

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Strong* (DD-467) in World War II:
Documents, Recollections and Photographs**

Needham, Massachusetts
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1210 Greendale Ave., #339
Needham, MA 02192
December 3, 1996

USS Strong (DD-467) Crewmembers,

It is my pleasure to present you with a copy of the booklet I have compiled on your ship. It is the twelfth such booklet I have completed on destroyer-type vessels sunk in World War II. In addition to the crew I also send copies to ten museums/libraries around the country (and one in Australia), so the Strong's story will be preserved for future naval historians. The last page in this booklet explains very well what I do.

You don't owe me anything for the booklet, but contributions will be appreciated. I'm really more interested in seeing that every survivor gets a copy than I am in breaking even.

I'm sorry that I can't supply you with extra copies, but I hope you'll have copies made at a copying store for your family. I want future generations to know what you went through in World War II. I was just a Boy Scout then - on the Home Front. We all did our best then to "support our boys in uniform," and I'm still doing it.

I know you'll be pleased to hear that I have located "Doc" Horne. He's 86 years old! I wasn't able to talk to him because he has Alzheimer's disease, but his wife (who was married to him in 1943 when he was aboard the Strong) is very sharp and was very responsive to my call. When I told her that I was sending her a Strong booklet she said that it would be greatly appreciated by their five children. Doc told them many details about his narrow escape when the ship was sunk, and two of his grandchildren even gave presentations at school on their grandfather's ship.

An unexpected reward from my Strong research was being able to send an 8"x10" print of Frederick Purdy to his namesake, Frederick Purdy Turner, a retired police detective residing in California. His mother is a very close friend of Fred Purdy's widow (they are both still alive) and asked her to be the godmother of her son, whom she named after her friend's deceased husband. This print was the first Fred Turner had ever seen of the man he was named after!

I was also fortunate to locate Lt. Hugh Barr Miller's son, Dr. Landon C. G. Miller, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He sent me the great photograph of his father with Admiral Halsey and the First Lady which I've included in my booklet.

Enjoy the booklet!



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

U.S.S. STRONG

DESTROYER

NAMED FOR REAR ADM. JAMES H. STRONG, U.S.N.
BUILT BY THE BATH IRON WORKS CORP., BATH, ME.

AUTHORIZED

MARCH 27, 1934

KEEL LAID

APRIL 30, 1941

LAUNCHED

MAY 17, 1942

FIRST COMMISSIONED

AUGUST 7, 1942

The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) in World War II

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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.*

WILLIAM S. NEWELL, PRESIDENT
ARCH. TALD M. MAIN, EXEC. VICE PRES.

THOMAS R. ALLEN, VICE PRES.
ROLAND F. HILL, VICE PRES.

G. VINCENT PACH, VICE PRES.
SIDNEY L. EATON, TREASURER

" WILL ALWAYS BUILD GOOD SHIPS "

BATH IRON WORKS CORPORATION

SHIPBUILDERS AND ENGINEERS
SHIPS OF ALL TYPES

CABLE ADDRESS
BATHIRON

BATH, MAINE

193/S6
C-20
April 28, 1942

From: Bath Iron Works Corporation
To: The Honorable, the Secretary of the Navy
Via: Supervisor of Shipbuilding, U.S.N.
Bath, Maine
Subject: USS STRONG (DD467) - Launching
Reference: (a) Contract NOd-1434 for the Construction of
Torpedo-Boat 467.

Sir:

1. In connection with Article 11 of the General Provisions forming a part of the Contract for subject vessel, we beg to notify the Department that the launching date has been set for Sunday, May 17, 1942, the time being 3:45 P.M. Eastern Wartime.

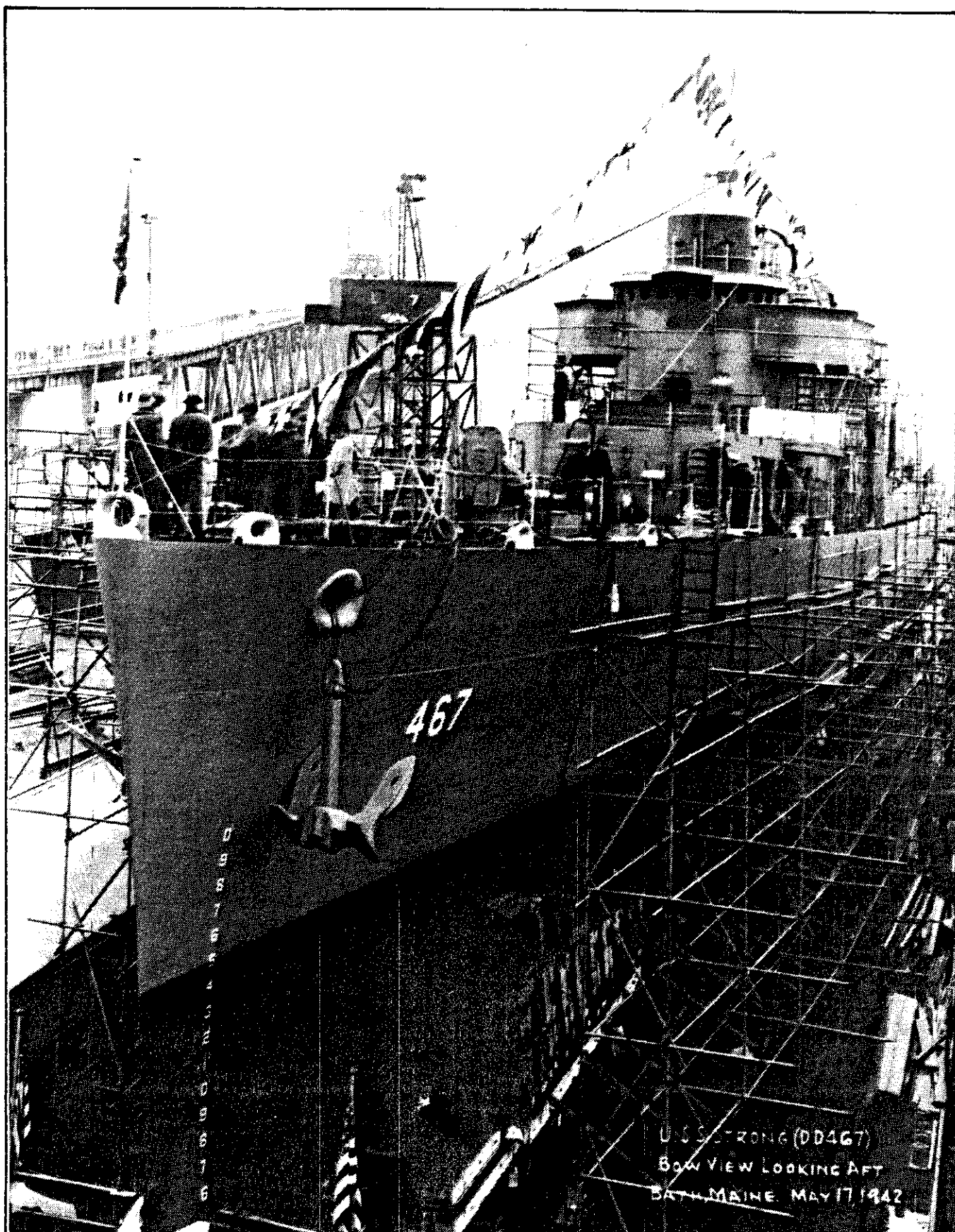
2. We have been advised by the Bureau of Navigation that the Department has designated Mrs. Hobart Olson as sponsor for this vessel and we are in touch with her so far as details are concerned.

Respectfully,

BATH IRON WORKS CORPORATION



G. B. Connard
General Manager



The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467), a 2,100-ton Fletcher-class destroyer, on the ways at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, shortly before launching on 17 May 1942. At the left coastal Route 1 heads "down east" over the bridge towards Wiscasset and Damariscotta. (National Archives photograph)

Strong

James H. Strong, born in Canandaigua, N.Y., on 26 April 1814, was appointed a midshipman in the Navy while he was a student in the Polytechnic College at Chittenango, N.Y., on 2 February 1829. He made his first cruise on the Brazil station in *Lexington* from 1833 to 1835. After various cruises, he commanded the store ship *Relief* in 1859.

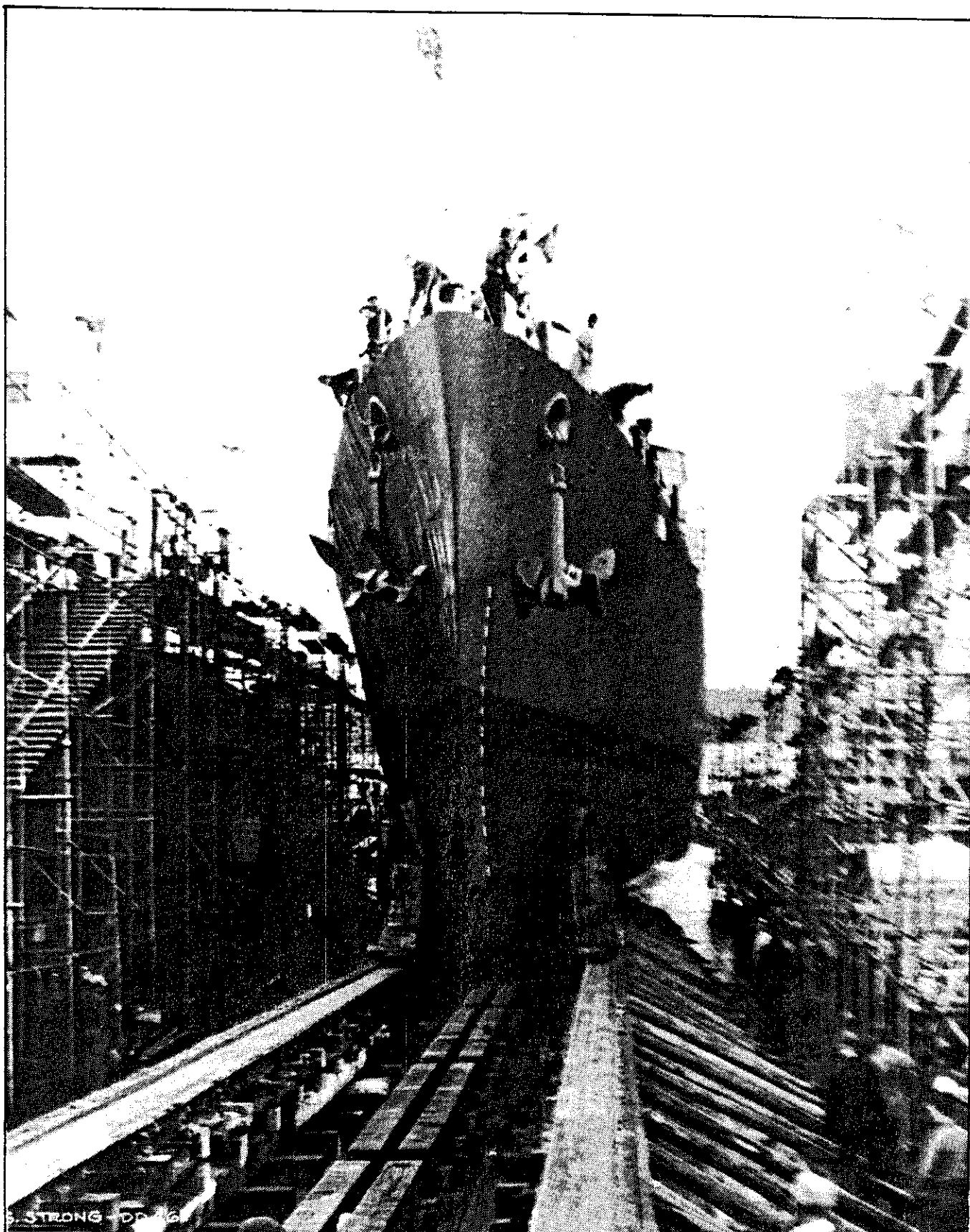
Strong was promoted to commander in April 1861 and commanded *Mohawk* and *Flag* in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron in 1861 and 1862 and *Monongahela* in the West Gulf Blockading Squadron from 1863 to 1865. At the Battle of Mobile Bay, he was the first to ram the Confederate ironclad *Tennessee* and received high commendation for his initiative and valor.

Strong served at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1866 and 1867 and later commanded *Canandaigua* in the Mediterranean Squadron in 1869 and 1870. He was promoted to rear admiral in 1873 and served as Commander-in-Chief of the South Atlantic Squadron from 1873 to 1875. Strong retired on 25 April 1876.

* Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume 6.
Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1976.



Mrs. Susan Hobart Olson, the Strong's sponsor, with her husband and Lt. Marvin I. Rosenberg, USN, the Officer-in-Charge of the precommissioning detail. Mrs. Olson was the great-grandniece of Rear Admiral James H. Strong, USN. The ship was christened at Bath, Maine, on 17 May 1942. (Official U.S. Navy photograph)



The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) as she was launched at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, on 17 May 1942. After fitting out she was commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard on 7 August 1942, Cdr. Joseph H. Wellings in command. The Strong was named after Rear Adm. James H. Strong (1814-1882) who distinguished himself at the Battle of Mobile Bay in 1864. (National Archives photograph)

SUNDAY LAUNCHING SETS NEW RECORD FOR IRON WORKS

Sponsor Performs Her Task in True Navy Style

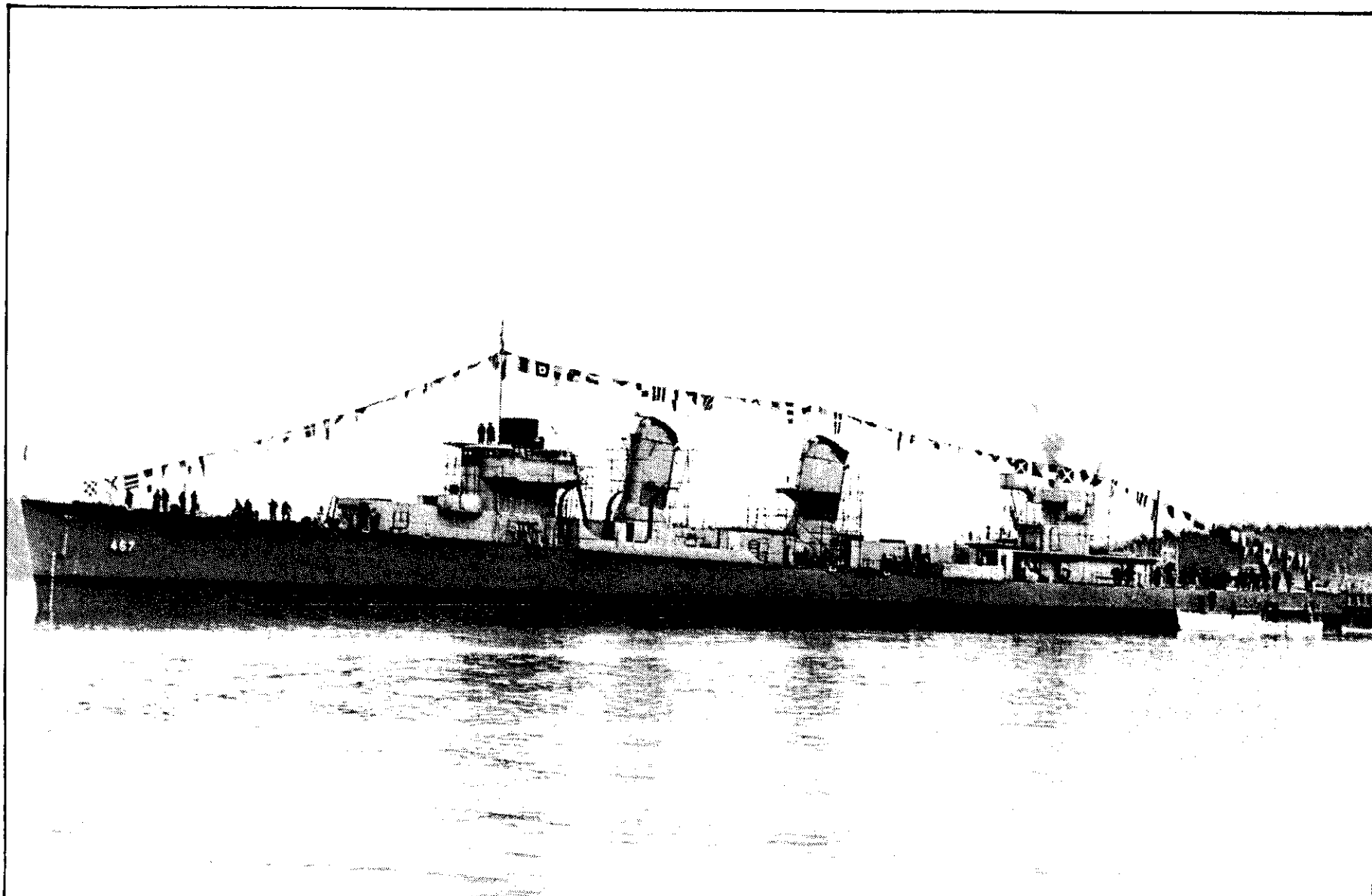
Another precedent was established at the Bath Iron Works Corp., Sunday afternoon when the U.S.S. destroyer Strong slipped quietly into the waters of the Kennebec in the first Sunday launching in the history of the firm. But with war time fervor, production, capacity, expansion, personnel and every other type of record has been broken, and Sunday's launching was just another to add to the long list.

Mrs. Hobart Olson, Milwaukee, a great grandniece of the late Rear Admiral James Hooker Strong, U.S.N., in whose honor the ship was named, christened the destroyer and though it was her first experience, indeed, the first launching she had ever witnessed, she won praise from Commander J. M. Kiernan who labelled it as, "a real Navy job."

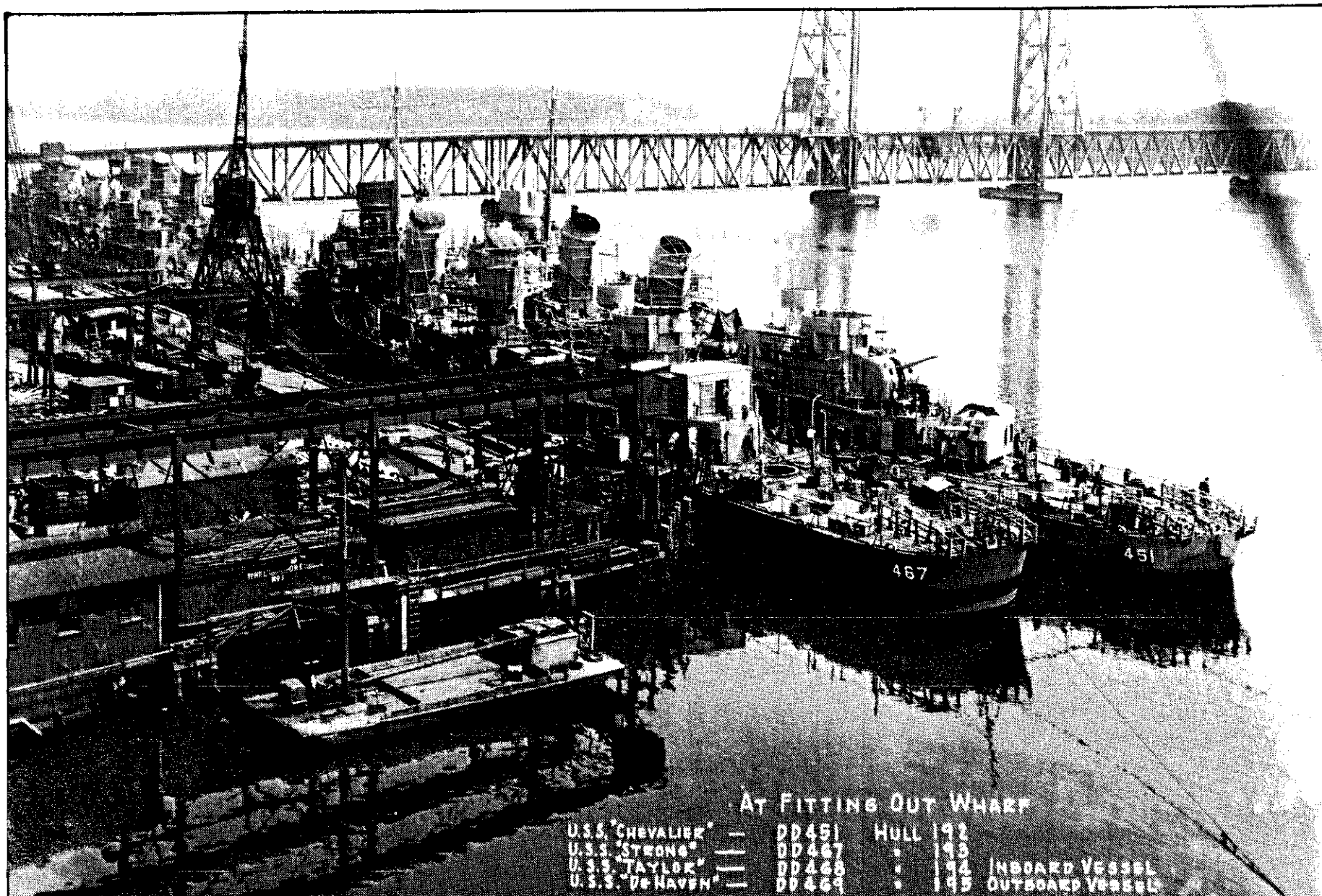
Though the weather is now a military secret, it is safe to say that none of the sponsor's party or other spectators worried about sunstroke. A small number of spectators watched the ceremonies from vantage points on the north side of Carlton Bridge, Vine street; and the Maine Central Railroad station with a few more clustered around Vine street on Water and Washington.

The launching was conducted with typical wartime speed and lack of frills and it was just another launching. Though the time of the launching was a military secret, four or five hundred spectators gathered in the above spots some 15 or 20 minutes before launching time to witness the event.

The Strong is the second ship to be launched from the new ways in the north yard of the shipyard, the area included in the recent expansion of the plant which took over much of the section formerly used by the railroad.



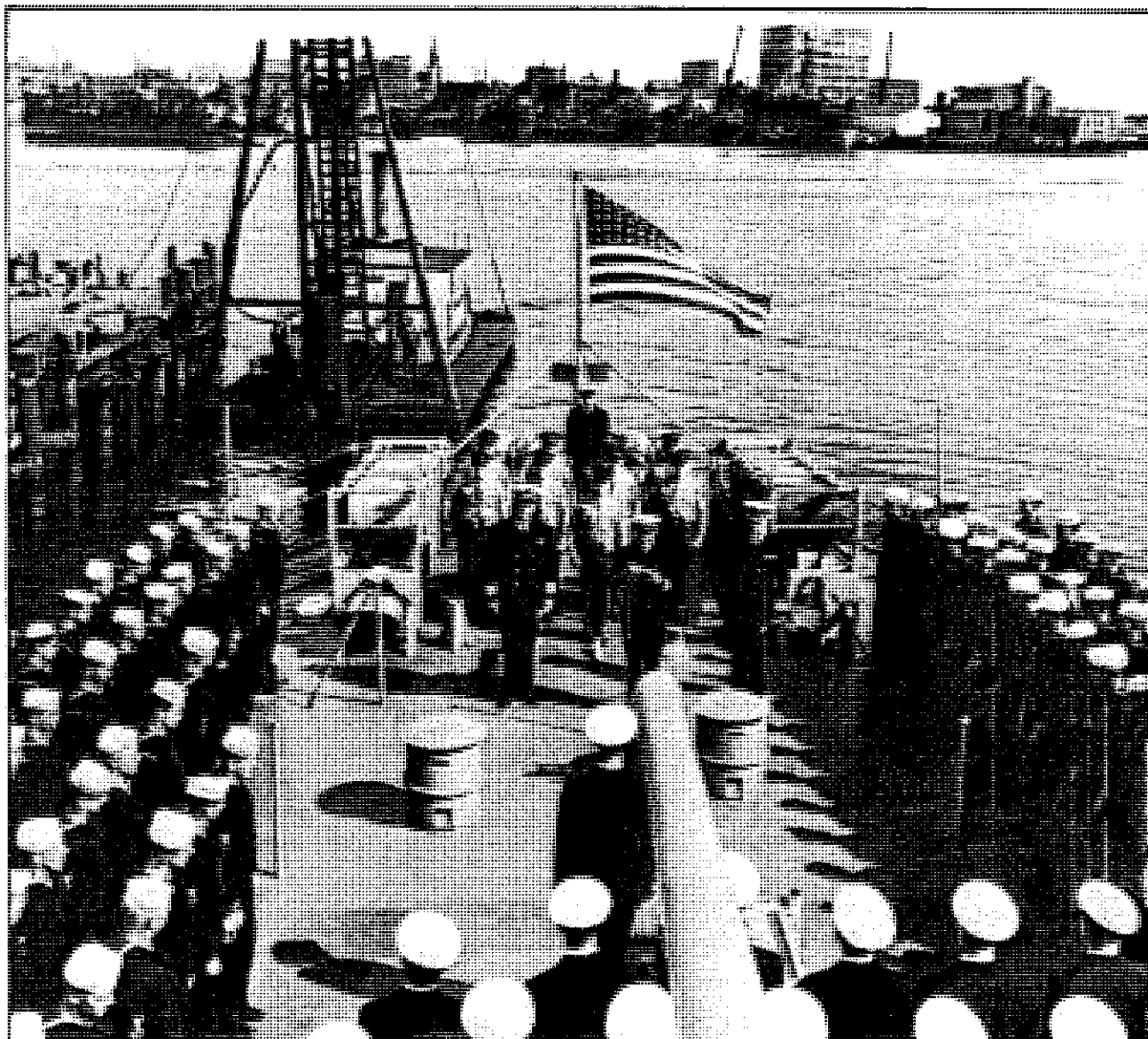
The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) after her launching in May, 1942, at Bath, Maine. When completed, she was armed with five 5-in./38 dual-purpose guns in single mounts, ten 21-inch torpedo tubes in two quintuple mounts, depth charges in stern racks and "K"-gun projectors, and an AA battery of 40-mm and 20-mm automatic cannons. She was 376', 6" long and had a rated speed of 35 knots. (National Archives)



AT FITTING OUT WHARF

U.S.S. "CHEVALIER"	—	DD 451	HULL 192	
U.S.S. "STRONG"	—	DD 467	" 193	
U.S.S. "TAYLOR"	—	DD 468	" 194	INBOARD VESSEL
U.S.S. "DE HAVEN"	—	DD 469	" 195	OUTBOARD VESSEL

The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) and the U.S.S. Chevalier (DD-451) at the Bath Iron Works' fitting-out wharf in July, 1942. Ahead of them are their sister ships the U.S.S. Taylor (DD-468) and the U.S.S. De Haven (DD-469). Only the Taylor survived World War II, but she had the honor of escorting the battleship U.S.S. Missouri (BB-63) into Tokoyo Bay for The Surrender on 2 September 1945. (National Archives)



Lieutenant Commander Joseph M. Wellings, USN, reading his orders at the commissioning of the U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) in the Boston Navy Yard on 7 August 1942. After her shakedown cruise and convoy duty in the Caribbean and Eastern Atlantic the Strong departed from Norfolk, Virginia, on 27 December 1942 to join the war in the Southwest Pacific. (N. War College/Hist. Collection)



The officer complement of the U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) at her commissioning on 7 August 1942: (Front row, L to R) Lt.(jg) James A. Curran, USN (Gunnery); Lt(jg) Hugh B. Miller, USNR (Stores and 20-mm.); Lieut. Frederick W. Purdy, USN (Executive Officer); LCdr. Joseph H. Wellings, USN (Commanding Officer); Lieut. Marvin I. Rosenberg, USN (Engineering); Lt(jg) H. P. Laughlin, (MC), USN (Medical); Lt(jg) R. J. Foley, USNR (1st Lieut./Dam. Control). (Back row) Ens. Virgil M. Wheeler, Jr., USNR (Ass't. Gunnery); Ens. Albert E. Oberg, USN (Signal Off. and Ass't. Navigator); Ens. Benjamin F. Jetton, USNR (Communications.); Lt(jg) Delavan B. Downer, USNR (Ass't. Engineering); Lt(jg) Donald A. Regan, USNR (Ass't Gunnery); Ens. Ralph E. Trost, USNR (Ass't. Engineering); Ens. Alton B. Grimes, USN (Radar and Sound); Ens. O. Milton Hackett, USNR (Torpedo Off.). (Photograph/Identifications courtesy of Cdr. O. M. Hackett, USNR (Ret.))

Division of Naval History
Ships' Histories Section
Navy Department

HISTORY OF USS STRONG (DD 467)

The first ship named after a gallant fighting man, USS STRONG (DD 467) was a veteran of convoy operations in the Caribbean and eastern Atlantic as well as the blazing sea battles fought in the early days of World War II in the South Pacific. Her well organized crew fought her guns so gallantly that the enemy more than paid for her loss.

STRONG was built by the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine. Her keel was laid on 30 April 1941 and she was launched 17 May 1942, at which time she was sponsored by the great-grandniece of Rear Admiral Strong, Mrs. Susan H. Olson. USS STRONG was commissioned on 7 August 1942, with Commander Joseph Harold Wellings, USN, serving as her first commanding officer.

One of the FLETCHER class, this sleek fighting ship was named for Rear Admiral James H. Strong, USN, who was born in Canandaigua, New York on 26 April 1814. He began his Naval career in 1829 as a midshipman. Upon completion of studies at the Naval Academy, Rear Admiral Strong was assigned duty with the sloop LEXINGTON serving with the Brazil Squadron from 1832 to 1833. He served in succession aboard the following ships: CONSTELLATION, INDEPENDENCE, COLUMBUS, LEVANT, RELIEF MOHAWK and finally as commanding officer of the steam sloop, MONONGAHELA, operating in the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, from 1863 to 1865.

In November 1863, Commander Strong convoyed a division of the army under General Banks from New Orleans to Brazos Island at Brazos de Santiago. On the 25th of November, 1863, a body of troops under Major General Banks captured a battery of three guns at Arkansas Pass. Commander Strong, after assisting in the landing of the troops, steamed ahead and opened an effective fire on the battery, which shortly hoisted a white flag and was taken possession of by the troops, who had also engaged it. General Banks commended the effective gunnery of the MONONGAHELA. Commander Strong also commanded the MONONGAHELA at the battle of Mobile Bay on 5 August 1864. His vessel was the first to engage the rebel ram TENNESSEE. He sheared out of the line to run into her, and struck her fair, at the same time giving her a broadside of solid 11-inch shot, which apparently had but little if any effect upon her. Soon after, a signal was made to his ship to again ram her and he did so, and was about to try it the third time when she surrendered to the fleet.

Commander Strong was commissioned Captain on 5 August 1865; Inspector, Navy Yard, New York, 1866-7; commanding steam sloop CANANDAIGUA, European Squadron, 1868-9. He was commissioned a Rear Admiral in September 1873 and died in 1882.

After her shakedown cruise, USS STRONG was employed in convoy operations in the Caribbean and eastern Atlantic waters. An 11,000 mile escort assignment took her from Hampton Roads, Virginia to Noumea, New Caledonia. She sailed on 27 December 1942 and arrived there on 30 January 1943.

Upon arriving at Noumea USS STRONG was badly in need of ammunition and stores. Numerous gunnery drills while underway had depleted her ammunition and she hadn't taken on any stores since leaving New York on Christmas Day, 1942. She finally succeeded in receiving a ten-day supply of provisions from USS WHITNEY though she had to send a 40 man working party to WHITNEY in order to get them. On 1 February STRONG sailed in company with USS CONY, BIDDLE and OBERON enroute to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.

The ships arrived on 3 February and on the following day STRONG received 922 rounds of 40 millimeter ammunition from USS DIXIE. Later that afternoon she received 440 auxiliary boosters for aircraft bombs for delivery to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. She sailed the following day in company with USS AMERICAN LEGION, HUNTER LIGGETT, GEORGE CLYMER, PATUXENT. STRONG lead the oilers and transports through Sealark Channel on 7 February to the unloading anchorages off Lunga Point and Kali Point, Guadalcanal.

During the latter part of the morning all ships had to get underway due to an air raid warning though the attack never developed. At 1745 the task group was ordered to clear the area immediately and proceed to sea to the eastward. The Tokyo Express, estimated at 20 destroyers, was on one of its regular trips south to land supplies or remove Jap personnel from their area around Cape Esperance. By 1812 the transports and oilers were underway with STRONG and other escorts screening with all boilers on the line.

The task group returned on 9 February to finish unloading. That night the near proximity to Savo Island caused all hands some anxiety and they remained at their battle stations the entire night while PATUXENT was unloading. However, all fears were unfounded as the Japs had evacuated on the night of 7 February when STRONG had been ordered underway. On 10 February, STRONG escorted PATUXENT to Tulagi Harbor and upon arrival, found that the Army at Guadalcanal had just announced that at 1500 that afternoon the entire island at Guadalcanal was in U.S. control. All remaining enemy troops had been captured, apparently stranded when the last "Tokyo Express" had departed on the night of 7 February.

On 11 February, PATUXENT finished unloading and stood out with USS STRONG and HUMPHREYS screening. The following day STRONG was detached to rendezvous with Task Force 67. At 0713 on 13 February she joined the task force which included the cruisers

NASHVILLE, HELENA, HONOLULU, and SAINT LOUIS, plus the destroyers JENKINS, CHEVALIER and TAYLOR. On 14 February the day turned into one of great activity as stores, supplies and oil were apparently plentiful, and working parties were kept busy.

On 15 February the task force sortied for maneuvered and training exercises. At 1943 on 17 February a lookout reported a periscope on the starboard quarter, about 1500 yards away. STRONG's captain heeled his ship over with hard right rudder and began a systematic sound search of the area. However, by 2025 no sound contact had been made and STRONG was ordered to rejoin the task force. On 23 February the entire force returned to port at Espiritu Santo.

