correspondence. However, it is desired here to commend the pilots of the two F4U Corsairs who tried valiantly to save the DREXLER from the third bomber. They attacked it at close quarters through our AA fire; one peeling off when apparently hit by our AA, the other staying on the tail of the bomber until it struck us. It is also desired to commend the "small boys" for their excellent job of recovering survivors. The LCS(L)114, which arrived during the engagement, picked up about 150 survivors. The other survivors were recovered by the LCS(L)55 and LCS(L)56.

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-----LESSONS LEARNED, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

8. (a) Outside of the fact that the planes were picked up at too short a range for most effective employment of the Combat Air Patrol, the success of this attack for the Japs was due primarily to the first bombers being able to attack the two destroyers in line. With the information available in this particular case no other deployment of ships could logically be made. It is recommended, therefore, that if practicable a minimum of three destroyers be assigned to picket duty. In a triangle formation at least two ships can fire freely in any direction.

(b) It is not too much responsibility for the senior commanding officer to act as OTC during the preliminary phases of an air action. However, once the planes start in, an individual commanding officer needs to devote his attention to his own ship. It is therefore most desirable to have a separate officer, i.e., a Division or Squadron Commander as OTC of a picket group.

(c) The destroyers on picket duty are now engaged in battles paralleled only by the night actions in the Solomons as regards severity, damage, and casualties. They should be equipped with maximum guns and facilities. In particular, it is recommended that both torpedo mounts on this type vessel be replaced by 40 MM quad mounts. Mark 63 directors should be provided; this is particularly important in view of the increasing attacks at night. The allowance of remote radar PPI scopes should be provided; the DREXLER had none in CIC.

(d) Finally, in the last analysis, the only means of countering these attacks is to shoot them down, which is a gunnery problem that has improved considerably. However, this commanding officer is convinced that great improvement can be made in, and more thought should be given to the tactical employment of the ships of the picket group and of the Combat Air Patrol assigned thereto. In one instance when the DREXLER was in a picket group, one ship was almost hit when caught in a course change by column movement when simultaneous turns should have been used. In another instance one ship of a three destroyer picket group was hit while in column formation making 15 knots.

R. L. WILSON
Comdr., USN

Copy to:

ComInCh - Advance-Direct (1)
CinCPac - Advance-Direct (3)
ComDesPac - Direct (1)

CDS63/A16-3
Serial No. 097

COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON 63

c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.
1 August, 1945.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ **DECLASSIFIED**

FIRST ENDORSEMENT to
CO, USS DREXLER (DD741) conf.
ltr. DD741/L11, serial 01 of
26 June 1945.

From: Commander Destroyer Squadron SIXTY-THREE.
To: Commander in Chief, UNITED STATES FLEET.
Via: (1) Commander Task Destroyer Flotilla FIVE (CTG 31.5).
(2) Commander FIFTH Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet (CTF 31).
(3) Commander THIRD Fleet.
(4) Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Action Report, Involving loss of U.S.S. DREXLER (DD741).

1. Forwarded.

2. There is no doubt but that the enemy attack on Radar Picket Station No. 15 was skillfully executed by experienced and determined pilots in planes that packed a 'destructive wallop'. The initial radar contact was on a 'decoy' which drew the Combat Air Patrol to it, leaving the three Frances' free to approach from a different bearing, low and undetected until range was seven miles.

3. Whether planned by the enemy or otherwise, the 'decoy' prompted a column movement by the two ships to bring him abeam; this resulted in the strength of the attack being picked up nearly dead ahead, at such close range as to make another column movement impossible in the time available.

4. It is instinctive for a Commanding Officer to turn his ship so as to present his broadside to a threatening suicider. In this case, it resulted in the DREXLER having to shoot over the LOWRY at the first attacker. Assuming the LOWRY turned promptly to bring the first Frances abeam (and this must be a matter of doctrine, as there is no time for signals), whether or not the DREXLER might have obtained a better firing position by standing on and delaying her turn until the bearing was clear is a matter of conjecture. In any event, the advantage of a third ship in a triangular formation where at least two ships will always have clear firing bearings is obvious.

5. The Commanding Officer DREXLER's comment on the desirability of a Squadron or Division Commander being OTC of a Radar Picket Station unit is definitely concurred in.

6. Many details of personnel and materiel performance bearing on the loss of the DREXLER are lacking from the basic report. This is caused to a great extent by the heavy casualties incurred, one-hundred and fifty enlisted men and eight officers

FILMED

1 August, 1945.

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Subject: Action Report, Involving loss of U.S.S. DREXLER (DD 741).

killed or missing in action, and fifty-one wounded; and by the fact that the majority of the personnel below decks in a position to observe machinery and hull damage were lost with the ship.

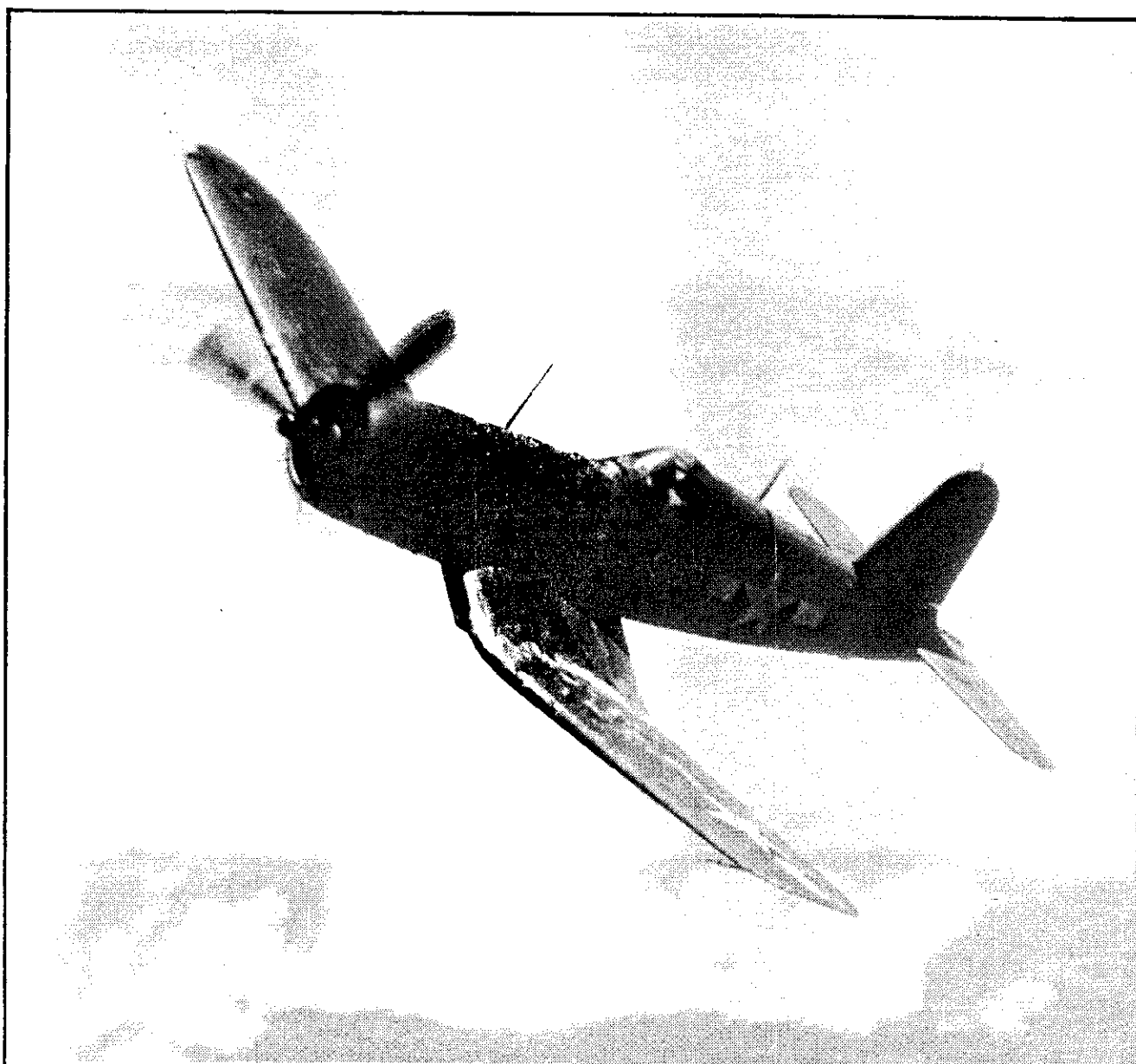
7. The Squadron Commander is cognizant of another factor which made the assimilation of detailed facts difficult. The Commanding Officer DREXLER received injuries, incident to the sinking of his ship, which required his hospitalization and evacuation from the combat area on a ship other than the one which carried out the survivors of his crew. As of the time the basic report was written, the Commanding Officer had not yet been able to contact his surviving officers and men to obtain their detailed accounts.

8. By copy of this endorsement, the Commanding Officer, U.S.S. DREXLER, is requested to submit an amplifying report, covering such additional information on the rapid sinking of the DREXLER as may be obtained from other surviving officers.

9. The Squadron Commander feels that the DREXLER's combat record, though short, is one of which she can well be proud. As of 28 May, 1945, she had performed Radar Picket duty, off Okinawa, during a busy period, for a total of fifteen days. During this period she shot down two suicide planes, possibly destroyed one or more during night attacks, assisted in the destruction of three more and, finally, took two down with her. It is a matter of great regret that the DREXLER can not carry the fight through to the finish.

Charles A. Buchanan
CHARLES A. BUCHANAN.

Copy to:
ComDesPac.
Comdr. Ronald L. Wilson,
c/o BuPers.

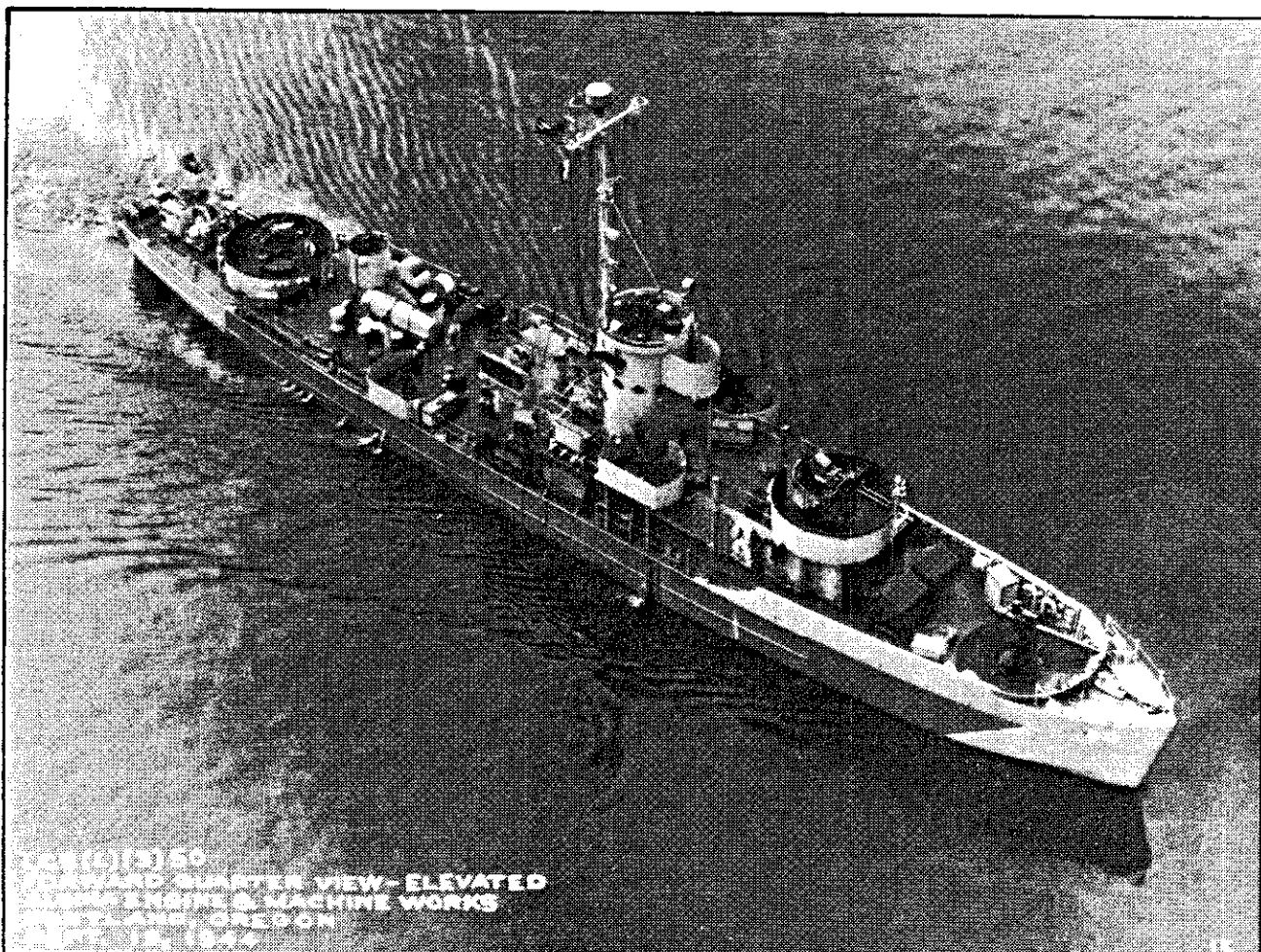


The Combat Air Patrol ("CAP") assigned to Radar Picket Station No. 15 on May 28, 1945, consisted of four F4U "Corsairs." This fighter was easily identified by its long nose and inverted gull wing. The F4U-1's wingspan measured 41 feet, and its gross weight was 12,039 lbs. The plane's 2,000 H.P. engine provided it with a top speed of 417 mph at 19,900 feet. Six .50-caliber machine guns were mounted in the wings. Later models, modified to carry rockets, bombs or napalm, were effective fighter-bombers. The two Marine pilots who courageously flew their Corsairs through the Drexler's antiaircraft fire to attack the kamikazes were commended by the ship's commanding officer.

(U.S. Naval Institute Collection)



A captured Kawasaki Ki-45 long-range twin-engine fighter over the U.S. in May 1945. This is the plane (code name "NICK") which made the initial attack on the destroyers in Radar Picket Station No. 15 on May 28, 1945, and was shot down by the Combat Air Patrol. The two kamikazes which dove into the Orester were identified in the ship's action report as "FRANCES" bombers, but according to Comdr. Wilson's oral history transcript, recorded on July 25, 1945, CINCPAC's Intelligence decided that all three of the planes were NICKS. These twin-engine aircraft could easily have been identified as bombers, because a field modification provided them with the capability of carrying externally either two drop tanks with extra fuel or two 250-lb. (113-kg.) bombs. The NICK had a wingspan of 49' 3" and a top speed of 335 mph at 19,685 feet. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph)



LCS(L)(3) #50, shown, is a Landing Craft, Support (Large) (Mark 3). It is of the same class as the Support Crafts Nos. 55, 56 and 114 which picked up the Drexler's survivors on May 28, 1945. These vessels were 157 feet long and displaced (full load) 380 tons. They were armed with two 3-in. dual-purpose (air/surface targets) guns, a twin 40-mm. Bofors gun mount, four 20-mm. machine guns and depth charges. The Drexler's executive officer, Lt. Cdr. Robert G. Bidwell, praised these small craft in his oral history recorded July 25, 1945 (see transcript):

"The rescue ships commenced picking up men approximately a half hour to 45 minutes after the ship went down. The job that these ships did was excellent; they were very efficient in searching the area and picking up the wounded and worst cases first. The 114 . . . stood right into the survivors as close as she could without hitting them and threw over life rafts . . . so that men could hang onto those until she had time to pick them up."

(Naval Historical Center Collection)

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DECK LOG-REMARKS SHEET

UNITED STATES SHIP LCS (L) (3) 55

Monday 28 May 1945
(Day) (Date) (Month)

0 to 4

- 0000 Patrolling as before in Radar Picket Station #15 Northwest of Okinawa at General Quarters. Enemy planes in area. Patrolling at Standard speed on alternate courses of 090° True and 270° True.
- 0300 Secured from General Quarters.
- 0310 Sounded General Quarters.
- 0358 Secured from General Quarters. Watch properly relieved.

J.B. Wiley Ensign USNR
J. B. Wiley, Ens., USNR

4 to 8

- 0400 Standing by as before on RPS 15.
- 0640 General Quarters.
- 0739 Proceeding to Area in which DD 741 was sunk by Japanese suicide planes, to pick up survivors.
- 0745 Raking up survivors.

