

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Duncan* (DD-485) in World War II:  
Documents and Photographs**

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The U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) In World War II

List Of Pages

<u>Sheets</u>	<u>Sides</u>	
1	1	List Of Pages
1	1	Quote - President John F. Kennedy, 1963
1	2	<u>Photo</u> - On the ways, 2/20/42/Biography, Silas Duncan
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Sponsor, Mrs. Dorothy Clark Thayer
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Sponsor's party, Kearny, N.J., 2/20/42
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Starboard bow, completion photo, 4/42
2	4	History, Ships' Histories Section, 1952
1	1	Map, Southwest Pacific (showing Guadalcanal)
2	2	War Diary, 5/1/42 to 9/30/42
1	1	Obituary, Vice Adm. Edmund B. Taylor, USN (1904-1973)
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - USS <u>Wasp</u> (CV-7), torpedoed, aflame, 9/15/42
2	2	Citations (3), rescue operation, 9/15/42
1	1	Map, Solomon Islands (showing Cape Esperance)
4	6	Action Report, 10/23/42, ComDesRon 12, battle 10/12/42
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Stbd. beam, u/way off Guadalcanal 10/7/42
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - After deckhouse on <u>Aaron Ward</u> (DD-483)
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - 1.1-inch quad mount
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - 20-mm. Oerlikon mount
10	16	Action Report, 10/16/42, sinking, Bat. of C. Esperance
1	1	Citation, Cdr. Edmund B. Taylor, USN (Navy Cross)
1	1	Citation, Lt. Cdr. Louis A. Bryan, USN (Silver Star)
1	1	Citation, Lt. Frank J. Broccolo, USNR (Silver Star)
1	1	Citation, Lt.(jg) R. L. Fowler, III, USNR (Navy Cross)
3	3	Medals Awarded (8), draft citations, loss of ship
1	1	List Of Officers, 10/12/42
5	5	Muster Roll Of The Crew, 10/12/42; casualties summary
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - USS <u>McCalla</u> (DD-488), rescue ship
3	5	Action Report, <u>McCalla</u> , 10/12/42 (rescue operation)
1	1	Citation, Cdr. William G. Cooper, USN ( <u>McCalla</u> )
6	11	Article, "Solomons Battle Log" by Ens. G.B. Weems, USN
1	1	Newspaper article, 11/1/91, Joseph Manna, S1c
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Monument, Purvis Bay, Florida Island, 1944
1	2	News Release, dedication of monument, 1944
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Plaque on Purvis Bay Monument
1	1	<u>Photo</u> - Purvis Bay Monument, August 1993
5	6	<u>Photo</u> /panels - 50th Anniversary Monument, Guadalcanal
1	1	Quote - Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, 1945
16	16	Appendix - Firsthand reports, Battle of Cape Esperance
1	1	Photograph Credits
1	1	Bibliography
<u>87</u>	<u>107</u>	TOTALS

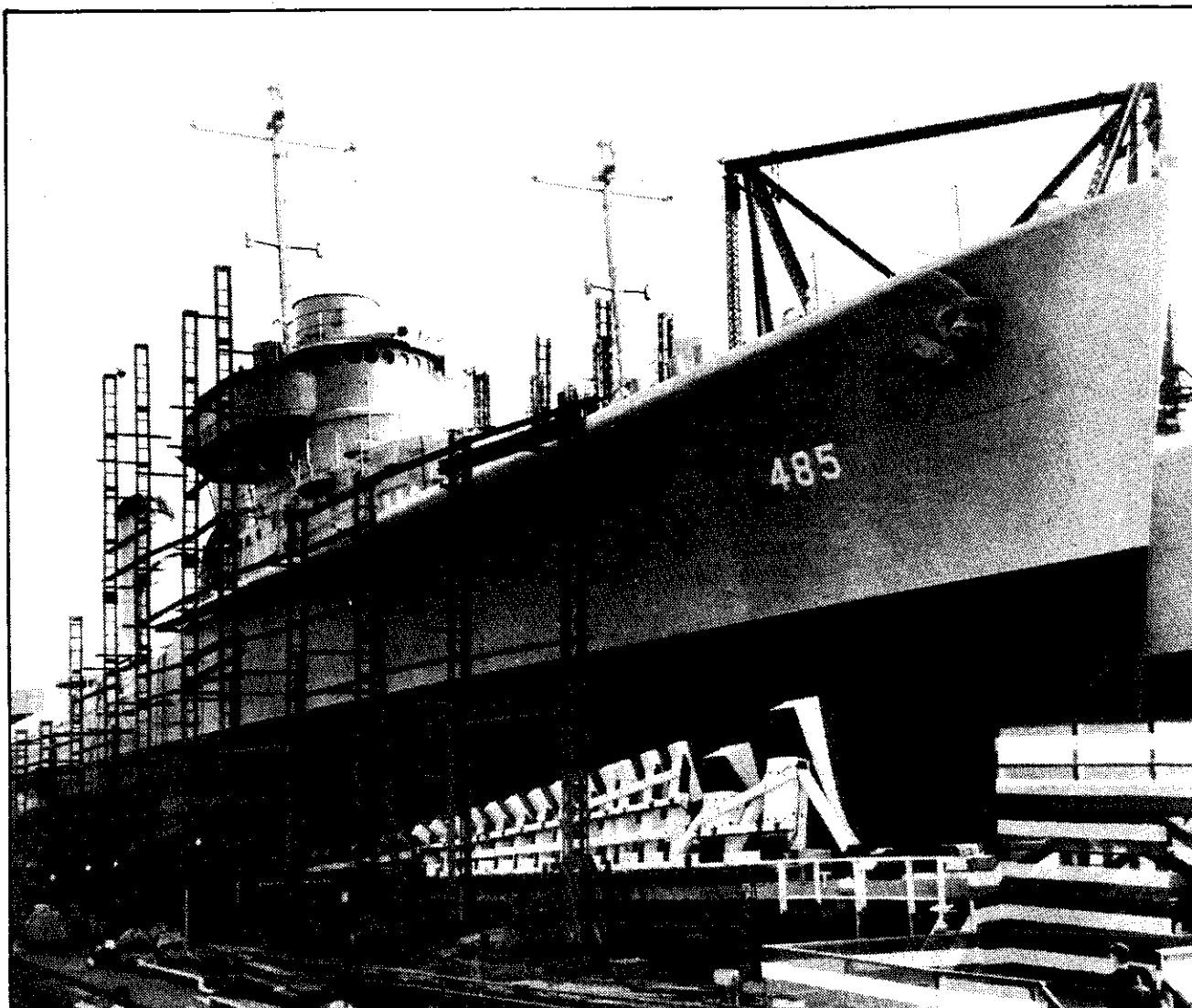
E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
October, 2000



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

*- President John F. Kennedy, 1963*





The Livermore-class destroyer U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) on the ways prior to launching at the Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Company, Kearny, New Jersey. She was laid down on 31 July 1941, launched on 20 February 1942 and commissioned on 16 April 1942. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)

Standard displacement	1,630 tons
Length (overall)	348' 2"
Beam	36' 1"
Depth	19' 8"
Shaft horsepower	50,000 h.p.
Rated speed	37 knots

**Duncan\***

Silas Duncan born in Rockaway, N.J., in 1788, was appointed midshipman 15 November 1809. While third lieutenant of *Saratoga* during the Battle of Lake Champlain, 11 September 1814, he was sent in a gig to order the gunboats to retire. He succeeded in delivering the orders despite concentrated enemy fire which severely wounded him and caused the loss of his right arm. For his gallant conduct he was thanked by Congress. From 1818 to 1824 Commander Duncan saw active service on board *Independence*, *Hornet*, *Guerriere*, *Cyane*, and *Ferret*. He died 14 September 1834 at White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.

\* Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume 2.  
Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1963.





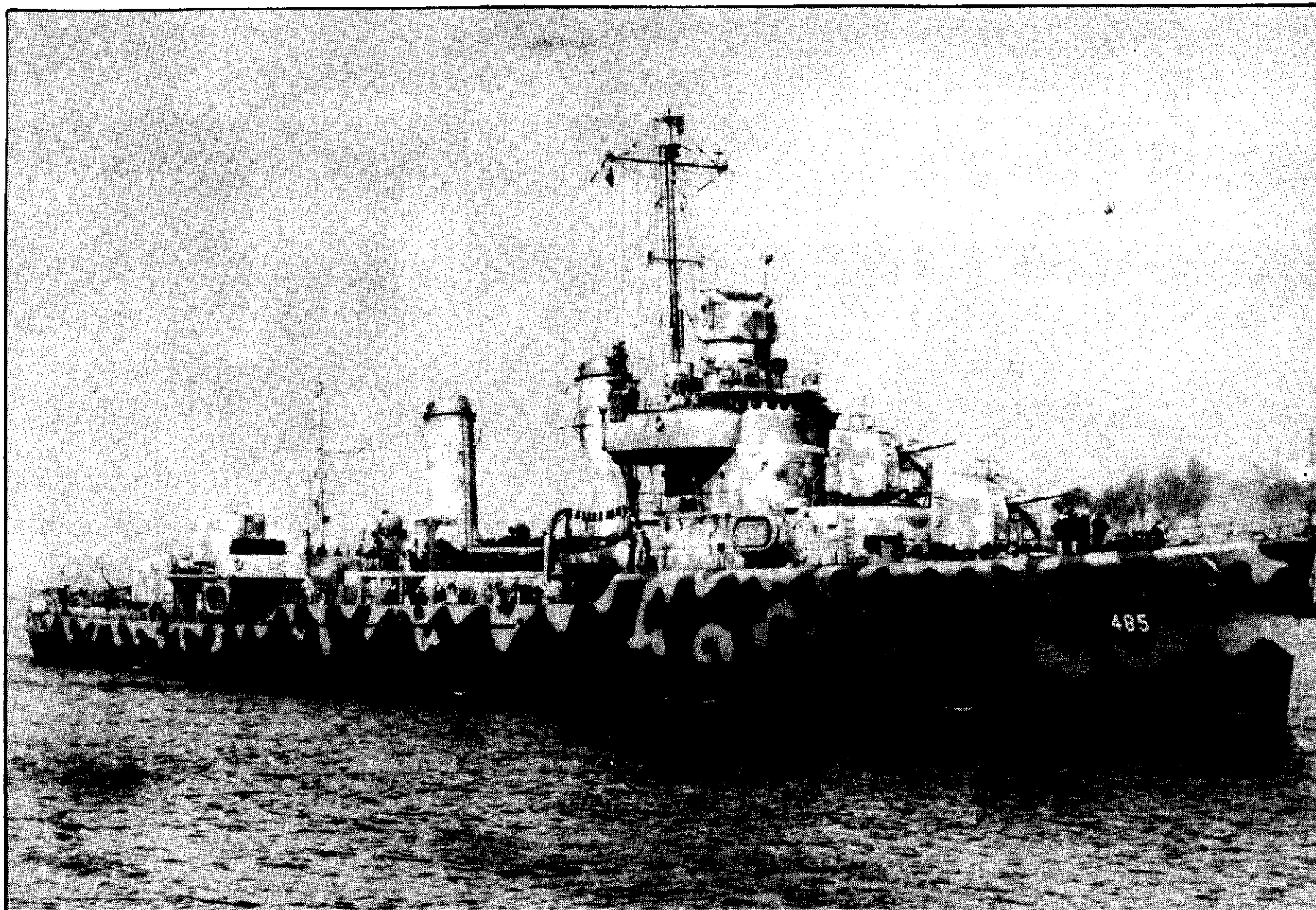
Mrs. Dorothy Clark Thayer sponsored three ships named after her first cousin three times removed, Commander Silas Duncan! Shown here at the launching of the U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) on 20 February 1942, she had previously sponsored (as Miss Dorothy Clark) the Duncan (DD-46) in April, 1913. After the DD-485 was sunk on 12 October 1942, she christened her successor, the Gearing-class destroyer Duncan (DD-874) in October, 1944. (Official U.S. Navy photograph)





*The official party at the christening and launching of the U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) on 20 February 1942 at the Federal Shipbuilding Yard in Kearny, New Jersey. Mrs. Dorothy Clark Thayer (front row, second from the left) was the ship's sponsor. (Official U.S. Navy photograph.)*





The 1,630-ton destroyer U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) was commissioned at the New York Navy Yard on 16 April 1942, when Lieutenant Commander Edmund B. Taylor, USN, took command. She was armed with four 5-inch/38 dual-purpose guns, five 21-in. torpedo tubes and for AA protection, a 1.1-in./75 quad machine cannon, plus 20-mm's. Officially a Livermore-class ship, she was also known as a Bristol-class destroyer. The Duncan's radar antennas have been censored out of this completion photograph. (USN photo.)



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### HISTORY OF USS DUNCAN (DD 485)

In a brief but gallant career, USS DUNCAN (DD 485) carried on the fighting reputation of her namesake, Commander Silas Duncan. Before being sunk by crossfire from Japanese warships during the surface engagement off Cape Esperance in October 1942, DUNCAN's gunfire and torpedoes contributed to the destruction of an enemy cruiser.

A destroyer of the LIVERMORE Class of 1938-1941, USS DUNCAN (DD 485) was built by the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Docking Company at Kearny, New Jersey, where her keel was laid on 31 July 1941. The sleek, new destroyer was launched on 20 February 1942 and sponsored by Mrs. Dorothy Clark Taylor, first cousin three times removed of Commander Silas Duncan.

Commander Duncan was born in New Jersey and appointed midshipman in 1809. As third Lieutenant on SARATOGA in the crucial Battle of Lake Champlain, he was ordered to carry an important dispatch to the American gunboats. While crossing the open water in a small boat, he was a target for enemy fire, and although severely wounded, he delivered the message to the commander of the gunboat ALLEN. For his brave act, Commander Duncan received the thanks of Congress. From 1818 to 1824, he saw active service on INDEPENDENCE, HORNET, GUERRIERE, CYANE, and FERRET. Commander Duncan died on 14 September 1834.

USS DUNCAN (DD 485) was the second ship honoring Commander Duncan. The first DUNCAN (DD 46) was authorized by Congress on 4 March 1911 and launched on 5 April 1913. DD 46 remained with the Fleet until March 1935, when she was scrapped in accordance with the London Treaty for the limitation and reduction of Naval Armaments.

On 16 April 1942, USS DUNCAN (DD 485) was placed in commission at the New York Navy Yard and Lieutenant Commander Edmund B. Taylor, USN, became the ship's first and only Commanding Officer.

Because of the acute need of destroyers in early 1942, DUNCAN was hurriedly outfitted for sea and by 30 April was ready for her shakedown exercises. Throughout most of May and June, DUNCAN rushed through training, had post-shakedown availability, and on 24 June, got underway from Hampton Roads, Virginia as escort ship for a convoy bound for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Arriving on 28 June, the ship was released from convoy duty and two days later steamed independently for the Canal Zone, anchoring at Cristobal on 2 July.

Throughout July and early August, DUNCAN continued escorting various convoys between Guantanamo Bay and Cristobal. Aside from occasional submarine contacts, the long hours passed slowly. However, since the majority of DUNCAN's crew were untrained, a rigorous training program was inaugurated, and drills, drills, and more drills prepared DUNCAN's green crew for the days ahead.

By mid-April, DUNCAN bid "adieu" to convoy duty in the South Atlantic and transited the Panama Canal, anchoring in Balboa Harbor. On 21 August, the destroyer in company with USS SOUTH DAKOTA, LANDSDOWNE, and LARDNER steamed into the Pacific bound for Espiritu Santo Island, via Tongatabu Island in the Friendly Island Group.

After leaving Tongatabu Island on 7 September, the ships joined a friendly task force, and a few days later, DUNCAN performed her first errand of mercy. She and three other warships of the force picked up survivors of the carrier WASP, which was so badly damaged that she had to be sunk by LANDSDOWNE. Survivors were transported to Espiritu Santo for proper medical treatment.

At Espiritu Santo, DUNCAN joined the Fleet at a crucial time in the Guadalcanal campaign. Following the surface engagement in the eastern Solomons in mid-August 1942, no major action took place for a period of about six weeks. During those six weeks, however, the supply lines had to be kept open to Guadalcanal. Japanese submarines and aircraft were active in the vicinity, and by 13 September, enemy ground forces had been reinforced. In addition, by the end of September, Japanese fleet units had been assembled to the northward, and the situation was serious. Reinforcements to the Marines was now becoming a necessity even though made in the face of enemy naval and air superiority.

As a preliminary, carrier planes attacked enemy shipping in the northern Solomons, and DUNCAN, acting as plane guard, took part in the strikes. By early October, a clash with enemy surface units appeared imminent, and U.S. naval forces were disposed in three groups. One was built around the carrier HORNET, to the westward of Guadalcanal. A second, to the eastward of Malaita Island, included the new battleship WASHINGTON. And the third, (Task Group 64), composed of cruisers and destroyers under the command of the late Rear Admiral Norman Scott, was stationed south of Guadalcanal pending developments. Stationed in the anti-submarine screen of this force, DUNCAN kept a sharp lookout for the "Tokyo Express" or ships bringing in reinforcements for the Japanese ground forces.

On the afternoon of 11 October, enemy forces were reported in "the slot" between Choiseul Island and the New Georgia Group, headed for Guadalcanal. Admiral Scott immediately steamed northward with his force, which rounded the northwest tip of the island about two hours before midnight. At 2308, unidentified objects



appeared on DUNCAN's radar scope. Following a left turn by the force, the contacts now came in clear, bearing on the starboard bow at a distance of 8,000 yards.

Within the next few minutes, an enemy ship was sighted off DUNCAN's starboard bow and the entire battle line opened fire. At least two shells crashed into the vessel, now identified as a Jap cruiser, and she appeared to be almost dead in the water. Taken by surprise, the enemy did not return the fire for nearly ten minutes, during which time the cruisers poured a murderous fire into the enemy force.

DUNCAN at this stage, while maneuvering to clear HELENA's line of fire, sighted a second large enemy warship off the starboard beam, which had not been brought under fire by U.S. cruisers. In order to fire torpedoes, DUNCAN placed herself between the enemy ship (now identified as the heavy cruiser AOBA or a Jap cruiser of a similar class) and her own battle line. In doing so, she received a number of hits but fired one torpedo before a shell wrecked the Torpedo Director and wounded the Torpedo Officer. A second torpedo was fired by local control. Both torpedoes hit the target as two explosions were observed on the port side of the enemy cruiser, and following the second torpedo hit, the target was also hit by shells from the cruisers. Almost immediately, the Jap cruiser crumbled in the middle, then rolled over and disappeared.