On 1 March STRONG stood out in company with Task Force 67. The ship were to operate on training exercises just north of Espiritu Santo, south of San Cristobal. At 1200 on 14 March NICHOLAS, RADFORD, STRONG and TAYLOR were detached from Task Force 67 and ordered toward Tulagi to bombard the Vila-Stanmore Plantation on the Island of Kolombangara, Solomon Islands. At 1040 on 15 March the destroyers put in at Tulagi to fuel and at 1545 they again stood out on their mission of destruction. At 2000 all four boilers were put on the line in case enemy opposition developed.

At 0203 on 16 March, USS STRONG opened fire for one minute, then after checking guns and personnel, began firing in earnest. At 0215, USS TAYLOR, the rear ship of the column ceased firing and all ships "poured on the oil" and surged through the water at 32 knots to clear Kula Gulf. By 2232 the task force had been contacted and the destroyers rejoined.

On 20 March the task force entered Tulagi Harbor where the ships fueled and provisioned. After completing her duties there STRONG steamed on to Espiritu Santo, arriving on 22 March 1943.

During April, STRONG remained with Task Force 18 in the Solomons Islands area until the 11th after which she based at Espiritu Santo. On 7 April STRONG made contact with a surfaced submarine and though she scored three 5-inch hits and numerous 20 and 40 millimeter hits before the wily enemy submerged, she was not credited with a sinking.

On 19 May STRONG sailed from Espiritu Santo to rendezvous with Task Unit 32.4.6 the following day. She then sailed to Guadalcanal where she began patrol duties. On 23 May she was dispatched to the scene where USS NIAGARA and 6 torpedo boats were burning. However, by 0351 of the following day she still had not located the ships but received word that all survivors had been rescued. STRONG then returned to Tulagi Harbor where she remained conducting brief patrols at the harbor entrance until 16 June.

About 1300 on 16 June, STRONG was anchored in Tulagi. At 1315 she received a preliminary warning of an impending air raid expected at 1345. At 1320 STRONG's crew scurried to their battle stations and at 1333 the ship got underway. Meanwhile, STRONG's communicators were receiving many reports on fighter direction which indicated that the enemy was approaching Henderson Field from the southeast, over the mountains of Guadalcanal. A little later several dog fights took place over Henderson Field which was then visible to the ship. Commander Wellings increased his speed to 25 knots.

At 1412 dive bombers were seen attacking friendly ships between Koli and Lunga Points. One merchant ship was hit near the stern and shortly thereafter MONONGAHELA, which was in the unit with STRONG, changed course placing STRONG on her port bow. Again more speed was ordered and STRONG's engines responded, pushing her along at 30 knots. Between 1413 and 1422 about 15 Vals (dive bombers) attacked from the direction of Lunga and Koli Points on a northwesterly course. Almost all the planes came in on a shallow glide at high speeds and levelled off between about 100 500 feet from the water.

At 1414 STRONG fired on the enemy planes, splashing three of them by 1421 when she ceased firing. At that time a few dog fights were still going on in the area at an altitude of about 15,000 to 20,000 feet. By 1458 all enemy planes had either been shot down or departed the area and STRONG steamed back into the harbor.

On 5 July 1943, STRONG joined Task Group 36.1 to bombard enemy positions on Kolombangara and Bairoko Harbor. The sea was moderate with a 12 to 15 knot wind from the northeast and intermittent rain squalls. About midnight of 5-6 July, the force entered Kula Gulf and STRONG was the second ship in column. All four boilers were in use and STRONG was ready for using emergency power. Enemy positions on Kolombangara Island were bombarded first, followed by blasting installations around Bairoko Inlet on New Georgia Island. At 0040, after completing the bombardment STRONG turned to port and about 1½ minutes after completing the turn, a torpedo crashed into the port side at the forward fireroom.

The fireroom and engineroom flooded to the waterline immediately. The after fireroom flooded slowly as STRONG took a 15 degree list to starboard. All propulsion was lost but emergency electrical power remained. At 0113, USS CHEVALIER (DD 451) came alongside to port and removed the survivors; 234 enlisted men and 7 officers. This was probable the fastest rescue operation of the war as it was all over in only 7 minutes. At 0122 STRONG broke in two as the stern listed about 40 degrees and both ends sank simultaneously.

USS STRONG earned two Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the following operations:

1 Star/Consolidation of Solomon Islands

Consolidation of Southern Solomons -- 15-16 March; 12-13 May; 20 May and 16 June 1943

1 Star/New Georgia-Rendova-Vangunu Occupation -- 4-5 July 1943

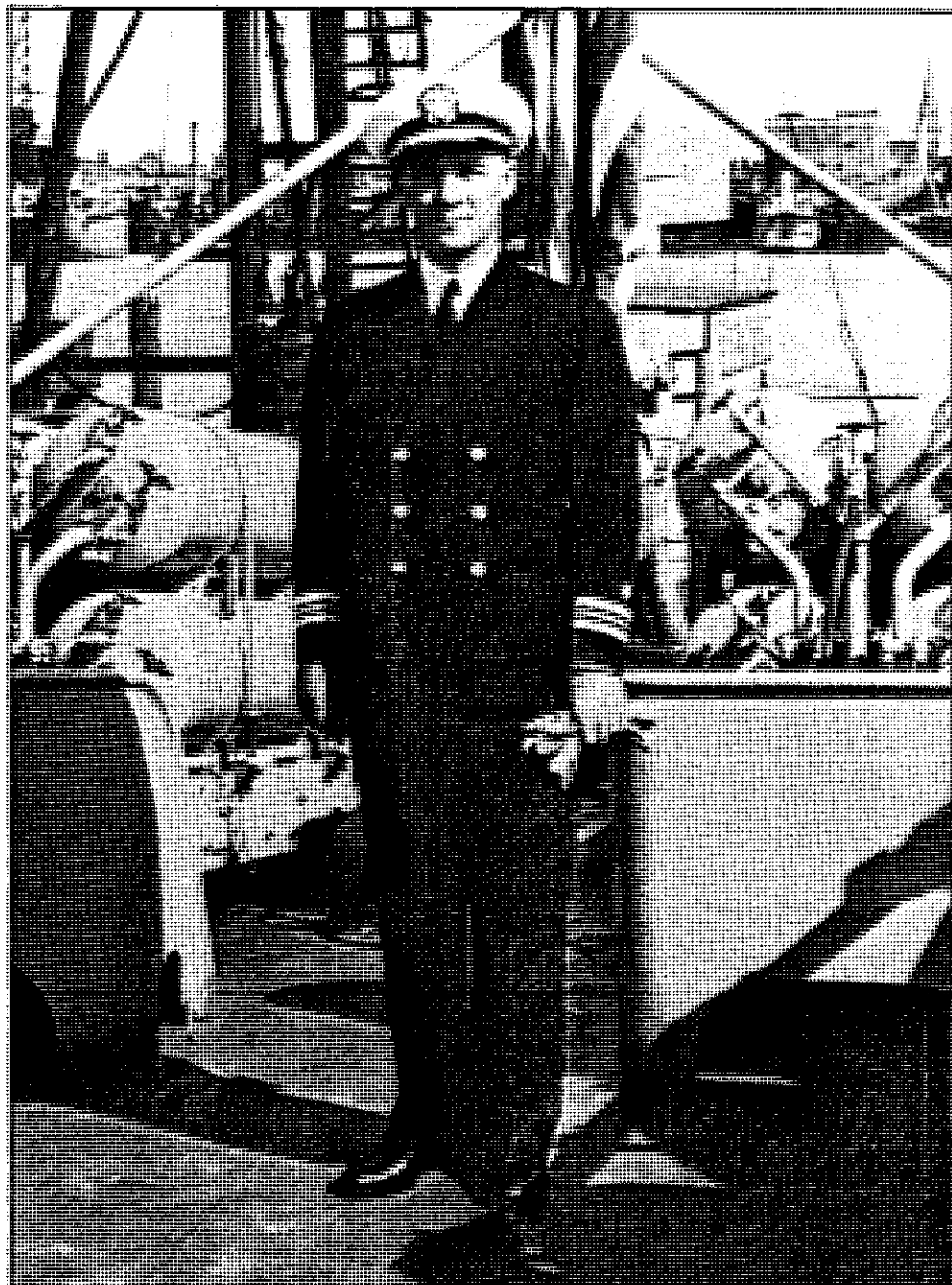
* * * * *

STATISTICS

LENGTH	377 feet
BEAM	39 feet
SPEED	35 knots
DISPLACEMENT	2,050 tons

* * * * *

Compiled: October 1952



LCDR. Joseph H. Wellings, USN, on 7 August 1942 when he assumed command of the U.S.S. Strong (DD-467). Eleven months later he stepped off the bridge as the ship sank beneath him in Kula Gulf in the Southwest Pacific. The article he wrote in 1977 and the personal papers he donated in 1980 to the Naval Historical Collection at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., provided a valuable source of information for this booklet. (NWC/Newport.)

Obituary for Rear Admiral Joseph H. Wellings, USN (Ret.)*
1903 - 1988

Commanding Officer, U.S.S. Strong (DD-467)
August, 1942 - July, 1943

JOSEPH HAROLD WELLINGS '25

RAdm. Joseph Harold Wellings USN (Ret.) died on 28 March 1988 in Newport, Rhode Island. Burial took place in Arlington National Cemetery.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, he was appointed to the Naval Academy from that state and graduated with the Class of 1925. He first served in UTAH with Battleship Division Two, Scouting Fleet followed by duty in Florida and in destroyers KING and TILLMAN. He instructed with the NROTC Unit at Harvard for two years beginning in 1933, during which time Gus met his future wife, Dorothea Kirstine Bertelsen of Boston. They were married in January 1937 after his service in the Fleet as Admiral Leahy's Aide and Flag Lieutenant. In 1940 Wellings was ordered to duty as an assistant naval attaché and as observer of the Royal Navy. His experiences as an observer were applied in developing tactical doctrine and antisubmarine doctrine for convoy operations and gunnery.

In August, 1942 Wellings put the destroyer STRONG (DD-467) in commission as her Commanding Officer. Subsequent operations involved convoy escort in the Caribbean, Eastern Atlantic and in North African waters including the Casablanca invasion. In late 1942, STRONG was ordered to the Pacific. On 30 January, 1943, at Noumea, she began operations against the enemy in the Pacific. She was sunk on the night of 4-5 July 1943 during the landings of our forces at Rice Anchorage, New Georgia Islands. For services while commanding STRONG, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device "V" and the Silver Star Medal.

Following the sinking of STRONG, Wellings was hospitalized until January 1944 when he reported for temporary duty with the Anti-Submarine Warfare Unit, Fleet Operational Training Command, Atlantic Fleet. In March, 1944 he took command of Destroyer Division One Hundred Two and from November 1944

to March 1945, held additional responsibility as Commander, Destroyer Squadron Two. For his services in these positions he received Gold Stars in lieu of his second and third Bronze Star Medals. He was cited particularly for his performance as Commander, Attack Group Seven, Blue Beach, at Lingayen Gulf, Philippine Islands between 9-16 January 1945 and for escort and fast carrier task group screening duties in the Western Pacific and Philippine Islands area.

This duty was followed by two years at the National War College and two years as planning officer on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet. Wellings was then given command of the cruiser Columbus in the Mediterranean. Returning to Washington in 1952, he served in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Personnel). While in that assignment he was selected for rear admiral and was ordered to ComNavBase, Newport, after which came two years with the Atomic Task Force followed by duty as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy). From this assignment he was ordered as Assistant and then as Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Following this duty RAdm. Wellings was appointed Commandant of the First Naval District with headquarters in his birthplace, Boston. Following a stroke, he retired in August 1963 and moved to Newport, Rhode Island.

In December 1980 RAdm. and Mrs. Wellings donated their personal papers relating to his 40 years of active service in the United States Navy to the Naval War College Foundation. This collection has been placed on deposit in the Naval Historical Collection at the Naval War College for the use of naval scholars.

* Shipmate magazine; June, 1988.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the BRONZE STAR MEDAL to

CAPTAIN JOSEPH HAROLD WELLINGS, UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:¹

"For meritorious achievement as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. STRONG, operating as a Unit of a Task Force during combined minelaying expeditions and bombardment missions in the enemy Japanese-held Kolombangara and New Georgia Areas, Solomon Islands, the nights of May 7 and 13, 1943. Skillfully maneuvering through poorly-charted waters under cover of darkness, Captain (then Commander) Wellings carried out his assigned duties courageously and with unwavering determination, delivering his devastating bombardments against these heavily-fortified strongholds and successfully mining areas used extensively by Japanese surface forces, subsequently bringing his ship through without damage following each decisive action. By his brilliant and inspiring leadership, expert ship-handling and constant devotion to the completion of these extremely perilous assignments, Captain Wellings contributed immeasurably to the success of our sustained operations against the enemy in a vital theater of war and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy.

¹ Typed from a draft citation at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the SILVER STAR MEDAL to

COMMANDER JOSEPH HAROLD WELLINGS, UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

*CITATION:*¹

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. STRONG in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands, July 4-5, 1943. As part of a task force in close support of the landing of United States troops at Rice Anchorage on New Georgia Island, Commander Wellings skillfully maneuvered his ship through restricted submarine-infested waters and effectively bombarded enemy shore batteries and installations in the face of intense Japanese opposition until the STRONG was struck by an enemy torpedo. Calmly and efficiently, Commander Wellings directed the abandonment of his sinking ship, heroically remaining aboard as she went down. The explosion of her depth charges threw him, seriously injured, into the sea, and several hours later he was rescued. The inspiring leadership and valiant devotion to duty displayed by Commander Wellings contributed materially to the success of a vital mission and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy.

¹ *Typed from a draft citation at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.*

*E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000*

DESECRETTED

ACTION REPORT

USS STRONG

DD 467

SERIAL 04

12 APRIL 1943

ACTION REPORT OF SUBMARINE ATTACK ON 7 APRIL 1943.

COVERS ATTACK IN 10-05S LAT AND LONG
162-08E - ASSISTED BY O'BANNON - WHILE
ON DETACHED DUTY FROM TASK FORCE 18.

51937

OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY

ORIGINAL

DD467/A16-3
Serial 04

U.S.S. STRONG (DD467)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

April 12, 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

From: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. STRONG.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, PACIFIC FLEET.
Via : (1) Commander Destroyer Division FORTY ONE.
(2) Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY ONE.
(3) Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
(4) Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action Report of Submarine Attack by U.S.S. STRONG,
7 April 1943.

Reference: (a) Navy Regulations, Art. 712 and Art. 814(6).
(b) C.T.F. 18 Secret Dispatch 080810 of April 1943.

Enclosure: (A) Report of Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander
F.W. PURDY, U.S. Navy.
(B) Track Chart of subject attack.

1. In accordance with reference (a) the following action report is submitted. Reference (b) is the Dispatch Report required by the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet.

2. NARRATIVE

(a) At 2150 LOVE, 7 April, Task Force EIGHTEEN was in Latitude 10-05 South, Longitude 162-08 East, course 125 degrees True, speed 20 knots. The Task Force consisted of the USS HONOLULU (Fleet Guide), ST. LOUIS and HELENA formed in column in above order, distance 1000 yards, screened by six destroyers on circle 5 in screen No. 23. (Comdespac Conf. Serial 01010 of 15 October, 1942). The STRONG's station was 5070. Circle spacing 1000 yards. O.T.C. - C.T.F. EIGHTEEN (Rear Admiral W.L. Ainsworth in HONOLULU).

2151 - (LOVE) The STRONG made Sugar George radar contact bearing 150 degrees True, distance 9350. Fox Dog radar was placed on contact by remote control bearing indicator. Contact was verified by radar interpreter.

2153 - Went to general quarters and informed Task Force Commander over T.B.S. of contact bearing 153 degrees True, distance 4 miles. The D.R.T. in the combat information center and the plotting room both plotted the contact's speed as zero.

2157 - Informed C.T.F. EIGHTEEN over T.B.S., "I am investigating".

2158 - Changed course to 180 which placed contact about 5 - 10 degrees on port bow.

DD467/A16-3
Serial 04

U.S.S. STRONG (DD467)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

April 12, 1943

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: Action Reports of Submarine Attack by U.S.S. STRONG
7 April 1943.

-
- 2200 - Increased speed to 25 knots. The gunnery officer, machine gun officer, torpedo officer and executive officer (radar interpreter) were informed of the plan of action if contact proved to be a submarine.
- 2203 - Range had closed to about 1150 yards, bearing steady 170, ordered, "right full rudder". Contact still on radar screen.
- 2204 - When contact about abeam to port ordered, "rudder amidships", and opened shutter on fire control searchlight. Commenced firing immediately with 5 inch, 20 and 40 mm when a large size submarine fully surfaced appeared in center of searchlight beam. Range about 700 yards. The 5 inch began to hit immediately, the 20 and 40 mm sprayed the decks and hull from bow to stern. At about -
- 2204-1/4 - Ordered cease firing and right full rudder. At this time three sure 5 inch hits had been observed and the submarine was sinking stern first with about a 10 - 15 degree angle. The searchlight shutters were closed about 2204-1/3. The ship continued to swing to starboard and the D.R.T. position of the submarine closed as quickly as possible. There was a very strong smell of diesel oil as the ship passed near the last position of the submarine. The Combat Information Center stated that the ship had turned inside the position of the submarine.
- 2208 - Speed reduced to 15 knots, headed away from the D.R.T. location until range was about 1800 yards then turned and at -
- 2225 - Passed over D.R.T. position of submarine dropping an eight charge pattern with deep settings. D.R.T. position of submarine at time of attack Latitude 10-10 South, Longitude 162-10 East.
- 2235 - Dropped another eight charge pattern on D.R.T. position of submarine. Returned to D.R.T. position of the submarine, turned on 12-inch signal searchlight for about one minute. A few pieces of unidentified small debris were observed.
- 2249 - Informed C.T.F. EIGHTEEN and Comdesron TWENTY ONE (Commander Screen) over T.B.S. that three sure 5 inch hits were observed, that submarine was observed sinking stern first with 10 - 15 degree angle and that two full patterns of depth charges had been dropped on D.R.T. plot.
- 2253 - Received orders from C.T.F. EIGHTEEN to rejoin Task Force.

April 12, 1943

DECLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIALSubject: Action Report of Submarine Attack by U.S.S. STRONG
7 April 1943.
-----3. GUNNERY AND CASUALTIES.

- (a) Ammunition expended, 10 rounds 5" A.A. common, base detonating projectiles with 10 rounds of flashless powder. 98 rounds of 40 mm and 288 rounds of 20 mm. No casualties.
- (b) Full radar control was used until searchlight was turned on when director pointer and trainer shifted to telescope control (partial radar control). Continuous fire was employed.
- (c) Three sure 5 inch hits were observed as follows: one in conning tower; one in hull below and slightly abaft conning tower, one in hull near stern. One possible 5 inch hit was obtained in hull between conning tower and bow. Many 40 and 20 mm hits were observed.
- (d) The gun blast on the port wing of the bridge from No. 2-5" and No. 1-20 mm located just forward and at about the same level as the bridge was severe when firing on the quarter.
- (e) The only material casualty was the failure of one depth charge thrower on the port side to fire. The firing circuit for this thrower had tested satisfactory 10 hours previously. Investigation indicated a break in the firing lead near the depth charge.
- (f) The flashless powder was big improvement over the smokeless powder. The small flash from the flashless powder did not impair the visibility to any degree.
- (g) The torpedo officer was informed that torpedoes would be fired if the contact were a submarine, but to wait for the C.O.'s order to fire. The problem was set up on the torpedo director with bearings from the Sugar George radar. Everything was ready but the C.O. did not give the order to fire - an error that will always be remembered since the undersigned has strongly advocated the use of torpedoes in such circumstances.
- (h) There were no personnel casualties.

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U.S.S. STRONG (DD46)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

DD467/A16-3

Serial 13

April 12, 1943

Subject: Action Report of Submarine Attack by U.S.S. STRONG
7 April 1943.

MISCELLANEOUS.

- (a) The initial Sugar George radar contact was 9350 yards. Two nights before the same operator made an initial Sugar George contact of 12,000 yards. This contact resulted in the sinking of a Jap submarine by the U.S.S. O'BANION.
- (b) When screening a unit cruising at moderate or high speed considerable distance is covered between the initial contact, contact verified, reported and action taken. Part of this time delay the night the O'BANION sank its submarine and in this attack was due to scattered rain squalls and heavy clouds on the bearing of the contact. In order to reduce this delay the executive officer (radar interpreter) sleeps in an upper bunk in the captain's sea cabin and both the captain and executive officer are up and out when the loud remote radar contact alarm is sounded on initial contact.
- (c) A planned method of approach and attack is essential. Events happened too fast to do much thinking and take the necessary action near the end of the approach or when action is joined. There are other methods which are perhaps as good if not better than the one selected. The method selected was based on the following assumptions
 - (1) Considerable traffic (large and small) had left Guadalcanal area during the day. Ships were close ahead and astern of Task Force 18 at the time of the contact, therefore it was essential to verify if contact were enemy.
 - (2) Contact assumed to be submarine, speed zero.
 - (3) High speed, and course directly for submarine selected to reduce time interval for submarine to take action, to reduce danger from submarine torpedoes, to prevent submarine from observing wake and to be in a good position to ram or drop depth charges if submarine submerged during approach.
 - (4) When range was reduced to 1150 yards and "pip" had not disappeared from Sugar George screen the target was brought on the beam to identify and to open fire with all guns at ranges where there should be no misses.

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U.S.S. STRONG (DD467)

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San Francisco, California

DD467/A16-3

San Francisco

CONFIDENTIAL

April 12, 1943

Subject: Action Report of Submarine Attack by U.S.S. STRONG
7 April 1943.

- (d) The remote control Sugar George P.P.I. and bearing indicator located in the pilot house was of considerable assistance in conducting the approach and assuring the commanding officer of the location of other units. It is strongly recommended that remote control P.P.I.'s be installed in destroyers as quickly as practicable.
- (e) The smell of diesel oil when the ship returned to the D.R.T. position, and before as well as after the depth charge attacks, was very strong. The engineer officer and the doctor both reported a strong smell of diesel oil carried through the ventilation blowers to the forward engine room and wardroom.
- (f) When the submarine was illuminated it was broadside to the STRONG (target angle about 280). It was fully surfaced and very long. As one signalman said, "What a big son of a bitch". The size and shape of the conning tower and hull when compared with O.N.I. silhouettes indicated that the submarine was of the I-121-123 class. A net cutter was observed in the bow. No deck gun was observed and no number was seen on the hull or conning tower.
- (g) WEATHER AND SEA CONDITIONS. - Wind southeast 6 knots. Sea very smooth with no swells. Barometer 2993. Temperature 83. Water at surface 88. Sky overcast, scattered cumulus clouds. Visibility fair.

5. The performance of duty of all personnel was excellent. It is believed that Garris, D.J., Rdm2c, the radar operator who made the initial contact; Lieutenant Commander F.W. PURDY, radar interpreter; Lieutenant J.A. CURRAN, gunnery officer and Lieutenant (jg) A.B. GRIMES, are deserving of credit. Recommendations for awards for the above personnel will be forwarded in separate correspondence.

J.H. Wellings
J.H. WELLINGS.

Copy: Cominch
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Comdespac
Comdespac Representative Sopac
(WHITNEY)

DECLASSIFIED
UNIDENTIFIEDU.S.S. STRONG (DD467)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

April 12, 1943

From: The Executive Officer.
To : The Commanding Officer.

Subject: Action Report.

Reference: (a) Art. 948, U.S. Navy Regulations.

1. At about 2200 LOVE, on April 7, 1943, the USS STRONG engaged and sank a Japanese submarine in approximately Latitude 10-05 South, Longitude 162-08 East. Pursuant to reference (a) following report is submitted:
2. Initial contact was made by S.G. radar bearing 150 degrees True, distance 9350 yards at about 2151. The initial contact showed a very strong pip which gives rise to the belief that the submarine had surfaced immediately before contact was made. Control was immediately coached on and made contact by F.D. radar.
3. Beginning with the initial contact, the plot was started on the D.R.T. This gave the target course as roughly east, speed about 2 knots. As the plot continued target speed appeared to drop to zero. The Plotting Room reported that they had a solution and that target speed was zero. The fact that the submarine at first was tracked at 2 knots and later appeared to have stopped supports the theory that it had just surfaced.
4. From 2158 on, the bridge was kept advised of the true bearing and distance to the contact. The range closed rapidly until 2203 when the S.G. radar showed a range of about 1150 yards, bearing 170. During the approach the position of this stopped submarine was plotted accurately on the D.R.T. S.G. radar kept the sound operator coached on the bearing of the submarine. I directed the sound operator to listen for propeller noises. Pinging was stopped before starting our approach in order to avoid the possibility of appraising the submarine of our presence. The radar screen was closely observed during the approach and in the event that the "pip" had disappeared indicating submarine had submerged, the sound operator was prepared to immediately start pinging on the bearing where radar contact had been lost.
5. Combat Information Center was kept informed of the situation at all times by the Bridge, Control and Lookouts. From the time that firing ceased, continuous efforts were made to regain contact by radar (the contact was last seen on the radar screen just after firing was opened). Using the D.R.T. plot the Captain was coached "on" for two depth charge runs. Charges were dropped when the D.R.T. indicated the ship over the sub. Sound contact was not made at any time although the sound operator was constantly coached in his search by reference to D.R.T. Plot.

DECLASSIFIED

DD167/A16-3

Subject: Action Report.

April 12, 1943

6. It is believed that the performance of duty of the following named officers and men was outstanding and contributed to the destruction of this submarine:

Lieutenant J.A. CURRAN, USN, Fire Control Officer.

Lieutenant (jg) A.B. GRIMES, USN, Tracker.

JONES, J.J., SK1c, Director Pointer

BRAKEFIELD, S.C., RDM2c

BUTLER, S.F., RDM2c

FERGUSON, S.D., RDM2c

GARRIS, D.J., RDM2c

F.W. Purdy
F.W. PURDY.

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11)
00782
(Changed
CLASSIFIED
O, Officer
line)

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

ejh

May 31, 1943

1st Endorsement on
ComTaskFor Eighteen
Conf. ltr. Ser Old,
dated April 17, 1943

From: The Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force
To: The Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: Report on Operations April 1-7 Inclusive.

1. Forwarded.
2. The Commander South Pacific concurs in the opinion of the Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN that 2 submarines were definitely destroyed. Officers and men of the U.S.S. O'BANNON and U.S.S. STRONG are to be congratulated. The part played by the U.S.S. STRONG in both instances is particularly noteworthy.
3. It is considered that the Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN exercised sound judgment in carrying out the directives of OP-Plan 9-43.
4. Classification of this correspondence is hereby changed to "Secret."

W. F. HALSEY

Copy to:
ComAirSoPac
CTF18
CTF19
ComAirSols
Comdesron 21
Comdesdiv 41
C.O. USS O'BANNON
C.O. USS STRONG

P15

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
Flagship of COMMANDER TASK FORCE EIGHTEEN

Serial 0085

24 April 1945

From: Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
To : Lieutenant James Albert Curran, U.S. Navy.
Via : Commanding Officer, U.S.S. STRONG.

Subject: Commendation.

1. The Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN takes pleasure in commending you for your performance of duty as gunnery officer of the U.S.S. STRONG on the night of April seventh, 1943.

2. On this occasion the U.S.S. STRONG was engaged in screening this task force off San Cristobal Island, Solomon Islands. Contact was made on a possible enemy vessel on the surface; the STRONG made a daring and skillful approach to within less than one thousand yards of this contact and surprised an enemy submarine on the surface. By the skillful and prompt action of the battery under your charge, this submarine was sunk by gunfire and depth charges without injury to the STRONG or her crew.

3. Your performance of duty in bringing the gunnery personnel and material to the high standard of training and efficiency exhibited on this occasion reflects great credit on yourself and is in keeping with the best traditions of the naval service.

W. L. AINSWORTH

Copy to:
Cincpac
Comsepac

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
Flagship of COMMANDER TASK FORCE EIGHTEEN

SERIAL 0086

24 April 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

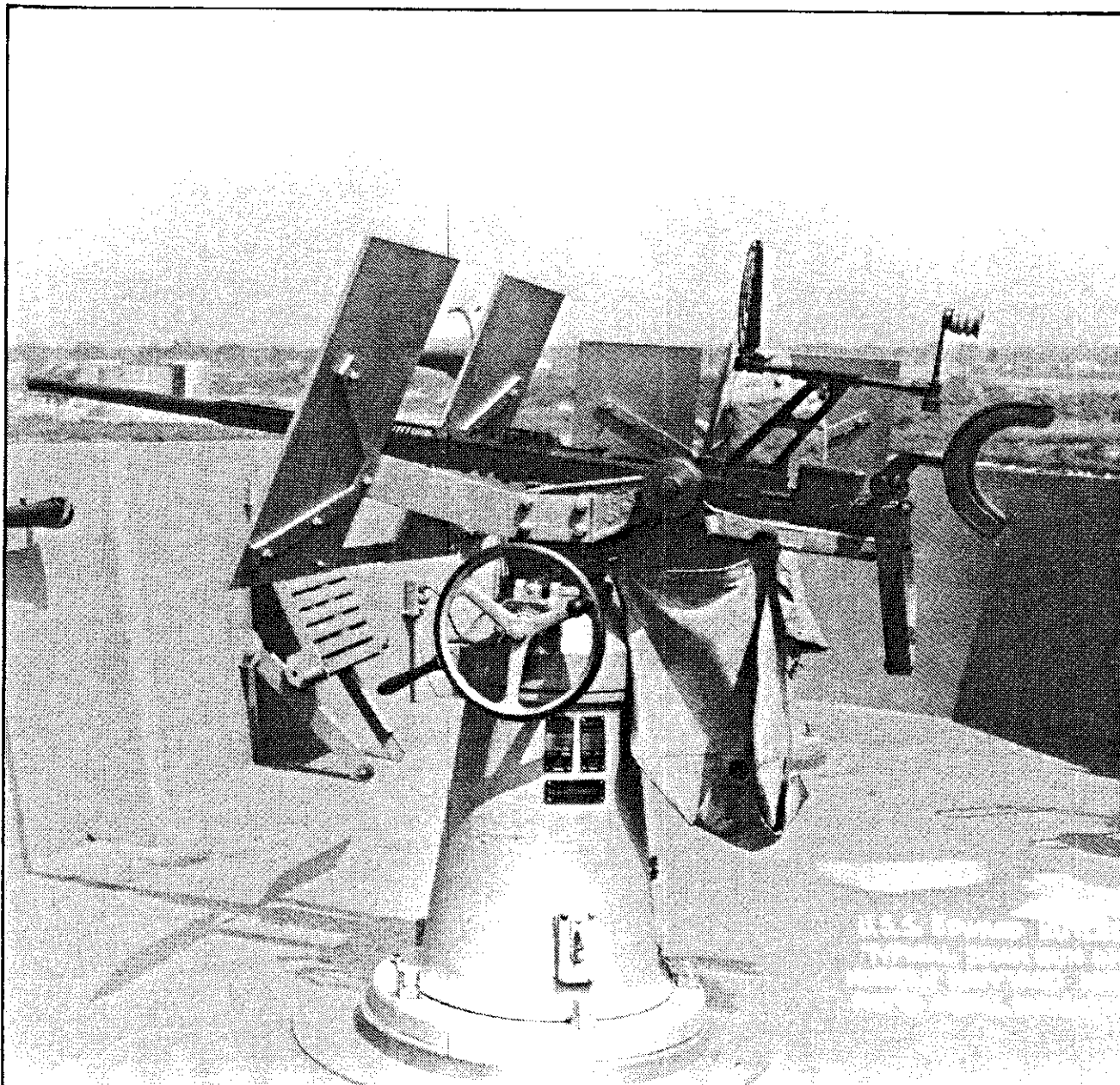
From: Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
To : Lieutenant (junior grade) Alton Barger Grimes,
U.S. Navy.
Via : Commanding Officer, U.S.S. STRONG.
Subject: Commendation.

1. The Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN takes pleasure in commending you for your performance of duty as radar officer of the U.S.S. STRONG, which indirectly resulted in the sinking of one Japanese submarine by the U.S.S. O'BANNON on the night of April fifth, 1943, and of the sinking of another by the U.S.S. STRONG on the night of April seventh, 1943.

