

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Laffey* (DD-459) in World War II:
Documents and Photographs**

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April 22, 1996

USS Laffey (DD-459) Survivors,

It is my pleasure to present you with a copy of the booklet I have put together on your ship. It is one of several I have completed on destroyers sunk during the Guadalcanal Campaign. The last page (a letter from the Warships Museum in Sydney, Australia) explains very well what I do. Other museums receiving my booklets include:

U.S. Naval Institute Archives/Annapolis
U.S. Naval Historical Ctr./Washington Navy Yard
The Admiral Nimitz Museum/Fredericksburg, Texas
Nimitz Library/U.S. Naval Academy
Naval War College/Newport, R.I.

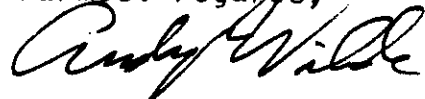
I was fortunate to find the Laffey's deck logs for September 1942 on microfilm at the Naval Historical Center. From them I was able to determine the exact number of Wasp survivors you rescued. The National Archives does not have these logs.

From the personnel diary on microfilm at the National Archives I was able to compile a muster roll of the crew for the date you were sunk. It includes about twenty-five men who were not plankowners.

I'm indebted to Dick Hale for the material he contributed as well as for his moral support - and I want to thank Bill Davis for providing me his address list and his encouragement. Thanks to him I'm sending out about fifty copies of my booklet - no small task! If you desire additional copies please have them made at a copying store. I'm told that even the photographs reproduce well.

So - enjoy the booklet. I'm more concerned about providing a copy to every survivor (or his family) than I am about breaking even, but contributions will be appreciated.

Warmest regards,



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

The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) in World War II

List Of Pages

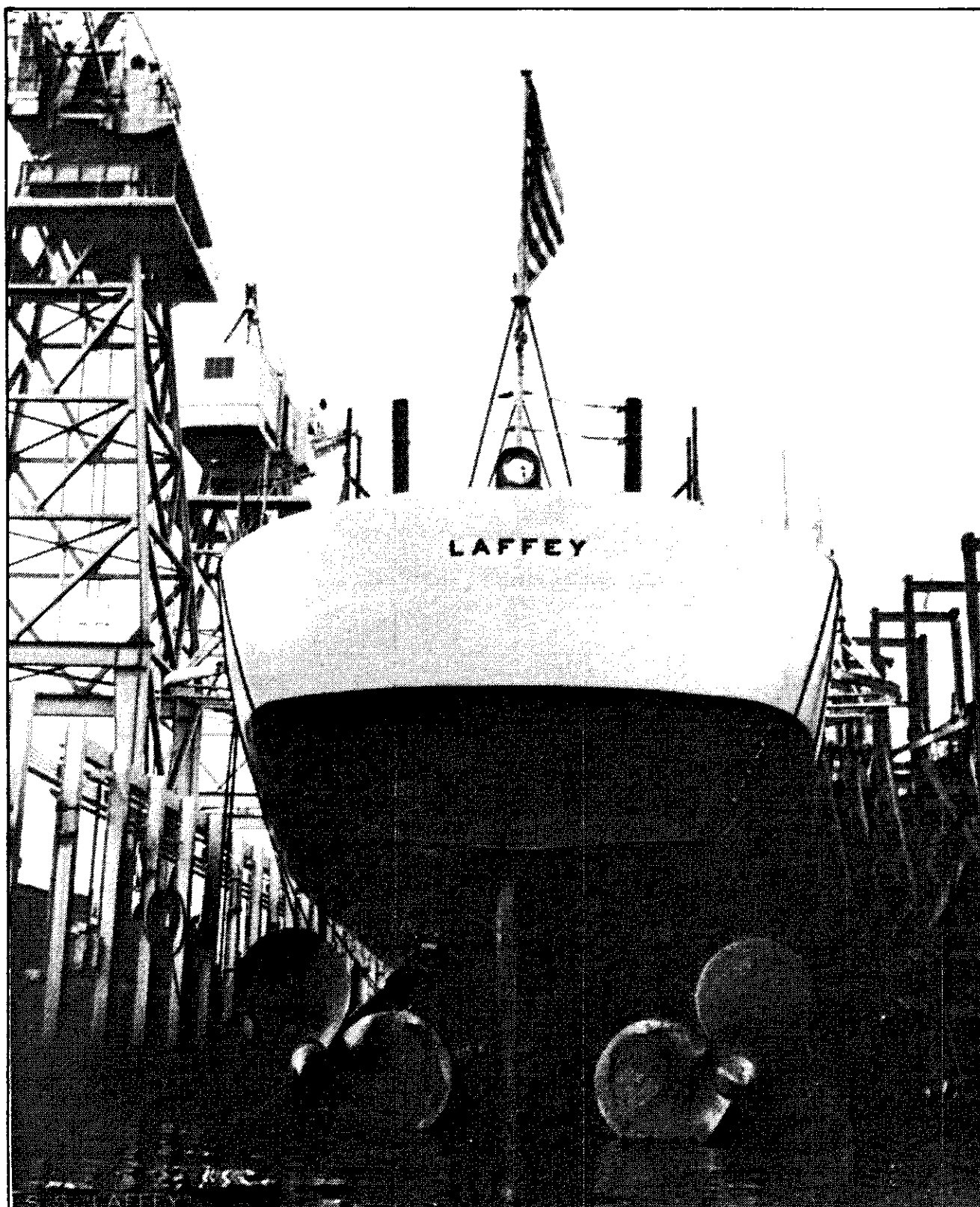
Sheets Sides

1	1	List Of Pages
1	1	Quote - President John F. Kennedy, 1963
1	1	Photo - On the ways, San Francisco, Calif., 1941
1	2	Photo - Sponsor/Biography, Seaman Bartlett Laffey
1	1	Photo - Christening, 10/30/41
1	1	Photo - Launching, San Francisco, 10/30/41
3	3	Deck Log, 3/31/42 (Commissioning)
2	3	History, Ships' Histories Section
1	1	History, <u>Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships</u>
1	1	Map, Southwest Pacific (showing Guadalcanal)
1	2	Photo - Stbd. bow, refueling u/way/LCdr. Hank citation
1	1	Photo - USS <u>Wasp</u> (CV-7), torpedoed 9/15/42
1	1	Citations (3), Navy & Marine Corps Medals
1	1	Photo - Stbd. beam with <u>Wasp</u> survivors, 9/16/42
1	1	Photo - Port quarter, with <u>Wasp</u> survivors, 9/16/42
1	1	Photo - 1.1-inch quad mount ("Chicago Piano")
1	1	Photo - 20-mm Oerlikon mount
1	1	Letter, Navy Department, to E.A.W., 9/5/95
1	1	Map, Solomon Islands with Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal
3	6	Action Report, 10/23/42, ComDesRon 12/Photo Ltjg Evins
1	1	Diagram, Battle of Cape Esperance (with Action Report)
1	1	Recollection, Lt.(jg) Thomas A. Evins, USNR
1	1	Recollection, V. Richard Hale, Jr., SM3c
1	1	Medal citation, LCdr. W. E. Hank, USN
3	3	Article, "The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal"
1	1	Photo - Japanese battleship <u>Hiei</u>
3	4	Action Report, 11/14/42, LCdr. W. T. Doyle
2	2	Action Report, 11/16/42, Lt. E. A. Barham
3	3	Battle diagrams, 11/13/42, V. Richard Hale, Jr.
5	9	Narrative, Lt.(jg) Thomas A. Evins, USNR
1	2	Firsthand account, Paul M. Sowder (in 1996)
2	3	Messages, congratulatory/LCdr. Hank biography
1	1	Photo - USS <u>Hank</u> (DD-702), stbd. beam, u/way
1	1	Medal citation, LCdr. W. E. Hank, USN (Navy Cross)
3	3	Medal citations (6)
1	1	Poem, "The U.S.S. Laffey" (poet H. I. Phillips)
1	1	Newspaper article, ". . Laffey Fights Epic of Sea"
1	1	List Of Officers, 11/13/42
5	5	Muster Roll Of The Crew, 11/13/42
2	2	Notiflcations to next of kin
1	1	Sketch of wreck, C. R. Haberlein, Jr., July 1992
1	1	Photo - Monument, Purvis Bay, Florida Island
1	2	News Release, dedication of Purvis Bay Monument, 1944
1	1	Photo - Plaque on Purvis Bay Monument
1	1	Photo - Purvis Bay Monument, August 1993
1	1	Quote - Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, 1945
6	8	Photo/panels, 50th Anniversary Monument, Guadalcanal
1	1	Photograph Credits
1	1	Bibliography
<u>78</u>	<u>94</u>	TOTALS

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

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

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



The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) on the ways at the Bethlehem Steel yard at San Francisco prior to launching on October 30, 1941. She was laid down as a "repeat" Benson-class ship, but when the armament for this block of ships was changed to improve their anti-aircraft protection in exchange for one of their 5-inch mounts some contemporary sources began calling them Bristol-class destroyers. Both terms are still used. (U.S. Navy photograph)

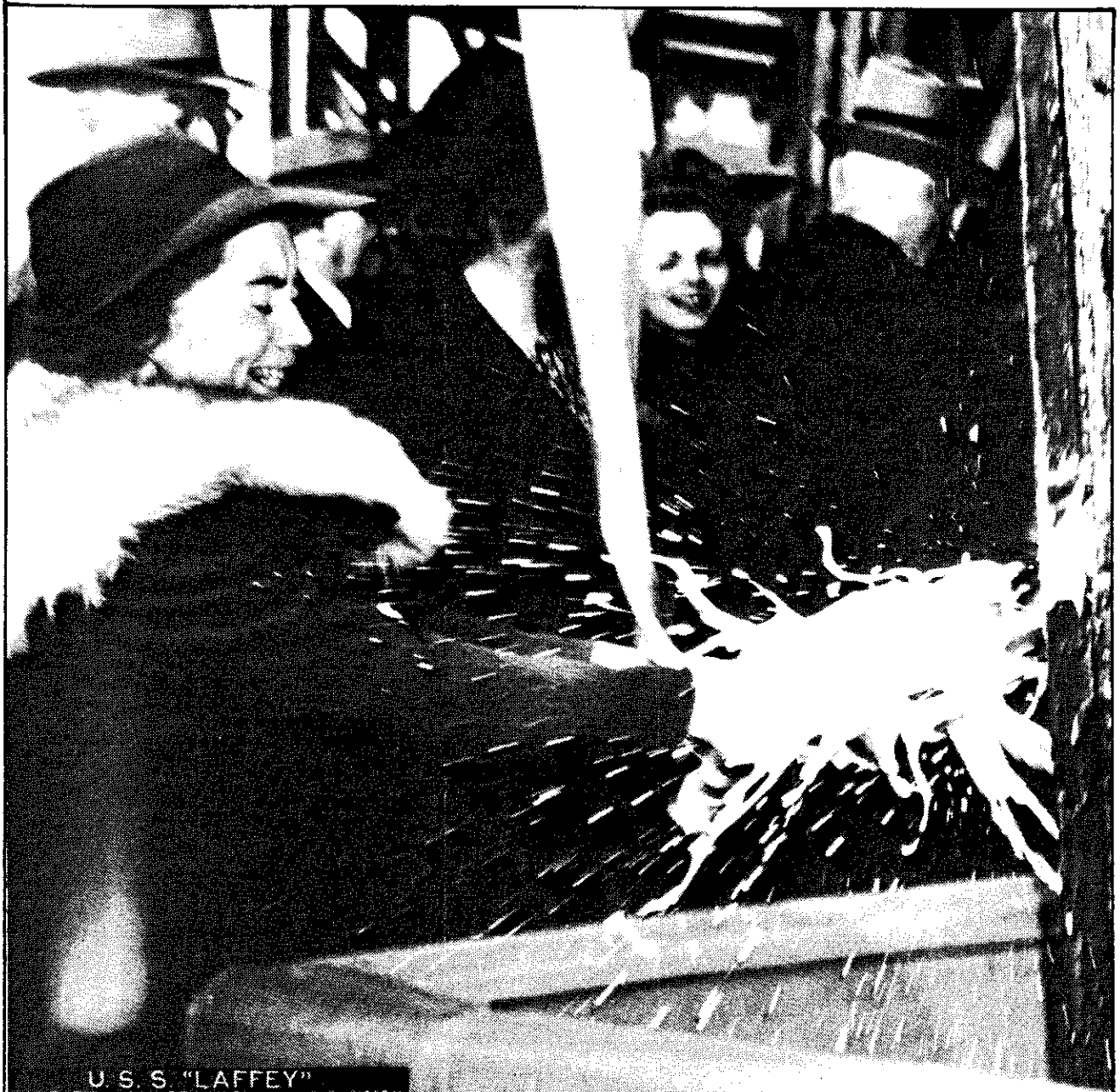


Miss Eleanor G. Fogarty was selected by the Navy Department to sponsor the destroyer U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459), named after her late grandfather, Seaman Bartlett Laffey (1841-1901). Seaman Laffey was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1864 for bravery in action while assigned to the Union stern wheel gunboat Mansard.
(Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

Laffey*

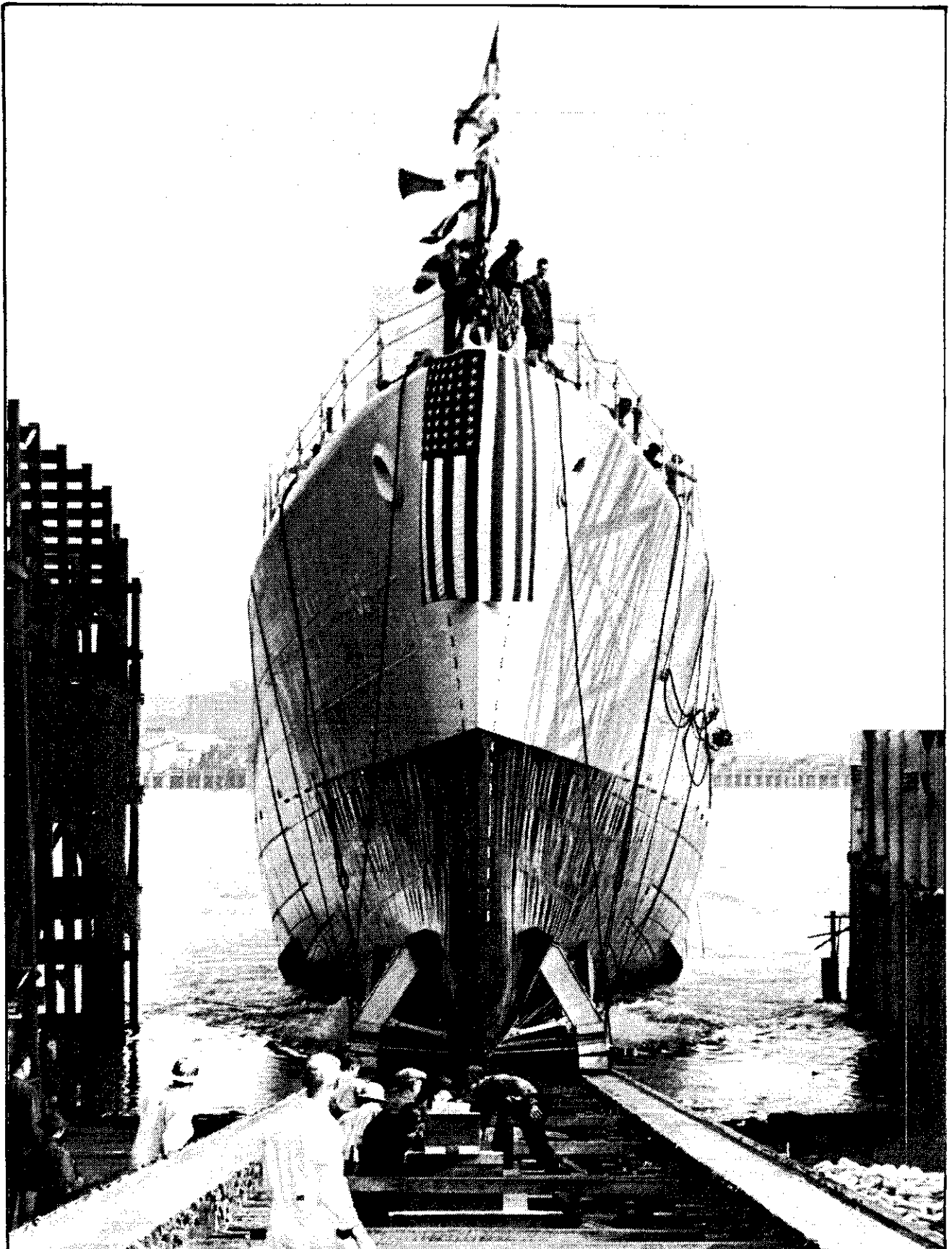
Bartlett Laffey, born in Ireland in 1841, enlisted in the Navy 17 March 1862 and was assigned to stern wheel gunboat *Murmora*. On 5 March 1864, the Confederates launched a heavy attack on Union positions at Yazoo City, Miss. In the midst of heated battle Laffey landed a 12-pound howitzer and her crew. Despite enemy rifle fire which cut up the gun carriage and severed the rammer, Laffey bravely stood by his gun and contributed greatly to turning back the fierce Confederate assault. Seaman Laffey was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous stand. He died at Chelsea, Mass., 22 March 1901.

* Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume 4.
Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1969.



U. S. S. "LAFHEY"
PITTSBURGH STEEL CO. SHIPBUILDING DIVISION
HULL 5366 - NAVY NO DD459
OCT. 30 1941 - SAN FRANCISCO YARD
NEG. NO 12 - OFFICIAL PHOTO -
CHRISTENING
NOT TO BE RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION

Miss Eleanor Fogarty gave it her best shot when she christened the destroyer U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) at San Francisco, California on 30 October 1941. The vessel was commissioned there on 31 March 1942 with Lieut. Commander William E. Hank, USN, as the first commanding officer. (U.S. Navy photograph.)



The band played and the crowd cheered as the 1,620-ton destroyer U.S.S. Laffey was launched at the Bethlehem Steel Shipbuilding Company, San Francisco, California, on 30 October 1941. After her commissioning on 31 March 1942, she began a short shakedown period before heading for the war zone via Pearl Harbor, arriving there on 6 June 1942. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

UNITED STATES SHIP

Tuesday
(Day)

31
(Date)

March
(Month)

1942

ZONE DESCRIPTION Plus 9

REMARKS

1455 The prospective officers and crew of this vessel were assembled at quarters. 1500 Commander C.G. McCord, U.S.N. Rat accepted this vessel from a representative of the Bethlehem Steel Company, Shipbuilding Division, San Francisco, California in accordance with Comdt. 12th Naval District orders AL-1(14869-10-Bn) of March 31, 1942, and therewith placed the LAFHEY in full commission. Lieut-Comdr. W.E. Hank, USN, the prospective commanding officer then read Bureau of Navigation despatch orders 041357 of October, 1941 as modified by Bureau of Navigation orders 13525 of Dec. 30, 1941, and assumed command.

12-16.

Moored starboard side to Pier 4, Bethlehem Steel Company, Shipbuilding Division, San Francisco, California, with the following lines: Bow line, forward spring line, stern line and quarter spring line. Boiler No. 4 in use for auxiliary purposes. Receiving fresh and salt water from the dock. The following provisions have been received for the use of the General Mess. Inspected as to quantity by Ensign A.H. Damon, Jr. USNR and as to quality by SHYNE, D.L., PHM3c, USN: From Tarantine & Sons, 145 lbs. roasters; from Snow White Baking Co., 175 lbs. white bread; from Rich Pie Shop, 60 pies; from W.M.D. Laney, 14 lbs. soda crackers, 240 lbs. dessert powder (starch); from Swift & Co. 300 lbs. butter, 428 lbs. ham; 100 lbs. head cheese, 103 lbs. beef liver, 100 lbs. bologna, 306 lbs. beef rounds, 360 lbs. beef chucks, 402 lbs. veal sides, 71 lbs. beef loin; from Armour & Co, 50 lbs. pork; from Elite Produce Co., 280 lbs. cabbage, 400 lbs. carrots, 200 lbs. squash; from Kellogg Sales Co. 192 lbs. corn flakes, 104 lbs. shredded wheat, 80 lbs. rice krispies, 100 lbs. rice flakes; from Standard Brands, 60 lbs. gelatin powder; from Washington Creamery, 198 lbs. turkey; from Cudahy Packing Co. 418 lbs. bacon, 100 lbs. luncheon meat, 499 lbs. pork loins, 100 lbs. frankfurters, 200 lbs. pork sausage, 622 lbs. boneless beef; from Carnation Co. 9 gals. ice cream; from Giovannone Bros. 400 lbs. onions, 3500 lbs. irish potatoes, 47 lbs. peppers; from Edw. L. Kahn & Co. 330 lbs. jam, 324 lbs. apples, 216 lbs. pears; from B.J. Holmes, 300 lbs. eggs, 72 lbs. cheese; from America Fruit Co., 150 lbs. parsnip; from Tiedemann & McMorran 100 lbs. grape nut flakes; from A. Levy & J. Zentner Co., 278 lbs. celery, 328 lbs. lettuce, 220 lbs. apples, 100 lbs. bananas; from Purity Stores, 36 lbs. chili powder, 10 lbs. celery salt, 10 lbs. bay leaves; from T. Hunt & Co. 200 lbs. cauliflower, 90 lbs. green onions, 198 lbs. tomatoes, 275 lbs. grapefruit, 283 lbs. oranges, 125 lbs. tangerines; from Haas Bros., 48 lbs. sugar, 48 lbs. brown sugar. Lieutenant William T. Doyle, Jr., USN, reported on board for duty as executive officer, in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 11675 of November 26, 1941, as modified by Bureau of Navigation orders 15692 of January 16, 1942. Lieutenant Eugene A. Barham, USN, reported for duty as engineer officer, in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 11263 of December 10, 1941. Lieutenant (jg) William K. Ratliff, USN, reported for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 12816 of January 6, 1942. Ensign Eldo W. Bergman, USN, reported for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 12791 of December 5, 1941. Ensign Arthur H. Damon, Jr. D-V(G), USNR, reported for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 11349 of February 23, 1942. Ensign Joseph W. Finch, Jr. D-V(G), USNR, reported on board for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 12597 of December 2, 1941. Ensign John R. Vrba, D-V(G), USNR, reported on board for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 11194 of December 4, 1941. Ensign James Williams, Jr. E-V(G), USNR, reported on board for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 102360 of September 8, 1941. Ensign Lars Wanggaard, Jr. USN, reported on board for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders 12315 of December 14, 1941. The following named men reported on board for duty with baggage, service and health records, in accordance with Commanding Officer, Receiving Ship, San Francisco, orders NM13/PL6-4/MM of March 31, 1942. Pay accounts retained at Receiving Ship, San Francisco: AFRICANO, Louis Johnnie #602-00-26, F3c, V6, USNR, AGRELIUS, Wilbur Davis #618-06-56, Sea2c, V6, USNR, ALFORD, Thomas Earl #268-92-75, F3c, USN, ALLEN, William Ervin, #628-11-47, Sea2c, V6, USNR, ALMOND, Harry Douglas, #262-62-57, Sealc, USN, AMBLER, Arthur William #610-24-83, F2c, V6, USNR, ATKINSON, Robert Prichard, #272-83-00, AS, USN, BANFIELD, Clyde Louis #291-72-14, F3c, USN, BARNES, Charles Wilson #662-13-40, AS, V6, USNR, BIRD, Thomas Ivan, #375-90-35, Flc, USN, BLACK, Samuel Bernard #272-78-71, Matt 3c, USN, BLANCHARD, Max Carliss, #311-82-19, F3c, USN, BLEDSOE, William Roy, #632-39-50, AS, V6, USNR, BRANHAM, Jack(n) #287-34-53, Sealc, USN, BROMAN, Robert Lowell #382-82-12, AS, USN, BROUGHTON, David Houston #262-39-62, Sealc., USN, BROWNLEE, Earl Vernon, #386-09-17, Sea2c, USN, BURK, Daniel Madison #337-63-34, Sea2c, USN, BUSH, Oscar Durwood, #656-05-38, F3c, V6, USNR, CAMPBELL, Thomas Mitchell, #624-28-26, AS, V6, USNR, CARR, John Thomas #346-86-46, Sealc, USN, CARRIGAN, Keith LaVerne #632-40-11, AS, V2, USNR, CASEY, Arville Ward, #624-28-21, AS, V6, USNR, CHADA, Theodore(n) Jr. #620-18-90, F2c, V6, USNR, CHURCHILL, Clayton LeRoy, Jr. #342-30-69, Sealc., USN, CONNOLLY, James Emmett, #372-26-67, Sealc, USN, DARUGNA, Louis(n),

ADDITIONAL SHEET

U. S. S. LAFFEY

Date March 31, 1942

12-16 (cont'd)