R.B. Bensar Ensign USNR
R. B. Bensar, Ens., USNR

8 to 12

- 0800 Standing by taking board survivors.
- 0830 One Officer, 29 enlisted men, survivors from ill-fated DD741, U.S.S. Draxler receiving of Medical Attention and care. The following named men aboard.
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| WEATHERLY, E.N., Lt. USN 104976 | GWYN, L. SKlc 268 55 81 |
| TIERNEY, W.J. Slc 274 75 99 | BOYD, C. Slc 930 85 14 |
| CURGINO, J. J., Slc 94463 10 | CHAPMAN, J.F., Slc, 932 56 14 |
| ANDERSON, E.A., SF 3c, 907 86 37 | CANNON, Wm. W. B2c, 640 80 38 |
| MAKNARI, S.J., SOM 3c, 817 85 34 | WEIKERT, H.A., Slc(RdM) 922 93 48 |
| BURROWS, W.T., Slc, 205 63 71 | CHIAFFITELLI, S.D., Flc, 908 18 27 |
| ALFIERI, J.J., Slc, 711 39 93 | MCDONALD, R.N., RT 2c, 202 10 72 |
| MITCHELL, F.W., Slc, 251 47 29 | COLLINS, D.L., Slc, 293 31 30 |
| O'HORNER, Thomas, SC3c, 832 78 01 | JOHNSON, C.E., Slc, 920 86 34 |
| SMITH, D.L., Slc, 942 57 38 | BLOOM, R.J., Flc, 877 58 65 |
| WILLIS, D.C., MMlc, 272 47 99 | STEMPOWSKI, N., Slc, 805 41 96 |
| DODSON, A., GM2c, 895 24 85 | VIAR, J.D., MM2c, 603 17 94 |
| POMAINVILLE, R.I., Slc, 825 43 66 | ENRICH, K.J., S2c, 712 92 24 |
| BUTTS, Geo. ST2c, 637 25 23 | SKIFFINGTON, W.F., Slc, 761 58 84 |
| LEGGET, S.B., Slc, 969 32 04 | JAEGER, M.E., SC1c, 622 35 60 |
- 0900 Underway in area of survivors.
- 0945 Moored starboard side to DD770 to take aboard 4 patients to be transferred to DD567
- URBACH, R.E., S2c, 285 42 33; PLIMMER, JN, S2c, 342 83 19; WALTERS, F.C., Slc, 273 44 05; MAGNELLY, J., Slc, 876 90 94. At 0955 cast off all lines underway to DD567 to transfer all survivors and four patients.
- 1050 Alongside starboard to DD567. Transferred all survivors and patients.
- 1105 Transfers completed.
- 1107 Cast off all lines, proceeded to patrol area as directed by OTC-DD568. Took station as guide of LCS Group 56,66, and 114. Executing turn movements every 20 minutes.
- 1145 Chow down. Captain left Conn.
- 1145 Watch properly relieved. Ensign Bertie, as O.O.D.

A.W. Markowicz Ensign USNR
A.W. Markowicz, Ens., USNR

12 to 16

- 1200 Underway as before patrolling area RP#15 on courses 090° True, speed, 9 knots.
- 1300 Patrolling as before.
- 1400 Same as before.
- 1500 No changes.
- 1512 CAP planes would return to base because of bad weather. Raining very hard.
- 1545 Watch properly relieved.

R.C. Bertie Ensign USNR
R. C. Bertie, Ens., USNR

16 to 20

- 1600 Underway as before on patrol in RP#15 acting as OTC for LCS's 56,66, and 114.
- 1800 Patrolling as before on alternate courses of 090° and 270° True.
- 1945 Watch properly relieved by Ensign Bensar.

J.B. Wiley Ensign USNR
J. B. Wiley, Ens., USNR

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PAGE

UNITED STATES SHIP

LCS(L)(3) 56

Monday

28

May

1945

(Day)

(Date)

(Month)

REMARKS

Refer to action report of Okinawa Shima - 1 April, 1945.

0000-0400 Steaming as before on various courses and speeds about 15 miles northwest of Ie Shima in formation with LCS(L) 55.

P. A. Wood

P.A. Wood O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

0400-0800 Reference is made to War Diary. Steaming as before. 0708 Underway on course 120 T. at flank speed. 0728 Commenced picking up survivors from the Drexler (DD 741).

E. M. Jordan

E.M. Jordan O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

0800-1200 Reference is made to War Diary. Still lying to picking up survivors. 0830 Completed task of picking up 3 officers and 15 enlisted men. 0835 Lying to about 19 miles from Ie Shima. 0942 Underway independently on various courses and speeds. 1021 Moored alongside Watts (DD 567) starboard side to and transferred 3 officers and 15 enlisted men. 1040 Cast off all lines and got underway on various courses and speeds. 1045 Lying to.

J. J. DeVita

J.J. DeVita O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

1200-1600 Still lying to. 1205 Got underway and formed new formation LCS(L) 114 to our stern. LCS(L) 55 unit guide and LCS(L) 66 with interval and distance of 800 yards in two columns. Steaming on base course of 000 and 180, speed 2/3 standard on 3 engines about 15 miles northwest of Ie Shima.

T. A. Davis

T.A. Davis O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

1600-1800 Steaming as before.

P. A. Wood

P.A. Wood O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

1800-2000 Steaming as before.

E. M. Jordan

E.M. Jordan O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

2000-2400 Steaming as before.

J. J. DeVita

J.J. DeVita O.O.D.
Ensign, USNR

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DECK LOG-REMARKS SHEET

UNITED STATES SHIP LCS(L)(3)

#114

Monday, 28
(Day) (Date)May, 1945
(Month) (Year)

0-4

At general quarters as before on night patrol station. 0012- Secured from general quarter
 0150- Received orders to proceed to RP#15-A, to replace LCS(L)(3)#524 Underway on course
 005(T), three engines on each quad at standard speed. 0310- Spunded general quarters.

W.R. McInnis
 W.R. McInnis
 Ens. USNR.

4-8

At general quarters as before. 0405- Secured from general quarters., 0406- Proceeds to
 RP#15-A, at standard speed, four engines on each quad, 005(T). 0440- Passed IeShima
 abeam to starboard, distance four miles. 0457- Radar ceased to function. Reduced speed
 to one third upon the report that enemy plane was in the area. 0502- All engines ahead
 standard. 0530- Radar now operative. 0545- Changed course to 007(T). 0601- Passed
 Yanaha Shima abeam to starboard, distance 13 miles. 0650- Sounded general quarters.
 Destroyer, bearing 007(T), distance approximately 6 miles, commenced firing at enemy
 plane. Enemy plane splashed by our fighters or by AA fire from destroyer. 0655- Enemy
plane suicided into DD#741. Changed speed to flank and then full to reduce vibration,
 and steered toward destroyer on course 340(T). DD#741 hit by two engined enemy plane,
 which had circled to port, followed by two corsairs, crashing into port side of destroyer
 which was on a course of approximately 225(T). The plane was probably a Frances. There
 was a terrific explosion, followed by much smoke and then fire. 0703- Smoke cleared
 from destroyer enough to observe it in a sinking condition, stern down. 0704- Destroyer
 sank, stern first. 0711- Nearing flaming wreckage, changed course to 330(T). 0714-
 All engines ahead standard. 0717- All engines stopped. 0721- Commenced picking up
 survivors. 0722- Lowered dingy, and one life raft, throwing heaving lines and all life
 rings to survivors. 0730- LCS(L)(3)'s #55 and 56 commenced picking up survivors.

P.H. Holmberg
 P.H. Holmberg
 Lt(jg), USNR.

8-12

As before, laying to, picking up survivors. 0844- All survivors aboard, proceeding on
 course 180(T), at standard speed. 120 survivors aboard. 0920- Various courses and
 speeds, preparing to go alongside APD#70. 0922- Moored port to starboard APD#70,
 commenced transferring survivors. 1003- All survivors transferred to APD#70. Under-
 way at standard speed on course of 000(T) for RP#15-A. 1035- Reported on station.

F.C. May
 F.C. May
 Ens. USNR.

12-16

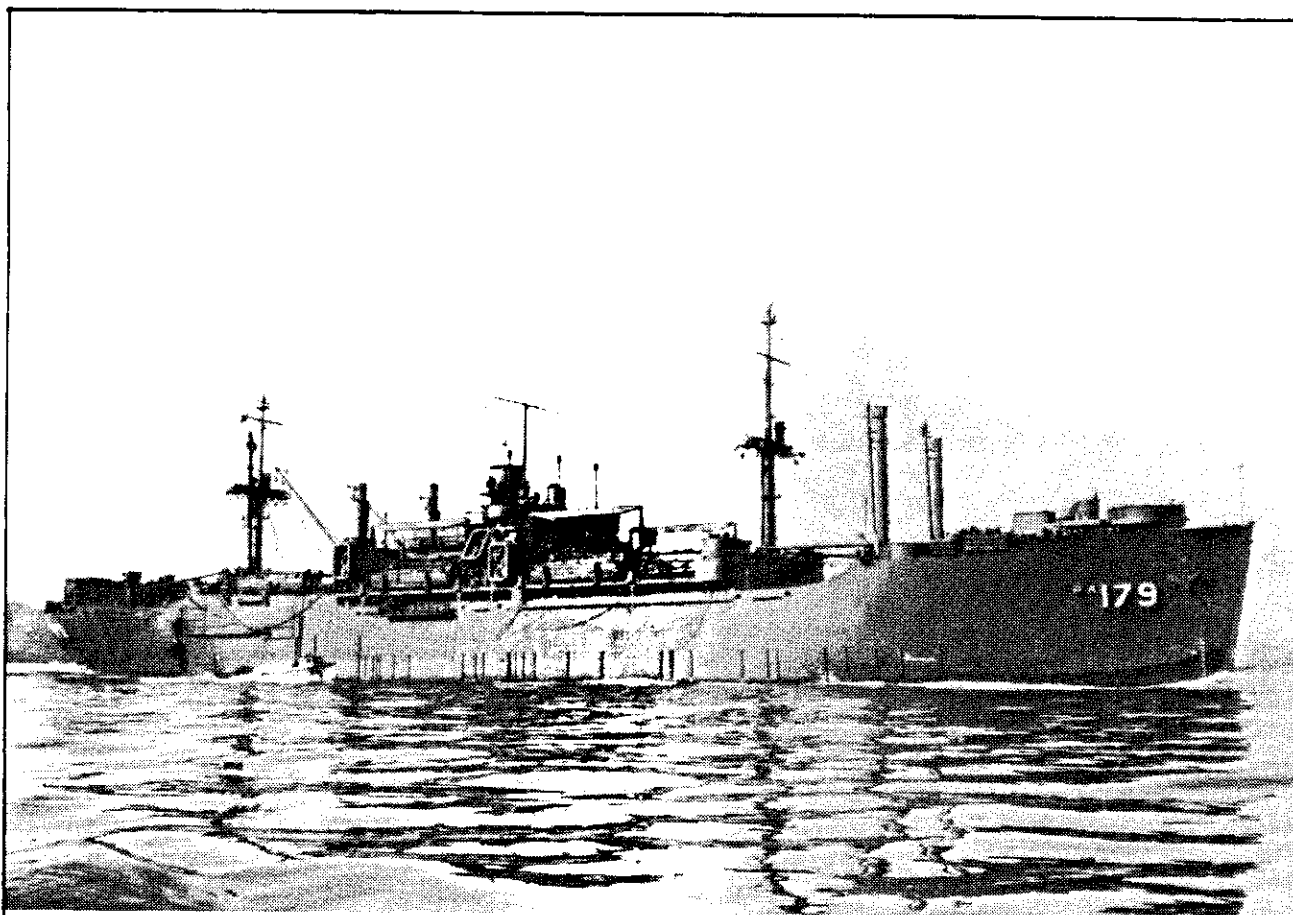
Underway as before on RP#15-A, picket patrol.

H.A. Schutz
 H.A. Schutz
 Ens. USNR.

16-20

Underway as before on RP#15-A, picket patrol.

J.G. McInturf
 J.G. McInturf
 Ens. USNR.



Many of the unwounded Drexler survivors were transferred to the attack transport USS Lauderdale (APA-179) at the Hagushi anchorage off Okinawa's western shore. Here they were provided with a good set of dungarees and one complete outfit. Each survivor also received a carton of cigarettes and toilet articles. The Lauderdale was 436 ft. long overall and her full load displacement was 14,900 tons. (Naval Hist. Ctr.)

A Tribute to the Men on Radar Picket Stations
by Samuel Eliot Morison*

Although your historian himself has been under kamikaze attack, and witnessed the hideous forms of death and torture inflicted by that weapon, words fail him to do justice to the sailors who met it so courageously. Men on radar picket station, to survive, not only had to strike down the flaming terror of the kamikazes roaring out of the blue like thunderbolts of Zeus; they were under constant strain and intense discomfort. In order to supply high steam pressure to build up full speed rapidly in a destroyer, its superheaters, built only for intermittent use, had to be lighted for three and four days' running. For days and even nights on end, the crew had to stand general quarters while the ship was kept "buttoned up." Men had to keep in readiness for the instant reaction and split-second timing necessary to riddle a plane bent on sacrificial death. Sleep became the rarest commodity and choicest luxury, like water to a shipwrecked mariner.

The capture of Okinawa cost the United States Navy 34 naval vessels and craft sunk, 368 damaged, over 4900 sailors killed or missing in action, and over 4800 wounded. Tenth Army lost 7613 killed or missing in action and 31,800 wounded. Sobering as it is to record such losses, the sacrifice of these men is brightened by our knowledge that the capture of Okinawa helped to bring Japanese leaders to face the inevitable surrender.

* The Two-Ocean War. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1963

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741)

Citations for Medals and Ribbons Awarded¹

Lieutenant Eugene Camp Hicks, USNR

SILVER STAR MEDAL (Posthumous)

"For distinguishing himself by extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy on the morning of 28 May 1945, when the USS DREXLER was subjected to a heavy, coordinated air attack and sunk by Japanese suicide planes north of Okinawa. When the first plane hit and sprayed the ship with gasoline which started fires and set off 40-mm ammunition, he took charge of fire-fighting and quickly and efficiently brought the fires under control by the time the second plane hit the ship only two minutes later. Without regard to his own safety, he led his Repair Party in fighting fires in the midst of continued air attacks, gunfire, and exploding ammunition, despite loss of steam and all but emergency power on the ship. He was last seen running along the deck with a fire hose and ran directly to the spot the second plane hit and was missing in action. His resourcefulness, courage, and devotion to duty were an inspiration to men serving under him and were at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

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Commander Robert Gordon Bidwell, USN

GOLD STAR in lieu of a SECOND BRONZE STAR MEDAL

"For meritorious service in connection with operations against the enemy while serving as Executive Officer of a destroyer during the Okinawa Operation. During the period 2 May to 28 May 1945, his ship was subjected to almost continuous alerts and many actual attacks while performing the vital and hazardous duty of support destroyer on radar picket stations. As Executive Officer he was instrumental in keeping the crew at the peak of combat efficiency necessary for this duty. As Evaluator in Combat Information Center, through under considerable strain himself, through threat or actual attack, he exhibited inspiring leadership, resourcefulness, and ability which contributed greatly to his ship's success in defeating numerous attacks by the enemy. Finally, on 28 May, when subjected to a particularly violent attack by enemy suicide planes, two of which struck the ship, the DREXLER, on which he served, was sunk. His conduct and devotion to duty were outstanding and at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Combat "V" is authorized.

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Ensign Nick Martin Pappas, USNR

BRONZE STAR MEDAL
(with Combat "V")

"For heroic achievement in connection with operations against the enemy as an officer attached to a United States destroyer, on May 28, 1945, during the assault and capture of Okinawa Gunto. When the ship was struck by an enemy suicide plane and sank within a very short time he, with outstanding courage and initiative, swam to the aid of several survivors who were in immediate danger of drowning and assisted in keeping them afloat until they could be removed from the water by a rescue vessel. Through his leadership, bravery and deep devotion to duty, he contributed materially to saving the lives of these men and proved to be an inspiration to all. His conduct throughout distinguished him among those performing duties of the same character."

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Geatano William Caruso, Coxswain, USNR

NAVY & MARINE CORPS MEDAL (Posthumous)

"For heroism in aiding and rescuing several men in the sea when the USS DREXLER was sunk by Japanese suicide planes north of Okinawa on 28 May 1945. Under conditions of great personal danger from burning oil, a heavy covering of oil and debris on the water which made swimming difficult, and with complete disregard of his own safety, he helped three men suffering from exhaustion to a life boat by swimming to their aid. He was last seen swimming to the aid of a fourth man but did not return to the life boat and was missing in action. His heroic conduct, performed at great risk of his own life, was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

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James William Collinson, Boatswain's Mate First Class, USN

LETTER OF COMMENDATION: (RIBBON)

"For meritorious conduct in the performance of his duties while serving as a member of the U.S.S. DREXLER from 2 May to 28 May 1945 during operations against the enemy off Okinawa. While his ship was acting as support destroyer on radar picket stations, his high degree of skill, loyalty and devotion to duty contributed materially to his ship's ability to survive and defeat the enemy in numerous air attacks. His performance of duty was outstanding, and his conduct was at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

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1 These draft citations, on index cards at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, may have been reworded before they were formally issued. Unfortunately, there is no listing of awards by ship, so there may have been other medals awarded that I did not find.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2003

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741)

Survivors' Recollections¹

Name, Duties/Rating, General Quarters Station

Officers:

Lt. Chester M. <u>Lee</u>	Gunnery Officer	Main Battery Director
Ens. Nicholas M. <u>Pappas</u>	Asst. 1st Lieut.	Forward Repair Party

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Enlisted:

ANTEAU, Robert L., FC3c	Forward Repair Party
BRICK, Eugene M., GM3c	5-inch Mount #2, Trainer
BURROWS, William T., S1c	5-inch Mount #1, Sight Setter
CARLSON, Morris E., WT2c	Forward Fireroom
COOLEY, William, MM3c	After Engine Room, lower level
CUCCIA, Nicholas, MM1c	Forward Engine Room
EASTMAN, John M., WT2c	After Fireroom
FOX, Henry V., FC1c	Main Battery Director, JA phones
HARDIN, Edward Q., EM2c	Forward Engine Room Switchboard
LEPERI, Joseph G., PhM2c	Casualties Station, Wardroom
LOCKHART, Donald W., SM3c	Signal Bridge
McINTYRE, Robert B., SM1c	Signal Bridge
MILLER, William R., RM3c	Radio Shack
MILLS, Buford C., GM2c	40-mm Mount 44 (port quad)
MITCHELL, Fred W., S1c	40-mm Mount #43 (stbd. quad)
NEWTON, Marvin, S1c	20-mm Mount #1 (stbd., forward)
PAETTIE, Joseph R., RM2c	Radio Shack
PETAGO, William O., S1c	40-mm Mount #42 (port twin)
RADCLIFFE, Albert J., BM2c	5-inch Mount #2, Gun Captain
RAY, Ben H., GM1c	5-inch Mount #3, Mount Captain
REAM, George W., TM3c	Torpedo Director (Bridge)
SCOTT, Roland H., MM2c	Forward Repair Party
STUDDARD, Elmer T., S1c	5-in. Mount #2, Up. Handling Rm.
WOOLARD, Ward M., Y3c	40-mm Mount #44 (port quad)