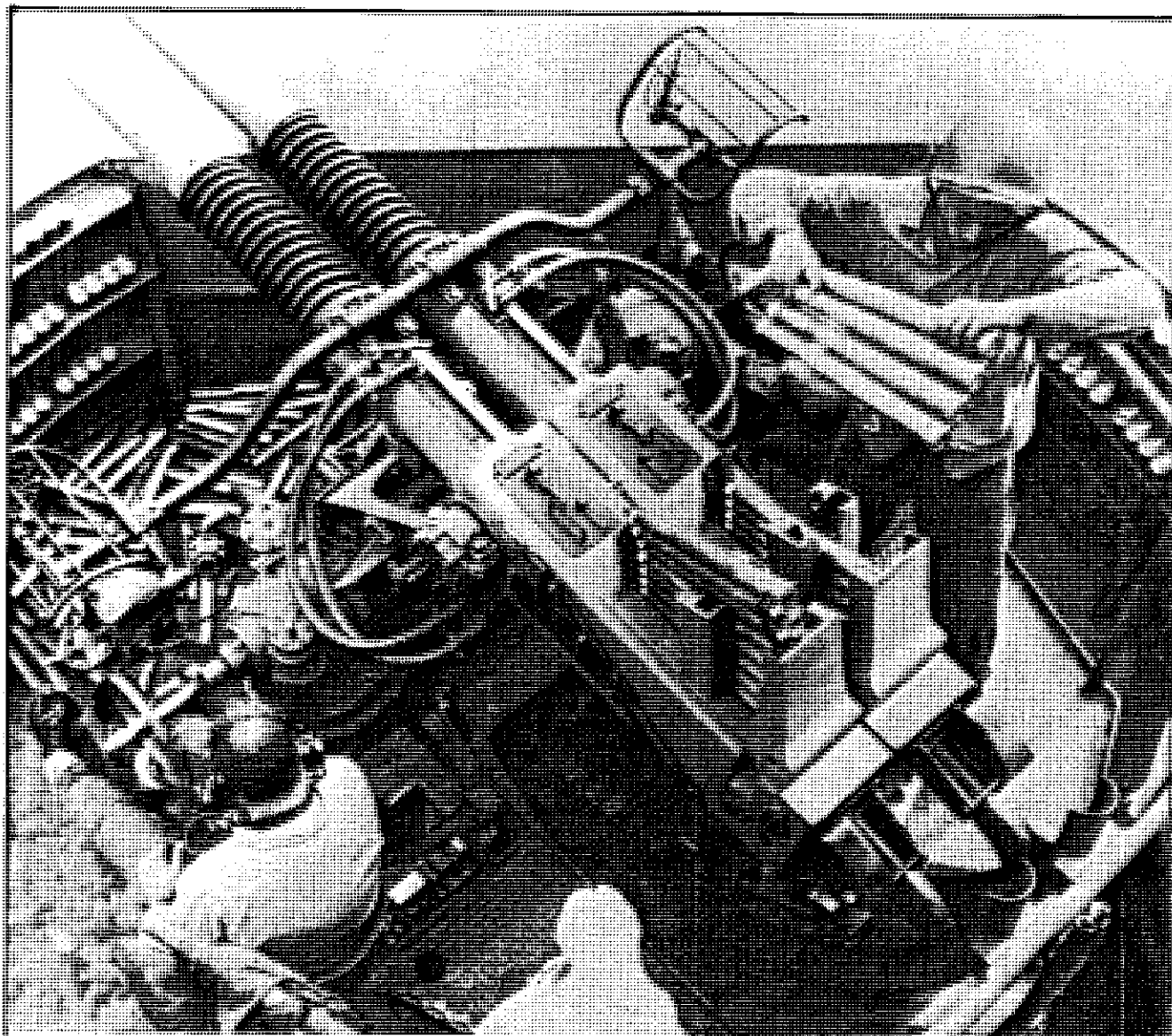
2. On both of these occasions, the O'BANNON and STRONG were engaged in screening this task force in the vicinity of the Solomon Islands. Due to the high state of material efficiency of apparatus and to the thorough training and indoctrination of personnel under your charge, two Japanese submarines were detected on the surface and sunk by gunfire; one by the U.S.S. O'BANNON on the night of April fifth, and a second by the U.S.S. STRONG on the night of April seventh. This leadership and professional ability is in keeping with the highest traditions of the naval service.

W. L. AINSWORTH

Copy to:
Cincpac
Comsepac



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.)



The 40-mm Bofors gun fired a two-pound explosive shell with an effective range of about 2,500 yards. It was primarily an antiaircraft weapon, but destroyers also used their 40-mm's against enemy strongpoints when they provided close-in gunfire support during landings. The gun crew for a twin mount consisted of a pointer, a trainer, a gun captain and four loaders (two for each barrel). The Bofors was capable of firing about 160 rounds/barrel/minute, but the number of rounds actually fired depended on the ability of the loaders to provide an uninterrupted supply of ammunition.

(Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

DD467/A16-3
Serial 08

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

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C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

May 15, 1943

23 MAY 28 49

COMMANDER IN CHIEF
U.S. FLEET
RECEIVED

From: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. STRONG.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, PACIFIC FLEET.
Via : (1) The Commander Destroyer Division FORTY ONE.
(2) The Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY ONE.
(3) The Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
(4) The Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night of 12-13 May 1943.

Reference: (a) Art. 712 and Art. 814(6) U.S. Navy Regulations.
(b) ComThird Fleet Operation Plan 11-43 of 7 May 1943.
(c) C.T.F. 18 Operation Order 7-43 of 9 May 1943.
(d) C.O. RADFORD Operation Order 2-43 of 9 May 1943.
(e) ComThird Fleet Desp. 102355 of May 1943.
(f) C.T.F. 18 Operation Order 7-43, revised, of 11 May 1943.

Enclosure (A) Track chart of USS STRONG for bombardment of Vila Stanmore Plantation, 13 May 1943.

1. Reference (b) ordered Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN to mine the eastern side of Kula Gulf and bombard enemy troops and logistic concentrations in the Vila Stanmore area, Kolombangara Island, Solomon Islands, on the night of 12-13 May. The mine field was laid and the bombardment conducted in accordance with references (c) and (d) as modified by reference (f).

2. The Vila Stanmore group consisted of the light cruisers HONOLULU, HELENA and NASHVILLE; the destroyers NICHOLAS, TAYLOR, O'BANNON, STRONG and CHEVALIER, plus the mining detachment, RADFORD, PREBLE, GAMBLE and BREESE. The Munda group consisted of the ST. LOUIS, JENKINS and FLETCHER.

3. NARRATIVE

(a) Preliminary Operations.

TIME (zone -11)

1325 Passed through Point Grand Central in Latitude 8 degrees 15 minutes South, Longitude 159 degrees, 25 minutes East, on course 300 True, speed 25 knots. The Task Force was in a cruising formation with the cruisers in column in following order from the van: HONOLULU, HELENA, NASHVILLE. Destroyers were stationed as follows: NICHOLAS 2315; TAYLOR 2045; CHEVALIER 2135; O'BANNON 2180; STRONG 2225.

49730

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California
DD467/116-3
Serial 08

May 15, 1943

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

NARRATIVE (continued)

TIME (zone -11)
1825 (cont'd)

Circle spacing 1000 yards, CHEVALIER, O'BANNON and STRONG maintaining station on the rear cruiser (NASHVILLE). The Mine Detachment was formed in column 2000 yards astern of the O'BANNON in the following order: RADFORD, GAMBLE, BREESE. The STRONG was in readiness for action Condition Two and Material Condition of readiness Baker with all gun crews sleeping or resting at their guns. All four boilers were on the main steam line with full power available.

- 2230 - Went to General Quarters in accordance with instructions of Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
- 2325 - Changed course to 270 without signal.
- 2400 - Changed course to 225 True and slowed to 20 knots without signal. Formation changed to a single column in following order from van: NICHOLAS, TAYLOR, HONOLULU, HELENA, NASHVILLE, O'BANNON, STRONG and CHEVALIER, followed by the Mine Detachment. Distance between cruisers, 700 yards; between destroyers 500 yards. 1000 yards distance between TAYLOR and HONOLULU.
- 0017 - HONOLULU changed course to 180 without signal and commenced standing into Kula Gulf. The STRONG changed course at 0022. Between 0022 and 0100, STRONG steered various courses between 180 and 165 to maintain station in column as Task Force proceeded into Kula Gulf.
- 0030 - (about) Mine Detachment proceeded on mining mission.
- 0040 - Moon set behind hills of Kolombangara.

(b) Bombardment Operations.

- 0059-2/3 Observed searchlights on shore to starboard in vicinity of bivouac area, Vila Stanmore.
- 0100 - HONOLULU commenced firing. This was also signal for ships to commence bombardment.

DD-167/A16-3
Serial 06

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

May 15, 1943

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

NARRATIVE (continued)

TIME (zone -11)

- 0100-1/2 First salvo from STRONG. Searchlights were either turned out or shot out by the cruisers at about this time.
- 0100-1/2 to 1104-1/2 - STRONG fired on assigned target on north shore Bambari Harbor.
- 0101-1/2 to 0108-1/2 - STRONG fired on assigned target on northern section of Kape Harbor.
- 0108-1/2 to 0111 - Ceased firing and conducted radar search.
- 0111-1/2 Commenced firing at assigned target in bivouac area.
- 0119 - Ceased firing in bivouac area and lost steering control on the bridge as STRONG was about to turn 90 degrees to port to course 090 following astern of the O'BANNON. Shifted steering control to the steering engine room. Stopped port engine, went ahead flank speed on starboard engine then stopped starboard engine until steering control was definitely shifted to the trick wheel in the steering engine room.
- 0119-1/2 Came left to course 080, all engines ahead flank speed.
- 0121 - With O'BANNON bearing 030, distance 1300 yards, came left to 030 to regain station astern of O'BANNON.
- 0123 - All engines ahead full speed. The STRONG did not fire at Bairako Harbor as called for in the bombardment plan due to the steering gear casualty. This plan called for about four and one half minutes of fire in the Bairako Harbor area.
- 0125 - STRONG regained station astern of O'BANNON and commenced firing at assigned area in Rice Anchorage.
- 0128 - Ceased firing on assigned target in Rice Anchorage. Bombardment completed.

DD-167/116-3
Serial 08

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

May 15, 1943

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

NARRATIVE (continued)

TIME (zone -11)

- 0130 - Increased speed to 28 knots.
- 0131 - Decreased speed to 15 knots and then to 10 knots in order to maintain station east of O'BANNON.
- 0140 - Increased speed to 28 knots following in column astern of O'BANNON.
- 0201 - Unloaded Gun #2 through the muzzle.
- 0202 - Shifted steering control to the bridge.
- 0203 - Formation shifted course and axis to 090 and formed cruising disposition. STRONG stationed 2000 yards on port quarter of the rear cruiser (NASHVILLE). At this time Task Force had cleared Kula Gulf.

3. GUNNERY.

- (a) Expended 815 rounds of 5"/38 cal. A.A. common projectiles. Expended 370 rounds of flashless powder, 445 rounds of smokeless powder.
- (b) FIRE CONTROL. The director was not used to solve the fire control problem. The computer was set to "local". The ship's position was established by Sail George radar ranges and bearings. The Combat Information Center informed the plotting room of the range and true bearing to the initial points of each target area. On "Mark" the time motor of the computer was started and a surface problem with target speed zero set up in the computer. Shortly before opening fire, and several times during firing at each area, the computer's generated range and bearing was compared with the range and bearing on the track chart in the Combat Information Center. The M.P.I. was moved about the target area by the application of range and deflection spots. Fire control schedules were drawn up for this purpose for each target area. The guns were in automatic, fuzes set on "safe". A six second salvo buzzer was used with firing key and salvo buzzer operated from stable element in the plotting room.

DD467/A16-3
Serial 08

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

5 01962

May 15, 1943

C-O-M-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

(c) Gunnery Casualties.

(1) Gun #1. On 42nd salvo breech would not close, cartridge case removed, plug was then greased and oil sprayed on the slots in which the plug slides. After about three minutes the breech plug was able to be closed. Another cartridge case was rammed and the gun fired. No further trouble was experienced by this gun which fired a total of 133 rounds.

(2) Gun #2. On 164th salvo, breech plug would not close. Extracted cartridge but large pieces of cork adhered to the inside of the powder chamber. This cork was removed, the plug greased and oil sprayed on the slots in which the plug slides. Another cartridge case was rammed into the gun and the breech plug tapped closed. The gun was then unloaded through the muzzle - 33 minutes after the completion of the bombardment.

(3) Gun #4. Breech plug would not close when the 155th round was loaded into the gun. Gun captain thought it was a misfire and reported it as such. Further investigation indicated that breech plug had not completely closed. The plug was then tapped closed and the gun unloaded through the muzzle about one minute after completion of the bombardment.

(4) Gun #5. Fired 17 additional salvos. Salvos from the CHEVALIER close astern caused the gun captain to fire these additional salvos by percussion when he mistook these salvos as STRONG salvos.

(d) Cartridge Case Extractors. Each destroyer has one extractor in accordance with the Ordnance Allowance List. This number is totally inadequate. Each destroyer should have one for each mount. It takes too much time during battle, particularly at night, to get the one extractor to the mount which has the casualty. The STRONG and other destroyers have had to use these extractors at least once during sustained firings. The importance of extracting the cartridge case quickly both from the viewpoint of safety and getting the gun back in commission cannot be over-emphasized. Pending action by Bureau Ordnance additional extractors should be manufactured by the destroyer tenders.

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Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

- (c) Short Cartridge Cases. BuOrd Circular Letter A-25-42 of 3 November 1942 authorizes short cartridge cases for clearing projectiles lodged in bore of guns using fixed ammunition. Similar short cartridge cases should be authorized for the 5"/38 caliber semi-fixed ammunition in order to clear these guns for action in the shortest possible time and to prevent the detonation of a shell allowed to remain in a highly heated gun barrel.
- (f) Breech Plugs not completely closing. The STRONG had three different breech plugs which failed to completely close. It is believed that all the ships engaged in this bombardment had at least one breech plug which failed to close. In the case of the NICHOLAS and CHEVALIER this failure resulted in a serious casualty. This casualty which apparently is common on sustained firings undoubtedly is partly due to improper loading. However the breech plug clearances and the type of oil and grease used should be investigated in order to reduce this dangerous casualty to an absolute minimum.

4. MISCELLANEOUS.

- (a) Steering gear casualty. The steering gear casualty mentioned in the Narrative was caused by a loose connection on the holding coil of the main line contactor in the synchro tie control panel located in the steering engine room. This loose connection caused the contactors to open and resulted in loss of power to the synchro tie unit which in turn caused the loss of steering control on the bridge. Steering control was then shifted to the trick wheel. It is strongly recommended that this control panel be checked before operation and the contactors locked in closed position. It is further recommended that the shifting of steering control be practiced during target practices. The STRONG took too long to shift control accompanied by too much talking. While steering control was lost for only about 30 seconds it seemed like about an hour particularly since the ship was in the lower end of Kula Gulf headed for Blackett Strait.

DD467/AIG-3
Serial 08

U.S.S. STRONG DD467
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

May 15, 1943

5 01962

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Subject: Action Report - Bombardment of Vila Stanmore - night
of 12-13 May 1943.

(b) Firing at Aircraft. At 0534, 13 May, when about 50 miles northeast of the Russell Island, while on course 120 True, one aircraft was tracked for 20 miles on the Sugar Charlie radar. No recognition signals were picked up by the Sugar Charlie radar. The aircraft did have its red and green running lights turned on. It was too dark to identify the aircraft. It remained on a steady course heading towards the STRONG which was stationed on the port quarter of the rear cruiser. This aircraft was reported on the T.B.S. When the range closed to 8000 yards, the STRONG reported to C.T.F. 18 over the T.B.S. that the aircraft had been tracked for 20 miles, that no recognition signals could be detected and that if it continued to close, fire would be opened unless otherwise directed. C.T.F. 18 replied "wait" and shortly thereafter "do not open fire on plane". In the meantime the range closed to 4000 yards, the NASHVILLE opened fire with 40 mm and the STRONG fired 5 rounds of 5"/33 caliber at the aircraft. The aircraft apparently was not hit since it rapidly cleared the formation.

(c) Weather. Wind 030 True, Force 1. Sea from 300 True, Force 1. Visibility good to excellent - about 7-8 miles. Barometer 29.89. Clouds - alto cumulus from 030 True amount 5. Moonset behind hills of Kolombangara 0044.

(d) There were no personnel casualties. There were no individual instances deserving praise or censure. All hands conducted themselves in a very creditable manner.

J.H. Wellings
J.H. WELLINGS.

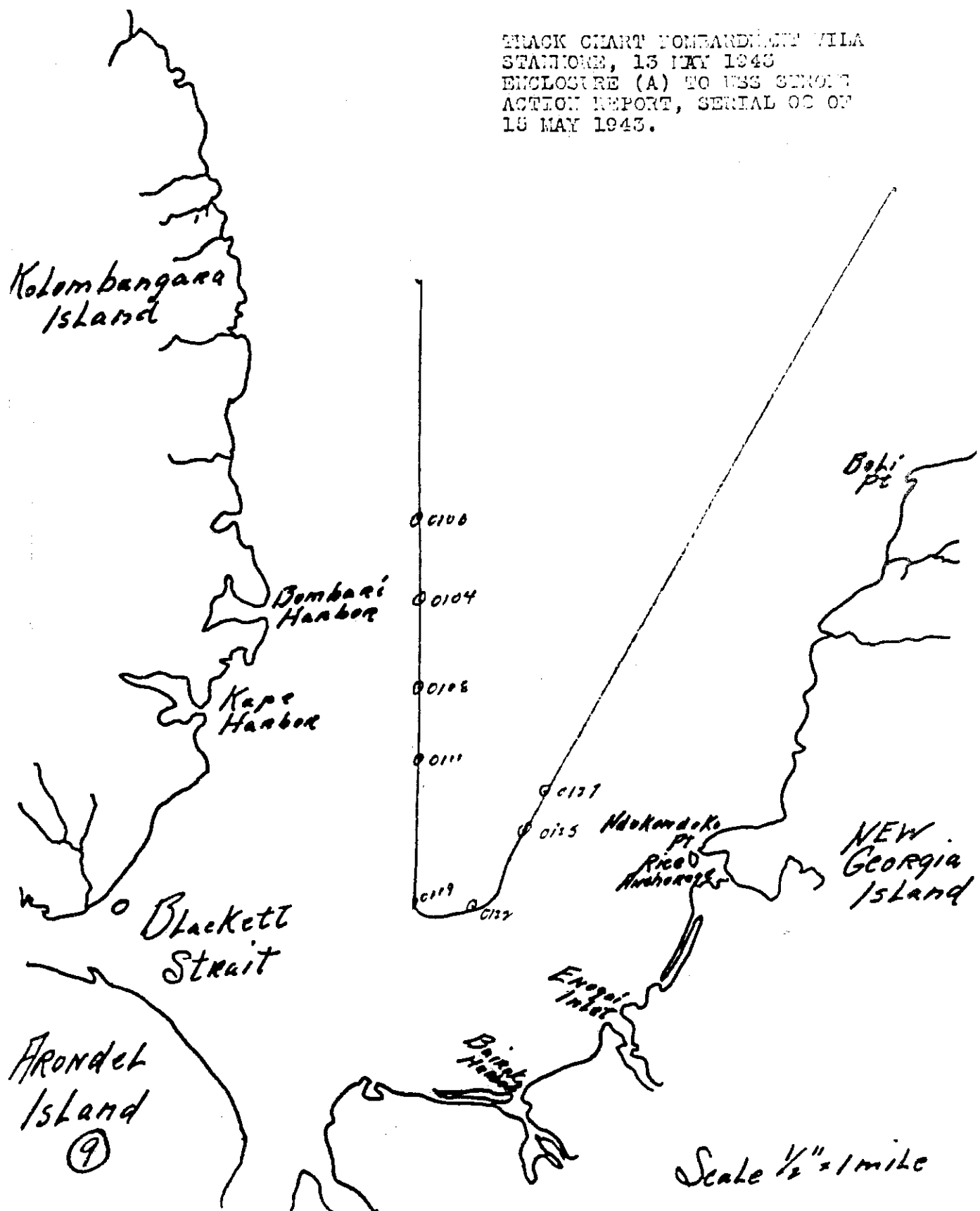
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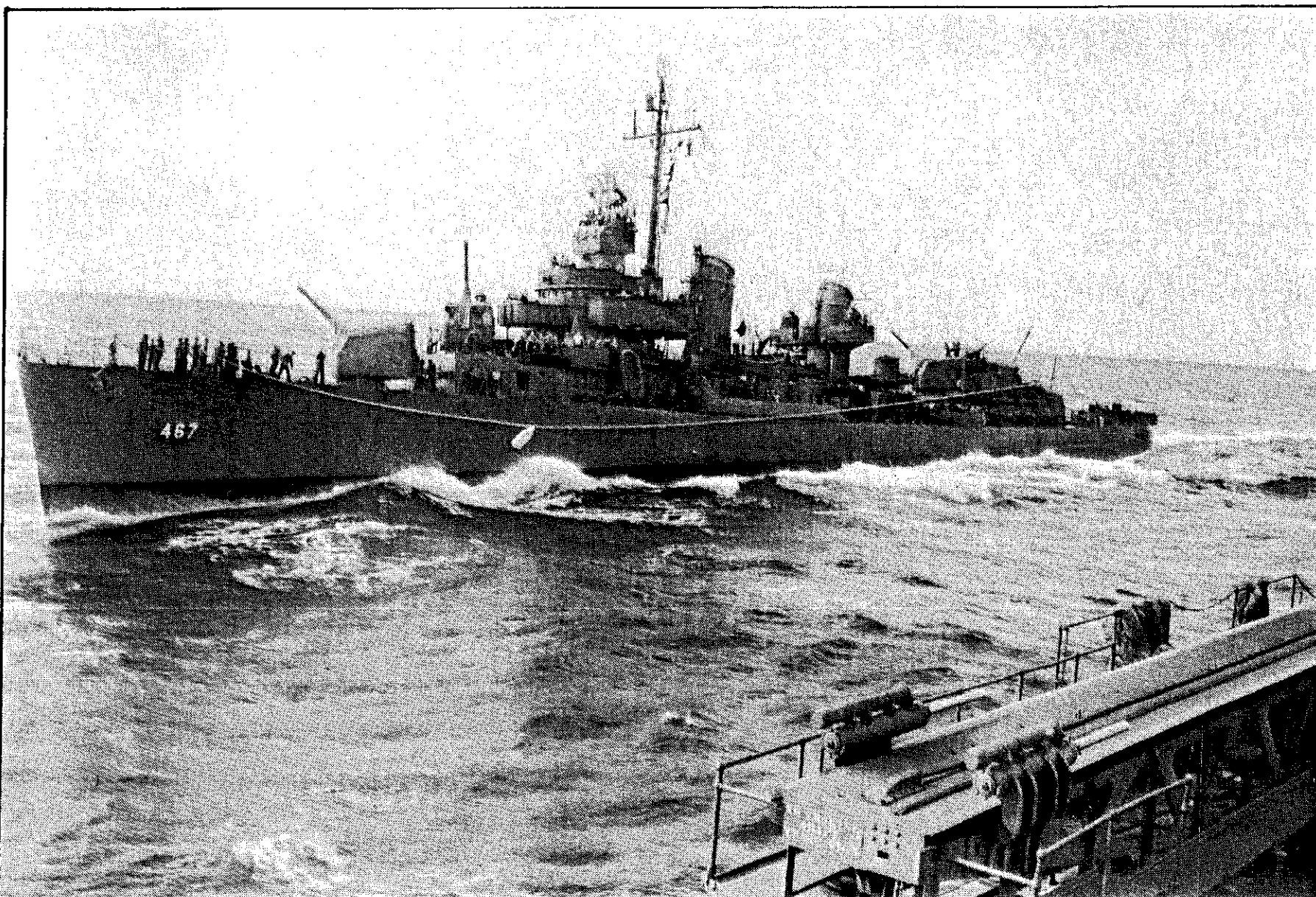
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TRACK CHART FOMERANDU VILA
 STATION, 13 MAY 1943
 ENCLOSURE (A) TO USS SERVIC
 ACTION REPORT, SERIAL 00 OF
 15 MAY 1943.





The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) delivering mail to the U.S.S. Honolulu (CL-48) off Espiritu Santo in early July, 1943. The Strong was sunk by a Japanese torpedo a few days later in Kula Gulf while bombarding enemy shore installations on New Georgia Island. Fortunately, most of the officers and crew were rescued by other destroyers, but forty-five were lost, including the executive officer, Lt. Cdr. F. W. Purdy, USN. One of the Honolulu's catapults for her observation planes appears at the lower right. (National Archives photograph)

"A Lovely Ship"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

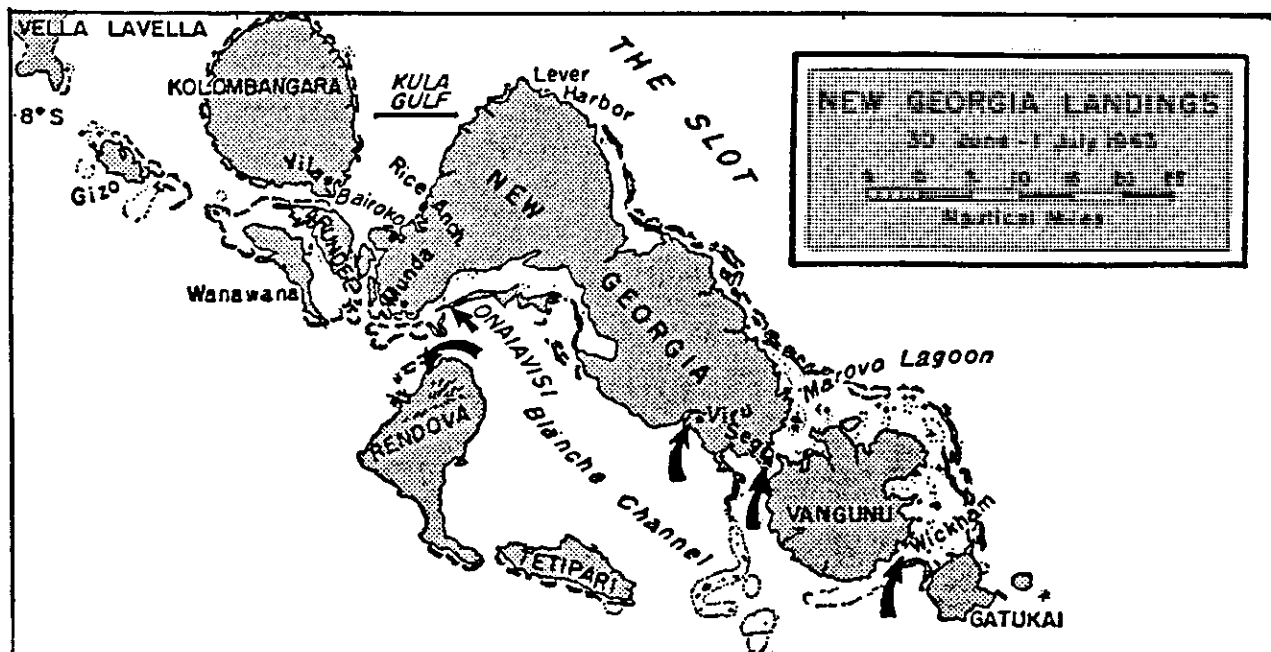
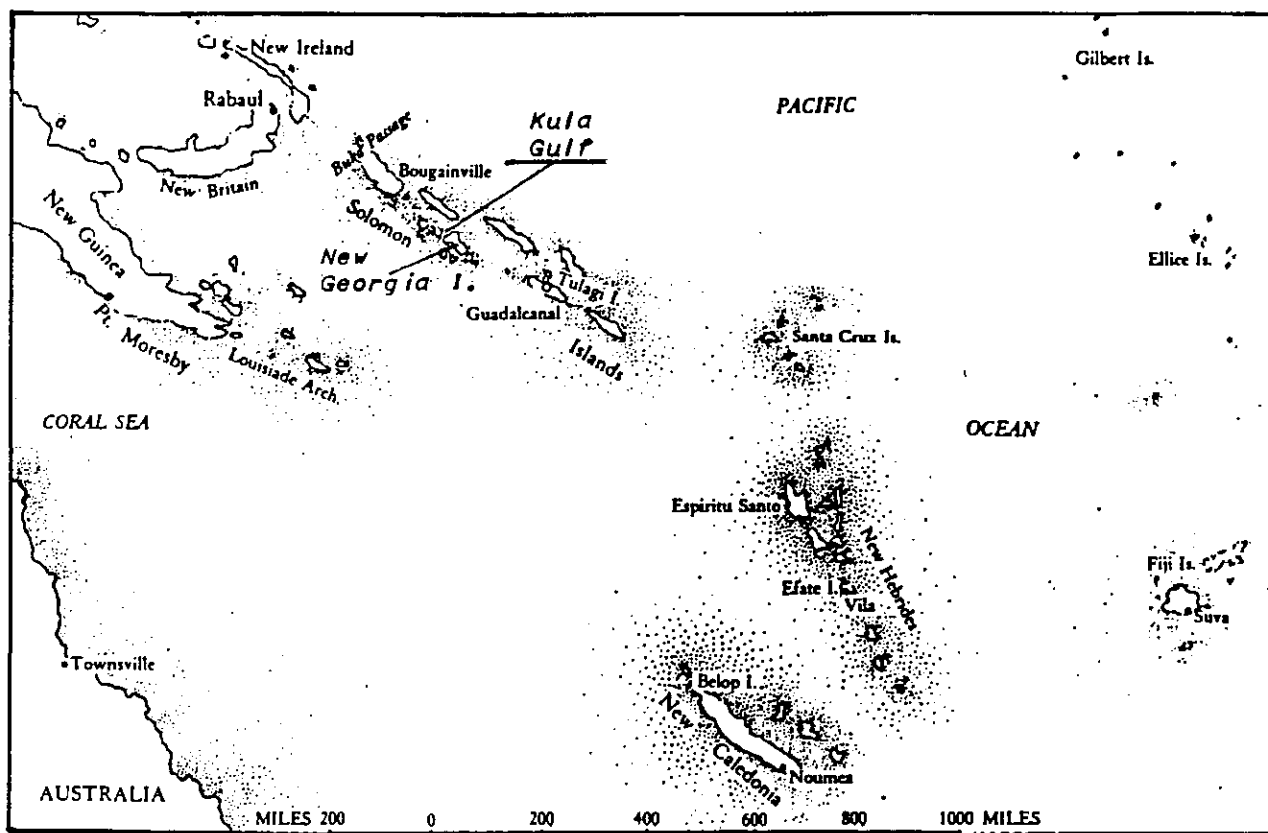
The spirit of the little ships reflects itself in that of their crews. Destroyermen are a bit apart from the rest of our man-of-war men. On their small ships they have to do without many of the comforts the crews of carriers, battleships or even cruisers enjoy. They live in cramped quarters. There is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

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

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

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

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



The U.S.S. *Strong* (DD-467) was sunk on the night of July 4-5, 1943, in Kula Gulf, between Kolombangara and New Georgia Islands in the central Solomons, while bombarding enemy positions in support of landings at Rice Anchorage.

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July 10, 1943

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander in Chief, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET.
Via : The Commander Task Group 36.1.
The Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action Report of Bombardment of Kula Gulf Area and
Circumstances of Sinking, U.S.S. STRONG, July 5, 1943.

Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, Article 712 and 814.
(b) PACFLT CONF. Ltr. 36CL-42 of Nov. 8, 1942.
(c) PACFLT CONF. Ltr. 39CM-42 of Nov. 29, 1942.

Enclosures: (A) Track Chart of STRONG in Kula Gulf.

1. In accordance with references (a), (b), and (c) the following action report is submitted concerning the operations of U.S.S. STRONG in the bombardment of Kula Gulf objectives, and subsequent sinking of U.S.S. STRONG. Inasmuch as all notes and data were lost with the ship, the times given are approximate.
2. The STRONG was a unit of Task Group 36.1, whose mission was to bombard shore installations on Kolombangara and Bairoko Harbor, New Georgia in conjunction with landings to be effected at Rice Anchorage, New Georgia, by TRANSDIV 11 and TRANSDIV 12.
3. At 2200 all hands went to General Quarters. At this time the cruisers were in column formation in order: HONOLULU, ST. LOUIS, HELENA; Destroyers were disposed in circular anti-submarine screen number 22. STRONG was in station one (4020), NICHOLAS in station two, O'BANION in four, CHEVALIER in three. Course 297, fleet speed 25 knots.
4. At 2323 the formation changed course to 215 true, and commenced the approach into Kula Gulf.
5. At 0005 the course was changed to 255 true.
6. At about 0019 the course was changed to 190 true, and our position was adjusted to form astern of NICHOLAS. At this time the SG radar screen was clear except for one pip, which was identified by IFF as a "Black Cat", located 3000 yds., 080 true from Sasamboki Island.
7. At about 0028 the STRONG commenced firing on reported batteries on starboard beam. Rangefinder ranges, checked by SG range to land on the bearing, were used. Salvos were laddered back and forth. The Gunnery Officer ordered "Cease Firing", after 10 salvos, inasmuch as the flashes appeared to be explosions from cruiser shells instead of shore batteries.

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Subject: Action Report, etc., Page 2.

8. At about 0034 course was changed to 090 true, following astern of NICHOLAS. Sasamboki Island was bearing West. Fire was commenced on Bairoko Harbor. A preliminary range and true bearing were given to plot by SG radar. This was set up on the computer, which was in "local", with time motor off, synchronize E knob in the OUT position. The director was not switched into the computer. On "mark" the time motor was switched on, and a surface problem with target speed zero was commenced. A check of data was made between generated range and bearing and SG range and bearing. Guns were in full automatic; salvo signal and firing key were pulled in plot, using a 5 second interval, one second buzzer. AA common projectiles and flashless powder were used. A salvo table, with range and deflection spots, having the southwest tip of the target area as reference was applied in plot. Spot received from the "Black Cat" was that the NICHOLAS and STRONG were hitting target area. A large fire was observed in the area. The STRONG fired approximately 300 rounds. The only material casualty was a misfire in gun 3 on the 40th salvo. Attempts were being made to clear this when the ship was torpedoed.

9. At 0040 fire was ceased, and course changed to 000 true.

10. At 0043 the Gunnery Officer, the undersigned, saw a thin phosphorescent wake of about 3000 yards in length strike the port side amidship at a track angle of 90 degrees. He attempted to inform the bridge, but immediately a violent explosion shook the ship caused it to lurch to port, then almost immediately take a list of 15 degrees to starboard (This was read and reported by the quartermaster) The wake was seen also by the Machine Gun Control Officer and port after lookout.

11. Power was lost throughout the ship. Emergency power was available immediately and remained on the ship as long as it was manned. All main battery guns were shifted to emergency power except gun 5. Emergency power cut in to the computer automatically. All guns were shifted to local control, with orders not to fire on any target unless designated by the control officer. This was accomplished within 5 minutes. Radio equipment was placed back into operation after shifting to emergency power, with the exception of the TBS transmitter. The antenna rotation control of the SC radar was inoperative. The SG radar was jarred out of tune, but was restored to excellent emergency operation. The FD radar was inoperative (Rangefinder ranges were available.) Steering engine received emergency power. Magazine crews were ordered to stand by the sprinkling system.

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Subject; Action report, etc., Page 3.

12. Communications internally were generally excellent. Communication was maintained with all guns except with the after 40MM and 20 MM installations. 2JV circuits went out immediately. For external communications, all receivers were in operation. All transmitters were dead. Attempts were made to report torpedoing over TBS, "Black Cat", and Task Force frequency with no success. All antennas were down. Flashing light was sent to CHEVALIER, who reported the torpedoing to the Task Group Commander.

13. Steaming condition of engineering plant: Four boilers were in use with 750 degrees F. steam temperature. The plant was entirely split. Both engines were making 195 r.p.m.