63-19-50, F2c, V6, USNR, DAVIS, William Probert, #283-42-45, Sealc., USN, DEVITT, Richard (n), #395-31-37, Sealc., USN, DICKEN, Marion Upton #372-40-75, AS, USN, DIEDRICKSEN, Clifford #618-08-65, AS, V6, USNR, DUGAN, Ralph, #382-81-42, AS, USN, DUZENBERRY, Robert Gordon, #342-19-99, Q43c, USN, ELIDGE, Edward Boone, #632-34-44, AS, V6, USNR, EPPERSON, Jack Roy #382-82-18, AS, USN, FARRIS, Harold Sumner, Jr. #382-77-21, AS, USN, FAUNCE, Jack William #376-45-61, AS, USN, FERGUSON, Robert Earl, #393-32-57, GM2c, USN, FORTE, Pete George, #337-41-76, Sealc., USN, FURNAS, Lonnie LeRoy, #300-32-31, Sealc., USN, GALLOB, Stanley(n), #632-35-89, Sealc., V6, USNR, GARNER, Donald George, #632-27-30, AS, V6, USNR, GRAHAM, Eugene Victor, #624-28-23, AS, V6, USNR, GREEN, John Robert #368-25-99, T1lc., USN, GREGSON, Charles Arthur #359-97-61, Mattlc., USN, HAGLER, Lloyd Clayton, #624-28-31, AS, V6, USNR, HALE, Richard (n), #224-30-06, Sealc., USN, HANSEN, Harold Walter, #223-67-38, Sealc., USN, HEMPLEG, Max Winfrey, #321-49-19, Sealc., USN, HENSARLING, Ercel Eugene #624-11-67, AS, V6, USNR, HOBBS, Dale Robert #382-81-72, AS, USN, HOLLADON, Raymond Nalyan, #268-05-33, Sealc., USN, HOSHKO, George(n) #283-58-84, Sea2c, USN, HUDSON, Basil Henry #382-79-60, AS, USN, HUNTER, George Gutza, #632-28-98, SC2c, V6, USNR, IVESTER, Berlie(n) #337-41-43, Sealc., USN, JAMES, Huey Lee, #644-02-47, Sea2c, USN, JOHNSON, Jack Herman #268-59-28, Sealc., USN, JONES, Harvey (n) #376-49-14, Sea2c, USN, JONES, Raymond Elmer #287-41-40, Sealc., USN, KARAM, Carlos (n) #632-37-23, AS, V6, USNR, KELLER, James Carlton #632-33-57, AS, V6, USNR, KELLER, Burl Lee #258-28-31, Sealc., USN, KERN, Nathaniel Russell, #602-00-30, F3c, V6, USNR, KERR, Arthur William #328-10-35, EM3c, V6, USNR, KING, Joseph Allen, #382-77-46, AS, USN, KIRKLAND, Vernon Lee #382-80-79, AS, USN, KITTREDGE, Russell Francis #654-24-53, AS, V6, USNR, KNUDSON, Milton Loy #300-49-73, Sea2c, USN, KOONTZ, Ira Logan, #103-03-53, SC2c, V6, USNR, LAMBERT, Roderick Malone #382-80-43, AS, USN, LAROCQUE, John Peter #610-26-05, Flc., V6, USNR, LAVENDER, John Francis #350-50-52, TM3c, V6, USNR, LAWHEAD, Laverne Arthur #382-76-06, AS, USN, LIEN, Milton Perry #316-72-79, Sealc., USN, LONER, Robert Willard #382-82-16, AS, USN, LONG, William David, #337-77-11, AS, USN, LORTON, Leo Albert #382-77-17, AS, USN, LUGO, Victor Cervantes, #632-29-65, AS, V6, USNR, LYON, Hershel James #331-26-47, GM2c, USN, MARTINEAU, Joseph Raymond #201-67-33, Sealc., USN, MARTINEZ, Daniel Montanez #632-33-28, AS, V6, USNR, MAXWELL, Benjamin Martin, #268-39-03, F3c, USN, MC CLINTOCK, Francis Blake, Jr. #201-52-34, Flc., USN, MC CORKLE, James Beckham #286-79-23, T1lc., F4c, FNR, MC CULLAH, Clem Edward #382-76-98, AS, USN, MC DONALD, Chester Harvey, #632-30-87, AS, V6, USNR, MC GUFFEY, Gordon Anthony #662-30-16, AS, V6, USNR, MC WHORTER, James Hubert, #668-02-83, S2c, USN, MEATTO, Ralph (n) #224-35-84, S2c, USN, MEYSKENS, Frank Louis #300-55-25, Sea2c, USN, MIAZGA, Kenneth Frank #224-36-26, S2c, USN, MILLER, Walter James #632-31-14, AS, V6, USNR, MILNE, George Earl Jr. #654-02-47, S2c, V6, USNR, MOORE, Lawrence Eugell #670-11-37, AS, V6, USNR, MYERS, Roy Alfred #368-22-67, Slc., V6, USNR, NEEL, Wayne, #382-76-57, AS, USN, NEMEC, Rudolph(n) #238-60-12, Flc., USN, NEWCOMB, Leon (n) #351-03-09, AS, USN, OKUSZKI, Edward Eric, #223-41-42, Slc., USN, O'NEILL, Francis James #243-67-84, GM3c, USN, PAHLKA, Earl Frederick #375-92-96, RM2c, USN, PARRISH, Robert Kenneth #383-11-85, AS, USN, PARRY, George Tennis #628-14-13, F2c, V6, USNR, PENTRIDGE, Richard Burton #632-31-18, AS, V6, USNR, PEGUES, Juan "C", #498-50-91, OS3c, USN, PRINCO, Mike(n) #368-35-75, Sealc., V6, USNR, PETROSINO, Leo(n) #382-75-92, AS, USN, PHILFER, James William #263-52-38, Matt3c, USN, POTTER, Elbert Jones #632-30-03, AS, V6, USNR, PRINDLE, Franklin Theodore #287-50-83, Sealc., USN, PUCKETT, Calvin Richard #382-77-15, AS, USN, QUINTERS, Bernard (n), #407-27-92, TM3c, USN, REDMOND, Lyle Vincent #321-45-27, Flc., USN, RIDEN, Robert John #328-81-00, Flc., USN, RIDER, Robert George #382-02-29, EM2c, V6, USNR, RIESER, Frank Edward #299-61-96, T1lc., USN, ROBBINS, Harold James #620-20-27, Flc., V6, USNR, ROBERTSON, Harlan Walton #243-77-10, Sealc., USN, RUNDALL, Wayne Calvin #620-20-48, F3c, V6, USNR, SADLER, Lloyd Clayton #632-32-82, AS, V6, USNR, SCHALLER, Robert George #668-19-46, Flc., V6, USNR, SCULLY, Joseph Vincent Jr. #223-45-23, Sealc., USN, SEEGER, Bernard Joseph #620-19-36, Flc., V6, USNR, SHERMAN, Everett Russell #382-19-14, Sealc., USN, SHYNE, David Loyola, #342-20-92, PHM3c, USN, SIGNS, Howard Harry #311-20-38, Cox, V6, USNR, SIDS, Anthony Burdett #632-33-32, AS, V6, USNR, SIDS, Robert William #632-33-31, AS, V6, USNR, SKIRVIN, Olin Eugene #382-79-55, AS, USN, SOWDER, Paul Mortimore #662-24-73, AS, V6, USNR, SPAULDING, Paul (n) #266-21-96, TM3c, USN, STANLEY, Rowland Roosa #382-17-00, Flc., USN, SUDDUTH, Harry William, #616-20-40, AS, V6, USNR, SWENSON, Hilding Sigvard #372-05-97, SM2c, USN, THOMAS, Theodore Jr. #660-08-87, AS, V6, USNR, THOMAS, William Ray #265-86-21, Flc., USN, THOMPSON, Morales Franklin, #382-77-99, AS, USN, THORNTON, Leroy Joe #368-47-24, Flc., USN, TREVINO, Amdao Jr. #624-26-35, AS, V6, USNR, VAN VLEET, Warren David #393-02-56, Sealc., V6, USNR, VOIGT, Raymond Vernon #299-89-44, Flc., USN, VOLLMANN, Robert Lawrence #382-79-36, AS, USN, WALLACE, Robert Thomas #620-19-70, F2c, V6, USNR, WARNER, Donald Andrew #234-33-19, Sea2c, USN, WEBB, Russell Eugene #372-43-11, AS, USN, WEBBER, Cecil (n) #670-04-02, Sea2c, V6, USNR, WEITZEL, Samuel(n) #371-77-22, SC1c, USN, WILKINSON, Raymond Luther #360-56-05, AS, USN, WILLIAMS, Charles Edward #640-10-22, S2c, V6, USNR, WILLOUGHBY, Oliver Logue, Jr. #382-78-07, AS, USN, WILSON, Vincent "L" Roy, #360-55-34, AS, USN, WILSON, William Henry #223-50-20, Flc., USN, WOLFER, Oscar (n) #316-66-26, Sealc., USN, WUNDER, Edmund Earl, #321-17-96, Bmkrlc, USN, ALMEIDA, Frank (n) #204-28-36, T1lc., USN, BAILEY, Richard Ogden #356-00-55,

FC2c, V6, USNR, BARKER, Raymond Edward, Jr. #258-18-34, CM2c, USN, BARNES, Donald LeRoy, #342-17-80, EM3c, USN, BECICKA, Joseph Wesley, #321-21-39, MT2c, USN, BECKENDORF, Orville Leroy #316-41-64, MT1c, USN, BELL, Lee Duff, #385-44-01, MT2c, V6, USNR, BERENDT, Albert (n) #337-04-24, MM1c, USN, BRASIER, Charles Joseph #337-05-79, MM2c, USN, BROWN, Donald Howard #250-50-36, FC2c, USN, BRUNN, Edwin James #413-41-63, MT2c, MLc, USNR, BROWN, Frank Elisha, #662-22-82, SC3c, V6, USNR, CALDWELL, John Oliver #355-70-65, MM1c, USN, CAMPBELL, William Arthur Jr. #654-04-41, Y2c, V6, USNR, COKER, Robert Harry #223-36-51, RM1c, USN, COLEMAN, Walter Harold #272-00-04, CM1(AA), USN, DALEY, Jeremiah Joseph #201-18-39, EM1c, USN, DAVIDSON, Alexander (n) #700-09-84, BM2c, V2, USNR, DENNIS, Leroy Wilfred #291-54-90, CM2c, USN (records only, DENNIS being A.O.L. from duty in USS LAFAYETTE fitting out detail from USSO this date), EGBERT, Willard Earl #385-44-39, MT1c, USN, FOSTER, Ervin (n) #368-13-40, MT2c, V6, USNR, FRANCISCO, Pedro (n) #151-44-69, OS2c, F4e, PNR, GIER, James Elgin #393-24-64, TM2c, USN, GILLEY, Floye Essex #291-43-31, FC1c, V6, USNR, GLEWE, Fred Wesley #316-65-11, RM3c, USN, GRIDER, Ernest Leroy #375-79-72, MM2c, V6, USNR, HEFFLER, George Robert #282-82-37, CM1(PA), USN, HENDRICKSEN, Stephen Robert #381-20-88, CM3c, USN, KASPER, Jacob Lawrence #305-12-25, CM1(PA), USN, KELLY, John Anthony #200-64-93, CY(PA), USN, LARSON, Carl Frederick #305-16-60, MM1c, USN, LARSON, Joseph Norman #328-57-83, MM2c, USN, LEACH, Lanie Henry #355-31-26, CTM(PA), USN, LEE, Walter "G", #385-37-70, CCStd, (PA), USN, MAYNER, Robert Lee #346-29-89, RM1c, USN, MC DONALD, Stuart (n) #320-93-44, SK2c, USN, McLAUGHLIN, William Theodore, #233-83-23, CBM(PA), USN, MC LEOD, John Norman #662-02-00, Y3c, V6, USNR, MENTZER, George Adolphus #320-90-48, TM3c, USN, MINOR, Eugene Stanley #371-94-60, MM2c, USN, MITCHELL, Lawrence Francis #212-49-05, EM2c, USN, MOORE, James Daniel #346-64-46, MM1c, USN, MOORE, Joe Cephas, #271-94-51, CFC(AA), USN, MUESING, Vincent William #328-49-02, MM1c, USN, MURPHY, Lester Edward, #385-44-86, CWT(PA), USN, NORFLEET, Everett Emmet #413-49-00, RM3c, V6, USNR, PARMELEY, Ralph Alex #337-00-43, MM2c, USN, PATTERSON, James Eoy #267-62-92, CM(PA), USN, PATTY, Jesse Clay #295-37-82, CM2c, V6, USNR, PAUL, Francis Adelbert #367-82-66, CQM(PA), USN, PHILLIPS, James Wesley #346-68-77, MM2c, USN, ROGERS, Roy Ernest #372-01-21, Ksmthlc, USN, ROGOL, Nathan David #214-52-55, MM1c, USN, SARE, Parker Elliot #368-34-91, MM2c, USN, SCHREIBER, Paul Charles #408-04-54, CM1(PA), O-1, USNR, SEALE, Robert Everett #393-18-68, Cox, V6, USNR, SHAW, Otis Franklin #295-19-58, FC3c, USN, STRAUGHAN, Robert Jr. #291-10-75, CSM(AA), USN, SWAIN, Calvin Cooley #381-04-78, MT2c, V6, USNR, TANNER, William (n) #204-41-84, EM1c, USN, TOMICH, Michael Anthony #368-39-08, RC3c, USN, TROYER, Max Lorain #368-39-24, MM2c, USN, WATT, Colin Jesse, EM2c, USN #291-45-97, WILLIAMS, Hubert Eugene #268-31-18, MM2c, USN, WINFINGER, Joel Phelps, #371-65-37, TM2c, V6, USNR, WINN, Robert Ellis #310-94-76, CM(PA), USN. Ensign Thomas A. Evins, D-V(G), USNR, reported on board for duty in accordance with Bureau of Navigation orders, 13962 of January 9, 1942.

A.H. Damon, Jr.
A.H. Damon, Jr.
Ensign, D-V(G), USNR.

16-20:

Moored as before.

A.H. Damon, Jr.
A.H. Damon, Jr.
Ensign, D-V(G), USNR.

20-24:

Moored as before. 2100 Ensign Thomas A. Evins, D-V(G), USNR, was transferred to Naval Hospital, Mare Island, Calif. for treatment.

A.H. Damon, Jr.
A.H. Damon, Jr.
Ensign, D-V(G), USNR

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

HISTORY OF USS LAFHEY (DD 459)

USS LAFHEY (DD 459), first ship of the name, distinguished herself in one of the shortest, but most active careers of any naval vessel during World War II. In one of the "hottest" night battles of the war, she sank two destroyers, a cruiser, and demolished the superstructure of a battleship before being sunk herself. Even then she did not sink until the enemy force had retired. Thus, USS LAFHEY lived up to the efforts and tradition set by her namesake during the Civil War.

USS LAFHEY (DD 459) was built by the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company, San Francisco, California. Her keel was laid on 13 January 1941 and she was launched on 30 October 1941. Miss Eleanor G. Fogerty, granddaughter of the ship's namesake, served as sponsor.

USS LAFHEY was named in honor of Seaman Bartlett Laffey, USN, of Civil War fame. While serving on board the USS PETREL, Seaman Laffey was sent ashore with a group to man a rifle howitzer which had been mounted on a field carriage and posted in the streets of Yazoo City during the rebel attack on that place on 5 March 1864. Their defense of the gun against superior forces is mentioned as most gallant, having nobly stood their ground through the whole action, fighting hand to hand to save the gun and the reputation of the Navy.

He was awarded a medal and appointed an Acting Master's Mate which appointment he declined. Seaman Bartlett Laffey was born in Ireland about 1841 or 1842 and enlisted in the U.S. Navy on 17 March 1862 when 21 years of age. He died at Chelsea, Massachusetts on 22 March 1901.

USS LAFHEY (DD 459) was commissioned on 31 March 1942 with Lieutenant Commander Hank, USN, as her first commanding officer. LAFHEY sailed on a brief shakedown cruise then set course for the South Pacific where she arrived just in time to participate in the Battle of Cape Esperance (Second Savo) on 11 and 12 October 1942. She then turned toward Guadalcanal and supported that operation on 12 November 1942.

On the inky-dark night of 13 November 1942, USS LAFHEY followed in the wake of USS CUSHING, proceeding up "The Slot". The Japanese had set an ingenious trap to catch the audacious little United States force; they came with battleships, cruisers, and destroyers.

USS LAFHEY, never reticent in attack, left a Japanese destroyer burning and dead in the water in the first three minutes of the battle that followed. She then tackled a Japanese

cruiser and, though the cruiser hurled 8-inch shells, LAFLEY's smaller 5-inch guns, soon silenced the guns of the cruiser and left her dead in the water, ravaged and burning.

LAFLEY still didn't have to look for a target. Like a nightmare, the skyscraper-pagoda mast of a Japanese KONGO-class battleship loomed through the darkness, coming toward the destroyer at 25 knots. LAFLEY closed the monstrous man-o-war at full speed. A salvo of torpedoes were fired. At the last moment, LAFLEY was turned just enough to clear the bow of the enemy, and no sooner had she cleared than her guns began to speak at point-blank range. The enemy battleship's superstructure was literally pulverized. Two of LAFLEY's torpedoes also found their mark as the white glare of the explosion crawled up the side of the big battleship.

As LAFLEY ran further and further ahead of the American line of ships, she soon found herself in the center of a ring of enemy ships. Simultaneously, two Japanese destroyers opened fire on her, the nearest knocking out two of her 5-inch guns. LAFLEY's answer to this was another salvo of torpedoes toward the nearest Japanese destroyer. Maneuvering violently, the enemy destroyer managed to evade all but one torpedo, but that one left another ship dead and burning.

With her three remaining 5-inchers blazing in rage, LAFLEY turned on the remaining foe, one of the big KAGERO class destroyers. Two-thirds again as large as LAFLEY, the Japanese destroyer started to pound the now thoroughly exhausted LAFLEY. At point blank range the two ships duelled, circling each other in a fight to the death. Slowly they disintegrated before the other's withering fire. Another 5-inch gun of the LAFLEY's was silenced and yet another until she was down to her last 5-inch gun. That one gun doggedly kept barking and at the time when all seemed lost, a flame, preceded by a brilliant flash, shot skyward and in its light the men of the LAFLEY could see the Japanese ship tear apart and sink into the blackness of the deep.

Now, the big Jap battleship, whose bridge LAFLEY had so completely demolished, began to assert herself. Alone in the darkened sea, engines disabled and fires raging out of control, there was no escape for LAFLEY. Commanding Officer Hank gave the last order: "Abandon Ship". The wounded men, and there were many, were put into the life rafts and lowered into the water. A few wounded men were still in the sick bay. The ship's doctor went to see about their removal. Commander Hank and three officers were on the forward deck, seeing to the dispatching of life rafts crowded with the wounded. Suddenly, a violent explosion caused LAFLEY to rear up in the water and break in two. Slowly she settled in the water, as if reluctant to carry to her watery grave the men who remained on board. At last

she succumbed. As dawn began to light the remaining ships, she at last succumbed and slid below the surface.

For her gallant part in that battle, the President of the United States awarded LAFLEY and her crew the Presidential Unit Commendation with the following citation:

"For outstanding performance during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific area, September 15 to November 13, 1942. Braving hostile fire to rescue survivors from submarine-infested waters, the LAFLEY, after fighting effectively in the battle off Cape Esperance, successfully repelled an aerial torpedo attack, and although badly crippled and set afire, inflicted severe damage on Japanese naval units off Savo Island. Eventually succumbing to her wounds after the enemy had fled in defeat, she left behind her an illustrious example of heroic fighting spirit."

USS LAFLEY (DD 459) earned three Battle Stars on the Asiatic Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the following operations:

- 1 Star/Cape Esperance (Second Savo) -- 11 to 12 October 1942
- 1 Star/Capture and Defense of Guadalcanal - 12 November 1942
- 1 Star/Guadalcanal (Third Savo) -- 12 to 15 November 1942.

* * * * *

STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	348 feet
BEAM	36 feet
SPEED	38 knots
DISPLACEMENT	1,620 tons

* * * * *

Compiled: March 1952

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships:

(DD-459; dp. 1,260; l. 347'10"; b. 36'1"; dr. 11'10"; s. 37.5 k.; cpl. 208; a. 4.5", 5 20mm, 3 21" tt., 5 dcp., 2 dct., cl. *Bristol*)

Laffey (DD-459) was laid down 13 January 1941 by Bethlehem Shipbuilding Co., San Francisco, Calif.; launched 30 October 1941; sponsored by Miss Eleanor G. Forgerty, granddaughter of Seaman Laffey; and commissioned 31 March 1942, Lt. Comdr. William E. Hank in command.

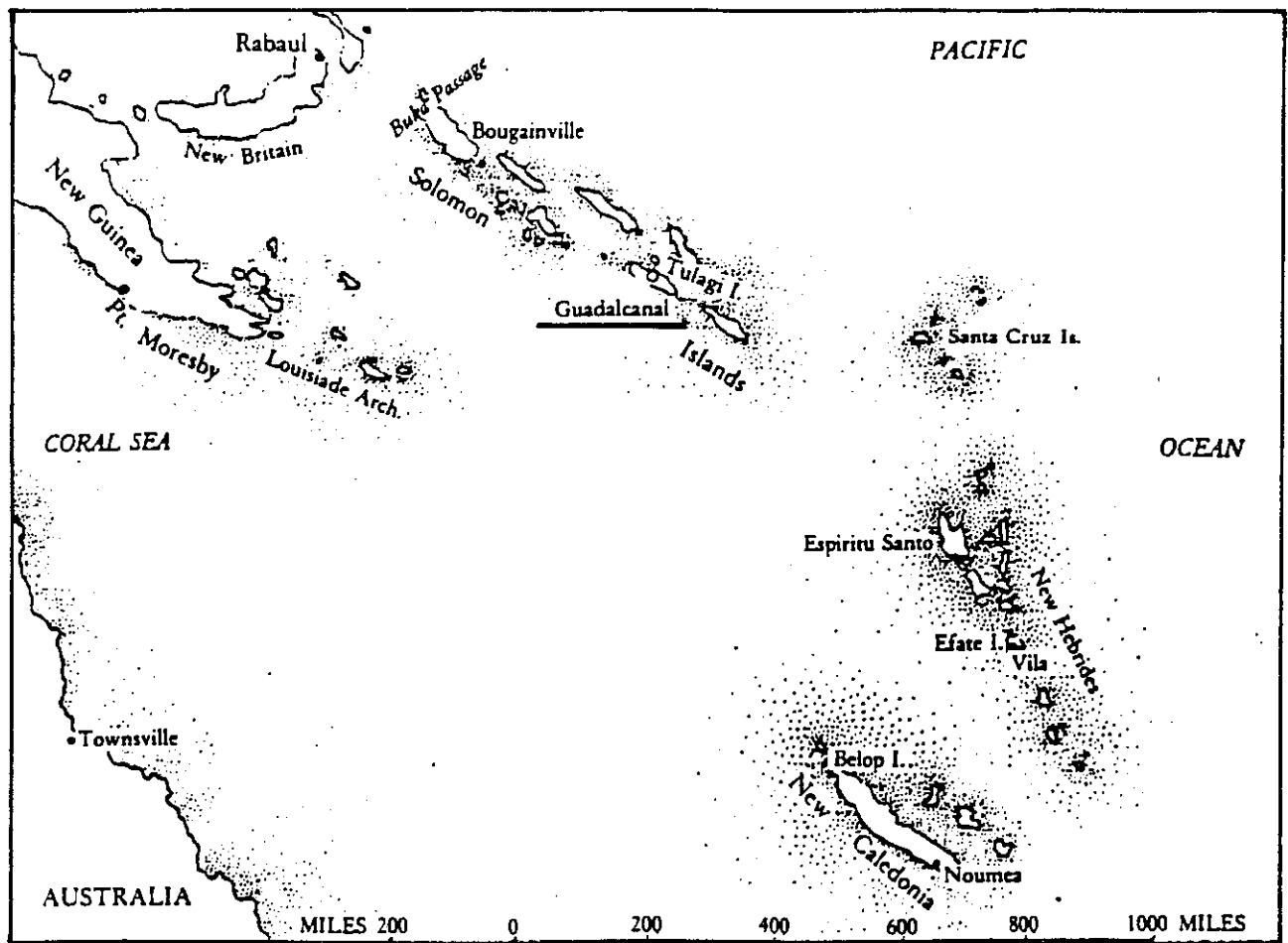
After shakedown off the west coast, *Laffey* headed for the war zone via Pearl Harbor, arriving Efate 28 August 1942. She steamed in antisubmarine screen until she joined Task Force 18 on 6 September. When *Wasp* (CV-7), her flagship, was sunk 15 September, *Laffey* rescued survivors and returned them to Espiritu Santo. She sailed with Task Force 64 and touched at Noumea, New Caledonia, 18 September.

Laffey saw her first fleet action in the Battle off Cape Esperance (also known as the Second Battle of Savo Island) 11 and 12 October 1942. The destroyer operated with Admiral Scott's cruiser group, guarding against enemy attempts to reinforce Guadalcanal. On 11 October, when the group formed into single column, *Laffey* joined two other destroyers in the van. About an hour later sailors ran to their battle stations, steel doors clanged shut, and all made ready for battle. When the engagement began, *Laffey* raked *Aoba* with three of her 5-inch guns. The furious gunfire roared on through the night. At dawn, destroyer *Duncan* was sinking, destroyer *Farnholt* was badly damaged, and cruiser *Boise*, though hard hit, had weathered several powerful blows. On the other hand, the Japanese losses were even greater. Cruiser *Furutaka* was sinking, cruiser *Aoba* was badly damaged, and destroyer *Fubaki* had sunk.

After the battle, *Laffey* rendezvoused with a group escorting transports from Noumea 11 November, and sailed to Lunga Point, arriving the next day. The disembarking operations were interrupted by a heavy air attack. On Friday 13 November *Laffey* was placed in the van of a column of eight destroyers and five cruisers under Admiral Callaghan. Early in the mid-watch the radar operator reported contact with the enemy. The naval battle of Guadalcanal was just about to begin when the enemy force, a group of two battleships, one cruiser and 14 destroyers appeared on the horizon. *Laffey* lashed out at the enemy with gunfire and torpedoes. At the height of the violent battle, an enemy battleship came slashing through the darkness and both ships headed at full speed for the same spot. The destroyer unleashed her torpedoes and, using all her firepower, machinegunned the battleship's bridge. With a battleship on her stern, a second on her port beam, and two destroyers on her port bow, *Laffey* fought the Japanese ships with the three remaining main battery guns in a no-quarter duel at point blank range. Suddenly, from the battleship whose bridge she had shot away, came a salvo of 14-inch guns, swamping the crippled destroyer. Then a torpedo in her fantail put *Laffey* out of action. As the order to abandon ship was passed, a violent explosion ripped the destroyer apart; and she sank immediately. But her gallant skipper and crew had made the enemy pay a fearful price of one battleship severely damaged, one cruiser and two destroyers sunk.

Laffey was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for her gallant performance in the South Pacific and three battle stars for World War II service.

Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands in World War II



Noumea to Rabaul. (Courtesy Australian War Memorial)

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

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

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

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996



The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) (LCdr. W. E. Hank) alongside the heavy cruiser U.S.S. San Francisco (CA-38) to exchange mail while under way on 4 September 1942. This uncensored view of the Laffey shows a Mk 4 fire-control radar antenna mounted on a Mk 37 main gun director over her pilot house and an early SC-type air-search radar antenna atop her foremast. Two days later the Laffey joined up with Task Force 18 (RAdm. L. Noyes) and became one of the screening ships for the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Wasp (CV-7). (USN photo.)

*The Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet,
takes pleasure in commending*

*LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM EDWIN HANK
UNITED STATES NAVY*

for service as set forth in the following

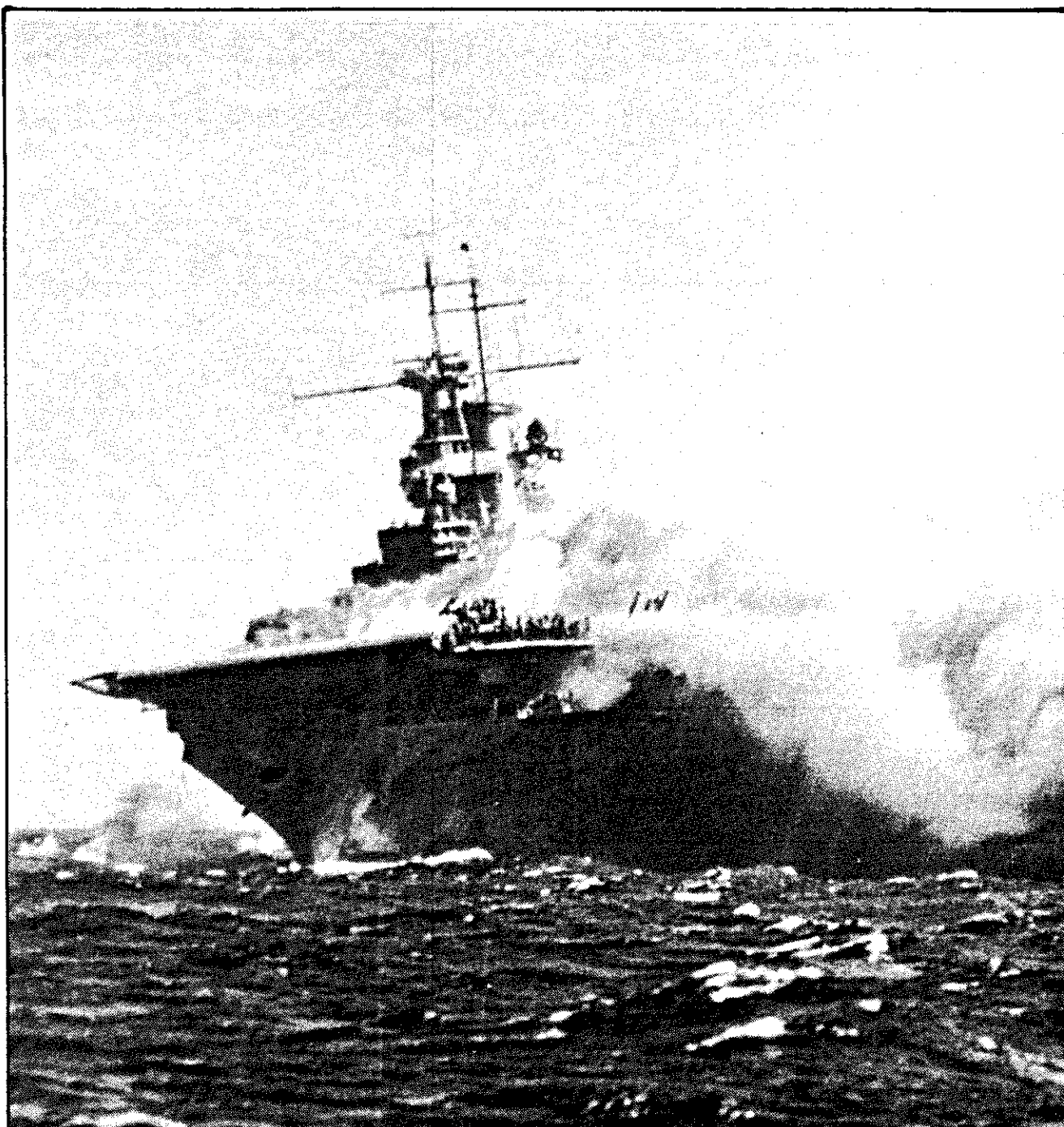
CITATION:

*"For meritorious action and distinguished
service in the line of his profession as the
Commanding Officer of a destroyer during the
rescue operations subsequent to the loss of the
U.S.S. WASP. His fine judgement in seamanship
made possible the successful rescue of many
officers and men in an area where enemy subma-
rines were actively present. His skill and de-
votion to duty were in keeping with the highest
traditions of the United States Naval Service."*

Chester W. Nimitz

Admiral, U.S. Navy

*Retyped from a citation on file at the U.S.
Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.
E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996*



The U.S.S. Wasp (CV-7) on fire and listing to starboard after being hit by three torpedoes from a Japanese submarine on 15 September 1942. After she was abandoned the Laffey rescued 322 survivors with her two whaleboats and took them to Espiritu Santo. The Wasp finally went down at 1900 after being torpedoed by the U.S.S. Lansdowne (DD-486). Of the 2247 men on board, 193 were killed. Fortunately, all but one of her planes were recovered by the U.S.S. Hornet (CV-8). (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

USS Laffey (DD-459)
Rescue of USS Wasp (CV-7) Survivors, 9/15/42

NAVY & MARINE CORPS MEDALS Awarded:¹

Albert Berendt, Machinist's Mate First Class, USN
and
Milton Lox Knudson, Seaman First Class, USN

CITATION: (Identical citations)

"For extraordinary courage and disregard for his own safety in rescuing numerous survivors from the torpedoed U.S.S. WASP on September 15, 1942. At the time of the enemy torpedoing of the U.S.S. WASP he dived over the side innumerable times to swim distances, with a line, to rescue exhausted survivors of that vessel. He has been listed Killed In Action since November 13, 1942."