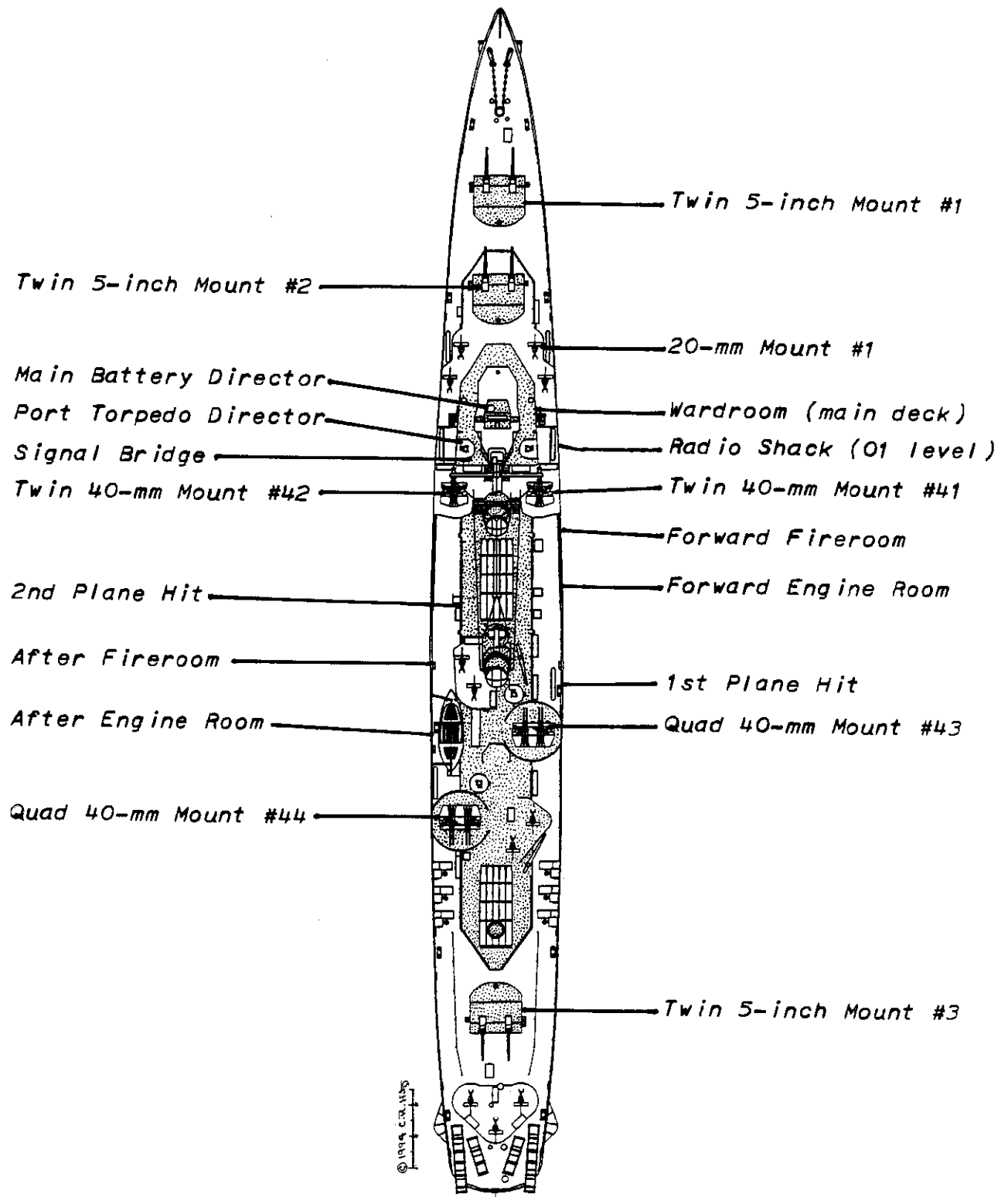
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¹ Source: Two "Historical Reviews" published by the Drexler's Survivors Reunion Association in 1988 and 1993. These booklets were edited by the association's historian Robert L. Anteau assisted by Eugene M. Brick, the association's secretary.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2003

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741)

Location of Survivors' General Quarters Stations



Deck Plan; Allen M. Sumner-Class Destroyer

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) - Survivors' Recollections

Lieutenant Chester M Lee, USN - Gunnery Officer

We arrived on station around 7:00 A.M., having departed from Kerama Retto after having accomplished some reprovisioning and without off-loading empty ammunition cans, which were still stacked on the main deck in preparation for off-loading.

We were at General Quarters and as soon as we arrived on picket station we received reports of incoming "Bogies" described as "Bettys" (bombers) and "Frances"-type fighters - all "Kamikaze" types. We tracked some "Bettys" and took them under fire. We may have gotten one kill, but I'm not certain because our attention became more focused on the two "Frances" - twin-engine fighter type approaching our station. Two Marine fighters were our Combat Air Patrol and were directed to intercept the Japanese. Captain Wilson commenced maneuvering to keep our batteries fully unmasked so that we could maximize the number of guns we could bring to bear on the enemy planes. I recall the U.S.S. Lowry (DD-770) was on our starboard beam while the 1st Frances fighter dove towards our two ships. It appeared that the enemy was diving directly at the Lowry, and as our sights closed down on the Lowry we ceased fire in order to avoid hitting her. I thought he was going to crash into the Lowry which was only a couple of thousand yards off our starboard beam, but the Japanese pilot pulled up over the Lowry, skimmed over the surface of the ocean, and hit us at about the engine room - at the water line. Our ship did not appear to be severely damaged, but most important, we did eventually lose all power.

In the meantime, the second Japanese Kamikaze was approaching the Drexler and obviously we were his prime target since his fellow pilot had just given his life and seriously damaged us. One of our Marine fighter pilots was on his tail but pulled off when we started to take the Jap under fire. As I recall, it was about this time that we lost power and all guns were into "Local Control." Our Local Control did not produce any direct hits, but I believe that it, together with the Marine pilot's efforts, caused the Jap pilot to veer off a little and therefore passed alongside and did not try to dive into us on that pass. Rather, he turned to port in a steep turn to come up on our starboard side - heading out ahead so that he would then be coming back on another attempt from dead ahead. As I watched him make his turn, I thought that the Marine fighter pilot had damaged him and that he was going to catch his left wing in the water and crash. That he was able to keep his aircraft under control and not crash, convinces me that he was not a young lad thrown into the Kamikaze Corps to fly one way, only to his death, but rather, this Japanese pilot was fairly well trained. At any rate, he managed to keep from crashing into the water, pulled ahead of us several thousand yards to turn and make another attack. During this time, since we had lost power due to the damage created by the first Kamikaze hit, we were firing all guns in local control. I recall seeing the Jap pilot making his turn ahead of us and coming in from directly ahead - "target angle zero." There was no question that he was going to crash into the Drexler even if we could manage to hit him with some gunfire.

The final approach brought the Frances just over our port side at about the height of the 5" gun control director - close enough that his port wing cut the signal halyards and close enough to glimpse the pilot with his white scarf as he dove into the aft torpedo tubes. The impact, together with his bomb, created a terrific explosion - and apparently severely opened the hull to massive flooding.

My impression was a tremendous explosion that threw my head back, and I could see parts of the ship blown above the ship with shock waves and smoke. Immediately there was a perceptible roll to starboard, and it was obvious the ship

was going to roll over on its starboard side. I passed the words over the phone to "Abandon Ship" immediately. By the time I got my headset phones unhooked the water was over the bridge, and I just slipped into the water from the Gun Director platform above the bridge. Of course in my haste, I still had on my foul weather jacket and Marine combat boots as well as my rubber belt life jacket. Unfortunately, while trying to inflate my rubber life belt I inadvertently released and lost the life belt. All of this occurred very quickly and some of it remains hazy. However, I do recall that I was near the bow as the bow pointed to the sky and started to slip under the sea. I was close enough to push off the bow to get as clear as possible, because I was concerned about the suction that would follow the ship's sinking. There was no suction; evidently because the ship was literally blown apart and flooded throughout the interior. I also remember that I was happy that I had requested the Captain's permission to put all depth charges on "safe" since while on picket station duty our greatest threat was the Kamikazes riding their aircraft or the "Baka" bombs into the ships, rather than submarine attacks.

In effect then, there was no perceptible suction that I noticed nor any depth charge explosions that had killed so many survivors in the water after other destroyer sinkings. There was no fire or smoke in my immediate vicinity, although I could see some smoke and fire a short distance away, but it did not appear to be a threat to me. Also, there were no sharks in our vicinity. My problem became one of treading water and staying afloat.

Fortunately at this time I noticed an empty ammunition can floating by. One of the cans that, fortunately had not been unloaded in Kerama Retto, due to our hasty departure when we were ordered out to replace another damaged picket destroyer. It became my life belt and life saver. As I floated with my ammunition can I picked up two survivors with my life buoy and we held on as the rescue craft moved in. I wish I could recall the names of the two men who joined me on the ammo can. If they are still around, I would be most happy to see and talk with them. I don't recall how long we were in the water, but I would guess it was at least 45 minutes to an hour. I do know that I was pretty tired when I was pulled aboard, still wearing boots. After all that dumb effort, I didn't save them! I have never been able to figure out how the men in the back of the Director failed to get out or how some of the men on the aft part of the bridge failed to get off. If anyone knows, I would like to hear the story.

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Ensign Nicholas M. Pappas, USNR - Assistant First Lieutenant

I was in charge of Repair Party #1. After the first hit, I saw the starboard deck was ruptured and there was an airplane engine on the deck which was on fire. There also was fire on the 20-mm deck. I knew then that all the drills we had paid off because our crew had a handy-billy pump operating and water was at the nozzle. We put out the fires.

At this point the ship was dead in the water. The first hit knocked out all our power and another plane, a twin-engine bomber flew low over midships and seemed to be smoking. I thought we had hit it, but he came up and made a 360 degree turn, hit us aft midships, blowing the rear of the ship off.

Prior to this, I went through midships to the port side and found one of our mates lying on the deck with a shattered leg. I got a morphine syrette and was giving him a shot when the second plane hit. I think if I had been standing it would have been the end. Now the passage forward was jammed and the ship made a

list to starboard. I walked off the side of the ship.

After I was in the water, there were two mates who needed some help - one I think was Tony Fabrizi. We were in a lot of oil but we did okay.

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ANTEAU, Robert L., FC3c

At G.Q. I was assigned to the forward repair party which met in the chow hall. Ena. Pappas was in charge. We were at this station when the first plane hit us and we got orders to start the forward emergency pump and generator and to run water lines aft to assist in extinguishing the fires. I went topside on the starboard side of the main deck with another member of our group and started to run water hoses aft. He started aft with one end of the hose while I started to couple the other end when I realized that he took the wrong end of the hose. I started to run after him when I looked up and saw the second Jap plane coming in. Two Corsair fighters were doing their best to knock it down. I looked around and realized that I was the only one in that area of the ship. It appeared that the Jap was trying to hit us on the starboard side, so I decided I better get over to the port side. I remember going through the area between the 1st & 2nd mounts when the 2nd mount fired a shot over my head. The concussion knocked me down, but not for long. By the time I got over to the port side, the attacking plane had crossed our bow and was beginning a tight arc in its attempt to hit us on the port side. There was a mass of people in the passageway by the wardroom trying to go from port to starboard. I managed to just get inside the hatchway and hang on when it hit. The explosion was tremendous. The ship started to list to starboard immediately after the hit. Mates were starting to abandon ship. There was a life raft near me which I helped cut loose. I went forward a few feet and slid down the side of the hull when it was listing about 45 degrees. My lifebelt worked. I swam a short distance and then looked back and saw the bow of the ship sticking straight up before it disappeared. Since there was a lot of burning oil, and I was not injured, I decided to swim against the wind in an attempt to get away from the fire. At this time I remember a plane dove over the area. I could not identify it. I instinctively took off my life belt and sank under the water. When I came up I recognized it as one of our planes. I put my life belt back on and heard someone yell for help. I swam over to him. One mate was helping another mate who did not have a lifebelt and asked for some assistance which I was glad to provide. Shortly thereafter the mate with the lifebelt wandered off to help someone else. It was not too long after this that a small boat from the LCS came along and picked us up.

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BRICK, Eugene M., GM3c

I went aboard the USS Drexler the evening of 3/12/45 while the ship was in Purvis Bay, Florida Island, a part of the Solomon Islands group. I was transferred from the USS SC-1266, at my request, and I had been aboard her for 14 months.

On the morning of the 28th of May, 1945, we were called to battle stations after a hurried trip to Picket Station #15. We were on station with the USS Lowry (DD-770) and LCS's Nos. 55, 56, and 114.

I was the trainer in Mount #2, one of the twin 5-inch enclosed gun mounts in the forward part of the ship. Shortly after "GQ" was sounded and I got to my battle station I was told to "match up," which meant to put Mount #2 in automatic train which would put us under control of the main battery director located on

top of the bridge. While we were under control of the director I had nothing to do but follow the target by looking through the trainer gunsight and wait for further orders from our mount captain (Weldon Ingram). Through the gunsight I could see the first plane that hit us coming at us about 15-20 feet above the water on our starboard beam. All of our guns were firing at it, and I could see tracer bullets ricocheting off the front part of the Kamikaze which was identified later as a twin-engined attack bomber of the "Frances" type. Our 5-inch projectiles could not catch up with it. As I remember, our proximity activated bursts were strung out behind the suicide plane like a string of black pearls. The Kamikaze kept coming, and we kept firing until the gun mount reached its limit of train to starboard. A split second after that I couldn't see it any longer, and it crashed with a thunderous bang which knocked out all our electricity. I sat there a little bit and Ingram told me to put the train drive into "local" control. This meant that I had manual control of the movement of the gun mount to move either right or left and to match up with his pointer that was attached to his gunsight in front of him. I started to turn the mount to the left as fast as I could. It wasn't long before my arms started to give out because there was no electric-hydraulic power plus the fact the ship was starting to list to starboard, resulting in more weight to move, with only me supplying the power. While I was going through this procedure I heard a plane go right over the top of us, and it sounded very close. I had the manual drive in low gear which meant that it was not moving very fast. All of a sudden another explosion happened somewhere on the ship, and it felt like someone had hit the bottom of my seat with a sledge hammer. I could no longer train the mount, and it seemed to me we were in big trouble so I thought I had better put my life jacket on. Ingram told me to "get the hell out of here - she's sinking!" I stood up and grabbed my kapok life jacket which I had been sitting on for several weeks because being short-waisted like I am, I needed the elevation to comfortably look through the gunsight. It was compressed into more of a vest than a fluffy piece of flotation equipment. Well, we had to go with what we had, and I left the mount through the starboard "hot-shell" hatch right behind Ingram. When I landed on the 0-1 deck after leaving the gun mount the ship was listing to starboard at an angle steep enough to make it difficult to get over or through the rail lines. I got through the same thing getting over or through the main deck rail lines. I slid down the side of the ship which was about on a 45 degree angle. I slid fast enough that when the stabilizer strip which runs along the side of the ship (which was visible by this time) came up I went over it on my behind, and it felt like I just about broke everything I had in that area. I went into the thick oil and started swimming like mad to get away from any suction that might occur if I got caught too close to the ship. Behind me I could hear the noise from loose gear and machinery probably being torn from the decks, rattling and rumbling around, making such a horrible noise that I stopped and turned around to look. I was probably 75-100 feet from her and could see about 30-40 feet of the bow of the Drexler sitting straight up in the air, and then I watched her disappear fast.

There were shipmates all around me; some injured but still able to swim out of the oil, some of which was on fire a short distance away. I swam a short distance when I got clear of the worst of the oil. It didn't seem that we were in the water very long - maybe less than a half-hour. One of the LCS's came along and fished us out of the water. We sure made a mess out of that LCS, but they took care of our needs without a complaint.

I'll never forget that day. I have counted my blessings every day since that happened. Over the years I have thought about the horrible waste of lives and that it took less than three minutes from the time the first plane crashed into us to do it.

BURROWS, William T., S1c

As I recall, the ship's crew was having breakfast in sections so as not to jeopardize our readiness. I had just finished eating and was standing outside Mount #1. G.Q. sounded and I climbed into my battle station as a sight setter between the twin 5-inch guns. Being in this position, I had no idea as to the direction we were firing. All at once we heard Cooper, our Gun Captain, holler that we were going to be hit.

There was this tremendous shudder of the ship and a loud roar of an engine. At this point we lost all power and also the sound-powered phones went dead. Cooper stuck his head out of the lookout and said that there was a tire track skid mark across the top of our mount. The second plane had come in at us too high. We then started to train and sight by hand so we could continue to fire at the enemy. We could not turn the mount around fast enough. Again, there was another tremendous shudder, and the ship started to list to starboard. At this point Cooper came down from his position and told everyone to get out of the mount. With everyone trying to go out the hatches, I dove through the shell scuttle hole and started to slide to starboard. I got to my feet and climbed to the port side, stepped over the rail, and caught my foot in some netting. I remember fighting to get free and going under water. I finally shook loose and found myself tumbling and turning over and over so much that I didn't know where the surface was. Just when my lungs were giving out I popped to the surface.