14. A large hole was torn in the port side and main deck in the vicinity of frame 90. The deck plates were buckled between frames 75 and 105. The superstructure deck house collapsed on the port side between the after side of number one stack and forward torpedo mount base ring. The boat winch was gone. Number 2 motor whaleboat was torn apart; one half of the boat dangled from the forward davit.

15. In number one fireroom number 4 blower and blower room were gone. The fuel oil heaters carried away, and oil from them sprayed up through the hose in the main deck. It was impossible to observe the entire condition of boiler number 2 because of the immediate flooding of the fireroom; the port side of it was observed by the Chief Water Tender to be crumpled.

16. The bulkhead between the forward fire room and forward engineroom was blown away. The evaporators and the ladder from the port hatchway were seen to have been blown away. No other damage was observed here since the space was almost immediately flooded.

17. Seams were opened on the starboard side of the bulkhead between the forward engine room and after fireroom. A vent line carried away behind number three boiler. The lower level flooded rapidly. Before the crew left the fireroom, they secured the stops on number three boiler. A short time before the ship sank safety valves lifted on number three boiler.

18. The after engineroom was not flooded. The only material damage observed was a fire in a relay coil behind number two main distribution switchboard which was extinguished by use of CO 2 extinguisher. The after generator furnished power for approximately one minute, at the end of which time it lost the load because of low steam pressure. Shortly thereafter the Assistant Engineer Officer Lt.(jg) R.E. TROST, USNR, decided to secure the after engine room for towing. The bulkhead stops were secured, and the jacking gear was engaged.

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Subject: Action Report, etc., Page 4.

19. The First Lieutenant and Damage Control Officer reported the extent of damage to the bridge. The Assistant Engineer Officer reported that, with the after fireroom flooded, it was impossible to make any headway. The Gunnery officer ordered all ammunition shifted to port side. It was decided not to jettison the torpedoes lest a hot run endanger the transports to starboard and the cruisers to port. Word was then passed for all personnel below to lay up to the port side of the main deck. This was relayed to the magazines and handling rooms. The mounts remained manned.

20. At 0113 the CHEVALIER rammed the ship at frame 70 at a speed of 10 knots and an angle of 30 degrees. Her bow stopped adjacent to the after end of gun 2. STRONG personnel crossed the water to cargo nets on the CHEVALIER's side at the after 20MM guns, and went hand over hand to the forecastle on mooring lines which were secured to the STRONG's superstructure deck.

21. Word was received by the Gunnery Officer to abandon ship. At this time the ship was very low in the water and heeled over about 60 degrees. On going below he discovered the superstructure deck forward of number one stack under water.

22. At 0120 the CHEVALIER backed off. At this time the shore batteries were illuminating the scene with starshells. Salvos were observed over and short. A stick of bombs fell near the CHEVALIER's fan-tail. The Commanding Officer of the CHEVALIER informed the undersigned that any further time alongside the STRONG would risk loss of his own ship.

23. At 0122 as the CHEVALIER was backing off, the STRONG broke in two pieces and sank. Four depth charges exploded near the forecastle of the CHEVALIER: inasmuch as the depth charges were all on "Safe" during the bombardment, it is believed that the operation of the charges was caused by the shock of the torpedo explosion.

24. The USS CHEVALIER rescued 7 officers and 234 men. The USS RALPH TALBOT rescued two officers (one of which was Commander J.H. WELLINGS, seriously wounded) and three men.

25. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) It is recommended that the weighted bags for disposal of registered publications be made smaller in diameter to permit their passage through circular hatchways.
- (b) An automatic device for cutting in emergency power to the 5 inch guns is recommended. The present installation requires laborious operation of undogging panel door.

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Subject: Action Report, etc., page 5.

- (c) At least two SG radars should be available; one for navigation, one for search and gunnery. An alternative would be a system whereby target designation could be given to gun control without interruption of the searching sweep.

26. All personnel conducted themselves in a creditable manner. Lt. (jg) B.F. JETTON, D-V(G), USNR, Communication Officer, and Ensign W.F. HEDRICK, D-V(G), USNR, Assistant Communication Officer are recommended for citation; both are missing due to their disregard of their own lives to dispose of registered publications and destruction of registered devices. Lieutenant D.A. REGAN, D-V(G), USNR, is recommended for citation for entering the forward engine room to rescue a wounded man, and later in charge of the gig, for rescuing 17 men from the water.

J.A. CURRAN
Lieutenant, US. Navy.

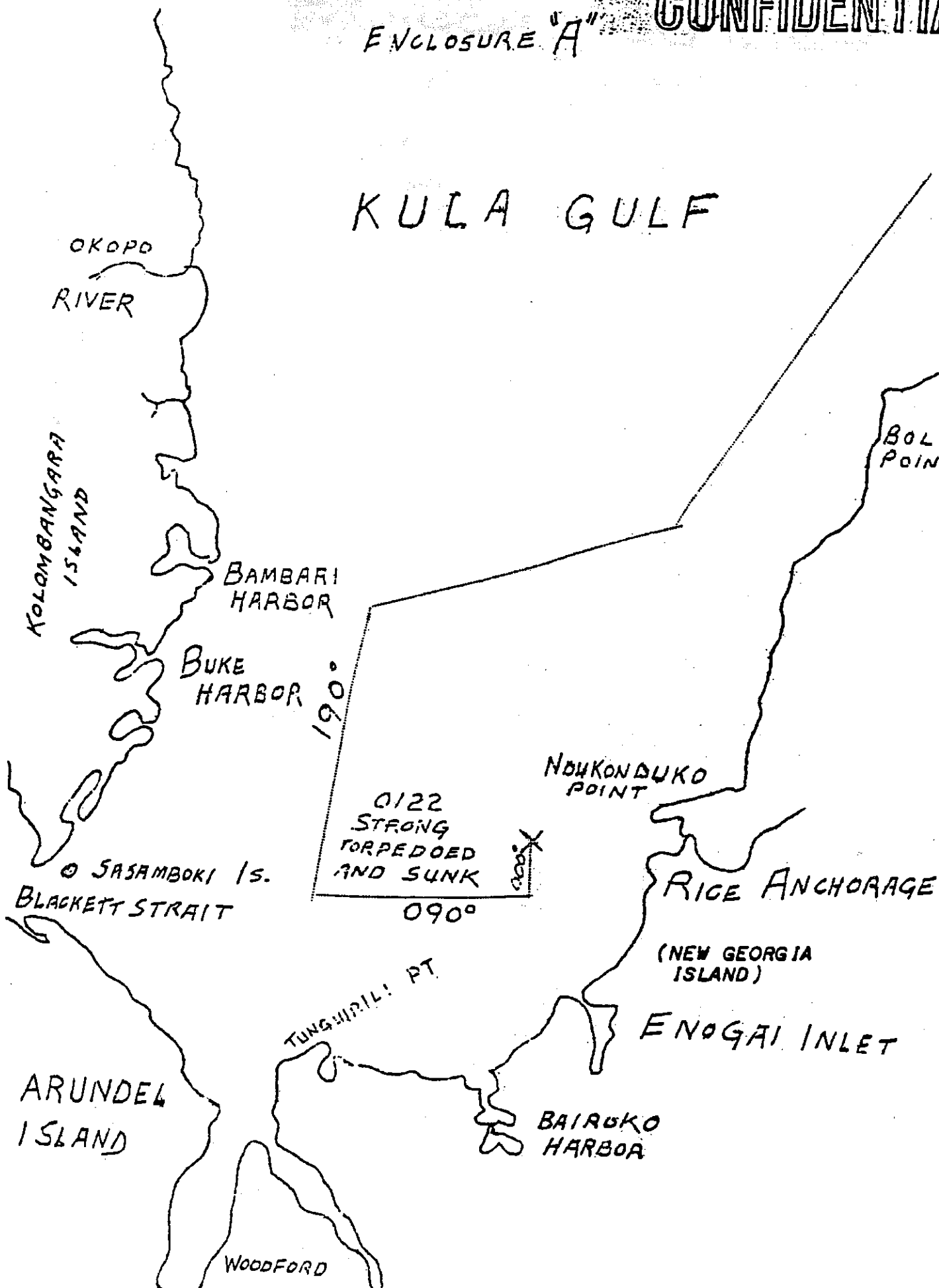
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ComDesPac
ComTaskGroup 36.1
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ENCLOSURE "A"

KULA GULF



Al6-3/DD467

Navy #131
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

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August 12, 1943

From: The Commanding Officer, Ex-U.S.S. STRONG (DD467).
To : The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET.
Via : (1) The Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY ONE.
(2) The Commander Task Force EIGHTEEN.
(3) The Commander SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE.

Subject: Action Report of Bombardment of Kula Gulf Area and
Circumstances of Sinking of U.S.S. STRONG, 5 July 1943,
Amplifying Report.

Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, Article 712 and 814.

Enclosure: (A) Action Report and Circumstances of Sinking of USS
STRONG submitted by Senior Unwounded Survivor -
USS STRONG Conf. Ltr. of 10 July 1943, Registered
Number 1269.

1. The Commanding Officer, ex-U.S.S. STRONG, Commander
J.H. WELLS, concurs with the statements contained in Enclosure
(A) written by the senior unwounded survivor. It is desired to
amplify Enclosure (A) as follows:

(a) The formation of the Task Force at the time the STRONG
was hit was as follows: the NICHOLAS (DD449) was on course 000
degrees true, about 1000 yards ahead of the STRONG. Taking into
consideration the time to change course 90 degrees at 20 knots (1
minute, 30 seconds) the STRONG was on course 000 degrees for 1-1/2
minutes when hit by the torpedo. The HONOLULU was 1000-1500 yards
astern of the STRONG and therefore should have been changing course
from 090 to 000 true. The HELENA and ST. LOUIS were 1000 yards astern
of HONOLULU in the order indicated on course 090 degrees and were
still firing at Bairoko Inlet. The O'BANNON (DD450) and CHEVALIER
(DD451) were on course 090 degrees astern of ST. LOUIS in order
indicated, distance between ships 500 yards and firing at Bairoko
Inlet.

(b) Enemy surface or submerged craft were not detected by the
STRONG or other ships of the Task Force prior to the STRONG being
hit. The gunnery officer stated he saw a torpedo wake bearing 270
relative an instant before the ship was hit. This would place the
submarine inside the "U" formed by the bombardment course of 190
degrees for Vila Plantation, the bombardment course of 090 degrees
for Bairoko and the first retirement course of 000 degrees, the
bottom of the "U" being about 3 miles in length. It is believed
that if the torpedo were fired by a motor torpedo boat or a submarine
on the surface some ship of the Task Force would have made Sugar
George contact.

August 12, 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: Action Report - Sinking of U.S.S. STRONG.

Whether or not the simultaneous firing of the cruisers and destroyers furnished sufficient illumination for a submerged attack on a dark night with clear atmosphere is debatable. Since only one ship was hit and no other ships reported torpedo wakes, plus the fact CHEVALIER and O'BANNON remained in the vicinity during rescue operations indicates the possibility of a two man submarine.

(c) Since the ship did not sink in the first five minutes and the list was only 15-20 degrees it was believed that there was sufficient time to check the condition of the ship and await assistance which had been promised in such situations by the Task Force Commander prior to our first bombardment of Vila Plantation. The order to abandon ship was not given until CHEVALIER came alongside in order to avoid having men all over Kula Gulf and to expedite rescue operations. After hitting the STRONG on the port side forward near number 4, 20MM gun the CHEVALIER remained inclined about 30 degrees from the STRONG with CHEVALIER's bow alongside the port bow of the STRONG. The fact that CHEVALIER was able to rescue 234 enlisted men and 7 officers in 7 minutes, the majority of whom came aboard via cargo nets, indicates excellent organization and work on the part of CHEVALIER.

(d) During the rescue operations both ships plus O'BANNON were illuminated by star shells and fired upon by shore batteries from Enogai Inlet. Some of these shells landed very close to STRONG and CHEVALIER, shorts and overs. As a result of this firing the CHEVALIER shoved off before rescue operations were completed. The undersigned strongly concurs in the decision of the Commanding Officer CHEVALIER to break off rescue operations. When the Marines captured Enogai Inlet they found four, 140MM guns with considerable ammunition.

(e) Shortly after CHEVALIER shoved off the STRONG began to settle rapidly with about a 40-60 degree list to starboard. It was believed that all hands who could get off had either been rescued by CHEVALIER or were in the water. The undersigned attempted to go down the outboard inclined ladder leading from the after side of the bridge to the superstructure deck but was blocked by water when one third on the way down. I then went back to the bridge and stepped into the water from the bridge wind screen outboard of the starboard torpedo director. This indicated that the ship was sinking very rapidly. I was about 25 yards from the ship when she sank. An instant before sinking the ship broke in two with the after end twisting to starboard about 40 degrees. Shortly thereafter one of the 300 pound depth charges on the starboard side exploded. I am certain it was the starboard depth charges because the water bubbled up around me and I doubt if I could have survived a 600 pound charge. Fortunately I was on my back and wearing a Kapok life jacket.

August 12, 1943

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~DECLASSIFIED~~Subject: Action Report - Sinking of U.S.S. STRONG.

The vibrations were terrific. I did not hear the explosions of the other depth charges reported by the officers in the CHEVALIER. A few minutes later I saw a floater net about 25 yards away thanks to the Jap starshells. I was assisted on to the net by my chief quartermaster who had remained on the bridge with me until the very end. We attempted to paddle toward Rice Anchorage with our hands. During the night we picked up two enlisted men and one officer. At 0510 we were rescued by the USS GWIN which had seen our flashlight, the quartermaster preceded the request for help by the major war challenge.

(f) As stated in Enclosure (A) all depth charges except the starboard 300 pound charges were checked and found on safe after the torpedo hit. Some of the starboard depth charges had jumped from the sockets containing the arbors and were on the deck under water and as a result could not be checked. They were checked and found on safe after the completion of the bombardment and prior to the torpedo hit. It was standard practice never to set depth charges until submarine contact was made. In addition safety forks and safety knobs were always on with short lanyards attached with the other end of the lanyard not secured. It was found that with considerable drill a mine charge pattern could be set and made ready in 20-25 seconds by the three men on watch.

(g) The ship was hit on the port side near the after end of number one fireroom but immediately took a 15 degree list to starboard. The men who lowered the gig on the starboard side had considerable difficulty due to the side plating being pushed out directly below the gig davits. The fact that the bulkhead between the forward fireroom and forward engine room carried away immediately and the bulkhead between the forward engine room and after fireroom cracked on the starboard side causing this fireroom to immediately flood to above the floor plates is of considerable interest. It was the flooding of this third major compartment plus the increasing list which led to the decision to abandon ship.

(h) All the life rafts landed bottom side up with all the equipment being on the bottom side of the raft. This was anticipated from putting the rafts in the water in port. Short lines were attached to each piece of equipment to allow it to be pulled out from under the raft. However considerable difficulty was experienced in recovering the equipment due to darkness and the men in the raft. In connection with life rafts it is interesting to note that three different groups of survivors abandoned the rafts in favor of the rubber landing boats floating in the bay as a result of the landing at Rice Anchorage. The men liked the rubber boats better and they could make better speed in paddling. It is realized that the capacity of these boats is only about 1/3 of the life rafts.

August 12, 1943

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~DECLASSIFIED~~Subject: Action Report - Sinking of U.S.S. STRONG.

(i) Two separate groups on rafts floated up and down the middle of Kula Gulf for two days. One of these groups transferred to a rubber landing boat just before dark of the third day, went to sleep from exhaustion and grounded on Arundel Island at dawn the third day. This group of about 6 men paddled across Kula Gulf two nights later to just above Rice Anchorage. The two uninjured men of the second group attempted to swim to Rice Anchorage the afternoon of the second day to get assistance, came across a small rubber boat enroute, were too exhausted to paddle, went to sleep and also grounded on Arundel Island. They left two officers and three enlisted men all injured on the life raft. These two men remained on Arundel Island for four days before paddling up Kula Gulf and being rescued by a Higgins boat from Enogai Inlet. While on Arundel Island they came across a wounded army aviator, who was also rescued. It is regretted that on the first or second day after the ship sank that a Higgins boat, escorted by fighters if necessary, could not have searched for survivors.

(j) The vast majority of the officers and men wore Kapok life jackets. Kapok versus inflated life jackets was the subject of considerable discussion among the survivors. All hands including the undersigned are strongly in favor of the Kapok life jacket.

(k) The Sugar George radar was not used for station keeping after the Task Force formed column and proceeded into Kula Gulf and a few ranges at about 1000 yards taken of the NICHOLAS to determine the appearance of its wake. It was used for firecontrol purposes to set up and check the problem during the early stages of the firing on Bairoko Inlet. The NICHOLAS wake was kept slightly on the starboard bow to allow "pinging" on the QC gear on the port side without wake interference.

(l) At the present time (11 August) 39 enlisted men and 7 officers are missing out of a total of 306 enlisted men and 19 officers. 21 enlisted men and the engineer officer were trapped in number one fireroom and number one engineroom. It is seriously doubted if any of these men escaped. The communication and assistant communication officer were last seen at the communication safe in the wardroom country destroying secret and confidential publications. As previously stated, two officers and four men all wounded were last seen floating on a raft in Kula Gulf. The executive officer was found dead on the beach at Arundel Island by one of the groups which landed on that island. The loss of these splendid officers and men is sincerely regretted.

August 12, 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: Action Report - Sinking of U.S.S. STRONG.

(m) All personnel conducted themselves in a very highly creditable manner which was in accordance with the highest traditions of the Naval Service. Recommendations for awards will be made in separate correspondence.

J.H. Wellings
J.H. WELLINGS.

copy:

ComDesPac
Cominch
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ComDesPacRep
Comairsols

DECLASSIFIED

REPRESENTATIVE OF
COMMANDER DESTROYERS, PACIFIC FLEET
IN SOUTH PACIFIC AREA

Al6-3

Serial 00190

September 7, 1943.

SECRET

SECOND ENDORSEMENT to
CO STRONG Conf. Ltr.
Al6-3/DD467 of 8/12/43

From: Representative of Commander Destroyers,
Pacific Fleet in South Pacific Area.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet.
Via : Commander South Pacific Force.
Subject: U.S.S. STRONG -- Action Report of Bombardment of
Kula Gulf Area and Circumstances of Sinking on
5 July 1943.

1. Forwarded.

2. The loss of the officers and men of the STRONG is deeply regretted. The ship had distinguished itself on many previous engagements against the enemy. Its loss on this occasion was not due to any failure on the part of any personnel of the STRONG but was due to enemy action.

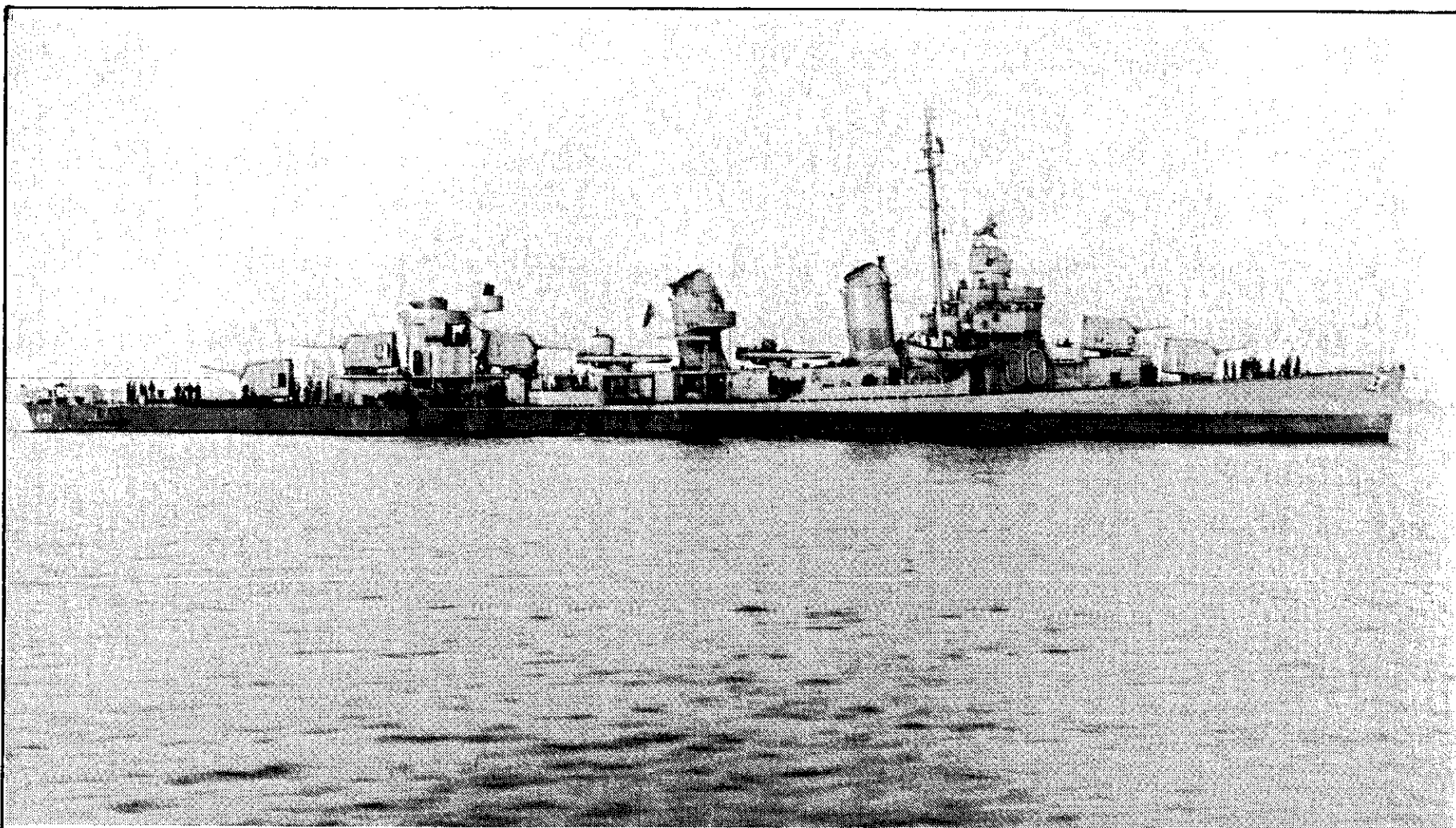
3. From eye witness accounts it is known that all hands conducted themselves in a highly commendable manner in order to save the ship after it had been torpedoed and in the subsequent abandon ship operation.

4. The Commanding Officer, Commander Joseph H. Wellings, U. S. Navy, is deserving of praise for his skillful and heroic conduct in directing operations. He remained with his ship until it sank beneath him.

F. X. McInerney
F. X. McINERNEY.

Advance Copy to:
Cominch
Cincpac

Copy to: Comdespac
CDS-21



The U.S.S. Chevalier (DD-451) (Cdr. E. R. McLean, Jr.) rescued most of the Strong's survivors shortly before she sank due to damage from a torpedo hit in Kula Gulf off New Georgia Island on 5 July 1943. While under fire by Japanese shore batteries the Chevalier shoved her bow into the Strong and recovered 7 officers and 232 enlisted personnel within about seven minutes. Others were rescued by the U.S.S. Ralph Talbot (DD-390) and the U.S.S. Gwin (DD-433), but 6 officers and 39 enlisted personnel were lost. Sixty-one were wounded. The Chevalier was also sunk by a torpedo on 6 October 1943. (U.S. Navy photograph.)

OPERATIONAL REMARKS

UNITED STATES SHIP CHEVALIER (DD451)

Monday

5

July 1943

ZONE DESCRIPTION -11

REMARKS

00-04: Steaming in company with Task Group 36.1 in battle formation, order of ships from van to rear U.S.S. NICHOLAS, STRONG, HONOLULU, ST. LOUIS, HELENA, O'BANNON, CHEVALIER, at 20 knots. Ship's company at general quarters stations. 0000 Task Group changed course to 235°T, pgc, entering Kula Gulf. 0015 Task Group changed course to 255°T, pgc. 0028 HONOLULU commenced bombardment of Vila and Stanmore Plantations, Kolombangara Island, and was followed by other cruisers. 0030 Changed course to 190°T, pgc, and opened fire on gun emplacements on Disappointment Cove, Kolombangara Island. 0044 Ceased firing on Kolombangara Island and changed course to 075°T, pgc. 0046 Opened fire on New Georgia Island, concentrating on Bairoko Harbor gun emplacements. 0050 Commenced firing on gun emplacement on Tunguirili Point. 0051 Being illuminated by enemy star shells and plane flares. 0052 Changed course to 355°T, pgc. 0054 Ceased firing. 0055 Came right to investigate and assist U.S.S. STRONG. Commenced maneuvering to go alongside U.S.S. STRONG. Number 3 gun had casualty with powder case jammed half way into breech of gun. Two fire hoses played on gun and gun trained in safe directions. 0107 Being fired on by numerous guns from Enogai Inlet. 0113 Our stern touched U.S.S. O'BANNON while maneuvering, disabling our starboard depth charge rack and starboard smoke screen generator. Hit U.S.S. STRONG a glancing blow at frame 50 port side with our bow. Secured a line from our bow to STRONG. Commenced receiving personnel from STRONG over the bow and along our starboard and port side. Our bow moderately damaged by hitting STRONG. 0123 Cast off from STRONG, which was listing very heavily to starboard with stern in the air and settling rapidly. U.S.S. STRONG sank out of sight. CHEVALIER backing full to clear area. Depth charges on U.S.S. STRONG exploded, jarring CHEVALIER severely. Damage control parties investigating damage to ship. 0125 Gun number 3 exploded, blowing shield apart and possibly rupturing the gun. DELANEY, P.M., 614 43 09, MM2c, USNR, received a shrapnel wound in the left forearm from gun explosion. Gun mount on fire. 0119 Opened fire on shore batteries. 0120 Ceased firing. Stick of four or five bombs dropped 75 yards off starboard quarter by enemy plane. Investigating damage. Changed speed to 25 knots ahead. 0128 Damage control party put fire out on gun mount and flooded Number 3 upper handling room. Flares were dropped over ship by enemy plane. Recovered seven officers and 232 enlisted personnel from STRONG as listed:

OFFICERS

Lieutenant James A. Curran, U.S. Navy, Signal No. 7348
 Lieutenant (jg) Alton Barger Grimes, U.S. Navy.
 Lieutenant (jg) Virgil Maxey Wheeler, DE-V(G), USNR.
 Ensign Jack J. Drath, D-V(G), USNR, File No. 187677.
 Ensign Alfred Robert Naphan, D-V(G), USNR.
 Lieutenant (jg) Ralph Edward Trost, E-V(G), USNR, File No. 120132.
 Lieutenant (jg) Albert Merrill Horne, (MC), USNR.

ENLISTED PERSONNEL

ADAIR, Joseph James	625 61 68	StMlc, USN
ALLISON, Robert Francis	210 81 42	CDM(PA), USN
ANDERSON, Lester Warner	620 09 56	EM2c, V6, USNR
ANDERSON, Thomas William	634 11 28	GM3c, V6, USNR
AVERY, James Lee	656 52 88	FC3c, V6, USNR
BAMACH, Theodore Stanley	99 74 75	CY(PA), USN
BANNER, Max (n)	646 35 24	RT2c, V3, USNR
BARBER, Norman Harry	234 28 48	Cox., USN
BARNWELL, St. Julien Mazyck	552 13 93	Slc, V6, USNR
BARRETT, Irvin (n)	299 75 22	CRN(PA), USN
BEAGLES, Eugene Stanley Jr.	337 34 23	GM3c, USN
BEYER, Roy Alvin	654 38 86	MM2c, USNR
BILL, Lewis Edward	551 82 58	RdM3c, V6, USNR
BOHATEC, John V.	658 56 29	GM3c, V6, USNR
BOSWELL, John Elwood	Unknown	FTc, V6, USNR
BOWEN, Victor (n)	Unknown	Cox., USN

Approved: *E.R. McLean Jr.*
 Commander, U.S. Navy,
 Commanding.

Examined: *G.R. Wilson*
 G.R. Wilson, Lt. Comdr.,

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON*

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

COMMANDER EPHRAIM R. McLEAN, JR., UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

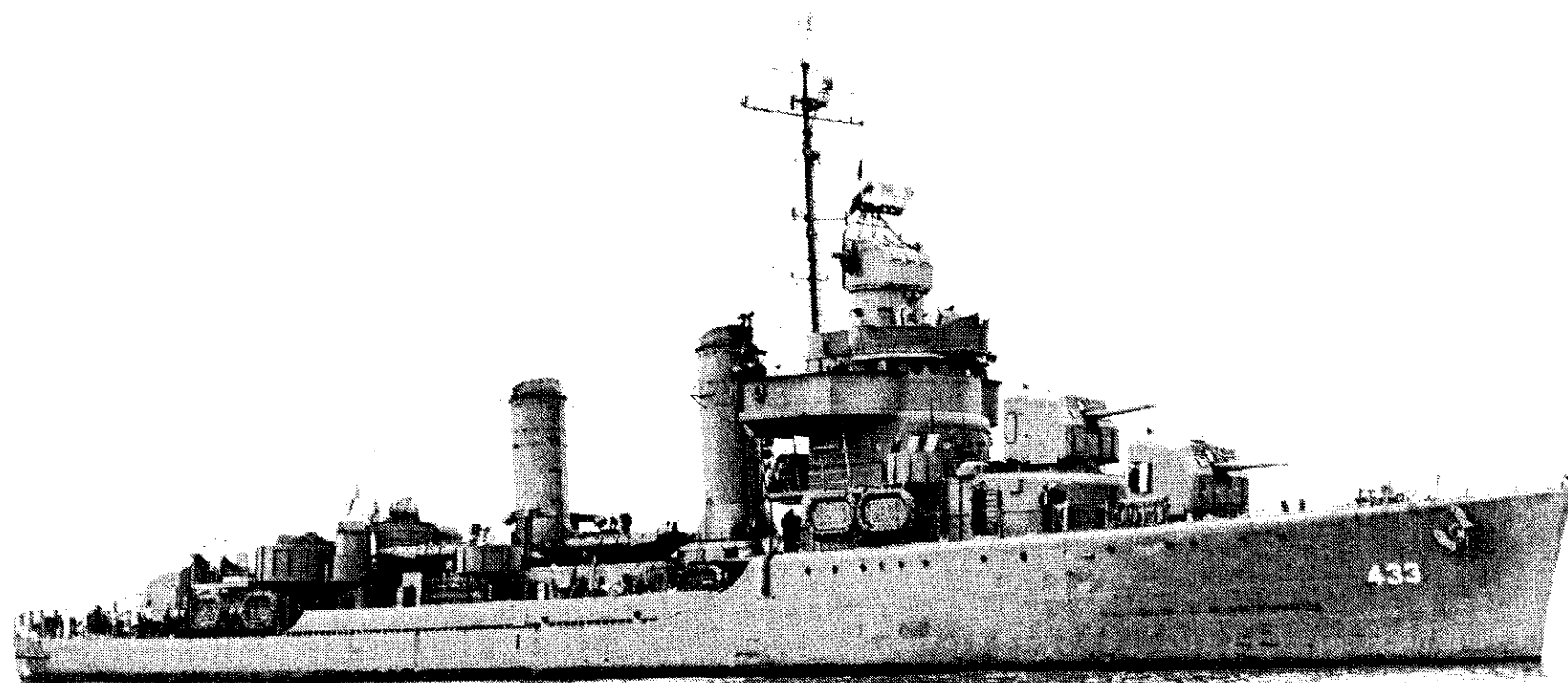
"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of a U.S. warship in action against enemy forces in the Solomon Islands on July 4 and 5, 1943. When one of the ships of his task force was torpedoed during a bombardment of enemy positions off Kula Gulf, Commander McLean placed his ship alongside the sinking vessel and skillfully directed the extremely hazardous rescue operations, despite the close proximity of hostile submarines and shore bases. Although his ship was subjected to intense fire from enemy coastal batteries and illumination by flares to aid attacking Japanese bombers, Commander McLean courageously continued his rescue efforts until seventy-five percent of the personnel had been saved. As the torpedoed ship went down her depth charges exploded, resulting in damage to his ship. The brilliant leadership displayed by Commander McLean and the valiant devotion to duty of his command contributed materially to the success of our forces in this vital campaign and reflect great credit upon the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy.

** Typed from a draft citation approved on 15 October 1943 on file at the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.*

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



The U.S.S. Gwin (DD-433) (Lt. Cdr. John B. Fellows) rescued five Strong survivors, including the commanding officer Cdr. Joseph H. Wellings, USN, from a floater net about four hours after their ship went down. Fortunately, the Gwin's lookouts faintly saw their flashlight as she was clearing the area only an hour before dawn. The Gwin was lost about a week later at the Battle of Kolombangara. (Official U.S. Navy photograph)

The Night Strong Was Sunk

4-5 July 1943, in Kula Gulf

Rear Admiral Joseph H. Wellings USN (Ret.)

I was the first and only captain of the United States destroyer **STRONG** (DD-467). The **STRONG** was the sixth ship of the new 2100-ton class of destroyers, built by the famous Bath Iron Works of Bath, Maine.

What a thrill for a Boston English High School boy who entered Annapolis in 1921 and returned to his home town Navy Yard as a Lieutenant Commander 21 years later, on 7 August 1942, to commission and to be the first commanding officer of Uncle Sam's newest destroyer.

The **STRONG**'s crew consisted of 16 officers and 306 enlisted men, all of whom were extremely loyal and superb in every respect. Five of the officers were regular U.S. Navy officers and eleven were Naval Reserves.

One of the Reserve officers was Lt.(jg) Hugh Barr Miller, from Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Hugh Barr was a former quarterback on the University of Alabama football team. The way he trained and drilled our 20 mm. guncrews, one would think he was still calling signals for his beloved Alabama football team in a bowl game against the University of Oklahoma.

The **STRONG**'s armament consisted of five dual purpose 5" guns, ten torpedoes arranged in two above-water mounts, 40 depth charges, four 40 mm. anti-aircraft guns, and sixteen 20 mm. anti-aircraft guns. All the guns were remotely controlled by the gunnery officer from his fire control station located just above the navigation bridge.