* * * * *

Lieutenant (junior grade) Lars Wanggaard, Jr., USN

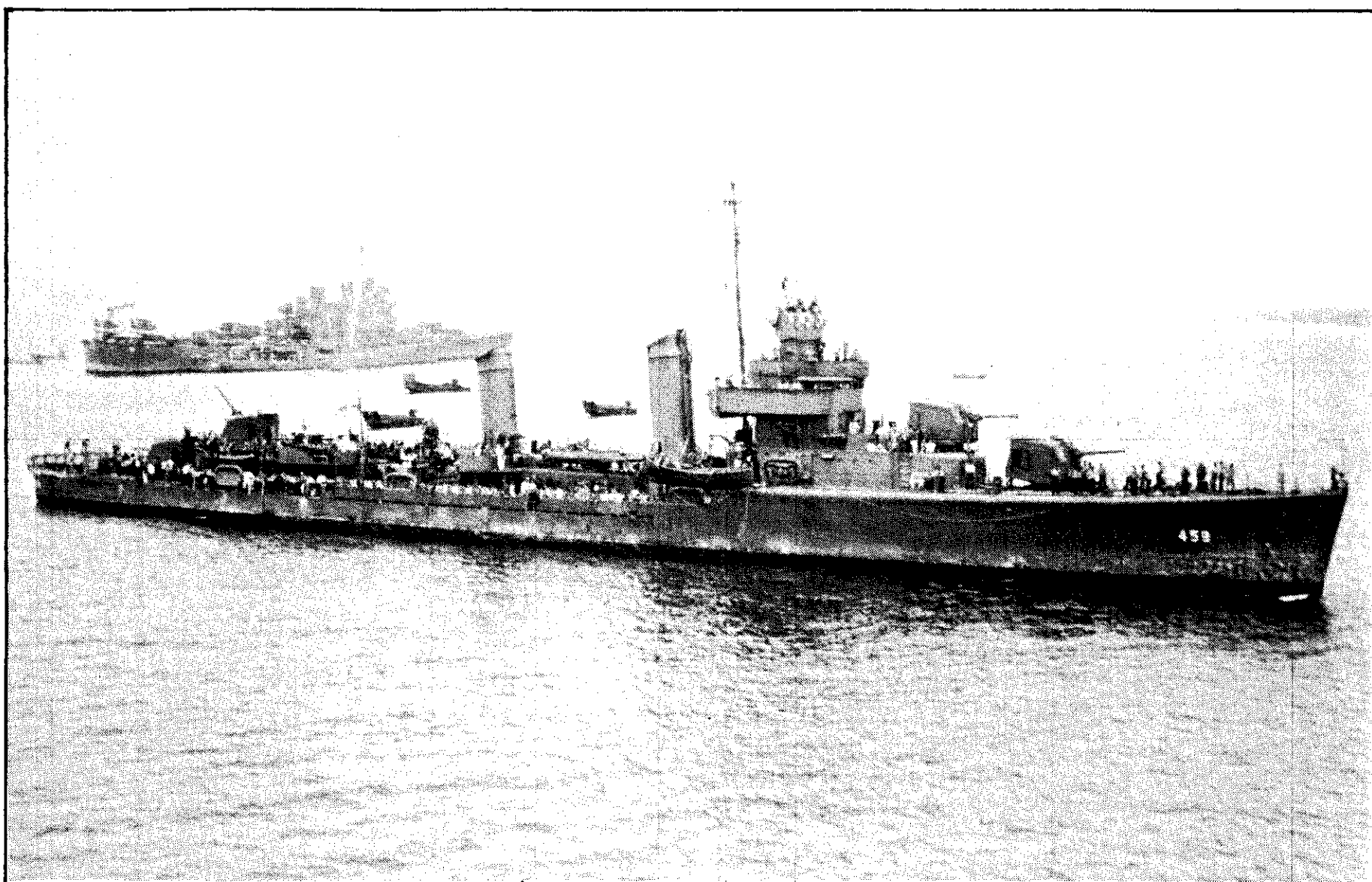
CITATION:

"For heroism after an aircraft carrier was torpedoed and burning fiercely in the South Pacific area on September 15, 1942. As the ship's boat officer of an escorting destroyer, Lt. WANGGAARD, without regard for his own safety, approached the burning and exploding carrier innumerable times to effect rescue of personnel in the water, himself swimming to their aid when they were too weak to help themselves. His courage and conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

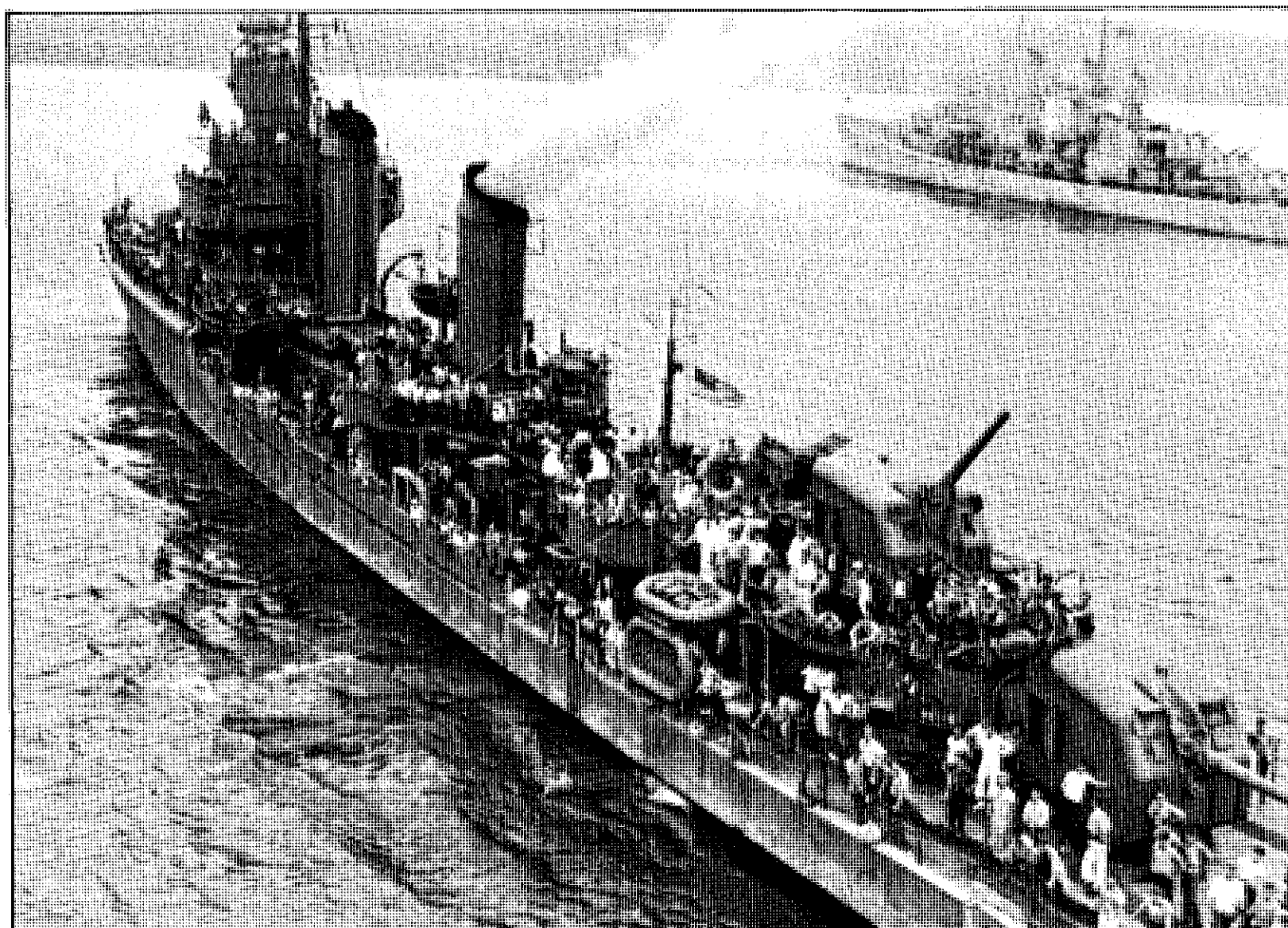
* * * * *

¹ Source: Draft citations on index cards filed at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The formal citations may have been reworded.

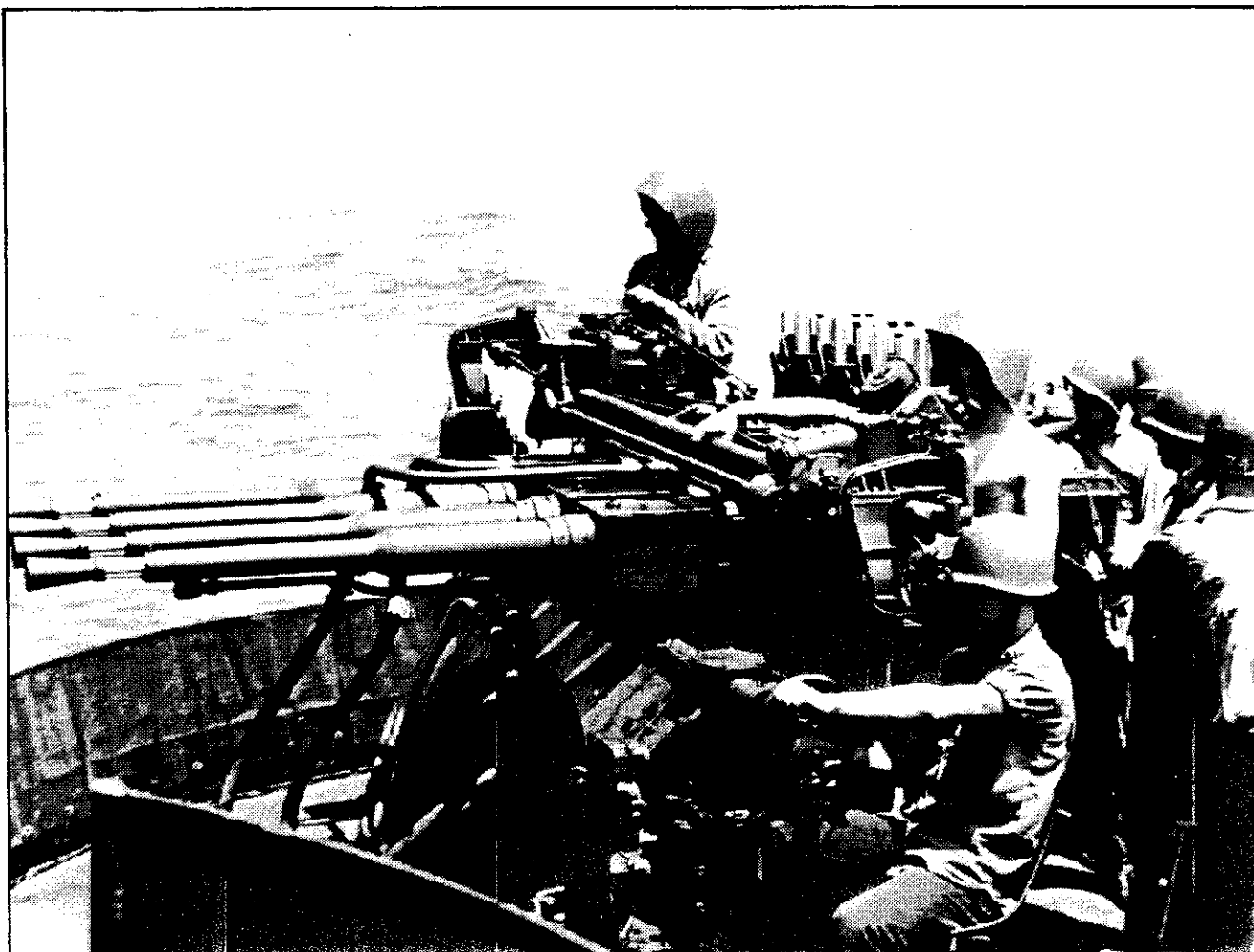
E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000



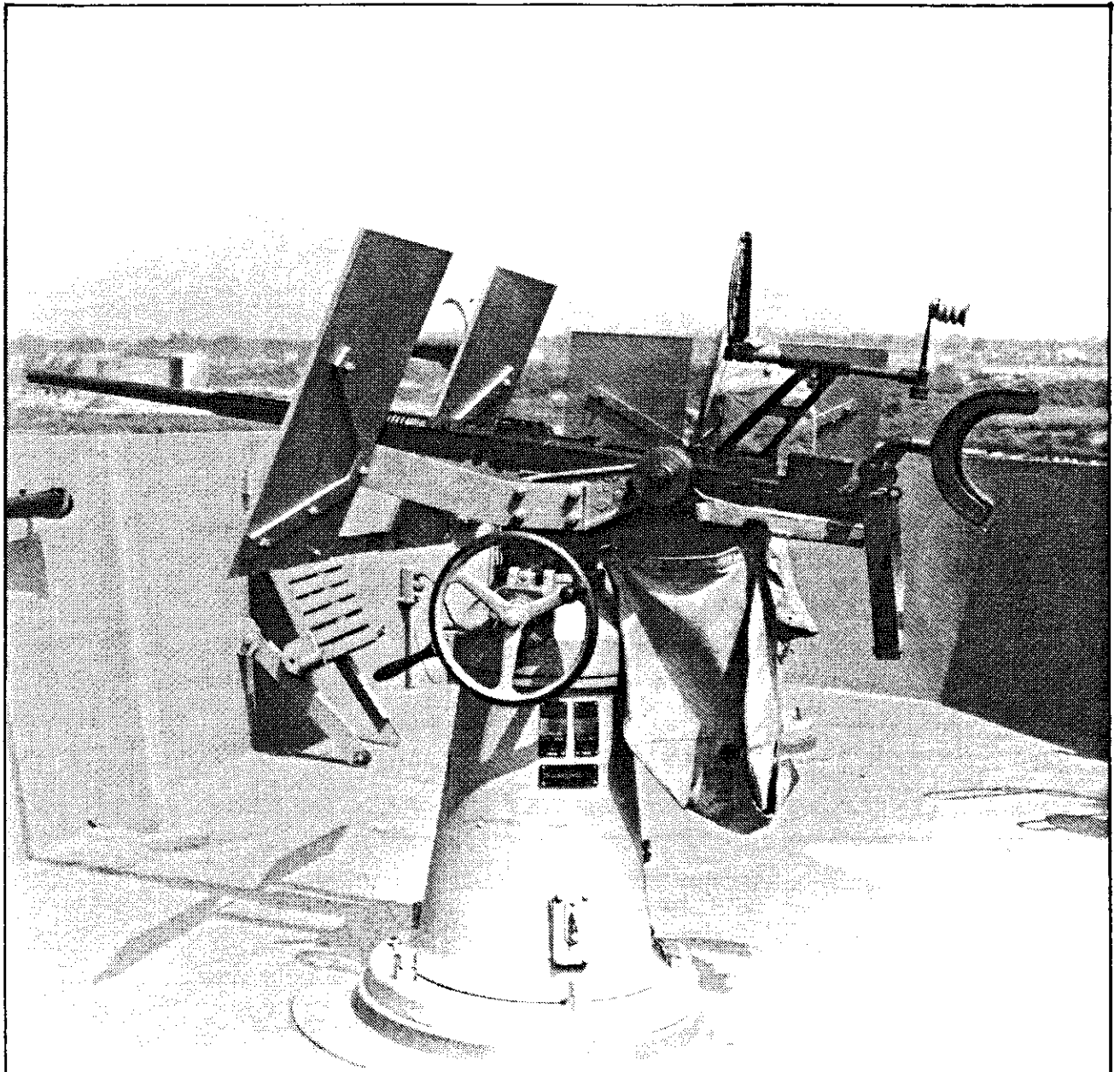
The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, on 16 September 1942 with survivors from the U.S.S. Wasp (CV-7). This full-length view shows the Laffey's main armament of four 5-in./38 dual-purpose guns in single mounts and a quintuple bank of torpedo tubes between her stacks. Her antiaircraft battery consisted of five 20-mm. Oerlikon machine cannons (two forward of the bridge, two by the No. 2 stack, one on the after gun platform) and a quad 1.1-in./75 machine cannon mount on the after gun platform. Her antishubmarine weapons were depth charges in stern racks and side projectors ("K"-guns). Behind the Laffey there is a St. Louis-class light cruiser with a destroyer tied up alongside. (Official U.S. Navy photo.)



The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) as she prepared to transfer 214 wounded Wasp survivors to the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Salt Lake City (CA-25) at Espiritu Santo on 16 September 1942. The Laffey then made a high-speed run to Noumea, New Caledonia, where she transferred the 108 unwounded survivors to the U.S.S. Fuller (APA-7) and the U.S.S. President Polk (AP-103) on 18 September 1942. Note the four barrels of the 1.1-in. mount on the after gun platform trained out to starboard. At the upper right is an Atlanta-class light cruiser with sixteen 5-in./38 guns. (USN photo.)



This view of a quad 1.1-inch/75 machine gun/cannon on a destroyer escort shows what the mount on the starboard side of the Laffey's after gun platform looked like. (It was balanced there by a 20-mm Oerlikon machine gun/cannon to port.) Dubbed as the "Chicago Piano" for the way it fired, this medium-range antiaircraft weapon was replaced on U.S. destroyers in 1942-43 with the much more effective 40-mm Bofors automatic gun, in single, twin and quadruple mounts. The "one point ones" could fire 150 one-pound high explosive shells per minute per barrel. Ammunition in 8-round clips was passed up from below through two rectangular scuttles in the deck called "slots." Although this weapon was difficult to maintain and unreliable in use, around 1,000 of them were built before production ended in 1943, and some remained in use aboard older ships and auxiliaries until the war ended in 1945. (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.)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER
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WASHINGTON DC 20374-5060

IN REPLY REFER TO

5750
Ser AR/2504
5 Sep 95

Commander E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., USNR (Ret.)
1210 Greendale Avenue #339
Needham, MA 02192-4622

Dear Commander Wilde:

This is in reply to your letter requesting USS LAFLEY's action report for the Battle of Cape Esperance.

We searched our World War II action report collection. Unfortunately, this Archives did not receive a copy of LAFLEY's report if that command prepared a separate report for the Battle of Cape Esperance. However, since LAFLEY was in Destroyer Squadron TWELVE (DesRon 12), I am enclosing a copy of the squadron's action report for the Battle of Cape Esperance. The ship's war diary went down with the ship.

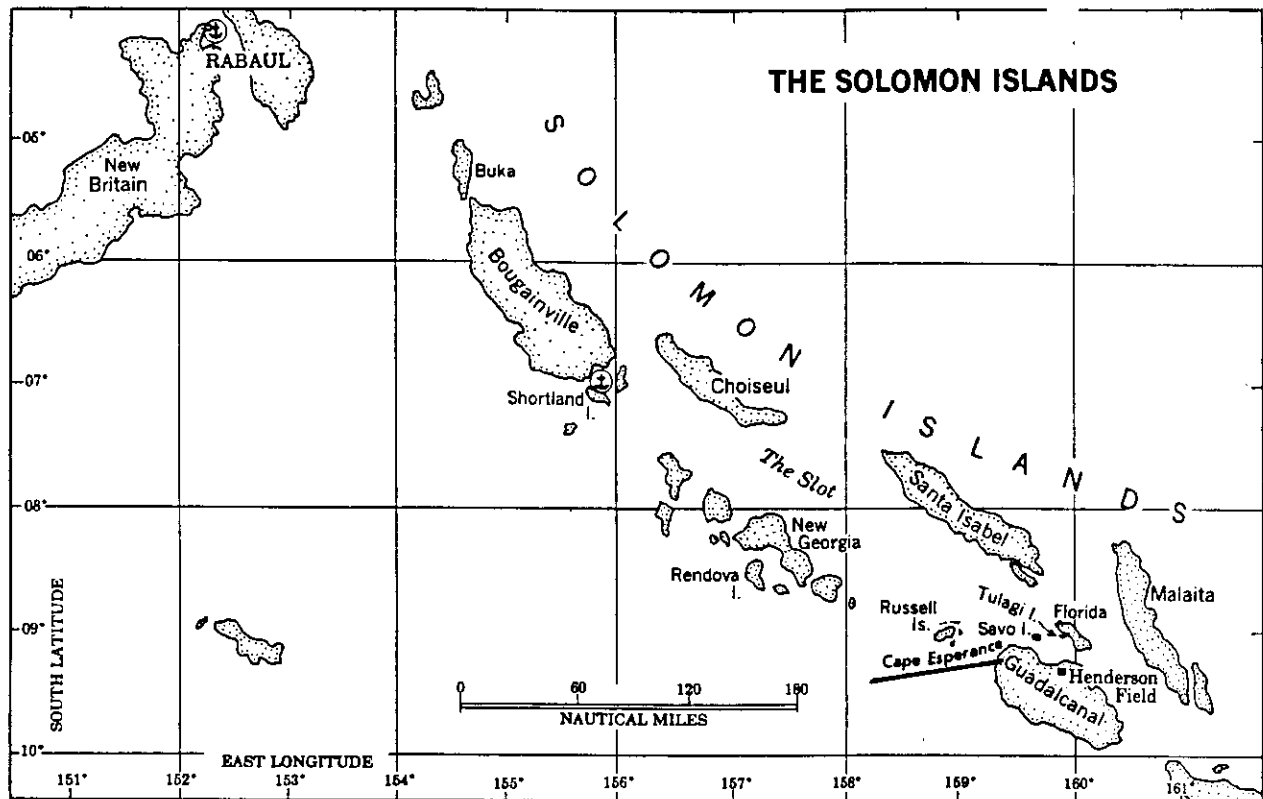
We look forward to the updates that you will bring on your next visit. Your booklets are a significant contribution to this Archives' World War II collections. Your interest in naval history is always appreciated and I hope that this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Bernard F. Cavalcante
BERNARD F. CAVALCANTE
Head, Operational Archives Branch

Enclosures

The Battle of Cape Esperance
11-12 October 1942



Map from The Battle of Cape Esperance, by Captain Charles O. Cook, USN (Ret.). (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1968.)

Editor's Note: The Battle of Cape Esperance was fought in the waters just north of the northwestern tip of Guadalcanal and west of Savo Island. For this reason it has also been called the Second Battle of Savo Island. One of the panel inscriptions at the American World War II Memorial on Guadalcanal included at the back of my booklet briefly describes this night surface engagement. The following action reports describe the battle in greater detail; the first by the commander of the five U.S. destroyers, Captain Robert E. Tobin (Com-DesRon 12), and the second by the Duncan's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Edmund B. Taylor.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996

Serial 022

Care of Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California,
October 23, 1942.

SECRETDECLASSIFIED

From: Commander Destroyer Squadron TWELVE.
To : Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.
Via : Official Channels.

Subject: Report of Action off Savo Island, Solomons,
Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

References: (a) LAFFEY ltr. DD459/A16-3(00417) of October
13, 1942 (Action Report)✓
(b) BUCHANAN ltr. DD484/A16-3(00417) of October
13, 1942 (Action Report).
(c) FARENHOLT ltr. DD491/A16-3/L9-3(002) of
October 13, 1942 (Damage Report).

1. In the evening of 11 October Task Group 64.2 was steaming on course 000° true at 28 knots. Word had been received from Group Commander that his intentions were to intercept enemy force of 2 heavy cruisers and 6 destroyers which air reconnaissance had reported approaching Northwest coast of Guadalcanal from the Northwest with the assumed objective of landing troops. Our cruisers, SAN FRANCISCO, HELENA, SALT LAKE CITY, and BOISE were in column with destroyers, FARENHOLT DUNCAN, LAFFEY, and McCALLA disposed in screen on 4000 yard circle. The BUCHANAN, who had left formation in late afternoon to rescue cruiser aircraft personnel, rejoined and took station in screen at 2211. This force was approaching Savo Island from the South. Zone - 11 time was in use, moderate sea, wind Easterly about 12 knots, night dark and overcast. The Squadron Commander was embarked in FARENHOLT, Squadron Flagship.

2. The following is a chronological sequence of events:

(a) At 2145 slowed to 25 knots.

(b) At 2200 sighted bright yellow flare astern of formation. Cruisers were launching aircraft at this time. Formation slowed to 20 knots.

(c) At 2220 FARENHOLT obtained radar contact bearing 345° true, distance 13,000 yards, which was assumed to be Russel Island.

SECRET

Subject: Report of Action off Savo Island, Solomons,
Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

(d) At 2223 destroyers took approach disposition with FARENHOLT, DUNCAN, and LAFFEY in column in van and BUCHANAN leading McALLA at rear of cruiser column.

(e) At 2227 disposition changed course to 075° true.