I found myself about a half mile away from where the ship went down. I knew this because I could see the oil fire and the sea boiling from the air escaping from within the ship. I didn't know how I ended up so far away from the ship. I found out later that when the ship sank, it caused a huge whirlpool. This must have caused me to toss and turn me around and carried a few others and myself away from the ship.

Now I was floating around without a life jacket and looking for something to hang on to. I spotted one of our life rafts and swam to it, climbed aboard, and discovered two others, covered with oil and unrecognizable. At this point I heard planes and saw two of them diving at us. Now this really scared me because I had heard that sometimes the Japs came back and machine-gunned the survivors. I told the others to dive over and go deep, which we did. When I came up I looked for the planes and noticed that they were Corsair fighters, pointing us out to our rescuers - our location.

I climbed back on the raft and found out that the other two were badly injured. I saw the LCS's picking up survivors. While I was in Gunnery School at Newport, R.I., I became interested in semaphore since they also trained Signalmen there, so I learned this for my own pleasure. I never thought that I would someday use this knowledge to signal for help. I realized that since we were on a raft, we would probably be some of the last to get picked up. Knowing how bad and in need of medical help the other two were, I stood on the corner of the raft and signaled the LCS and advised them of our needs.

Well, this turned into a story in itself. They saw and read my signals and almost immediately headed for us at a high rate of speed. As they approached us they turned to port and cut their speed down too late. This caused the ship to glide sideways and bump the raft. The ship continued forward, and now we were faced with the ship's props coming at us. I screamed as loud as I could, and somebody must have heard me as they shut down the props and we slid under the propeller guard and bounced off the prop. At this time I had a few choice words I wanted to say to whoever was in charge. That LCS left us. I think the Skipper thought we had been picked up. Another LCS came right behind them and did pick us up. All I can say is that God must have been with me. Twice within an hour I almost lost it.

After we were picked up I don't remember anything until we were on a troop ship headed for Hawaii. They told us that if G.Q. sounded, all of us were to go below and stay until it was all over. Well, let me tell you that went over like a lead balloon, knowing what happened to our fellow mates below decks. There was one false G.Q., and there were more people topside than you could count. I sincerely wish that all of us could have been lucky and decommissioned this ship together.

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CARLSON, Morris E., MM3c

The morning we were sunk I was in the Forward Fireroom. I remember when we took the first hit we lost our lights, and an auxiliary lantern came on. After the second hit, we lost our steam pressure and decided to abandon ship. There was no P.A. system to the fireroom, so we didn't know what was going on. Some men tried to get out the portside hatch which led to the portside passageway which was on fire. Richard Cameron came back to the fireroom and told Roy Coleman and me to go up the starboard ladder which led to the starboard deck. We were the only three left in the fireroom at this time. Cameron went first, Coleman next, and then myself. When I got on deck the water was starting to go down the hatch and the starboard life line was already under the water. I recall empty 5-inch shell casings sliding down the deck into the water. Roy Coleman got hung up on something and lost his life jacket while being cut loose. He spent the time in the water with me on my life jacket. I also recall when I got on deck I saw the older blonde-headed Pharmacist's Mate attending someone who looked like he had a hole in his stomach. All this was happening in seconds after leaving the fireroom. I swam away from the ship as far as I could and watched her go down. The bow seemed to be 100 feet in the air when it slid under. I only wish I would have kept my life jacket. I would have given Roy Coleman one half.

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COOLEY, William, MM3c

I went to my G.Q. station in the after engine room, lower level, to man the feed and lube pumps. I had left my life jacket on the upper level railing. I noticed Lt. Warrick looking out the starboard hatch above me, and then I heard the 5-in., 40's, and 20's going off. When I heard the 20-mm opening up I knew something was getting pretty close. Then I heard a bang above my head. It was Lt. Warrick jumping down from the starboard hatch onto the deck plates above my head, and I saw him run across the engine room to the portside hatch and up and out. Just then a great big fire ball went across the engine room, and a fine mist came down after the explosion. The pumps started to lose steam pressure, the alarms started to ring, and the lights went out. I worked my way across the engine room to the portside hatch, and seeing daylight, I climbed the ladder to topside. I don't know if anyone survived on the upper level. I could not see or hear anyone. I met an officer at the hatch, and we decided to find a portable lamp so we could go back down to see how badly we were damaged.

I went forward past midships and past the officer's quarters. Just then the second one hit us. A lot of twisted steel and other trash fell in front of me, and the top half of an office door flew over my head. I started back toward midships and met a colored shipmate with an arm blown off. I guided him to midships and the ship had listed to starboard. I could not hold on to him as I could not get any traction under my feet and my shoes came off. I stepped on some hot shrap-

nel and one piece imbedded in the bottom of my foot. As the ship rolled over a length of hose came loose from the railing, and I climbed up the hose, walked over the side of the ship, and dived into the water.

As I came up, the bow of the ship was straight up in the air, waving and sliding back. I started to swim without my life jacket. It was hard to breath because the oil was so thick. I was swallowing it and trying to spit it out at the same time. I looked for something to hang on to and noticed a group of guys in a circle, so I swam to them as they all were covered with oil and all I could see was the whites of their eyes. I was picked up by the LCS and was pulled aboard by Gene Gavin. I said to him, "They saved you two?"

My first G.Q. station on the Drexler was in the lower handling room for 5-inch Mount #2. Later I was transferred to the After Engine Room. If it had not been for that, I would not be here today.

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CUCCIA, Nicholas, MM1c

Late at night on 5/27/45 we received a call to go and relieve the U.S.S. Stormes, so we got on station. I went down to the Forward Engine Room at about 6:30 A.M. The next morning when G.Q. went off I hurried down to the Forward Engine Room where I was on the throttle wheel for G.Q. Everyone was at their station checking their job when suddenly we heard a loud noise. I looked around the board to my right and I saw a large hole in the starboard side of the engine room. One of the guys who was checking the bearing on the reduction gear was blown out when the bomb went off. We looked around to see if everyone was okay. I yelled at the guys on the lower level to come up on topside so we could get out. When we got topside we asked the fire room guys to see if we could get steam from the forward fire room. They said as far as they knew, everything was all right, so we went back down to the engine room to open and close some valves. In a little while someone called us up as there was another plane coming in on us. I went to the port side of the ship, and at that time we were strafed with machine gun fire. This plane went around and up the starboard side. When the pilot got up to the bow of the ship we saw him coming straight down on the ship again. I went as far forward as I could when the plane hit right at midships. Our ship went up and I went over the side into the water. By the time I turned around and looked back the bow was going down into the water. It happened just that fast - 49 seconds!

Since we were all in the water we had to get away from the fire and oil. Once we got away from the fire there were more planes dog fighting over us. This lasted for quite a while. Finally we were picked up by a small craft. I got aboard but was scared and stayed topside. I hung on to the rail for fear of landing in the water again. This ship had only .50-caliber machine guns, and I told them that was not very much. Then I was transferred to another ship whose name I can't recall. I went down below deck as I was covered with fuel oil and I was a mess. When I was taking off my clothes the corpsman asked me where I tore my left pant leg, but I couldn't remember, so he ripped the whole side open and he saw where my leg was hit with shrapnel. He cleaned my leg and gave me a shot. I took a shower and was given clean clothes and later went topside. I can't remember how long we stayed in harbor, but we did leave and went to Guam and later to Pearl Harbor and then back to the States. I was admitted to a hospital in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. I remained there until 10/19/45 when I was discharged. While I was in the hospital I was presented the Purple Heart Medal. When I was discharged the doctor told me not to ever let anyone operate on my leg as the shrapnel was very deep and it may disable me, so I'm still carrying it around in my leg. I'm a lucky guy though - I survived two sinkings.

EASTMAN, John M., WT2c

At the time of the first hit I was on watch in the After Fireroom. The first plane hit at the bulkhead between the After Fireroom and the Forward Engine Room. There was one big ball of flame. Everything went dead. Steam pressure dropped to zero and we just stood there, unbelieving. There was no word as to what was happening or any abandon ship orders. I told my men to get out before the steam gets us (600# pressure and 900 degrees). I always figured that if we were hit, the steam would get us all before we could get out.

Somehow all of us made it topside. What happened to them afterwards, I do not know. Only Bruce Wetzel and myself are left from the watch. Lost were: Bodie Lebo, Tony Distafano, and Clark.

I walked toward the forecandle. The second hit lifted me off my feet and I then ran to the bow and walked off the side by the anchor hawes into the water. Fantail and aft section were already under water. I swam a few yards before discovering that I had no lifebelt. I had left it in the fireroom. I turned to look at the ship, and the bow, forward from the anchor chains, was all that was still above water. Panic set in - afraid of undertow. I swam hand and fast away and became very tired. The oil slick caught up to me, and I got oil in my mouth and nose and started to choke and cough. I went under once and thought my number had come up. At this point a shipmate caught me. He had a lifebelt and he had me hang on until I stopped gagging on the oil. He spotted an oil-soaked pillow and got it for me and tucked it under my chin to keep my head above water. He stayed with me a few minutes longer and assured me that I would be fine until picked up. He left me to help someone else. To this day, I do not know who this man was. But I have thanked God and him many times for my life. I would love to know who he is so that I might thank him personally. If anyone relates giving a pillow to a struggling sailor, please let me know. I owe him my life.

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FOX, Henry V., FC1C

My G.Q. station was in the Main Battery Director, located above the bridge. I was on the J.A. circuit to the Bridge. I could hear the Captain receiving reports from the first hit, but I couldn't see what was really going on. In fact, we were tracking the second plane after the first hit. I can tell you one thing, when the second plane came in I had it in the director scope and it made a B-29 look like a Piper Cub.

After the second hit I received the message to abandon ship. I relayed the message but got few answers. Everyone was told to get out of the director. Daniels and Daiuto apparently had a fear of the water and needed some encouragement. We helped them inflate their life belts and both left the ship before I did. I didn't see either one of them again. (What a loss.)

After helping them, there was a little short kid who was a 20-mm operator by the bridge, and he was standing looking straight up, holding the life line with both hands. I tried to talk to him with no results, and I tried to pull him from the line without success. "Shorty" Horan came to help me and we pulled him free and tossed him overboard. He took off like a fish. I left the ship shortly afterwards and began swimming away from the ship. The ship had listed to starboard, so I walked down the port side.

After I swam a short while I looked back and the ship had listed to port and looked like it was going to roll over close to me. I swam further and looked back just as the bow was vertical as it slid under. Carlson, the Water-tender, and I helped several mates inflating their life belts and brought

powder cans to them. After what seemed like days instead of hours, this little ship arrived to pick us up.

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HARDIN, Edward Q., EM2c

I was in the #1 Engine Room, forward on the port side main electrical switchboard. I had communications from all over the ship as to what was happening when the first plane hit aft on the starboard side. It blew a hole at least 6 feet in diameter. We never did find out what happened to the fireman working in that area. The explosion broke the main steam line which supplied power to make electricity. When that happened I started to lose voltage quickly. I then called the forward diesel room and made arrangements to shift when the voltage dropped to 300 volts. After that, I was the last one to leave the #1 Engine Room. I got topside just in time to see the second plane miss us. I was on the starboard side at the midships passageway and it looked like that's where the second plane was headed, so I started for the port side and hit the deck about half way.

After the explosion I started forward on the starboard side. I tried to cut a life raft loose but it was too crowded, so I gave my knife to someone else to cut it loose. Then I went forward on the starboard side to the bow where I jumped overboard. The bow was still in the water with a slight list to starboard. When I jumped the ship twisted to starboard so fast that I landed on the keel. That is when I broke two disks and cracked four more in my back. Thank goodness I didn't feel too much suction. Then the fire kept gaining on me, so I finally got through and around it. While I was trying to inflate my life belt a plane was headed directly for us right out of the sun. Thank goodness it was a Marine plane taking pictures. I looked around to see who needed help but could hardly hear - which turned out to be a busted ear drum. I remember helping two sailors hanging on to a small piece of wood. I found a life jacket for them. I was one of the last ones to get picked up by our escort ship. The only one I recognized aboard that ship was Maurillo. He was one of the first ones overboard.

From there they put me aboard the hospital ship U.S.S. Solace. From there I went to a base hospital in Guam and stayed there for about two weeks. While there I tried to get help from the Red Cross, but they refused unless I gave them my pay number or money. Thank goodness for the Salvation Army. They gave me everything I needed and apologized because they didn't have more to give me. In about two weeks I was flown to Pearl Harbor. From there I went by hospital ship to Oakland, California to Oaknell Naval Hospital. At the hospital I met Townsend from the Drexler. We made our first liberty together the day the Japanese surrendered. I still have our picture from that liberty.

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LEPERI, Joseph G., PhM2c

Dr. Thompson and I were at our G.Q. station in the officers meeting room patching up many casualties. We had run out of tourniquets when MM2c McCullough crawled in with his leg almost cut off. I was applying my belt as a tourniquet when Chief Moore (Chief cook) opened the door to the passageway and yelled, "Docs, get off. We are going to get hit." Dr. Thompson had one end of McCullough and I the other, while carrying him. The doctor and McCullough were in the passageway and I was about to step up and out when the second plane hit with tremendous force. The door slammed shut and I was momentarily stunned, finding myself on the deck by the water cooler inside the officers meeting room. Looking up, I saw the ocean water coming into the room. The front hatch, which was always

closed at G.Q., was open. I immediately got up and swam off the ship through the open hatch. The fuel on the ocean was burning. I applied pressure to the cartridges in my life belt and only one inflated. The one had a hole in it. I was swimming very fast because I was told when a ship is sinking it has a pulling force. When I looked back I saw the bow of the ship go straight up and immediately straight down, not causing much suction. I saw two small ships in the distance and swam as fast as I could toward them. While swimming toward the small ships a MM2c (I don't remember his name) was without a life belt and asked for help. I told him to hold on to my life belt, kick as hard as you can and I took him to the life raft. As I continued to swim toward the small ships the same sailor again asked for help. He said the fire was moving too close to the raft, and he came after me and said to take off the life belt as it would be easier for both of us. I told him to hang on and kick hard, because I did not intend to take the belt off. We found something floating in the water which he could hold on to and I told him to follow me and keep kicking to move forward. He was saved. Lt. Commander Bidwell was in the water singing "Drinking Rum And Coca Cola," and mates were going down all around us. Mates were lost because they had no life belts on, heavy fuel & fire, and wounded that couldn't make it. I never saw Dr. Thompson or McCullough again.

I was one of the first sailors picked up, and being young and a good swimmer, I wanted to jump back in and save others who needed help. However, I was told they only had one Pharmacist's Mate on the ship and since I was a Pharmacist's Mate I was needed to treat the injured and wounded. I recall one officer had a deep hole in his back the size of a quarter. I gave him medication, cleaned and treated it and bandaged it. The other Pharmacist's Mate and myself continued to treat the survivors. I also passed out $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or more of whiskey to each survivor to help calm them. The Chief Cook Moore said to me, "Doc, you know this cup of whiskey is not enough for me." I gave him more in a bottle and told him to take it easy with it. We treated many wounded. I didn't mind anything until we were transferred to an APA and my knees started to shake. I should have taken some of the whiskey myself.

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LOCKHART, Donald W., SM3c

I was on the bridge when the first plane hit and we went dead in the water. I can remember admiring the courage of the pilot in a Corsair who was following the Jap plane, in spite of the fact that both us and the Lowry were shooting at it and he was right in the line of fire. I remember seeing the other plane that hit us go directly over the ship on his first pass and we thought he was done for. But he made a tight turn and came back and hit us close to the same spot as the first one had. I then realized that the ship was sinking. I took off the binoculars I was wearing, stepped up on the bridge railing and jumped into the water. It was only a short jump, for the ship was listing badly to starboard, which is the side I was on. I began to swim away from the mast which was almost in the water by then. I can remember the flag halyards being very close to me. The next time I looked up the ship was on her stern and almost gone.

I had a foul weather jacket on with a CO₂ cartridge life belt over it. It was quite a struggle to get the jacket and my shoes off. Next problem was the cartridges didn't work, so I had to inflate the belt by blowing air into it. I didn't do too good of a job on that. I was lucky enough to find a floating piece of debris which I latched onto and which increased my survival chances quite a bit. There was a bad fire burning on the water, but it was quite a

distance from me and didn't cause me any problem.

I was able to make my way to an APD and climb aboard. Several of the crew were already there. When I went below to clean up I was quite surprised to see that I was covered with oil and was black all over.

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McINTYRE, Robert B., SM1c

The morning of the 28th of May was a rather somber one on the signal bridge. Not much talking, everyone was just kind of looking out into space, hoping against hope there would be nothing out there to see. A "Bogie" was reported about 20 miles or so to port. This Bogie was identified by our "CAP" (Combat Air Patrol) and then visually by us as a friendly patrol bomber - a "PBM." For reasons unknown, their "IFF" (Identification Friend or Foe) signal wasn't received. Therefore it was assumed to be a Bogie until it was identified visually. I think the "Turkeys" were looking up their codes on local time instead of Greenwich time. On several occasions we needlessly went to General Quarters because of those malfunctioning bastards.