The **STRONG** was one of the very first of our Navy ships to be equipped with the new famous SG surface radar, manufactured by the Raytheon Company of Lexington, Mass. In addition to the new SG surface radar, which revolutionized naval warfare, the **STRONG** was equipped with the latest type of air search and fire control radars.

As soon as our wartime stores were aboard, including general supplies, spare parts, ammunition, torpedoes, and depth charges, the **STRONG** began an intensive four weeks of day and night operations in the Gulf of Maine to insure that our crew, including myself, were proficient in the operation and maintenance of our new and complicated equipment. I should amplify that statement by saying that all of our officers and leading enlisted petty officers reported to the Bath Iron Works about two months before the ship was commissioned. We all participated in the final installation and testing of our equipment.

When this shakedown training period was completed, the **STRONG** was assigned to convoy escort duty in the Atlantic and Caribbean, and then participated in the Casablanca operation, marking the initial invasion of Northwest Africa by the Allies on 8 November 1942.

Our last convoy escort duty from Casablanca ended in New York in mid-December. About ten days later, Christmas morning 1942 to be precise, the **STRONG** sailed from New York and I became the escort commander for a large troop convoy bound for Brisbane, Australia, via the Panama Canal and Bora Bora in the Society Islands. That convoy escort duty ended about fifty miles outside of Brisbane, when the locally based destroyers rendezvoused with the convoy and assumed the responsibility for escorting it into Brisbane.

I regret to say the **STRONG**'s crew never did get to see Australia, for we were ordered to proceed to Espiritu Santo Island in the New Hebrides Group, about 560 miles southeast of Guadalcanal. Upon our arrival at Espiritu Santo, the **STRONG** joined other destroyers of DesRon 21 as the anti-submarine and anti-aircraft escorts for RAdm. Walden L. Ainsworth's

division of old six-inch cruisers, composed of the HONOLULU, HELENA and ST. LOUIS.

We were affectionately known as the "Night Raiders" by the Navy and Marines in the general Guadalcanal area, because we operated almost exclusively at night. We were under the immediate tactical command of Admiral Ainsworth who in turn was under the overall command of Admiral Halsey, Commander of the Navy's South Pacific Force.

We assisted the Marines in gaining control of Guadalcanal by escorting supply ships, troop ships, ammunition ships and tankers into the island.

After the Japanese evacuated Guadalcanal on 7 February 1943, we began to edge our way ever so slowly northward in the Solomon Islands. We conducted raids and other small operations, while waiting for a sufficient number of additional ships and aircraft to arrive in our area which would permit us to mount a major offensive in the Bismarck Archipelago. Our major objectives were the city of Buin on the southern end of the island of Bougainville and Rabaul on the island of New Britain.

At that time we were sadly lacking in ships and aircraft. Our shortage of aircraft was so great that we frequently lacked control of the air in the immediate Guadalcanal area, and never had control of the air north of Guadalcanal. This was the reason why we operated almost exclusively at night, north of Guadalcanal.

Our Night Raiders usually arrived in the general Guadalcanal area from Espiritu Santo about sunset. We then proceeded to steam up the so called "Slot" between New Georgia and Santa Isabel Islands, for raids along the New Georgia coast, and frequently we continued steaming northwest beyond New Georgia Island for various operations inside of Kula Gulf. All our navigation was conducted by ranges and bearings from our SG surface radars.

Kula Gulf is situated about 180 miles northwest of Guadalcanal between New Georgia and Kolombangara Islands. The Gulf is about twenty-five miles long in roughly a north to south direction, and varies in width from about twenty miles

at the northern end to about ten to fifteen miles at the southern end. Our operations harassed the Japanese and provided excellent intelligence information, including contacts with the Australian and New Zealand coast watchers stationed in these areas.

About six months after the STRONG arrived in Espiritu Santo, on the night of 4 July 1943, the Night Raiders began another small but important operation in our determination to edge our way northward in the Solomon Islands. The Raiders that night consisted of the cruisers HONOLULU, HELENA, and ST. LOUIS steaming in column formation at 25 knots, surrounded by the four destroyers STRONG, NICHOLAS, O'BANNON, and CHEVALIER, formed in a circular anti-submarine screen. As usual, Admiral Ainsworth was the Officer-in-Tactical Command.

We had two missions that night. The primary mission was to act as a Covering Force and a Bombardment Force for 2600 Marines under Col. Harry Liversedge, who were following us in seven destroyer transports. The Marines were to capture Rice Anchorage, located on the western side of New Georgia Island, about two-thirds of the distance into Kula Gulf, as a prelude to our later capture of the Japanese Munda Airfield, situated on the southwest end of New Georgia Island.

After capturing Rice Anchorage, the Marines were to force their way southward through the jungles and swamps of New Georgia Island, and block Japanese land and water reinforcements from reaching the Munda Airfield from the Vila Airfield and Vila Plantation, located on the southeastern end of Kolombangara Island.

Our secondary mission was to prevent, if practicable, the landing of the first echelon of 4000 Japanese reinforcements due to land on Kolombangara Island the same night from Japanese destroyer transports.

The night of 4 July was dark, the sea calm with a moderate southwest wind and occasional rain squalls, as we began our final approach towards Kula Gulf at 2323. All ships reduced speed to 20 knots. Our radars indicated no ships inside Kula

Gulf. Upon entering the Gulf, Admiral Ainsworth was careful to avoid the minefields the mine layers of our Task Group had laid along the east coast of Kolombangara Island on a previous visit into the Gulf.

Twenty-six minutes past midnight on 5 July, all ships began a bombardment of about 3000 shells into the Vila Airfield and Vila Plantation on the southeastern part of Kolombangara Island, at targets indicated from photographs taken by our reconnaissance aircraft.

Thirty-four minutes past midnight all ships changed course to the left from 190° true to 090° true and shifted fire to Bairoko Harbor, the New Georgia terminus of the Japanese ferry line from the Vila Airfield and Plantation to the Munda Airfield.

Forty minutes past midnight we ceased firing and changed course to the left to course due north to check the progress of the Marines landing at Rice Anchorage. If all was well and no Japanese ships were headed toward Kula Gulf we would clear the Gulf and return to Guadalcanal to await orders from Admiral Halsey.

Less than one and a half minutes after the STRONG had completed the change of course to due north, my gunnery officer, Lt. James A. Curran '41, saw a bubbling torpedo wake close aboard on our port bow headed directly for the STRONG. Before Lieutenant Curran could notify me, as I was standing on the open part of the navigation bridge just ten feet below him, a terrific explosion on the port side at number one fireroom knocked me down to my knees.

The explosion completely destroyed number one fireroom and the adjacent number one engineroom, killing nearly all hands on watch in those two major compartments of the ship. The cries and moans of my men, for a split second or two before their almost instant death, haunted me for years. A large hole was torn in the portside of the ship and also in the main deck above number one fireroom. The bulkhead between number one engine room and number two fireroom was cracked, allowing considerable water to enter number two fireroom.

Our damage control parties went into action immediately but they were handicapped by the ship taking an immediate

list to starboard of fifteen to twenty degrees which rapidly increased to thirty degrees. Emergency power from our two diesel generators was automatically available for our guns and steering engine.

My two reliable and most efficient communication officers, Lt. (jg) B. F. Jetton and his assistant Ens. W. F. Hedrick, both Naval Reserve officers, came immediately to the bridge. I instructed them to destroy the coding machine and our classified files as quickly as possible.

The port motor whaleboat was destroyed by the explosion but the captain's gig secured at the starboard boat davit was undamaged.

The superstructure deckhouse on the portside in the vicinity of the explosion collapsed. The main deck plates in the vicinity of the explosion collapsed. The main deck plates in the vicinity of the explosion were badly buckled.

When the damage control parties reported that the water in number two fireroom was just above the floor plates, and the water depth increasing regardless of our continued efforts to control it, number two fireroom was secured and the personnel evacuated.

When the list of the ship increased to about forty to forty-five degrees, I gave the order to prepare to abandon ship, because I was certain that the ship's back had been broken and that despite all our efforts the ship would sink in about twenty to forty-five minutes, even though number two engineroom was not yet flooded.

When I gave the order to prepare to abandon ship I also instructed my officers not to permit anyone to actually abandon ship until I specifically gave the order to abandon.

My reasons for this latter decision were fundamental. First, I did not wish to have my crew scattered all over Kula Gulf if it could be avoided. Second, by keeping the crew together, rescue operations would be expedited. Last, and most important, I felt certain my friend, good old Admiral "Pug" Ainsworth would send a destroyer alongside to rescue my crew.

True to his promise to come to the assistance of our destroyers if we ever got into trouble, Admiral Ainsworth immediately ordered the destroyers O'BAN-
NON and CHEVALIER to our rescue. They

began counter firing at the Japanese shore batteries at Bairoko Harbor and adjacent Enogai Inlet because these shore batteries opened fire against the STRONG with their 150 mm. guns after we were torpedoed.

I was horrified but still most thankful at thirteen minutes past one, to see the destroyer CHEVALIER appear out of the darkness steaming at about ten knots and crash into our port side at an angle of about thirty degrees. I thought the STRONG would roll over from the crash. Fortunately, the ship did not roll over but the list to starboard increased to about fifty degrees. The CHEVALIER stopped with her bow just forward of our bridge.

The CHEVALIER had cargo nets and mooring lines over her starboard side. As soon as she stopped, I gave the order to abandon ship. My crew began jumping into the water and climbing up the cargo nets to the deck of the CHEVALIER. They also began climbing aboard CHEVALIER from the STRONG's forecastle.

While I assisted the abandon ship operations amidships, I sent my most capable Executive Officer, Lt. Frederick W. Purdy '33, to take charge of the abandon ship operations on the forecastle. As Fred started down the inclined ladder from the bridge leading to the forecastle, I said "Fred, be sure to get aboard CHEVALIER yourself before she casts off from alongside." Fred looked at me, smiled and said "Don't worry about me, Captain."

All the time the CHEVALIER was alongside, the Bairoko Harbor and Enogai Inlet shore batteries continued to shell the STRONG and the CHEVALIER. A few shell fragments struck my right wrist and lower right leg with only minor injuries. In addition to the shelling by the shore batteries, two or three bombs fell just astern of the CHEVALIER.

When the CHEVALIER came alongside, my gig was lowered into the water from the starboard boat davits with considerable difficulty due to the list of the ship plus the fact that the ship's starboard side plating opposite number one fireroom had buckled outboard from the side of the ship.

Lt. Donald A. Regan USNR, who had previously entered the forward engineroom and rescued a wounded man, acted as Captain of the gig and eventually

rescued seventeen men from the water. The gig and her survivors were later taken aboard a destroyer at the northern entrance of Kula Gulf.

After the CHEVALIER had been alongside about nine minutes, Commander Eph McLean '24, her Commanding Officer, shouted over to me and said "Gus, I think everyone who was topside is either aboard, or in the water alongside. I better cast off and get out of here in a minute or two, before I am hit and crippled with all your men on board." I reluctantly agreed with the fervent hope and prayer that none of my men would still be in the water when the CHEVALIER cast off.

CHEVALIER rescue operations were outstanding when one considers that she rescued 234 enlisted men and seven officers in about ten to twelve minutes.

Once again my sincere thanks to Admiral Eph McLean and Captain George Wilson '32, the Commanding Officer and Executive Officer of the CHEVALIER.

As soon as CHEVALIER began to cast off from the STRONG, I took a quick look fore and aft from both the starboard and port wings of the bridge. All personnel were clear of the topside of the ship, including the personnel on the forecastle.

The water was now almost up to the bridge level on the starboardside. I decided to take a last quick look along the main deck amidships but I was blocked by water as I started down the inclined ladder leading to the main deck.

I quickly returned to the bridge and was shocked to see my leading quartermaster sitting in the chart house. I said "Rodriques, why didn't you go to the forecastle and get aboard CHEVALIER with the rest of the bridge personnel?" He replied "I am not leaving the ship until you do, Captain."

A last quick glance outside the bridge area convinced me the ship was about to roll over to starboard. I then said, "There's no one topside and no one alive below decks. Let's get off right now before we're trapped inside when she rolls over."

We both then stepped on top of the bridge wind screen, outboard of the starboard torpedo director. He stepped into the water, and I followed right after my loyal quartermaster.

The time was now twenty-four minutes past one. Fortunately we were both wearing kapok lifejackets.

As soon as we were in the water we both rolled over on our backs, just in time to see my beloved STRONG break into two pieces, with the after end twisting to starboard about forty degrees, as she sank below the calm waters of Kula Gulf.

A few seconds later I was knocked unconscious when one or more of my starboard 300-pound depth charges, which were forced off "safe" by the torpedo explosion, exploded as the ship settled toward the bottom of the Gulf. The water from the explosion bubbled up all around us, but thanks to the kapok lifejackets, plus being on our backs, we both survived the explosion but we were severely injured.

When I regained consciousness some minutes later, I was being helped into an empty STRONG floater net by my loyal and most efficient quartermaster. The net had floated off the ship as she sank just as intended. As soon as we were in the floater net, we began signalling with the quartermaster's watertight flashlight "Help, STRONG survivors."

My stomach and back pains were so severe I was of very little assistance to Rodriques as we tried to paddle the floater net toward what we believed to be Rice Anchorage. We made little or no headway but were most fortunate to rescue one STRONG officer and two enlisted men from the water.

About three hours and forty-five minutes later, I had lapsed into a semi-conscious condition. I wondered how my lovely devoted wife and five-year-old daughter were in Dedham, Mass. I knew that our respective families would assist them in every way possible if I were killed by the Japanese, or captured and became a prisoner of war. Frankly, I had just about given up all hope of being rescued because I knew our ships would be clearing the Gulf at maximum sustained speed to set course for Guadalcanal, it then being less than an hour before dawn.

Just then the good Lord interceded in our favor and, in my judgement, performed a miracle for us.

The destroyer GWIN, the last ship remaining in the lower part of Kula Gulf, was executing her change of course to clear the Gulf when her lookouts faintly saw our flashlight call for help.

As Cdr. John B. Fellows '31, Commanding Officer of the GWIN, quickly maneuvered her alongside our floater net, all her personnel on deck were shouting "Turn off that flashlight before we are hit by the shore batteries—we'll pick you up."

We were all hauled aboard the GWIN via cargo nets and, as soon as we were on deck, Commander Fellows ordered flank speed ahead, and then quickly increased speed to her maximum sustained speed for the passage to Guadalcanal. The time was now 0510.

Commander Fellows and Capt. John M. Higgins '22, the Squadron Commander aboard GWIN were most kind to us, as were the GWIN's doctors and pharmacist mates.

We were all given physical examinations, but there was nothing they could do for our internal injuries except to give us morphine and blood plasma, and hope we would stay alive at least until we arrived at Guadalcanal.

We were all given dry clothes, placed in officers' bunks, and received constant checking by the doctors and the pharmacist mates during the high speed run to Guadalcanal. When the GWIN arrived off Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, we were all transferred via stretchers into two amphibious personnel boats and taken to the mobile hospital on Guadalcanal.

The Marines captured Rice Anchorage. The Japanese did not land their reinforcements on Kolombangara Island. The United States captured the Munda airfield on 5 August 1943.

As for myself, after additional hospitalization at Noumea in New Caledonia, at Bethesda, Maryland, and Chelsea, Massachusetts, plus recuperation leave, I finally received a clean bill of health from the doctors.

I was then offered a fine assignment by Adm. William D. Leahy to once again be his Aide and Flag Secretary. Admiral

Leahy at that time was Chief of Staff to President Roosevelt in Washington. However, because of the war situation I preferred to return to sea duty, and Admiral Leahy graciously accepted my decision. Instead of a desk assignment at the White House, I returned to the Pacific in the Summer of 1944 as the Division Commander of the first division of 2200-ton destroyers. Before the war ended I also served as Commander Destroyer

Squadron Two in the Pacific.

I regret to say that the Navy lost forty-six gallant and efficient destroyer men and their families suffered great sadness as a result of the STRONG settling beneath the waters of Kula Gulf early the morning of 5 July 1943. Our casualties included the loss of my outstanding Executive Officer, Fred Purdy, who did not get aboard the CHEVALIER before she cast off from the STRONG.



U.S.S. Strong (DD-467)

Citations for Medals Awarded to Officers and Crew:

Silver Star Medal awarded (approved 1/21/44) to

LIEUTENANT BENJAMIN FRAZIER JETTON, USNR
ENSIGN WILLIAM C. HEDRICK, USNR

CITATION: "Lieutenant Jetton and Ensign Hedrick, as communication officer and assistant communication officer, respectively, in total disregard of their own safety, insisted on remaining below decks in the officer's country passageway, removing secret and confidential publications and placing them in weighted bags and throwing them over the side despite the order to abandon ship. These two officers remained below continuing the destruction of secret and confidential matter when the ship went down. While listed as missing it is certain that these officers were trapped below decks when the ship sank. Awards to these two officers will be posthumous."

* * * * *

Silver Star Medal awarded (approved 1/2/44) to

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER FREDERICK WARREN PURDY, USN

CITATION: "Lt. Comdr. Purdy was executive officer of the U.S.S. STRONG. After the STRONG was hit by the torpedo and the reports of damage indicated the ship would have to be abandoned, Lt. Comdr. Purdy personally investigated the extent of the damage at great risk to his own safety. After CHEVALIER smashed into the STRONG's forecastle in coming alongside, Lt. Comdr. Purdy took direct charge of the very difficult rescue operations on the forecastle. It was chiefly due to his leadership that all enlisted men on the forecastle were transferred via hand lines to CHEVALIER during the short period (seven minutes) that CHEVALIER was alongside. Purdy and three other officers were the only remaining men on the forecastle when CHEVALIER shoved off. When last seen he was investigating a report that a wounded enlisted man was on the deck behind number 2 five-inch gun mount. It is believed that he jumped with the three other officers just before the ship sank. His body was found on the beach of Arundel Island three days later by a group of STRONG survivors who drifted to this island. This award will be posthumous."

* * * * *

Editor's Note: These citations were obtained from an index-card file at the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. Since there is no list of those who received medals, I may not have included all of the medals awarded.

U.S.S. Strong (DD-467)

Citations for Medals Awarded (continued)

Navy and Marine Corps Medal awarded (approved 5/15/47) to

CHIEF QUARTERMASTER MAURICE A. RODRIGOS, USN

CITATION: "For heroism in assisting in the rescue of his commanding officer although badly injured on the night of July 4, 1943, when the United States Ship STRONG was sunk in a night action in Kula Gulf, Solomon Islands. After the order was given to abandon ship he courageously chose to remain with the Commanding Officer in complete disregard for his own safety. As his ship was about to sink he stepped off the bridge into the water and immediately thereafter was badly injured by the explosion of depth charges. Despite his own injuries he assisted the injured Commanding Officer to a floater net where by means of a flashlight which he carried he contributed immeasurably to the final rescue five hours later. His heroic conduct, performed in the face of great danger to himself, was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

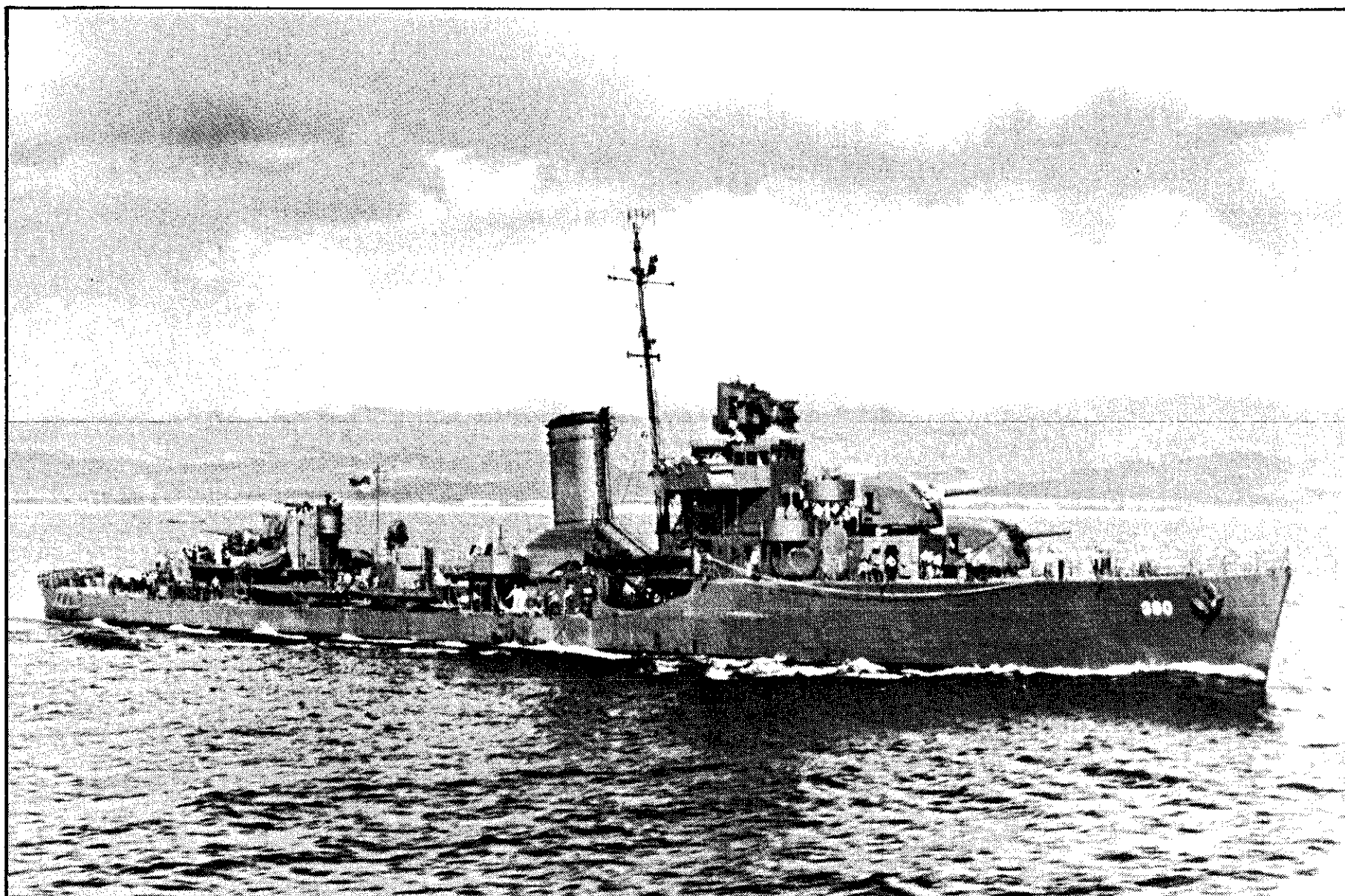
* * * * *

Bronze Star Medal awarded (approved 7/11/49) to

LIEUTENANT DONALD ARTHUR REGAN, USNR

CITATION: "Lt. Regan, upon investigating a tapping sound on the main deck directly over number one engine room, which had been instantly flooded saw Langley, Willard G. #636-78-43, EM2c, USNR, on top of the switch board of this engine room with the water slightly below him. Langley was badly wounded and was crying for help. Lt. Regan lowered himself through the emergency hatch into the engine room and secured a footing across the braces of the switch board. Langley then crawled along Regan's body until he came to the emergency hatch where he was pulled up on the deck and later lowered into a life raft. When the USS CHEVALIER backed away from the USS STRONG, Lt. Regan was pulled overboard from the STRONG's forecastle. After swimming around for about 5 minutes he was picked up by the gig which was lowered into the water prior to the ship's sinking. He took charge of the gig, remained in the area for a considerable time picking up a total of 17 enlisted men. Unable to locate other rafts or men he headed out of Kula Gulf beyond Visu Visu Point and started toward Guadalcanal. He knew that the APD's and destroyers would leave Kula Gulf by 6 o'clock the same morning. The entire gig's crew was rescued by the USS RALPH TALBOT shortly after daylight."

* * * * *



The Bagley-class destroyer U.S.S. Ralph Talbot (DD-390) (Cdr. J. W. Callahan) sighted the Strong's gig (Lt. Donald R. Regan, USNR, in charge) with eighteen survivors and rescued them as she departed Kula Gulf shortly after daybreak on July 5, 1943. The Ralph Talbot was commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard in 1937. She survived World War II but was scuttled in 1948 after the nuclear tests at Bikini. (U.S. Navy photograph.)

UNITED STATES SHIP

RALPH TALBOT

Monday

5

July 1943

ZONE DESCRIPTION

REMARKS.

0 to 4 STEAMING AS BEFORE

J. P. W. / Jan

4 to 8 STEAMING AS BEFORE. 0705-Rescued eighteen survivors from the Sea Region, Donald Arthur, Lieutenant D-1(G) USNR; GARRIS, DICKSON JR., RMK; U.S. USNR; McDANIEL, DANIEL JAMES, TM 3/c 2726626 USN; BARTENBERG, ROBERT JR., GM 3/c V-6 USNR; Lucas, Gordon Everett, F/c 2918404 USN; Chapman, FRANK William F/c 6232434 V-6 USNR; Clinie, George Clinton, F/c 2632107, USNR; Nelson, William Hargrove, F/c 6252702, V-6 USNR; GARYEN, Lawrence George FC 3/c 6386910 V-6 USNR; Ellwell, Revolt John 6003303 V-6 USNR; Clifton, T S/c 5518153 USNR; Danner, G W S/c USNR; Fohl, Louis Earl S/c 6266372 V-6 USNR; Hill, Robert Harold S/c 3120541 USN; Ell, George Raymond S/c 6207948 USNR; SAGEV, EDWARD FLAVIAN S/c 6607396 V-6 USNR; TUCKER, Reice Haley S/c 6400854 V-6 USNR; Rogacki, Alojz Joseph, S/c 6084083 V-6 USNR.

J. P. W. / Jan

7 to 16 to 22 Proceeding as before 1720 Anchored in assigned berth.

J. P. W. / Jan

20 to 24 Anchored as before

J. P. W. / Jan

2 to 12 STEAMING AS BEFORE. 0800 MUSTLED CORD ON STATION, NO ANCHORING. 5. MAKE DAILY INSPECTION OF AMMUNITION & STORES POLICE SAMPLES, CONDITIONS, ETC.

J. P. W. / Jan

12 to 16 STEAMING AS BEFORE. 1500 DISEMBARKED SURVIVORS

J. P. W. / Jan

Approved:

Examined:

J. P. W. / Jan

J. P. W. / Jan

July 9, 1943.

From: 1st Lieut. U. S. S. Strong (DD467)
To: Senior Officer.
Subject: Damage Control - Miscellaneous Lessons Learned from
Torpedoing and Sinking of the U. S. S. Strong. (July
4-5, 1943.)

1. This report is written that others may benefit from the experience and profit by the mistakes made during the torpedoing and subsequent events of damage control, jettison, abandon ship, and finally, rescue of survivors.

2. The first part of this report will deal with events as they happened to be experienced by me. The chronological order of events will be confused, as no conception of passage of time was possible. Evidence of this is my first estimate of the sinking time of the Strong - seven minutes when the log of the Chevalier shows more than forty minutes.

3. My station was as Officer of the Deck, conning the ship to stay 100 yards astern of the U. S. S. Nicholas, and follow her in column. I had taken the port wing of the bridge, the side opposite the firing side for better visibility of LD449 and my whole attention was focused on that ship. Since the torpedo struck on Port side and it's wake was observed at the last moment by the Gunnery Officer, it may be inserted here that had I kept more of an all around lookout, I may have observed this wake in time to take avoiding action.

4. On being hit by the torpedo, a terrific explosion was felt which knocked me off my feet. After picking myself up, I went into the pilot house, which was deserted except for Hozley, QM2/c, who stated he was O.K. Papers, pamphlets etc., were strewn about the deck in confusion. I then picked up the TBS transmitter and sent "Hugo from Gay - we have been hit by torpedo". Transmission, however was dead.

5. The Captain at this point came through pilot house to port wing, and I asked and was granted his permission to go below for inspection.

6. On making my way below I noted ship had about a 12° list to starboard. Men were standing about not knowing the proper action to take. The starboard main deck seemed intact. Men were attempting to lower the gig, and I ordered them to stop until further orders were received. The ship was continuing to list, water rising higher on the deck as ship settled more. The list however seemed to be slowing.

I then went up on superstructure deck forward of #1 stack, and saw that the port side was blown through; wrecking and twisted metal blocked any passage along port main deck. I made my way aft on superstructure deck, climbing down on port side, since deck had collapsed amidship. I heard yells of "Help" from Forward engine room and Ochsman 1/o

This report by Lt. Donald A. Regan, USNR, is included in the papers donated by the late Admiral Wellings to the Naval War College/Naval Historical Collection, Newport, Rhode Island.

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

seeing me shouted "Mr. Regan the ladders are gone from F.E.R., we can't get down there and men are crying help". I immediately went to port F.E.R. (outside of laundry) through W.T. door and looked through hatch which was blown open. Water was within four feet of main deck, steam was heavy, oil on surface of water. On seeing the flashlight, the yells increased. I managed to lower myself into F.E.R. by crawling on an insulated 4" pipe, and searched with my floor light for personnel. Due to steam I could not immediately see anyone, but the man directed my light to him. I saw a man who turned out to be Langley, E.M.lc, pinned between a pipe and the main electric board, in port after corner. He quieted down on seeing me and I told him I'd need help to get him out. I then went on deck, asked Wolters, C.T.M. to get some rope and assist me, but he replied "Mr. Regan I'll do all I can but my arm is broken." Another man volunteered to help. I then returned to the F.E.R. the man got at 3' piece of line which I hung on to. I then instructed Langley to duck under the pipe he was on, and as he did I grabbed him, pulled him to the hatch, and from there assisted him to the deck. He complained that both legs were broken. On getting to deck I found Lt.j.g. Trost and turned Langley over to him with orders to give him an injection of morphine and to take care of him. Mr. Trost stated that A.E.R. was flooding, all machinery inoperative. I gave him my flash-light to inspect damage. I then made my way back to superstructure deck and looked along starboard side, and noted the list had not materially increased.

7. I returned to the bridge and reported this fact to the Captain, with the opinion that we had a chance of saving the ship. The Captain wanted to know if we had steering control, if we had to five full left rudder, in order to beach the ship at Rice Anchorage. I went to the pilot house spun the wheel, which was inoperative, reported same to Captain, then went below again with the intention of getting word to the after-steering station to apply full left rudder and to inspect after engine room.

8. On returning below I gave these instructions to Ochs who went aft to comply. The word was then passed to jettison ship; torpedo tubes were trained out, but were not fired. The gig, I noted was cut loose at this point. Because of torpedo tubes I could not make my way aft. Ochs reported rudder was full left but nothing happened. At this point there was a rumbling aft, steam began venting from after-stack, the ship buckled dangerously in the center, and the list to starboard began increasing to an alarming angle. Hackett (Lt.j.g.) passed me at this point saying all after engine spaces were flooded and inoperative, but he was going back again to have a look. I returned to the bridge again, told these facts to the Captain, and that the situation was bad. I requested and obtained permission to go to the forecabin to prepare the anchor chain for towing. A word-passing line had been formed by this time from the bridge aft; order and discipline were apparent; jettison ship was proceeding. On getting to superstructure deck, I remained a moment to pass words from the bridge - i.e. - "All hands to port top-side; prepare to abandon ship; do not leave ship yet."

9. The list I noted was increasing and accelerating, and the ship was buckling in the center. I yelled to the bridge "Captain, the ship is breaking up." At this moment the U.S.S. Chevalier rammed us. This immediately heeled us over to 35°, making it impossible to stay upright on ship without hanging on to something. We must have been very low in the water, as the main deck of the Chevvy was about 7' above us. I yelled "Lower your cargo nets" to the yell being taken up.

The order was then passed for "All hands make their way to fore-castle and go aboard the Chevalier". Passing this word, I then started forward intending to go forward on superstructure deck, and down to main deck forward of gun #2, thinking that main deck would be impassible on account of ramming by Chevvy. On making my way forward I found by 20m.m.#3 several men making their way across to Chevvy on lines. These men were yelling "Lower your cargo nets and throw us your lines." I remained here to assist. Mr. Hackett, Mr. Naphan, and Mr. Puray were there also. The latter (Lt.Com.) ordered me to get some lines across. A mooring line was passed across at this time, and Mr. Hackett and I secured it by putting the loop over the edge of the 20 m.m. shield. I told Hackett to watch that it did not slip off. Men were going across on this line. Another line (stanchoin life line) was sent over and I held this while men went over. After awhile the Chevvy began backing away. One man was midway across the line I was holding (Garrett). I instinctively held on to the line, and was pulled overboard with it as the Chevvy pulled away, striking deck of the Strong with my right hip.

On getting into the water I still held on, and got my arm in the loop of this line, as my right leg was paralyzed by the thud on the Strong's main deck as I was pulled off by the Chevalier. The line was being hauled in and I could hear Edwards C.B.M. on deck of Chevvy. Garrett yelled he couldn't hang on, and he slid down. I grabbed him and noted that our gig was alongside the Chevvy. Edwards commenced pulling and seemed to recognize. However, with Garrett there, and the gig so close, I decided it would be better to make for it and ordered Edwards to lower me to water again that I would get the gig. He complied after some hesitation. While making the gig, which had an inexperienced man at the tiller and thus took some time to come within reach, I heard the Strong sink. Remembering that someone had yelled that depth charges were not checked on 'safe', I rolled over on my back with Garrett, and puckered up my rectum. The depth charges, four of them, went off, but neither Garrett nor I had any ill effects.

On getting aboard gig I could not stand on my right leg. The boat was covered with fuel oil. I made my way back to after compartment and directed coxswain in picking up men in the water--i.e. turning off motor and listening for cries. I believe we picked up about a dozen men. My left eye was swollen shut caused by pumping into something while in the water.

While this was going on I noted an explosion on the Chevvy, which was about 500 yards away. The Chevvy was firing; star shells were overhead. By the time all survivors in immediate surrounding were aboard, only one destroyer was in sight, about two miles away firing at Bairoki Inlet.