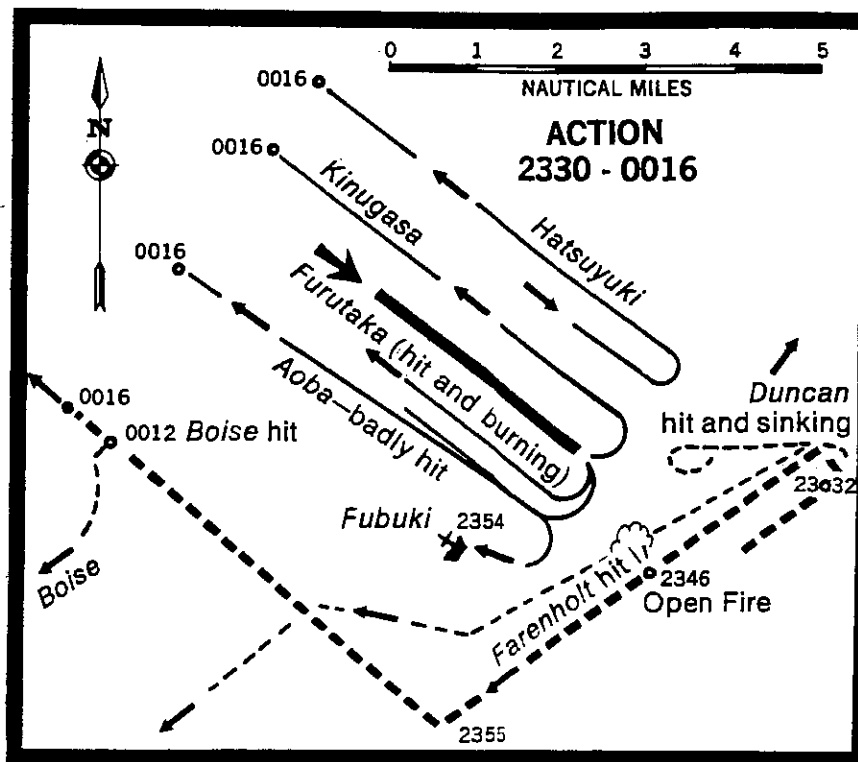
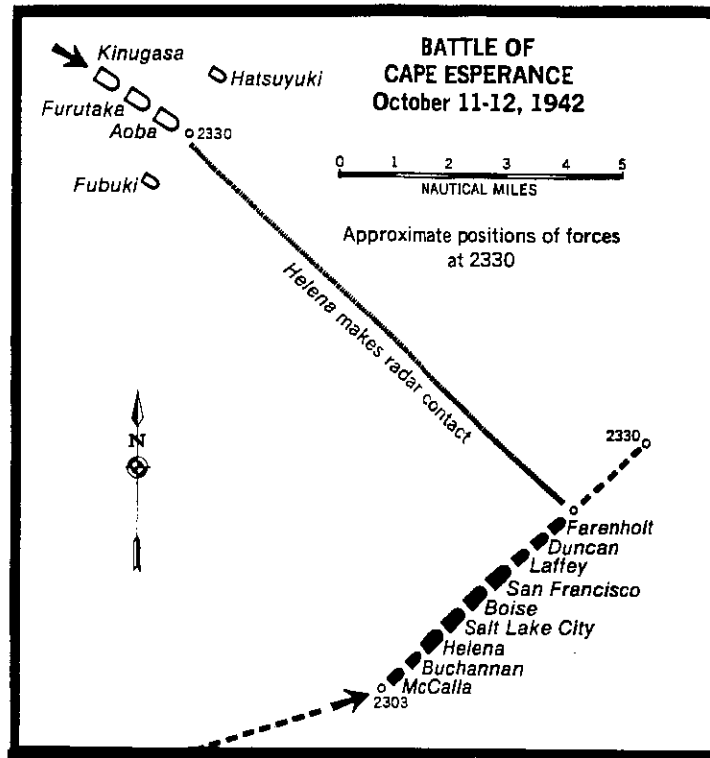
(f) At 2245 sighted two blue lights on beach at Northwest end of Guadalcanal which had the appearance of range lights and oriented such that they may have been intended as aids to the approaching enemy force.

(g) At 2300 sighted Savo Island dead ahead, distance approximately 6 miles.

(h) At 2308 force changed course to 050° true.

(i) At 2332 force reversed course left to 230° true, cruisers executing column movement immediately. FARENHOLT turned to left followed by DUNCAN and LAFFEY. I gave orders to the Captain of the FARENHOLT to slow as necessary to remain astern of the cruisers until it could be ascertained whether DDs which had been in the rear were following cruisers in formation, or had turned to take new van positions. As soon as I determined that they were following astern of the cruisers, I ordered the Captain to speed up and take position ahead of cruisers, going up on their starboard flank. Up to this time there had been no contact of enemy forces in the vicinity, and from previously reported position of enemy forces, it was estimated that they would be Southeastward of our own forces, or on cruisers port flank. DUNCAN and LAFFEY had been instructed previously to follow the course and speed of the FARENHOLT without signal.

(j) At 2340 SAN FRANCISCO reported radar contact with surface craft, bearing 298° true, distance not given. At this time the FARENHOLT had



Diagrams from Jack Coggin's The Campaign for Guadalcanal.
(Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972.)

DECLASSIFIED

October 23, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Report of Action off Savo Island, Solomons,
Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

gained position abreast the middle of the cruiser column. As this contact was about 68° on the starboard bow of FARENHOLT, I instructed the Captain to slow, and gave consideration to turning toward cruisers and attempting to take position astern of them. Just at this time CTG 64.2 inquired if my group was taking position ahead, to which I replied, "Affirmative; coming up on your starboard flank". This was done to acquaint all hands of our position.

(k) At 2343 SAN FRANCISCO reported radar contact of unidentified aircraft 065° true, distance 5 miles, and another contact 284° true, no distance given. Before any action could be taken toward turning to take position astern of cruisers, fire was opened by our own forces, shells at first going over the top of this vessel, the fire being about abeam of the cruisers. Consideration was then given toward the best way to get out of this unfavorable position and decision was made to continue at best speed and pull out ahead as a turn to the left would throw us into our own cruisers and to the right into the enemy.

(l) At 2347 order for all ships to cease firing was heard over voice radio. CTG 64.2 inquired if I was all right, reply being made in the affirmative. About 30 seconds later reported that our own units were firing on us. Fire of own units decreased in volume but continued.

(m) At 2349 the FARENHOLT opened fire on enemy vessel, brilliantly illuminated by starshells, and orders were given to fire torpedoes at favorable targets, if any. Two vessels on the starboard hand, which appeared to be enemy heavy cruisers, were burning fiercely at this time.

SECRET

Subject: Report of Action off Savo Island, Solomons,
Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

(n) At 2350 the FARENHOLT was hit on the fore yard arm and at the top of No. 2 stack. Fragments from latter hit jammed the torpedo mount amidships. At the same time or shortly thereafter, the FARENHOLT was struck at water line on port side near Frame 65 by one or more shells. This hit put the I. C. and Plotting Room out of commission. This hit and one at water line, port side, Frame 85, disrupted all power, lighting, and communications in forward part of ship. At this time the FARENHOLT was about abreast of SAN FRANCISCO. Area was cleared, crossing ahead of SAN FRANCISCO, which cruiser was apparently turning to starboard to close the enemy. After clearing, a check on the damage sustained was made. The ship had a heavy list to port.

3. While an attempt was being made to save the ship and to get information relative to the condition of the propulsive machinery, the second phase of the encounter occurred about three or four miles to the Westward of the FARENHOLT. Due to the FARENHOLT's condition and that our forces were between her and the enemy, she did not enter into this phase of the battle. The FARENHOLT remained in the vicinity until about 0100, at which time it appeared that no further action would take place, then retired Southwest, later to southard, to keep clear of own forces, as the only means of identification was by blinker tube.

4. References (a), (b), and (c), have been forwarded previously. To date no action reports have been received from FARENHOLT, McALLA, and from Commanding Officer of DUNCAN, which ship was lost in this action.

5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

(a) The value of vertical fighting lights was thoroughly demonstrated. However, no arrangement is made for a suitable means of identification in case fighting lights are put out of commission as occurred in FARENHOLT. It is believed that a compact auxiliary set of vertical fighting lights installed on the mainmast would be highly desirable.

October 23, 1942.

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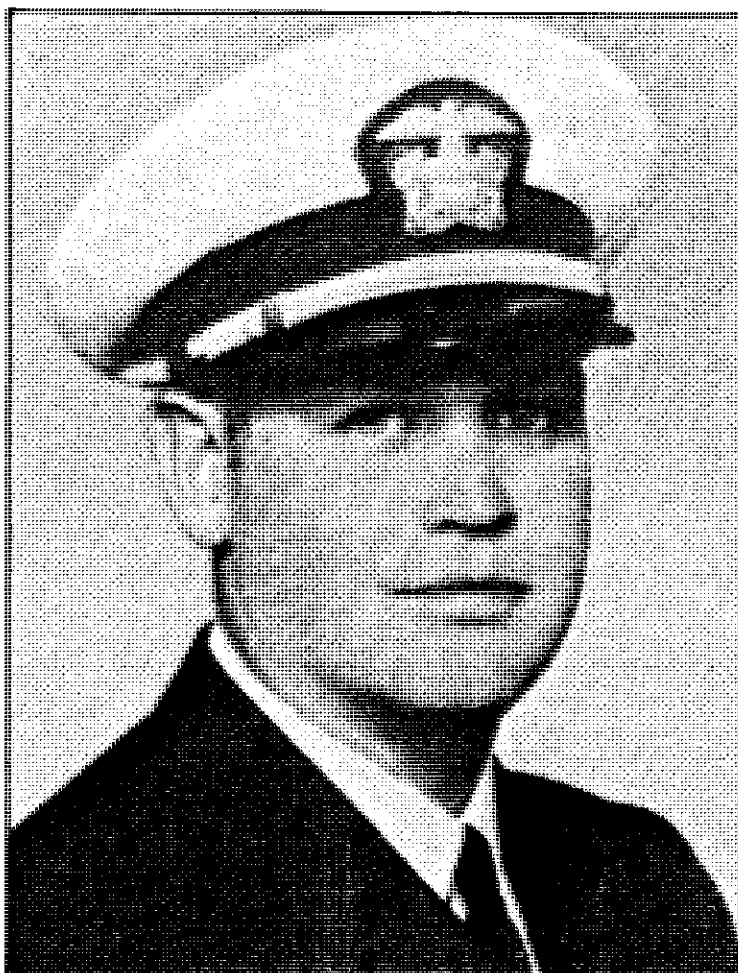
Subject: Report of Action off Savo Island, Solomons,
Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

(b) The use of "Roger" for receipt of a TBS message was apparently misunderstood as an order to commence firing. It is recommended that either the signal to commence firing be changed, or the manner of receipting for TBS messages be changed in order to avoid possible misinterpretation or confusion.

(c) In the event that destroyers are disposed both in the van and the rear of heavy ships when deployed for action, and a column movement of 120° or more is executed by the heavy ships, it is recommended that those DDs which were originally in the rear take the van position upon the execution of the change of course. This would decrease the time that the heavy ships' fire would be masked by own DDs.

6. All officers and enlisted personnel who came under the observation of the Squadron Commander conducted themselves in a manner creditable to the Naval Service. No actions were noted meriting special credit.

R. G. TOBIN



Lt(jg) Thomas A. Evans, USNR, was the LaF-
ay's torpedo officer during The Battle of
Cape Esperance and the decisive Naval Bat-
tle of Guadalcanal on November 12th, 1942,
(Guadalcanal: Decision at Sea, E. Hannel.)

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

The Battle of Cape Esperance, 11-12 October 1942

Recollection of LTj.g. Thomas A. Evins, USNR,
the Laffey's Torpedo Officer:

"From my battle station on top of the pilot house I could see as much of what went on as any observer on either side. We were steaming along in column along the northwest coast of Guadalcanal when we picked up the enemy on radar. We were ordered to make a 180 degree turn in column, in the presence of the enemy; each ship would turn in total darkness, following the wake of the ship ahead--a very dangerous and confusing maneuver.

"The first thing I saw was a Japanese destroyer on a course opposite and parallel to our own; so close that you could see sailors running up and down the decks when she was illuminated by searchlights from our units. We flailed away with our main battery, but never fired any torpedoes. We were supposed to save them for heavier targets. When the American cruisers opened fire, they were completely lit up by their own muzzle flash, giving the enemy a perfect point of aim. When the Japanese opened fire, you could see only a little blue flick of flame from the barrels of their guns. They used cordite powder; I wished we had.

"The Japanese turned back, but not before they inflicted heavy damage on the light cruiser U.S.S. Boise (CL-47). After daylight I stood next to a signalman on the bridge of the Laffey; we counted as 106 bodies slipped under an American flag and over the side of the Boise as we were retiring southward toward Espiritu Santo."

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

The Battle of Cape Esperance, 11-12 October 1942

Recollection of V. Richard Hale, Signaller 3rd Class:

"Inside our five-inch mount we seemed to lose all track of time. 'Boats,' our Gun Captain, had earphones on in communication with the Gunnery Officer in the director. A couple of hours later, Boats yelled out to us to lock on to the director. I pushed the firing switch to my trigger into the locked position with my thumb, but I forgot to change the prism on my gun-sight to one of the darker lenses. I still had the clear lens for daylight use in place when the first shot was fired. The blast was so brilliant that I was almost blinded. I quickly changed the lens setting to dark, and my vision gradually returned.

"After we got off a few rounds we had a hangfire, so Boats yelled at me to kick it off, and I stomped the foot pedal hard. The firing pin worked well, the recoil slammed the mount and the empty brass case went flying back to the scuttle. We had a man with long asbestos gloves whose job it was to catch the brass casings and guide them through the scuttle to the deck outside the mount, but we were firing so fast that he kept missing them.

"The target was soon on fire. The range was short enough that I could follow the trajectory of our shells by the tracers in them, and when I saw one hit their Number Two mount I yelled out, and our gun crew cheered. After we ceased fire, Boats opened the hatch so we could get some air. We could see ships burning back on our starboard quarter.

"When dawn came we were on our way at high speed back to the base at Espiritu Santo. As we pulled into the harbor we were a cocky bunch; we wanted to paint a couple of cruiser and destroyer symbols on the side of our mount to let everyone know that the Laffey was a real fighting ship. We lost all fear of battle at that point, and getting away without a scratch, while pounding the enemy, meant that we were ready to win the war. The feeling did not last long."

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the GOLD STAR in lieu of the second NAVY CROSS to

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM EDWIN HANK
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. LAFLEY during the night action against enemy Japanese forces off Cape Esperance, Solomon Islands, on October 11-12, 1942. Boldly engaging a Japanese force of two destroyers and a cruiser, Lieutenant Commander Hank, despite his extremely hazardous position in a leading group and the terrific fire of the enemy, fought his ship with devastating effect upon the opposing vessels. Directing the fire of his guns with cool and daring accuracy, he enabled the LAFLEY to sink one hostile destroyer, to damage another, and to assist in the sinking of a cruiser. By his indomitable fighting spirit, expert seamanship, and gallant devotion to duty, he contributed largely to the success of the battle and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy

Retyped from a draft citation on file at the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal

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

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

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

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

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



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

UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE

Naval History - May/June 1995

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

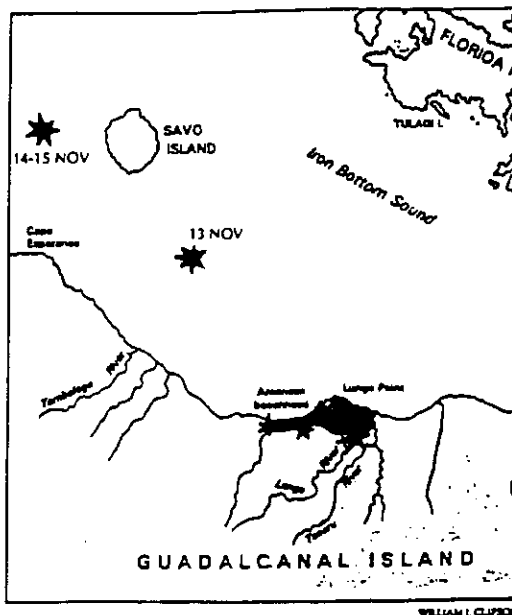
Fortunately, the Japanese Army consistently underestimated the number of Marines and soldiers ashore by 50% to 70%. Consequently, the 30,000 troops landed in detachments fed three successive attempts to overrun Henderson Field—in late August, mid-September, and late October—rather than massing for one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

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

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

Cruiser Night Action, 13 November

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



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

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

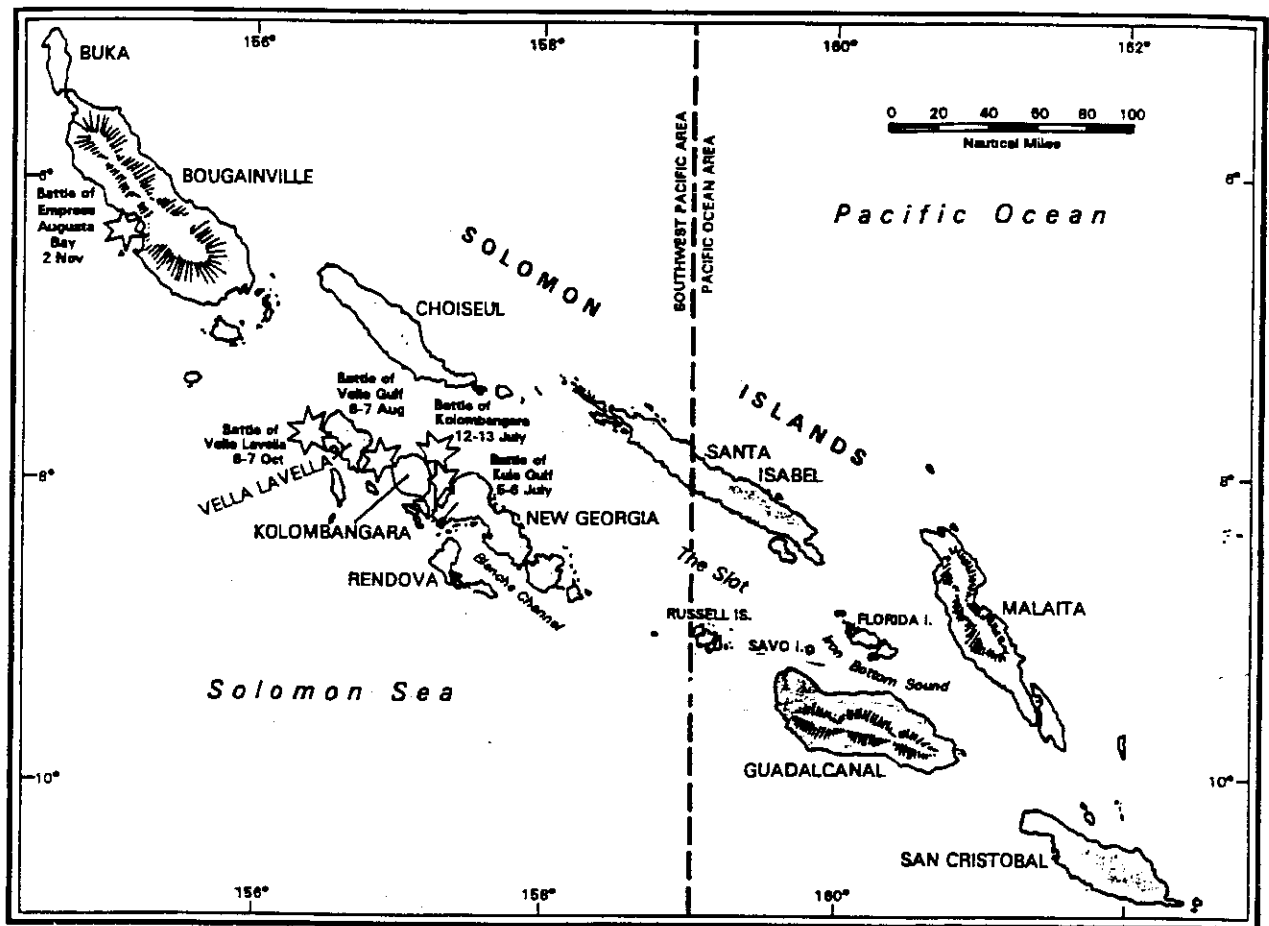
Dawn and U.S. aircraft found the *Hiei* only a few miles from Guadalcanal. Repeated bomb and torpedo runs added to her misery, and around sunset she became the first Japanese battleship to be sunk in World War II. The day's action was not entirely to the Imperial Navy's disadvantage, however. Torpedoes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

Air Action, 14 November

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

Battleship Night Action, 14-15 November

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

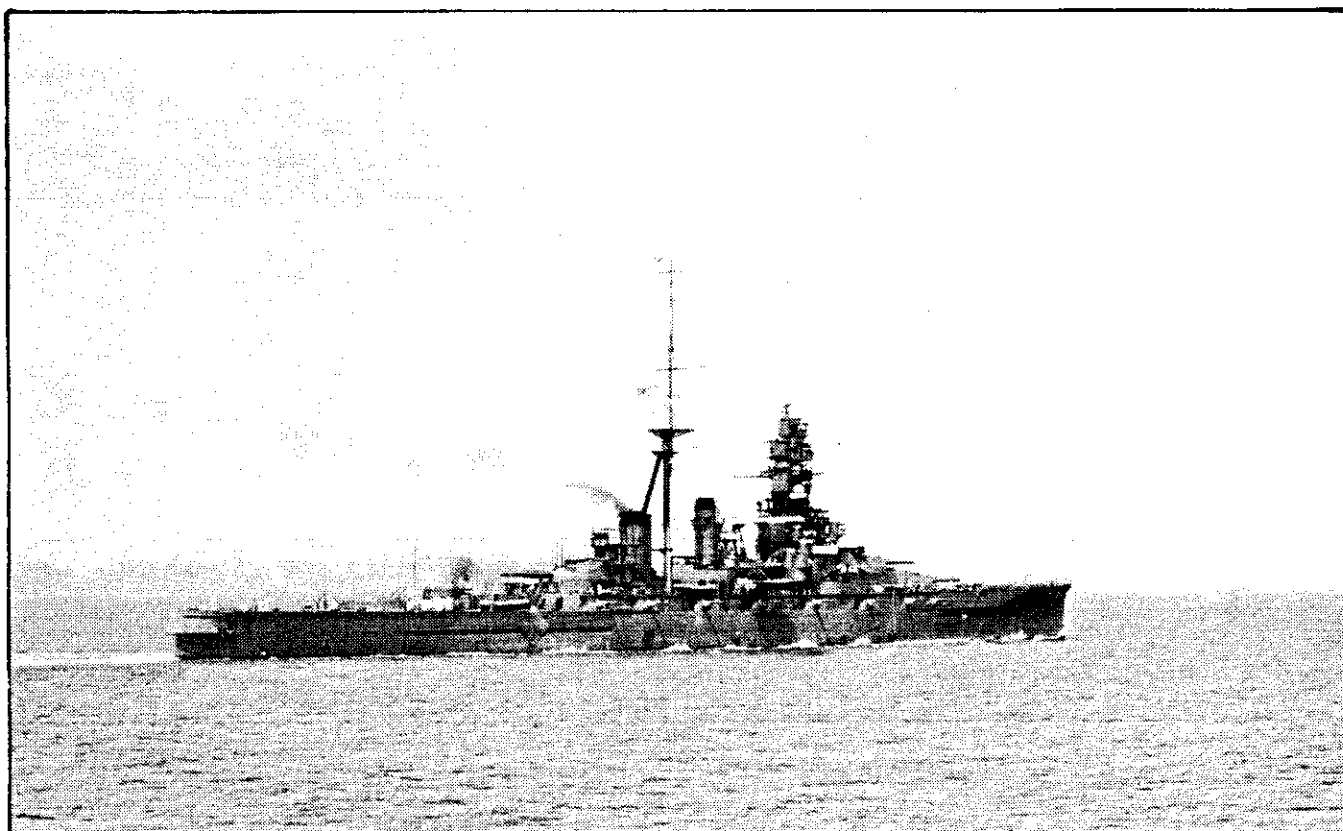


heavy gunfire unit into the cauldron. The surface action group thus formed under Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee consisted of the new battleships *South Dakota* (BB-57) and *Washington* (BB-56) and four destroyers. On the Japanese side, Vice Admiral Nobotake Kondo, commanding the Combined Fleet's Advanced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

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

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

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



The Japanese battleship Hiei almost collided with the Laffey during the melee which characterized The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on November 13, 1942. As the huge ship passed close astern (about 10 feet!) the Laffey's guns severely damaged the battleship's bridge area and disrupted her communications. After being bombed and torpedoed by planes from Henderson Field the Hiei was finally scuttled by her crew late that night. The Hiei was armed with fourteen 6-inch and eight 14-inch guns. She displaced 31,720 tons. (Prewar NHC photo.)

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ORIGINAL

ACTION REPORT

USS LAFFEY

DD-459

SERIAL NONE

14 NOVEMBER 1942

BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL, 12-15 NOVEMBER 1942.

NARRATIVE REPORT OF PARTICIPATION IN
ACTION OFF SAVO ISLAND AGAINST JAPAN-
ESE SURFACE FORCES. USS LAFFEY SUNK
IN THIS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENEMY.

44933

116-3/0459

U.S.S. LAFFEY
November 14, 1942.

REPORT

From: Commanding Officer (Acting)
To: Commander South Pacific Force.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Division TBS
(2) Commander Destroyer Squadron TWELVE.
(3) Commander Task Unit 67.4

Subject: U.S.S. LAFFEY, Battle Report of.

Enclosure: (A) List of known survivors.
(B) List of known dead.

1. At approximately 0215 on November 13, 1942, the U.S.S. LAFFEY in company with TASK UNIT 67.4 and second ship in formation, column of ships, made contact with a Japanese force of approximately fifteen units located about six miles to the eastward of Savo Island. The crew was at general quarters stations and in all respects ready for action with the enemy. The Executive Officer, now Commanding Officer, was at his battle station at secondary conn. The ship was on course north at fifteen knots, night was dark, no wind.

2. Contact with the enemy was first reported over the TBS by radar at a distance of thirteen miles and between Savo Island and Cape Esperance. This placed the enemy on the port side of the formation. A short time later further contacts by radar were made on the starboard side of the formation towards the northward of Savo Island. The number of contacts is roughly estimated as fifteen enemy units. Previous to opening fire the order was given by the OTC for odd numbered ships to fire to starboard, even numbered ships to port. The LAFFEY was second ship in column and opened fire to port. Just previous to opening fire two large enemy ships could be made out bearing about 315° relative. The enemy illuminated our formation about simultaneously with both sides opening fire. From my station I could not ascertain what our target was at commance fire and since the gunnery officer has been evacuated from Guadalcanal this information cannot be definitely stated at this time. A short time after firing commenced a large enemy unit bore down on the LAFFEY from port and only by speeding up was a collision prevented. Torpedoes were fired at this ship and they were seen to run to the target but did not explode due to the short run and the torpedoes not arming. This large enemy crossed astern of the LAFFEY and fire was opened on its bridge structure by all guns which would bear. At about this time a large caliber salvo of shells hit the LAFFEY in the bridge structure and in number two gun turret, followed very shortly by a torpedo hit at the stern. Shortly after this another large caliber salvo hit midships plunging the after fireroom and electrical workshop. This was the extent of hits known to have been made on the LAFFEY.

3. Due to damage from enemy gunfire and torpedo fire this vessel was in the following condition:

Subject: U.S.S. LAFAY, Battle Report of.

- (1) 5" guns number two, three and four out of commission.
- (2) Engine spaces untenable due to escaping steam.
- (3) Stern end blown off up to number four turret, resulting in no propulsion or steering control.
- (4) Oil fire at extreme stern of vessel.
- (5) No pressure on firemain.
- (6) No electrical power.