DUNCAN's position, sitting in a crossfire between the opposing cruisers, now became desperate. In addition to the earlier hits in her number one fireroom and near the torpedo director, a shell exploded in the handling room of the number one gun, causing fires which rapidly got beyond control. Soon after the second torpedo was fired, another series of hits added to the devastation. One shell bursting in the chart house killed all the personnel, wrecked the chart house, and blocked the passage from below. A second landed near the bridge, killing the Machine Gun Battery Officer and four men, one of whom was standing alongside the commanding officer. Another shell burst near the main Radio, and another entered the Plotting Room, wrecking the communications throughout the ship.

Gradually the damaged destroyer, with the bridge enveloped in flame and steam and steering control lost, cleared the line of fire and circled back from the battle area. As the flames around the bridge increased in intensity, the men gathered on the bridge level were ordered to jump into the water, the only avenue of escape.

Meanwhile, the remaining crew members, aboard the after part of the ship tried unsuccessfully to subdue the fires and to beach DUNCAN on Savo Island. Loss of steam pressure and explosions of ammunition frustrated these efforts, and finally the order to Abandon Ship was passed to all hands. About 0200, the last man left the ship.

Beware of darkness, the survivors were forced to remain in the water during the early morning hours, but at daybreak the destroyer MC CALLA and planes dispatched from Guadalcanal appeared on the scene to commence rescue operations. The recovery of so many survivors was remarkable. When the crew members trapped in the bow and on the bridge were forced by fire to drop into the water, DUNCAN still had considerable forward speed. And by the time the wounded were lowered into the water and the remaining survivors had jumped, individuals were scattered over a wide area. The majority were picked up in scattered groups of two or three and many were all alone.

Simultaneous with rescue operations, a salvage party from MC CALLA boarded the fire-gutted hulk, and in spite of strenuous efforts to save her, DUNCAN sank a few hours later, joining the host of ships lost in the fierce battles in "Iron Bottom Bay."

The Commanding Officer of the DUNCAN, Commander Edmund B. Taylor, USN, was awarded a Navy Cross with the following citation:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the USS DUNCAN during action against enemy Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on October 11, 1942. Although his ship had sustained heavy damage under hostile bombardment, Lieutenant Commander Taylor, by skillful maneuvering, successfully launched torpedoes which contributed to the destruction of a Japanese cruiser. Maintaining the guns of the DUNCAN in effective fire throughout the battle, he, when the vessel was finally put out of action, persistently employed to the fullest extent all possible measures to extinguish raging fires and control severe damage. His gallant leadership and courageous conduct under fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Other awards were made to seven officers and eleven enlisted men.

USS DUNCAN earned one Battle Star on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the following engagements and operations:

1 Star/Cape Esperance (Second Savo) -- 11-12 October 1942

\* \* \* \* \*

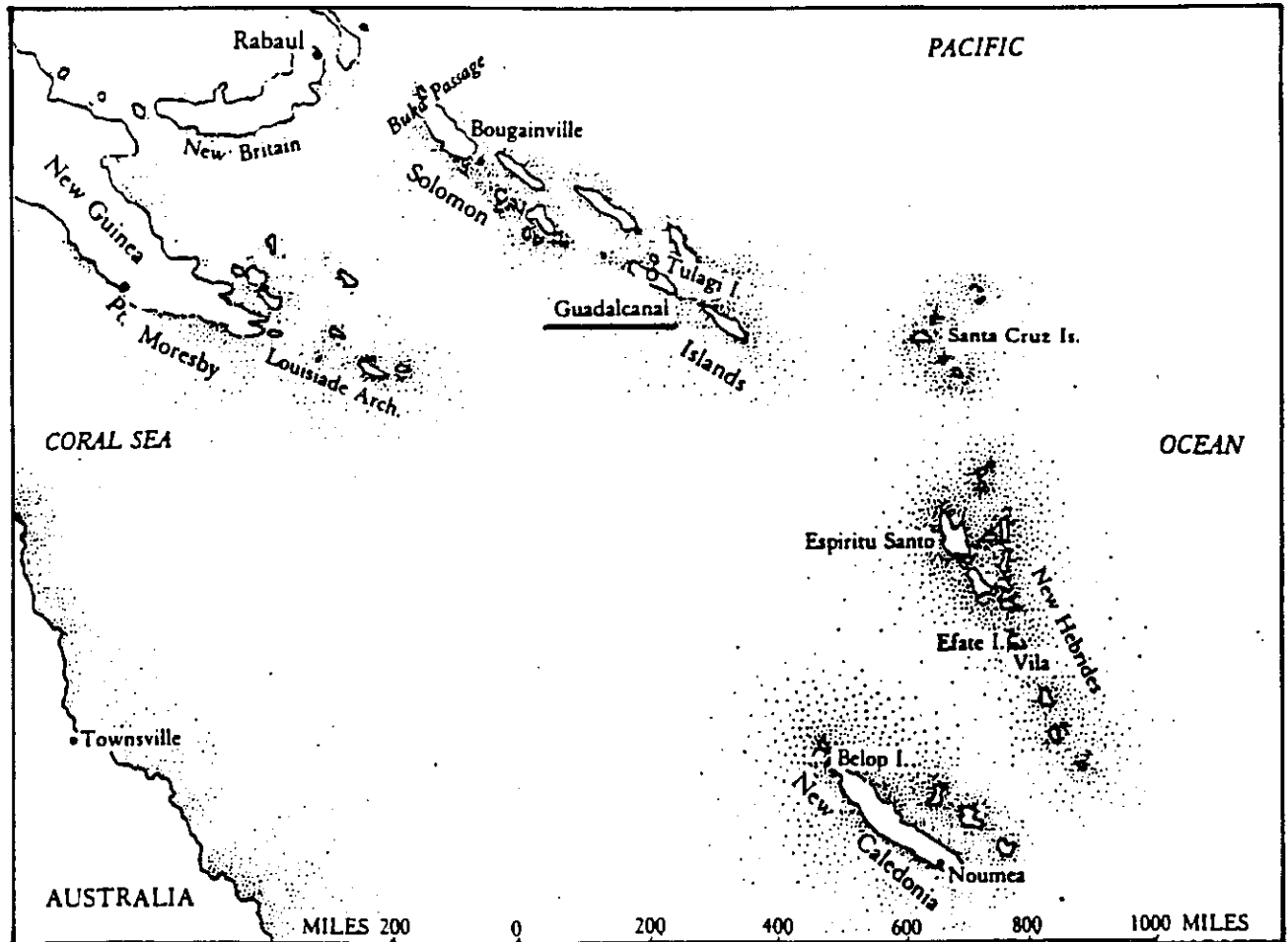
#### STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	348 feet	BEAM	36 feet
DISPLACEMENT	1,630 tons	SPEED	37 knots

\* \* \* \* \*

Compiled: June 1952

## Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands in World War II



*Noumea to Rabaul. (Courtesy Australian War Memorial)*

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

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

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

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
February, 1996



DUNCAN (DD-485) -1-  
SERVICE

SOURCE	DATE	DEPARTED	ARRIVED	DATE	REMARKS
707-2					War diary begins 1 May 42 at Staten I., N. Y. (DO is Lt. Cmdr. E. B. Taylor, USN) To Newport, R. I. 2 May for exercises; to Casco Bay 6 May for exercises and patrol To New London 30 May.
					(June and July 1942 are missing.)
					As of 1 Aug acting as convoy escort enroute to Cristobal via Guantanamo Bay 4-6 Aug. Transited P. C. 11 Aug.
	21 Aug 42	Balboa	Tongatabu I.	4 Sep 42	
	7 Sep 42	Tongatabu I.	Espiritu Santo	4 12 Sep 42	Sortied same day as screen for WASP guarding transports carrying 7th Mar. Reg. for support of Guadalcanal. TF 18 and 17 attacked by 2 Jap subs on 15 Sep. WASP lost; (O'BRIEN damaged, latter broke apart enroute to P. H.) DUNCAN picked up survivors and at Espiritu Santo to 16-17 Sep transferred to other ships 57 officers & 644 enlisted, to base hospital 2 officers, 16 enlisted, 2 dead. Resumed screening duties on transports to S. I. Returned to Espiritu Santo 24-28 Sep.



USS DUNCAN (DD-485) -2-  
SERVICE

SOURCE	DATE	DEPARTED	ARRIVED	DATE	REMARKS
707-2	28 Sep 42	Espiritu Santo			Screening MINNEAPOLIS.  War diary ends 30 Sep 42.
			<u>LOSS REPORT:</u>		
			<p>On 11 Oct 42 DUNCAN was in the screen of TF 64 when the CQ was sounded at 1815; she fired on her first target, a cruiser, for at least 2 direct hits,, then swung to get out of fire of own forces. Sighting a 2nd enemy warship on stbd beam, she failed to fire torpedoes in order to avoid a collision with LAFLEY. She swung to left to parallel target and found herself between the enemy forces and her own TF formation. At this time and in this condition she received her first hit probably from own forces when shell hit no. 1 fireroom causing first of the fires that were to gut a large part of the ship before she was abandoned. She nevertheless continued to fire on the enemy; her gunfire caused the cruiser (2nd target) to "blow up" and she then shifted to a nearby destroyer as target. After 2 hits in this victim, DUNCAN was hit in the bridge area and her firing became sporadic without center control. All control was lost due to the severe pounding and fires aboard so the order to abandon ship was given at approximately 0055-0130 while she steamed in circles. Unknown to CO several men were still aboard and they tried to beach her until all power failed. The survivors (9 officers, including CO and exec, and 186 enlisted) were rescued from sharks from 0630-1209 by MC CALLA despite wide area to be covered. Lost were 4 officers and 43 Unlisted men. MC CALLA men also tried to salvage DUNCAN but she began to sink at 1145 and they remained only long enough to set depth charges for 330 ft and abandon her. She sunk about 6 miles n. of Savo I. about 30 minutes later.</p>		





*Obituary for Vice Admiral Edmund B. Taylor, USN (Ret.)\*  
1904 - 1973*

*Commanding Officer, U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485)  
April, 1942 - October, 1942*

**EDMUND BATTELLE TAYLOR '25**

VAdm. Edmund Battelle Taylor, USN (Ret.), died on 30 April in Norfolk, Va. Funeral services were held at NAS Norfolk in the Chapel in the Woods. Interment was in Woodlawn Memorial Gardens with full military honors.

The Chicago native excelled in athletics at the Naval Academy. He was captain of the football team in 1924, All-American lacrosse 1924-25, and on the basketball and boxing squads. He won the USNA Athletic Sword. After graduation in 1925 he had sea duty in the *NEW YORK*, *TEXAS*, *WYOMING*, *HATFIELD*, *LEARY* and *PERRY*. Duty on the staff of COMDESBATFOR and at BuNav preceded his first WWII assignment, CO, *USS DUNCAN*. She rescued survivors of the *USS WASP* and later was lost from severe damage received while launching a successful torpedo attack against the Japanese cruiser *FURUTAKA*. He received the Navy Cross and a Letter of Commendation for extraordinary heroism in that command.



Edmund Battelle Taylor '25

Shipmate, July/Aug 1973

In early 1943 Adm. Taylor had command of the *USS BENNETT*. He next was COMDESDIV 90, for which he received the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal. For his next assignment, COMDESRON 45, he was awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallant action in the first Battle of the Philippine Sea. During the last eight months of WWII he was Aide to SecNav Forrestal.

He returned to the Naval Academy in May 1946 as Head of the Department of Physical Training and Director of Athletics. Two years later he was assigned as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations to CINCPACFLT. In January 1950 he became CO, *USS SALEM*. The following January he was ordered to BuPers and later as Assistant to the Under SecNav. In 1952 he took command of a destroyer flotilla of the Atlantic Fleet.

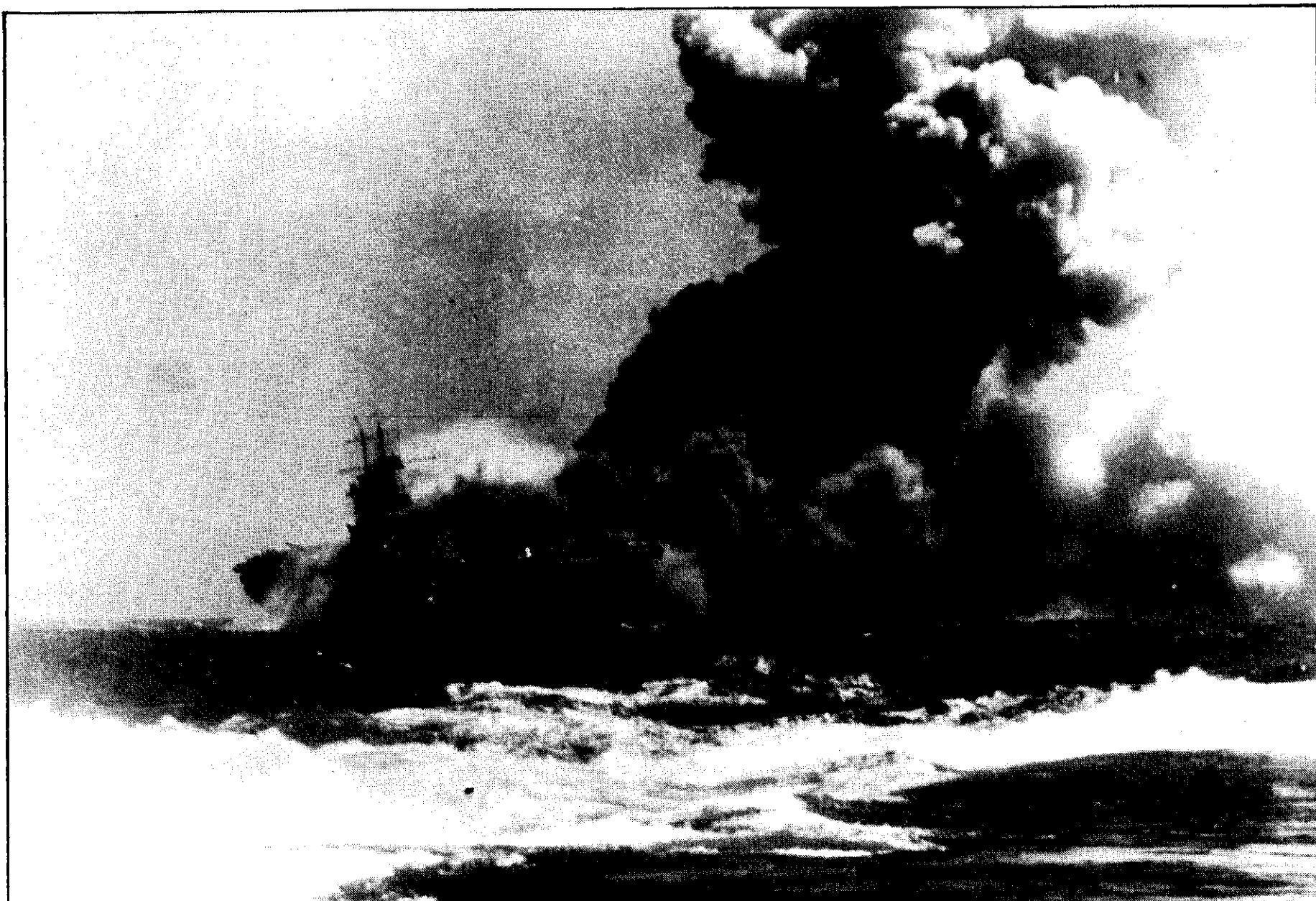
Adm. Taylor was Commander, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base from December 1953 to August 1955 when he reported as Chinfo. In January 1958 he was assigned as COMDESLANFLT and in January 1960 as COMASWLANT. For meritorious conduct at the latter he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit. In December 1953 he became ComFIVE, earning the Distinguished Service Medal. He retired 1 May 1966.

He was a Kentucky colonel and a member of the Virginia chapter of the Society of Cincinnati. He belonged to the New York Yacht Club and the Army-Navy Club.

Surviving are his widow, Elizabeth Fay, 245 Bay Colony Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23451; a daughter, Mrs. Walter H. Butler, Jr. of Palm Beach, Fla.; three brothers, Capt. Thomas H. Taylor, USN (Ret.) '40 of Leesburg, Va., Cdr. Crittenden B. Taylor, USN (Ret.) '30 of Sun City, Ariz., and Richard B. Taylor of Lima, Ohio; a sister; and eight grandchildren.

\* Shipmate magazine, July/August, 1973.





*The aircraft carrier U.S.S. Wasp (CV-7) aflame and listing, south of San Cristobal Island, after being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 15 September 1942. The Duncan rescued 719 survivors and put them ashore or transferred them to other ships the next day at Espiritu Santo Island. (Official USN photo)*



U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485)

Medals Awarded (Rescue of USS WASP (CV-7) Survivors, 9/15/42):

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS MEDALS:

Roman Joseph Olek, Machinist's Mate First Class, USN

CITATION:<sup>1</sup>

"Subsequent to the torpedoing and sinking of the U.S.S. WASP on the afternoon of Sept. 15, 1942, the U.S.S. DUNCAN picked up a total of 721 officers and men, members of her crew. Owing to the danger of additional submarine attacks, the DUNCAN slowly crisscrossed the area containing the majority of the personnel who had jumped clear of the WASP. Many of the swimmers, wounded, or exhausted, were unable to hold the lines and life preservers tossed to them. Upon their own initiative Olek and McIntosh, both strong swimmers, stripped off all shoes and clothing and dove into the water to assist those too weak to help themselves. In complying with the order for the DUNCAN, "to clear the area immediately and screen the cruisers," it was necessary to leave behind both boats still loaded with survivors and towing others. Some time later one of these boats found Olek and McIntosh cheering and encouraging other men in the water, while swimming themselves without aid of life preservers."

Lieutenant (junior grade) Jack Gilbert Smyth, USNR

CITATION:<sup>2</sup>

"For outstanding heroism as Boat Officer of the USS DUNCAN during rescue operations in the Pacific Area after the torpedoing of the USS WASP by enemy Japanese forces on September 15, 1942. Maneuvering his small boat through the debris-littered sea, which was covered with flaming oil and ringing with the cries of the injured, Lieutenant (junior grade) Smyth and his crew worked unceasingly to rescue survivors from the stricken ship. Knowing that quantities of gasoline stored on the USS WASP might explode at any moment, he nevertheless took his boat under the starboard bow of the flaming carrier and rescued personnel isolated in the forward gun galleys and on the flight deck and trapped by fire and exploding ammunition. Although menaced by bursting shells, Lieutenant (junior grade) Smyth kept on with his work of rescue. By his fearless devotion to duty and extreme courage he saved many who otherwise might have perished."