I then decided to skirt along the coast of New Georgia and try to find the APD that were landing troops at Rice Anchorage. From MG fire I surmised this to be about 8 miles away and headed in that direction. We were underway about five minutes when a DD began firing in our direction. I ordered all hands down in the boat. My thought was that we had been picked up on the ship's radar screen and were mistaken for a sub. I changed course, and the tracers also seemed to change. I stopped the boat and although the firing seemed directly at us with shells whistling overhead, firing soon ceased and we resumed our way. This made me very wary about showing lights; and awhile later when another suspicious looking ship was in sight, we layed-to until it had pass to keep the coast of New Georgia in sight. I figured we were making about 3 knots and had enough fuel for 50 miles which would bring us to where I wanted to go i.e. Course 117 2 miles clear of New Georgia coast. Also decided to signal any passing ships, and on occasions laid-to listening and trying to spot ships.

Meanwhile I had given morphine injections to four men suffering from blast injuries. Another man, Kleine, I believe, had given one to another man as my hip did not allow me to move about the gig freely. Later on I gave an injection to McDaniel's, suffering from a broken arm. Other first-aid was impossible in the dark, because of oil, darkness and crowded condition of boat.

My plan now was to get aboard a ship; and if not to save enough fuel to make the coast, and there administer first-aid when dawn came, and to search beach for coast watcher or our infiltration troops.

At dawn which I knew to be about 0636, we laid-to again, measured the fuel (2 gallons left) and rigged the canopy because of heavy seas, and waited for the ships. They arrived right on time which meant everything else had gone O.K. and according to schedule. I then broke out the semaphore flags and sent "Survivors of Strong - please take us aboard". The ship DD390 - Ralph Talbot got the signal and soon rescued us.

The following are suggestions of what might have been done during the sinking of the Strong:

1. The handy-billy should have been put in immediate use in the After Fire Room, in an attempt to drain it out. This was the only means available for draining the ship as all auxiliaries had no power i.e. - submersible pumps and Fire, Bilge and Flushing pumps. It is very doubtful if one pump could do much - capacity 150 cu.feet per minute - especially over a lift of 20 feet. Four such pumps (ships new allowance) may have helped.
2. An attempt should have been made to plug the ruptured bulkhead in A.E.R. with mattresses, backed by shoring, to slow leakage down.
3. All depth charges should have been set on safe, and thrown over-board to reduce top-side weight.
4. Starboard anchor could have been slipped.
5. Other top-side weights - loading machine, all ready boxes, Gig, jettisoned.
6. It is extremely unlikely that any of these steps could have helped the ship, but an orderly attempt as listed may have given more time before the ship broke in two.
7. Notes on abandoning ship:
 - (a) All life rafts and float nets should have lines attached in order to tow alongside. All float nets should have paddles.



The Strong's Executive Officer, Lt. Frederick W. Purdy, USN, at the ship's commissioning on August 7, 1942. He died when the Strong was sunk by an enemy torpedo in Kula Gulf on July 3, 1943. Lcdr. Purdy was last seen attempting to rescue one of his shipmates. (NHC/Newport, Naval Hist. Collection.)

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER FREDRICK WARREN PURDY,
UNITED STATES NAVY, DECEASED**

Lieutenant Commander Purdy was born on December 4, 1911, in Chicago, Illinois. He was graduated from the Severn School, Severna Park, Maryland, in 1929, and was appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, from Florida, on June 13, 1929. While at the Academy he played soccer and boxed, was a member of the Trident (literary) Society, and during his fourth year was Midshipman Company Commander. He was graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 1, 1933. His subsequent advancements in rank were: Lieutenant (junior grade), June 1, 1936; Lieutenant, July 1, 1940; and Lieutenant Commander, October 1, 1942.

Upon graduation Lieutenant Commander Purdy was assigned to the USS MISSISSIPPI, serving in her until December 30, 1935, and had communication duty on the staff of Commander, Battle Force, until December 31, 1936. From January 25 to March 23, 1937, he was under instruction at the Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island, and at the Navy Yard, Washington, D. C.

On March 24, 1937, Lieutenant Commander Purdy reported to the Navy Yard, Norfolk, Virginia, for duty in connection with fitting out the USS BAGLEY, and for duty in her when she was commissioned June 12, 1937. He was detached from the BAGLEY on June 23, 1939, and after several months at the Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland, he reported at Headquarters, Fifteenth Naval District, Balboa, Canal Zone, where he remained on duty until July 5, 1940. From July 25, 1940, until April 29, 1942, he served in the battleship CALIFORNIA. The CALIFORNIA was damaged in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

Lieutenant Commander Purdy was on duty for a short time in the Twelfth Naval District and on June 26, 1942, he reported for duty in connection with fitting out the USS STRONG at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, and served as her executive Officer from her commissioning August 7, 1942, until he was killed in action when the STRONG was sunk as a result of enemy action in the South Pacific on July 5, 1943.

For his service in the STRONG, Lieutenant Commander Purdy was awarded the Silver Star Medal, posthumously, with the following citation:

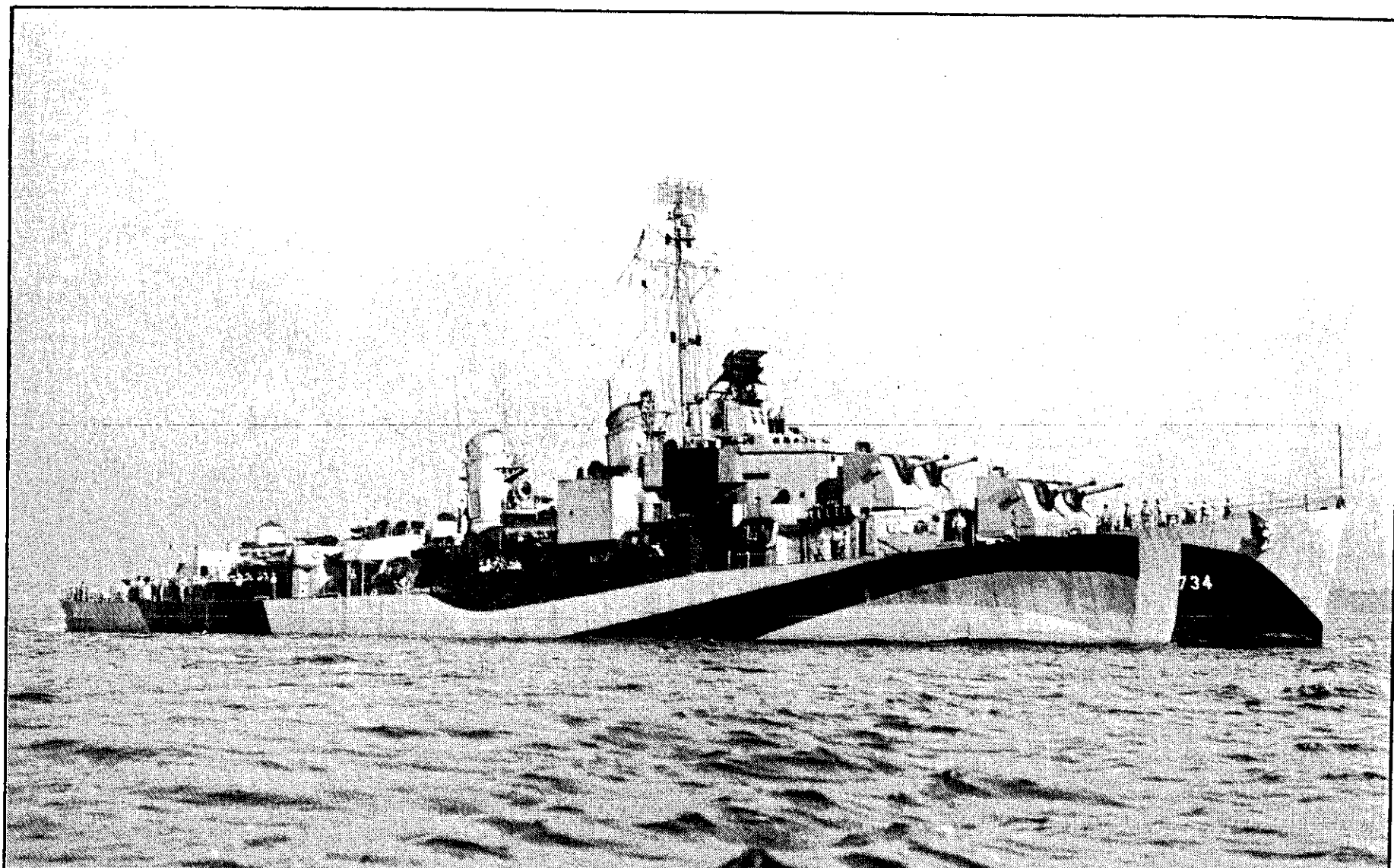
SILVER STAR MEDAL:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as executive officer of the USS STRONG when that vessel was torpedoed and sunk by enemy Japanese forces in Kula Gulf, Solomon Islands, July 5, 1943. Working desperately and with no thought of his own safety during the seven minutes in which the rescue vessel was alongside, Lieutenant Commander Purdy aided all the enlisted men on the forecastle of the stricken ship over the side by way of hand lines. Continuing his courageous efforts in behalf of others aboard, he was last seen searching for an injured member of the crew reported to be on the deck behind the gun mount. Lieutenant Commander Purdy's heroic spirit of self-sacrifice and his inspiring conduct throughout a hazardous and critical period were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."

He was also awarded the Purple Heart Medal, posthumously.

In addition to the Silver Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal, Lieutenant Commander had the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

The U.S.S. Purdy (DD-734) was commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard on July 18, 1944. This page from the commissioning program is courtesy of Frederick Purdy Turner.



The 2,200-ton destroyer U.S.S. Purdy (DD-734), named after the Strong's Executive Officer, LCdr. Frederick W. Purdy, USN. Shown here off the Boston Navy Yard in August, 1944, this Allen M. Sumner-class vessel was launched at Bath, Maine, in May, 1944, and commissioned at Boston on 18 July 1944. She was armed with six 5-in./38 dual-purpose guns and two quintuple torpedo-tube mounts. The Purdy survived a kamikaze's bomb at Okinawa in 1945 and was finally struck from the Navy's records on 2 July 1973. She earned one battle star in World War II and three during the Korean Conflict. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

FIRST LADY PRESENTS NAVY CROSS TO HERO

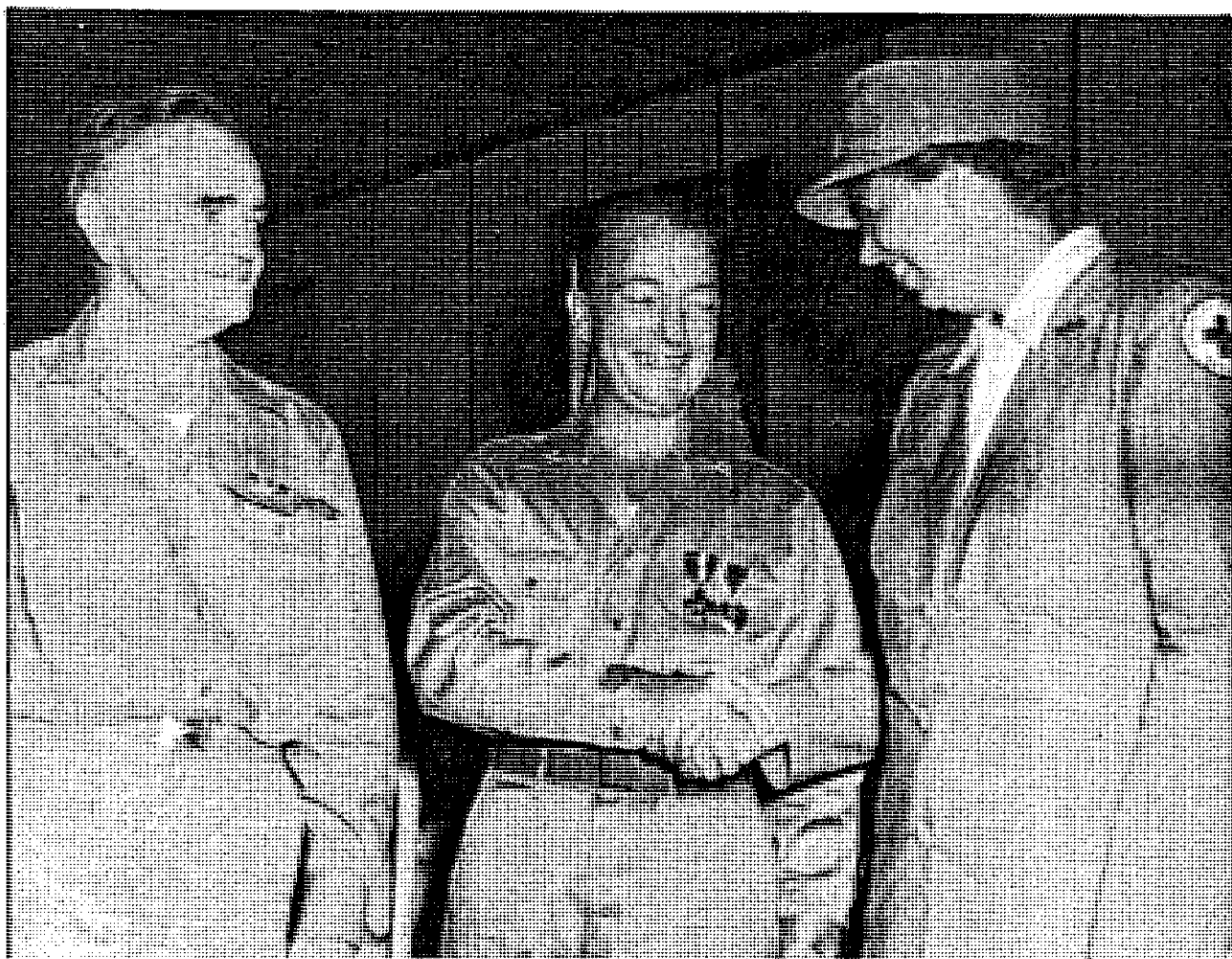
Recipient Killed Twelve Japanese While Marooned on Island

A UNITED STATES BASE, in the South Pacific, Sept. 15 (Delayed) (U.P.)—Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt pinned the Navy Cross and Purple Heart with Gold Star today on Navy Lieut. Hugh Barr Miller, 33 years old, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., a one-man army who attacked three Japanese machine-gun nests and one patrol, killing at least a dozen Japanese, while marooned for thirty-nine days on Arundel Island, northwest of New Georgia.

Lieutenant Miller, former University of Alabama Rose Bowl quarterback, spent four days at sea in a raft before reaching Arundel Island after the sinking of the destroyer Strong during the night of July 4-5. He brought back "valuable information concerning Japanese positions and units" on Arundel, despite internal injuries he suffered in the sinking.

Mrs. Roosevelt presented the medals to Lieutenant Miller in a hospital ward at the request of Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander in Chief in the South Pacific. In a bed beside Lieutenant Miller lay Willard Langley, electrician's mate, second class, of Cordele, Ga., the only known survivor of the U. S. S. Strong's forward engine room.

Lieutenant Miller, an ambulatory patient, is regaining strength lost during his exploits.



Lt. Hugh B. Miller, USNR, being congratulated by the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt after being awarded the Navy Cross and Purple Heart by Admiral Halsey (at left) on September 15, 1943. Lt. Miller later told an AP correspondent, "Two things saved me. I have loved hunting all my life, and I always have been able to find my way home." (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Gordon G. Miller.)

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON*

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

COMMANDER EPHRAIM R. McLEAN, JR., UNITED STATES NAVY
for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of a U.S. warship in action against enemy forces in the Solomon Islands on July 4 and 5, 1943. When one of the ships of his task force was torpedoed during a bombardment of enemy positions off Kula Gulf, Commander McLean placed his ship alongside the sinking vessel and skillfully directed the extremely hazardous rescue operations, despite the close proximity of hostile submarines and shore bases. Although his ship was subjected to intense fire from enemy coastal batteries and illumination by flares to aid attacking Japanese bombers, Commander McLean courageously continued his rescue efforts until seventy-five percent of the personnel had been saved. As the torpedoed ship went down her depth charges exploded, resulting in damage to his ship. The brilliant leadership displayed by Commander McLean and the valiant devotion to duty of his command contributed materially to the success of our forces in this vital campaign and reflect great credit upon the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy.

* Typed from a draft citation approved on 15 October 1943 on file at the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
March, 1996

Prepared—November 23, 1943

Pers 328—gmc

Signed _____

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

LIEUTENANT HUGH BARR MILLER, JR., UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE

FOR Service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism while serving aboard the U.S.S. STRONG which was sunk in Kula Gulf, British Solomon Islands, July 4-5, 1943, and during a period of forty-three days thereafter. After assisting in abandon ship operations, Lieutenant Miller, while extricating two comrades entangled in a line on the ship's side, was forced with them beneath water by the pull of the sinking vessel. Although injured and dazed by several underwater explosions, he clung tenaciously to the two men, fought clear of the powerful suction, and continued to hold them above water until he could place them in a net. In charge of survivors grouped together on a floating net, he finally reached a small island dangerously near enemy positions. Unwilling to allow his weakened condition to retard the progress of his companions, Lieutenant Miller ordered them ahead, and, in spite of a lack of food and water, regained enough strength to wage a lone battle against enemy units with weapons retrieved from the bodies of dead Japanese. Menaced by constant fire from hostile scouting parties, he maintained himself for thirty-nine days, gathering valuable information concerning enemy positions until he was finally rescued by a friendly aircraft."

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy

copy to:
Pers 328
Pers 18
Pers 203
Public Relations, Navy Dept.

Ref: ComSoPacFor Ser 01684
 >120/43
MISC DDDL

Born: January 19, 1910 - Alabama
Home Address: Gainesville, Florida.
Next of Kin: Mrs. Frances N. Miller
 1925 8th Street
 Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
Cas. Status: Active duty.

JN

Espiritu Santo Island
August 24, 1943

From: Lieut. Hugh Barr Miller Jr. D-V (S), USNR.
To : Destroyers Representative, Kbon.

Subject: Report of Activities while Missing.

1. I am a survivor of the USS Strong. Because of the deaths of personnel which occurred in my presence which have not been reported, to get my story on record, and to account for my absence since July 4, 1943, I make this report.

2. When we were hit on the night of July 4th in Kula Gulf, all communications to my battle station, machine gun control officer, were cut off. I went down to the next deck to the bridge and reported that to the Captain and asked for orders. I was ordered to go amidships and take the damage control officer's report; this was done. I was then ordered to evacuate the fire control tower and all gun positions; this was done. When I reported to the Captain the third time, I was ordered to abandon ship. I went to the main deck, port side, forward by the superstructure and #2 gun, and there I stayed doing what I could to get the men over the side and on to the USS Chevalier. When the Chevalier was forced to pull away from us, a line which she had put on us broke and fouled along the side of our listing ship. Our ship began sinking very swiftly and Lieut. Commander Purdy, Executive Officer, came to the main deck where I was and ordered me to go over the side; he went over at that time himself and I have not seen him since. As I started to go over the side, I saw that this line, which had fouled along our side when the Chevalier pulled away, had pinned both legs of two of our men and they were utterly helpless to extricate themselves, whereupon I got down to them and cut them loose. This operation took so long that just as I cut them loose, the ship sank under our feet. I got the impression that as the ship sank it broke in two at the point where the torpedo had hit us. The suction took us down to a considerable depth and very nearly drowned all three of us and would have done so but for my Kapok life jacket and the assistance that it enabled me to give these two men. After we fought clear of the suction, one underwater explosion occurred in the direction of the after part of our ship. This first underwater explosion numbed me to the waist. Almost immediately thereafter, three explosions

Note: This report is included in the papers donated by the late Admiral Joseph H. Wellings to the Naval War College/Naval Historical Collection in Newport, Rhode Island.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 1996

occurred very close together; these knocked me unconscious. I know that every possible precaution always had been, and was that night, taken to prevent our depth charges from exploding in the event that our ship was ever sunk. It is my personal opinion that the safety forks were jarred out of the depth charges which exploded by the jar of the bombardment which our heavy guns had just finished. I could not have been unconscious for over a couple of minutes because when I came to, I was still holding up the heads of the two temporarily injured men. During the time that we had been fighting free of the suction, I had to release my pistol belt and all of the equipment I had on to get rid of that much weight because I had all I could do to assist these two men. Pretty soon, we drifted into a floater net with some men on it. One destroyer attempted to get a line to us, but it was traveling at such a speed that we were unable to hold on to or secure the line. Throughout the night we picked up other people, some injured, some not injured, and attempted to attract somebodys attention by calling. By daylight we had become a group of two floater nets and two broken rafts. For three days I suffered from the injuries I had received in the underwater explosions and the pressure against my diafram was such that my breathing was seriously restricted. That first day, I sent three officers ashore on one of the broken rafts with the only paddle we had to try to get assistance to us; our position was approximately in the middle of Kula Gulf. No assistance arrived. The next day I sent ashore, in a effort to get assistance, a group of four men on the other broken raft. This group included a man from E Division named McGee and a man from C Division named McKelduff. No assistance was gotten as a result of their efforts. However late that afternoon we could hear people calling us and I am sure that they could hear our answers, but the water was a bit rough and you can not stand on a floater net so we did not make connection with whoever this was prior to darkness. Several men died during this time from internal injuries. We had ample water, which we conserved carefully, and emergency rations. We drifted at the will of the tides and winds and at one time we almost drifted out of the north mouth of Kula Gulf. On the night of the 8th of July, what was left of us we had concentrated on one floater net and we were all asleep. I woke up and found that we were only a hundred yards from land. Everybody that could paddle or pull tried as best he could and we made land that night of the 8th of July. It is with regret that I cannot give the names of all the men who had died but I am certain of the death of Summers, a Yeoman, of Sisson, Officers Cook, of Alby, Metalsmith or Shipfitter, of Muller, Torpedoman. When we landed, the only ones left were myself, Lieut. (jg) A. E. Oberg, USN, and four men, Eddie Deering, D.J. Mullane, Lloyd Lawrence, and Frank Armbruster.

3. The land that we reached was only a very small island with no fresh water and only a few coconuts. The location of the island is just off the point of Arundel Island directly across the

mouth of Blackett Strait from Villa Plantation and directly across the mouth of Hathorn Sound from New Georgia Island. We rested and ate coconuts for two days. I was still unable, as a result of my injuries, to retain any solid food, but coconut juice nourished me. On the 10th of July, Lieut. (jg) Oberg died of his injuries. That day we cut down our net and placed Eddie Deering, who was very seriously injured, in the center with the remnants of our emergency rations and our two water beakers, one of which was empty, and started the half mile to the mainland of Arundel Island. I was of very little assistance and could only sit on the back of the net and kick. The fine work of Mullane and Lawrence with makeshift paddles on the front corners of the net and the extremely courageous and powerful swimming of Arnbruster pulling the net got us across after two hours of effort. When we landed on the northeast corner of Arundel Island, we found fresh water springs on the beach and a limited supply of coconuts. We also found an old Japanese lean-to and a old Japanese blanket. We made camp there for a few days, but concluded because of the closeness of Japanese patrols and scarcity of coconuts and the necessity for finding more food that we must move. Meantime, Eddie Deering died on the morning of July 13th. We moved south upon Arundel Island along the edge of Hathorn Sound that day. Our progress was extremely slow because of my inability to do no more than just get along with the help of a staff. Late that afternoon, after having covered about three miles, we made camp. Up until this time I had been passing clotted blood from my rectum. After that three mile hike, I passed over a quart of fresh blood from my rectum and would have fainted but for the fact that the men gave me water and assistance. I was so weak as a result of this that I was unable to stand or move. We stayed there the 14th of July and on the night of the 14th I made up my mind that if I could not go on the next morning that I would be impairing the chances of escape of these three men and that I would send them on without me. We could see a cultivated coconut plantation at the lower end of Hathorn Sound and we originally hoped to reach there and to find fruits and possibly friendly natives; we did not know that that coconut plantation was a Japanese infested position. The morning of the 15th I could not go on, so I made the men take what equipment we had and ordered them to leave me, which they did. Our equipment at that time consisted of only a sheath knife, a rain proof Parka, and several tins of emergency rations; I gave my shoes to one of the men who was barefooted. All I had left was two Japanese beer bottles of water, a broken pocket knife and the small inch and half blade which had been broken out of it, the Japanese blanket, and my staff. I was so uncomfortable that I didn't try to conserve this water and I exhausted my supply before the morning of the 16th of July; I thought I would be dead by then, but I rallied. The day of the 16th I had no water, but I became determined to live. Late in the afternoon of the 17th I was still without water and quite uncomfortable and I prayed for rain and in my prayers promised that if I could get rain I would get up and help myself. That night

there was a very heavy rain and I was able to catch enough water in one of the empty emergency tins to fill up my two beer bottles, to drink four tins, and then catch the tin full again. The morning of the 18th I drank that tin of water for breakfast and got up and put my two bottles of water in my pocket and got my Jap blanket over my arm and with the assistance of my staff, started back toward the north tip of Arundel Island to reach a spring which I remembered about a mile and a quarter from me. I could only move very slowly and it took me about a half day to cover two-thirds of the distance. At this point, I had to cross an open salt flat which was dry that time of the day at low tide. When I was in the middle of this salt flat, a Japanese Zero Fighter plane tried to strafe me. He missed me but one bullet splattered when it hit a rock about twenty feet away from me and two pieces of steel hit me. One lodged in my neck on the right-hand side and the other in my left wrist. I pulled the metal out of both wounds, found that they were very minor, and went on. Late that afternoon I found a spring and made camp there with plenty of fresh, very excellent water. The next day I got up and got a coconut and opened it by beating the husk off on a sharp coral rock and that day, which was the 19th of July, I was able to eat the meat of the coconut, which was the first solid food that I had been able to retain since the ship went down. From then on, there was plenty of fresh water and coconuts and my strength was on the upgrade. There were no Jap installations or permanently stationed personnel on that northeast corner of Arundel Island, however, they had almost daily or nightly patrols in that area which forced me to do quite a bit of dodging and to move my camp several times. On the 26th of July I made a permanent camp about a hundred yards in the jungles from my spring, which was on the beach, which camp I occupied for the remainder of my stay on Arundel Island. Out in front of my spring, there was a salt and coral rock flat about a hundred yards square which extended out to the edge of Hathorn Sound and which, at low tide, was dry. There were other salt flats like this opening into each other all along the edge of Hathorn Sound; small wooded patches, which became islands at high tide, were along the outer edge. The same day I made my permanent camp, I attracted the attention of a low flying American TBF plane. I had felt that my one chance of escape would have to be to attract the attention of an American plane and that they would send some kind of boat to get me. I knew where I was and that it would be too hazardous^{an} operation to rescue me, but I never lost hope for my eventual rescue. This plane circled a dozen times very low and looked me over very carefully, often being so close that I could see the plane crew so well that I could almost identify them if I saw them again. I don't know what they reported, but I never received any assistance from any report they ever made.

4. Every night the Japanese ran barges and small boats from Vila Plantation down Hathorn Sound right by me to the coconut plantation at the lower end of Hathorn Sound. These barges and boats carried reinforcements of men and supplies to the Japanese fighting on New Georgia Island. I had very carefully reconnoitered all the northeast corner of Arundel Island for a mile and a half back into


the jungles all the way from a mile below me up to the point opposite Vila Plantation, which is a distance of about five miles in length. Army and Marine Intelligence have been informed of all of this. The night of about the second or third of August, what I thought was a American PT boat, drifted very quietly down Hathorn Sound and hid against the mangrove trees in the upper corner of the salt flat opening in front of me along the bank of Hathorn Sound, by one of these little islands which I mentioned earlier. When the Japanese barges loaded with soldiers came by them, they cut these barges to pieces with their 50 caliber machine guns and did one fine job of killing Japs. Apparently not knowing whether there were any Japs behind them in the woods, as a precautionary measure, they sprayed the woods with a tommy gun. This tommy gun very nearly got me and kept me so in hiding that I was unable to get out to make any effort to reach them. When they went to leave, I tried to attract their attention, but I know you can't yell "Hey Marine" or "Hey Navy" because the Japs have done so much of that that when anybody hears it they shoot in that direction, so the only way I could hurriedly think of to identify myself was that I ran up a leaning tree, which I used for my lookout post, and sang the Marine hymn at the top of my voice. By that time they were so busy finishing off Japs with their pistols as they moved out to get back to Rice Anchorage that they could not hear me. Shortly after our boat left, Japanese boats came and picked up all the screaming, yelling Japanese survivors. The next morning I chanced detection by going out on the edge of Hathorn Sound and robbed a dead Jap of his shoes, socks, bayonet, grenade carrier, two hand grenades and five cans of horrible, Japanese tinned beef. This tinned beef was almost impossible to eat, but I ate it every other day for lunch and it undoubtedly added to my strength. A Japanese patrol came out that afternoon, probably looking for wounded. This patrol found where I had robbed this Japanese soldier, which they undoubtedly reported to their Headquarters at Vila Plantation. After they had left, I attracted the attention of a low flying TBF plane. This plane circled me several times, looked me over carefully and dropped a small package containing a compress bandage, a small bottle of iodine, and one chocolate ration D. This ration D was the only square meal I had in 43 days; it cannot be so highly recommended because it is highly concentrated and actually contained enough vitamins and food value to give me extra energy for two days. It is my opinion that a man can eat half of a ration D every other day to supplement a coconut diet and live almost indefinitely on a place like Arundel where he could find nothing edible except coconuts. The iodine very probably saved my life because any coral cut festers, any sore festers in the jungles and my feet in particular were getting in a pretty terrible condition and the iodine and Japanese shoes and socks are what kept me on my feet and moving around. No assistance to me in the way of rescue resulted from any report that this TBF plane may have made to anyone. The Japs, having determined that I was on Arundel Island as a result

the report of my robbing this dead Jap, sent a five man patrol after me the following night. I saw them coming in the moonlight in the woods and retreated in front of them for a hundred yards to my permanent camp. They did not hear or see me at any time. When it became evident that they were going to walk right into my camp, I decided to try out one of the two hand grenades that I had. When they were thirty yards from me in the position that I wanted them in, which was in a close group, which I knew that they had to be in to come between two groups of thorn bushes, I tossed this Jap hand grenade in the middle of them and killed all five. I retreated a mile back in the jungle, to a big Banyan tree that I had previously determined to fall back to under such circumstances, after I was sure that they were all dead. The next morning, I found that three of the men were little more than mince meat and that all their rifles had been wrecked. However from the other two, one of whom was an officer, I got letters, pay accounts, identification tags, pay stamps, personal photographs, insignia, six hand grenades, some new Jap uniforms, rain coats, pup tents, haversacks, bayonets, ammunition, five more small cans of meat and other Jap gear. I buried this party and planted plants over the level graves so that there is no way of ever finding them. I used the Jap uniforms for underclothes to replace my greasy underclothes and used the Jap soap to get the fuel oil off me which I had been unsuccessful in doing up to that time. All their gear was put in good use. Within the next three days, several other dead Japs drifted ashore and I robbed their bodies and increased my supply of Japanese personal effects and hand grenades; I never did get any fire arms. Every night, after this patrol came looking for me, the Japs established machine gun nests in those little groups of woods on the edge of Hathorn Sound to protect the movement of their supply boats and barges from such an occurrence as had transpired when the PT boat shot them up. All this information and all of my Japanese gear and Japanese personal effects and how they operated their boats at night to escape our "Black Cats" has been made available to Army, Marine, and Amphibious Force Intelligence. On three different nights between the 9th and 14th of August, I slipped a mile and a half up the beach and heaved long range hand grenades into Jap machine gun positions. I know from the blood and some equipment that I found the next day that I got some each time, but every night when the boats completed their run they picked up these machine gun crews, so I do not know how much damage I did on those three occasions. Almost every day there were patrols which I eluded. The last night I was there, the night of the 15th August, they were within thirty yards of me and had they come any closer, they would have gotten some more of their very good hand grenades, but they passed on by.

5. The morning of the 16th of August at around 8:30 or 9:00 o'clock, I heard a low flying plane, which I identified by sound as a TBF, and I rushed out on my salt flat and waved a Jap towel and attracted the attention of the pilot, 1st Lieut. James

R. Turner, USMCR. He circled me once, sized up the situation, flew to Munda and reported it to Major Vernon A. Peterson, USMCR, in the Marine Fighter Headquarters. Within an hour, although there were Jap planes in the air, Major Peterson reached me with his rescue expedition. This expedition was composed of Major Peterson, in Command, Major Goodwin R. Luck, USMCR, as pilot, Master Sgt. John J. Happer, USMCR, all of the 2nd Marine Air Wing, in a "Duck". In order to light in front of me, this little plane was forced to circle within at least two thousand yards of Vila Plantation, which they did, turned, and lit on the water in Hathorn Sound in front of me. Seeing that I was weak, Major Peterson did not allow me to risk the danger of the last 40 yards of water to the plane, but told me to wait until he could inflate the boat and come get me. They had killed their motor and put out the anchor from their plane. While Major Peterson was inflating the boat, I went back in to my camp and gathered up all the Jap gear which I thought might be of intelligence value as well as that part of it that I personally prized. I returned to the edge of the reef just as Major Peterson started toward me in the boat. When he reached me, I told him that this gear was important so he loaded it in the boat and took it to the plane, returned, got me, and returned to the plane. We then cranked up and I was flown to Munda field in time for lunch, where I was put in the very capable hands of Dr. Ward at Acorn 8 Hospital. I stayed at Munda for two days, making myself and my gear available to Army and Marine Intelligence, after which time, I was flown by Boat to Guadalcanal, where I got some American uniforms and some rest, and then was flown by Boat to Espiritu Santo.

6. In an effort to offer constructive criticism, I wish to mention some of the life raft and floater net equipment now provided by the Navy. I suggest that the containers that emergency rations are kept in, if possible, be made more sturdy. I further suggest that the screw top be provided with some sort of handle, because when coated with fuel oil, after having been sealed with paint, these containers are very hard to open with the screw tops they now have. I highly recommend that more tins of malted milk tablets be included in these containers because the malted milk tablets are not only nourishing but they can be eaten without water. I can not too strongly express myself on the subject of the remainder of the food in these emergency ration containers. The biscuits are nourishing and good and the meat is tasty, but the biscuits are so dry that not one bite of them can be swallowed without the assistance of water and the meat is so greasy that not one bite of it can be swallowed without the assistance of water and it is realized by everyone that the conservation of water is the most serious problem while adrift as a survivor. Certainly there must be some canned bread which is semi-moist, or some other foodstuffs, which could be eaten without the use of water. I cannot too highly commend the Army Chocolate ration D.