4. A determined effort was made to extinguish the fire at the after end of the ship. The portable gasoline pump was operated and for a while it appeared to get the fire under control. Prior to starting up the gasoline pump water was poured by hand, using empty powder cans, producing some signs of success. Eventually the oil fire gained headway and went out of control. By this time it was definitely established that the ship could not be gotten underway and the Commanding Officer gave orders to abandon ship.

5. Abandon ship was conducted in an orderly fashion. Both motor whaleboats and all lifeboats except three which caught fire were successfully put into the water. All but a few officers and personnel were in the water when a terrific explosion occurred aft. It is believed that the explosion caused the greater percentage of our casualties due to large and small parts of the vessel descending on personnel in the water. Following the explosion the ship sank immediately.

6. The Captain, Lieutenant Commander William E. Hank, U.S.N., was last seen in the water near the bow of the vessel but has not been seen since the final explosion of the vessel.

7. All members of the crew performed in an exceptionally meritorious fashion and at no time during or following the action was there any confusion or disorganization. Survivors, known at this time to have landed on Guadalcanal Island are listed in enclosure (A). Men on dead are listed in Enclosure (B). An up-to-date Report of Changes (N.Nav.5b) was submitted to Bureau of Personnel, Commander Southern Pacific Force, and Commander Service Force, Pacific Fleet on or about September 24, 1942. A complete Muster Roll (N.Nav.5a) as of 30 September, 1942, was submitted on or about 3 October, 1942 to Bureau of Personnel and Commander Service Force, Pacific Fleet.

8. The U.S.S. LAFAY previously participated in numerous punitive actions against the enemy, in all cases giving a good account of itself. The crew is considered to be of exceptionally high caliber in spirit and morale and the recommendation that officers and crew be retained as a group to place a new vessel in commission is made with the best interests of the U. S. Navy in mind.

~~SECRET~~

02459/ A16-3

Subject: U.S.S. LANTER, Battle Report of.

9. This report is incomplete due to the temporary absence of such key members as the gunnery officer. A further and more detailed report will be made as early as possible.

H. T. DOYLE, Jr.

DECLASSIFIED

ACTION REPORT

DECLASSIFIED

U.S.S. LAFFEY

DD459

U.S.S. LAFFEY, REPORT OF LOSS OF.
[NOVEMBER 13, 1942. OFF SAVO ISLAND.]

NO SERIAL
NOVEMBER 16, 1942.

44211

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DD459/AL6-3

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U.S.S. LAFFEY (DD459)

November 16, 1942.

DECLASSIFIED - DOD DIR. 5200.9
of 27 SEP 58

BY CCB-9/C DATE 12-6-63

From: Commanding Officer (Acting).
To: The Secretary of the Navy.
Via: Commanding Officer, Naval Activities, CACTUS-RINGBOLT Area.

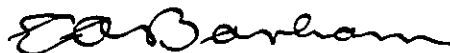
Subject: U.S.S. LAFFEY, report of loss of.

Reference: (a) Article 841, U.S.Navy Regulations.

1. The U.S.S. LAFFEY was lost in action while engaging units of the enemy fleet off Savo Island about 0200 November 13, 1942.

2. The LAFFEY was lost after sustaining following damage: Number two, three and four 5" guns out of commission by direct hits; shell hit in chart house; large caliber shell hit in electrical work shop which penetrated the forward engine room; five inch shell hit in after fireroom; stern end blown off by torpedo hit.

3. About five minutes after the order to abandon ship was given, the ship blew up with a terrific explosion and sank immediately.


E. A. BARNHAM
Lieutenant, U.S.Navy.

Copy to:

C.N.O.
CincPac.
ComsoPac
ComdesPac.

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

AL6-3

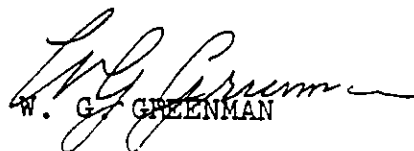
Serial 130

ADVANCED NAVAL BASE
Cactus - Ringbolt

17 November 1942

From: Commander Naval Activities, Cactus-Ringbolt Area.
To : The Secretary of the Navy.
Via : Commander South Pacific Force

1. Forwarded.

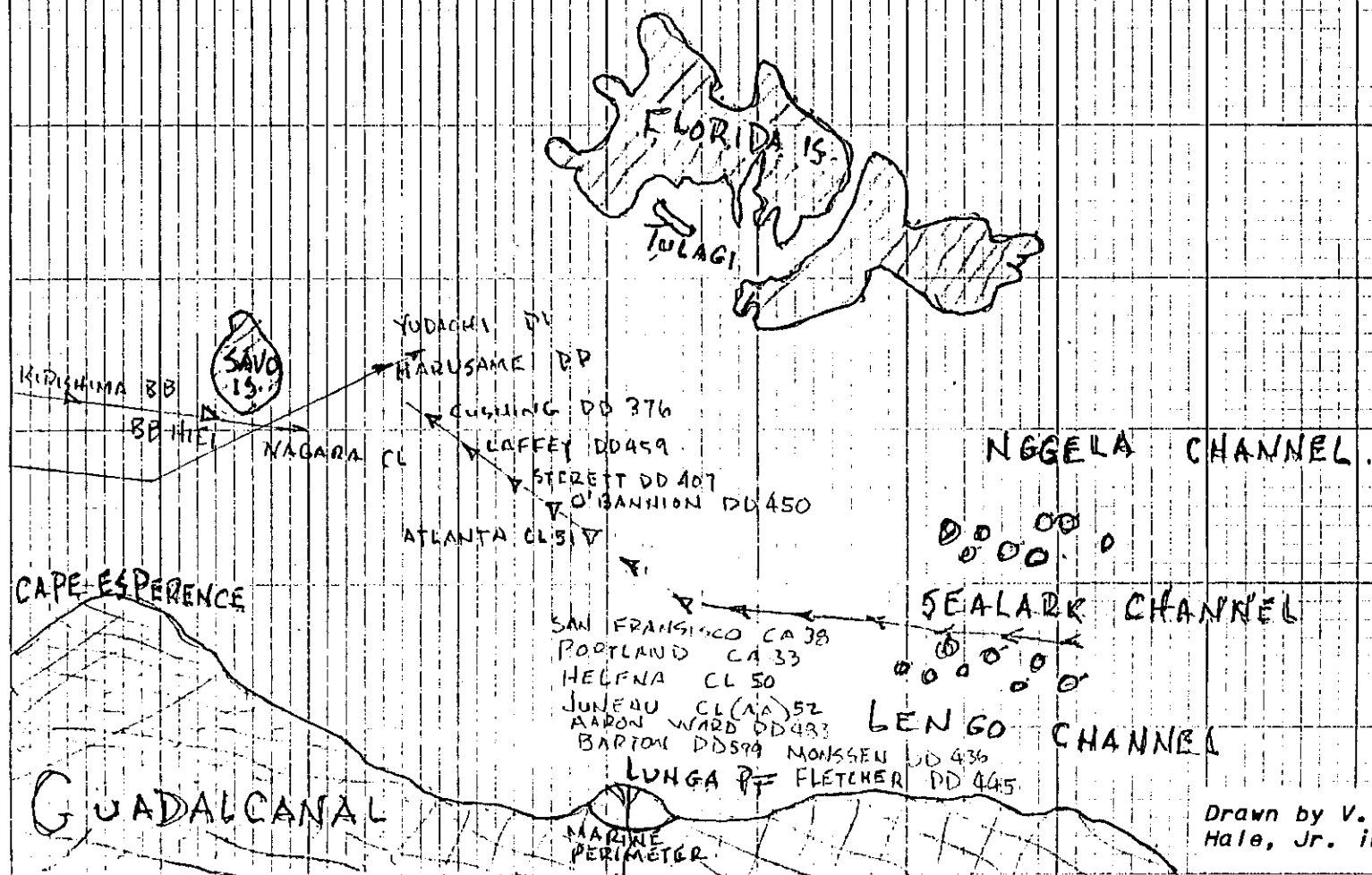

W. G. GREENMAN

CONSENSUS INITIAL CONTACT.
YUDACHI FIRED ON AND NAGARA
ILLUMINATED. APPROX 1:30 AM.
NOVEMBER 13, 1942.



No. 1

BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL
NOV. 13, 1942 IN
THE EARLY HOURS.

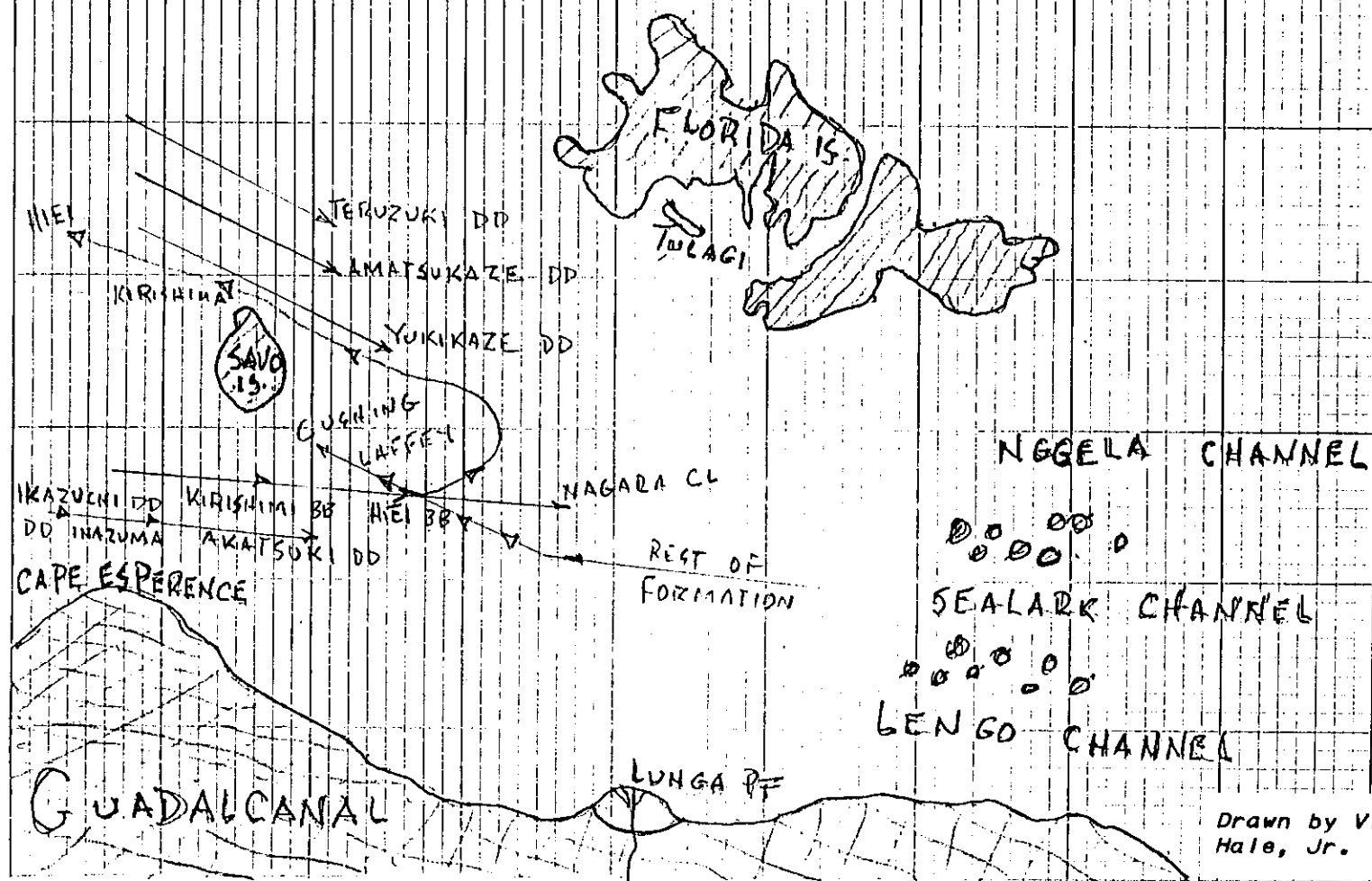


Drawn by V. Richard
Hale, Jr. in 1990.

SECOND INCIDENT - HIEI & LAFFEY
NEARLY COLLIDE - NAGARA OPENS
SEARCHLIGHTS - YUKIKAZE FIRES
SPREAD OF 8 TORPEDOS, ONE HITS
LAFFEY. APPROXIMATELY 1:45 AM
NOV. 13 1942.



16.2



Drawn by V. Richard
Hale, Jr. in 1990.

THIRD INCIDENT. LAFFEY TORPEDO HIT
UNDER #4 MOUNT SPINS SHIP 180°
BEFORE SINKING. - NAGARA APPARENTLY MAKES
A 360° TURN & PASSES CLOSE ON PORT
SIDE OF LAFFEY - SHE ILLUMINATES AND
OPENS FIRE AT SHIP IN DIRECTION OF
LUNGA POINT. THEN DISAPPEARS IN THE
DARKNESS. AT DAWN - PORTLAND
FIRED ON AND SUNK YUDACHI.
HIEI SUNK BY DIVE BOMBERS, P.M.

HIEI BB DEAD IN WATER
COUP DE GRACE
BY YUKIKAZE EVENING
OF NOV. 13.

YUDACHI DD
SUNK
3 SALVOS AFTER
DARKLIGHT BY
PORTLAND CA
PORTLAND CA
MAGARA CL
APPROX 1:45 AM
NOV. 13, 1942
LAFFEY
(SURVIVORS PICKED UP
AFTERNOON NOV. 13)

CAPE ESPERANCE

GUADALCANAL

CUSHING

ATLANTA

LUNGA PT

FLORIDA IS.

TULAGI

NOTE: THE POSITIONS OF HIEI, YUDACHI,
PORTLAND, CUSHING & ATLANTA
ARE SHOWN HERE AS THEY
WERE AT SUNRISE NOV. 13TH.
TORPEDO HIT PORTLAND AT
RUDDER. PORTLAND TOWED
BY FLEET TUG TO TULAGI
LATER IN AFTERNOON.

NGGELA CHANNEL

SEALARK CHANNEL

LENGO CHANNEL

Drawn by V. Richard
Hale, Jr. in 1990.

BUTLER, MEANS, EVINS & BROWNE

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

LAWYERS BUILDING

205 MAGNOLIA STREET

P. O. DRAWER 451

SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA 29304

THOMAS A. EVINS
T. SAM MEANS, JR.
R. E. BROWNE, III
CLYDE H. HAMILTON
J. BRUCE FOSTER
ELFORD H. MORGAN
ROBERT A. SHELOR, JR.
JAMES B. DRENNAN, III
H. SPENCER KING
JACK W. LAWRENCE

EDWARD R. COLE
THOMAS A. PHILLIPS

THOMAS B. BUTLER
(1903-1972)

TELEPHONE
AREA CODE 803
562-5630

November 17, 1975

Mr. Jim Bishop
Columnist
The Charlotte Observer
Charlotte, N. C. 28202

Dear Mr. Bishop:

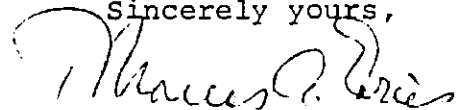
When your recent column, copy of which is enclosed, was published, a friend of mine sent it to me under the mistaken impression that the USS Laffey (DD724) was the ship I served in during World War II.

I do not know whether you are aware that this Laffey was the successor to a ship sunk off Guadalcanal in the early morning hours of November 13, 1942. A short time ago, I began to try to put together a memorandum for my children. I revived and revised an article I wrote not very long after the happenings described therein.

Because I think that this narrative more accurately reflects the movements and experience of the Laffey (DD459) during the Battle of Guadalcanal than does Morrison's account, I am sending a copy of this to the Navy.

Since you are obviously interested in Naval history, I hope you may enjoy reading the enclosure.

Sincerely yours,



THOMAS A. EVINS

TAE/cs

Encl.

cc: w/encl - Bureau of Personnel
Chief Naval Historian
Department of the Navy
Washington, D. C. 20360

Mrs. Agnes C. Sandifer
P. O. Box 2277-A
Spartanburg, S. C. 29302

Episode Guadalcanal

A narrative by Thomas A. Evins, the Torpedo Officer (LTj.g., USNR)
aboard the destroyer USS *Laffey* (DD-459) during the Naval Battle of
Guadalcanal on November 13, 1942.¹

The afternoons are usually hot nine degrees south of the Equator, and this afternoon was no exception. All the destroyers of our force had been at general quarters (battle readiness) for two days. Half the men were now snatching a few minutes sleep near their guns, while the others stood by ready to rouse them at a moment's notice. Word had just come that we could expect an attack by enemy torpedo planes.

"All right boys," I called. "Let's get on our feet. Aircraft attack in about forty minutes. There are supposed to be about twenty-five torpedo planes headed our way."

One sleepy lad stirred and looked up at me. "Jeez," he said, "could I get about twenty minutes more sleep? I'd still have twenty minutes to get ready."

This boy was ready and even anxious to get a shot at the Japs, but it was all in the day's work with him, and he never even considered that he might be spending his last few minutes on earth. He probably never heard of Sir Francis Drake and his famous game of bowls, and he would not be much interested if you told him.

We had been at Guadalcanal for two days. There were about twenty-five ships in our task force. Seven of these were transport and supply ships, and all during the previous day and that morning they had been lying-to near the beach while a steady stream of landing boats put ashore men and supplies for our Marines. Meanwhile, two of our cruisers and a destroyer had ripped into the Japanese shore positions with a steady tattoo of gunfire making matchwood of the palm trees behind the burning white beach of the island. Here and there along the shoreline fires were smoldering, and the remains of enemy landing craft strewn about the beach in a confusion of useless wreckage could be easily seen through binoculars.

I looked about me at the other ships. All seemed to have suddenly come alive as they swung into their positions. The great guns of the cruisers trained around covering the sector from which the attack was expected. Destroyers were leaving boiling white wakes as they raced to assume their proper places. Aboard our own ship, the lookouts strained their eyes toward the far horizon and the cloudless sky. Gunners gave their weapons a last minute check.

I was looking down at the deck and adjusting my binoculars when a lookout shouted, "There they are!"

"Where?"

"Right off the tip of Florida Island, sir. They seem to be fanning out."

Then I saw them; twin-engined torpedo bombers, flying low, fanning out for attack. As yet they were far out of the range of our guns. Our main battery swung around to cover them. I stared at the oncoming planes, fascinated. They were twin-engine "Betty" torpedo bombers, the first planes of this type that I had ever seen. Viewed at this distance they seemed to move as slowly as the buzzards that circle the green hills of home.

As Torpedo Officer of the USS *Laffey* (DD-459), I had no duties to perform unless the Machinegun Control Officer should be killed. My station was out in the open, so I had an excellent chance to observe the attack and there was nothing to distract my attention.

They came at us and we bided our time. The range closed rapidly. Now they were about five miles out. The ship seemed to flex her muscles and tense to meet the onslaught. Then came the command, "Commence firing," echoed by the first salvo from our main battery. The lighter guns held their fire.

Suddenly the sky about the enemy planes was alive with cold black anti-aircraft bursts. Things happened fast. The bursts increased in number as our guns belched fire and smoke, until it seemed that an orange and black wall of flying shrapnel was interposed between our ships and the enemy planes. Still they came on — some of them. Their ranks were thinning. Here and there the carcass of an enemy bomber added red flame and black smoke to the colorful picture. Now the "one point one"² and 20-mm machine guns began to chatter. More planes hit the water. They were right on top of us, but there were only two or three left. One of those crossed our bow astern of the ship ahead of us as a stream of tracers lost itself in her body. She was smoking and gliding steadily downward, but the *San Francisco* was in her path. She was deliberately steered into the stern of the cruiser and crashed there in a blaze of exploding gasoline.

There were a few torpedoes in the water. One seemed to be headed right for us. It would strike us amidships! Just then there was a spout of water. The torpedo had exploded short of its mark. Another just missed our bow. I looked up in time to see two "Bettys" attempting to escape toward Savo Island. They were being attacked by several of our fighter planes which had been unable to get at them until they were out of range of our ship's guns. In a few minutes both were burning in the water. The attack was over.

It was not until then that I looked around at the other ships. It seemed impossible that they should have all escaped, but it was none the less true. The *San Francisco* seemed to be having trouble with the burning plane which I later heard had caused the death of several men, but the damage, estimated in terms of her readiness for combat, was slight. This she proved during the next twelve hours.

Here and there a Japanese plane was still smoldering in the water. One of them was not far from us. You could still see the big red circles on her wings against the mottled bilious-brown background of her war paint. One of our sister destroyers was ordered to machine-gun it until it sank. In a few seconds it had disappeared.

By this time it was beginning to grow late, and we knew that the Japanese on the Island were watching our movements; trying to guess what we would do. An enemy task-force of great strength headed by two battleships had been reported in the area, and they must have been very much interested in trying to find out where we would spend the night. Our heaviest ship was a cruiser, and we were encumbered by the transports which would require protection against submarine and aircraft attack as they retired to Espiritu Santo, two days journey to the south. Certainly, they must have thought, we would not have the temerity to engage their vastly superior force; and if we did, it was our own funeral.

On signal from the flagship *San Francisco* we formed in a protective screen around our transports and headed for the open sea, southbound through Sea Lark Channel. It must have seemed to Japanese shore-watchers that we were planning to put plenty of sea water between us and their forces now bearing down on Guadalcanal at high speed.

As darkness came on, we were still headed south. We did not see or hear anything of the enemy, so we were allowed to relax a little. Expected enemy contacts do not always materialize.

The officers and men of the *Laffey* considered themselves veterans. We had come through the Battle of Cape Esperance a month earlier almost without a scratch, and each of us had confidence in the ability of the other to handle his assignment, regardless of the circumstances. If anything, we were a bit over-confident about tackling any little thing the Japanese could cook up.

There was no moon, and with the coming of darkness it got so black that you could not see your hand before your face. It was even difficult to make out the shapes of the mountains rising from the sea which had seemed so close that you could reach out and touch them in the glare of the tropical sun. In the darkness we turned back, all but the transports and the force left to protect them, each ship groping its way into her position in formation. The destroyers *Cushing**, *Laffey**, *Sterett* and *O'Bannon* led the thin, snake-like column stretching back more than three miles. Next came the antiaircraft cruiser *Atlanta**, flagship of Admiral Norman Scott, followed by Admiral Daniel Callaghan³ in the heavy cruiser *San Francisco*, then the *Portland*, the *Helena* with its splendid main battery of fifteen 6-inch guns and the *Juneau**, another ill-fated antiaircraft cruiser bristling with sixteen 5-inch/38 guns. Bringing up the rear were the destroyers *Aaron Ward*, *Barton**, *Monssen** and *Fletcher*, thirteen ships in all.

"Well, that should bring us luck," someone remarked. "We've got thirteen ships, and by the time we get back there it will just be coming up Friday the thirteenth."

That Friday, the thirteenth day of November 1942, was to prove a fateful day for us. It marked the beginning of the end for the Japanese on Guadalcanal. For many of the finest men I have ever known, it was the last day on earth. When it began at midnight, it was "as black as the pit, from pole to pole."

*Lost in action November 13, 1942.

There seemed to be unusual quiet throughout all the world as we steamed along. All equipment had long since been given its final test for battle. Every station was on the alert. I had no premonition about the coming engagement. I doubted that anything was going to happen. Operating in waters where there is enemy activity, a fighting ship is prepared for battle at a moment's notice. You never know what may be in store for you. Perhaps all of us had the feeling that it might be the same old story of false alarm, even though we were fully prepared for it to be otherwise.

The time between the coming of darkness and contact with the enemy seemed to race by. Not long after midnight, I was talking quietly with the torpedo director operator when the general alarm was sounded. The *Helena* with its sophisticated search radar had picked up the enemy coming directly at us between Guadalcanal and Savo. All hands were called to the super alert.

I scanned that general area with my binoculars until I thought my eyes would pop out of my head, but it was far too dark to make out anything as yet. Nobody said a word.

Suddenly I saw something.

"Looks like two bright wakes going from port to starboard across the bow of the *Cushing*." I told the talker at my elbow, "They seem to be about three thousand yards out. Right on top of us."

I turned to the torpedo director operator to tell him to train on them, but I saw he had anticipated the order. "Have you got that third ship? The one with the big silhouette? She looks like a cruiser."

I hardly heard his "Yes, sir" as I got the torpedo battery lined up to fire. The Japanese ships were moving very fast, but as they crossed our bow I was ready to fire.

"I have an enemy cruiser to starboard," I reported to the Bridge. "Request permission to fire torpedoes."

"Permission not granted," was the prompt reply.

Neither side had, as yet, made any sort of illumination or fired a shot. Precious time lost robbed us of any element of surprise we might have achieved. I instructed the director operator to stay on his target as she went down our starboard side. I knew that the order to commence firing could not be long delayed.

Like lightning, both forces lashed out at each other. The three enemy ships we had been watching turned on their searchlights illuminating the cruisers which were following us. They were on only momentarily. Within less time than it takes to tell it, the lights were doused by our gunfire.

Already our main battery was firing away with a roar so constant as to create the impression that there was no noise at all. When the No. 2 gun on a 1,900-ton destroyer is trained around to either beam, personnel at the torpedo director are within a few feet of its muzzle. With 53 pounds of smokeless powder exploding every 3 or 4 seconds, producing a great rosette of flame accompanied

by a devastating concussion, the inevitable effect is to leave the operators temporarily deaf and blind - another good reason for launching all torpedoes before firing begins. But we still had our target, and I knew I would be allowed to get the torpedoes away. I was just about to ask the talker to get permission from the Bridge when I saw his eyes get as big as half-dollars.

"Fire torpedoes to port!" he shouted to me.

Although the torpedo battery was trained out to starboard, I needed no further explanation, for there, bearing down on us from the port side, and on a collision course, was what seemed to be the biggest man-made object ever created. The Japanese battleship *Hiei*⁴. She was only about a thousand yards away, and there was clearly not a second to lose. She was so close aboard as to be thoroughly illuminated by the flash from the gunfire of our ships. The director operator would have no trouble in seeing her, and he was already getting on her as fast as he could. The torpedo tubes amidships followed our frantic readjustments. Though the first torpedo was probably on its way to its mark in less than a minute, it seemed like an interminable time before I was able to begin to launch our single spread of five gas-operated steel fish. Meanwhile the great battleship came relentlessly on, as if to crush us as a sledgehammer might flatten a mechanical toy.

As the torpedoes splashed into the water and darted off toward their mark, I could think of but one thing. They simply must go home. They had to hit that battleship! The fact that we were ourselves in imminent danger of being blown sky high never occurred to me, and I dare say it did not occur to any other man in the ship. It has been my observation that in battle you are much too busy carrying out your assigned duties to worry about consequences or feel any fear. The whole business of fighting a ship is much too absorbing to require any personal bravery.

For a few seconds we could follow the wakes of the torpedoes; then they disappeared into the blackness of the night. Any result achieved was lost in the general confusion.

When I looked up from watching the torpedo wakes depart, I realized that we were racing for our lives. If we were to have any chance of survival at all we must get past the bow of that battleship. It was going to be close, very close. We were speeding up perceptibly. The general alarm was sounded for the second time that night. This time for collision! You could almost feel the great propellers biting into the water as we sped forward. There was always some question as to whether we would make it or not until we had actually shaved by with only about ten feet to spare. It would have been a ridiculous situation in peace time. In battle it was unbelievable. Nothing remotely like this has happened since the days when sailing ships fought in hand to hand combat. The chances that it will ever happen again are too remote to be handled by any computer. As Admiral Halsey later said, "This was perhaps the fiercest naval battle ever fought." It had no moment "fiercer" than this.

Great moments in our little personal histories pass us by unnoticed. If I (or anyone else in our ship) had had the presence of mind to sew the sea with depth charges set to explode at 30 feet as we crossed the bow of the *Hiei*, she would have been on the bottom of "Ironbottom Bay" two days sooner.