\* \* \* \* \*

1 Source: Adraft citation on index cards at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, taken from the C.O. DUNCAN letter of 2/24/43. The formal citation was undoubtedly reworded.

2 Source: A service biography of Lt.(jg) Smyth at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. Awarded posthumously. Lt.(jg) Smyth was killed in the Battle of Cape Esperance, 10/12/42.



LETTER OF COMMENDATION

Bruner Watson Flowers, Pharmacist's Mate First Class

CITATION:<sup>1</sup>

"Subsequent to the torpedoing and sinking of the U.S.S. WASP on the afternoon of September 15, 1942, the U.S.S. DUNCAN picked up a total of 721 officers and men, members of her crew.

"Lt.(jg) Broccolo, CPhM King and Flowers, PhM1c, constituted the medical department of the DUNCAN. All three worked continuously for a period of over 30 hours, treating and caring for the wounded. Lt.(jg) Broccolo, assisted by King, personally treated all of the more serious cases. Flowers handled the one or two serious cases quartered in the after part of the ship and supervised the treatment of the many less seriously injured personnel quartered aft."

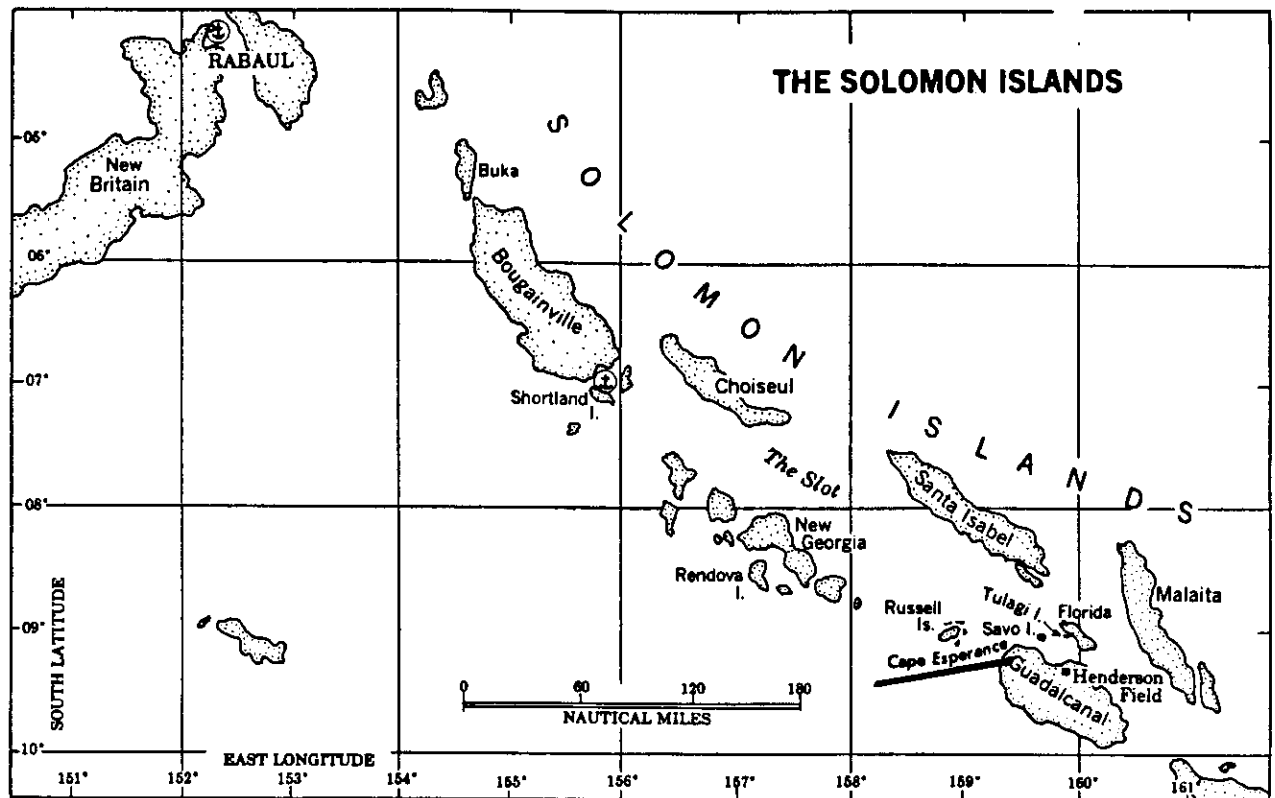
\* \* \* \* \*

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
October, 2000





**The Battle of Cape Esperance**  
11-12 October 1942



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

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

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
February, 1996



Serial 022

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

SECRET

**DECLASSIFIED**

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

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

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

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

2. The following is a chronological sequence of events:

(a) At 2145 slowed to 25 knots.

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

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

SECRET

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

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

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

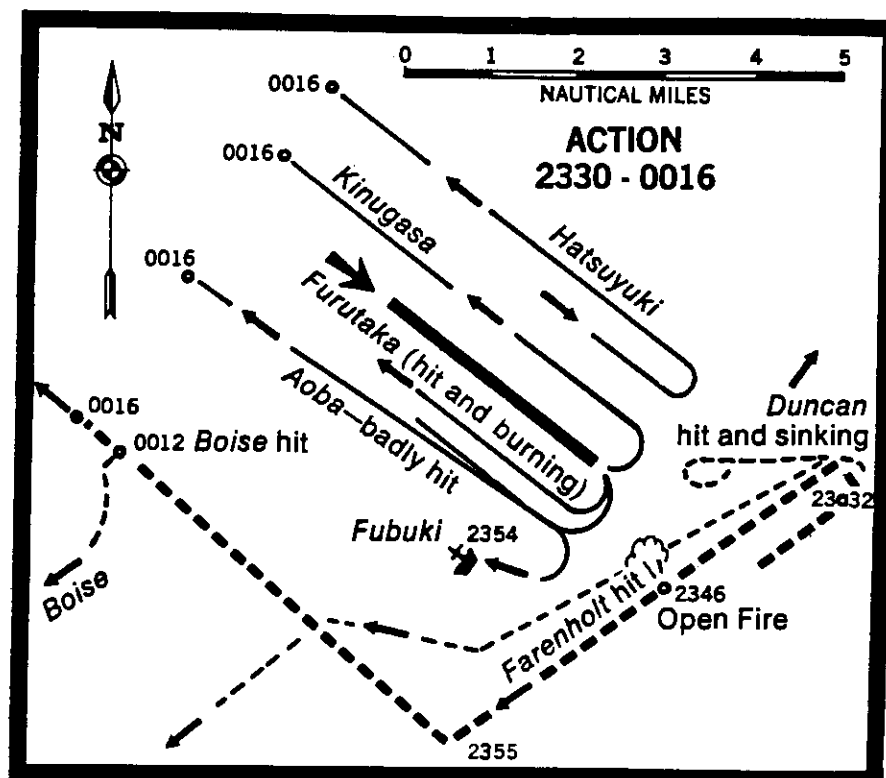
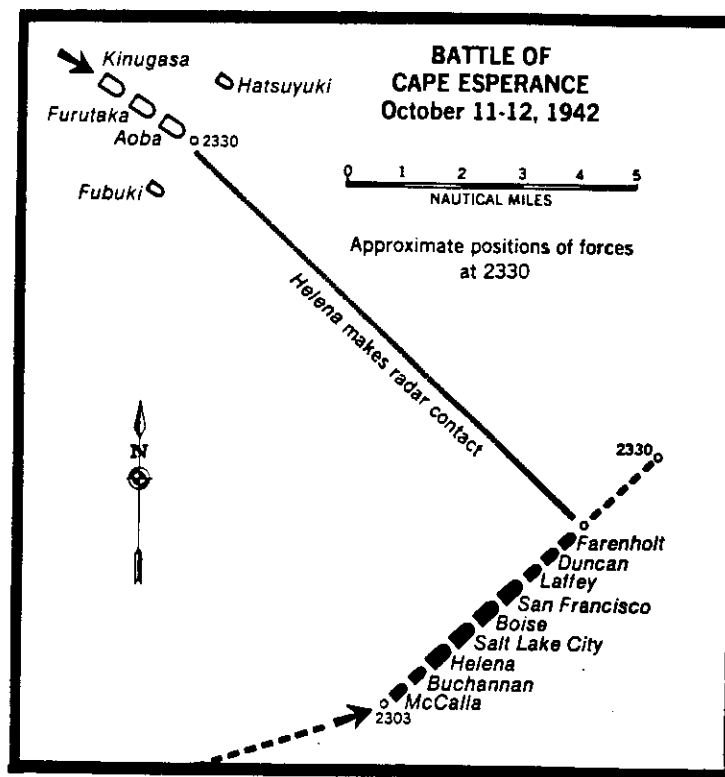
(f) At 2245 sighted two blue lights on beach at Northwest end of Guadalcanal which had the appearance of range lights and oriented such that they may have been intended as aids to the approaching enemy force.

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

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

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

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



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



DECLASSIFIED

October 23, 1942.

SECRET

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

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

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

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

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

SECRET

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

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

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

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

5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

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



October 23, 1942.

SECRET

## DECLASSIFIED

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

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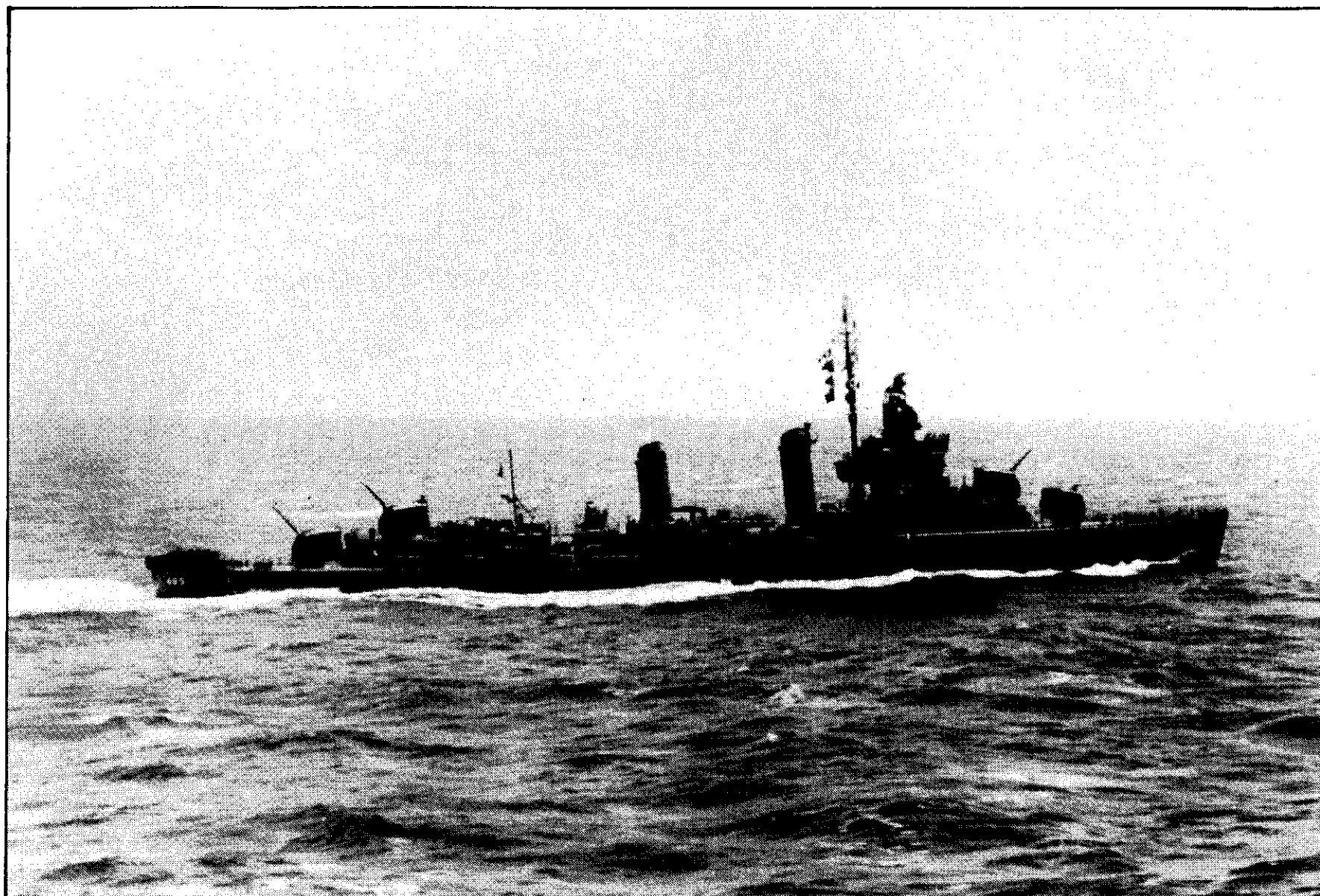
(b) The use of "Roger" for receipt of a TBS message was apparently misunderstood as an order to commence firing. It is recommended that either the signal to commence firing be changed, or the manner of receipting for TBS messages be changed in order to avoid possible misinterpretation or confusion.

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

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

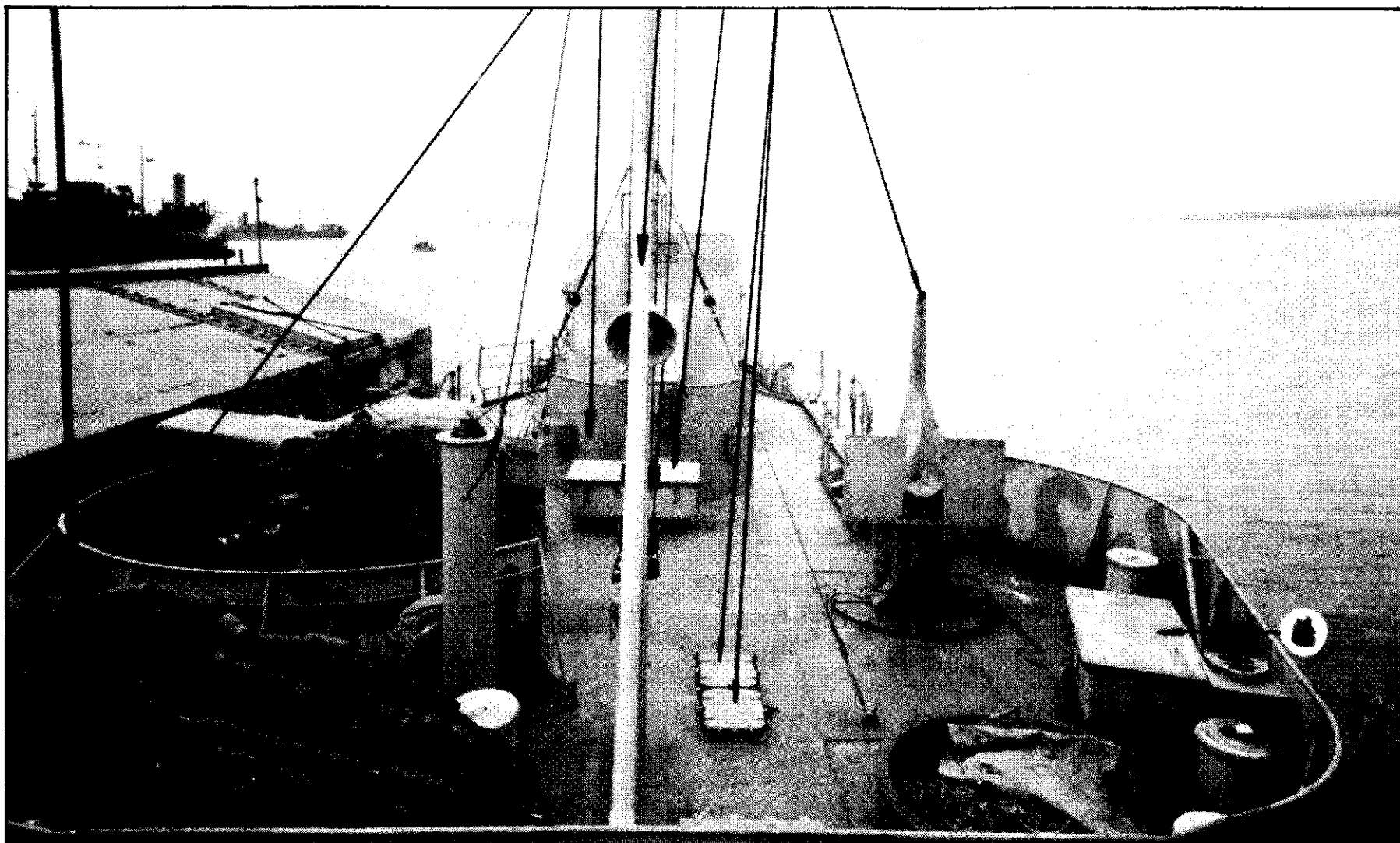
R. G. TOBIN





*The U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) (LCdr. E. B. Taylor) under way in the South Pacific on 7 October 1942, seen from the escort carrier U.S.S. Copahoe (AVG-12) (a converted oiler later redesignated a CVE) as she delivered aircraft to Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Five days later the Duncan was sunk in the Battle of Cape Esperance. (NHC/Washington photograph courtesy of modeler Michael McGee.)*





Looking aft at the after gun platform of another Livermore-class destroyer, the U.S.S. Aaron Ward (DD-483). Note the waist-high wind screen for the secondary conn station, behind the mainmast with its fixed forestay and the ready-service ammunition box in the center of the picture. From here Ensign Frank A. Andrews, USN, conned the Duncan after fires forced the Commanding Officer, LCdr. Taylor, and all surviving bridge personnel to abandon ship down over the side. Ordered to beach the ship by the senior officer then on board, Lt. H. R. Kabat, Ensign Andrews, assisted by Chief Torpedoman Boyd, attempted to run the Duncan aground on Savo Island. Before they could do so the ship lost all power and stopped. Finally, amidst exploding ammunition and with no means to fight the fires, they too were forced to abandon ship. (Official U.S.N. photograph.)