H.B. MILLER, JR.
Lieut., USNR.

Charleston, S.C., newspaper
November 1, 1943

Berkeley County Boy Tells Thrilling Adventure Tale

Moncks Corner, Oct. 31.—Special: Seaman First Class Robert Gregory, former Berkeley high school boy, who was aboard the U. S. S. Strong when she was torpedoed in the Kula gulf on July 5th and was on the list of the "missing" for nearly a month, is now safe and sound at his home at 135 Coming street, Charleston. Robert and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Gregory, spent a day recently with his sister, Mrs. Joseph Platt, and he and his brother, Carl, fished with Mr. Platt in the Santee-Cooper lake. "Bobbie" said that many a time in that lonely Pacific island he had wished to get right in the middle of this big cool Santee-Cooper lake and drink all the water he wanted.

"We got water", he said, "but it didn't look clean and it didn't taste good". One of the boys stepped in a low place and found that it was damp, so with their bare hands and two sheath knives, their only weapons, they dug holes deep enough and the water would collect in them like springs. "It rained nearly every night, though, and we caught what water we could in some 'spam' cans we had", he said.

Robert, who is only 17 years old, left school soon after his parents moved from Moncks Corner to Charleston, and joined the navy. This was early in 1942, and in the year and a half he has belonged to the navy he has seen plenty of action. He says that such things as sinking subs and shooting down planes aren't considered battles, and that he isn't supposed to tell that any way, but he is wearing four stars for four major battles, and says he supposes he may get one for the Kula gulf affair.

He first took part in the invasion of Africa at Casablanca. Then he was fighting in the battle of Guadalcanal. Another trip was made to the states transporting supplies and soldiers, and on Christmas Day they sailed again for the Pacific islands. Gregory arrived there in time to participate in the battles of Rendova island, New Georgia, and lastly the Kula gulf battle, where his ship was torpedoed on July 5th at 12:30 a. m.

"It was really July 4th back home", he said. "And anyway we had all the fireworks on the 4th."

"We had been instructed as to which side the land lay on and had been instructed to abandon ship on that side if we had to leave her. I didn't have anything to do with that, though", he added, "for when the explosion came I got knocked out and didn't know anything until I hit the water after somebody had thrown me overboard. Finally eleven of us got aboard a rubber raft, but one fellow was hit by an



J. GREGORY R. GREGORY

explosion of a depth charge and died a few minutes later, and we had to let him down. Another fellow, an electrician's mate second class, Langley, of Florida, had an arm and leg nearly blown off his body and we had to lift him like a baby wherever he went. Each of the rubber rafts is provided with a first aid kit, and that undoubtedly saved Langley's life until we got to safety.

Two and a Half Days on Raft

"We floated on the raft for two and a half days before we washed ashore, and although Langley kept begging us to kill him or throw him overboard and let him die, we tried to keep up his courage. We were all blind from the oil in the water, except First Class Seaman Richard Cody, of Los Angeles. Cody would tell us when he saw a plane coming and we would duck and lie as if we were dead to keep them from seeing us. We saw rafts of our comrades shot to death with machine guns, and could hear the Japs scream with laughter after they had got them. They turned searchlights on the water at night and I don't see how we escaped.

"When the raft did float ashore we found ourselves on a narrow deserted beach by a dense jungle, and we pushed through the jungle for about a hundred feet and there made a resting place for Langley and the rest of us. We soon found some boards on the beach and made a lean-to to protect ourselves from the rain. We found plenty of signs where the Japs had been. Among other things we found an aluminum can of high test gasoline that we used to wash the oil from our eyes and hair. It nearly took the hair off, too. There were several other gas cans, but they were in tin cans and had rusted and the gas had escaped.

"We found some Japanese canned food and cut it open, but it didn't suit us. It was white and looked like small sausages and smelled awful, and so we decided we'd rather just live on cocoanuts that we found in abundance. There were also plenty of papayas, but I didn't like those either, although some of the boys seemed to really enjoy them. We weren't worried so much about what we ate. We wanted to get off of there and get Langley to a doctor."

Poor Langley got worse all the time. None of us were medical men, although we had all had a little first aid. The flesh was simply hanging from the wound on Langley's arm and we had to take the sharp sheath knife and cut it off. Later gangrene set in and we were compelled to amputate the whole hand. By the time we finally did get him to a hospital he had gangrene in his leg, too, but so far as I know he is still alive and recovering."

Ten Days on Island

The boys later learned that the island on which they were stranded was Kalambajora, 22 miles from New Georgia. Their stay of 10 days was filled with scenes and experiences of horror. They took turns going down to the beach to look for supplies that might wash ashore. They found a sea bag with three pairs of shoes in it, and as they had all had to discard their shoes when they abandoned ship, they took turns wearing the shoes. Whoever went on scouting trips on the beach wore them. Hence only three went at once. Gregory and two others usually did the scouting as they seemed to be stronger than the others.

"These trips were no pleasure jaunts. They came upon the bodies of their comrades as they floated ashore, but could not recognize them. The only thing that could identify them was the uniform. They found the torsos of two American marines that had been mutilated by the Japs. One body lay on the beach with head, hands, and feet cut off; the other could be seen in the shallow water as the tide went down, and had apparently been mutilated in the same way. One day Gregory came upon the body of a naval officer. He could not recognize him, but he ran his hands in his pockets and found his pocket book with his identification card and driver's license and \$9.00 in money. He learned then that the officer was Lieutenant F. W. Purdy, of Boston, the commanding officer of the "Strong". He carried the pocket-book along with him and later turned it over to a chaplain, where it served to determine the fate of Commander Purdy, whose family were then notified of his death.

One day a kit of American K. S. rations washed ashore. In it were 22 cigarets, a can of chopped ham and eggs and a can of chopped pork loin.

"We had the ham and eggs for breakfast, and the pork loin for dinner," he said. "There were only eight of us then, for two had been lost."

"We knew there were plenty of Japs on the island," Gregory said, "and we could hear constant firing. Some of the boys wanted to go and give up because they saw no chance to get away. Two of the fellows, George E. Hege, of Whitesville, N. C., and W. F. Ginner, of Colorado, made up their minds that they would try to go around the island and see if they could discover any means of escape. Hege had a wife and three children back in North Carolina. They said that if they could get away they would bring help back for us. We that were left looked and waited for them, but they never came back. We never heard from them and we believe they fell into the hands of the Japs."

The boys left behind got more and more restless, as they saw Langley get worse and worse and realized that they were getting weaker themselves, eating only cocoanuts and drinking foul water. Five of the boys, including Langley, said it would be better to go and give themselves up to the Japs and take a chance on being taken prisoner and cared for in some fashion. Gregory and the two other boys who did most of the scouting said they would rather die in the jungle than give themselves up to the Japs and insisted on waiting. They continued to search further and further down the beach to find some means of escape. One day they went further than usual. Gregory did not have any shoes this day, and his feet were sore so he sat down to wait while the others went on. They were gone quite a while and then he saw them hurrying down the beach. They had found a rubber surf boat and had pulled it ashore and hidden it in the jungle.

Escape in Boat

When they got back it was about midday and they talked it over and decided to wait another day on Hege and Ginner. They went to bed now knowing that in a few hours they would leave their jungle abode. When evening came the next day, and still no news had come from Hege and Ginner, they lifted Langley in their arms and carried him to the boat. Under cover of the night they slipped out across the Gulf of Kula and before morning were in a deserted village on New Georgia, which they learned later was a distance of 22 miles.

The boys were sitting on the ground eating coconuts when a native appeared in the foreground running towards them with his arms waving in true "Friday" fashion. They were so happy to see another human being that they all ran to meet him, that is all but Langley. The native proved to be the former chief of the village. He could speak fairly good English and told them how the Japs had driven his people from their village, had raped and mutilated his women and killed his men. He hated the Japs, and would die before he would betray the Americans to them, he said. He explained that he was now an American scout, and he and his partner, whom he had left to guard their small boat had come to spy and see if there were any Japs around. He gave the boys cigarets and promised to send help to them on the following day.

"Americans fine people" continued the old man. "We welcome Americans on our island".

That night about midnight the boys were awakened by someone calling "Master! Master" and as some of them ran out to meet the visitor they were accosted by a small group of natives, who explained in their very feeble English that they had been sent by the old chief to carry them to safety.

It was not long before they were in the American camp, where the astonished officer at first refused to believe their story. But when they had identified themselves beyond doubt as survivors of the Strong, and turned in Colonel Purdy's pocketbook they were sent by a P. V. Y. plane to the camp at Guadalcanal where Langley was given hospital treatment. They all had a five day rest in a rest camp, and time to write home to their wives, mothers and sweethearts.

Robert has an older brother who is also in the navy, John Gregory, enlisted in the service in April 1942, and is now a second class aviation machinist's mate. The third brother is Carl Gregory, of Moncks Corner.

CREW WELCOMED SINKING BY JAPS; IT BROKE SPELL!

Destroyer's Tension Told by Survivor.

When the U. S. destroyer Strong was sunk by torpedoes in the battle of Kula gulf on July 5, it was almost a relief to members of the crew because it broke the tension of six months of fighting without any of the crew or the ship itself being hit by an enemy projectile, a survivor who was knocked out in the blast said yesterday.

The survivor, Arthur W. English, 19, shipfitter first class, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas English of Barrington, said the two torpedoes that hit the Strong almost simultaneously were the only missiles ever to reach the ship between January, when it reached the Solomons, and the time it was sunk.

Zeros Were Their Meat.

Many members of the crew, he said, showed their bravery time after time in actions which included several engagements in the Solomons as well as at least two off New Guinea. The ship, usually accompanied by other destroyers but sometimes a part of a task force which included larger vessels, had been under fire from the sea as well as the air.

It took part in the Solomons battle in which 96 Japanese planes were shot down. The Strong was a powerful anti-aircraft unit, and its gunners were skilled in picking off Zeros, young English said.

"We all seemed to lead a charmed life," he said, "and the ship itself always came out without a mark on her. Altho we knew we were good as a crew, we also were certain that Lady Luck had taken a hand in our game. No crew could be that good.

Always Asking, "Is This It?"

"As a consequence, it got so that every time we were under fire we got to wondering if this would be it. Altho no one ever said anything until after a battle, we could feel the tension of wondering whether our luck would run out this time. It made us better fighters, tho.

"Then it happened. We hardly had got warmed up in the opening phase of the scrap before the tin fish plowed right into a place where it counted most. I had on a helmet and a Mae West [jacket], which saved my life. I was thrown to the deck on my head, and was out for quite a while.

"We could feel the long built up tension breaking. Discipline was perfect. Nearly every one who hadn't been killed by the explosion got away, and we were fished out of the water in a few minutes by another destroyer."

Robert R. McGee, F1c and
Sigmund F. Butler, RdM2c

2 Castaway Sailors, Flyer Rescued From Raft at Sea

ALLIED HEADQUARTERS, South Pacific Forces, July 27—(Delayed)—(U.P.)—Two castaway sailors from the destroyer Strong and an Army flyer lost in the New Georgia jungles were rescued from a rubber life raft by a party of marines from Enogai Inlet, former Japanese base near Munda Field, a report from an advanced base disclosed today.

The sailors are Robert R. McGee, 22, fireman 1st class, of Benicia, Cal., and Sigmund F. Butler, radio-man 2d class, Whiteville, N. C. They were castaways 11 days after the Strong was sunk. The flyer is Lieut. Edward B. Whitman Jr., 25, Green Spring Valley, Garrison, Md., who was lost four days after his plane was shot down.

McGee and Butler told their rescuers they were aboard the raft for four days following the sinking of the Strong, July 5. They reached shore and wandered through jungles for several days. Occasionally they got uncomfortably close to Japanese outposts.

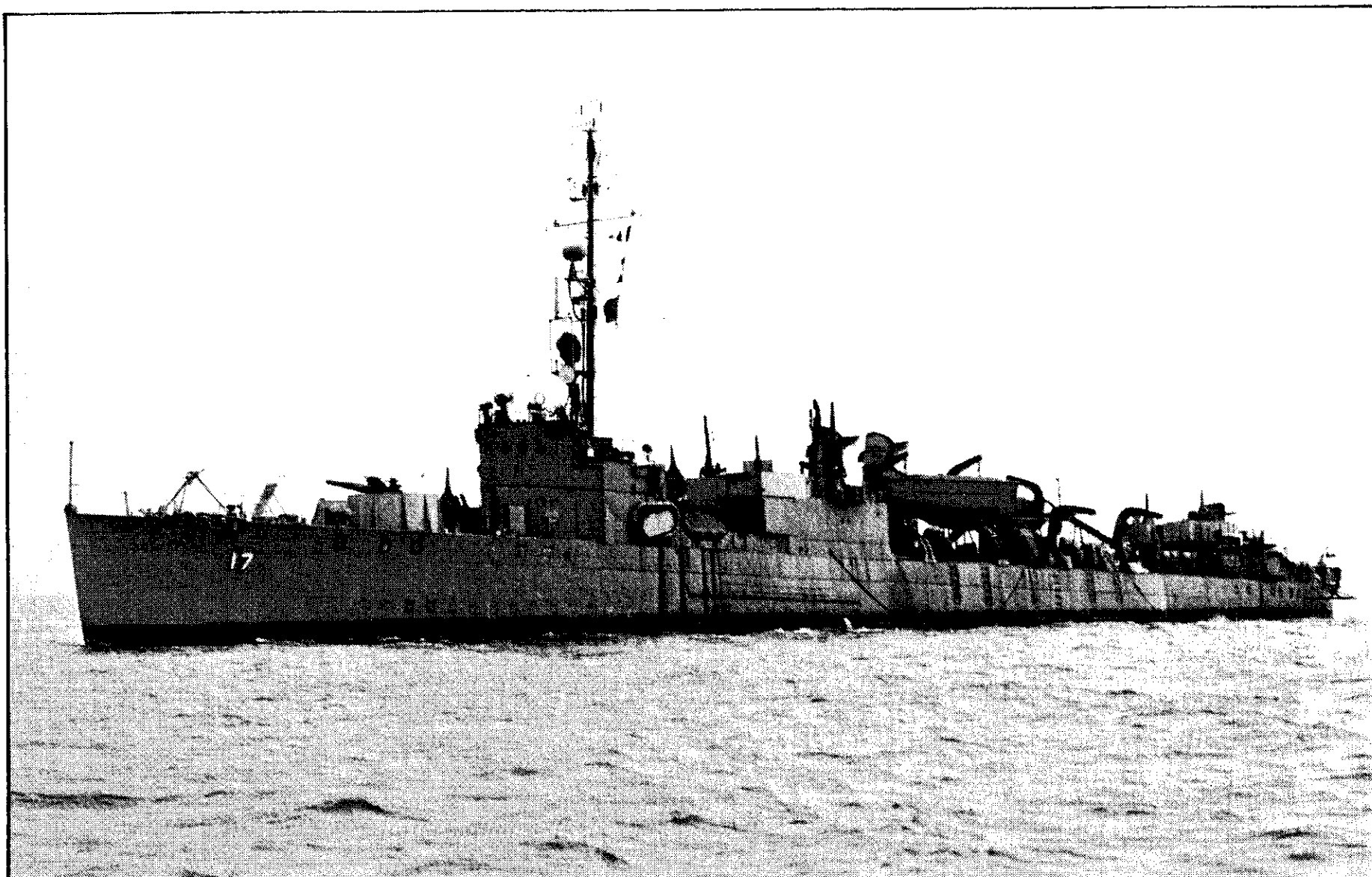
"Several days later," McGee said, "we heard someone call softly, 'Hey, you Americans!' We looked up and discovered a man making his way toward us."

It was Whitman, whose P-39 Airacobra had been shot down over New Georgia, July 11, after he bagged one Zero. He bailed out and landed in a tree, breaking an arm.

He said he heard someone speaking English as he crawled through the jungle. He inched forward and found the sailors.

After several days of wandering the three men decided to try their luck on the raft along the shore and within a few hours they were spotted by a marine stationed at an observation post at Enogai Inlet.

Whitman said Butler set his broken arm with an improvised splint and medical corps doctors said the sailor had done "an excellent job."



The destroyer transport U.S.S. Crosby (APD-17) took five Strong survivors (including the ship's Torpedo Officer, LT(jg) O. M. Hackett) from the small U.S. beachhead at Rice Anchorage, New Georgia Island, to Tulagi on 13 July 1943, eight days after their ship was sunk in Kula Gulf. This World War I "four-piper" lost two of her boilers when she was converted to a transport, but she gained powered davits and four 36-ft. Higgins boats to put ashore her landing force of about 150 Marines. She was armed with three 4-inch single-purpose deck guns, 20-mm. antiaircraft machine cannons and depth charges. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

The U.S.S. **Strong** (DD-467) Is Sunk

Recollections by Milton Hackett*

Many years have passed since the sinking of the USS **Strong** (DD-467) in the early hours of July 5, 1943, in Kula Gulf. Until recently this event was put behind me, and my recollections of some details are hazy. Now it seems desirable that my children have an account of a truly critical event in my life. For the record, this is the way I recall it.

By way of preface, the **Strong** had entered Kula Gulf on the night of the fourth of July as part of a task force covering the landing of Marines at Rice Anchorage on New Georgia Island, with the added mission of preventing Japanese reinforcements from landing across the Gulf on Kolombangara Island. Just after midnight the task force bombarded targets first on Kolombangara then on New Georgia. Shortly afterward, at 1240, the task force changed course, standing to the north to withdraw from Kula Gulf. Almost immediately the **Strong**, which was the second ship in line, was struck by a torpedo on the port side amidships. This was a dismally black night, made even more dismal by occasional rain squalls.

My station as Torpedo Officer was at the torpedo director on the after part of the bridge, and I was at the starboard torpedo director when the torpedo struck. Shortly thereafter I was sent aft to gather information on the damage and I did so, proceeding all the way to the fantail. It was clear that the two forward engineering spaces were flooded immediately and that the after two soon would be. There were a few men in the water off the fantail, but after the initial moment of panic discipline was excellent. The ship had a starboard list, and the deck was holed in the vicinity of the forward fireroom.

After returning to the bridge and reporting, I was sent forward to help make preparations to take a tow. About then the USS **Chevalier** (DD-451) came alongside to port, ramming the **Strong** in the dark and increasing the starboard list. Up forward there was momentary confusion, and some of the men were preparing to go over the side. I restored order by threatening to shoot anyone who tried to do so without the order to abandon ship. (I was not carrying a gun, but in the darkness this was not evident.) I think it likely that these men, who would have been in great jeopardy had they gone over the side, soon escaped safely to the **Chevalier**. We took a line from the **Chevalier** and tried to secure it around a 5-inch gun mount. About this time Don Regan came forward, and shortly afterward we were joined by the Executive Officer, Fred Purdy, who relayed the order from the Captain to abandon ship.

Purdy, Regan, Jack Howard and I then tended the forward lines while the men on the forecastle crossed with the help of these lines to the **Chevalier**. Before this operation was completed the **Chevalier** pulled away - Regan flying off into the darkness still holding his line. Purdy, Howard and I were left together on the port side of the forward superstructure deck clinging to the lifeline against the list of the ship. We had no idea that the ship was then on its way down and optimistically hoped that the **Chevalier** would return. There were others left aboard - I have no idea how many. An injured man was moaning on the main deck near us, and Purdy went down the ladder next to us, hoping to help him up to where we were. He had just reached the main deck when Howard, to my left,

* Written by Cdr. O. Milton Hackett, USNR (Ret.), around 1986, before a mini-reunion of some of the officers at Newport, R.I., in 1987. LTj.g. Hackett was the ship's Torpedo Officer and Assistant Gunnery Officer in 1943. I have re-typed his narrative, complete, with very minor editing.

said, "Here she goes - jump." No jump was needed - the ship sank under us. I did not see Purdy or Howard again.

I was submerged, fighting the ship's suction and holding my breath to the limit of my capability. Breaking the water's surface, my arm came down over an empty powder can tied into a float net to give it extra buoyancy, and I hoisted myself partly out of the water. At this time there was an underwater explosion, perhaps from detonating depth charges, which left me shaken but otherwise uninjured. It may be that heavy-weather gear, pants tied closed at the ankles, saved me from the deadly salt water enema, which often is a consequence of underwater explosions at sea. To the best of my recollection there was one other person on the float net when I crawled aboard.

I whistled (many of us carried whistles for this purpose). Seemingly in response, a ship standing off in the darkness - either the **Chevalier** or the **O'Bannon** (DD-450) - came toward us, raising hopes of rescue, but she was under way to leave the scene, and of course the people aboard could not see us by the dark of night and in the black oil-covered water. She passed us to port at high speed so closely that the net was flipped up, but miraculously we were not run down. Further whistling was soon ceased when gunfire appeared to be directed toward us from the beach.

For a while the place was a bedlam. To add to the noise and flashes from gunfire, a Japanese plane dropped flares and bombs, and from the deep the **Strong** herself gave occasional moans of agony as she broke up.

There seemed to be people in the water at all quarters calling and crying out. In the next half hour or so some of those nearby were gathered on the float net, including Lt. Hugh Barr Miller. He was drifting about, badly injured, in a kapok life jacket. I pulled him aboard the net and gave him morphine. To the best of my recollection there were finally six of us on this float net - all except myself seemingly badly injured. Survivors were gathered on other float nets and rafts, and with considerable difficulty - float nets were basically unmaneuverable - we joined forces with people on another net and on a broken raft. Here also came my roommate, Jack Fulham, pushing a board carrying the ship's cook, Sisson, who had a broken leg, and accompanied by two other men. Although we did not know it then, other nets and rafts carrying survivors were in the vicinity. The number of these is unknown, but Cdr. Wellings, the ship's captain, was aboard one of them, and another carried men whom I believe were later shot by the Japanese. I estimate that men in my company numbered twenty to twenty-two. Of these, all but five were injured. I was the senior uninjured officer in the group and assumed command. Miller, who was senior to me, was so badly injured as to be out of the decision-making line.

It seemed evident to me that many if not most of the group would not live without medical attention, only available from the landing force and covering ships at Rice Anchorage. And it seemed imperative to try to reach the Rice Anchorage area before the APD's (destroyer transports) and covering destroyers departed; or failing that, to reach land at or near Rice Anchorage and secure help from the troops there. Accordingly, probably between 0300 and 0400, I ordered all able-bodied men capable of wielding a paddle to join me on the raft for the attempt to reach help. These included three seamen: Salter, Eudy and Bird; a petty officer, Shepard; and LTj.g. Jack Fulham, who though burned about the ankles could handle a paddle - six of us in all.

From the briefing for the night's action we understood that if something should happen to the ship, survivors if not picked up should aim for the coast of New Georgia as far toward the mouth as possible - that is, generally toward Rice Anchorage and definitely away from the Japanese base at Enogai Inlet. In

retrospect there was no way we could reach the ships of the landing force, which had to depart before dawn to be reasonably out of reach of Japanese land-based planes. With only two paddles which we rotated among us, progress on our nearly submerged raft was agonizingly slow.

Shortly, probably within the hour after leaving the float nets (I estimate we had gone less than a half mile, but far enough to have lost sight of the nets in the black of night and from our low vantage point on the water), we heard the noise of an approaching power boat. Hopes for rescue were dimmed when we realized that the boat was approaching from the Kolombangara side of the Gulf. Accordingly, we submerged our bodies alongside the raft and waited. It became clear that this boat was Japanese when it opened fire in what seemed to be the vicinity of our float nets. We also heard voices, though unintelligible, from the direction of the boat. At that time we were sure that our comrades had been shot, and we expected to be next. Inexplicably, the boat circled and then went back in the direction from which it came; we heard no further shots. We did not find out until weeks later that our nets had escaped unseen and that likely another net or raft in the vicinity had been shot up.

We continued toward shore but made little progress - current and wind were against us, and we were exhausted and discouraged. Then, the hand of God intervened. As dawn broke we saw a small object floating on the water and made our way to it. It was an aviator's life raft, too small to be useful but with a set of paddles. With four paddles we made some headway, but so slowly that we were in doubt as to making landfall in the direction we had chosen.

Again, probably about the middle of the morning we saw an object in the water ahead. This turned out to be a rubber landing raft of the type towed behind power boats to ferry troops and supplies ashore. Apparently it had been set adrift during the landing operation at Rice Anchorage. It had ample room for us, an upswung bow and oars. From this point on we made visible progress. Filled with apprehension we approached the beach, landing there about the middle of the afternoon, with no enemy or friend showing.

We were nearly done in, covered with oil from the fuel tanks of the sunken **Strong**, hungry, and most of all in need of water. Near the point of landing was a small shelter, which we surmised served the natives while fishing. Here we rested and opened some coconuts for their milk. This was done with my small sheath knife, hardly suitable for cutting through their tough husks.

It seemed necessary to get away from exposure along the beach, so after resting we went on up a narrow trail leading inland. We had gone perhaps a quarter to a half mile when the man at the head of the column came back with the word that he had seen knapsacks, which he took to be Japanese, hanging from a branch along the trail ahead of us. His conclusion seemed reasonable - we had seen no signs of a landing by Americans along the beach where we came ashore. Reluctantly we retreated to the beach, where we decided to remain until after dark and then move along the coast, hoping to bypass the Japanese. We were convinced that Rice Anchorage was in the direction of the mouth of the Gulf, and this conviction was reinforced after nightfall when we heard the sound of boats from that direction.

That night it rained and turned cold. We huddled for warmth in the beach shelter, planning to nap until it was time to push on. The nap turned into a full night's sleep, and we woke well after the dawn of a new day. Unknown to us and not far away, our old task force had engaged the Japanese in the Battle of Kula Gulf, and the cruiser **Helena** (CL-50) had been sunk.

The new day found us somewhat rested and in better shape to plan the next move, after first laboriously cleaning congealed oil from our eyelashes so our

eyes could be opened. Our opportunity to move along the beach under cover of darkness was gone until nightfall, but we felt we could not remain where we were. Our best bet seemed to be the trail inland, hoping that the knapsacks of the afternoon before were unreal, or that if the Japanese were there they might have moved on. If we found signs of their presence we would scatter into the jungle to wait out the day.

Fortune smiled; we found no trace of Japanese gear, and moving along the trail we came to a native village. Reconnaissance showed this to be abandoned, and it seemed to be a suitable shelter for the day. We quartered at the largest hut, which proved later to have housed the Methodist mission. The only trace of life was a flock of chickens. By this time we were ravenous, and the chickens were tempting prey. We let them be, from fear of alienating the natives should they show up, but the eggs were fair game and along with more coconuts provided us with some nourishment.

We were a motley crew, covered and black with oil, which we had no way of removing. By that time, in the heat of the day, I had shed my oil-soaked rain suit and underwear and was as bare as the day I was born except for shoes. Jack Fulham's burned ankles were bothering him, but otherwise we were in good shape except for the nuisance of the oil.

As evening approached we decided to nap until it was dark enough to proceed with our plan to move up the coast. Then came a replay of the night before; we woke up to another day. Again the plan to move up under cover of darkness had to be postponed until a new nightfall. Meanwhile it seemed prudent to remain in the village.

Intermittently we napped and foraged for eggs. Then, I think it was about noon, one of the men who had been foraging for eggs came running back to our hut with the word, "They're here!" "They" proved to be three natives armed with machetes. My first words to them, with palms upturned ala stories of friendly greetings by early settlers to American Indians, were, "We Americans, we friends." The reply, in English - to our surprise - was, "You swear you American?"

The natives were from another village and had been sent by an Australian coastwatcher named Corrigan to help the American forces at Rice Anchorage. En-route they were to watch for and assist if found, some American aviators who were reportedly lost near the coast; presumably we were the aviators. Their leader was the headman's son, Lecura (sp?) by name (pronounced Lay-koo-ra). He was a Christian, as a result of mission work by Seventh Day Adventists from New Zealand, and had learned to speak English at the mission school at Tulagi.

Japanese were in the vicinity, Lecura said, and we should remain in the village while his men went to Rice Anchorage to report our presence and get help. He stayed with us, and that evening we had a sumptuous meal of boiled bananas and some kind of bread plant, plus "popos" (papayas, I guess). Also, for the first time we had enough to drink, as Lecura's machete neatly sliced the tops off green coconuts, husks and all. Only milk from the green coconut was fit to drink, he explained. Milk from ripe coconuts was likely to cause dysentery. He outfitted me in his spare shirt. From him we learned that our hut had been the headquarters of a Methodist mission from Australia. And so we spent our third night on the island and our second at the village.

The next morning Lecura's men came back. At Rice Anchorage they had been instructed to bring us in. They proposed to do this by way of the Gulf, as the chance of encountering Japanese and being recognized as Americans would be smaller on the water than in the jungle. We would go by way of "monoxelan" (sp?), which turned out to be a large dugout canoe, cached near the mouth of a small stream.

Off we went, staying some distance from the coast and, to our surprise, heading further into the Gulf in the opposite direction from that which had been our goal. We saw and heard an occasional plane, but if we were seen, evidently natives in a dugout, were not of interest. Our oil-soaked skins must have made us appear like anything but Caucasians, because when we approached Rice Anchorage we heard from concealment, "Let the bastards get a little closer." Of course we hastened to identify ourselves.

Only a small force of Americans remained at Rice Anchorage. The landing had been unopposed, and most of the marine raider battalion (First Marine Raiders?), under Col. Harry Liversedge, had gone inland. Left behind with most of the supplies were a headquarters company and a heavy weapons company (I think these were national guard troops operating with the First Raiders), under Lt. Col. Freer, a national guard officer from Ohio. With them were about eighty Navy boat personnel who, along with their Higgins boats used for the landing operation, were left behind by the APD's when they had to depart.

This force was isolated and incommunicado. It was presumed to be in dire straits and expected to come under Japanese attack at any time. All radio gear, loaded on a single landing raft, had been lost when this raft was swamped during the landing operation. (With the possible exception of one set taken with Liversedge.) There had been no word back from Liversedge. That the Japanese were aware of the Americans was evidenced by occasional "Pee call Charlie" bomb drops each night. Fortunately they had mistaken the location of a few lost boats as the point of the main landing and had given it most of their attention. These boats were those whose motors we had heard during our first night on the beach, when under cover of darkness they were making their way to Rice Anchorage.

We were welcomed warmly and regardless of the dismal outlook were overjoyed at being with our own troops. First order of business was, with the aid of soap, to get rid of our oil cover. Then we were given spare clothing (mine was a camouflage suit and jungle boots) and a supply of "C" rations.

Under the circumstances, the Colonel said, there was no way his troops could give attention to searching for other survivors of the **Strong**. He did assure me that he would have the word spread to the coastwatchers and natives to be on the lookout.

As to our immediate future, there was no way to return us to the Navy. We were now a part of Col. Freer's command and would have to share whatever befell at Rice Anchorage. I was senior naval officer in camp and as such was assigned command of eighty or so naval personnel and their two dozen or so Higgins boats armed with machine guns. The Colonel's main concern seemed to be that trigger-happy sailors, untrained for battle ashore, be restrained from firing without orders - the only casualty thus far was a sailor wounded by a companion firing at a strange noise in the dark.

The rest of the day and the next two were spent in watchfully waiting. The Higgins boats had been pulled into an inlet out of sight of the beach, and the troops were encamped on a hill next to the inlet. All hands dug foxholes, which were occupied whenever the Japanese nuisance plane came over. Anticipating an attack, the Colonel had these placed so as to form a perimeter defense, protecting the summit of the hill and anchored at the inlet by the Higgins boats with machine guns.

About noon on our fourth day at Rice Anchorage word finally came back from Col. Liversedge. His troops were desperately low on supplies. They had taken Enogai Inlet and some of the Higgins boats were to be loaded and sent there. Air cover would be provided beginning at noon.

It was already too late to meet the proposed schedule, but it was decided to

proceed anyhow. Several of the Higgins boats were loaded with supplies and led by Lt(jg) Smith, the senior boat officer, shoved off in early afternoon (I think about 1430). The tide was low and these boats ran aground on the bar near the mouth of the inlet. Japanese planes attacked, but fortunately the promised air cover was still there and they were driven off. All personnel were ferried back safely. Later that afternoon the channel was marked, and at high tide the boats were floated and Smith and his charges went on their way to Enogai Inlet.

Then, just before dusk, while visual identification could be made, a Black Cat (PBY Catalina Flying Boat) came in, landing just off the beach. It was to pick up wounded, reportedly from heavy fighting at Rice Anchorage. The crew was assured that no battle had taken place, and off they went. With them went Jack Fulham, whose ankle burns had become serious.

That night the Colonel expected the worst. The actions of the day had dramatized our presence to the Japanese, and an attack seemed certain. His plan was to stand our ground as long as possible, then fight our way to try to rejoin the troops with Liversedge. For this, one company was to take the van, the other the rear, with the naval contingent between them.

Shortly before dawn the noise of approaching boats seemed to herald the attack. We were to hold fire until the boats reached the beach. Then to our great relief signal lights flashed toward shore, identifying the boats as American. Standing offshore were APD's carrying a new load of supplies and expecting to pick up their men and Higgins boats.

The sojourn of the **Strong** survivors at Rice Anchorage was ended. We were sent aboard the destroyer transport USS **Crosby** (APD-17), under the command of Lt. Cdr. Grant from Seattle, and a short time later I was drinking coffee in the wardroom.

The **Crosby** delivered us to Tulagi, where we stayed overnight. Jack Fulham had already gone on. The next night was spent at Guadalcanal, and the following day we were flown to Noumea, New Caledonia, where we joined the **Strong** contingent. It was July 15th - eleven days since the **Strong** had set out for her last fight.