Sometime later (when I thought of it), I solemnly decided that no order to drop depth charges could ever have been executed, however timely it might have been. After all, the charges were set on "safe" to protect us sailors if we should lose our ship, and we were steaming in column with eleven of our own ships following. At the height of battle it is impossible for human beings to execute an unplanned maneuver. Usually the victory is given to the side making the lesser number of unforgivable blunders. So — keep it as simple as possible but plan carefully and practice, practice, practice, practice.

It is doubtful whether *Hiei* saw us until we were too close aboard for her guns to depress sufficiently to cover us, and now for a moment we enjoyed the privilege of being able to fire at her while she was still unable to return our fire. We did just that. You could actually see the bursts behind the portholes of her Bridge, and her superstructure looked like a 4th of July fireworks display as our 5-inch projectiles riddled it. Of course, we could do no damage to her armored turrets and conning tower, but we did the best we could firing at her weaker armor. This was probably sufficient to disrupt her communications and help persuade Admiral Abe to disengage his forces; one of the decisions that played a major role in the American strategic victory.

This comfortable state of affairs did not last long. We had done sufficient damage to call the attention of the Japanese ships to our presence in their midst, and they set about eliminating us from battle.

Dead ahead of us were two enemy destroyers and behind us was the enemy main battle line. We had turned from the battleship to engage the destroyers which were more profitable targets for our guns, but the big one had felt our sting and was not through with us.

I had gone down to the torpedo tubes to talk to our operators and get their observations of our torpedo attack on the battleship. I was just about to climb the superstructure to the bridge to make my report to the Captain when they turned the lights on us. The whole world seemed to burst suddenly into the brilliance of an eerie blue midday as the star shells burst over our heads. One minute there was total darkness; the next, you could have read a newspaper on deck. I heard somebody close by say, "Uh oh," and the next second I was hanging on to a stanchion trying to keep myself from being thrown from the ship like a rodeo rider from an untamed steer. She seemed to throw herself into the air then nosedive for the bottom.

Tons of water poured down over the superstructure. It was difficult to stand under the weight of it, and every man topside was drenched to the skin. A shell passed through the amidships deckhouse right under my nose, throwing a shower of electrical sparks as it hit a junction box. I braced myself against an explosion, but none came. The shell had passed right through the ship and hit the water on the other side without exploding. Judging from the hole it left, it must have been fired from an 8-inch gun. Blue dye everywhere testified to the probability that the *San Francisco* had let us have it. Her shells carried blue splash dye. The Japanese guns were loaded with thin-skinned bombardment ammunition intended for Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.

Our principal damage was from a torpedo hit at the stern of the ship. It left her whole after end a twisted mass of wreckage. I did not know then that one of the forward guns had sustained a

direct hit, but I soon realized from the debris strewn about the decks that there had been at least one hit higher up in the superstructure. Miraculously, there was no more firing at us, and the lights which had played upon us were extinguished. The ship was left on an even keel, dead in the water and burning aft where fuel oil was seeping from her punctuated tanks and soaking the mattresses in the main sleeping quarters. Fortunately, no flame from the fire showed outside the ship to disclose our presence to the enemy.

In a matter of seconds we had been ripped to pieces. There was no time for fear or even apprehension; unless you had some job to perform, you simply hung on to the nearest hand hold and wondered what was coming next. In a fascinated daze I had watched the Japanese battleship, which was still close to us, fire a salvo that seemed to be headed our way. I followed the tracers with a detachment that even then was amazing to me, but I remember that there was a distinct feeling of relief when the shells passed high over our heads. I did not look to see what her target might have been.

There was plenty of work to be done. We were now completely out of action, but there was a distinct possibility that we might remain afloat, and there were the wounded to be attended to and the confused to be directed toward some useful employment. I went aft along the main deck toward the fire. **Bill Doyle**, the Executive Officer, was already directing the efforts being made to bring it under control. With all systems out, damage control was reduced to handy billys.⁵

One of the gun mounts had been completely wrecked by the torpedo hit, but there were still some who were alive and conscious inside what had been the splinter shield. I crawled up the slanting deck and into the mount to help in evacuating the wounded to the only available dressing station. Several had sustained horrible injuries, and others were already dead; but there was one lad in particular whose plight was heart-rending. Though both his legs had been broken, he had not lost consciousness. Fire was burning below the deck to which he was pinned. There was little hope that we could free him from the trap in which he was caught.

My recollection of the minutes during which we found the fire and sought to save that man have merged into one impression of haste and effort. Two torpedomen were working frantically to free him. Occasionally small portions of powder would explode from the heat of the fire, but we seemed to be getting it under control. It was even reported to the Bridge that we had succeeded.

In spite of all our efforts, the situation deteriorated. The decks were beginning to get hot. The order was passed to abandon ship. It was then that I heard one of the torpedomen in the gun mount shout, "We got him!" It was a moment of real triumph, for in a few minutes it would have no longer been possible for the rescue work to continue. A metal stretcher was brought, and the uncomplaining lad was strapped into it. There was no time to do more than put him, stretcher and all, on a life raft. Almost everyone had left the ship. I sat down on the deck and carefully removed my shoes and socks. The last I ever saw of either of the torpedomen or their wounded comrade was when I slipped over the side and swam out to my assigned raft. They were then just leaving the ship. Their names all appeared on the list of fatal casualties.⁶

It never occurred to me that our ship might explode. That she would become a blazing inferno was inevitable, but if I thought about it at all, I assumed that all the magazines in the after end of the ship were completely flooded by the sea which the torpedo hit had let in. When she did explode, my first reaction was one of surprise. It was as if an old and trusted friend had suddenly struck me a violent blow with a baseball bat.

Over on Guadalcanal they said that when she exploded it threw debris six hundred feet into the air. I did not see it. I felt the concussion of the explosion and then immediately had the impression that I was no more than a wreck of what I used to be. My right arm seemed to be gone entirely. I had trouble catching my breath, and I had little or no will to resist the wave of hot water which seemed to be carrying me down and down interminably. Only my life jacket pulled me up. The explosion was so blinding and the night so dark that I literally could not see my hand before my face.

With my left hand I could feel that there was something left of my right arm which gave me momentary encouragement, but I knew that I was having trouble breathing, and when I felt a numb spot on my back and put my finger into a hole there, I experienced the horrible fear that a piece of metal had gone into my back and passed through my gizzard up into my lungs. I was terrified! Actually, a piece of metal about the size of a dime had collapsed my right lung and was resting peacefully in the middle of my chest about an inch from my heart, but I did not know that until ten years later. I am still wearing it; right where it was then.

We had abandoned ship in an orderly manner and our whaleboats had been put into the water before the ship exploded. In fact, the last time that I saw our Captain, **Bill Hank**, he was putting our little dog into one of these boats. The dog survived, but Bill was never seen again. It was into one of these boats that I eventually found my way.

Not long after the explosion and while I was still convinced that my time had surely come, I saw a life raft a few feet away, and with the aid of a sailor who was already aboard I crawled up onto the edge of the "doughnut" and stretched out flat. In this position I found it a little easier to breathe. My best friend aboard the ship was "Slim" Barham, a "Trade School boy" out of the Class of '35. In a few minutes he came by in one of the whaleboats. He was tying all the life rafts together and was going to try to tow them ashore. With some difficulty I persuaded him to take me into his boat which was already crowded with wounded, some of them dying. Of course they could make no light of any kind, and first aid was next to impossible. The only medication available was some morphine. Somebody gave me a shot of this which did wonders for my morale. I slept.

At dawn small boats came out from Guadalcanal, and I was among the first to be loaded aboard. With my collapsed lung I wasn't breathing very well, but then I only knew that I was short of breath, had a hole in my back and a useless right arm. I was lying on the flat bottom of the small landing craft. The boy next to me was dead. So far as I could tell, the only man around who ranked me was the First Lieutenant of the *Atlanta*. The Coxswain who was driving had a buddy on a .50-cal. machine gun in the bow. They proposed to go half a mile out of the way to slaughter some Japanese sailors who were swimming about in their underwear fifteen miles from shore. It was hard to raise enough hell to get us back on course for Guadalcanal when you had to do it in a whisper, with the

not undivided attention of the SOP whose right shin was set at an angle of 45°, but we stopped the massacre.

The next thing I remember, I was lying on a bunk in the Sick Officer's Quarters of the First Marine Hospital and looking up at the Japanese shipping marks on the ceiling. The place had been built entirely of Jap packing boxes. It was one of the buildings the enemy had thrown together when they first came to the Island, long before the Marines had landed and taken it from them.

The doctors on Guadalcanal were working with the utmost dispatch. Only the gravest emergency cases were being admitted to surgery. Nothing less than an amputation was sufficient excuse for more attention than a dose of a sulfa drug and a shot of anti-tetanus and (of all things) a mini-bottle of bourbon.

* * * * *

Editor's Notes:

1. This is a copy (with a few corrections and very minor editing) of the narrative on file with the Ships' Histories Branch of the Naval Historical Center at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. In his covering letter of November 17, 1975, Mr. Evins explained that he wrote it "not very long after the happenings described" and then revised it (in 1975?) when he put together a memorandum for his children. Mr. Evins died in his hometown of Spartanburg, SC, in August 1991.
2. The quadruple 1.1-inch/75 machine cannon mount on the *Laffey's* after gun platform.
3. The Officer in Tactical Command (OTC) for this night surface action.
4. A *Kongo*-class battleship displacing close to 32,000 tons and armed with a main battery of eight 14-inch guns.
5. Handy billy: A small portable water pump.
6. The *Laffey's* official casualty list prepared after the war lists 59 men killed (3 Officer; 56 Enlisted).
7. A term sometimes used by members of the U.S. Naval Reserve (exclusively!) for the graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
Commander, USNR (Ret.)
20 June 1995

Firsthand Account: Paul M. Sowder, SOM3c¹

"My battle station was phone talker for Lt. Tom Evins on the flying bridge. I had access to all conversations throughout the entire ship on my "JA" circuit.

"On the night of October 11th Admiral Scott gave the go-ahead, and we turned towards Cape Esperance. During the battle everybody was busy shooting. The star shells began going out. Captain Hank had given the orders to load star shells and standby to illuminate, but somebody else fired star shells first as the battle broke. The Aoba was getting away. Captain Hank ordered, 'Get that cruiser!' Other orders followed: 'Shift fire,' 'Load ready service,' 'Commence fire.' Needless to say, four star shells were in the breech and four more were in the hoist. So we put eight star shells into the base of her stack, and she got a red glow on. The projectileman in Mount #2 even threw the two practice-brass sand loads at them when the hoist didn't feed fast enough. (Bet the Japs thought we were hard up for ammunition!

"Captain Hank had every gun crew work out on the loading machine for one hour and fifteen minutes every morning the ship was in commission - in port or not.

"I spent many a watch in the pilot house with Captain Hank. He was the most admired and respected man I have ever known. Had he survived - and if I could have served with him - I would have been a 20-year man too.

"On the night of November 13th - after we had taken the transports down Sea Lark Channel - we came back. You could smell the sweet smell of flowers blowing towards us. Captain Hank said that we were going back in to get them.

"Tom Evins said to me, 'Ask permission to fire torpedoes to starboard.' I relayed it to the Bridge. It came back, 'Permission denied.' He said to me, 'What's the matter with those people!' 'I've got two beautiful targets on the starboard bow.' (He sure had a heavy southern drawl.) Word came up, 'Fire torpedoes to port.' Next I heard, 'My God, that looks like the Chicago Flatiron Building!' Mounts #1 and #2 were pounding the Hiei's bridge. She was so close that the muzzle blast and the projectile exploding were almost simultaneous. 'Swede' Hendrickson, on the #2 20-mm, put at least two magazines into her bridge.

"Those 14-inch guns looked to me like 50-gal. drums with their bottoms cut out - and they were right at eye-level. I thought, don't fire, damn it, the concussion will sink us! She passed about 40 feet astern of us. Part of her bridge was laying down on the forward turret, and you could feel the vibration of those massive screws as she passed. She turned to her port and passed up our starboard side and disappeared into the dark.

"The Hiei fired one salvo from her stern turret and straddled us. The flying bridge is 57 feet above the waterline, and I thought somebody had a fire hose on the foremast.

"Then the Jap destroyers came down the port side. We took hits in our #2 Mount, chart house, torpedo director (nothing left but a piece of pipe about a foot high) and the port flag bag.

"Then the Long Lance torpedo hit the fanfail - Mount #4 was sitting higher than #3 - and we started to burn. No power or pumps - couldn't get a portable handy billy pump started - tried a bucket brigade with combat helmets - about as effective as peeing on a forest fire.

"Captain Hank sent Bill Davis to get Lt. Barham - we were up on the port side of the break in the forecastle deck. Lt. Barham showed up on the port quarterdeck. 'What do you want, Captain?' Reply was, 'Get us

under way and I will get you out of here.' The Engineering Officer answered, 'Both screws and the rudder are gone. What do you want me to do - set sail!?'

"The Executive Officer, Lt. Comdr. Doyle, came forward from Secondary Conn with a piece of metal in his stomach right above his belt. He said, 'I don't think there is much else we can do.' Then Captain Hank said, 'I think we'd better abandon ship.'

"I went off the #1 bit, after seeing the Cushing get hit. I swam around in front of the bow to get the bridge between me and the fire, and then she blew. Oh boy, it's raining - it will keep this fuel oil from burning. It wasn't water - it was metal coming down!

"Found raft after a long swim - crowded - hooked feet in ropes - breast stroked to help guide. Sun came up - Cushing was burning - Atlanta afloat but dead in the water - Portland making circles next to beach - Jap destroyer, hull down, on other side of Savo Island. Portland fired three salvos from forward turret as she circled (rudder jammed). The third try took Jap destroyer down.

"An SBD ('Dauntless' dive bomber) came over - waggled wings. About two hours later an LCVP came out from CUB #1 and took us to Lunga Point. Spent two weeks on Guadalcanal. Came home on the USS Barnett (AP-11).

"Admiral Halsey described November 13th the best of anybody in Time magazine - 'A barroom brawl with the lights out!'"

* * * * *

1 Excerpts from his letter to the editor (received by E. A. Wilde, Jr. on 5/23/96) thanking him for the booklet he had received.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal¹
12-15 November 1942

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal; November 12-15, 1942

U. S. NAVAL COMMUNICATION SERVICE
Cactus—Ringbolt Area

Channel No.

PARAPHRASE

SECRET

Precedence

CINCPAC WISHES TO CONGRATULATE ALL WHO TOOK PART IN THE BATTLE OF LAST EVENING X ALSO ALL YOUR SHIPMATES IN THIS VICINITY EXTEND THEIR CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ON YOUR GREAT FIGHT X YOU HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL OF DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY AND MADE IT FEASIBLE FOR OUR SHIPS, SUBMARINES AND AIRCRAFT NOT YET ENGAGED TO MEET AND DELIVER MORE DAMAGING BLOWS ^{TO} THE ENEMY .

COPIES TO: ATLANTA
COMDESDIV 10

✓ LAFFEY
MONSSEN
BARTON; CUSHING

AUTHENTICATED

Daniel Harris
DANIEL HARRIS, ENSIGN, USNR.

TOR

DATE

14 NOVEMBER 1942

CWO

RELEASE

Originator

RDO
HONOLULU

Action

COMSOPAC

Information

Time Group 130217

Editor's Note:

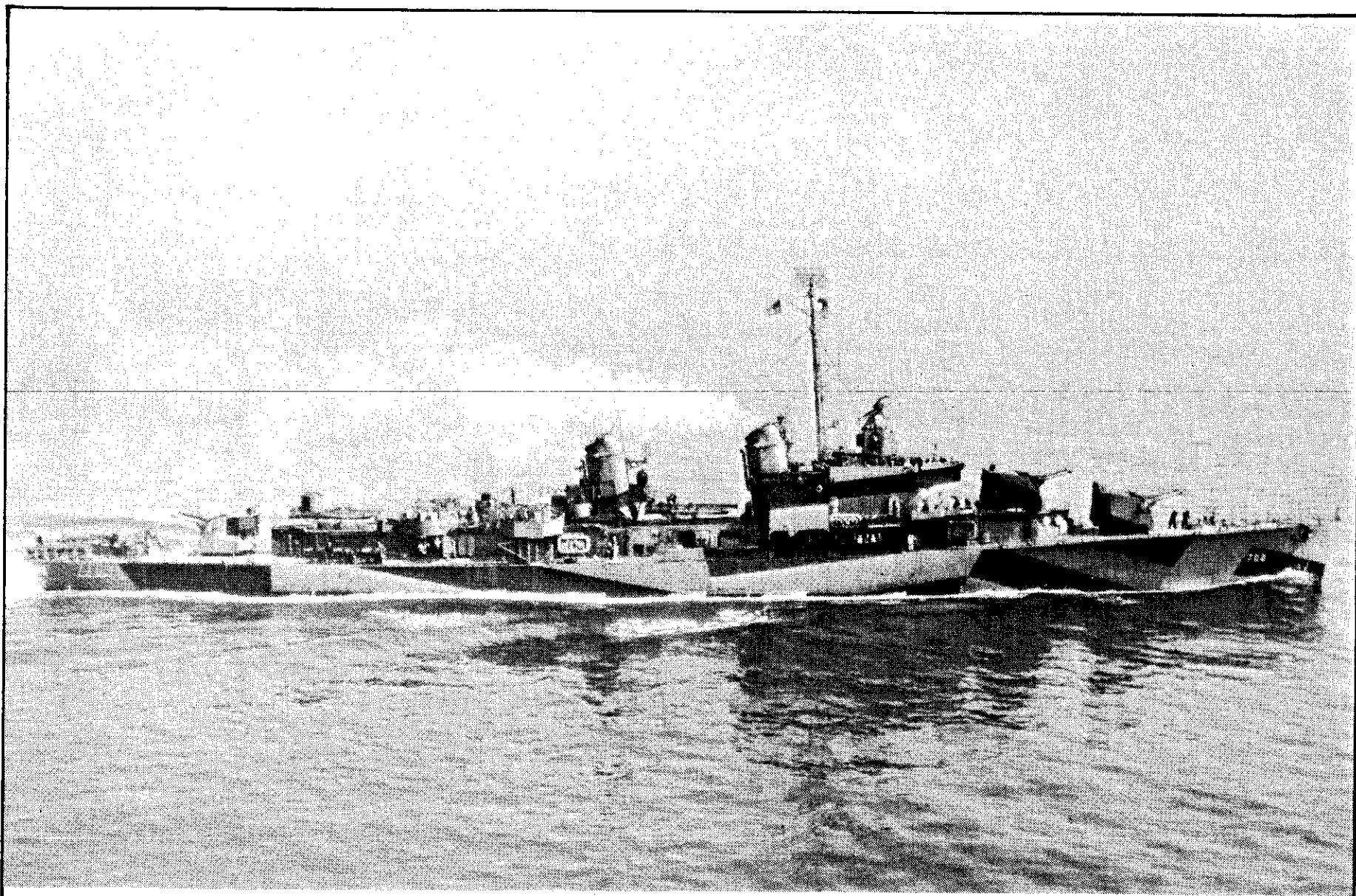
This is a message from Admiral C. W. Nimitz (Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet) to Admiral W. F. Halsey (Commander South Pacific Force) following the surface action on the night of 12-13 November 1942. All five of the ships listed for copies were lost in this battle. (Copy from the U.S.S. Monssen (DD-436) file.)

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 1995

Hank*

William Edwin Hank was born at Norfolk, Va., 25 September 1902 and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1925. During the years before World War II, he served at various shore stations and in *New York*, *Hull*, and *Saratoga*. Commissioned Lieutenant Commander in 1940, Hank took command of destroyer *Laffey* 1 April 1942. He received the Navy Cross for his skillful handling of the ship during the Battle of Cape Esperance October 11-12 and a second Navy Cross for heroism during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal 12-13 November. As *Laffey* gallantly fought battleship *Hiei* against great odds in a decisive fleet action that helped turn the course of the war, she was sunk by large caliber gunfire and a torpedo. Lt. Cmdr. Hank was reported missing and presumed dead 14 November. His ship received the Presidential Unit Citation.

* Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume 3. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1968.



The Sumner-class destroyer U.S.S. Hank (DD-702), named after the commanding officer of the U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459), Lieutenant Commander William E. Hank, USN, who died when his ship was sunk in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on 13 November 1942. LCdr. Hank was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for heroism during that battle. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, class of 1925. (USNI collection.)

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to

*LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM EDWIN HANK
UNITED STATES NAVY*

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in the line of his profession during action with enemy forces on the night of November 12-13, 1942, on which occasion the force to which he was attached engaged at close quarters and defeated a superior enemy force. His daring and determination contributed materially to the victory which prevented the enemy from accomplishing their purposes."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy

*Retyped from a draft citation on
file at the Naval Historical Cen-
ter, Washington, D.C.*

*E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 1996*

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

Medals Awarded; (Loss of ship, November 13, 1942)

SILVER STAR MEDAL

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM THOMAS DOYLE, JR., USN

CITATION:¹

"While serving as Executive Officer of the USS LAFFEY and engaged in action against the enemy on the night of November 13, 1942, Commander (then Lt. Comdr.) W. T. Doyle, Jr., USN, after his ship had been struck by an enemy torpedo and caught fire aft, immediately organized a fire-fighting party from personnel assembled near his station at After Conn, and the fire mains being ruptured, so efficiently fought this fire with ammunition cases filled with water and passed from hand to hand, and later with a small gasoline handy billy that the fire was brought under control. However, oil from the LAFFEY's tanks again became ignited and in spite of the immediate danger of a general explosion and the constant danger from small explosions of powder in the area, he fought this fire until all hope of saving his ship had to be abandoned. At this time, and on his advice, the Commanding Officer gave the order to abandon ship, and Commander Doyle proceeded to see that this order was executed in the most efficient manner possible under the circumstances. While waiting in a lifeboat to take the Captain away from the burning ship, the ship exploded in Commander Doyle's face, wounding him painfully and casting him into the sea some distance from his lifeboat. In spite of the fact that he was wounded in this explosion, he efficiently directed the gathering together of the surviving personnel into a group from which they could be efficiently rescued.

"It is my opinion that if Commander Doyle had not suggested that the ship be abandoned and if this order had not been carried out as promptly as was done, a great many lives would have been lost. It is no exaggeration to state that Commander Doyle is directly responsible for the survival of at least 25% of the LAFFEY's personnel."

* * * * *

¹ Source: A draft citation on an index card at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The wording is from a letter by Thomas A. Evins dated September 19, 1945, recommending an "APPROPRIATE AWARD" and was probably changed on the formal citation.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

BRONZE STAR MEDALS (with Combat "V"):

LIEUTENANT EUGENE ALEXANDER BARHAM, USN

CITATION:

"For meritorious conduct in action while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on November 13, 1942. As Engineer Officer during the action, Lt. BARHAM, without regard for his personal safety, re-entered the engine spaces, which had been rendered untenable by both a torpedo hit and a major shell hit, and made an inspection for the purpose of determining the possibilities of repairing the steam lines and getting the ship under way. Lt. BARHAM also aided the Executive Officer in assembling all survivors after the vessel had exploded. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

* * * * *

LIEUTENANT THOMAS A. EVINS, USNR

CITATION:

"For meritorious conduct in action while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on November 13, 1942. As Torpedo Officer, Lt. EVINS, after all torpedoes had been expended against the enemy and after his destroyer had been hit and set afire by a Japanese torpedo, proceeded aft and rendered invaluable service to the Executive Officer in evacuating the wounded and fighting the rapid spreading fire. Also, completely disregarding his own safety, Lt. EVINS entered Number Four gun enclosure and attempted to remove a shipmate wedged in the wreckage. When the spreading fire suddenly flared and ignited powder inside the gun enclosure, he would not withdraw until ordered to do so by the Executive Officer. Moreover, when the destroyer subsequently blew up aft, Lt. EVINS was wounded by shrapnel. His exemplary courage and conduct were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

* * * * *

LESTER EDWARD MURPHY, MACHINIST, USN

CITATION:

"For meritorious conduct in action while serving on board a destroyer which was badly damaged during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on November 13, 1942. During and following the action, Machinist MURPHY, by his technical skill and devotion to duty, was an inspiration to his shipmates. He entered the steam-filled engine spaces wrecked by enemy torpedo and gunfire, to assist the Engineer Officer in surveying and estimating the possibilities of repairing the steam lines sufficiently to again get the ship under way. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

* * * * *

NAVY & MARINE CORPS MEDALS:²

JAMES ELGIN GEER, TORPEDOMAN FIRST CLASS, USN
and
FREDERICK DALE SANDERSON, TORPEDOMAN FIRST CLASS, USN

CITATION: (Identical citations)

"For extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty while serving on the U.S.S. LAFHEY during that vessel's participation in the defeat of superior enemy forces on November 13, 1942, off Savo Island. When all torpedoes on board had been expended against enemy targets and the LAFHEY having been hit and set afire aft by an enemy torpedo, he proceeded aft and was of invaluable assistance in evacuating the wounded. With complete disregard for his own safety he entered Number Four gun enclosure and by use of a sledge was able to release W.C. Miller, Seaman Second Class who was wedged in by wreckage, and aided in getting Miller over the side into a life raft."

* * * * *

1 Source: Officer biographies and a file of draft citations on index cards at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

2 Awarded posthumously. James Geer was listed as missing in action after the Laffey sank on November 13, 1942. Frederick Sanderson was mortally wounded when the ship blew up, and he died in the ship's boat before reaching shore. The man identified as "W.C. Miller" in this citation was probably Walter James Miller, the only Miller assigned to the ship. This man was initially listed as missing in action, so he also may have been killed when the ship exploded.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

The U.S.S. Laffey*

When the long, hard wars are over
And the smoke has cleared away,
They will still talk of the Laffey--
And the night she made 'em pay:
Just a game U.S. destroyer,
She tore in against a bunch
Of the huskiest opponents
And she gave 'em punch for punch!

There were battleships and cruisers
All around her, aft and fore...
What to do? There was one answer--
Go in swinging from the floor!
It was death, and well she knew it,
And she never had a chance,
But before the foemen got her
How she kicked 'em in the pants!

First she charged a heavy cruiser;
As she grazed it by ten feet,
She was like a blooming taxi
In a reckless driving meet.
She got in at such close quarters
That her startled, dizzy foe
Thought it couldn't be authentic
And might be a picture show.

Then some dreadnoughts she encountered--
'Twas enough to raise her hairs,
But the Laffey had a system--
She just took 'em on in pairs!....
Enemy destroyers also
Came to join the growing din,
But she just roared down the alley
And yelled "Set 'em up agin!"

Bulldog in a cage of lions--
What a mess of 'em she made!
Yes, she had to die to do it,
But the lady made the grade!
There were no laughs on the Laffey;
Grim and bitter was the show--
But I figure there is laughter
Where the great, stout-hearted go.

John Paul Jones and Captain Lawrence--
Farragut and Fighting Bob--
I can hear their laughter ringing
As they greet each Laffey gob;
Not the laughter of amusement--
Not the laughter of good fun--
But the laughter of the valiant
When the bitter job's well done.

* By the syndicated poet H. I. Phillips. This poem appeared in the January 18, 1943, edition of The Sun Dial (city unknown).

Destroyer Laffey Fights Epic of Sea

**Torpedoes Jap Battleship. Then Enters Duel
to Death With Other Warcraft Until Sunk**

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 12. (AP)—At the height of a violent sea battle in the Solomons, the huge gray hulk of a Jap battleship came slashing through the darkness, her engines driving her at a speed of close to 25 knots.

In her path was the audacious U.S.S. Laffey, the first of the swift new series of destroyers we had built.