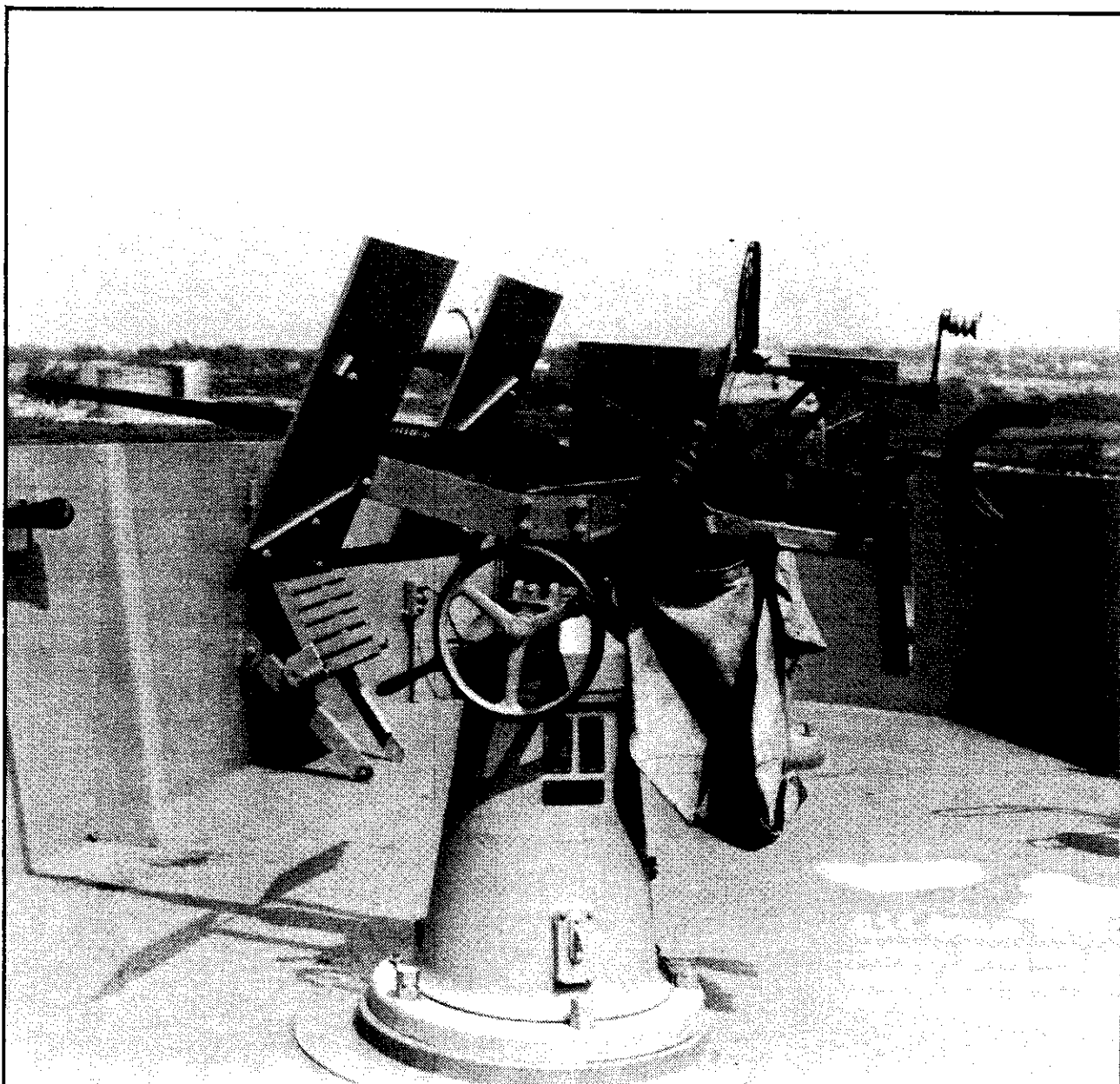




*This view of a quad 1.1-inch/75 machine gun/cannon on a destroyer escort shows what the mount on the starboard side of the Duncan's after gun platform looked like. (It was balanced there by a 20-mm Oerlikon machine gun/cannon to port.) Dubbed as the "Chicago Piano" for the way it fired, this medium-range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







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



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BY 711 DATE 8-16-60

## ACTION REPORT

COMMANDER IN CHIEF, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET

SERIAL 00771

MAY 6, 1943

ACTION REPORT.

[ DETAILED REPORT OF ACTION OF U.S.S. DUNCAN (485)  
DURING ENGAGEMENT WITH JAPANESE FORCES OFF  
SAVO ISLAND, 11-12 OCTOBER 1942. ]

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October 16, 1942.

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From: Commanding Officer, EX-U.S.S. DUNCAN  
To : Commander Task Force SIXTY FOUR

Via : Commander Destroyer Squadron TWELVE

Subject: Detailed Report of the Action of the U.S.S. DUNCAN (485) During the Engagement with Enemy Japanese Forces off Savo Island, Solomon Island Group, during the Night of 11-12 October, 1942.

Reference: (a) Preliminary Report of Such Action Made Direct to ComTaskFor64 dated Oct. 14, 1942.

Enclosure: (A) Combined accounts of the actions of various individual members of the crew of the U.S.S. DUNCAN during this engagement with the enemy.

1. Reference (a) was submitted directly to Commander Task Force SIXTY FOUR upon receipt of orders for the transfer of the U.S.S. DUNCAN survivors to the U.S.S. FULLER and the indicated immediate departure of Task Force SIXTY FOUR. It was prepared from the memory of the writer and the one or two other survivors he was able to consult.

2. Subsequent to submission of reference (a), the Commanding Officer of the EX-U.S.S. DUNCAN has been able to question many of the surviving officers and petty officers of the DUNCAN

The following report has been compiled from their statements and the recollection of the writer.

3. Due to the death of the yeoman detailed to maintain the record of the action and the loss of all records in the wreckage of the chart house and subsequent loss of the ship, it has been necessary to rely entirely upon the memory of various survivors for factual data and the sequence of events subsequent to the start of the turn to the left to a course of 230 degrees T. as ordered by the O.T.C. at 2332 (-11 Zone time).

4. The tactical maneuver of the DUNCAN as reported in the following differs only in one respect from that as reported in reference (a). In preparing the latter, the Commanding officer was under the impression that the turn of the DUNCAN from an easterly to a northwesterly course to uncover the torpedo battery to starboard was made to the right. The Executive Officer positively states, confirmed by the helmsman, that upon clearing one of our destroyers, the Commanding Officer gave

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DD485/A4-1

October 16, 1942

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the order "Left full rudder, prepare to fire torpedoes to starboard" and that the DUNCAN actually swung left towards the Japanese cruiser in gaining the torpedo firing course instead of right as previously reported.

5. During the afternoon of October 11th, the U. S.S. DUNCAN was on station in the anti-submarine screen of Task Group 64, bearing forty-five (45°) degrees relative, distance 4,000 yards from the U.S.S. SAN FRANCISCO, the formation guide. The base course at this time was 318° T., and the formation speed was being gradually increased to 29 knots. The cruisers were in column in the following order: U.S.S. SAN FRANCISCO, U.S.S. BOISE, U.S.S. SALT LAKE CITY and U.S.S. HELENA. Order of ships in the anti-submarine screen from the port bow around head and to starboard was: U.S.S. MC CALLA, U.S.S. BUCHANAN, U.S.S. FARENHOLT, U.S.S. DUNCAN and U.S.S. LAFFEY. Late in the afternoon the BUCHANAN dropped out of the screen to stand by one of the cruiser planes in the water. The DUNCAN moved up a station 30° on the starboard bow of the guide. This latter station was maintained throughout the approach.

6. At 1815, in obedience to signal made by the O.T.C. earlier in the afternoon, the crew were called to General Quarters, Condition Afirm was set, and shortly thereafter, all Stations were reported manned and the ship was reported by the Executive Officer as ready for action. The former Communication Officer had recently been detached, and in the absence of another officer available and qualified to take the conn in formation at high speed, the Commanding Officer directed the Executive officer to remain on the Navigating Bridge to assist the former. The Commanding officer intended to release the Executive Officer to his normal battle station in secondary conn when it appeared that action would be imminent. The rapidity of subsequent events prevented the latter. The services of this experienced officer on the bridge were invaluable to the Commanding Officer during the subsequent engagement.

7. At 2025 the guide reported over TBS that his course was 330° T. and at 2122 fleet course was changed to 000° T. The DUNCAN maneuvered to regain assigned station in the screen. Shortly thereafter formation speed was reduced to permit the curisers to launch planes. What was first believed to be a very bright flare was noted on the starboard beam of the third cruiser in column. The latter ship was observed to temporarily drop abeam of the fourth ship.

DECLASSIFIED

DD485/AF-1

October 16, 1942

8. At 2226 orders to change formation course to 075° T. were received over TBS and shortly thereafter at 2231 the signal to concentrate. The DUNCAN then proceeded to take station in column astern of the FARENHOLT, as second ship of the van destroyers, ahead of the SAN FRANCISCO. The LAFFEY was observed to take station astern of the DUNCAN. At 2308 orders for a formation change of course to 050° T were received. After steadying on this course the Gun Director reported numerous questionable radar pips at varying ranges and bearings to port.

9. At 2332 orders for a formation change of course to the left to 230° T. were received. The DUNCAN remained in column astern of the FARENHOLT until this turn was approximately three-quarters completed when the ship was steadied on approximately a westerly course (270°). This served to bring the FD radar contacts, which were now reported as good clear contacts, slightly on the starboard bow, distance 8,000 yards. The FARENHOLT appeared to be on an approximately parallel course of the port bow, and the Commanding Officer believed that the former was heading to close these radar contacts. He, therefore, increased speed to 30 knots and changed course slightly more to the right. It was noted that the third cruiser in our column had about completed its turn and steadied on the new formation course at this time.

10. Within a very few minutes, report of a radar contact bearing 298° was heard over the TBS, followed by an inquiry from the O.T.C. to ComDesRon 12 as to whether he was taking station ahead and the reply "Affirmative, moving up your starboard side". The DUNCAN by this time had opened somewhat to starboard on the FARENHOLT and was headed to close a large war vessel just sighted between 20° and 30° on the starboard bow, distance approximately 5,000 yards. Almost immediately the orders to "Commence Firing" were heard over the TBS and our battle line was seen to open fire on this vessel, which we were now able to identify as a Japanese cruiser heading on a southwesterly course. At least two direct hits were observed on this cruiser from this first broadside from our battle line. Her guns were trained in and she appeared to be almost dead in the water. The DUNCAN at this stage was on the port quarter of the Jap cruiser distant from it approximately 2,000 yards. In order to clear the line of fire of the HELENA, right standard rudder was ordered and almost immediately after the swing to starboard had started a second large war ship was reported close aboard forward of our starboard beam. Up to this moment the Commanding Officer had been conning the ship from the port wing of the bridge. The executive officer was stationed on the starboard wing. The executive officer pointed out this target to the Commanding Officer, inviting particular attention to the turtle appearance of the uptake forward of her leading stack. It appeared to be heading on a southwesterly course at a speed of from 10 to 15 knots.

October 16, 1942

11. Orders were given to prepare to fire torpedoes to port. At this moment one of our own destroyers (presumed to have been the LAFFEY) was sighted to port, also apparently turning with right rudder. Possible collision appeared imminent, but this destroyer dropped rapidly abaft the beam, the DUNCAN still maneuvering at flank speed (30 knots).

12. The DUNCAN was now abaft the beam of the target, and had missed the opportunity to fire torpedoes to port as a result of the foregoing maneuver. Orders then were given for "Left full rudder, prepare to fire torpedoes to starboard", and the ship swung rapidly to the left to parallel the target, by now definitely identified as a Japanese cruiser. Two turrets were noted forward of the bridge with guns still trained forward. This cruiser was observed to be swinging to the right and increasing speed. A smaller warship was seen passing under her stern heading for the disengaged side, and flashed of gun fire noted from vessels still further astern of the enemy cruiser. The DUNCAN received her first hit at about this time, probably in No. 1 Fireroom.

13. As the DUNCAN started swinging to left to the torpedo firing course orders were given to Gun Control to "Commence Firing when on the target". The Gunnery Officer reports that "the main battery opened fire on the enemy target (cruiser) as it bore approximately 30° relative on the starboard bow, using a radar range of 3,300 yards, guns and director in automatic. The first salvo was observed to land just short of the waterline and a spot of up 200 applied. Subsequent salvos were observed to pass into the superstructure area. After eight or ten salvos, the target was observed to "blow up" and fire was shifted to an enemy destroyer to the right of the cruiser, range now down to 2,250 yards (by radar). Two salvos, both hitting, were fired when the DUNCAN was hit in the bridge area, and the Director lost control. Guns #1, #3, and #4 were observed to continue to fire by local control.

14. The turn to the left from an easterly to a westerly course served to place the DUNCAN directly between the enemy cruiser and our own battle line, which was observed to take this target under fire as the DUNCAN steadied on a torpedo firing course. One torpedo was fired from director control when a shell bursting forward of the director platform severely wounded the Torpedo Officer and wrecked the torpedo director. As the DUNCAN forged abeam of the Jap cruiser, one more torpedo was fired by the Chief Torpedoman, Boyed, from the tubes in local control. Two distinct explosions similar to those resulting from torpedo hits were observed on the port side of the Jap cruiser almost immediately following the launching of each of these torpedoes. Following the second torpedo hit, this cruiser was also hit by shells from our battle line. Almost immediately she was observed to crumble in the middle, then roll over and disappear.



CLASSIFIED

October 16, 1942

15. In addition to the earlier hit in #1 Fireroom and the hit near the Torpedo Director, #1 Smokepipe had been knocked over and a shell had exploded in the handling room of #2 Gun. The latter hit caused a fire which rapidly got beyond control. At the same time a report was received on the bridge that a shell had exploded in Gun #3 magazine. Subsequent investigation indicates that this was an erroneous report meant for Gun #2. After giving the order to fire torpedoes the Commanding Officer, appreciating that he was in the crossfire between the Jap cruiser and our battle line, ordered the port fighting lights turned on. These went on momentarily, but went off again when all lighting, power and control was lost on the bridge.

16. At this point the DUNCAN was simultaneously hit by four or more shells. One bursting in the chart house killed all personnel therein, wrecked the chart house and blocked passage from below. Either this same shell or a second one killed the Machine Gun Battery Officer (lieut.(jg) Rhodes) at his station on the after side of the director platform, killed four men on the wings of the bridge, one of whom was standing alongside the Commanding Officer. Number one fireroom was hit a second time, killing all of the crew who had remained at their station to secure the forward boilers after the first hit. Another shell bursting in or near main radio killed all the personnel stationed therein, and Ensign Lane, who was stationed in the Coding Room adjacent. Another shell entered the Plotting Room, wrecked the I.C. board, but killed only one man. The shells bursting in Radio and #1 Fireroom started fires which quickly spread beyond all control. Except for two men, both badly wounded, the Forward Repair Party, under charge of Lieut.(jg) Smyth and stationed on the main deck over #1 Fireroom, were killed. The Commanding Officer believes that some of these hits may have come from port, possibly shorts from our battle line or the result of mistaking the DUNCAN for an enemy destroyer.

17. A hurried survey at this time disclosed the following damage; #2 Gun Mount a mass of flame, with the fire and explosions from the handling room cutting off access to the forecabin; the bridge level and above isolated by the fire just below; the chart house and after end of the navigating bridge wrecked; #1 Fireroom open to the sky and on fire, cutting off all access between the forward and the after parts of the ship; all communication leads from the Pilot House to other parts of the ship dead; byro repeater out; no answer from signal over the engine annunciators; and the bridge steering control lost. The ship had left rudder on when steering control was lost, and the effect of this carried the DUNCAN clear of the line of fire and aft of the battle area. The bridge level was enveloped in steam escaping from a ruptured drum or line in #1 Fireroom. In an attempt to clear the Pilot House of smoke and steam the forward ports were opened, but heat and flame from #2 Gun Mount forced them to be closed again immediately.

DECLASSIFIED  
DD485/AL-1

October 16, 1942

18. The director crew and remainder of the uninjured on the director platform lowered the wounded to the starboard wing of the bridge. When it became apparent to the Commanding Officer that the Bridge was completely isolated and the fires forward, aft and beneath were increasing in intensity, he ordered the personnel gathered on the bridge level to get clear. At this time the ship was still turning slightly to port, making at least 15 knots speed through the water. An attempt was made to reach the life net just beneath the port wing of the bridge, but smoke and flame drove the men back. The only avenue of escape from the bridge level was into the water over the starboard wing of the bridge. An attempt was made to signal the crew of Gun #1 and survivors from Gun #2, who were gathered in the eyes of the ship and isolated by the fire which had now spread to the magazines under Gun #2. Under the supervision of the Executive Officer the wounded and survivors on the bridge level were passed into the water.

19. The Commanding Officer made a final unsuccessful attempt to establish communication with the after part of the ship, and then made an inspection of the bridge level. Ammunition in the forward 20 mm. ready service boxes had been exploding for some time and the port wing of the bridge was now on fire. All the living had apparently gotten clear, and the Commanding Officer jumped from the starboard bridge shield approximately one-half hour after having given the original order to the bridge personnel to clear the bridge area. At this time the ship had taken up a swing to the right, still making an estimated 15 knots or better speed through the water. Flame had spread to the bridge level from below, and the ammunition in the forward magazines was exploding. It is estimated that the first order to clear the bridge was given some time between 0030 and 0100. From his position in the water the Commanding Officer observed the ship to continue to steam in circles for a time longer, with a roar of steam from #1 Fireroom, the forward part of the ship a mass of flames. The commanding Officer and Whelan, R. E. GM2c, were picked up by a boat from the MC CALLA at 1000 the following morning.

20. The succeeding account has been pieced together from the statements of the two junior officers and various chief petty officers who remained aboard the after part of the ship some time longer in an effort to control the ship and subdue the fires. The Chief Engineer (Lieut. Kabat), the senior officer remaining aboard in this part of the ship, was badly bitten later by sharks and was not interviewed by the Commanding Officer.

21. Contrary to the early report of a hit in Gun #3 handling room, the hull and fittings aft of #1 Fireroom were not appreciably damaged by shellfire with the exception of the Machine Shop over #1 Engineer room and a shell or fragment which pierced the forward distribution board in #1 Engineer room.

DECLASSIFIED

DD485/A4-1

October 16, 1942

22. Guns #3 and #4 continued to fire a few rounds at the Jap destroyer by local control until the target was lost in the continued swing of the ship to port. Ensign F. A. Andrews, who had been stationed as Starshell Illumination Officer in Gun #3, went to secondary conn and established communication with the after engineroom and steering aft. Steering control was secured by steering aft and rudder shifted to full right with the idea of beaching the ship on what was later identified as Savo Island. This was abandoned and rudder shifted to hard left when there appeared to be a chance of saving the ship. Shortly thereafter the engines stopped due to loss of steam. Chief Torpedoman Boyd had joined Ens. Andrews at secondary conn. As the ship lost headway they repaired to the main deck to assist in fighting the fires.