After the first hit, we all ended up on the port side of the signal bridge. I climbed up on the Semaphore stand so I could better watch what was going on. The plane that missed us on its first pass skimmed the water, continued on around the ship and came in off the bow. I yelled, "Stay on the bridge. She's not going to hit the bridge." The plane's port wing took out our port halyards and crashed aft of the motor whaleboat, somewhere in the vicinity of the after stack. Silakowski (KIA) and Burleigh (KIA) left the bridge and headed aft. That's the last time they were seen. The port flag bag and the wooden deck gratings in front of it were on fire. I had been knocked about 8 to 10 feet forward by the explosion. Getting up, I got a fire extinguisher from inside the pilot house and was trying to put out the fire when someone yelled, "Hey Mac." I looked up and it was the "Gun Boss," Lt. Lee. He was climbing out of the gun director, and he said, "Get your men off the bridge, we're sinking." The Signalmen wore life belts instead of life jackets because it was impossible to man the flag bags with jackets on. The belts also had their draw backs. If you leaned too hard on the flag bag when bending on flags the pressure on the belt would cause the caps to perforate the CO₂ cartridges, causing the belt to inflate. We were constantly going back to the Shipfitter Shop to get replacement CO₂ cartridges. Finally, Myers, SF1c told us he was getting low on them and what we needed to do was back the "caps" on the belts off a couple of turns. Then pressure on the belt wouldn't perforate the cartridges. That way, we wouldn't be using so many.

The first thing I did after swimming what I thought was a safe distance from the ship was to unsnap the sides of the belt and squeeze down on the CO₂ cartridges. Nothing happened. While treading water I managed to get the hose loose. I would take a deep breath, go under water, and attempt to inflate the belt, and still nothing happened. By then I really had the worrying duty. Then it dawned on me the caps were loose. I tightened the caps, applied pressure, and I felt like I was sitting on top of the world. Shortly thereafter I was picked up by one of the "Vultures," an "LCS" (Landing Craft - Support).

Later, we were transferred to an "APD." On board we had the bodies of two crew members: Chief Watertender Prendergast and the other, I believe was Storekeeper 2c Kaping.

We proceeded to Kerama Retto where we were transferred to the U.S.S. Lauderdale. I had burns treated around my ankles (I didn't have any socks on.). We were able to shower, issued clothing, and fed.

MILLER, William R., RM3c

I was in the radio room at G.Q. I believe that Joe Paettie was on the receivers that morning copying code. I remember the 5-inch guns firing and then the 20-mm. I said to Paettie that the planes must be close because of the 20-mm firing. Not being able to see anything in the radio room, I decided to go outside to see what was happening. As I got out on the upper deck I looked to starboard and saw a plane coming in close to the water, maybe 20 to 30 feet high. The guns were actually cutting the wings off the plane. At this point I ran back to the radio room. About that time the plane hit the ship and of course the ship went dead in the water. It was at this time we got into our life jackets. Titus didn't have one so I gave him mine because Harold could not swim. Just about then there was another severe explosion which folded a corner of the exit door in so that we could not get out. We were trapped. I don't know what made me do it, but I kicked at the bottom of the door and it fell out. Of course all of the men got out of the radio room. I checked the de-coding room as I went by and everything was blown inside. At this point I headed for the bridge. I got up about 3 or 4 steps on the ladder and the ship began to list to starboard. At this point there was a door to the outside to port and I headed for it. At this time the ship was on her side, so I stood on the locker and pulled myself up to the side of the ship. I then walked down the side of the ship when I hit the waterline. I went into a slide and then dove into the water. All I could remember was to get away from the ship so that I wouldn't be sucked under with her. When the stern of the ship sunk and her bow went into the air all I could hear were things tumbling inside the ship. It was as if someone had dumped a large load of steel cans. I'll never forget those sounds. I was swimming in oil about a foot thick, and about that time a fire started. All I could think of was to get out of the oil, and I swam with everything I had. After I got out of the oil I was really exhausted. I was about to go under when I came upon Jim Armstrong who saved me by holding on to him until I caught my second wind. We found an empty powder container which I held on to until I was picked up by the small boat which one of the LCS's sent out. Until recently I never knew the man who had helped me in the water. I can't thank him enough. After I was picked up, they treated me for a leg and arm wound.

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MILLS, Buford C., GM2c

I was the Gun Captain on the port quad 40-mm gun mount. About 0630 word came over that Marine fighters had made contact with six suicide planes, all Bettys. The Marine fighters splashed two of them, but the other four got through into range of our guns. They came in on the starboard side at about 4 o'clock. All starboard 20's, 40's, and 5-inch guns went into action. Our guns knocked two of them down; two of them came on through. The first one came down in almost a dive and leveled off just above the water at about two or three hundred yards out. A Marine Corsair was on the second Betty, which came at the ship from starboard to port, just in front of the bow. The first plane hit aft of the center on the starboard. One of the wings caught under the tubes of the quad 40-mm and turned it out of its trunnion. The Marine fighter veered off the second plane since it was too low. It came up and over, hitting just in front of the #1 smoke stack. After the first plane hit our ammo racks on the port side caught fire. I told my crew to leave the gun tub. Our main deck was already under water and the bow was rising into the air. When I came down from the port quad 40-mm the water was knee deep on the main deck. I grabbed an empty

5-inch powder canister with a lock type ring, went forward port side, crawled up on the port bow with the help of lifelines and dropped off the port side. I was holding the powder canister by the ring. When I hit the water suction from the sinking ship caught me and I went down - way down. I remember the hull of the ship with the barnacles on her side dragging against me. I turned and put my feet on her side and tried to walk up. My lungs were almost exploding. In one last effort I hunkered close to the ship with my feet under me and gave one shove against her side. Thank God, I came up. When I became oriented I saw that the oil from the ship was on fire, and I started swimming away as fast as I could. Later, I was picked up by an LCS.

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MITCHELL, Fred W., S1c

I was in the mess hall and it was about 0700 and I had just finished a breakfast of pancakes when G.Q. sounded. We all rushed to out battle stations.

My G.Q. station was "Lookout" on Mount #43, the quad 40-mm on the starboard side. After arriving at my post and with all the excitement I forgot to put on my life jacket after putting on the phones, steel helmet and binoculars. It was lying at my feet on the deck. I looked through my binoculars and saw a twin-engine "Frances" heading straight for us. I yelled into my phones to the Gun Captain the approximate bearing, elevation angle and range of the incoming plane. Our gun crew was already sighted in on the plane and was firing straight at it. I watched as our barrage of shells and tracers went right into him. We expected the plane to explode at any moment before reaching the ship. The plane, even though riddled with our gunfire, kept coming towards us. Suddenly the plane was upon us. The wing was about 80 feet wide. I could even see the windshield. Everything happened so fast. I knew it was going to crash into out gun.

In an instant I remembered what one of the Marines we transported from Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal told me. He said that when you know that an explosion is going to occur, "Hit the deck and lay flat on your stomach." I did this and it saved my life.

Just as I hit the deck the plane crashed into out gun. There was a tremendous explosion and debris was falling all around me. After a few moments I looked up and got up on my feet. It was a horrible sight. The gun mount and all the crew were gone. Everything was on fire. It appeared that I was the only survivor until I learned at a reunion that George Payne also survived when he was blown into the water. I was dazed and felt numb. I felt my arms and legs to make sure they were still there. I wiped my face and felt blood. A mate rushed by and I asked him if my face was gone. He said it was cut but nothing serious. Then he hurried away.

I knew the ammo from our gun and the port 40-mm would explode. I found my life jacket and binoculars on the deck and picked them up. I went down the ladder to the starboard deck. The P.A. system was dead. I started to run towards the midships passageway. I ran into an officer going in the opposite direction. I don't remember who he was. He yelled at me and asked me where my battle station was and I told him. He ordered me to go back to my battle station. I told him that it was blown up and on fire, but he still ordered me to go back. I started climbing back up the ladder and the Gun Captain from Mount #3 was trying to climb down. He looked at me in disbelief and asked me where I was going. I told him that I was ordered back to Mount #43 by an officer. He said the mount was no longer there and the ammo is going to blow up any minute, and he told me to get back down the ladder - which I did. I again found my way to the midships passageway without incident. The officer I saw previously was not there, and I

never saw him again.

Shortly thereafter there was another tremendous explosion as the second plane hit. Suddenly the deck started to tilt and the ship began to roll over. I knew that I wouldn't have time to put on my life jacket, which I was still holding. I dropped it on the deck and grabbed the life lines. I started sliding down the side of the ship. The bottom of the ship was lifting out of the water as it was rolling over. I ended up in the water, and I still had my foul weather jacket on, but no life jacket. I tried to get my jacket off, but the zipper was stuck. I knew that I had to get away from the ship, so I started to swim. I swam until I was nearly exhausted. I stopped to look back and I saw the bow pointed toward the sky and then it disappeared.

My jacket was water-logged and heavy and I could not get it off. The weight of it was starting to make it very difficult to stay afloat. All of a sudden a mate appeared and asked me if he could help me. I told him that I could not get out of my jacket. Fortunately, he had a knife and he cut the jacket loose. He asked me if I was okay, and since I was no longer weighted down with the jacket I thought that I could stay afloat. He then took off. I think he saved my life and I don't know his name.

I swam, floated and treaded water for what seemed like an eternity. My strength and energy were once again leaving me, and I could hardly keep my head above water. I saw an officer with a life jacket on and he saw me. He helped me to stay afloat, and together, with his help, we got to a raft. There must have been 30 to 35 men hanging on to it. There was no more room to hang on. One of the mates told me to hang on to his belt. His name was Stephen Marinari, SCM3c. I will never forget him either.

The next crisis I encountered was the burning oil. As it came close to the raft everyone started to yell and panic. The officer who had helped me previously told us to stop and told us how to paddle with our hands to get away from the fire. It worked and we managed to get clear of the burning oil.

We saw the LCS in the distance and paddled towards it. When we got close to it we thought they would throw us a line, but they did not. We started to drift away. One of the men on our raft swam toward the LCS and yelled at them to throw him a line, which they did. He swam back and tied it to the raft, and they pulled us alongside. We finally climbed aboard. Thank God for the solid deck under my feet. I am forever grateful to all those shipmates who helped me that day.

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NEWTON, Marvin, Slc

I was a gunner on a 20-mm in Mount #1 on the starboard side, forward. I fired all of my 490 rounds at the first plane and ran out of ammunition. I looked around for West, my loader, to put on another magazine, but he and the other gunner, Johnson, and our man that wore the ear phones were all crouched down as they were trying to protect themselves from danger. So I unbuckled myself from my gun and also hit the deck. I looked at the plane and it was diving straight towards us. I closed my eyes and bowed my head and said to myself, I guess this is it. It crashed right below us toward the middle of the ship. I asked Nick Pappas after we were picked up what happened, and he said right before it crashed it veered to the left. I believe with all my heart that God Almighty protected me that day. We regrouped for the second plane, and I fired all the ammo I could at him. He went around to the port side and crashed on that side of the ship. As the ship began to list to starboard I went through to portside and climbed onto the side of the bow as it was about 90 degrees to starboard, in the water and sinking fast. I jumped off and I still had my helmet and life jacket on. It

was a terrible jerk on my back as I hit the water. I removed my helmet and kicked off my shoes and started to swim towards the small ship. One of our shipmates came alongside me and asked which way to go, and I told him to swim in the same direction as me. Moments later he hollered for help. I looked around and he was gone. I don't know whether he was taken by a shark, or what. I looked back earlier and saw our ship with the bow straight up in the air, going under. I came upon a small boat (I assume a motor whaleboat) from the destroyer that was with us that day. There were men in the boat (no more room inside), but, thank God, I found a place to grasp on the side and hung on. Boy, was I glad when I climbed up that rope ladder to get on the deck of the destroyer. They gave me a bowl of soup and used shoes and clothing.

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PAETTIE, Joseph R., RM2c

My G.Q. station was in the Radio Shack, along with Bill Miller, Bob Feeney and others whom I can't remember. The first plane hit near the emergency radio room which was the G.Q. station of Radioman Ira Hamilton. After the hit, Ira came up to the main Radio Shack. His face was covered with blood. It seems that paint chips flew off the bulkheads after the hit, cutting him. He was not seriously injured, although he appeared to be hurt at the time. When the second plane hit the concussion jammed the Radio Shack door. Miller had the presence of mind to knock out the emergency escape panel to the passageway. The rear passageway door was jammed so we went to the forward door at the C.I.C. room. I remember undogging the door, and just as we got it open the pyrotechnic locker broke loose and came down across the opening, leaving enough room for us to scramble over it. I looked back and saw the officer in charge of C.I.C. (I forget his name) still sitting on his stool and holding on to the plot table. I remember walking down the side of the ship and diving off the keel.

After I was swimming in the water I looked back in time to see the bow go straight up and plunge. I remember an oil fire starting and trying desperately to get away from it. A little later, I remember coming across someone who was hurt. I held him up for quite a while, but I had forgotten who it was. Years later, at our first reunion in Charleston, Bob Feeney reminded me that it was he whom I had helped. One incident that I remember very clearly was a yeoman who had on only a life belt and was swimming near me. He stopped swimming, took off his belt and just sank. I also forgot his name, but he had light hair, fair skin and I think he was the Captain's talker at G.Q. I remember the kindness of the crew who picked us up, offering us whatever they felt would make us comfortable. I also remember thinking what a terrible mess we were making of their ship with our oily clothing and bodies.

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PETAGO, William O., Slc

I was a first loader on Mount 42, a twin 40-mm, and Armstrong was my Gun Captain. At the time the first "Frances" hit, from the starboard side, I thought it was at about midships. It blew me off the mount and I fell on the deck of the gun. It almost knocked me out. As soon as I recovered I jumped back up on the gun, and it was just a few seconds until the 2nd Frances came in. There was a Marine Corsair on his tail chewing away at him, and he was taking a lot of 20-mm hits from us. There was smoke coming from the attacking plane. I never saw a plane take so much punishment and keep coming. It almost seemed like a ghost up there - something that could not be knocked down. I saw that it was going to hit,

and I said a few words to my good maker, as many of us did I suppose. Again, it blew me a few feet in the air, and I landed back down on the deck of the gun. At that time the ship was listing badly to the starboard side. I jumped up and ran like hell to get on the bridge, and I always hated it if I bumped into Captain Wilson, because I know those last few seconds must have meant a lot to him. I jumped on the side of the bridge and slid off in the water and swam like a Gar fish. I got out away from the ship and heard someone call out my name. I spotted him and it was Don Mosher (?). He was with me when we lost a destroyer in the North Atlantic, the U.S.S. Fiske (DE-143). Don wanted me to blow up his life belt. Don and I got separated and I wound up all by myself. Pretty soon I got to thinking about sharks and I put my knife in my mouth.

About that time I saw a low-flying plane coming in, and I thought it was a Jap plane. I tried to dive under water and get my life belt off at the same time. I gave it a big try but my rump would pop up. It was one of our TBF torpedo bombers instead of a Jap plane. During this exercise I lost my knife. After that I was one of our LCS's. When I got to it and started up the ladder, Collinson, my BM1/c reached down and helped me aboard and put both arms around me, patted me on the back and said, "God damn Petago, I's glad you made it."

I ended up on a hospital ship which took us to Guam. I stayed in the hospital 2 weeks on Guam. I had blast concussion and perforated ear drums. I was then transferred by plane to Pearl Harbor and then took a ship to San Francisco.

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RADCLIFFE, Albert J., BM2c

We were just getting ready for breakfast and it was going to be pancakes. I remember clearly that the Captain said over the loud speaker, "Bogies 20-miles away. Take under fire," which we did. I was Captain on port 5-inch gun in Mount #2. I had 13 men in the mount. We commenced firing at the "Kamikaze" planes. After 2 minutes of firing we took a hit on starboard side, amidships, and immediately rolled over on our starboard side. One of my gun crew asked me what happened, and I said we took a suicide hit on the starboard side. He right away jumped through the hot shell chute, with the starboard gun crew leaving with him.

I went to Tony Fabrizi and told him to fire that gun, but he said it would not fire. So I tried using the manual pedal with no results. I then asked Sullivan, who was the lookout for the mount, what was going on. He said, "Everybody is in the water." I started passing out life jackets to the port crew and told them to leave. Oliver Warren (KIA) from Tenn. threw his life jacket on the deck, stepped on it and said, "Let's fight some more." The shell-man and the powder-man left. Sullivan left, I left, and Fabrizi came behind me. When we left, Odom and Warren were still in the mount. Finally, Odom got out of the gun mount. It was down about 40 feet.

I helped Sullivan get up on the port side of the ship as he could not get himself up to go over the side. Then I told him, "You jump right; I'll jump left." When I hit the water and came up the ship at that time was already sinking - stern first. I put my feet on the port side of the "741" and pushed myself away. Just then, the ship went out of sight. There was no suction, no depth charge explosions. Otherwise, the explosions would have wiped us out.

I then swam over to where some of the crew were in the water. I helped four men. Then I spent some time with Walker, trying to make him hang on to a powder can, but he was beyond himself; and was one of the missing. Caruso was swimming near me and saw a crew member that needed help and was going to help him. I told him I was tired, and he had to be tired too, but he went anyway to his shipmate's aid. I watched him go down as the man grabbed him and both went

down.

I swam over to a life raft where there were about 30 or 40 guys hanging on to the side of it. Bill Skiffington was sitting inside the raft as he was hurt. The sea was on fire all around us and the heat was terrific. I told some of the crew to move around and make a paddle motion to get away from the fire. There again, many of the men were panicking and no one would leave. I talked to Skiffington, wished them all luck, and swam away. I came across a young fellow from Yonkers, New York. I don't know his name. He asked if I could help him. I told him not to touch me when I swam up to him. I swam up behind him and turned him over on his back and I treaded water, holding him while he relaxed and floated, talking to him all the time. After a few minutes I told him there were some powder cans nearby. He started treading water nicely by himself. I took just a few strokes, looked back, and he was not in sight.

When I was back in the States and in a bar in Yonkers, N.Y., two young ladies sat beside me and were discussing this young sailor who was missing from the Drexler, the same fellow that I tried to help. The sensation that went through my body then made the hair on my arms and head go straight up. I started talking to the ladies, showing my papers that I was on the Drexler. They wanted me to talk to his wife, but I just could not do it at that time.