The captain of the Laffey, Lieut. Comdr. W. E. Hank of Norfolk, Va., and her crew, were set for a kill that night. A few moments before, they had silenced the guns of a Jap cruiser. But this was bigger game.

RUSHES AT HUGE FOE

The report of the 12th Naval District told today of the sea epic, of the battle that raged Nov. 12 and 13.

The Laffey rocketed straight at the vast shape of the Jap battle wagon, her engines racing at "emergency full." To the crew of the destroyer it must have appeared that Comdr. Hank was hurling his vessel at the enemy battleship in a head-on suicide thrust. But he had other plans—plans that had to be true to the last decimal.

When the range was right Comdr. Hank let go with a salvo of torpedoes. But the Laffey was moving almost as fast as the torpedoes. And it was clear that with both ships heading at full speed for the same square yard of ocean, the destroyer was going to be there first. But by how much? Every man held his breath.

MARGIN OF 10 FEET

The Navy report said "as the bows crossed, an alert Jap on the forward deck could have tossed a hand grenade onto the deck of the destroyer." The margin was just over 10 feet. But the racing Laffey got clear in time. It appeared that two of the torpedoes hit the battleship.

And then, as a parting insult, the Laffey's four 5-inch guns were turned on the battleship's massive superstructure, focused on the bridge.

The bridge appeared literally to pulverize and blow away. "It was shot completely off the ship," the Navy stated.

FIGHT AGAINST ODDS

The battleship started blazing away with secondary guns—she couldn't depress her larger batteries far enough—as the Laffey widened the range. Then the little destroyer found herself in deeper trouble. She had separated from her companion ships and was surrounded by the enemy. There was a battleship on her stern, a second on her port beam and two large Jap destroyers on the port bow.

The Laffey and the two Jap destroyers opened fire simultaneously. The Laffey put one Jap out of action and left her burning briskly. But the other put a torpedo into our ship and got a fair hit on the Laffey's deck.

JAP CRAFT EXPLODES

The Laffey still had three of her five-inch guns working, and turned them on the remaining Jap destroyer in a no-quarter dual at point-blank range. Damage to both ships was tremendous. One after another the Laffey's guns were silenced. Finally she was down to a single big gun. But she kept on fighting. The Jap destroyer tried to creep away. But she exploded and sank.

The Laffey was left alone on the darkened sea. But she was a sorry sight of a ship, with all her guns silenced and a bad fire out of control. Then the Jap battleship whose bridge had been shot away straddled the Laffey with a salvo of 14-inchers. The destroyer was almost swamped by the splash.

VIOLENT BLAST

The fire was burning without hope of recovery. The men were put on life rafts; the others in life jackets. Comdr. Hank gave orders to abandon ship.

Comdr. Hank and three other officers were on deck forward. A medical officer was bringing up the last wounded man from sick bay. A violent explosion ripped the Laffey apart. The medical officer was trapped below; the captain was never seen again. The Laffey sank immediately.

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

List of Officers; 13 November 1942¹

** <u>Hank</u> , William Edwin	LCdr.	USN	Commanding Officer
* <u>Doyle</u> , William Thomas, Jr.	LCdr.	USN	Executive Officer
<u>Barham</u> , Eugene Alexander	Lt.	USN	Engineering Officer
* <u>Bergman</u> , Eldo William	Lt.	USN	First Lieutenant
* <u>Ratliff</u> , William K.	Lt.	USN	Gunnery Officer
<u>Damon</u> , Arthur H., Jr.	Ltj.g.	USNR	Communications Off.
* <u>Evins</u> , Thomas A.	Ltj.g.	USNR	Torpedo Officer
** <u>Finch</u> , Joseph W., Jr.	Ltj.g.	USNR	Ass't. Communications
* <u>Rice</u> , George A., Jr.	Ltj.g.	USNR	Ass't. Gunnery Off.
<u>Wanggaard</u> , Lars, Jr.	Ltj.g.	USN	Ass't. Gunnery Off.
* <u>Haines</u> , Joseph Edward	Ens.	USNR	Ass't. Engineering
* <u>McGann</u> , Patrick Henry	Ens.	USN	Ass't. Navigator
* <u>Sterrett</u> , David Stafford	Ens.	USN	Ass't. First Lieut.
<u>Williams</u> , James, Jr.	Ens.	USNR	Ass't. Engineering
** <u>Michelson</u> , Aaron S.	Ltj.g.	USNR (MC)	Medical Officer

* * * * *

¹ Compiled with the assistance of Captain Patrick H. McGann, USN (Ret.), and by reference to the report of personnel casualties by Lt. E. A. Barham, USN, dated 15 November 1942.

* Wounded (** Killed) when the ship was lost due to enemy action in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on 13 November 1942.

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

Muster Roll of the Crew, 13 November 1942¹

AFRICANO, Louis Johnnie	602-00-26	F3c
AGRELIUS, Wilbur Davis	618-06-56	FC3c
*ALFORD, Thomas Earl	268-92-75	F2c
*ALMEIDA, Frank	204-28-36	CWT
ALMOND, Harry Douglas	262-62-57	S1c
*AMBLER, Arthur William	610-24-83	F1c
ATKINSON, Robert Prichard	272-83-00	F2c
**BAER, Frank Leroy	243-63-59	RM2c
*BAILEY, Richard Ogden	356-00-55	FC2c
**BANFIELD, Clyde Lewis	291-72-14	F2c
*BARKER, Raymond Edward	258-18-34	CM2c
**BARNES, Donald Leroy	342-17-80	EM2c
*BECICKA, Joseph Wesley	321-21-39	WT2c
**BECKENDORF, Orville Leroy	316-41-64	MM1c
*BELL, Lee Duff	385-44-01	WT2c
*BENNETT, Elmer James	346-59-56	SF3c
**BERENDT, Albert	337-04-24	MM1c
BINGHAM, Albert Warren	356-49-56	S1c
BIRD, Thomas Ivan	375-90-35	Bmkr2c
*BLANCHARD, Max Carliss	311-82-19	F1c
**BLEDSOR, William Roy	632-39-50	S2c
BONCOSKY, Ralph Frank ²	300-??-92	S1c
**BRANHAM, Jack	287-34-53	S1c
BROMAN, Robert Lowell	383-82-12	S2c
**BROUGHTON, David Houston	262-39-62	TM3c
BROWN, Brewer Timothy	636-33-36	Matt2c
**BROWN, Charlie William	272-85-27	Matt2c
**BROWN, Donald Howard	250-50-36	FC1c
*BROWN, Frank Elisha	662-22-82	SC3c
**BROWNLIE, Earl Vernon	386-09-17	S1c
BURK, Daniel Madison	337-65-34	S2c
*BUSH, Oscar Durwoos	656-05-38	F2c
*CAMPBELL, Thomas Mitchel	624-28-26	SC3c
CARR, John Thomas	346-86-46	S1c
*CARRIGAN, Keith LaVerne	632-40-11	F2c
*CARTER, Delmar Laverne	321-18-72	EM1c
*CASEY, Arvelle Ward	624-28-21	S1c
*CHADA, Theodore, Jr.	620-18-90	F1c
*CHARMAN, Richard Gordon	414-37-02	S1c
**CHASE, Guy LaVerne	372-40-87	S2c
**CHURCHILL, Clayton Leroy, Jr.	342-30-69	GM3c
*COKER, Robert Harry	223-36-51	CRM
*COLEMAN, Walter Harold	272-00-04	CGM
**CONNOLLY, James Emmett	372-26-67	GM3c
CURTIS, Johnny Marvin	356-72-96	SOM3c
*DALEY, Jeremiah Joseph	201-18-39	CBM
**DARUGNA, Louis (n)	668-19-50	F1c
*DAVIS, William Probert	283-42-45	S1c
*DENNIS, Lores Wilfred	291-54-90	GM2c
DEVITT, Richard	393-31-37	S1c
**DICKEN, Marion Upton	372-40-76	S2c

DIEDRICKSEN, Clifford Diedrick	618-08-65	S1c
*DUGAN, Ralph	382-81-42	S2c
*DUZENBERRY, Robert Gordon	342-19-99	QM2c
*EARLIN, Raymond, Jr.	223-63-29	GM1c
*EGBERT, Willard Earl	385-44-39	WT1c
*ELLEDGE, Edward Boone	632-34-44	F2c
EPPERSON, Jack Roy	382-82-18	S2c
FARRIS, Harold Sumner, Jr.	382-77-21	S2c
*FAUNCE, Jack William	376-45-61	S1c
**FERGUSON, Robert Earl	393-32-57	GM2c
*FLAHERTY, Robert Eugene	311-41-36	S1c
*FONT, Patrick Joseph	624-15-49	SC2c
*FORTE, Peter George	337-41-76	S1c
*FOSTER, Ervin	368-18-40	WT2c
FRANCISCO, Pedro	151-44-68	OS2c
*FURNAS, Lonnie Leroy	300-32-31	S1c
**GALLOB, Stanley	632-35-89	S1c
**GARNER, Donald George	632-27-30	F2c
**GEER, James Elgin	393-24-64	TM1c
*GILLEY, Floyd Essex	291-43-31	FC1c
**GRAHAM, Eugene Victor	624-28-23	S2c
**GREEN, John Robert	368-25-99	TM1c
GREENE, Fred Wesley	316-65-11	RM2c
*GRESSON, Charles Arthur	359-97-61	Matt1
*GRIDER, Ernest Leroy	375-79-72	MM1c
HAGLER, Lloyd Clayton	624-28-31	S2c
*HALE, Richard	223-80-06	SM3c
**HANSEN, Harold Walter	223-67-38	TM3c
*HEFFLER, George Robert	282-82-37	CMM
HEMINEZ, Lawrence	662-57-56	S2c
HEMPING, Max Winfred	321-49-19	S1c
*HENDRICKSEN, Stephen Robert	381-20-88	GM2c
**HENSARLING, Ercel Eugene	624-11-67	S2c
*HERMAN, John August	411-29-81	S1c
**HOEYE, Dale Robert	382-81-72	S2c
*HOLLOMON, Raymond Nalynn	268-05-33	SM2c
*HOSHKO, George	283-58-84	RM3c
**HUDAON, Basil Henry	382-79-60	S2c
*IVESTER, Berlie	337-41-43	S1c
JAMES, Huey Lee	644-02-47	RM3c
*JENKINS, John Henry	402-89-47	S1c
**JOHNSON, Jack Herman	268-59-28	CM3c
JONES, Harvey	376-49-14	FC3c
*JONES, Raymond Elmer	287-41-40	GM3c
*JULIUS, Reginald	224-25-94	Matt1c
*KARAM, Carlos	632-37-23	S2c
*KASPER, Jacob Lawrence	305-12-25	CEM
*KELLER, James Carlton	632-33-57	S2c
KELLY, John Anthony	200-64-93	CY
*KERN, Nathaniel Russell	602-00-30	F2c
KERR, Arthur William	328-10-35	EM2c
*KING, Joseph Allen	382-77-46	S1c
KIRKLAND, Vernon Lee	382-80-79	F2c

*KITTREDGE, Russell Franklin	654-24-53	RM3c
**KNERR, Charles Robert	243-60-32	SF1c
**KNUDSON, Milton Lox	300-49-73	S1c
KOONTZ, Ira Logan	103-03-53	S1c
LAMBERT, Roderick Malone	382-80-43	S2c
*LA ROCQUE, John Peter	610-26-05	F1c
**LARSON, Carl Fredrick	305-16-60	CMM
LARSON, Joseph Norman	328-57-83	MM1c
LAWHEAD, Laverne Arthur	382-76-96	S2c
*LEACH, Lanie Henry	355-31-26	CTM
LEE, Walter "G"	385-37-70	CCStd
*LIEN, Milton Perry	316-72-89	S1c
LONER, Robert Willard	382-82-16	S2c
LONG, William David	337-77-11	S2c
LORTON, Leo Albert	382-77-17	S2c
LUGO, Victor Cervantes	632-29-65	S2c
LYON, Hershel James	381-26-47	GM1c
*MARTINEAU, Joseph Raymond	201-67-33	S1c
*MARTINEZ, Daniel Montanes	632-33-27	S2c
MAXWELL, Benjamin Martin	268-89-03	F2c
*McCLINTOCK, Francis Blake, Jr.	201-52-34	Bmkr2c
McCORKLE, James Beckham	286-79-23	WT1c
McCULLAH, Clem Edward	382076-98	S2c
**McDERMOTT, Thomas Patrick M.	662-56-41	S2c
*McDONALD, Chester Harvey	632-30-87	F2c
*McDONALD, Stuart	320-93-44	SK1c
*McFADYEN, Gordon	380-76-24	WT1c
**McGINNIS, Everett Monroe	662-57-93	S2c
McLEOD, John Norman	662-02-00	Y2c
**McMILLAN, Charles James	268-30-54	BM2c
*McNAMARA, Kenneth Patrick	662-53-20	S2c
*McQUEEN, William Charles	222-92-02	CPhM
*McWHORTER, James Hubert	668-02-83	F1c
*MERCER, Raymond Edward	662-54-68	S2c
*MEYSKENS, Frank Louis	300-55-25	F1c
*MIAZGA, Kenneth Frank	224-36-26	F2c
**MILBOURN, Jess	376-53-02	FC3c
**MILLER, Walter James	632-31-14	S2c
MILNE, George Earl, Jr.	654-02-47	F1c
*MINER, Eugene Stanley	371-94-60	MM1c
*MITCHELL, Lawrence Francis	212-49-05	EM1c
*MOORE, James Daniel	346-64-46	MM1c
MOORE, Joe Cephas	271-94-61	CFC
MOORE, Lawrence Eudell	670-11-37	S2c
MUESING, Vincent William	328-49-02	MM1c
MULHERIN, Maurice Preston	372-14-88	F1c
*MURPHY, Lester Edward	385-44-86	CWT
*MYERS, Roy Alfred	368-22-67	GM3c
NEEL, Wayne	382-7657	S2c
NEMEC, Rudolph	238-60-12	F1c
*NEWCOMB, Leon	351-03-09	S2c
*PAHLKA, Earle Frederick	375-92-96	RM1c
PARMELEY, Ralph Alex	337-00-43	MM1c

*PARRISH, Robert Kenneth	383-11-85	S2c
*PARRY, George Tennis	628-14-31	F1c
*PARTRIDGE, Richard B.	632-31-18	RM3c
PATTERSON, James Foy	267-62-92	CMM
*PATTY, Jesse Clay	295-37-82	GM2c
*PAUL, Francis Adelbert	367-82-66	Bos'n
**PEGUEROS, Juan "C"	498-50-91	OS3c
**PERINO, Mike	368-35-75	Cox
PHILLIPS, Herman Ardel	341-94-10	EM2c
PHILLIPS, James Wesley	246-68-77	MM2c
*POTTER, Elbert Jones	632-30-93	SC3c
**PRINDLE, Franklin Theodore	287-50-83	S1c
**PUCKETT, Calvin Richard	382-77-05	F2c
**QUINTERS, Bernard	407-27-92	TM3c
REDMOND, Lyle Vincent	321-45-27	MM2c
*RIDEN, Robert John	328-81-00	F1c
*RIDER, Robert George	382-02-29	BM2c
*ROBBINS, Harold James	620-20-27	F1c
*ROBERTSON, Harlan Walton	243-77-10	S1c
*ROBINSON, Donald Wallace	632-18-19	SOM3c
*ROGERS, Roy Ernest	382-01-21	Msmth1
ROGOL, Nathan David	213-52-55	MM1c
**RUNDALL, Wayne Calvin	620-20-48	F2c
SADLER, Lloyd Clayton	632-32-82	S2c
**SANDERSON, Frederick Dale	368-38-49	TM1c
**SARE, Parker Elliot	368-34-91	MM2c
SCHALLER, Robert George	668-19-46	F1c
*SCHREIBER, Paul Charles	408-04-54	CMM
**SCULLY, Joseph Vincent, Jr.	223-45-10	S1c
*SEEGER, Bernard Joseph	620-19-36	Bmkr2
**SHERMAN, Everett Russell	382-15-24	S1c
**SHYNE, David Loyola	342-20-92	PhM2c
SIMS, Anthony Burdett	632-33-32	F2c
**SIMS, Robert William	632-33-31	F2c
*SKIRVIN, Olin Eugene	382-79-55	RM3c
SOWDER, Paul Mortimore	662-24-73	SOM3c
**SPAULDING, Paul	266-21-96	TM3c
STANLEY, Rowland Roosa	382-17-00	MM2c
*STEVENSON, Homer Floyd	356-71-72	SOM3c
*STRAUGHAN, Robert, Jr.	291-10-75	CSM
SUDDUTH, Harry William	616-20-40	F3c
**SWAIN, Calvin Cooley	381-04-78	WT2c
SWENSON, Hilding Sigvard	372-05-97	SM1c
THOMAS, Theodore, Jr.	660-08-87	S1c
*THOMAS, William Ray	265-86-21	MM2c
*THOMPSON, Morales Franklin	382-77-99	S1c
**THORNBUR, James Henry	382-51-05	RM3c
*TOMICH, Michael Anthony	368-39-08	FC2c
**TREVINO, Amado, Jr.	624-26-35	S1c
TROYER, Max Lorain	368-39-74	MM1c
**TUCKER, Ernest Eugene, Jr.	346-87-34	S1c
UMBARGER, Kenneth Albert	356-71-43	SOM3c
*VAN VLEET, Warren David	393-02-56	Cox

*VOIGT, Raymond Vernon	299-89-44	F1c
VOLLMAN, Robert Lawrence	382-79-36	S2c
*WALLACE, Robert Thomas	620-19-70	EM3c
**WARNER, Donald Andrew	234-33-19	F1c
*WATSON, Richard Yates	628-07-13	SOM3c
*WEBB, Russell Eugene	372-43-11	S2c
WEBBER, Cecil	670-04-02	S1c
*WEITZEL, Samuel	371-77-22	SC1c
**WILKINSON, Raymond Luther	360-56-05	S2c
*WILLIAMS, Charles Edward	640-10-22	S1c
*WILLIAMS, Hubert Eugene	268-31-18	MM1c
*WILLOUGHBY, Oliver Logus, Jr.	382-78-07	S2c
**WILSON, Vincent "L" Roy	360-55-34	S1c
*WILSON, William Henry	223-50-20	MM2c
*WINN, Robert Ellis	310-94-76	CRM
WOLFER, Oscar	316-66-26	SC3c
WOODWARD, Harvey Edward	357-10-32	MM2c
WRIDE, George Washington	380-82-70	Bmkr2c
**WUNDER, Edmund Earl	321-17-95	Bmkr1c
*YESINKEVICH, Roy John	700-07-76	S1c

* * * * *

Notes:

- 1 Source: The final muster roll on microfilm at the National Archives, showing the disposition of the crew after the ship was sunk.
- 2 BONCOSKY, Ralph F., S1c, had been rescued a day earlier by the Laffey after he dived off the San Francisco to escape the explosion caused by a Japanese torpedo bomber crashing into the cruiser's after gun platform.
- * Wounded (** Killed) when the ship was lost due to enemy action on November 13, 1942, according to a machine-generated casualty report at the National Archives which was prepared by the Bureau of Personnel after the war.

Summary of Casualties:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 11/13/42</u>
Officer	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>15</u>
Enlisted	<u>56</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>230</u>
TOTALS	<u>59</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>245</u>

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
May, 2000

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

Notification To Next Of Kin¹
(BAER, Frank Leroy, 243-63-59, Radioman 2nd Class)

<p>STANDARD TIME INDICATED</p> <p>RECEIVED AT</p> <p>1420 SO. PENN SQUARE PHILADELPHIA, PA. BELL, LOCUST 3740 KEY., BROAD 5221</p> <p>TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAMS TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH</p>	<p>Postal Telegraph</p> <p>(40)</p> <p>International Cable</p> <p>United States</p>	<p>THIS IS A FULL RATE TELEGRAM, CABLE-GRAM OR RADIOGRAM UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED BY SYMBOL IN THE PREAMBLE OR IN THE ADDRESS OF THE MESSAGE. SYMBOLS INDICATING SERVICE SELECTED ARE OBTAINED IN THE COMPANY'S TARIFFS OR HANDBOOKS AT EACH OFFICE AND ON FILE WITH REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.</p>
<p>Form 15</p> <p>P.WA12 LC10W (ONE) 74 GOVT=PNR ARLINGTON VIR 20 1222P</p> <p>WALTER STANLEY BAER=</p> <p>5006 COTTAGE STREET (PHILADELPHIA PENN)=</p> <p>DEC 20 AM 3 11</p>		
<p>THE NAVY DEPARTMENT DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON FRANK LEROY BAER RADIOMAN SECOND CLASS US NAVY IS MISSING FOLLOWING ACTION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTY AND IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY. THE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES YOUR GREAT ANXIETY BUT DETAILS NOT NOW AVAILABLE AND DELAY IN RECEIPT THEREOF MUST NECESSARILY BE EXPECTED. TO PREVENT POSSIBLE AID TO OUR ENEMIES PLEASE DO NOT DIVULGE THE NAME OF HIS SHIP OR STATION=</p> <p>REAR ADMIRAL RANDALL JACOBS CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL.</p>		

¹ Courtesy of Frank Baer's niece, Michele Francine Reynolds, and her husband, Skip Reynolds, in 1999.

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

Notification To Next Of Kin¹
(BAER, Frank Leroy, 243-63-59, Radioman 2nd Class)

Mr. Walter Stanley Baer
5006 Cottage Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

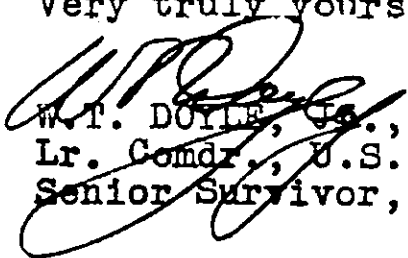
My dear Mr. Baer:

I regret to inform you that your son, Frank Leroy Baer, is missing in action, after the LAFLEY engaged in action with enemy surface forces on the night of November 12-13, 1942.

Your son was manning his regular battle station when last seen, and carried on bravely in the face of the enemy. Although I do not wish to hold out false hopes, there is always the possibility that your son may be found, in which case you will be notified immediately.

In the event that your son does not return, I well realize the loss that you must feel, which I personally share with you. May you have some measure of comfort in knowing that he made the greatest sacrifice of which any of us are capable; he gave his life in the service of his country, in the best tradition of the Navy.

Very truly yours,

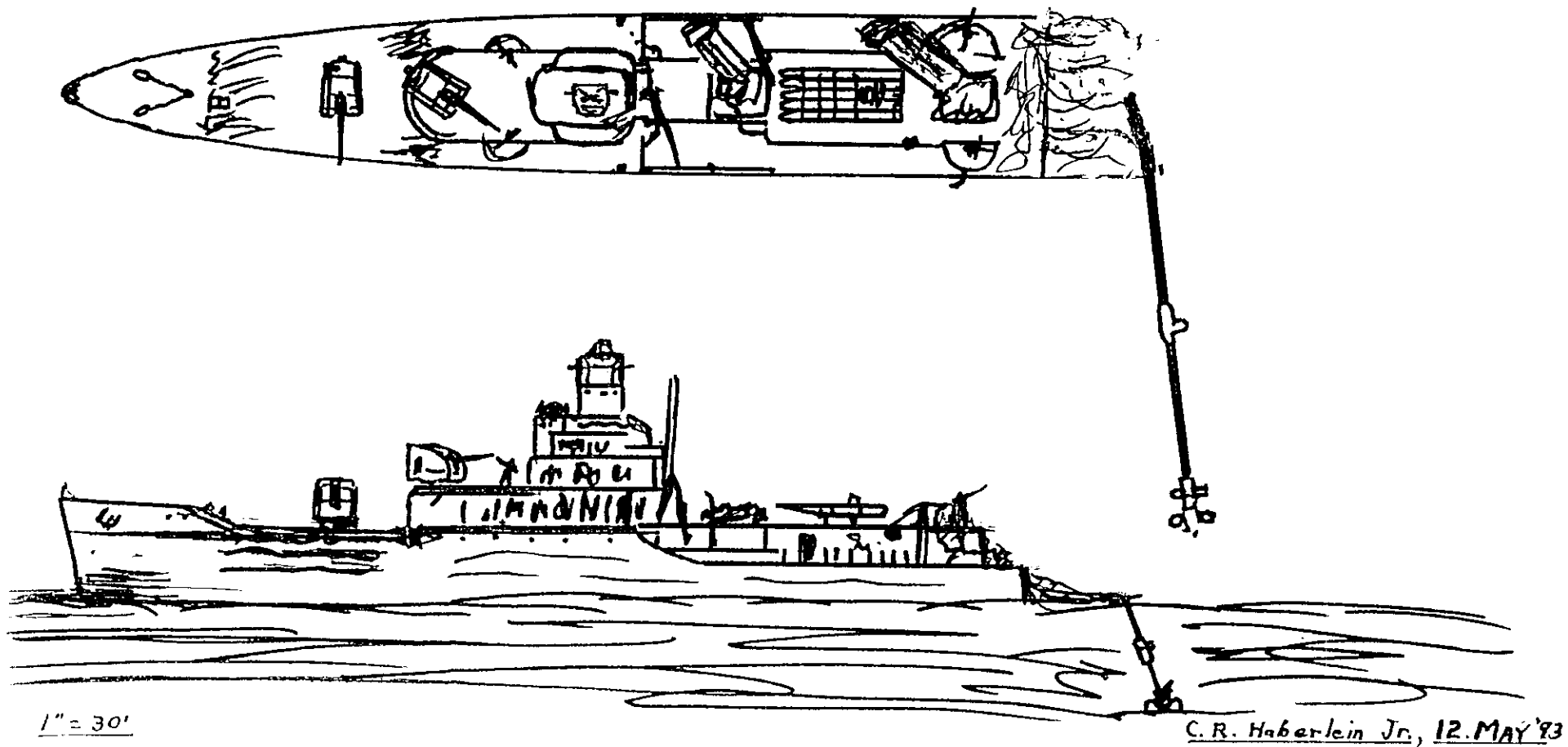

W.T. DOYLE, Jr.,
Lt. Comdr., U.S. Navy,
Senior Survivor, USS LAFLEY.

¹ Courtesy of Frank Baer's niece, Michele Francine Reynolds, and her husband, Skip Reynolds, in 1999.