23. Lieut. Kabat was directing the various parties fighting the fires. The forward bulkhead in the Machine Shop was open and flame from #1 Fireroom threatening to spread aft blocking all egress from #1 Engineroom, the forward engine was secured and the crew ordered to abandon the engineroom. This was only made possible by the action of the topside fire fighting parties succeeding in temporarily clearing the space around the engineroom starboard escape hatch. Upon receiving word that the after fireroom had lost feed suction, #2 Engineroom was secured in an effort to retain enough steam pressure to feed one boiler with sea water, but the pressure dropped too quickly.

24. Loss of steam had forced securing of the pumps on the firemain, and the flames began spreading aft. The continuous explosion of ammunition in the forward part of the ship was creating much flying debris and the order was passed aft to Abandon Ship.

25. A group of volunteers under charge of Lieut. (jg) Coley and Chief Water Tender Holt repaired to the after fire-room and manned the hand fuel oil pump in an attempt to raise enough steam to run a fire and bilge pump, but found insufficient water in the boiler. The gasoline handy billy pump was then connected to the boiler feed system in an effort to feed sea water to the boiler. The first shot of cold water in the steam drum flashed into steam, which forced its way back through the handy billy.

26. A final effort was then made by this group to continue the fight against fire with the handy billy, and when this failed by the CO2 extinguishers remaining and a bucket brigade. With the fires continuing and the ammunition explosions increasing in violence this group finally Abandoned Ship, the last man leaving from aft at about 0200.

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DD485/A4-1

October 16, 1942.

27. A salvage party from the U.S.S. MC CALLA boarded the hulk of the DUNCAN early in the morning of the 12th, and in spite of their most strenuous efforts to save it the ship sank several hours later. They reported that the ship was completely gutted by fire forward of #1 engineroom bulkhead. Identification tags could be found on only two of the many bodies located in this part of the ship. The Commanding Officer has been informed that the ship carried down with it an unexploded 8" shell in the Machine Shop.

28. It is realized that the action of the Commanding Officer in placing this ship between the enemy cruiser and our own battle line is subject to criticism. The following considerations led to such action:

(a) When first sighted, as the DUNCAN started her first turn to the right from a westerly to an easterly course, this cruiser appeared to be abeam or slightly abeam of the HELENA, the fourth ship in our battle line.

(b) It was evident that the Japanese cruiser was turning to a northwesterly course and picking up speed.

(c) This enemy ship had not as yet been brought under fire by our battle line, nor had there been indication that its presence was definitely known. It was not until after the DUNCAN had nearly completed her swing back to a torpedo firing course and as the first torpedo was launched that this target was brought under fire by our battle line.

(d) The Commanding Officer knew that it was the intention of the O.T.C. to close the enemy to insure his destruction, even though some damage was incurred by our forces. He believes that seldom has a destroyer been presented with as favorable an opportunity for launching torpedoes against an enemy target, and feels that the two torpedo hits obtained in this target justify his action. The undoubtedly contributed materially to her complete destruction, witnessed a few moments later after shells from our battle line were observed to hit. From a study of silhouettes since the action, this cruiser has been identified by the Executive Officer, Gunnery Officer, Chief Torpedoman and others as either the AOBA or a ship of a similar class.

29. The recovery of so many survivors by the U.S.S. MC CALLA is considered remarkable. When the personnel trapped in the bow and on the bridge level were forced by fire to drop into the water, the ship still had considerable headway on. By the time the wounded were lowered into the water and the remaining survivors had jumped, individuals were scattered over a wide area.

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DD485/A4-1

October 16, 1942

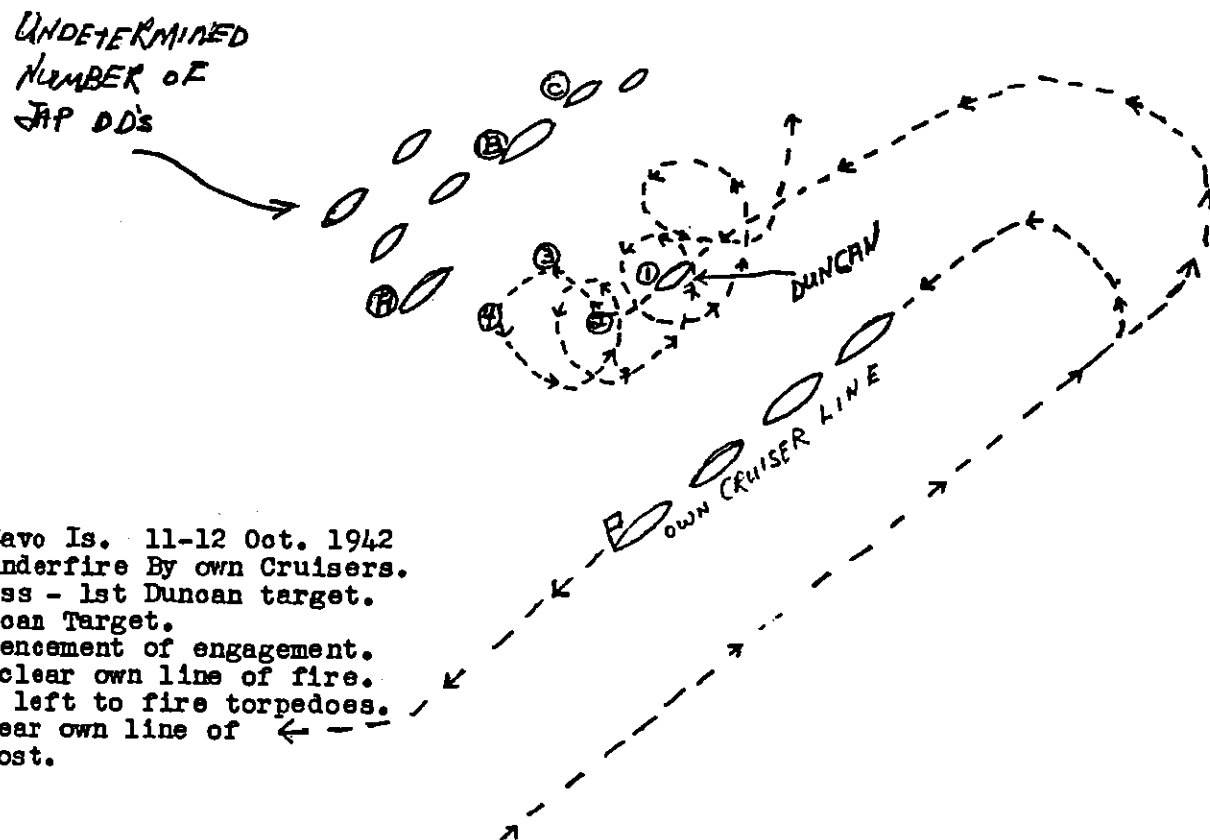
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The majority of survivors were picked up in scattered groups of two or three and many singles. Only one man who it is definitely known succeeded in getting into the water is still unaccounted for. The recovery of so many is due undoubtedly to the perseverance of the Commanding Officer of the MC CALLA, and to the assistance of the planes despatched next morning from Guadalcanal.

E. B. TAYLOR



UNDETERMINED  
NUMBER OF  
JAP DD's



# U.S.S. DUNCAN

Maneuvers in Battle off Savo Is. 11-12 Oct. 1942

A-1st Jap Cruiser taken underfire By own Cruisers.

B-Jap Cruiser of AUBA class - 1st Duncan target.

C-Jap Destroyer - 2nd Duncan Target.

①-Duncan Position at commencement of engagement.

②-Duncan turned right to clear own line of fire.

③-Sighted AUBA and turned left to fire torpedoes.

④-Started turn left to clear own line of fire when all control lost.

SECRET





~~SECRET~~ ENCLOSURE-A  
~~SECRET~~

1. The following accounts of commendable action by individual members of the DUNCAN's crew were noted personally by the Commanding Officer or have been reported to him by responsible officers and petty officers. They cannot by any means include all cases of an exceptional performance of duty.

The circumstances were such as to require the highest personal courage and devotion to duty for individuals to remain at their battle stations in the face of repeated hits and to continue to inflict punishment on the enemy.

(a) At about 2350 the telephone talker in #1 Fireroom reported to the Chief Machinist Mate in charge of the forward engineroom (Lester Magee) that the fireroom had been badly hit and the two boilers probably would have to be secured. Upon being directed to secure boilers #1 and #2, word was received in the engineroom that the boilers were being secured, but that the fireroom crew were remaining at their post to fight a fire and would not leave the fireroom until everything "was straightened out". A short time later all communication with this fireroom was lost. A large caliber shell apparently burst in this fireroom. All of its personnel are missing, undoubtedly killed at their stations. There was sufficient time between the first and second hits in this fireroom for all of the personnel to have cleared the area if they had abandoned their stations after the first hit. Their devotion to duty in remaining in order to prevent further possible damage to the ship cost them their lives. The following men were stationed in #1 fireroom at this time:

In charge - Allen, D. M., WTLc	
Winzenrith, W.M., WTLc	Tripp, T. J., Flc
Dietz, T. E., WT2c	Roberts, E. V., Flc
Smith, A. P., WT2c	Dunisch, D. G., Flc

(b) When the after mess hall was hit near the door to the plotting room (I.C. room), Christensen, C., EMLc was killed at his post at the I.C. board. All communication and fire control circuits went dead. Combs, C. E., FC1c, shifted the master gyro to battery. The I.C. room started to flood. At the direction of Colbeck, T. R., CFC(AA), Pallansch, E. P., FC3c, Hess, E. A., FC3c, Ham, E.B., Slc, and McDowell, J.C., Slc, carried Christensen to a table in the after mess hall. In response to a cry for assistance, Colbeck found Lieut.(jg) Broccolo, (MC), USNR, at the head of the ladder leading to the after mess hall supporting CPhM King, who had been badly hurt. Colbeck assisted the doctor in placing King on a mess table in the mess hall, and then returned topside to the galley passage, which he now found blocked with debris. Upon turning towards the wardroom he found the latter on fire and called for the fire hose from the after mess hall. Upon getting no water,

from the hose he attempted to fight the fire with a CO2 extinguisher with partial success. Colbeck then returned to the after mess hall and asked the doctor if he needed any assistance. The latter had just examined Christensen and pronounced him dead and then started looking for medical supplies to treat King. Two more shells struck in the vicinity of the after mess hall, and after subduing one small fire McDowell, Pallansch, Combs and Colbeck returned to the galley passage and succeeded in getting through flame and steam from #1 Fireroom over the starboard side into the water. After the ship was dead in the water Colbeck and Combs swam back to it and were pulled aboard aft where they joined the fire fighting parties and were among the last to finally leave. Lieut. (jg) Broccolo had gone to the forward mess hall in his search for medical supplies and was not seen again. His determination to find medicine to treat King undoubtedly cost him his life. The actions of the plotting room crew, and of Colbeck and Combs particularly, are to be commended.

(c) The Torpedo Officer, Lieut. (jg) R. L. Fowler, USNR, accurately set up the torpedo director and fired one shot which was observed to explode in the enemy cruiser just abaft his port beam. Before he was able to fire again he was hit and mortally wounded.

(d) Olek, R. J., MM1c, USN, was one of the two members of the Forward Repair Party who survived the blast which killed the remainder of this party. Though wounded, Olek succeeded in working his way aft before fire from #1 Fireroom cut off the after part of the ship. He joined the fire fighting parties aft, and later attempted to join the crew in the after engine room when attempts were being made to raise steam in the after boilers. When he finally abandoned ship he towed DeOnofrio, D. R. F2c, clear of the ship without mentioning the fact that he himself was wounded.

(e) Boyle, R. B., WT2c, USN, was stationed with the After Repair Party. When the forward fireroom area was hit and enveloped in escaping steam, smoke and flame, Boyle repeatedly ventured as near as possible to the fireroom escape hatch with a fire hose in his efforts to extinguish the fires. As reported by Holt, A. H., CWT(PA), "From the time of receiving the first damage until abandoning ship, he was constantly on hand and many times endangered his own life in attempting to fight fires and help keep the ship afloat.

(f) Boyd, D. H., CTM(PA), USN, was mount captain at the torpedo tubes. He temporarily cleared his station while #1 Stack was falling, then returned to the mount and succeeded in firing the remainder of the torpedoes at the cruiser target, resulting in a second sure hit on same. When driven from his station by flames from #1 Fireroom he went aft and assisted the group there, which was fighting fire and conning the ship.

~~SECRET~~  
~~SECRET~~ CLASSIFIED ENCLOSURE A (CONT'D)

(g) Ensign Frank A. Andrews, USN, was starshell Control Officer at 5" Gun #3. When ship control was lost forward he efficiently established and maintained control aft until steam supply was exhausted, and then diligently fought fires until they were beyond control of the fire fighting parties.

(h) Lieut. (jg) W. H. Coley, USNR, was 171 Battery Officer on the after deck house. When ship control was lost forward he efficiently directed control of the engineering installation until operation of the plant became impossible; directed fighting of fire and himself fought fire until out of control.

(i) Holt, A. H., CWT(PA), USN, was in charge of firerooms. He coolly and efficiently directed efforts to maintain steam and fought fire under trying conditions, displaying qualities of leadership which were unanimously commended by those about him.

(j) The chief machinist mates in charge of the two engine rooms, Magee, Lester, #1 Engine room and Solomon, H.L., #2 Engine room, demonstrated high qualities of leadership and presence of mind in the handling of the men and machinery under their charge. Both engine rooms filled with smoke and steam, even after the ventilating system was secured. When an attempt was made by Magee to reestablish communication aft, the messenger was driven back into the engine room by flames topside around each escape hatch. The Crew of #1 Engine room only succeeded in getting clear when an area around the after starboard escape hatch was temporarily cleared by personnel on deck.

(k) Borcyckowski, F. M., CMM(PA), USN, After Repair Party. He displayed outstanding qualities of leadership in directing the fighting of fires.

(l) The following named men of the director crew administered first aid to Lieut.(jg) Fowler, who was seriously injured and removed him from the ship under most trying and hazardous conditions:

Paige, L. T., CY(PA), USN  
Sobelman, J. S., FC1c, USN  
Bilbro, J. A., FC3c, USNR  
Queen, J. H. Slc, USN

Sobelman removed his life belt and placed it on Lieut.(jg) Fowler when the latter was found to be without support. Sobelman, Bilbro and Queen attended Lieut(jg) Fowler through the night and delivered him safely on board the MC CALLA the following morning.

~~SECRET~~ ENCLOSURE (CONT'D)

(m) Flowers, B. W., PhMlc, USN, was stationed at the Battle Dressing Station Aft. During and after the battle he efficiently and with untiring efforts administered first aid to the wounded. After being rescued and taken on board the MC CALLA he continued his duties without rest for 24 hours. His work undoubtedly saved many from more severe reactions.

(n) Lieut. Hauck, The Gunnery Officer, efficiently controlled his battery, obtaining direct hits on the target with his second salvo, and upon his own initiative shifted targets when the cruiser was seen to break up. When control of the battery was lost by the director, he attempted to reach Gun #2 in order to continue supervision of the available guns in local control. He was blocked below the navigating bridge level by the fire raging just below and returning to the director ordered the crew to evacuate the wounded from the director platform to the starboard wing of the bridge.

(o) The personnel on the navigating bridge came under the personal observation of the Commanding Officer. The shell exploding in the chart house killed two men at the SC radar, a sound stack operator, bridge radioman and the yeoman keeping the record of the battle. Another shell wrecked the after side of the bridge level and killed five men in the wings of the bridge. The bridge level and pilot house became enveloped in smoke and steam escaping from #1 Fireroom. When the pilot house ports were opened to clear the smoke and steam, flames and explosions from #2 Gun Mount forced them to be closed again. In the face of these, the surviving members of the bridge crew remained calmly at their respective stations, obeying immediately every directive of the Commanding Officer in his attempts to regain communications and control of his ship. These men remained quietly at their posts until fire from below spreading to the chart house caused the Commanding Officer to order them to get clear. Under the supervision of the Executive Officer they lowered the wounded into the water, the last of the uninjured finally having to jump clear. The survivors of this group include:

Lt. Cdr. Bryan, Executive Officer.  
Lt. (jg) Beebe, Communication Officer.  
Lehman, W. T., CQM(PA), Asst. Navigator.  
Johnson, E. R., QM2c, Helmsman.  
Chamberlain, W. A., SCK(AA), Telephone Talker.  
Dikker, W. F., SK3c, Engineerroom Annunciators.  
Benson, F. P., SMLc, Senior Signalman.  
Grigg, J. A., SOM3c, TBS Recorder.

The actions of the Executive Officer, Chamberlain as JA telephone talker, and Johnston at the helm are particularly to be commended.

**SECRET** **ENCLOSURE A (CONT'D)**

2. The morale of the survivors was high when picked up by the MC CALLA. They are justly proud of the fact that they engaged in close action with a larger opponent and secured hits with torpedoes and guns, the former leading to its destruction.

The Commanding Officer is proud to have served with such a crew, and hopes that he may have the privilege again.

E. B. TAYLOR



Prepared--May 1, 1943

Pers 328--jls

Signed MAY 8 - 1943

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

COMMANDER EDMUND B. TAYLOR, UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. DUNCAN during action against enemy Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on October 11, 1942. Although his ship had sustained heavy damage under hostile bombardment, Lieutenant Commander Taylor, by skillful maneuvering, successfully launched torpedoes which contributed to the destruction of a Japanese cruiser. Maintaining the guns of the DUNCAN in effective fire throughout the battle, he, when the vessel was finally put out of action, persistently employed to the fullest extent all possible measures to extinguish raging fires and control severe damage. His gallant leadership and courageous conduct under fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

FRANK KNOX

Secretary of the Navy.

Copy to:

Board of Decorations and Medals  
Public Relations, Navy Dept.  
Public Relations, BuPers  
Mrs. Casbarian, Public Relations

Born: April 4, 1904  
Home Addr: c/o Mr. J. Valiant  
Wardour, Md.  
Next of kin: Elizabeth Taylor  
(Wife)  
11 Sanbon St.  
Winchester, Mass.

Ref: Ser 0235 - ComSoPac - Jan 21, 1943

Cas. Status: On Active Duty





THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON

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

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER LOUIS A. BRYAN  
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity aboard the U.S.S. DUNCAN during action against enemy Japanese forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. While his ship was under tremendous hostile bombardment, Lieutenant Commander Bryan, despite severe wounds and repeated shell hits in the vicinity of his station, supervised evacuation of other injured personnel and survivors trapped by fire on the starboard wing of the bridge. By his grim determination and sturdy endurance, maintained at great risk in the face of grave danger, he undoubtedly saved the lives of many men who otherwise might have perished."