Getting back to the sinking, as I was swimming I came across Prokop, and the two of us swam together. When Prokop was up on one of the swells in the sea he saw a ship on the horizon and was hoping it was not a Jap ship. I told him I didn't care what it was, I just wanted to get picked up as we both were very tired. From the time of the sinking to the time we were picked up by LCS 114 it was 2 hours and 20 minutes.

After being picked up Nick Pappas (who was already on the LCS) asked me if I would like to go out in a small boat and look for survivors, which I did. Among the rubbish floating around from the sinking of the Drexler I came across a shipmate, Prendergast, Chief Water Tender. He was just floating on top of the water, and I brought him back to the LCS. As I came aboard the LCS I heard a shipmate, Pharmacist's Mate 1/c Lengeling calling for help. I quickly tied 3 heaving lines together and gave it to one of the shipmates who said he could swim out to him. He tied the lines around Lengeling, and I started to bring him in, but he drowned while being brought in. They worked on him for a long time, but just could not revive him.

We were brought back to Okinawa and placed aboard the U.S.S. Lauderdale. From there we were put on an AKA (cargo ship) which didn't feed us at all. From there we were taken to Ulithi and placed aboard a Merchant Marine cargo ship, the Gene Lafite, which fed us like royalty. Then on to Honolulu and San Francisco

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RAY, Ben H., GM1c

It started out to be a routine day. Shortly after that General Quarters was sounded. I was a Gunner's Mate 1st Class and my battle station was Mount Captain on Mount #3, a twin 5-inch 38 cal. mount with a total crew of 39 men, I believe, both in the mount and below deck in ammunition handling rooms. I was standing on a platform with my head and shoulders through the open top hatch with a blast shield behind my head. I had a life jacket on, a set of binoculars and a set of sound-powered telephones around my neck plus a large oversized steel helmet. On top of the mount, just in front of me, was an open sight I would use to get the Pointer and Trainer zeroed in for the purpose of shifting the mount to automatic control by the Main Battery Director. We were firing to starboard at the first

plane. The plane hit us just forward of Mount #3. A wave of water came over the top of the Mount and down the hatch where I was standing. I believe I took my helmet and binoculars off as I was soaked. I think I still had phones on, going back up the hatch, and I saw one or two plane wheels on the stern. Also, there was a 6 foot piece of gas line wrapped around the sight. I unwrapped it and dropped it in the Mount. After that I think we were on Emergency Diesel Power and that we fired a few more rounds.

After the second plane hit I lost all memory as to how I got put of the top hatch. Hopefully, someone could have shoved me or pulled me out, or I just floated up. I was never a swimmer. A bucket of water thrown in my face would have drowned me.

I first remember that I was several feet from the ship. I remember using my handkerchief to wipe the blood and oil out of my face as I had a 4-inch cut on my forehead.

When I was rescued I was too weak to grab a line. Someone hauled me aboard. I was out again until the next morning aboard another ship. I looked like a mummy. I got out of bed and someone caught me and put me back and told me what had happened. After finding out my mount crew was missing I was sick, and it wasn't from my injuries. I had about a half pound of shrapnel from my head to ankle, and I still have a couple of pieces left.

I was transferred to an Army hospital in Saipan. Before my thirty days were up I found out the Nurses Aids were Japanese girls. I didn't sleep anymore. I had a short stop in a hospital in Pearl Harbor and then on to San Francisco.

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REAM, George W., TM3c

My station was on the aft part of the bridge to operate torpedo directors and to be a lookout. I was sleeping on a locker on the main deck when G.Q. sounded. I looked at the destroyer to starboard, then above and beyond, and saw a twin-engine "Betty" and one of our fighter planes on its tail. I could see sunlight flickering on the enemy plane as bullets hit it. That didn't stop it. It dove on the other destroyer to our starboard as both ships were firing. Our plane pulled off and the Jap plane pulled up over its apparent target and came flying close to the water towards our ship. All firing stopped as destroyers were in each others line of fire. I saw the Jap plane turn upside down close to the water and then turn right side up, before it crashed into us at water line into our engine room. As the plane flipped over its wing tip cleared the water by about three feet and its props were ruffling the water. The crash was a big thud and the whole ship shook. All communications and power were knocked out. The ship started to sink, but I was not aware of its condition. A second Betty came in from starboard about 100 feet off the water. Some guns were firing manually. This plane passed aft of the fantail, flew up the port side about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the ship, turned and came at us from off the port bow. I could hear one 20-mm gun firing. The plane crashed on our No. 2 torpedo mount with a terrific explosion. I was on the ladder to the 40-mm gun deck and was hit on my head with a flying piece of wood. On the gun deck a signal flag halyard dropped around my neck plus the head phones I was wearing. I asked for help but got none and cut myself free with the hunting knife I carried, which I then threw away. While doing this 40-mm shells were going off like firecrackers in a rack about five feet from me. I then went up to the starboard side of the bridge and started through the wheelhouse. The ship listed about 45 degrees to starboard. A Radarman helped me through the wheelhouse to the port side. The radar

antenna on the top of the mast was about 3 feet above the water. Water was at our feet on the aft bridge. The ship was almost going down straight. Torpedo Officer McQuilkin hit the water first, then the Radarman, then me. I could have been the last one off the ship. I hit the water fully clothed - had on an extra sweater and a foul weather jacket zipped up. I activated my life belt with only one cartridge and found out it leaked. I hit the water swimming frantically and went under. Thoughts while struggling under water: If I don't make it, my mother collects \$10,000 insurance, and if I make it, I get 30 days leave. I relaxed, felt my body float, looked up, could see light, and swam to the surface. While trying to stay afloat my clothes were getting water logged. I unzipped my jacket, squeezed my life belt and started to swim. I got very tired and hollered for help. I heard, "Hang on," and saw someone with a floating net swimming towards me. It was McQuilkin. We didn't see the Radarman at all. We picked up one other person (Bruton).

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SCOTT, Roland H., MM2c

We had been at G.Q. for 72 hours, off and on. As for me, I was a MM2c and throttle man in the After Engine Room, and my G.Q. station was in charge of the Forward Repair Party with 7 men on the port side, forward. I felt like a monkey running up and down the ladder from the engine room to my G.Q. station.

On the morning of May 28th we had been in port to take on supplies and fuel. I had been in my sack for about an hour when G.Q. sounded. While going to my station I glanced through the passageway just as the first Jap plane hit. Someone was reaching up to close the hatch to the engine room when a piece of metal took his arm off between the wrist and elbow.

As we were getting the handy-billy pump running to help fight the fires I looked up and saw crew members throwing ammunition cans over the side. A Chief picked one up, and as he released it, it blew up in his face. As I turned around I saw the 2nd Jap plane coming, and I told the guys to hit the deck. After it hit above us, only two of us got up. By this time the ship was listing very badly. There was an officer running forward and I grabbed a knife from his sheath and cut a life raft free. To this day I do not know who he was. I remember sliding down the side of the ship. After that, everything seems to go blank. When I came to I was swimming between 2 crew members without life jackets, helping to hold them up. Since we were covered with oil, I could not recognize them. I did not know until later that only one section of my life belt was inflated.

The next thing I remember this LCS was picking up survivors. When I was going up the ladder I heard 2 guys hollering for help. I jumped back in the water and helped them to the ladder. There was a Warrant Officer who saw this and told me I would get a medal for this, which I never did.

The next thing I remember, I was on this hospital ship headed for Guam. I was there for about 3 months. While there, an Admiral presented me with a Purple Heart medal. I cannot remember any of the guys there. I suppose the blast from the bomber that hit us still had me running around in a daze.

I spent some time in a hospital in Pearl Harbor, and then I was transferred to a hospital in San Diego. I was discharged in January, 1946, with a 10% disability.

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STUDDARD, Elmer T., S1c

My battle station was in the upper handling room of 5-inch gun Mount #2, putting the 5-inch shells in the hoist to go up to the mount. When the first suicide plane hit it left us without power, and the rotating rack that turned all the time when we were in battle did not stop at the regular opening we used to get in and out of the "merry-go-round." We were trapped in the cage! However, the opening that is to line up with the opening in the wall somehow did stop exactly where the outside people put the 5-inch shells in the rack. This was the only way out. It was just by fate that the opening did stop at that exact spot. I got out when the second plane was about to hit. I fell down the stairs to the galley and then it exploded. I was hit by some object in the lower spine which caused partly paralyzed lower extremities, and my right wrist was broken. When I got to the main deck water was rushing in. I just went into the water and the bow went under within 7 or 8 feet from me - then the explosion and fire. I just managed to stay ahead of the fire. Picked up by LCS, etc.

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WOOLARD, Ward Marshall, Y3c

In retrospect upon the sinking of the Drexler, I can truthfully say that it was the most traumatic experience of my life. But for the grace of God, I would not be here today preaching the Gospel of Christ in keeping with the commitment I made to Him while in the water a short distance from the oil fire and hearing the desperate cries of "Help." How very pathetic they were, and I, unable to help.

As one of the first loaders on the portside quad 40-mm gun mount #44, I hit the deck just before the plane struck the starboard side. Luckily my "Mae West" was at my feet, a replacement for the waist-type preserver which had two holes.

With the ship now disabled, and like a sitting duck in the water, I found myself walking aimlessly on the stern, where there was part of the enemy plane's wing with the insignia of the rising sun staring up at me, as it were. I almost stepped on a bare leg that was severed near the hip. Never did I hear the words "abandon ship," nor did I have to jump overboard, for quite suddenly, the water was waist deep. I was on my own in the ocean and all alone except for the good Lord above.

It was a horrendous sight seeing the ship that had been our home away from home sinking so very fast at the stern, and listing so rapidly to starboard. Men were climbing over the port rail and walking, running and stumbling on the exposed left side of the hull in a desperate attempt to get away from the sinking ship and its impending suction. Shortly thereafter, the bow rose upward, and then the ship plunged downward and soon disappeared altogether. The aftermath of battle will be etched in my mind forever.

Seeing the fire caused me to swim very hard to get away from the oil spill. Thus, I was separated even farther from all other men. Only one LCS remained, and it was getting smaller on the horizon. What a blessed relief to see an American torpedo plane fly low overhead. This time it was a friendly face - quite unlike that of the Jap pilot about an hour before. No doubt he saw me waving frantically, and so he radioed the departing LCS, because it turned around and headed straight to my position. My prayer to God had been heard and answered.

On board the vessel, I declined the offer of whiskey, so they started giving me plasma for shock. Apparently they missed the vein, with the arm being covered with oil. When my arm started swelling and became painful, I had them stop the plasma. I recovered from minor wounds during a 2-weeks stay in Saipan, which caused me to miss most of the survivors in California.

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USS Drexler (DD-741) - List of Officers, 5/28/45¹

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Branch</u>	<u>File No.</u>	<u>Primary Duties²</u>
*WILSON, Ronald Lee	CDR	USN	71516	Commanding Officer
BIDWELL, Robert Gordon	LCDR	USN	81281	Exec. Off./Navigator
LEE, Chester Maurice	LT	USN	123592	Gunnery Officer
**HICKS, Eugene Camp	LT	USNR	126827	1st Lt./Dam. Control
WEATHERLY, Emmit N.	LT	USNR	104976	Engineer Officer
**RUPERT, Walter David, Jr.	LT	USN	165770	Asst. Gunnery
WALLACE, Arthur J., Jr.	LT	USNR	170860	Communications Off.
**KAYE, Ralph S.	LT	USNR	141419	Radio Specialist
RILEY, Joseph G.	LTjg	USNR	185689	Asst. Navigator
McQUILKIN, William T.	LTjg	USNR	188349	Torpedo Officer
**LEWIS, Kirby R.	LTjg	USNR	202270	Asst. Gunnery
HOOD, George W.	LTjg	USNR	269788	Navigator Asst.
WARRICK, Frank W.	LTjg	USNR	326832	Asst. Eng. Officer
**HILL, Paul D.	LTjg	USNR	336118	Radar Officer
FORBES, Don H.	ENS	USNR	377313	Asst. Communications
**STALTER, Herman G.	ENS	USNR	336096	Asst. Gunnery/Recog.
FELTES, Arthur W.	ENS	USNR	339432	Sound Officer
PAPPAS, Nick Martin	ENS	USNR	367769	Asst. 1st Lieutenant
*KESSOCK, James M.	ENS	USNR	180441	Asst. Engineer
**GRANT, Clark H.	LTjg (SC)	USNR	256291	Supply/Disbursement
**THOMPSON, Parley D.	LTjg (MC)	USNR	171450	Medical Officer

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¹ Sources: Record Group 24 at the National Archives: (1) The List of Officers for 14-30 November 1944 with the ship's deck logs. (2) A Roster of Officers on 5/1/45 dated 6/5/45 with the BuPers Casualty Assistance Branch file for the ship.

² Source: The List of Officers in November 1944. The names on the roster prepared 6/5/45 are the same, so these officers probably had the same duties when the ship was sunk on 28 May 1945.

* Wounded (** Killed) when the ship was sunk according to a machine-generated casualty report prepared by BuPers after the war in the "Battle Books" at the National Archives, Record Group 24.

U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741)

Muster Roll of the Crew, 5/28/45¹

*ADAMS, Paul Robert	244-52-15	S1c
ADLER, Herbert (n)	908-44-50	S1c
**AKANOWICZ, Edward Walter	653-07-03	MM3c
ALFIERI, Joseph John	711-39-93	S1c
**AMBURGEY, George (n)	961-09-97	F1c
ANCEL, John Florian	338-74-11	F1c
ANDERSON, Edward Andreas	907-86-37	SF2c
ANDERSON, Lawrence Frederick	959-19-82	F1c
ANTEAU, Robert Lee	861-97-78	FC3c
*ARMSTRONG, James Dorwin	856-61-63	GM2c
AVERY, Kenneth Louis	898-39-87	S1c
**BAILEY, Delmor (n)	921-93-09	S1c
**BAIRD, Robert James	317-12-44	F1c
BALASH, Mide (n)	285-72-09	S1c
**BARBER, Billy Harold	838-73-86	S2c
BEACH, Archie LaBruce	269-48-21	S1c
*BECKER, Henry Judson	706-09-28	TM2c
BECKWITH, Robert Olin	644-13-17	QM2c
**BEEMAN, Harvey Raymond	207-14-19	Cox.
**BISSON, Leo Walter	667-17-28	S1c
BLACK, Elmer (n)	616-30-21	BM2c
**BLACK, Robert Tyler	948-56-96	SSML3c
BLAGG, James Douglas	940-45-40	S1c
BLOOM, Roy Johnnes	877-58-65	F1c
**BIDEN, Daniel Clair	250-50-97	EM1c
BOYD, Charlie (n)	930-85-14	S1c
**BOYER, Kenneth LeRoy	921-80-95	S1c
BRANDT, Michael Joseph	224-83-83	SoM1c
*BRANTLEY, Lloyd George	611-27-82	RM2c
BRENNAN, William Ford	950-96-02	F1c
BRICK, Eugene Mail	655-75-98	GM3c
**BRIDGES, Glen Loyal	845-52-45	F1c
BRITTAIN, Thomas Jefferson	932-16-58	S1c
**BRIXIUS, Earl Francis	960-92-57	F1c
*BROWN, Donald McLean	897-08-65	GM3c
BRUTON, Cecil William, Sr.	934-43-64	S1c
**BUINICKI, Alphonse (n)	201-63-46	GM2c
**BURLEIGH, Robert Donald	573-29-58	S1c
BURROWS, William Thomas, Jr.	205-63-71	S1c
*BUTLER, Neil Leonard	385-90-84	MM3c
BUTTS, George (n)	637-25-23	St2c
*BYNUM, Fred Cannon	271-86-43	WT3c
CALLOWAY, Elmer Allan	624-24-80	SM2c
CAMERON, Richmond (n)	234-56-74	F1c
CAMPBELL, Richard Dale	283-71-78	MM3c
CANNON, William Warren	640-80-38	B2c
**CANTRELL, Euell Clifford	722-38-18	S1c
**CARL, William Dorman	285-66-38	S1c
CARLSON, Morris Eugene	305-84-07	WT2c
**CARRIER, John Baptiste	579-31-47	S2c
**CARRUTHERS, Harry Grube	908-27-13	F1c