U.S.S. Strong (DD-467)

List of Officers, 5 July 1943¹

* <u>Wellings</u> , Joseph Harold	Cdr.	USN	Commanding Officer
** <u>Purdy</u> , Frederick Warren	LCdr.	USN	Executive Officer
* <u>Curran</u> , James Albert	Lt.	USN	Gunnery Officer
** <u>Downer</u> , Delavan Bloodgood	Lt.	USNR	Engineering Officer
* <u>Miller</u> , Hugh Barr, Jr.	Lt.	USNR	Machine Gun Officer
* <u>Regan</u> , Donald Arthur	Lt.	USNR	First Lieutenant
** <u>Jetton</u> , Benjamin Frazier	Ltjg.	USNR	Communications Officer
<u>Hackett</u> , Orivall Milton	Ltjg.	USNR	Torpedo Officer
** <u>Oberg</u> , Albert Edward	Ltjg.	USN	Ass't. Gunnery Officer
* <u>Trost</u> , Ralph Edward	Ltjg.	USNR	Ass't. Engineering
* <u>Fulham</u> , John N., Jr.	Ltjg.	USNR	Damage Control Officer
<u>Grimes</u> , Alton Barger	Ltjg.	USN	Radar/Sonar Officer
<u>Wheeler</u> , Virgil Maxey, Jr.	Ltjg.	USN	Ass't Gunnery Officer
** <u>Hedrick</u> , William G., Jr.	Ens.	USNR	Ass't. Communications
<u>Drath</u> , Jack Junior	Ens.	USNR	(Newly assigned)
<u>Naphan</u> , Alfred Robert	Ens.	USNR	Ass't. Torpedo Officer
** <u>Howard</u> , Jack B.	Ens.	USNR	Ass't. Communications
* <u>Sherlie</u> , Keith Norman	Ltjg. (SC)	USNR	Supply Officer
<u>Horne</u> , Albert Merrill	Ltjg. (MC)	USNR	Medical Officer

* * * * *

¹ Compiled from the Ship's casualty and action reports and with the assistance of Commander Hackett's excellent memory.

* Wounded (** Killed) when the Strong was sunk by an enemy torpedo in the Kula Gulf, New Georgia Group, Solomon Islands, on 5 July 1943. Casualties were obtained from a computer-generated casualty report, prepared after the war, at the National Archives.

U.S.S. Strong (DD-467)

Muster Roll of the Crew, July 5, 1943

ADAIR, Joseph James	625-61-68	MA3c	USN
**ALBY, Frank John	291-58-43	Msmth2	USN
ALLISON, Robert Francis	210-81-52	CMM	USN
**ANDEREGG, William A.	223-24-17	MM1c	USN
ANDERSON, Lester Warner	620-09-56	EM1c	USNR
ANDERSON, Thomas William	634-11-28	GM3c	USNR
ANDREWS, Delbert Lee	658-56-93	F2c	USNR
*ARMBRUSTER, Francis H.	551-82-72	F1c	USNR
AVERY, James Lee	656-52-88	S1c	USNR
BALLENGER, Garold H.	604-86-14	S2c	USNR
BANACH, Theodore Stanley	299-74-75	CY	USN
BANNER, Max (n)	646-35-24	RT2c	USNR
BARBER, Norman Harry	234-28-48	BM2c	USN
BARNWELL, St. Julien M., Jr.	552-13-93	S1c	USNR
BARRETT, Irvin (n)	299-75-22	CRM	USN
*BARTENBACH, Robert John	646-59-51	GM3c	USNR
BEAGLES, Eugene Stanley	337-34-23	GM3c	USN
*BENTLEY, Robert Merwin	381-34-67	MM2c	USN
BEYER, Roy Alvin	654-38-86	MM2c	USNR
BILL, Lewis Edward	551-82-58	S1c	USNR
BIRD, Ephraim Lester	552-84-95	S1c	USN
BOHATEC, John "V"	658-56-29	GM3c	USNR
BOSWELL, John Elwood	658-56-38	F2c	USNR
BOWEN, Victor (n)	287-72-62	Cox	USN
*BRAKEFIELD, Samuel Coy	552-85-44	RdM3c	USNR
BREEDLOVE, Lloyd Everett	356-47-10	GM1c	USN
BRITTON, David S.	552-52-12	S2c	USN
BRITTON, Junior Everett	552-52-16	S1c	USNR
BROWN, Gordon Harry	279-78-41	Cox	USN
BROWN, Walter Fouree	656-53-21	Cox	USNR
BUICY, John (n)	228-12-39	CMM	USN
BURRUS, Douglas Eugene	656-53-19	S1c	USNR
BURTON, Ralph Monford	266-19-72	Cox	USN
BUTLER, Sigmond Francis	656-53-50	RdM2c	USNR
BYER, Leigh Henry	562-98-60	S2c	USNR
BYRD, Arthur Martin, Jr.	552-14-63	F2c	USN
BYRUM, Joseph Carroll, Jr.	658-34-67	Cox	USNR
CALHOUN, Walter Lee	274-63-18	OC3c	USN
CAPAZZI, Peter (n)	552-85-32	S1c	USNR
*CARPENTER, Norman Britt	633-40-80	S1c	USNR
CARTER, John Turner	266-63-41	S1c	USN
CASELMAN, Clarence C.	372-16-87	S1c	USN
*CHAPMAN, Frank William	623-24-34	F2c	USNR
CHIPPS, Howard Olin	552-85-46	GM3c	USNR
CHRISTIE, Julian Paine	551-81-93	EM3c	USNR

CICHANOWICZ, Raymond Paul	608-33-06	SoM3c	USNR
CLAUSEN, Alvin Charles	328-56-90	RM2c	USN
CLIFTON, Erastus Clemons	268-21-77	WT1c	USN
*CLIFTON, James Benjamin	551-81-53	S1c	USNR
CLINE, Bert Lewis	300-96-81	S1c	USN
*CLINE, George Clinton	263-59-07	F1c	USN
COBLE, James Chapman	552-14-74	S1c	USNR
CODY, Richard H.	382-36-48	S2c	USNR
COLBERN, Chesley Burgess	272-41-75	MM1c	USN
COLE, Arthur Everette	656-52-80	S1c	USNR
COLEMAN, Herman Leland	551-82-07	S1c	USN
*COOK, James Clark	665-29-49	S1c	USN
COOK, Kenneth F.	385-52-70	CEM	USN
CORDLE, Jason (n)	612-57-68	S1c	USNR
**CORYELL, Carl (n)	636-51-59	S2c	USNR
COX, Russell Earl	656-52-08	S1c	USNR
CRAWFORD, Luther (n)	266-63-38	S1c	USN
*CRAWLEY, Maurice (n)	346-95-74	MA1c	USN
CRISWELL, Vincent Dale	411-96-35	EM3c	USNR
*DANIELS, Orville Lanier	551-82-36	S1c	USNR
DARDINE, Frank G., Jr.	650-63-66	RT3c	USNR
**DEERING, Edward A.	283-78-52	S2c	USNR
DEVENNEY, Martin J.	312-09-80	EM3c	USNR
DIVINE, George Bucklin	310-69-75	CPhM	USN
DOHERTY, Harold	212-39-58	CGM	USN
DONNELLAN, Edward G.	203-81-76	SoM3c	USNR
*DONNER, George Walter	652-64-49	S1c	USN
DOOLEY, Jack Harold	363-53-61	S1c	USNR
DRINKARD, Thomas Alton	658-56-78	F1c	USNR
*DU BARD, Melvin Hart	274-34-39	MM1c	USN
DUKE, Andrew Jackson	636-96-76	F3c	USNR
DURHAM, Loonie Raymond	636-51-58	Bkr3c	USNR
*DURNAM, Henry Rudolph	656-53-18	S1c	USNR
EDMONDS, Charles Francis	320-85-72	CBM	USN
EDWARDS, Alven Samuel	272-91-22	MA2c	USN
EIDSVOLD, Eugene	639-02-30	S1c	USNR
ELLIS, Rudolph C.	656-52-11	F2c	USNR
*ELWELL, Gerald John	608-33-03	S1c	USNR
ELY, Charles Lewis	278-35-59	MM1c	USN
ENGLISH, Arthur William	610-14-36	SF1c	USNR
EUDY, Robert Glenn	263-58-88	S1c	USNR
EVANS, Aaron Edward	617-31-76	S2c	USNR
FAWCETT, Donald William	328-98-65	F1c	USNR
FEENEY, Thomas James	321-58-12	S1c	USN
*FERGUSON, Samuel David	552-85-43	RM3c	USNR
*FERGUSON, Walter Lee	659-03-58	S1c	USNR
FERIANCEK, Michael (n)	639-01-23	S1c	USNR
FITCH, Harold Edward	385-71-18	TM1c	USN
*FOHL, Lewis Earl	626-63-72	S1c	USNR
FONVILLE, George Thomas	263-61-53	StM2c	USN

FOX, Leo Charles	551-75-17	S1 c	USNR
*FRENCH, Charles Ralph	612-57-39	S2c	USNR
FRIESNER, John Harvey, Jr.	620-99-74	S1 c	USNR
GARDINER, William P., Jr.	258-46-14	S2c	USNR
GARRETT, Jewell Warfield	269-16-80	S1 c	USNR
*GARRIS, Dixon Jerome	656-54-36	RdM2c	USNR
*GARVEN, Lawrence George	638-69-10	FC3c	USNR
GASSNER, Charles Jacob	223-55-00	RM1 c	USN
GAY, Harold Ben	269-16-92	S1 c	USN
*GEISSLER, Wayne Edward	665-20-32	TM3c	USNR
**GENNER, Wilford J.	372-25-26	BM2c	USNR
**GERALDS, Jesse Thomas, Jr.	287-24-81	MM3c	USN
**GERBER, Charles W.	342-10-61	MM1 c	USN
GIBSON, Eugene Everett	300-36-00	GM3c	USN
GODOWN, William (n)	243-90-13	Bkr3c	USN
GRACEFFA, Steve (n)	669-07-72	S1 c	USNR
GRAY, Lee Emmit	393-28-12	MM1 c	USN
GREER, Harry Warren	250-80-15	S2c	USN
GREGORY, Robert F.	552-14-45	S1 c	USNR
GRESICK, Stanley J.	300-97-02	S1 c	USN
GRIFFITH, Raymond Guy	658-56-00	S1 c	USNR
*GRIMES, David (n)	360-39-44	MM2c	USN
*GRIMES, William Arthur	628-74-40	S1 c	USNR
**GURR, Fred (n)	636-52-87	F1 c	USNR
GUSTAVSON, Clarence (n)	647-44-70	SM3c	USNR
HADDOCK, Arnold Herman	551-81-54	Cox	USNR
HAFFLING, Robert (n)	610-47-68	MM2c	USNR
HALEY, Jack (n)	622-53-76	SoM2c	USNR
HAMBY, Claude Ray	656-53-15	S1 c	USNR
*HANC, Chester Peter	666-18-32	MM2c	USNR
HANCOCK, Homer Oliver	636-51-69	GM3c	USNR
**HANDLEY, James L.	668-43-05	SoM3c	USNR
HARDENBROOK, Verne Gilmore	400-61-22	Cox	USN
HARDESTY, Joseph Montgomery	552-84-19	F2c	USNR
HARPER, Richard Stanton	636-52-75	F1 c	USNR
HART, Robert Hertis	551-83-21	SF3c	USN
HAUKEDAH, Lloyd Raymond	328-82-21	Cox	USN
**HEGE, George E.	656-52-74	S1 c	USNR
HENDERSON, Hubert Willard	658-56-95	F2c	USNR
HENDRICKS, Casper Thomas	258-45-91	SoM3c	USNR
HERMSEN, John Joseph	316-92-75	S1 c	USNR
HIEMENGA, John (n)	623-24-01	S1 c	USNR
HILL, Ellis Adrian	636-53-07	S1 c	USNR
HILL, John Edward	626-66-85	S1 c	USNR
HILL, Marshall "C"	356-42-24	GM3c	USN
*HILL, Robert Harold	312-05-43	S1 c	USNR
*HILLIS, Asey Hill	618-75-75	EM2c	USNR
HILLIS, Lawson Clayborn	272-18-89	EM1 c	USN
HOCUM, Milford Keith	620-38-04	SoM3c	USNR
HODER, Stanley (n)	243-62-22	BM1 c	USN

HODGES, Richard Alton	623-24-33	S2c	USNR
*HOLLIFIELD, "L" "J"	656-54-27	SC3c	USNR
HOWELL, Keith Edward	410-63-33	F1c	USN
HOZLEY, LeRoy Henry	600-18-48	QM3c	USNR
HUDSON, Percy Wilbur, Jr.	268-13-04	CFC	USN
HUENEMAN, Delbert Robert	612-57-84	S1c	USNR
HUGGARD, Charles Richard	266-68-56	S1c	USN
HURT, Donald Marshall	562-65-60	F2c	USNR
**ILL, George Raymond	620-78-48	S1c	USN
*IVERS, Merle (n)	320-83-62	CCS	USN
JOHNSON, David F., Jr.	154-61-08	Y3c	USNR
JOHNSON, Edward Roy, Jr.	381-38-38	BM2c	USN
JOHNSON, Leonard Edgar	552-85-09	S1c	USNR
JONES, Albert Thomas	652-96-57	F2c	USNR
JONES, Jesse Julius	279-45-52	CSK	USN
JOY, Albert Richard	618-15-01	TM2c	USNR
JUNG, Wilford Walter	621-10-38	Bkr2c	USNR
KARAGINES, Peter (n)	642-59-14	S1c	USNR
**KELLER, Frederick M.	634-23-39	EM3c	USNR
KELLY, Thomas Ambrose	706-89-37	SK3c	USNR
*KENWORTHY, Marvin Chester	342-13-16	EM1c	USN
*KEOGH, Berdette E.	201-35-20	MM1c	USN
*KERR, Douglas (n)	552-14-55	SC2c	USN
KIMBALL, Clell Arthur	551-81-19	F2c	USNR
KING, Richard Andrew	642-59-09	S1c	USNR
**KIRKLAND, Thomas (n)	636-51-98	F1c	USNR
*KLIMEZEK, Edward (n)	250-53-03	MM2c	USNR
KLUTTZ, Elbert Roy	656-52-13	RdM3c	USNR
*KOBEL, Edward C.	414-07-93	CMM	USN
*KUEHNE, Kenneth Charles	300-86-58	S1c	USN
**LAMB, Clarence Odell	312-01-33	FC3c	USNR
LANE, Thomas Edison, Jr.	622-76-00	S2c	USNR
*LANGLEY, Willard G.	636-78-43	EM2c	USNR
**LAWRENCE, Floyd H.	636-52-38	S1c	USNR
LEE, Francis Edward	650-40-65	RM3c	USNR
LEHL, Samuel (n)	371-93-89	TM2c	USNR
LEONARD, Ben Smith	656-53-12	F2c	USNR
LEVAN, Edgar Ernest	632-21-44	S1c	USNR
LEWIS, Lloyd J.	266-68-68	S1c	USN
LONG, James Lewis	551-82-71	F2c	USNR
*LUCAS, Gordon Everett	291-84-04	F1c	USN
*LUND, Hjalmar, Rhenold	552-14-83	S1c	USNR
LYNN, Ludie (n)	360-19-45	GM2c	USN
LYONS, Clarence Eugene	266-68-72	S1c	USN
MACE, Henry Clinton, Jr.	552-84-42	S1c	USNR
*MACONES, Bernard Joseph	706-89-56	S1c	USNR
MANSFIELD, Bertice Lindley	706-89-59	S2c	USNR
*MARKOSKI, Eugene (n)	706-89-60	F2c	USNR
MARTINSON, James Arnold	385-67-74	CEM	USN
*MASTRIDGE, Phillip Anthony	706-89-62	F2c	USNR

MATTHEW, Jim Earle	654-30-48	FC2c	USNR
McCAULEY, George Wallace	706-89-49	S2c	USNR
*McDANIEL, Daniel James	272-66-26	TM3c	USN
**McELDUFF, Benjamin R.	656-54-13	S1c	USNR
*McGEE, Robert Raymond	382-20-42	F1c	USN
McLAURIN, Dennis Hill	356-25-00	GM2c	USN
McLYNDEN, Charles Raymond	706-89-54	S1c	USNR
**McNAMARA, John J.	223-89-59	QM2c	USN
McSWAIN, Floyd Grissom, Jr.	656-53-10	F1c	USNR
*MEADOR, Paul Sterling	381-61-36	S2c	USNR
MELOUGH, John Patrick	650-67-82	FC3c	USNR
MIELE, William Charles	706-89-64	SK3c	USNR
MISHKEL, Francis V.S.	403-74-23	PhM1c	USNR
MISTURINI, Mario (n)	706-89-65	F2c	USNR
MITCHELL, Arte Cuthbert	636-26-06	S2c	USNR
**MOELLER, Robert E.	563-27-33	S1c	USNR
MOORE, Edward Thomas	266-68-76	S1c	USN
MOORE, Harrell Judson	625-26-93	F2c	USNR
**MORTON, Brian Hugh V.	223-44-83	WT1c	USN
**MOTT, Leon R.	238-84-06	MM3c	USNR
**MULLANE, Daniel James	706-89-69	S1c	USNR
*MULLANE, Francis Joseph	706-89-70	Y3c	USNR
MYERS, Donald Eckert	602-29-28	RdM3c	USNR
NATION, Roy Eugene	552-14-79	F2c	USNR
*NEHRBAUER, George Henry	707-95-55	S2c	USNR
**NELSON, George E.	604-16-35	MM1c	USNR
NELSON, Grady Lee, Jr.	356-57-42	GM2c	USN
*NELSON, William Hargrove	625-27-09	F2c	USNR
*NEMEC, Anthony (n)	652-30-49	MoMM2c	USNR
NETTLES, William Brian	274-83-92	F2c	USN
**NEWMAN, Lewis L.	337-31-98	MM3c	USN
NEWMAN, Robert William	706-89-74	S2c	USNR
*NICCOLLS, Frederick Aubrey	706-89-75	S1c	USNR
*NORTON, James Ruben	269-16-79	SC3c	USN
OVERG, George August	380-98-10	GMM	USN
*OCHS, Carl Anton	382-00-34	Msmth1	USN
**ODEN, Richard E.	360-28-41	MM3c	USNR
ONDREICKA, Paul Vincent	223-65-20	Cox	USN
PANAGAKOS, John Vincent	706-89-80	SC3c	USNR
**PANESI, Raymond Dominic	375-79-75	WT1c	USN
**PHELAN, Peter Paul, Jr.	706-89-83	F1c	USNR
PHILLIPS, Calvin Leroy	258-46-17	S2c	USN
PHILLIPS, Charles William	630-29-97	F2c	USNR
POLAK, Joseph S.	409-37-38	Y1c	USN
POVALAWSKI, Paul Kenneth	305-55-15	S1c	USNR
PRICE, Glenn Allen	563-17-62	TM3c	USNR
QUINN, Danford June	656-52-85	S1c	USNR
RALLINS, Leslie Esten	356-80-71	RdM3c	USN
RAMSEY, Fred W.	263-59-13	S1c	USN
*RAMSEY, Willard Earle	266-68-65	F2c	USN

**REINBACH, Louis O.	300-41-47	WT2c	USN
**REYNOLDS, Ernest E.	385-67-93	MM3c	USN
RHODES, Robert Boyd	552-14-69	S1c	USNR
RHUDE, Ronald Chesley	600-30-92	S1c	USNR
RICH, Edward James	606-82-48	EM3c	USNR
RICHARDSON, Roe Chester	266-09-45	MM2c	USN
RIFFE, Lou Vernon	552-84-77	S1c	USNR
ROBERTS, John Lewis	651-51-30	S1c	USNR
*ROCK, Edward Anthony	652-96-41	S1c	USNR
RODRIGUES, Joseph, Jr.	204-90-80	S1c	USNR
*RODRIGOS, Maurice Alfred	375-84-35	CQM	USN
*ROGACKI, Aloysius Joseph	608-40-83	S1c	USNR
RUDY, Erland Wesley	638-25-25	RT1c	USNR
SAGE, Francis E.	622-61-63	S1c	USNR
*SAGER, Edward Florian	660-23-96	SC1c	USNR
SAINLAR, Norman Lewis	634-58-14	S2c	USNR
SALTER, Gilbert Hess	660-43-40	F3c	USNR
SANDERS, Robert Lewis	656-54-11	F2c	USNR
SANTOS, Charles (n)	606-51-87	S1c	USNR
*SANZA, Matthew J.	603-26-59	S2c	USNR
SATZINGER, Frank Harold	283-22-95	WT2c	USN
SAWHILL, Elden Raymond	662-56-83	FC3c	USNR
SAXE, Orville Milton	305-24-51	CWT	USN
SCHOFIELD, John Joseph	651-16-41	S1c	USNR
SCHRONCE, Howard (n)	656-53-63	S1c	USNR
SCHULTZ, Albert Henry	393-26-60	SM2c	USN
SCHWARZ, Louis Joseph	223-38-18	CM1c	USNR
SELLERS, James Wayne	552-84-27	S1c	USNR
SERMERSHEIM, Russell William	634-58-15	S1c	USNR
SHAW, Harry Ward	648-31-88	RM3c	USNR
SHEPARD, Richard Gordon	279-62-84	MoMM1c	USN
SIMS, Raymond Christie	651-28-80	F1c	USNR
**SISSON, Ezra (n)	346-61-07	OC2c	USN
SMITH, Everett Thomas	552-62-47	MM2c	USNR
SMITH, Roy Edwin	336-40-96	CMM	USN
STACY, William Atchinson	600-17-11	RM3c	USNR
STANCILL, William James	657-17-41	F3c	USNR
**SUMMERS, Lewis Ross	624-19-35	Y1c	USNR
TALBOT, Fred Hall	563-02-40	RM3c	USNR
TATE, James Harold	295-73-54	GM2c	USN
TATE, Lewis Paul	662-87-87	TM2c	USNR
TAUTENHAHN, "M" "C" Ray	356-40-11	S1c	USN
THAMS, Donald S.	664-40-87	TM3c	USN
THOMPSON, Courtland Stokes	651-03-47	F2c	USNR
*TUCKER, Reece Haley	640-08-54	S1c	USNR
**TULLY, Thomas E.	316-73-29	MM3c	USN
TURNEY, Kenneth George	662-28-80	S1c	USNR
WASHICKO, Stephen (n)	337-35-15	WT2c	USN
WEEKS, Burke Jeter	385-91-75	S1c	USN
WILZIEN, Raymond Earl	299-62-20	Cox	USN

WHEELER, Joseph Welcome	642-54-09	S1c	USNR
**WHITNEY, Arnold M.	212-46-87	RM1c	USN
WHITWORTH, William Shangai	624-58-70	FC2c	USNR
WILKES, Carl Vernon	640-42-58	S2c	USNR
*WILLIAMS, Charles Nathan	385-77-16	Bmkr1c	USN
**WILLIAMS, James "C"	356-14-30	MM2c	USNR
WILSON, Cebron Joseph, Jr.	656-52-68	S1c	USNR
*WILSON, William Ralph	346-94-59	F1c	USN
WOLTER, Frank (n), Jr.	206-63-10	CTM	USN
YANCE, Marvette (n)	272-64-90	F1c	USN
YEAGER, John R.	611-12-91	S1c	USNR
ZALESKI, Julius Michael, Jr.	224-72-65	SM3c	USN
ZONKO, Michael (n)	650-48-42	S2c	USN

* * * * *

Notes:

1 Sources: The ship's last muster roll on microfilm at the National Archives (dated 7/14/43), the list of those rescued by the USS Chevalier (DD-451) and the ship's Battle Casualties report of 17 July 1943.

* Wounded (** Killed) when the Strong was sunk by an enemy torpedo on July 5, 1943, according to a machine-generated casualty report at the National Archives prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel after the war.

Summary of Casualties:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 7/5/43</u>
Officer	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>19</u>
Enlisted	<u>39</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>308</u>
TOTALS	<u>45</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>327</u>

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
June, 2000

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

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

The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) in World War II

Photograph Credits

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source Code/Ident. No.</u>
Historical plate at quarterdeck	NA 19-N-36410
On the ways; Bath, Maine, 5/17/42	NA 19-N-36396
Sponsor w. Officer-in-Charge, 5/17/42	NA 19-N-36401
Launching 5/17/42, Bath Iron Works	NA 19-N-36397
Afloat after launching, 5/17/42	NA 19-N-36398
Fitting-out wharf, Bath, July 1942	NA 19-N-36405
Commissioning, Boston N. Yd., 8/7/42	NWC Adm. Wellings' papers
LCdr. Joseph H. Wellings, USN, 8/7/42	NWC Adm. Wellings' papers
20-mm Mk. 4 Oerlikon mount, May 1942	NA 19-N-31965
Twin 40-mm Bofors mount, April 1944	RWP N-6569A
Alongside USS <u>Honolulu</u> (CL-48), 7/43	NA 80-G-52931
USS <u>Chevalier</u> (DD-451), 1942 or 1943	NI Order with photocopy
USS <u>Gwin</u> (DD-433), stbd. view, 2/43	NI Order with photocopy
USS <u>Ralph Talbot</u> (DD-390), 12/42	NA 19-N-40185
Lt. Frederick W. Purdy, USN, 8/7/42	NWC Adm. Wellings' papers
USS <u>Purdy</u> (DD-734), starboard bow, '44	NA 19-N-69896
USS <u>Crosby</u> (APD-17), port bow, 2/24/43	NA 19-N-41557

* * * * *

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)

NWC Naval Historical Collection
Naval War College
Newport, RI 02841-1207
Curator: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak, (401) 841-2435

NI U.S. Naval Institute Photo Service
Beach Hall
291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402-5034
(410) 295-1022; FAX: (410) 269-7940

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

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) in World War II

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Books:

- Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. 6. Mooney, J. L. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1976.
- Alden, John D., Flush Decks and Four Pipes. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1965.
- Friedman, Norman, U.S. Destroyers: An Illustrated Design History. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982.
- Hodges, Peter and Friedman, Norman, Destroyer Weapons of World War 2. Annapolis and London: Naval Institute Press and Conway Maritime Press, Ltd., 1979.
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- Roscoe, Theodore, United States Destroyer Operations in World War II. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1953.
- Shafter, Richard A., Destroyers in Action. New York: Cornell Maritime Press, 1945.

Conversations:

- Cdr. O. Milton Hackett, USNR (Ret.), survivor
- Dr. Landon C. G. Miller, son of survivor Lt. H. B. Miller, USNR

Ship's Logs:

- USS Gwin (DD-433), 7/5/43
- USS Ralph Talbot (DD-390), 7/5/43

Miscellaneous:

- Action reports, Strong: 4/12/43, 5/15/43, 7/10/43, 8/12/43
- Admiral Joseph H. Wellings' papers, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
- Bath Daily Times on microfilm, public library, Bath, Maine.
- The "Battle Books" at the National Archives for a list of the Strong's casualties on 7/5/43 (a machine-generated casualty report prepared by BuPers c. 1946)
- Personnel Diary (Muster Rolls), Strong, on microfilm, National Archives.
- Shipmate magazine, July-August 1977 and June 1988. (U.S. Naval Academy alumni magazine)
- Ships' Histories Section file for Strong, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.
- War Diary, USS Chevalier (DD-451), 7/15/43
- WW II citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Hist. Ctr.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

About The Editor

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

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

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

Historical Compilations by the Editor:

(Destroyer/Destroyer Escort Hulls in World War II)

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

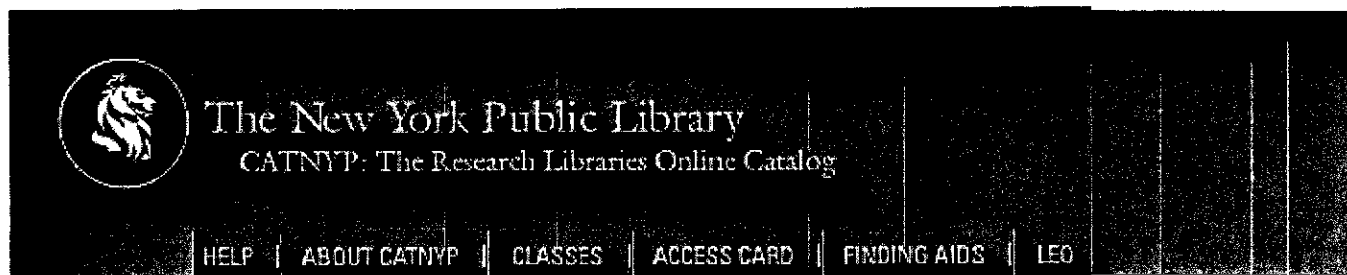
* * * * *

Notes:

* Total for two engagements with the enemy

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

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



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- 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

1210 Greendale Ave., Apt. E3
Needham, MA 02492-4622
October 17, 2002

Mr. Kenneth Lamb
4761 Butternut Drive
Holland, MI 49424

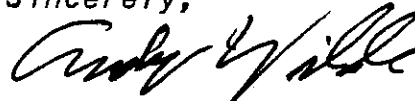
Dear Kenneth,

I'm happy to be able to send you a copy of my booklet on the USS Strong (DD-467). Every time I respond to similar requests for my booklets from the families of men who were killed in World War II I reflect on how wonderful it is that these men have not been forgotten.

For some reason I did not include Frank Wolter's firsthand account when I published my booklet, but I wish that I had. I have entered it in your booklet, and I'm enclosing an extra, loose copy. I have observed that families usually want to know how their loved one died, and now you know. Please note that in their accounts both Cdr. Wellings (Commanding Officer) and Lt. Miller express their belief that the depth charges had been set on "safe," and that apparently the torpedo explosion had jarred this setting loose.

I'm glad to be of service to you and your family, and I'm very sorry about the loss of your cousin.

Sincerely,



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

USS Strong (DD-467)

Survivor's Firsthand Account in August, 1943

STATEMENT OF: WOLTER, Frank, #206,63 10 CTM(AA) USN.

After the ship sunk I found myself in the bay with several other members of the crew. I swam around until coming near a raft on which were Kimball F2c and Ballanger Slc. They assisted me in with them at about 0145 on the morning of July 5th. A few minutes later Lamb, FC3c, was assisted on to our raft. He suffered effects of the depth charge detonations. On July 6th at about 0200 Lamb passed away; he had no identification on his person. On July 7th Gregory Slc and Gardener Slc returned to our camp around 1000 when we were on the beach, telling us that they found Mr. F. W. Purdy, Lt. Comdr., USN, lying face down on the beach near the water, dead. He must have been dead a few days. He was not washed ashore. From all indications he was still alive when made the shore and it seemed that he tried to crawl up on higher land after reaching shore. There was what appeared to be a shrapnel wound in his back. His life jacket was torn. Although it was hard to tell because of oil. He was unrecognizable. We went through his pockets and found his wallet, the sum of eight dollars, identification card, statement of pay accounts and several expired auto licenses. I turned all these effects over to the Army Chaplain at Rice Anchorage on the Island of New Georgia.

We followed a trail on land which ended at a little native village. We saw evidence of other men being there before us and which we believed to be Mr. Fulham and Mr. Hackett from our ship. A Mr. Milton arrived a little later and put us in the hands of some natives who showed us the way to the nearest Army post where we waited for transportation to the rear.

/s/ Frank Wolter.

Source: Papers donated by the late Admiral Wellings to the Naval War College/Naval Historical Collection, Newport, R.I.



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January 17, 1997

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

Dear Commander Wilde:

On behalf of the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, I wish to thank you for the copy of your book *The U.S.S. Strong (DD-467) in World War II*. It will be cataloged for the Hoole Library's Alabama Collection with a special note and access point for the passage relating to Hugh Barr Miller.

I think the book is an excellent and thorough essay on the career of the *Strong*, and I am delighted to have been of help to you.

Thank you as well for your interest in the Library and its work, and please be assured that I am, with best wishes,

Yours very truly,

Andrea Watson
Special Collections Librarian
for Reference Services

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

686 CUSHING ROAD (CODE 35)
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
02841-1207

ERNEST J. KING PROFESSOR OF MARITIME HISTORY

4 June 2002

Commander E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., USNR (ret.)
1210 Greendale Avenue, Apt E3
Needham MA 02492-4622

Dear Commander Wilde,

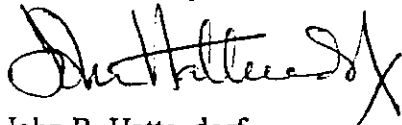
It was a great pleasure to meet you yesterday. Thank you very much for the copy of your history of the *USS Strong (DD-467) in World War II*. I took it home with me last night and thoroughly enjoyed reading it. As you say, it is a marvelous story and I was absolutely delighted to refresh my memory of Admiral Wellings and these events, many of which he had regaled me with on several occasions in the "chart house" of his Newport home.

In many ways, I think your approach in making such a judicious collection of documents is in many ways makes for more satisfactory reading than the usual second-hand history of a ship. In your approach, one can sense the immediacy of the events in a way that is lost when an historian picks up the task years later. The official letters, award citations, action reports, newspaper clippings, and reminiscences, each in their own way, bring us into direct touch to those men and the contributions they made in their ships.

Your work is of great value not only to those who served in these ships, but also to those of us whose profession it is to study and to write about ships and the sea. Professional historian will find your histories of great value and I am most grateful to know that you have made our Naval Historical Collection a permanent repository for a collection of them. They will be valued and used here regularly on a permanent basis.

As a professional historian evaluating your work in volumes such as this one, I most certainly must congratulate you on a very fine and valuable contribution to our field of enquiry. As a small and unimportant suggestion, the only tiny thing that is missing, which a professional historian would want to have, is an exact archival reference to the place where you found the materials. While you do this in general, a professional would like a more exact reference to archival collection number or record group, series, box and folder or file number, too. The point about such references is not a pedantic one, as many people assume, but because they provide the "sailing directions" to find the document again if one is interested in looking at the original again for some reason, perhaps for something on an adjoining page, etc. Clearly, many of your items were the result of very hard and time-consuming work on your part. I do hope, too, that you are saving your own correspondence with the various officers and men and their families. This, too, will eventually constitute a useful resource for future research. You should think seriously about ensuring that it gets preserved for that purpose. You may already have other places in mind, but I am sure Dr Cherpak would be very interested.

Yours sincerely,



John B. Hattendorf