For the President,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Frank Knox". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "F".

Secretary of the Navy.



Prepared----March 20, 1943

Pers328-hwb

Signed MAR 27 1943

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

LIEUTENANT FRANK J. BROCCOLO, MEDICAL CORPS, UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE

for service as set forth in the following

**CITATION:**

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Medical Officer aboard the U.S.S. DUNCAN during action against enemy Japanese naval Forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. Although shells struck the ship immediately adjacent to the forward dressing station, Lieutenant Broccolo, despite ever-increasing danger from raging fires, courageously stood by to administer to the wounded. Undiscouraged by the mounting toll of damage, and determined to render maximum aid with available facilities, he was searching for medical supplies amid the wreckage of sick bay when another bomb exploded in that vicinity. His loyal devotion to duty and heroic conduct under fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

FRANK KNOX

Secretary of the Navy.

Copy to:

Board of Awards

Secretary's Files

Public Relations, Navy Dept.

Public Relations, BuPers

Mrs. Casbarian, Public Relations

Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Born: April 3, 1917

Next of kin: Mr. Anthony Broccolo (father)  
1333 So. Asustin Blvd.  
Cicero, Ill.

Home Addr: (same)

Missing in action.

Ref: ComSoPac - Serial 00232 - Jan 21, '43 - Bd Awds Feb 11, '43



Prepared---March 23, 1943

Pers328-hwb

Signed MAR 27 1943

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

LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE ROBERT L. FOWLER, III, UNITED STATES  
NAVAL RESERVE

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism as Torpedo Officer aboard the U.S.S. DINCAH during an engagement with enemy Japanese naval forces on the night of October 11, 1942. Accurately setting up his torpedo director, Lieutenant (junior grade) Fowler, in the firing of his first torpedo, secured the initial hit on a hostile cruiser. Before he could fire the remaining torpedoes, he was fatally wounded by a shell which burst in the vicinity of the director. His conscientious devotion to duty and intrepid conduct under fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave up his life in the defense of his country."

For the President,

FRANK KNOX

Secretary of the Navy.

Born: April 19, 1919

Next of kin: Mrs. Patricia F. Fowler (wife)  
c/o Lt.(jg) Craig Wylie, USNR  
Room 3806, Navy Department  
Washington, D.C.

Home Addr: Katonah, N.Y.

Died from wounds received in action.

Copy to:

Board of Awards

Secretary's Files

Public Relations, Navy Dept.

Public Relations, BuPers

Mrs. Casbarian, Public Relations

Ref: ComSoPac - Ser 00232 - Jan 21, 1943 - Bd Awds Feb 11, 1943



U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485)

Medals Awarded (loss of ship, 10/12/42):<sup>1</sup>

NAVY CROSS

DAVID HERSHEY BOYD, CHIEF TORPEDOMAN, USN

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his profession while serving on board a destroyer during the engagement with the Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. After the torpedo officer was mortally wounded and director control lost after the launching of one torpedo BOYD mounted the torpedo tube and, in spite of fire, succeeded in launching the remaining torpedoes, with one of which he succeeded in making a second positive hit in the side of the enemy cruiser. Shortly after this second hit, the enemy cruiser was observed to crumble in the middle and disappear. His courageous conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*

SILVER STAR MEDAL

ROMNEY BERNARD BOYLE, WATER TENDER SECOND CLASS, USN

CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving on board a destroyer during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. BOYLE repeatedly attempted to prevent fires from spreading in the area around #1 fireroom. By determined effort, he succeeded in clearing the flames away from #1 engine room escape hatch long enough to permit the engineroom crew to escape. His courageous conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Source: Draft citations on index cards at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The formal citations were probably reworded.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
October, 2000





SILVER STAR MEDALS:

BRUNER WATSON FLOWERS, PHARMACIST'S MATE FIRST CLASS

## CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving on board a destroyer during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. During and after the battle, FLOWERS administered effective first aid to the wounded. When he was rescued, after spending about ten hours in the water, he continued his first aid work for a period of thirty-six hours without rest. His medical skill and his determination to carry on under adverse circumstances undoubtedly saved many lives. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*

LIEUTENANT PHILIP FREDERICK HAUCK, USN

## CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while acting as Gunnery Officer of a destroyer during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. Lieutenant HAUCK most ably and efficiently controlled the fire of the main battery of his ship. He secured hits on an enemy cruiser in nine out of the ten salvos fired at it. When he observed this target to break up, on his own initiative he shifted fire to an enemy destroyer, securing hits on this ship in at least four salvos. His leadership and technical ability were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*

ROMAN JOSEPH OLEK, MACHINIST'S MATE FIRST CLASS, USN

## CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while a member of a repair party of a destroyer during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. Though seriously wounded by the shell which wiped out the rest of his repair party, OLEK succeeded in getting aft before fire completely segregated the forward part of his ship and gallantly joined the after fire fighting parties. Because of his condition, it was necessary to restrain him from further entering smoke and steamfilled compartments. His courageous conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*



LETTERS OF COMMENDATION:

THOMAS RICHARD COLBECK, CHIEF FIRE CONTROLMAN, USN

and

CARL EUGENE COMBS, FIRE CONTROLMAN FIRST CLASS, USN

CITATION: (Identical citations)

"For meritorious conduct in action during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on October 11, 1942. COLBECK/COMBS efficiently handled the major casualties in the plotting room of his ship, a destroyer, and determinedly fought the serious fires in his part of the ship. When it became necessary to abandon the forward part of his ship, he dove overboard and swam aft. He then returned aboard and assisted in ship control and fire fighting in the after part of the ship. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN ROBERT HERNDAY, MACHINIST'S MATE SECOND CLASS, USN

CITATION:

"For devotion to duty under adverse conditions during the engagement with Japanese naval forces off Savo Island on the night of October 11, 1942. While in charge of the forward magazine group, HERNDAY directed the removal of ammunition to afford escape for part of the lower handling room crew who were trapped by the fires above their escape hatch. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

\* \* \* \* \*



U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485)

List of Officers, 10/12/42<sup>1</sup>

* <u>Taylor</u> , Edmund Battelle	Lt. Cdr.	USN	Commanding Officer
* <u>Bryan</u> , Louis Allen	Lt. Cdr.	USN	Executive Officer
<u>Hauck</u> , Philip Frederick	Lt.	USN	Gunnery Officer
* <u>Kabat</u> , Herbert Richard	Lt.	USN	Engineering Officer
<u>Beebe</u> , Clifford D.	Lt.(jg)	USNR	Communications Off.
** <u>Smyth</u> , Jack G.	Lt.(jg)	USNR	Ass't. Eng. Officer
** <u>Fowler</u> , Robert L., III	Lt.(jg)	USNR	Torpedo Officer
* <u>Wharton</u> , Richard Thomas	Lt.(jg)	USNR	Ass't. Gunnery Off.
<u>Andrews</u> , Frank Arland	Ensign	USN	First Lieutenant
<u>Coley</u> , Wade H.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Eng. Officer
** <u>Lane</u> , Arthur Stanley, Jr.	Ensign	USN	Ass't. Communications
** <u>Rhodes</u> , Theodore R.	Ensign	USNR	Ass't. Gunnery Off.
** <u>Broccolo</u> , Frank J.	Lt.(jg) (MC)	USNR	Medical Officer

\* \* \* \* \*

1 Sources: A casualty report prepared by BuPers (see below) and the action report of the rescuing destroyer, USS McCalla (DD-488), dated 12 October 1942.

\* Wounded (\*\* Killed) as the result of enemy action on 12 October 1942 at the Battle of Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, according to a machine-generated casualty report at the National Archives prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel c. 1946.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
May, 2000



U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485)

Muster Roll of the Crew, October 12, 1942<sup>1</sup>

ABERNATHY, Elliott Lee	656-25-87	S2c
**ALBRIGHT, Sam "R"	341-98-88	S2c
*ALLAN, William Bruce	100-43-98	SC2c
**ALLEN, David Melvin	261-19-97	WT1c
ALLEN, George Leslie	624-45-78	Matt3c
AMMON, Martin Gustine	650-13-31	MM2c
BACSIK, George	646-31-38	MM2c
BAGALO, Augustine Fred	633-02-43	F2c
BENSON, Francis Parkhurst	234-14-44	SM1c
BEAVERS, Edward Shelby	295-30-36	SC3c
*BERGQUIST, Helmas Herbert	646-31-44	MoMM2c
BERRY, John Robert	??	AS
BETHONE, Malcolm Richard	606-15-95	MM2c
BILBRO, James Allen	632-25-61	FC3c
*BOEHM, Roy Henry	224-20-60	Cox
BORCYCKOWSKI, Francis Martin	305-20-11	CMM
BOWERS, Edward Elory	602-13-82	SC3c
BOYD, David Hershey	327-91-19	CTM
BOYLE, Romny Bernard	336-80-36	WT2c
BROOKS, Donald Earl	243-64-42	MM2c
BUCKNER, James Byrnes	406-40-31	MM1c
BURNHAM, Floyde Alexander	381-40-92	S1c
BURNS, Leo Edwin	321-20-70	Cox
*BYRAM, Rebel	624-26-48	GM2c
CARLSON, Robert Herman	642-05-73	S2c
CARROLL, Francis	606-32-63	S2c
**CASE, Maxwell, Jr.	608-00-74	S2c
CASLER, Raymond "B"	600-13-56	S2c
CASTELLANO, Gaspare	646-60-91	S2c
CATLOW, Raymond	606-34-52	S2c
**CECHARIO, Frank Joseph	202-20-91	S2c
CHABINEC, Myron	642-11-88	S2c
CHAMBERLAIN, Whitney Adelbert	238-45-76	CSK
CHERUBINA, Jack Quentin	250-60-93	S2c
CHISHOLM, Edward Joseph	224-70-70	S2c
**CHRISTENSEN, Clarence	371-86-53	EM1c
CHRISTIANO, Frank (n)	600-13-87	S2c
CISEK, John Peter	224-71-00	S1c
CLEMENT, Donald Irving	311-59-44	S2c
COLBECK, Thomas Richard	401-28-95	CFC
*COMBS, Carl Eugene	291-46-39	FC1c
CONINX, Frank Louis	610-36-71	Y2c
CONLON, Frank Shepard	600-04-53	EM3c
CONNELL, Thomas	646-60-95	S2c
COOK, James Walton	342-32-87	TM3c
**CORMACK, John Alexander	646-58-46	S1c
**CORRIGAN, George Wilfred	224-71-01	S2c
COTTON, Charles Henry	646-63-36	F3c
COVENY, Alfred Andrew	646-60-97	S2c
CRAFT, Ralph Allen, Jr.	606-40-30	S2c
*CRAIG, Warren Samuel	224-71-03	F3c





GRANDALL, George Washington	207-38-12	S2c
CRITCHETT, William Oscar	224-71-03	S2c
*CRUZ, Louis Angel	224-70-53	S2c
CUTLER, Emery	300-64-48	S2c
**DAILEY, Norman Francis	201-82-58	F1c
*DAVENPORT, Paul Jones	346-37-71	BM1c
**DAVIS, Arthur (n)	606-34-22	S2c
*DAVIS, Arthur William	243-93-84	F1c
**DAVIS, George Frank	321-50-90	F2c
DAWSON, George Brimhall	261-81-70	WT1c
DAZEN, Russell John	652-18-10	S1c
**DEITZ, Thomas Edison	274-12-45	WT2c
DE LUCCA, Louis Henry	606-36-84	S2c
DE ONOFRIO, Dominic Rio	207-15-96	F2c
**DERNEHL, Howard George	299-93-28	BM1c
DI FELICE, Leonard (n)	650-24-74	F3c
*DIKKER, William Frederick	622-07-62	S1c
DIGNIN, Robert Jerome	328-78-25	F1c
DINKINS, William Millard	272-82-86	SOM3c
*DI RITTO, Domenic	202-26-41	F3c
DLUGOZIMA, Alexander Joseph	666-15-56	S2c
DOMERY, John Henry, Jr.	600-08-45	EM2c
DONELLE, Frederick Elar	212-77-61	F3c
*DOTY, John Michael	202-17-61	S2c
DRISCOLL, James Aloysius	646-64-60	S2c
**DUBIEL, Stanley John	666-15-37	S2c
DUCKWORTH, Chapel Dell	267-68-76	CGM
DUFFY, Paul James, Jr.	650-24-73	F3c
DUNCAN, James John	224-70-71	S2c
**DUNISCH, Donald George	300-22-89	F1c
DUNLOP, William, Jr.	666-14-22	S2c
*DUNN, Howard Oswald	279-39-39	GM1c
DUNN, Robert Lawrence	650-17-66	S1c
*DUVAL, Ward Edward	300-65-93	S2c
EDWARDS, Quinton DeWitt	272-45-27	TM3c
EGGLESTON, Robert Randolph	295-38-05	MM2c
EHRENBERG, Arthur Charles	224-71-46	S2c
ELKIN, Jack Beck	652-05-50	S2c
ELRICH, Harold Roy	668-11-93	S2c
EMOND, Robert France	606-35-88	F3c
FAFORD, Albert Joseph	646-63-44	F3c
FAIR, William Murray	606-35-78	S2c
*FALLON, Joseph Michael	650-24-63	S2c
*FERREIRA, Edward William	606-20-84	F3c
FERRIS, Millard Dale	646-63-45	S2c
*FIELDING, Charles Edgar	646-62-46	S2c
FIFFICK, Andrew Theodore	652-21-28	S2c
**FILLEBROWN, Thornton Barger	336-51-93	CRM
*FISCHER, Arthur, Jr.	646-57-52	S1c
FLAHERTY, James	600-13-81	S2c
FLEMING, James Francis	224-70-74	S2c
FLORCZAK, Walter Anthony	244-06-70	F3c
FLOWERS, Bruner Watson	262-25-44	PhM1c



**FOWLER, David Byron	606-32-73	S2c
**FREELS, Eilman Ivo	290-60-04	RM2c
GAGNE, Gideon Edward	212-61-81	S1c
GALGANSKI, Russell (n)	311-87-85	S2c
**GINDER, George James	243-69-79	S1c
GIST, William Harold	272-32-77	S1c
**GOODMAN, George Edwin, Jr.	640-02-52	EM3c
GRANT, George (n)	634-04-41	S2c
GREENE, Robert Emerson	311-49-94	S1c
GRIFFIN, Cyril Bateman	295-34-98	WT2c
GRIFFITH, Charles Otis	300-31-27	F2c
GRIGG, James Arthur	656-23-86	SOM3c
**GUENTHER, Warren Kay	223-37-48	RM1c
GUNTHER, Albert Ernest	223-08-43	MM2c
GUTHERY, Dewey Leroy	604-16-50	SOM3c
**HALBERT, Bentley Moon	269-10-58	SOM3c
HAM, Earle Barrett	552-06-54	S1c
**HAVEMAN, John Raymond	622-07-77	S1c
**HAWKINS, James Miller	269-09-59	SOM3c
HERNDAY, John Robert	300-08-92	MM2c
**HESS, Ernest Alfred	316-71-12	FC3c
HIGGINS, William (n)	172-86-87	MM1c
HOHNSBERN, Frank Boyce	337-58-59	S1c
HOLT, Arthur Harold	201-14-80	CWT
**JOHNSON, Emil	201-34-77	SC1c
JOHNSON, Newell "W"	368-55-12	F1c
**JOHNSON, Thomas Russell	266-37-92	S1c
*JOHNSTON, Edward Russell	262-30-67	QM2c
KANDRAVI, Francis George	243-80-21	F1c
KEGEL, William Howard	291-66-15	S1c
*KEMP, John Frederick	300-22-53	F1c
**KING, Isaac Cissroy	102-59-66	CPhM
**KLINE, Frank Lyons	612-11-33	RM2c
KOEHLER, Carl Ernest	328-48-02	FC1c
LaBEAU, Donald Glassfort	311-35-19	TM2c
**LAPPIN, Delbert Jesse	283-44-54	S1c
LARGENT, Robert Griffith	201-74-36	F1c
LARSON, Harold Milton	328-44-86	GM3c
LASSEIGNE, Arthur Edwin	274-23-34	MM2c
LEHMAN, William Tracey	295-10-36	CQM
LE VALLEY, Elwood	213-84-58	F1c
LYONS, Phillip William	291-57-89	F2c
**McADAMS, Robert	243-61-94	CM2c
McCLEARY, Gerald (n)	??	S1c
McDOWELL, John Conner	650-31-06	S1c
McINTOSH, George Patrick	234-00-43	BM2c
MAGEE, Lester (n)	385-47-04	CMM
MAHAN, Glenn Elmer	337-40-32	F1c
MALETTE, Charles (n)	622-09-72	S1c
**MANNA, Joseph	646-08-22	S1c
MARDOS, August, Jr.	402-63-80	MM2c
MARSHALL, Ancel Vernon	265-90-42	Msmth1c
MARTINELLI, Paul (n)	611-19-30	F1c



MARZAN, Tomas (n)	420-51-38	OC1c
MEYER, Roy Edward	647-01-71	S2c
MILEK, Charles Edward	207-17-37	RM2c
*MITCHELL, William (n)	287-01-93	CCStd
MOORE, Robert Lee	283-28-10	F1c
MOORE, William Charles	223-55-11	S1c
MORELAND, Matthew, Jr.	269-15-60	Matt3c
**MORTON, Hubert Allen	346-50-23	CEM
NICOLL, David Russell, Jr.	212-52-69	QM3c
NOLAN, James Francis	224-37-93	S1c
NORMAN, LaVerne Donald	620-04-42	F3c
NORTON, Robert Leonard	223-39-22	MM2c
O'BRIEN, John Vincent	622-38-81	F2c
**O'BRIEN, Leo William	402-86-62	GM3c
*OLEK, Roman Joseph	405-67-25	MM1c
O'MARA, Edward Ralph	328-96-57	F2c
PAIGE, Lennon Troy	265-61-45	CY
PALLANSCH, Edward "P"	648-01-77	FC3c
PACKWOOD, William Roger	268-41-11	FC2c
PALMER, George Vernon	295-96-47	S1c
PAPACODA, Anthony	207-16-93	TM1c
PASTORE, Samuel Anthony	238-50-36	F1c
PETET, Frank Lewis	316-81-75	F2c
PORTERFIELD, George Arthur	279-82-98	F2c
**PURGETT, Robert Leroy	279-61-92	SM3c
**PUZINES, John Joseph	206-84-87	WT2c
QUEEN, James Harold	295-61-83	S1c
QUINN, Francis Harold	642-07-13	MM2c
RASCH, Joseph Morris, Jr.	644-04-66	RM3c
**RIZZI, Rosalio Mario	224-11-51	S1c
**ROBERTS, Edgar Vernon	393-43-53	F1c
**ROSENFELT, James Lowell	372-09-98	F1c
ROSHTO, Burton (n)	274-39-04	GM2c
RUSCH, Anthony Joseph	409-35-59	CGM
SARGENT, Jacob Roger	321-20-08	Cox
SCHAEFER, John Brinton	414-63-46	F1c
*SCHIMMEL, George William	300-24-64	TM3c
**SCOTT, Dan Ragsdale	356-74-51	S2c
SCOTT, Elvin (n)	300-59-34	S2c
*SHURNEY, William Henry	268-48-41	Matt1c
*SIFERS, George Jackson	342-31-87	SF3c
SKWARLA, Metro	223-81-32	F1c
SLOVINEC, Andrew Alexander	300-24-05	F3c
**SMITH, Archibald Peter	327-90-98	WT2c
SNYDER, Robert Eugene	243-88-30	F2c
SOBELMAN, Jack Saul	375-95-39	FC1c
SOLOMON, Harry Lee	265-53-62	CMM
*STANFILL, Kelly, Jr.	279-75-36	S1c
STIVERS, Everett Shaffer	321-60-63	F1c
**TAYLOR, Robert LeRoy	316-55-07	GM2c
TOUSIGNANT, Roger Arthur J.	213-65-15	S1c
**TRIPP, Ted Jackson	311-73-83	F1c
TUCKER, Earl Walden	337-44-14	S1c