**CARTWRIGHT, Dennis Bartlett	969-34-58	F1c
**CARUSO, Geatano William	707-14-01	Cox.
CHAPLIN, Francis William	960-91-75	SSML3c
*CHAPMAN, Joseph Fleming, Jr.	932-56-14	S1c
**CHAPMAN, Merrill Dimple	273-20-23	S2c
CHIAFFITELLI, Salvatore Dominic	908-18-27	F1c
CHRISTIANSEN, Henry Olaf	908-39-23	S1c
**CLARK, Arthur Shaw, Jr.	205-71-01	F1c
**CLARK, Willard Oliver	707-34-21	F1c
CLAYTON, Raymond Hugh	861-18-05	S1c
CLEMENS, Newton Kremer	923-04-98	RdM3c
**COBBE, Gerald Joseph	712-93-88	S2c
COLE, Emmett (n)	966-54-78	S1c
**COLEMAN, Lewis Freeman	274-28-32	CFC
COLEMAN, Roy Knowlton	201-69-91	WT1c
COLLINS, Donald Lester	293-31-30	TM3c
COLLINSON, James William	201-76-79	BM1c
COMPERE, William Lee	940-47-07	S1c
COOLEY, William (n)	857-00-91	MM3c
COOPER, Clarence John	351-06-22	GM1c
CRATER, Hubert Charles	932-21-67	S1c
CRAWFORD, Carl Odell	932-37-38	S1c
**CRISCO, Maxie Joe	722-38-41	S1c
*CUCCIA, Nicholas (n)	360-30-64	MM1c
**CUNERD, Thomas Stanley	817-31-46	EM2c
CURGINO, Joseph Joseph	944-63-10	S1c
CURRAN, John Joseph	712-61-24	S1c
**DAGUE, Russell Conwell	923-33-87	QM3c
**DALUTO, Donald (n)	285-72-50	S1c
**DALLAS, Wenzel Irvin	375-83-19	CGM
**DANIELS, Edward Francis	898-58-30	S1c
**DAUNCEY, Francis Russel	892-34-20	TM3c
DAVIDSON, Paul Merlin	614-01-28	CMM
DE ROCCO, Umberto Bert	662-28-41	TM2c
**DESENBURG, Donald Arthur	962-61-53	F1c
**DE VITO, William Ralph	643-63-80	S1c
**DEVLIN, Edward Joseph	908-88-69	WT3c
**DISTEFANO, Anthony Joseph	712-93-25	F1c
*DIXON, Daniel Robert	827-58-15	S1c
DOBSON, Arden (n)	895-24-85	GM2c
*DUBINSKAS, Frank Joseph	827-52-61	SK3c
DULANY, Virgil Owen	376-10-32	MM1c
**DUNN, Loren Everett	244-83-28	S1c
**DZIKAS, Anthony Simon	808-56-75	S1c
*EASTMAN, John Milton	238-72-65	WT2c
**EDWARDS, Charles Luther	658-32-29	BM1c
*EGNEW, Carl Richard	382-07-65	CGM
*EHRICH, Kenneth James	712-93-24	S1c
FABRIZI, Anthony Patrick	643-63-66	S1c
*FEENEY, Robert Edward	251-16-69	RM3c
**FERGUSON, Robert James	712-68-74	F1c
*FINNEY, Paul (n), Jr.	574-98-72	Y3c
FLANAGAN, Edward Joseph	246-39-54	S1c

**FLEMING, Homer Fletcher	969-24-59	S1c
**FOLEY, James Edward	202-41-76	MM3c
**FORMAN, Edward (n)	212-59-54	MM1c
FOX, Henry Veal	274-54-37	FC1c
**FREDERICK, Robert Holmes	293-10-37	MM3c
*FRITZINGER, Franklin Howard	826-41-49	S1c
*FULTZ, Elmer James	924-24-30	S1c
**FURNO, Robert Ernest	709-37-99	TM1c
GAINEY, George Leon	262-31-03	CMM
*GALLAWAY, Frank Leroy	279-54-97	MM1c
GALLUP, Dudley Durant	720-87-93	RT2c
**GANEM, Frank Joseph, Jr.	360-05-31	CMM
**GANNON, Bernard Aloysius	815-37-68	TM3c
GAVIN, Eugene William	861-61-85	MM3c
GEROSKY, John (n)	712-93-14	S1c
*GLOVER, George Raymond	756-13-80	S1c
**GRAY, James Ellis	414-54-92	CWT
*GROCE, John (n)	615-05-69	WT1c
**GRUBER, Kenneth Dale	962-61-60	F1c
GWYNN, Leonard (n)	268-55-81	SK1c
HAAS, Joseph Valentine	921-43-89	F1c
**HALL, Ernest Willie, Jr.	893-89-06	S1c
**HALL, Leonard Joseph	807-66-02	GM3c
HAMILTON, Ira (n)	848-36-56	RM3c
**HANNAH, James Richard	291-88-62	GM2c
*HARDIN, Edward Quinton	311-69-29	EM2c
*HARDY, Billy Joseph	837-49-39	F1c
**HARPER, Walter Nathern	865-00-05	S1c
*HARRIS, Ben Pearman	930-98-32	S1c
**HART, Robert Russell, Sr.	655-32-05	CMoMM
HEK, Ben Lee	266-01-73	CBM
**HERDINA, Raymond Frank	305-79-17	MM2c
HOLMES, Raymond Lester	337-45-40	FCR1c
**HOLT, Samuel Thaddeus	604-91-47	Cox.
**HOLTER, Phillip Walter	871-07-48	HA1c
HORAN, Bernard Eugene	620-31-98	FC2c
HORNER, Thomas Onesumus	832-78-01	SC3c
**HORRIDGE, Henry Rostran	824-11-46	S1c
HOWELL, Fred Rayburn	942-99-10	S1c
HUGHES, Eugene (n)	560-23-68	S1c
**HUGHES, John Francis	621-50-19	MM3c
**HUMES, Frank Kanther, Jr.	922-15-82	S1c
**HUNT, John Weldon	636-19-43	MM1c
HUNT, Robert Gray	849-99-33	FCR3c
INGRAM, Weldon Arthur	376-44-20	GM1c
**JACKSON, James Corry	966-83-13	S1c
JAEGER, Martin Albert	622-35-60	SC1c
**JENKINS, Daniel Taft	650-38-45	RM1c
JOHNSON, Charles Edward	920-86-34	S1c
**JOHNSON, Clarence Williams	671-59-28	StM1c
**JOHNSON, Robert Franklin	256-52-30	S1c
**JONES, Carl Lee	839-41-00	
JONES, Willard Lee	940-51-59	S1c

**KALER, James Woodrow	926-88-91	F1c
**KAPING, Robert Ervin	639-36-98	SK2c
**KELLY, Billy Patrick	264-17-23	S1c
**KERN, Alden Lovelace	843-17-09	F1c
**KETCHUM, John Thomas	615-82-38	WT3c
**KINCADE, Louis Edgar	337-27-03	CEM
**KING, John Peter	811-12-93	Bkr3c
KING, William Hugh	604-33-18	RM1c
KOVALCK, Gus Roderick	560-23-39	S1c
LaFEX, Gordon Frank	944-63-42	S1c
**LAUDERDALE, "L" "G"	576-64-62	StM1c
**LEBO, Bodie Paul	952-57-89	F1c
*LEGGETT, Sam Bell	969-32-04	S1c
**LEMKE, Marvin Herman	305-68-40	SC2c
**LENGELING, Irwin Bernard	725-00-12	PhM1c
LEPERI, Joseph Gabriel	826-76-82	PhM2c
**LEWIS, Elmer Murray	893-97-46	S2c
**LEWIS, James Gordon	932-09-14	S1c
LILES, Plumer Haywood	969-32-34	S1c
**LITTLEJOHN, James Melvin	264-02-57	S1c
LOCKHART, Donald Wallace	924-21-74	SM3c
**LONG, William Ellis	826-24-48	F1c
**LOUQUET, Eugene (n)	225-02-20	TM3c
*LYMAN, Donald George	600-54-32	F1c
**MADDOX, Walter Lewis, Jr.	935-44-05	S1c
MAIELLA, Frank James	907-56-21	GM3c
MALTERER, John Arthur	859-01-67	SoM3c
MARCANTEL, Roy (n)	275-55-81	S1c
**MARCHANT, Ralph Leon	273-18-92	S2c
MARINARI, Stephen Joseph	817-85-34	SoM3c
MARKOWSKI, Alfred Stanley	908-56-27	F1c
*MARSHALL, Dewane Adam	648-33-74	TM2c
**MARTIN, Rush Starling, Jr.	658-52-21	CM1c
**MATHIEU, Aurel Anthony	203-16-16	EM2c
*MAURILLO, Gaetano William	647-70-25	EM1c
*MAXEY, Loy (n), Jr.	753-32-94	S1c
MC BAIN, Harold Joseph	706-08-61	QM1c
MC COY, Leon Robert	411-32-71	TM1c
**MC CULLOUGH, James Richard	651-74-51	MM2c
MC DONALD, Robert Nelson	202-10-72	RT2c
MC GRATH, James Rowen	817-46-85	RdM3c
*MC INTOSH, John Essie	385-85-19	MM2c
MC INTYRE, Robert Benson	316-82-65	SM1c
**MC MILLAN, James Edwin	932-41-64	F1c
*MEANS, Reginald Houston	928-59-94	S1c
MEYER, Vincent Louis	223-90-21	SF1c
MILLER, James Edward	971-06-41	S1c
MILLER, William Robert	653-02-67	RM3c
MILLS, Buford Clay	262-94-06	GM2c
**MILLS, William Ora	863-97-28	RT2c
MITCHELL, Donald Chester	400-86-54	CY
*MITCHELL, Fred Walter	251-47-29	S1c
*MOKROHAISKY, Raymond (n)	859-04-11	SoM3c

**MONDS, Jerry Spencer	967-05-60	F1 c
**MOORE, James Fortner	971-06-25	F1 c
*MOORE, Thomas Leonard	550-55-59	CCS
MOSHER, Harry James	312-93-14	SoM3c
MOTT, James William	932-24-16	S1 c
NEWTON, Marvin Gasque, Jr.	932-24-19	S1 c
**NOIVA, Armand Figueiredo	643-81-10	F1 c
O'BRIEN, William George	244-31-72	S1 c
**O'DAY, John Regis	251-30-54	GM3c
ODLE, Nye Edward	291-78-08	BM2c
ODOM, William "G" "R"	970-01-55	S1 c
*O'DONNELL, Edmond (n)	238-90-55	MM3c
**OLIVER, Eugene Lee, Jr.	833-94-03	EM3c
**OSBOURNE, Francis Shelden Jr.	636-65-90	Bkr2c
**PADGET, Joe Wise	930-47-68	S1 c
PAETTIE, Joseph Robert, Jr.	817-58-80	RM2c
**PARSONS, John Lipacomb	273-06-58	S1 c
PAYNE, George Whitfield, Jr.	971-06-30	S1 c
**PENDLETON, John Scott, Jr.	926-92-42	F1 c
*PETAGO, William Olan	630-92-68	S1 c
PETTEE, Robert Erland	823-02-63	S1 c
PHILLIPS, Edward Bernard	896-32-53	F1 c
**PHILLIPS, Leo Matthias	646-31-09	F1 c
PIACENZA, Gelvido Nilo	944-63-19	S1 c
*PINSON, Harold Harper	287-18-36	WT1 c
**POLLARD, Everett Henry	816-54-08	FC3c
*POMAINVILLE, Roland Isadore	825-43-66	S1 c
**POOLE, Carl Edward	860-45-89	F1 c
**PRENDERGAST, Richard Edward	201-17-54	CWT
**PRESSLEY, Eugene Graham	264-18-29	S2c
PRESSLEY, William Walter, Jr.	936-59-17	RdM3c
**PRESTRIDGE, Steve Harmon	940-54-13	S2c
PRICE, Charles Graydon	293-04-15	WT3c
**PRIDDY, Gilbert Henry	263-99-37	S1 c
PROKOP, Andrew Peter	706-08-84	Cox.
PULLAR, Andrew (n), Jr.	643-80-48	S1 c
PUTNAM, Arthur Rixey	836-78-59	EM3c
RADCLIFFE, Albert Joseph	403-60-17	BM2c
*RAY, Ben Hooper	295-86-40	GM1 c
*REAM, George William	821-63-08	TM3c
**REES, William Henry, Jr.	762-48-00	F1 c
**REILLY, Thomas Aloysius	927-43-02	S2c
**ROBINSON, Edmon Scott	880-46-44	S2c
**ROBINSON, Johnnie (n)	273-11-52	S2c
**ROSENFELD, Robert Edward	301-19-04	FC3c
ROTHERMEL, Herman Daniel	921-81-89	S1 c
**ROWAN, Ogden Wilson	223-35-68	WT1 c
**ROWE, Roy John	858-61-08	S1 c
RUSSELL, Ernest (n)	658-70-28	S1 c
SCHOENING, William Joseph	818-80-38	GM3c
SCOTT, John Collard	251-55-67	S1 c
*SCOTT, Roland Harold	552-30-71	MM2c
SEMENOFF, Robert Herman	897-47-28	RdM3c

SERUGA, Albert Francis	244-11-55	WT2c
**SHAW, Russell Eugene	975-26-49	F1c
SHREAVES, Barton Louis	936-39-60	S1c
**SIEBERT, Gilbert Tracy	869-61-06	S1c
**SILAKOWSKI, William Joseph Jr.	712-64-24	SM3c
**SILKINER, Maurice Guy	703-38-21	FC3c
**SIPES, Ralph Easley	932-23-81	S1c
*SKAGGS, Joseph Roy	845-02-36	F1c
*SKIFFINGTON, William Francis	761-58-84	S1c
SMITH, Dwight Lester	942-57-38	S1c
SMITH, Lucien Charles, Jr.	556-84-42	QM3c
**SMOOT, Charles Robert	756-13-62	S2c
**SNYDER, Frederick Edward	924-85-77	S1c
**SPENNATO, Nicholas George	921-42-28	S1c
**STACY, Paskel Curtis	566-53-94	S2c
**STALLINGS, William, Jr.	931-98-34	S2c
**STANGLE, Joe Walter	961-89-09	F1c
*STEMPLE, Daris Burns	258-09-93	GTM
STEMPOWSKI, Norbert	805-41-96	S1c
STEVENS, John Henry	847-06-80	StM1c
**STEWART, James Bill	577-59-54	S2c
**STINER, Darmon Roy	566-55-52	S2c
STIRES, Norman (n), Jr.	566-63-86	S1c
STONE, Dennis Ray	756-13-66	S1c
*STONER, Howard Edwin	814-40-79	MaM2c
STROHMAIER, Eugene (n)	379-39-33	S1c
*STROOK, George John	566-56-45	S1c
*STUART, William (n)	251-34-06	S1c
*STUDDARD, Elmo Thomas	358-34-39	S1c
SULLIVAN, Daniel James	203-27-38	Cox.
**SULLIVAN, Thomas Dennis	706-96-76	MM2c
**SWEENEY, Robert James, Jr.	801-67-74	SC3c
**SWINEY, David Burton	273-27-93	S2c
SWITZ, George John	922-39-51	S1c
TATSCH, Harold Clifton	577-56-70	S1c
**TETREAULT, Frederick Francis	666-59-78	SoM2c
**THOMAS, Fred Douglas	295-30-83	CK1c
THOMAS, William Vinton	393-48-61	WT2c
**THOMPSON, Joseph Frank	722-37-66	S2c
TIERNEY, William James	274-75-99	Cox.
**TITUS, Harold Albert	225-30-40	RM3c
**TOMPKINS, Matthew Whitfield	636-31-26	SoM2c
*TOWNSEND, Clinton Arthur	830-15-60	M1c
TURLEY, Douglas Allen	756-13-79	S1c
**TURNER, Robert Clyde	668-38-37	S1c
**VETTERS, Anthony Edward	557-17-50	S1c
*VIAR, John David	603-72-94	MoMM2c
VINES, Charles (n), Jr.	273-27-87	S1c
**WALKER, Thomas Willie	940-51-44	S1c
WALTON, George Ashley	967-23-44	S1c
**WARREN, Oliver (n), Jr.	971-06-39	S2c
**WASHINGTON, Lee (n)	847-35-62	StM1c
**WAYCASTER, Hugh Lewis	690-54-44	S2c

WEIKERT, Henry Albert	922-93-48	RdM3c
**WELLONS, Worth (n)	680-20-78	MM2c
**WEST, Joseph Dorsey	885-35-99	F1c
WEST, Walter Irby	269-22-15	S1c
*WETZEL, Bruce Richard	249-42-44	F1c
WHEELER, Carl Brown	783-70-03	S1c
**WHITE, Olin Hughes	834-16-75	Y3c
**WHITFIELD, Horace Ray	657-22-62	Cox.
**WHITMAN, Marvin Otis	305-58-11	Y2c
WILLIAMS, James Lowell, Jr.	921-07-27	F1c
WILLIS, Don Carlos, Jr.	272-47-99	MM1c
**WIMBISH, Clarence Chamberlain	782-57-49	S2c
**WINFIELD, Gene Tunney	256-72-09	S1c
**WINSTON, Edward Ray	971-03-72	F1c
**WOJCIECHOWSKI, Walter (n)	244-92-37	MM2c
**WOOD, Thomas James	647-22-95	MM2c
WOODS, Louis Joseph	898-70-08	RdM3c
*WOOLARD, Ward Marshall	969-32-17	Y3c
YATES, George Thomas	905-84-74	F1c
**YORK, Ray Edwin	264-16-10	S1c

* * * * *

Notes:

1 Source: Report Of Changes sheets dated 5/28/45 on microfilm at Archives II indicating the status of enlisted crew members and the location (vessel or station) of survivors.

* Wounded (** Killed) when the Drexler was sunk off Okinawa by kamikazes on May 28, 1945, according to a machine-generated list of casualties prepared by BuPers after the war at Archives II in the "Battle Books" (Record Group 24) listing casualties by battle/campaign, by ship.

Summary of Casualties:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 5/28/45</u>
Officer	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>21</u>
Enlisted	<u>150</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>336</u>
TOTALS	<u>158</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>357</u>
	<u>44%</u>			

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2003

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Narrative by: Commander R. L. Wilson, USN
Lieutenant Commander R. G. Bidwell, USN
USS DREXLER (DD-741)
Sunk off Okinawa - Suicide Planes.

The USS DREXLER, DD-741, went down in 49 seconds after being hit by two Jap suicide planes off Okinawa. In this recording the commanding officer and the executive officer describe the DREXLER's part in the Okinawa campaign and give their version of the sinking.

Film No. 410
Recorded: 25 July 1945

Copy No. 7 of three copies.
Rough Transcript: Scherff, 13 November 1945
Smooth Transcript: Clark, 17 December 1945

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Narrative by: Commander R. L. Wilson, USN
Lieutenant Commander R. G. Bidwell
USS DREXLER (DD-741)
Sunk off Okinawa - Suicide Planes.

Commander Wilson:

This is Commander R. L. Wilson, former commanding officer of the destroyer DREXLER, DD-741.