Naval Historical Center
Washington Naval Yard
901 M Street, S.E.
Washington, DC 20374-5060

USS LAFFEY

Approximate Configuration of Wreck
July 1992 — Port Side & Plan Views





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

NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE
MORNING NEWSPAPERS
JUNE 5, 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Addressing Reverend Mr. Edwards, Rear Admiral Hayler said:

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

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

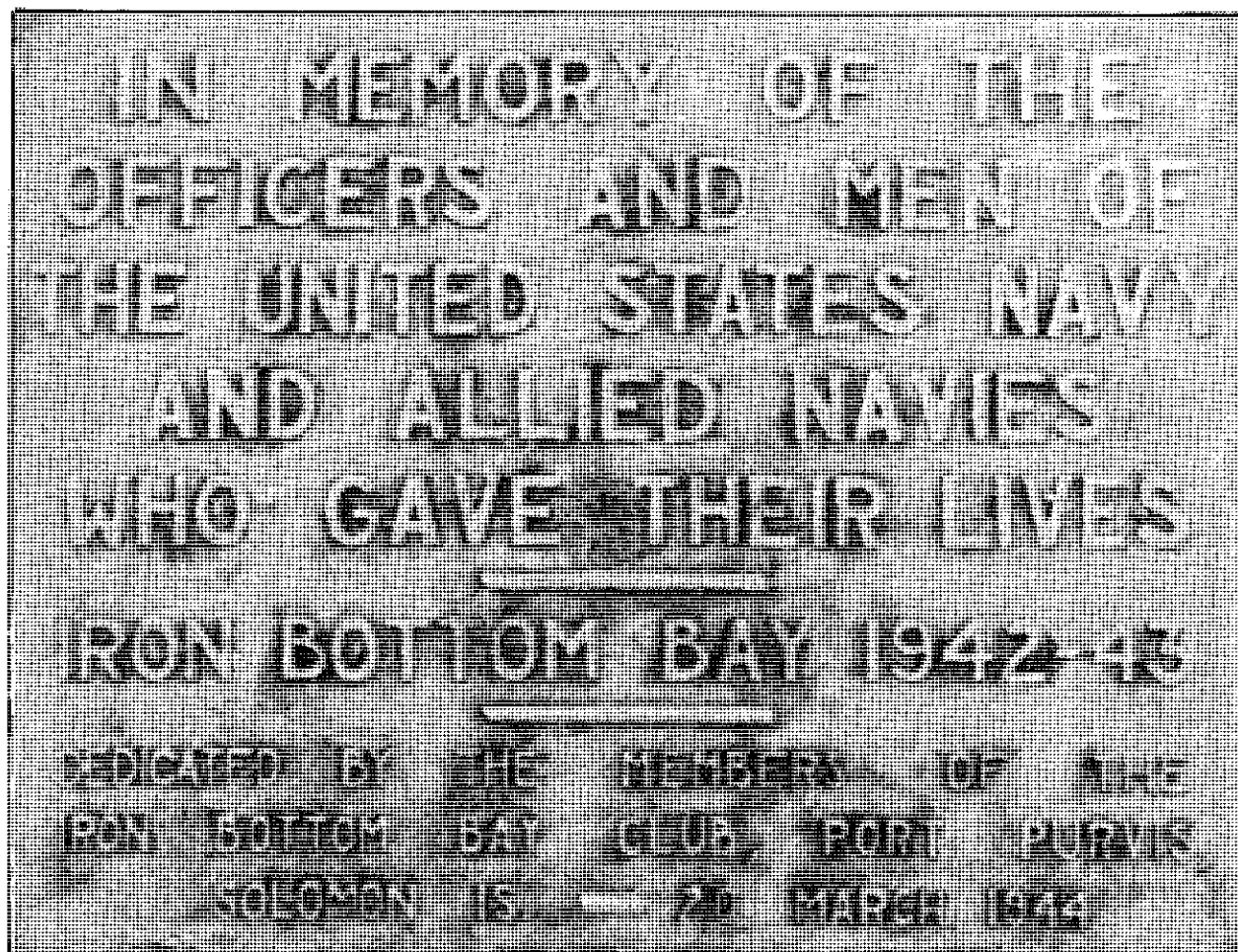
The plaque carries this inscription: "In memory of the officers and men of the United States Navy and Allied Navies who gave their lives -- Iron Bottom Bay -- 1942-43 -- Dedicated by Members of the Iron Bottom Bay Club -- Port Purvis, Solomons Islands -- 20 March 1944".

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
March, 1995

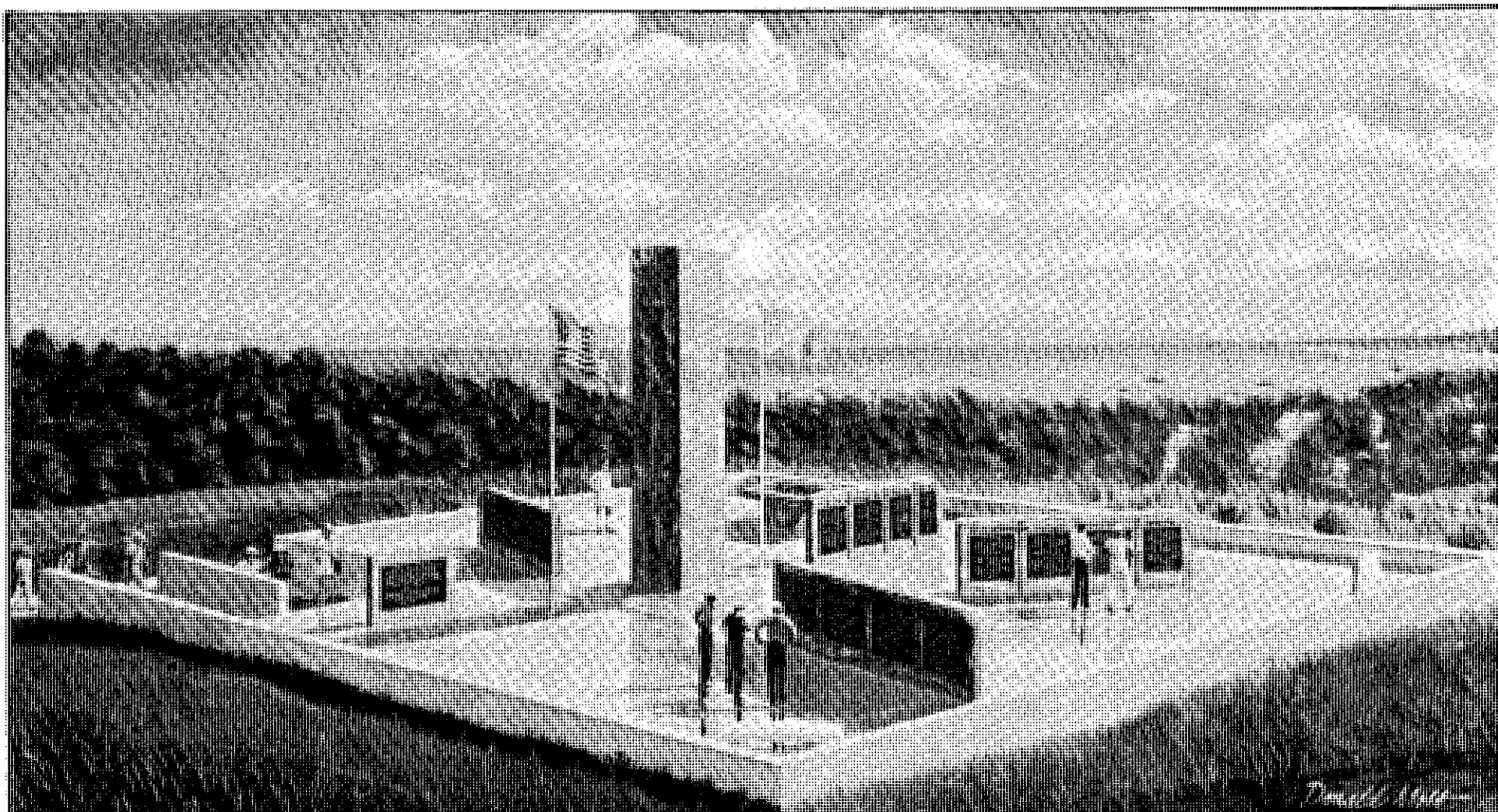
The Monument at Purvis Bay, Florida Island,
Solomon Islands, as it looked in August, 1993.
(Dedicated on April 30, 1944)



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

"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 American WWII Memorial overlooking Point Cruz and Iron Bottom Sound, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, was dedicated on August 7, 1982, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landings there by the U.S. Marines in World War II. About 20,000 people attended the ceremony, including many service personnel and over 500 foreign visitors. Many of the local residents walked for days in order to witness the dedication. Panels list the U.S. and Allied ships lost or damaged in the campaign and describe the seven naval battles fought in nearby waters. The polished red granite used in the walls with the panels and in the 24-foot high pylion were delivered to the site by the Royal Australian Navy. The Guadalcanal-Solomon Islands War Memorial Foundation raised \$500,000 and the U.S. Government authorized \$750,000 to cover construction costs. (Picture and panel inscriptions courtesy of Joseph G. Nicks, the Foundation's Treasurer and Project Manager.)

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

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

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

HORNET, WASP

HEAVY CRUISERS

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

LIGHT CRUISERS

ATLANTA, JUNEAU

DESTROYERS

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

MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS

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

TRANSPORTS

COLHOUN, GEORGE F. ELLIOTT,
GREGORY, LITTLE

FLEET TUG SEMINOLE

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

BATTLESHIPS

NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH DAKOTA

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

ENTERPRISE, SARATOGA

HEAVY CRUISERS

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

LIGHT CRUISERS

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

DESTROYERS

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

DESTROYER MINESWEEPER ZANE

CORVETTE

KIWI (ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY)

MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT PT-59

TRANSPORTS

BARNETT, ZEILIN

CARGO SHIPS

ALCHIBA, ALHENA

SEAPLANE TENDER MC FARLAND

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

THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN

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

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

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

WALL: 1 - TITLE - BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE
04/25/1991 PANEL 102 - TYPE B - FACE R

THE BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE

11-12 OCTOBER 1942

ON 9 OCTOBER A CONVOY OF TRANSPORTS CARRYING THE 164TH INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE AMERICAL DIVISION, THE FIRST MAJOR U.S. ARMY UNIT TO BE SENT TO GUADALCANAL, SAILED FROM NEW CALEDONIA TO REINFORCE THE HARD-PRESSED MARINES.

DURING THE AFTERNOON OF 11 OCTOBER, A B-17 OF THE 11TH HEAVY BOMBARDMENT GROUP SENT A WARNING THAT THE "TOKYO EXPRESS," AS THE NIGHTLY ENEMY SURFACE RAIDERS WERE CALLED, WAS A MUCH LARGER NAVAL FORCE THAN NORMAL. THE U.S. CRUISER AND DESTROYER GROUP, WHOSE MISSION WAS TO PROTECT THE CONVOY, IMMEDIATELY MOVED FROM SOUTH OF GUADALCANAL AROUND THE NORTHWESTERN TIP OF CAPE ESPERANCE TO REACH SAVO ISLAND BEFORE THE JAPANESE.

THE BATTLE THAT ENSUED WAS ALMOST THE EXACT REVERSE OF SAVO ISLAND. SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT, AS THE JAPANESE SHIPS ENTERED THE WATERS WEST OF SAVO ISLAND, THE U.S. CRUISER-DESTROYER TASK FORCE ACHIEVED THE CLASSIC CROSSING OF THE "T", AND OPENED A RAKING FIRE. TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THE ENEMY WAS SLOW TO REACT, THEN FLED WHILE RETURNING FIRE.

IN LESS THAN AN HOUR THE BATTLE WAS OVER. ONE U.S. DESTROYER WAS SUNK AND TWO U.S. CRUISERS AND ONE DESTROYER DAMAGED. JAPANESE LOSSES INCLUDED ONE CRUISER AND ONE DESTROYER SUNK; ONE CRUISER AND ONE DESTROYER WERE DAMAGED. TWO MORE ENEMY DESTROYERS WERE SUNK LATER ON 12 OCTOBER BY U.S. NAVAL AND MARINE AIRCRAFT FROM HENDERSON FIELD.

THE NAVAL BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL
12-15 NOVEMBER 1942

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

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

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

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

WALL: 2 - TITLE: GUADALCANAL NAVAL BATTLE II
04/25/1991 PANEL 107 - TYPE D - FACE R

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

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

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

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

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

JAPANESE NAVAL VESSELS
SUNK OR DAMAGED DURING THE
GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN

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

The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) in World War II

Photograph Credits

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source Code/Ident. No.</u>
<u>On the ways, stern view, 10/30/41</u>	NA 19-N-32269
<u>Sponsor Miss Eleanor G. Fogerty</u>	NA 19-N-32265
<u>Christening, Quincy, Mass., 10/30/41</u>	NA 19-N-32266
<u>Launching, Beth. Steel/Quincy 10/30/41</u>	NA 19-N-33392
<u>Alongside San Francisco (CA-38) 9/4/42</u>	NA 80-G-391484
<u>Wasp (CV-7), port bow, aflame, 9/15/42</u>	RWP N-190
<u>Stbd. beam w. Wasp survivors, 9/16/42</u>	NA 80-G-13609
<u>Port quarter with survivors, 9/16/42</u>	NA 80-G-13606
<u>1.1-inch quad mount</u>	RWP N-11247
<u>20-mm Oerlikon mount, 1942</u>	NA 19-N-31965
<u>Hiei, stbd. quarter, u/way, prewar</u>	NHC NH51879
<u>Hank (DD-702) aerial, s. beam, 1944</u>	NI Order with photocopy
<u>Monument, Purvis Bay, Fla. Is., 1944</u>	NA 80-G-275700
<u>Monument plaque (on above)</u>	NA 80-G-240318

* * * * *

Key to Sources:

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

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

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

NI U.S. Naval Institute Photo Service, Beach Hall
291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402-5034
(410) 268-6110; FAX: (410) 269-7940

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 2001

The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459) in World War II

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- Destroyer Squadron TWELVE (DesRon 12), 10/23/42
- USS Laffey (DD-459): 11/14/42, 11/16/42

Conversations:

- William P. Davis, survivor
- Charles R. Haberlein, Jr., Naval Historical Foundation
- V. Richard Hale, Jr., survivor
- Joseph G. Micek, AUS, Guadalcanal War Memorial Foundation

Miscellaneous:

- Casualties listed in the "Battle Books" for the Laffey at the National Archives; a machine-generated casualty report prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel c. 1946.
- COMSOPAC (Commander South Pacific Force) correspondence file at the National Archives.
- Deck Log, Laffey, at the National Archives and on microfilm at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington.
- Personnel Diary (Muster Rolls), Laffey, on microfilm at the National Archives.
- Ships' Histories Section file, Laffey, Naval Historical Center.
- World War II citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
February, 2001

2006 ADDENDUM

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

Editor's Note:

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

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

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
June, 2006

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There must be much consternation in Tokyo these days, because

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

* * * * *

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

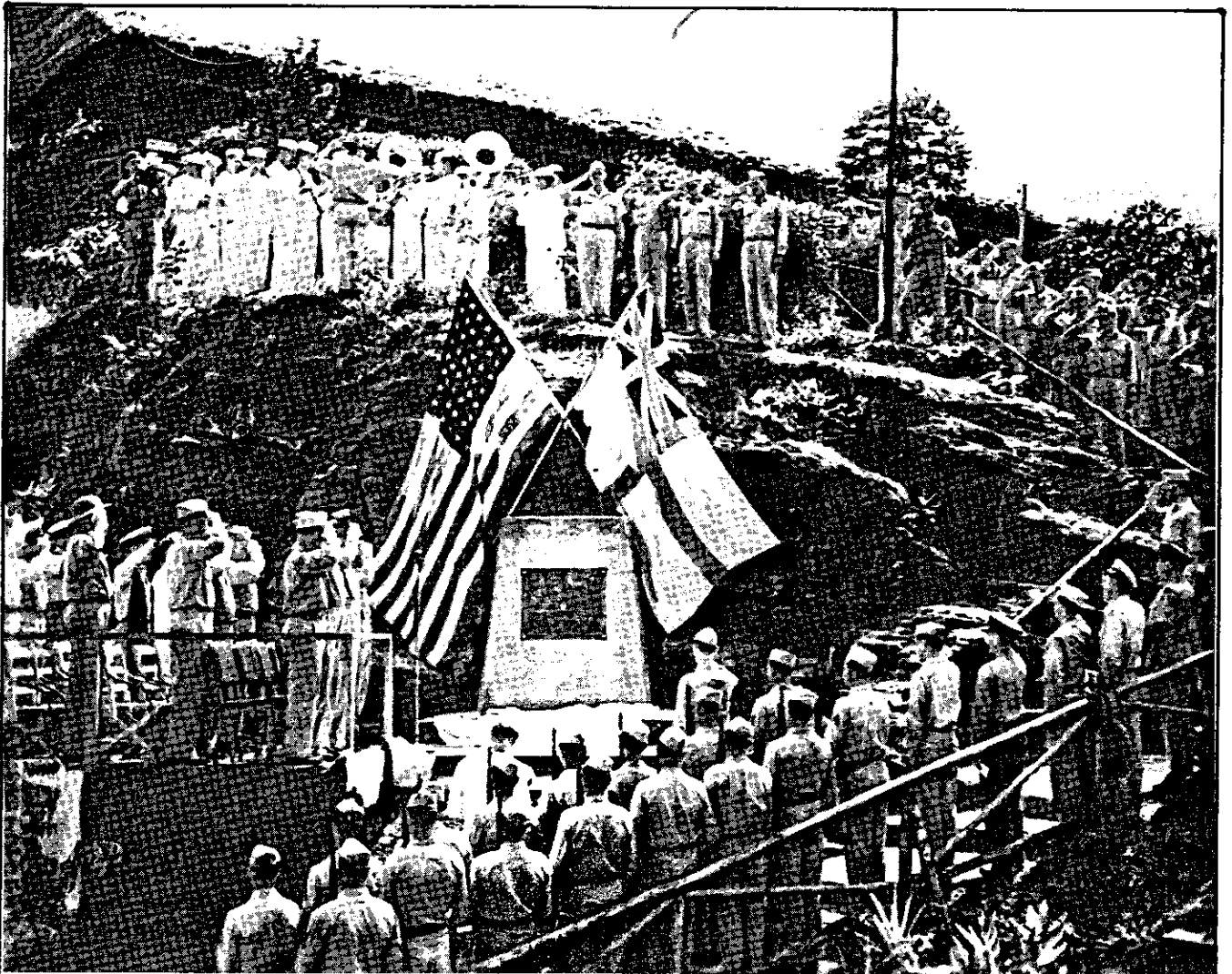
* * * * *

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

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

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

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



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

(Archives II, College Park, MD)

About The Editor

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

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

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

Historical Compilations by the Editor:

(Destroyer/Destroyer Escort Hulls in World War II)

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

* * * * *

Notes:

* Total for two engagements with the enemy

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

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

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
Louisiana Naval War Memorial Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

² Maine Maritime Museum Library, Bath, Maine
Mariners' Museum Research Library, Newport News, Virginia
Mystic Seaport's G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic, Connecticut

National Archives II Library, College Park, Maryland
³ National D-Day Museum Library Collection, New Orleans, LA
National Museum of Pacific War, War Studies, Fredericksburg, TX

Naval Historical Center, Navy Dept. Library, Washington Navy Yard
_____, Operational Archives Branch, Washington Navy Yard
_____, Ships' Histories Branch, Washington Navy Yard

Naval War College, Naval Historical Collection, Newport, RI
N.Y. Public Library, 42nd & 5th Ave., Room 315, New York, N.Y.
² Portland Public Library, Portland Room, Portland, Maine

⁴ Tin Can Sailors, Inc., Research Library, Somerset, Massachusetts
US Naval Academy, Nimitz Library Special Collections, Annapolis
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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Imprint Needham, Mass. : The Editor, 2001.

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World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives, American.
Alt title USS Laffey (DD-459) in World War Two

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U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

Thank You Letters for Booklet Mailed 4/23/96:

"Thank you, thank you, thank you - for the booklet on the DD-459. My husband enjoyed it thoroughly. He's very proud of the "459."

Enclosed is a check for \$10.00, but it is not enough. I wish it could be more."

Elizabeth Sadler
(for) Lloyd C. Sadler, (S2c)
Lucerne Valley, California

* * * * *

"Didn't mean to take this long in acknowledging receipt of your book. I couldn't put it down after I opened it. Some of the information plus a few pictures of the ship I had not read or seen. One picture was of the Hiei. All I ever saw was drawings. I was the director Pointer Operator, and I guess I'll never forget what I saw in my sights that night when we opened fire on her bridge.

"I am enclosing a check to help. Thanks for what you did, and I know all of our group will treasure this."

Robert E. Flaherty (S1c)
Watervliet, Michigan

* * * * *

"Many thanks for the U.S.S. Laffey booklet. It's very informative and will add a lot to other information I have. Have made three copies for the children, and I know they will be glad to read it."

Jean Webber
(widow of Cecil Webber, S1c)
Tacoma, Washington

* * * * *

"I received your book and I liked it very much. I was in Mount 3, the last gun to stop firing. I was the First Loader. Three of us got out with God's help."

Lonnie L. Furnas (S1c)
Muscatine, Iowa

* * * * *

"Just a note to thank you for the book on the Laffey. You really did your homework. . . . enjoyed the articles and the pictures."

Pete G. Forte (S1c)
Los Angeles, California

* * * * *

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

"I just completed reading your copy of the Laffey (459). I've read a lot of short stories . . . but this has been the most and best writing that I have ever read in the past 50 years.

"I've lived that night over for too many years. Even as old as I am now it still comes back to me every once in a while. I guess the main reason is that on Nov. 9, 1942 I had just passed my 16th birthday. I was pretty impressionable, so a lot of that night was pretty bad.

"In the beginning I was in Mount 1, in the Upper Handling Room passing ammunition. After we got hit real hard and the gun went out, I went to the 20-mm. mounts. GOD WHAT A MESS. When we left the ship I went off the starboard side. I had just hit the water when she blew. I went down with it for a while, and then the life jacket brought me to the surface. I was a little out of my head for a while, but to my relief I was not hurt.

". . . on the 'Canal' I was blind for a week from all of the oil in the water, but that passed - thank God. After that I served on 5 other ships and covered the central Pacific - ALL THE WAY TO JAPAN.

"What I would really like to say is THANKS for a treasure. I really enjoyed the reading."

Roderick M. Lambert (S2c)
Saint Joseph, Missouri

* * * * *

"I do want to thank you for the book. It brought back a lot of things I had forgotten. I do appreciate receiving it. A wonderful collection of events."

Lyle V. Redmond (MM2c)
Sparks, Nevada

* * * * *

"Your booklet on the Laffey (DD-459) is 4.0 - will enjoy its references and recollections."

Eugene S. Miner (MM1c)
Denver, Colorado

* * * * *

"Received your booklet about the Laffey (DD-459) and what a pleasant surprise! Really enjoyed reading it.

"I'm sure you spent more than \$5.00 to obtain this information, so I'm sending a check for \$30.00. I really appreciate this. Thanks a lot."

Harvey E. Woodward (MM2c)
West Palm Beach, Florida

* * * * *

U.S.S. Laffey (DD-459)

"I was surprised and very interested to receive the booklet, USS Laffey DD459. I enjoyed reading your thorough and so complete history of the Laffey.

"Many thanks, and I hope this check helps defray some of your expenses."

George E. Milne (F1c)
Tigard, Oregon

* * * * *

"My husband sure appreciated the Laffey book. I know it took a lot of research - thank you."

Mrs. S. R. Hendrickson (for)
Stephen R. Hendrickson (GM2c)
Chico, California

* * * * *

"The DD-459 collection is great! I appreciate having received a copy. It is important to use to enlighten the new and young generation."

Robert H. Coker (CRM)
New Bern, North Carolina

* * * * *

"Thank you for the history book on the Laffey. Lots of work went in to it. When I am through with it I will give it to my son. He has asked a lot of questions about it. Maybe this will answer some of them. Thanks again."

A. Ward Casey (S1c)
N. Richland Hills, Texas

* * * * *

"Andrew - you should be congratulated for the excellent work of the Research and Photograph Captions you have done on the U.S.S. Laffey DD459. Thank you."

"Ted and Dolores"
Theodore Chada (F1c)
Ames, Iowa

* * * * *

V. RICHARD HALE JR.
2585 Midway Rd.
Decatur, Georgia 30030
(404) 371-0425

Thursday June 8, 1995

Dear Commander Wilde,

You have put together a very interesting booklet on the Barton. I wish I could get the battle reports for all the ships in the battle, similar to the one for the USS Portland.

Our liferaft was about a half mile north of the Portland when she fired those salvos at the Yudachi. We nearly jumped out of our skins at the first sound of those eight inch guns. There is one problem with my memory about the number of salvos fired. I thought the Jap can blew up on the third salvo, but the battle report indicated six salvos fired. If that is true it was lousy gunnery because the distance could not have been more than two miles.

My interest is with the condition of the Hiei at the time the last ship in line fired at her. I was a pointer in mount #2 and I had locked into the director so I could see all four of our 5" and all the 20MM on the port side firing into her bridge after we nearly collided with her. Some of the survivors from the 20MM guns said they could see her going down our line of ships all on fire and the bridge collapsing forward. I would like to verify if the bridge really collapsed. Since the Fletcher was the last ship in Column their battle report should have indicated the condition of the Hiei when the action broke off.

After we arrived at Lunga point, the various boatloads of survivors were taken down to the river to try and get the oil washed off our bodies but the water was not doing it so someone had the bright idea to use some gasoline to do the cleaning. Some gasoline got in my eyes and blinded me, so I was taken to the little Cub one medical unit in the coconut trees near the beach and put on a cot with my eyes bandaged. Later that night the Japs sent heavy Cruisers in to Bombard the airfield. I could not see so I had to lay on that cot with those freight trains flying overhead for about two hours.

The next day, since I was wounded and blind I was loaded aboard a transport plane and flown to Espiritu Santo and spent a couple weeks there before we were all loaded into the Barnett for the trip back to San Diego. ----- I'll return your booklet on the Barton Shortly.

Thanks Again.

Rich Hale



May 14, 1996

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Cdr. E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., USNR(Ret)
1210 Greendale Avenue, #339
Needham, Massachusetts 02192

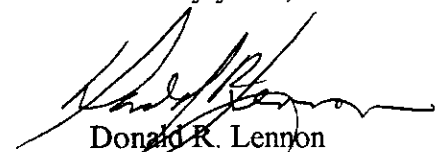
Dear Commandeer Wilde:

The package arrived containing your booklets concerning the United States Ships BARTON (DD-599) MONSSEN (DD-436), McFARLAND (AVD-14) and LAFHEY (DD-459). Without question these are certainly worthwhile compilations which should be of considerable assistance to faculty, students, and visiting scholars studying the U.S. Navy during World War II. We are very pleased to establish the E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Papers within the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation Collection here. These and all other booklets and materials that you wish to donate will become a part of your files. We also would be interested in including the photographs that you mention in your letter. We regularly have researchers inquire for images of particular ships and we have been attempting to build as comprehensive a collection of Navy ship prints as possible.

Again we thank you for your willingness to donate your ship books and photographs for preservation at East Carolina University. We look forward to receiving the remaining booklets and prints.

With very best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,



Donald R. Lennon
Coordinator
Special Collections

/sm



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Special Collections and Archives Division

6 May 1996

Commander E. Andrew Wilde, USNR (Ret.)
1210 Greendale Avenue, No. 339
Needham, Massachusetts 02192-4622

Dear Commander Wilde:

Once again, how can I adequately thank you for the marvelous books on the USS DUNCAN (DD-485), the USS AARON WARD (DD-483), and the USS LAFFEY (DD-459), and for the new material you added to your earlier ship books! They, as were your earlier volumes, are an invaluable source of information on these vessels. Thank you for thinking of us and for your on-going generosity.

I hope you have an easy trip back to Needham and that we'll see you back down this way again soon. In the meantime, please let me know if we can be of help in any way.

With all best wishes,

Sincerely,

Alice

Alice S. Creighton
Head, Special Collections
and Archives

July 2, 1996



Mr. E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.
1210 Greendale Ave., #339
Needham, MA 02192

Dear Mr. Wilde Jr.

Thank you for your generous donation offer of the manuscripts on the **USS Laffey (DD-459)**, **USS Aaron Ward (DD-483)**, **USS Duncan (DD-485)**, **USS Seminole (AT-65)**, **USS Calhoun (APD-2)**. These volumes will be added to the holdings of the Center for Pacific War Studies, which the research arm of the Admiral Nimitz Museum.

The Center currently houses 3,000 library volumes, 9,000 photographs and over 90 linear feet of World War II documents all relating to either World War II in the Pacific Theatre or the life of Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz.

Research requests come to the Center from documentary film producers, students, authors and veterans. I 1995 93 research requests were received. Due to the publicity generated by the 50th Anniversary of World War II, we expect this number to increase.

Sincerely

Paula Ussery
Paula Ussery
Curator

"We inspire our youth by honoring our heroes."

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