VANDONKELAAR, John "L"	311-70-72	Cox
*VANEK, Joseph (n)	403-84-27	S1c
VAN DYKE, Amos William	223-42-97	S2c
VEITCH, Henry Thornton	??	S2c
VIERING, Albert Henry, Jr.	403-70-88	F2c
WALTERS, Lucious George	268-19-48	OS3c
WATERBURY, William Henry	642-09-24	F3c
WATSON, Frank Sedgewick	400-83-77	TM3c
*WELHOUSE, Joseph John	300-57-15	EM3c
WHEET, Kimball Mansfield	291-76-84	S2c
*WHELAN, Raymond Edward	265-68-54	GM2c
WHITTEN, Duane Paul	316-70-62	S1c
WICKSTROM, Clarence John	328-45-71	SF1c
WILLIAMS, Leo Virgle	272-20-47	MM2c
**WINZENRITH, William Meredith	265-84-92	WT1c
*WOOD, Clovis	283-57-24	S1c
WRIGHT, Edward Elsworth	291-71-86	EM3c
YOUNG, Irving Emmett	238-83-16	S2c
*ZDRADZINSKI, Anthony Joseph	243-17-56	EM2c
ZIEGLER, Gerard Francis Xavier	402-68-01	GM3c

\* \* \* \* \*

Notes:

1. Source: The ship's muster roll for the quarter ending 9/30/42 on microfilm at the National Archives. There is no record of any men being received or transferred off during the following twelve days.
- \* Wounded (\*\* Killed) when the ship was lost due to enemy action according to a machine-generated casualty report at the National Archives prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel after the war.

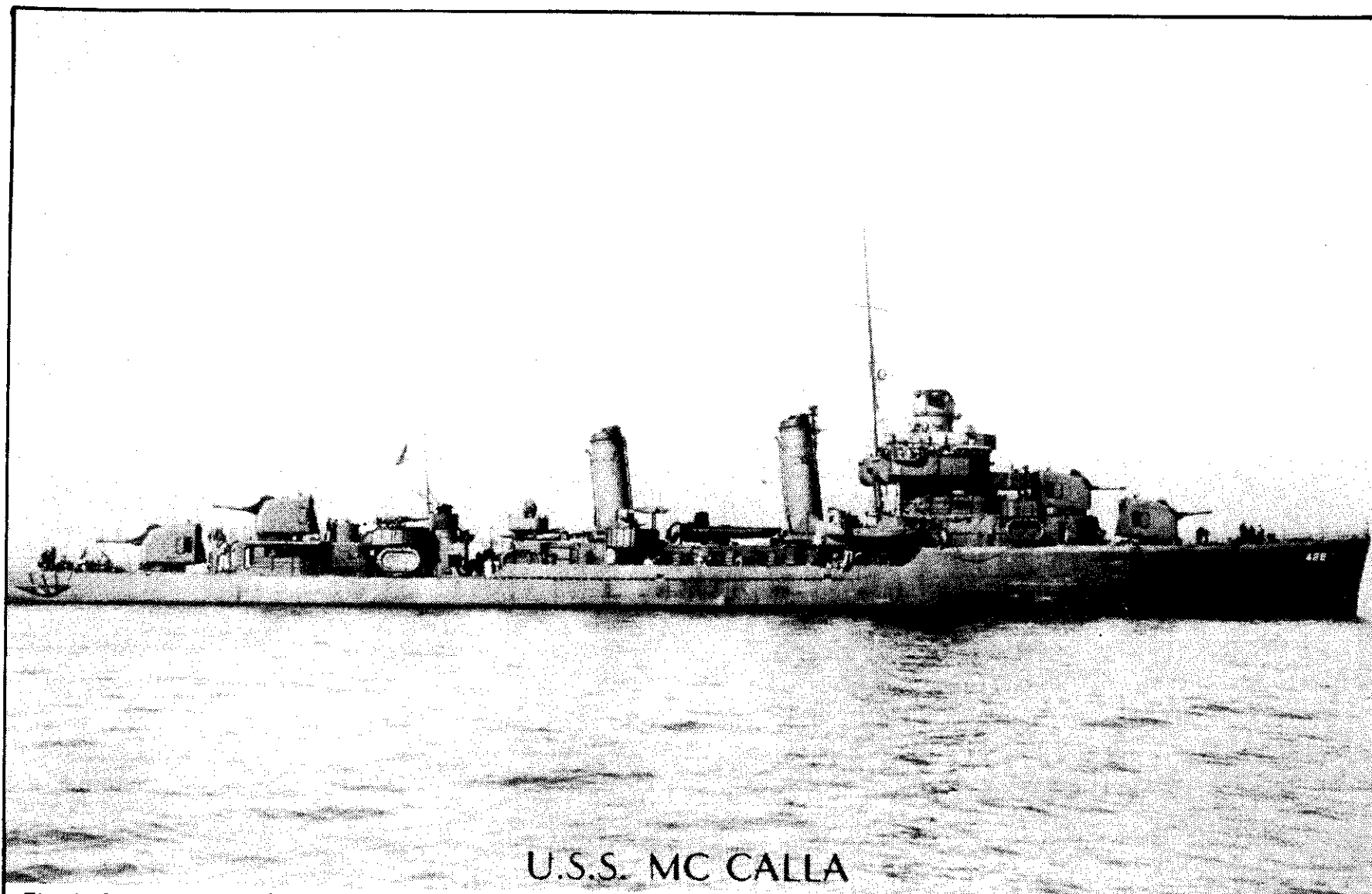
Summary of Casualties on 10/12/42:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Not Wounded</u>	<u>Complement on 10/12/42</u>
Officer	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>13</u>
Enlisted	<u>43</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>156</u>	<u>230</u>
TOTALS	<u>48</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>243</u>

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
May, 2000







## U.S.S. MC CALLA

The U.S.S. McCalla (DD-488) (Lieut. Commander W. G. Cooper) rescued 9 officers (including one who died of wounds) and 186 enlisted men from the Duncan after she was severely damaged at the Battle of Cape Esperance on 11-12 October 1942. A boarding party from the McCalla then made a valiant effort to salvage the Duncan, but the fire-gutted hulk finally sank amid the explosions of her own depth charges about 6 miles north of Savo Island. It is remarkable that so many were rescued, because the survivors were spread over an area eight miles long and two miles wide. (Photograph from the U.S. Naval Institute collection.)



SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

ORIGINAL

ACTION REPORT

USS MC CALLA

DD 488

SERIAL 003

12 OCTOBER 1942

RESCUE OF SURVIVORS FROM USS DUNCAN.

REPORT COVERS RESCUE OF SURVIVORS OF  
USS DUNCAN ON 12 OCTOBER 1942 NEAR  
SAVO ISLAND. A TOTAL OF 9 OFFICERS  
AND 186 ENLISTED MEN WERE RESCUED.  
MAJORITY BEING TAKEN ABOARD MC CALLA.  
(C.O. W.G. COOPER).

43958

DIVISION OF NAVAL RECORDS  
AND HISTORY



DD488/A16-3  
(003)

U.S.S. McALLA (DD488)

~~SECRET~~

October 12, 1942.

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To : The Commander in Chief, PACIFIC FLEET.  
  
Via : (1) The Commander, Destroyer Squadron TWELVE.  
(2) The Commander, Task Force SIXTY-FOUR.  
(3) The Commander, Southern Pacific Fleet.  
  
Subject: Rescue of Survivors from U.S.S. DUNCAN (DD485).  
  
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, Article 712 (2).  
  
Enclosure: (A) List of Survivors of the U.S.S. DUNCAN (DD485).

1. At 0055, 12 October 1942, following the night engagement with the enemy off Savo Island, this vessel left own formation as it retired to the south and west and proceeded to search for BOISE, which vessel had been last reported 12 miles bearing 295 from Savo Island. Search was commenced from position; latitude 9-97 S; longitude 159-28 W. Night was very dark, mostly overcast, sea smooth, wind from southeast, force 1.

2. Search was conducted with F. D. radar and visually on various courses and speeds. Search was negative, the only vessel picked up being ablaze. This flaming ship appeared very close to Savo Island and it could not be definitely determined whether she lay on the opposite side of the island. During the approach to this vessel several explosions were noted and it was believed that she was aground. Approach was made cautiously and at 0220, range 2500 yards, the burning vessel was illuminated. She was clearly not the BOISE, but her identity could not be definitely determined because of the flames which enveloped the entire forward half of the ship and smoke partially obscured her aft. Her after lines were definitely similar to those of the DUNCAN, however; and when control reported that the numbers 485 could be read on her stern, the Commanding Officer decided she was the DUNCAN. No sign of life could be seen aboard. At 0300 a boat was lowered and a salvage party in charge of Lieutenant Commander F.B.T. Myhre, U.S. Navy, was sent to the burning vessel with instructions to approach with caution, take no unnecessary chances, to fire a red very star if in need of immediate assistance. He was further informed that McALLA would remain in the vicinity for approximately one half hour and would then proceed to search further for the BOISE, and that no attempt would be made to pick up the boat in the absence of the red very star signal. Accordingly, at 0337, McALLA,

October 12, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Rescue of Survivors from U.S.S. DUNCAN (DD485)  
(Cont'd.)

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having passed within 3000 yards of the burning ship and flashed fighting lights for recognition, stood to the north and at 0445 to the west searching for BOISE. Results were negative and at 0530 course was set for Savo Island. At 0549 a ship was sighted bearing 135 and at 0608 it was established as DUNCAN. From this vessel it appeared that the fire had practically burnt itself out at this time, although the ship was still smoldering forward. As McCALLA approached close aboard, the following message was received from the salvage party:

"THIS SHIP HAS BEEN ABANDONED X CAN BE SALVAGED X  
SEND REPAIR PARTY X CAN BE TOWED FROM STERN X DEEP WATER  
AFT X AM TAKING SOUNDINGS FORWARD X SHE IS ROLLING FREELY."

The DUNCAN appeared to be completely gutted by fire from #1 engine room forward and her hull in way of the forecastle riddled with shell fire. Despite the message received from the salvage party, the Commanding Officer decided to proceed immediately to the rescue of survivors who had already been sighted, and so advised Lieutenant Commander Myhre. Report of the attempted salvage of the DUNCAN is covered by separate correspondence.

3. The first survivor was taken aboard at 0630 and rescue operations were continued until 1209. This vessel was assisted by planes and landing boats despatched by the Commanding General, Guadalcanal. A total of nine officers and one hundred and eighty-six enlisted men were rescued, the majority being taken directly aboard the ship. One officer, Ensign Robert L. Fowler, U.S.N.R., died of wounds received in action prior to this vessel's arrival at Espiritu Santo. The survivors were scattered in the water within a roughly rectangular area to the eastward of Savo Island, approximately eight miles north and south and two miles west. The largest group picked up included thirty-one on three life rafts tied together.

4. The most notable incident that occurred during the operation was the rescue of Lieutenant Herbert R. Kabat, U.S. Navy. While McCALLA was being maneuvered to pick up a single survivor, it was noted that another approximately two hundred yards abeam to starboard was being viciously attacked by a large shark. Three of the crew of this vessel:

October 12, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Rescue of Survivors from U.S.S. DUNCAN (DD485)  
(Cont'd.)

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SHAW, George James                    243 76 88    GM2c, U.S.N.  
MARTIN, Sam (n)                    207 26 23    QM3c U.S.N.  
BAILEY, Alfred Lester               622 72 62    Sea2c U.S.N.R.  
-----

were armed with rifles and fired at the shark until a boat could be lowered and Lieutenant Kabat taken aboard. These three men coolly and accurately fired at the shark, and the Commanding Officer is convinced that they saved Lieutenant Kabat's life. A recommendation that recognition be accorded their excellent performance of duty is contained hereinafter.

5.            Comments and recommendations are included below.

(a) In addition to Lieutenant Kabat, two other survivors were attacked by sharks, although the attacks were not seen from the ship. It is noteworthy that in all three cases the survivors were using empty powder cans for buoyancy. It is considered highly likely that these brightly painted cans served as a lure for sharks. Sharks were seen circling several other survivors but only three were attacked. It is recommended that empty powder cans set aside for use as a means of buoyancy when abandoning ship be painted a dark flat color.

(b) All survivors of the DUNCAN were loud in their praises of the Kapok life jacket. All hands stated that a wide web strap should be provided for passing between the legs. This is by no means a new recommendation and the Commanding Officer considers that it is time something were done about it.

(c) It is also strongly recommended that each man be provided with a piece of line about six feet in length, for lashing survivors together and to aid the rescuing personnel in recovery.

(d) This vessel had previously been provided with twenty suits of survivors clothing by the American Red Cross. This clothing was a great help following the rescue, but the outfits contained no footgear. It is recommended that destroyers be provided with additional outfits for use in such emergencies and that there be included sandals or similar shoes.

6.            The entire crew of this vessel assisted enthusiastically and untiringly in the rescue despite a sleepless

October 12, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Rescue of Survivors from U.S.S. DUNCAN (DD485).  
(Cont'd.)

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night. The Commanding Officer wishes to commend the following officers and men for outstanding performance of duty:

(a) Lieutenant Edwin K. Jones, U.S. Navy, who, as acting Executive Officer, ably assisted the Commanding Officer in directing the rescue.

(b) Lieutenant (jg) L. V. Potter, (MC) U.S. Naval Reserve, who ably undertook the care of the wounded undermost trying and difficult circumstances.

(c) HOLMES, Theophilus George, 243 10 61, CBM, USN., who directed the operations on deck.

(d)	ATHERTON, Eugene Arlan	212 28 15	TM1c	USN
	STERLING, William Robert	385 69 61	QM1c	USN
	HEILMAN, Howard Cecil	342 10 06	SM1c	USN
	GABRIEL, Frederick (H)	411 05 03	SM2c	USN

who, acting as spotters, made possible the rescue of the widely scattered single survivors and groups.

(e)	SHAW, George James	243 76 88	GM2c	USN
	MARTIN, Sam (n)	207 26 23	QM3c	USN
	BAILEY, Alfred Lester	622 72 62	Sea2c	USNR

whose accurate rifle fire kept a shark at bay thereby saving the life of Lieutenant Herbert R. Kabat, U.S. Navy.

(f)	DUGAS, Fred Omer	274 36 84	BM2c	USN
	MOUSEL, Orville Peter	385 89 93	Cox	USN
	SCHUMAKER, Don Louis	328 67 36	EM2c	USN
	PADGET, Jack Clifford	321 26 71	Sealc	USN

who manned the cargo nets over the sides for assisting survivors aboard.

7. It is recommended that letters of commendation be addressed to the two officers listed above and to HOLMES, and that the other men listed in paragraph six be advanced to the next higher rating for outstanding performance of duty.

  
W. G. COOPER.



Prepared—February 27, 1943

Pers328-hwb

Signed MAR 11 1943

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

COMMANDER WILLIAM G. COOPER, UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in the line of his profession as Commanding Officer of a U.S. warship during the night engagement against enemy Japanese and the attempted salvage of the U.S.S. DUNCAN on October 11 and 12, 1942. Handling his ship with coolness and skill and directing the fire of his guns with telling accuracy, Commander Cooper brought his vessel successfully through the fury of the battle. After retirement of the Task Force, he remained at the scene of the engagement and directed a vigilant search for our ships which were missing. Locating the DUNCAN, from whose blazing hull explosions were heard, he cautiously approached and left a salvage party aboard, then continued his search for other ships which might need assistance. Finally returning to the DUNCAN and realizing she was beyond saving, Commander Cooper made sure she would not fall into the hands of the enemy. As dawn came over the dark, oil-covered sea, he sighted and began picking up survivors. Despite the ever-present danger of enemy ships and aircraft which might be in the vicinity, he continued his extremely hazardous rescue operations until noon, when a total of nine officers and 186 enlisted men had been placed safely aboard his vessel. His great personal valor during battle and unwavering devotion to duty in rescuing survivors in the face of grave danger were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

**FILE COPY**

For the President,

FRANK KNOX

Secretary of the Navy.

Born: July 22, 1908

Next of kin: Mrs. W.G. Cooper (wife)  
111 Lafayette Ave.  
Palmerton, Penna.

Home Addr: 709 East 41st St.

On active duty. *Sevinah, Ha*

Copy to:

Board of Awards

Secretary's Files

Public Relations, Navy Dept.

Public Relations, BuPers

Mrs. Casbarian, Public Relations

Ref: ComSoPac - Serial 00189 - Jan 15, 1943



by George B. Weems, Ensign, U. S. Navy  
with additional text  
by Captain F. A. Andrews, U. S. Navy

**G**eorge "Bee" Weems was the five-striper in the U. S. Naval Academy Class of 1942, which in those days meant the top midshipman officer in the class. He was also a varsity lacrosse player and, in 1941, he won an Eastern Intercollegiate title in wrestling.

Weems is dead now, but not as a result of World War II action which is the subject of his story. Lieutenant Commander Weems was killed 11 years after World War II, while test piloting an airplane with new type pontoons for choppy water landings.