The DREXLER took part in the initial amphibious operations for the occupation of Okinawa. We were part of Support Carrier Unit #3, and we left Ulithi Islands on 27 March, arriving off Okinawa early on the morning of 1 April, Easter Sunday, which was D-Day for the occupation.

During the month of April, we operated with Support Carrier Unit #3. On the 2nd of May, we were detached from Support Carrier Unit #3 and reported to Commander Task Group 51.5 for duty as a picket support ship. Our first picket duty was on 3 May, when we were sent up to picket station 3, which is north of Okinawa and during that same period, we were shifted down to picket station 5. We were with the WADSWORTH, which was the radar picket.

During that period, we were under direct attack only once by a plane which dived on the WADSWORTH, and which we assisted to splash about 50 yards off the port beam of the WADSWORTH. Our next picket duty was radar picket station 15 where we were a picket support for the GAINARD who was a radar picket. During that period we were under attack at night only, the planes did not come down in the day time. At least they didn't attack us, but we were under attack for three consecutive nights, about four hours each night, and during this period, we shot down one twin-engine bomber close astern and assisted in shooting down two other planes.

A few days later, we went back to picket station 15 and the first night we were under attack all night. We were at general quarters almost all night. The results of our firing that night were undetermined. We cannot say definitely that we shot down any planes. The next morning the SPROSTON, which was another support ship, got hit and she was relieved by the BOYD who carried Commander Destroyer Division 92. The radar picket at that time was the AMMEN. We stayed with them the rest of that day and the following night and were sent into port early the next morning to replace ammunition.

FELT SHIP WOULD BE ATTACKED

After we had completed replenishment, we went back to the transport area at Okinawa and were put in the transport AA screen. This was the morning of 27 May, when we were AA transport screen. From that time until we were hit and in fact for a few hours after that, a period of about 30 hours, the Japs were down continuously and they hit both destroyers out in radar picket station 5 and they hit a small craft out there, this was on the 27th, and that night they hit two APDs in the transport screen.

At 0130, on 28 May, we were sent up to radar picket station 15 with the LOWRY, the LOWRY was to be the radar picket and we arrived on the station about 0400, 28 May, and relieved the BOYD and the AMMEN. We had been at general quarters practically all night and when we weren't at general quarters, we were in condition One Easy. Along about 0500 there were no further reports of the Jap planes, so we set condition One Easy again, and the LOWRY and the DREXLER then were patrolling radar picket station 15, this was 15 modified. They had moved the station over a little bit from its original position. The exact position was bearing 353 degrees true, 40 miles from Point Bolo.

The DREXLER and LOWRY were steaming in column on courses east and west, reversing course half hourly, making 15 knots and the DREXLER was on the eastern end of the line. We had two support craft with us on that station. They were the LCS(L) 55 and 56 and they were directed to patrol on generally east and west courses, three to four thousand yards to the northward of us. I was the senior commanding officer and acted as the officer in tactical command of the picket group.

Normally there were four small craft assigned as picket support craft, but on the previous night, two of the small craft on that station had a collision and were sent back to Okinawa, so we only had two support craft on that morning.

At 0643 the officer of the deck reported to me a Bogle which they had picked up on the SC radar. We went to general quarters right away. It had been our policy, and I think on most ships, that if a Bogle close in to 20 miles, you would go to general quarters. On this particular morning, however, we went to general quarters immediately because I felt that we were going to be attacked.

CAP SHOT DOWN PLANE

At about 0650 while we were steaming on course 090, we reversed course by simultaneous turn movements and came to course 270. We would normally have reversed course at 0700 in accordance with our patrol plan, but we reversed at this time in order to close the small craft and at about this same time we went to 20 knots. The bearing of the Bogle was 035, the range was 28 miles. The LOWRY, who was the radar picket, sent her Combat Air Patrol out to investigate the contact and the Combat Air Patrol reported a FBM.

Upon hearing this, I told combat, that is CIC, that we could see a vapor trail on the same bearing as the contact and that I thought the FBM was not the contact we had, and as a matter of fact, a few minutes later we sighted a FBM but it was on a different bearing. So I was sure we had a real Bogie.

At about 0655, we had another bearing on the Bogie and it had borne right a little, as I remember the bearing was 040. So, at about this time, we executed a destroyer's column right, 60 degrees and came to course 330 and about this same time, we went to 25 knots. Very shortly thereafter we sighted a plane on the starboard beam, coming in, elevation about 2,000 feet, range about seven miles.

The Combat Air Patrol took this plane under fire just as we were about to fire on it and they shot it down. When we saw him, his target angle was zero, so I believe that he was already headed in to attack us.

At the same time we noted this plane going down, we sighted another plane sharp on the starboard bow, elevation about 2,000 feet and his range about seven miles. He was already in his low, shallow glide, circling toward the head of our column. We came left and opened fire immediately and the LOWRY opened fire a few seconds before we did. The plane came on in, dived on the LOWRY and just as he might have hit the LOWRY, appeared to zoom up over the LOWRY and he missed him and looked like he was going to splash between the two ships, but he didn't splash. He splashed into us instead and hit us on the starboard side between the main deck and the water line, just a little forward of the starboard quad .40 mm mount, at frame 114.

This plane sprayed us with gasoline as he hit, which started fires and it broke steam lines in the after fire room and in both engine rooms. The after engineering plant was put out of commission entirely because the steam lines in the after fire room were broken, at least the auxiliary steam line was. This fire room was secured from top side. The after main distribution board in the after engine room was completely demolished so all electrical power aft was lost, but the after emergency diesel generator started up immediately and furnished power to five-inch mount No. 3.

Immediately after the plane hit, we noted from the bridge a great volume of steam coming out of the starboard side of the ship, so we rung up two-thirds standard speed for the time being until we could learn the extent of the damage and so that we wouldn't drain all the steam out of the boilers. Actually we didn't get two-thirds speed even, because the ship slowed down very quickly and stopped.

While we were still fighting the fire from the first plane, as a matter of fact, this whole action took place in about a minute and a half, but just a few seconds after the first plane hit us, another plane dived on the LOWRY which we fired on and splashed. We hit him with a five-inch shell and he tumbled into the stern of the LOWRY. This, we figure, was about 30 seconds after the first plane hit.

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At this time, we had not lost electrical power forward. The auxiliary steam line in the forward engine room was ruptured, but for a few seconds the boilers continued to supply steam so that the generator forward ran and supplied power forward, but we had no sooner splashed the second plane when we lost all power forward completely. The forward emergency diesel had started and ran intermittently, but either due to overload or short circuits or broken relays, we did not get power forward, to the forward five-inch mounts. So we were practically dead in the water with no electrical power except for the diesel aft.

SIGHTED ANOTHER PLANE AT SEVEN MILES

Immediately after we lost power, we sighted another plane, sharp on the starboard bow, about 2,000 feet altitude and its range was about seven miles and he was already started in on his attack. He circled around to our bow in his low, shallow glide and we opened fire. Mount 3, which had power, got off a few rounds at him in local control before he got so sharp on the bow that the mount wouldn't bear. Mounts 1 and 2 were both in local control and hand power. Mount 1 got off a few rounds, mount 2 didn't get off any, although they got their guns loaded.

The fire from the five-inch mounts was ineffective because it was impossible to train the mounts fast enough to keep them on the plane. Our starboard .40 mm quad had already been put out of commission and the starboard .40 mm twin near the bridge, the shield around it had been damaged and all the ammunition around it had been damaged, but this mount received ammunition from the twin mount on the other side of the bridge, so .40 mm twin mount on the starboard side and the starboard .20 mm guns took the plane under fire and our two radar picket Corsairs both got on the tail of the plane and followed him in through our fire.

We apparently hit one of these Corsairs because he peeled off smoking, but he didn't crash. The other Corsair stayed right on the tail of the plane as he came on in. The plane apparently tried to hit the bridge but as he came on it, our own fire and the Corsair's fire behind him seemed to force him out of bounds, so he came right down the port side very close, winged over and passed directly over the ship, over No. 2 stack. I think he had tried to crash us at that time, but he didn't, he missed us, and it looked like he was going to crash in the water. He was smoking, but he recovered from that and the .20 mms on the starboard side took him under fire again and this same Corsair picked him up again, was right on his tail, and the plane circled around and came in from dead ahead. Looked like he was trying to hit the bridge again, clipped our signal halliards, and scraped the mast and crashed into the superstructure deck right at the base of No. 2 stack, right at the amidships passageway, rather.

There was a tremendous explosion which shook the ship violently and knocked most people down that were standing up, at least it knocked all the people down on the bridge, knocked them flat on their back, and it

threw parts of the ship hundreds of feet in all directions and started a large oil fire which shot several hundred feet up into the air. The ship turned over rapidly on its side and then sank stern first, disappearing from sight within 49 seconds after the second hit.

The casualties were very high, due to the fact that the ship sank so fast and due to the fact that she rolled over so fast. I think if she had stayed upright we would have got a lot more people off, but the fact that she rolled over made it difficult to move around on the ship. You couldn't climb up a hatch or couldn't climb up a ladder or go through a door. You could hardly climb from the starboard to the port side of the ship to get off.

Of course the water around was covered with oil and debris. We didn't have time to release all the life rafts - we cut three of them loose. The other life rafts did not release with their hydrostatic release, probably because the ship went down so fast. The floater nets did not get clear of the ship, except for one and it was wooded up so bad, it was of no use. We had a number of five-inch powder cans on board which were stacked on the main deck. These all floated clear and were responsible for saving a great many men.

The small craft picked up the survivors. In addition to the LCS 55 and 56, the LCS(L) 114 arrived during the action and she also picked up survivors, in fact, she picked up most of them.

A correction on a ship that was hit on our second tour on radar picket station 15. It was the STORMES that was hit instead of the SPROSTON. The SPROSTON was not with us.

On the morning of the 28th when we got sunk, the first plane that was shot down by the Combat Air Patrol was identified as a Nick, twin-engine fighter. The other planes that attacked us were twin-engine planes, and at the time we thought they were Francesces. That's what we wrote up in the report. I understand, however, that later the Intelligence of CINCPAC decided that those planes were Nicks, that they were all Nicks. They were big planes and they could have been Francesces I think, and even if they were Nicks they could carry a pretty big bomb load. That second plane that hit us, some people claimed they saw two bombs on it. We were sure at least of one. Some people said there was a bomb under each wing.

The time of the attacks: the first plane hit us at 0702, and the second plane hit us at 0704.

Lt. Comdr. Bidwell:

This is Lt. Comdr. R. G. Bidwell, the former executive officer of the USS DREXLER, DD-741.

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The majority of personnel or about half the personnel lost in the sinking of the DREXLER, were apparently trapped below, due to the rapid sinking of the ship. Several stations, such as the plotting room, the magazines, lower handling rooms, and mount 3 had no personnel escape. There was one exception in mount 3, the mount captain who was in his seat up in the top of the mount, apparently was blown out the hatch in the top. He doesn't know how he got off the ship, as the first thing he knew, he regained consciousness in the water.

The rescue ships commenced picking up men approximately a half hour to 45 minutes after the ship went down. The job that those ships did was excellent, they were very efficient in searching the area and picking up the wounded and worst cases first. The 114 in particular did a good job, inasmuch as she was just reporting for duty, she was much closer to the ship at the time of the sinking. She stood right into the survivors as close as she could without hitting them and threw over life rafts, cut loose her own liferafts, so that men could hang onto those until she had time to pick them up.

I was the first man picked up by that particular ship, went aboard and after assisting a few people over the side of the ship, went up on the bridge with the commanding officer. At this time, approximately a half hour after the ship went down, the Combat Air Patrol shot down one more plane, identified as a Val. Distance from where we were was approximately three to four miles.

The area was thoroughly searched by the three LCSs after all the survivors were picked up. They had much difficulty in searching the area due to the empty five-inch tanks (shells) which floated with one end up and were covered with oil, and inasmuch as all the men in the water were covered with oil, it looked exactly like a man's head.

Two of the men recovered by the 114 were drowned. Apparently they swallowed a great deal of oil in addition to water and supply^{ed} artificial respiration to them for three to four hours did no good at all.

After going over the area twice and recovering her own, or enough life-rafts to replace her own, the LCS 114 stood down to the anchorage at Okinawa.

About five miles or ten miles south of the picket station, an APD, the PAVLIC, approached and took the survivors from the 114 who returned to her station. While aboard the 114, the men were given old clothes and shoes and a bit of alcoholic beverages to warm them up. The crew on that ship went all out to assist the men in every way possible.

On the PAVLIC the men who had not received clothing on the 114 and desired it were issued dungarees. The PAVLIC proceeded immediately to the anchorage at Hagushi where the wounded were transferred to the CRESCENT CITY,

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both the stretcher cases and the walking wounded, and were further transferred by the CRESCENT CITY to two other vessels in the harbor. The well survivors were sent to the LAUDERDALE, which is known as the survivor ship, where the men were processed and issued, or it was seen to, that they had one good suit of dungarees and one complete outfit. In addition, they were given a carton of cigarettes, matches and necessary toilet articles.

-- END --

"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. Drexler (DD-741) in World War II

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Light cruiser U.S.S. <u>Trenton</u> (CL-11)	NHC NH 78316
Sponsor, Mrs. Louis A. Drexler, 9/13/44	NA 80-G-267762
Launching, Bath Iron Works, Maine	NA 19-N-71462
Port beam, Boston Harbor, 1942	RWP N-7093
Aerial, stern view, under way 11/44	NA 80-G-272511
Twin 40-mm Bofors gun mount	RWP N-6569A
20-mm, Mark 4, Oerlikon machine gun	NA 19-N-31965
F4U Corsair Fighter plane	NI Order with photocopy
Kawasaki Ki-45 ("NICK") fighter	NA 80-G-192897
Support craft <u>LCS(L)(3) No. 59</u>	NHC NH 81527
USS <u>Lauderdale</u> (APA-179), stbd. bow	NHC NH 79554

* * * * *

Key to Sources:

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8601 Adelphi Road
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E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2003

The U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741) in World War II

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- Muster rolls, Drexler, on microfilm (National Archives II)
- Oral history transcripts, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.
- Ships' Histories Branch file, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.
- WWII Citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2003

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

Locations Where Historical Compilations by the Editor
Are Available For Researchers

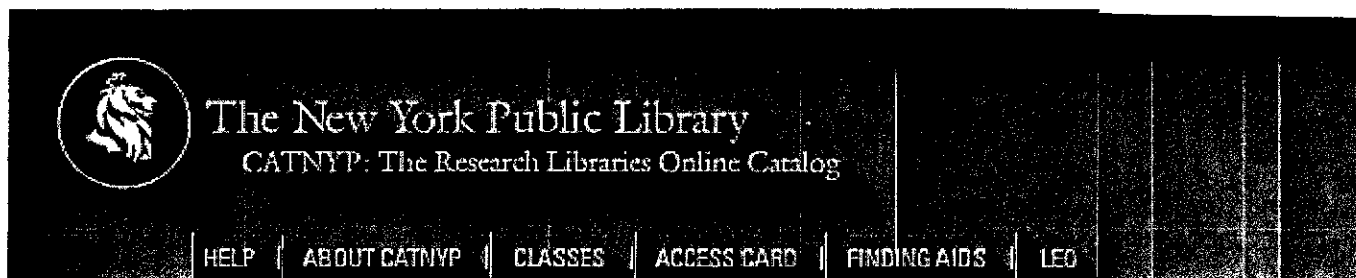
- ¹ Air Zoo, Guadalcanal Campaign Collection, Potage, Michigan
ECU Manuscript Collection, Joyner Library, Greenville, NC
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- ² Maine Maritime Museum Library, Bath, Maine
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- ² Portland Public Library, Portland Room, Portland, Maine
- ⁴ Tin Can Sailors, Inc., Research Library, Somerset, Massachusetts
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U.S. Naval Institute, History Division, Beach Hall, Annapolis, MD
- U.S. Navy Memorial's Research Library, Washington, D.C.
USS Slater (DE-766) Library, Albany, New York

* * * * *

Notes:

- ¹ Only ships which participated in the Guadalcanal Campaign:
Aaron Ward, Barton, Colhoun, Cushing, DeHaven, Duncan, Laffey,
McFarland, Monssen, Preston, Walke.
- ² Only Bath-built ships: DeHaven, Drexler, Emmons, Meredith,
Spence, Strong
- ³ Only ships sunk off the Normandy Beachhead: Corry, Glennon,
Meredith
- ⁴ By appointment only: (508) 677-0515

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
June, 2006



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30 October 2003

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Dear Commander Wilde,

I wanted to write you a quick note to acknowledge receipt of your latest work the **USS Drexler DD-741**. As always the Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War appreciates your great kindness in forwarding copies of your destroyer histories to us. It will enter our holdings in the Center For Pacific War Studies alongside your other fine works where it will be available to students, teachers and historians for generations to come.

I must tell you that your account of the **Drexler** is most compelling and I am very impressed with the work you've done on her. The maps, first person accounts and diagrams make this one of your finest accomplishments thus far. The museum looks forward to having even more of your important work in its collection.

As always thanks for your support of the museum and its mission of education, preservation and commemoration.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Wm Hunt
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Take a kid
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ENRICHING OUR COMMUNITY, EXPANDING OUR WORLD.

August 31, 2004

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Dear Commander Wilde:

Please accept my appreciation for your gift to the Portland Public Library of a copy of *The U.S.S. Drexler (DD-741 in World War II: Documents, Photographs, Recollections)*. I am pleased to be able to add this interesting compilation of materials about the *U.S.S. Drexler* to our collection and am sure that it will get good use here. I would, indeed, welcome copies of your other works on Bath-built destroyers.

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