The story is his account of the night surface gun battle off Cape Esperance in the Solomon Islands and the subsequent sinking of the destroyer USS *Duncan*. Weems wrote this letter about a week after the battle to his father, Captain P. V. H. Weems, U. S. Navy (Retired), an authority on marine and air navigation.

In order fully to appreciate Weems's letter, a little background information is necessary. The following is quoted from Theodore Roscoe's *United States Destroyer Operations in World War II concerning the Battle off Cape Esperance*:

*Duncan* was mortally wounded when she reeled out of the battle around midnight. The ship's superstructure was a shambles. Her forward fireroom was wrecked. Her forecastle was in flames. Her radio was demolished. Coding room, radar-plotting room, gun plot, and gun-director platform were in ruins. Her interior communications and electrical lines were gone, and the only light below decks was cast by the fiery glare topside. Everywhere lay the dead—in the shattered charthouse, on the bridge, in smoke-choked passageways and blasted compartments, and on the burning forecastle. But her engines were still pounding and the ship was circling blindly at 15 knots.

Tongues of flame lapped around the bridge-wing, scorching the metal and licking hungrily at the paint. After a futile attempt to communicate with the crew aft, her captain, Lieutenant Commander E. B. Taylor, ordered the bridge abandoned. Fires were eating their

way across the deck below, and the destroyer-men on the bridge were compelled to go overside to save their lives. When the wounded were let down to rafts, the Commanding Officer and the others went over. *Duncan* circled off across the sea-scape, a burning death-ship.

But there were still living men in that floating inferno—men topside and below decks who did not know the skipper had gone overside, or who thought everyone on the bridge had perished. Making his way to the after conning station, Ensign Frank A. Andrews succeeded in communicating with the Engineer Officer, Lieutenant H. R. Kabat. Assuming command as senior officer on board, Kabat ordered Ensign Andrews to beach the ship. Aided by Chief Torpedoman Boyd, Andrews strove to head the destroyer for Savo Island, to run her aground. Before they could get her inshore, the destroyer's bow was gutted by fire, and the engineers had to abandon the forward engine-room.

Then feed-water could not be pumped for the after fireroom. Lieutenant (jg) W. H. Coley, U. S. Naval Reserve, and Chief Water Tender A. H. Holt made a desperate effort to feed seawater into the boiler by a gasoline billy. The cold brine boiled away, and the pump became steam-clogged. Gradually the ship lost power and slowed to a stop.

About 0200 the ammunition began to explode, and the surviving members of the crew leaped overside. Clinging to powder cans, rubbish, anything that could keep them afloat, they swam away from the bursting destroyer. Her fiery hull was presently sighted by destroyer *McCalla* (Lieutenant Commander W. G. Cooper), hunting for *Boise* to the west of Savo Island.

Cooper maneuvered in carefully to investigate; then, satisfied that the burning vessel was not Japanese, he sent a boarding party under *McCalla's* Executive Officer to determine salvage possibilities. The party chugged away in a whaleboat about 0300, and *McCalla* steamed off to continue the search for *Boise*.

Ensign G. T. Weems  
USS *McCalla*  
December 1942

Dear Folks:

Now that the *McCalla* is a "veteran" of several months: some phases of our operations can be told without revealing any secrets.

This purports to be my personal battle log. I took notes (purposely illegible to anyone but myself) of the most interesting phase so I wouldn't forget the minor sidelights and personal reactions of the various situations.

Please note that this narrative is of the situation as I saw it *at the time*. With the valuable help of hindsight I could make a more continuous and logical picture of things, but I'm writing of the story as I saw it *then*. Many of our actions would have been different if we knew things we know now.

The *McCalla*, accompanying a cruiser task force, had been operating around the Guadalcanal area for three days, waiting for the enemy to come down and land reinforcements.

About all I knew of the strategical situation was this: Marines had landed on the island and were fighting for its control. Japs were landing troops and supplies every night, practically uncontested. Our mission was to discourage these nocturnal visits and give the Marines naval support. Press releases (a large

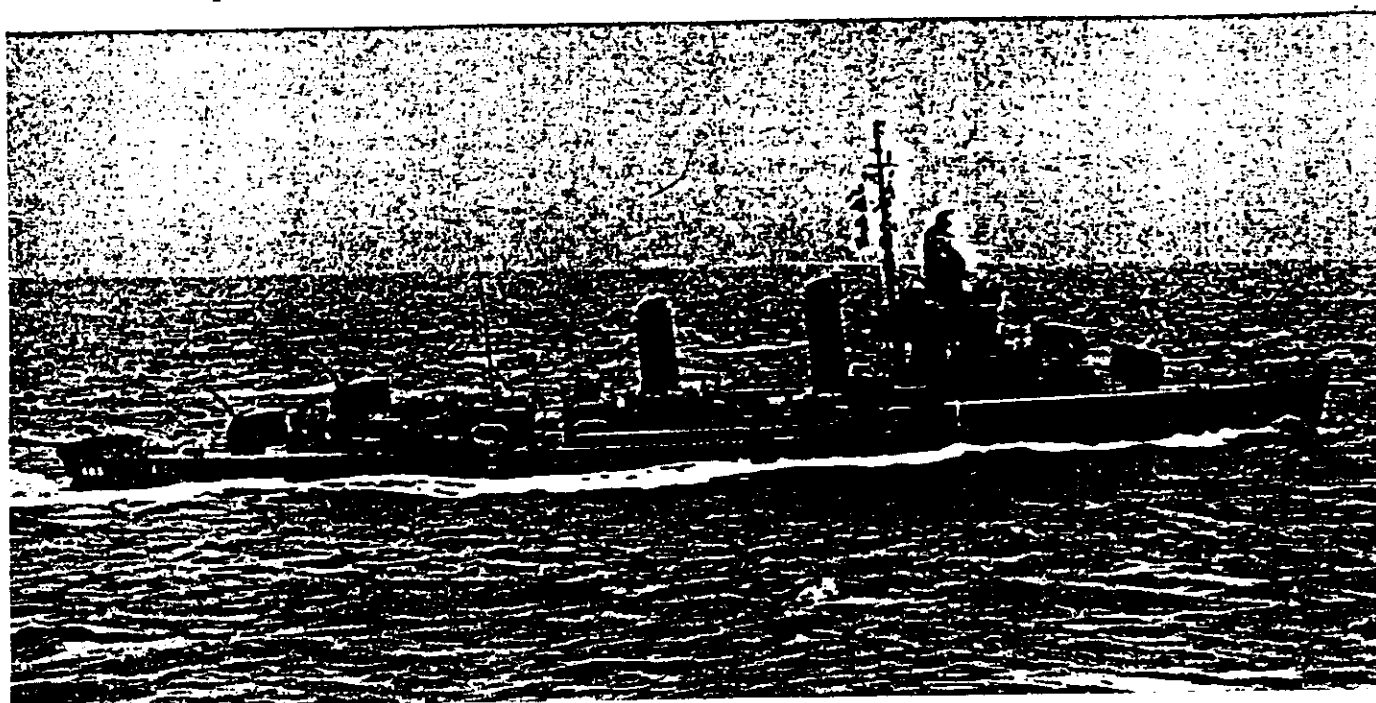
part of our information) and *Time* magazine indicated that the Gyrenes were having somewhat of a tough time of it.

That afternoon I had the 12-16 watch as Officer of the Deck. I had been up since 0330, time of our regular dawn alert. During that morning I occupied myself in getting the ship squared away for battle as best as I could. My job, first lieutenant, included damage control and rigging ship for battle. Glass was removed, inflammable gear jettisoned or stowed safely, emergency pumps checked, and all the Battle Bill provisions for my department were carried out. (We took some of the provisions with a grain of salt, for if we had thrown all files, paper, lumber, etc., etc., overboard as called for, the ship would have been uninhabitable after battle.)

I was relieved at 4:00, wrote my log, and slept from 5 to 5:30. We knew we were in for a long General Quarters session, probably most of the night. At 5:30 I bathed, shaved, and put on clean clothes. I guess nearly every man on the ship did the same—you feel more able and willing to fight when you're fresh and clean.

Dinner was served early, 5:45, inasmuch as we had received a signal to go to G.Q. at 6:15. On the dot 1815, the squalling bleat of the general alarm came over—"ble-eet ble-eet ble-eet"—"General Quarters, General Quarters,

Her crew made frantic efforts to save USS *Duncan*, the first American ship hit in the battle of Cape Esperance, but they were aboard a floating inferno, without power or pumps. With the ship torn by exploding ammunition, they had no choice but to abandon her.



all hands man your battle stations, ble-eet ble-eet," etc.

My battle station being damage control officer, in charge of forward and after repair parties, I play a "roving center." I don't have to stay in the same place all the time, a very pleasant consideration when we're at battle stations 16 or 17 hours.

I girded myself for battle and staggered aft under the combined weight of helmet, gas mask, knife, flashlight, morphine syrette, & life jacket. We also carried a fathom of line in our life jackets to facilitate rescue of ourselves or others. I am in the habit of putting on my Academy ring and carrying my wallet and a penknife—not that I am expecting to go overboard or anything, but it's nice to feel completely prepared for any eventuality.

I received reports of watertight closures made throughout the ship, and went back to Secondary Conn. (Emergency Steering Station). I was the assistant officer-in-charge of that station. Lt. Comdr. Myhre, our exec, always comes back when we really expect action. The idea is that if the bridge is damaged, he and I would take control of ship.

I was sleepy (my normal condition) and was lulled into lethargy by the grandeur of the tropical sunset. (Better than any barber shop calendar or postcard ever could show.) We were running along the coast of Guadalcanal, headed west. The only indication of impending battle was the speed at which the fleet was traveling. We would step up our speed a couple of knots at frequent intervals, till we were boiling along.

The speed caused concern on board the *McCalla* because we were low in fuel. Fuel consumption skyrockets for every additional knot over 20. We were the lowest of all the destroyers because of an extra trip we had taken a couple of days before, in order to pick up official fleet mail. I spent the time before it got completely dark in familiarizing myself with the fuel oil set-up—what tanks were full, which were empty, and which tanks suction was on. That's vital knowledge for damage control work (so they say, anyway).

The crew was more tense than usual, it was common knowledge that a Jap cruiser force had been reported heading toward us all afternoon. When I say tense, I don't mean jittery or frightened by any means. They were more

alert than usual, that's all. When permission was granted for certain parts of the gun crews to sleep at their stations, they dropped off like flies, all over the decks and gun mounts.

After dark I eased into the wardroom to see if there was any decoding of incoming messages for me to do. The Doc, Pete Potter, has his battle dressing station in the wardroom, and he and I usually spent nights at G.Q. in breaking down the continuous traffic of secret and confidential operating dope.

Doc, as is usual, was nervous. His having a wife and kid always made him worry when the going got a bit hazardous. I must admit it was the highest and most unselfish variety of worry, for others and not himself.

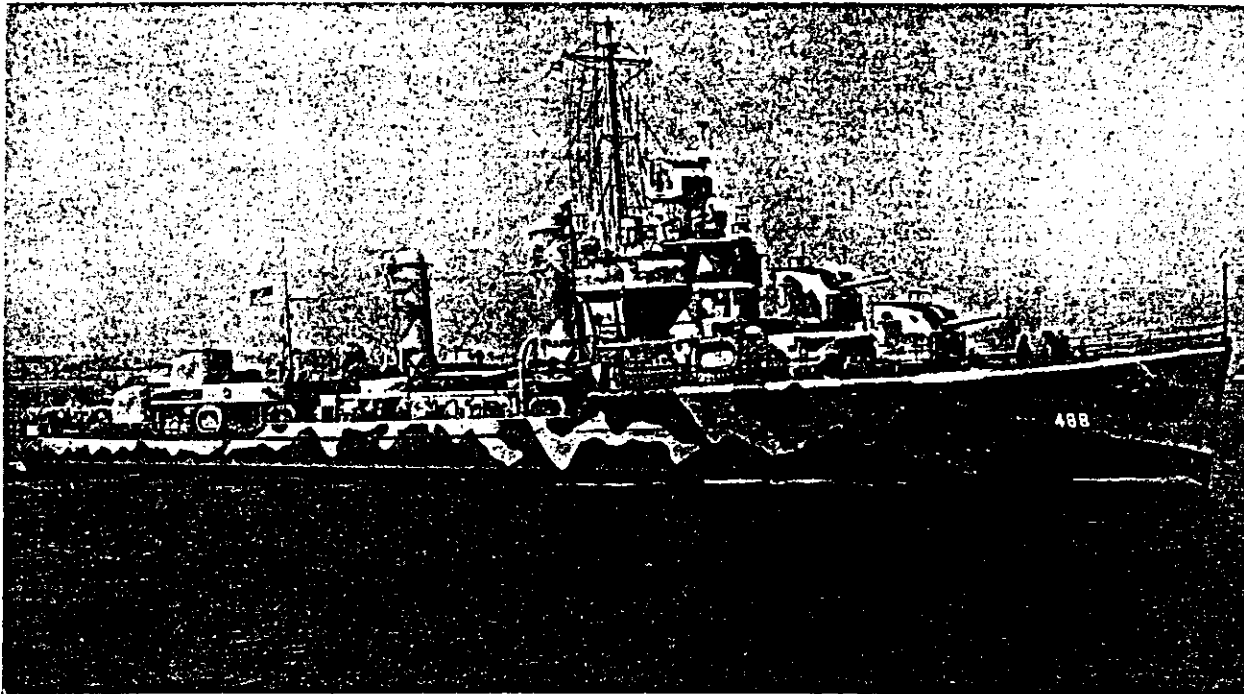
Bill Muir, Ass't. Engineer, also a "roving" warrior, stopped in for a cup of "mud" so we started a bull session to take Doc's mind off the situation. I don't know what is the standard pre-battle conversation, but we reminisced over the USA, and discussed old and lasting friendships. It made me think of guys like Boo Smith, Dick Lazenby, Dick Creecy and Dick King. It turned to how much we wanted to get back, and I took the usual jokes and ribbing for my evident enjoyment of life out here. I was always being called "bloodthirsty" and of the "warrior caste" because I had previously expressed a desire to at least see some Japs, if we had to be out here.

The wardroom looked as though a battle, or at least a small cyclone, had struck it. All the glass light globes were on deck covered with cushions. Doc's tools and gear were strewn all over the tables and transom.

I picked up a copy of "Esquire" which had some no soap jokes in it, so off we went for an hour or so, each telling a one better no soap story. The magazine also had words and music to "Waltzing Matilda" in it. I broke out my guitar to try it and we started a sing fest. None of the regulation do or die songs were sung, I must unromantically confess. Not even "Hurrah for the next man to die!"

The Captain reported over the general announcing system "Attention all hands, this is the Captain, the enemy forces are still approaching. We'll meet them tonight. Let's give 'em hell!"

I blushinglly admit that I was just a wee bit glad to hear the Captain's announcement. It made me feel like I used to before a wrestling



Ensign Weems' ship, *McCalla* (above), came upon the stricken *Duncan*, so shrouded with smoke and flame that she was, at first, unidentifiable. *McCalla* picked up 195 of *Duncan's* survivors; 48 perished with the ship.

match, a little pleasant and tingling inside. I was finishing an article—when the Captain reported the enemy 12,000 yards away. I completed it hurriedly, figuring I'd better get outside and accustom my eyes to the dark before the shooting began.

The after deckhouse gang was all abuzz at the word. They all quizzed me as to the dope, but of course I didn't know much more than they did.

The night was black and moonless. You could, however, make out the outline of Guadalcanal which was only three or four miles away. I tried to note as many things as I could, time, course, speed, etc. I studied the islands closely and impressed the contours of the mountains firmly in my mind.

We got a "stand by" over the battle announcing system and knew things were about to pop. Guns were trained out and half loaded. The cruisers ahead opened fire shortly before we did (5 or 10 seconds). I thought they were firing their 1.1" machine guns when I saw the constant stream of tracers. I figured they were holding their main battery back for something bigger. A few minutes afterward I got the word; it was their 6" main battery firing so fast I mistook it for bursts of machine gun fire.

The *McCalla* opened up and blasted away, full rapid, with the rest of them. I suddenly got the awful feeling that a mistake had been made. Here we were, banging away merrily, and getting no return fire. A searchlight was turned on up ahead and there 2,500 and 3,000 yards were two ships large and ghostly, but with *their guns still trained fore and aft!*

Gun #3's fire had partially blinded me temporarily so I got only fleeting glimpses of the ships. By this time star shells from our ships were outlining the strangers, so we could see their silhouettes.

We checked fire for a while and steamed along in the dark (I *still* thought the ships must be friendly, point blank range and no reply from their guns). All of my impressions were disjointed and fleeting, due to the recoil, noise and blinding effect of Gun #3 which was firing nearly directly over me. I had observed several hits on the unknowns, however. No major fires or damage was caused by this first phase as far as I could see.

After one or two minutes, our line opened up again, spraying 5", 6" and 8" shells like machine gun bullets, or water from a hose. I saw some return fire get underway, and all doubts as to the ships being Japs was dispelled.

I felt a wildly exultant joy in watching us let them have so much at such murderous range. If you stop and think—2,500 to 3,500 yards is point-blank range for big guns. You can hardly miss even if you wanted to! Just like shooting fish in a barrel!

Shortly after fire was resumed the Jap ships began to look like the most dramatic Hollywood reproduction in models of ships burning and sinking: I saw two that worked about like this (1) Pitch darkness (2) stream of tracers from our ships (3) series of flashes where hits were scored, silhouetting of ships by star shells (4) tremendous fires and explosions (5) ship folds in two (6) ship sinks. All in all, a much better performance than Hollywood's very best.

Other ships would just go "boom!" Some would burn with tremendous brilliance and intensity. The fires were extinguished by the simple expedient of sinking in 30 seconds or a minute. The exact number of ships I personally saw sink is doubtful. If I had been asked after the battle, I suppose I would have guessed about five or six.

I'm afraid I got a little ahead of the story. While I was watching the Nips sink, Mr. Myhre pointed out the ones that were firing back. One I remember in particular was firing at the destroyer astern of us, 500 yards away.

I refused to duck or to drop behind the one sixteenth aluminum spray shields as many were doing. I must confess that there was a *definite* urge to do so, but (1) it wouldn't look too good (2) I had carefully calculated beforehand that it did *no* good whatsoever. The urge was still there, however, decidedly!

I saw a couple of salvos land 100 or 200 yards away, but I foolishly dismissed them as being no danger, "They're firing at the can astern," I figured, God knows why. (Later reports were that at this stage of the game we had shells go between our rigging—one of our own ships firing over us at the enemy—salvos straddle us, and a torpedo miss us ahead by 50 feet and another astern by less distance.) Being largely unaware of the score in general, I was enjoying life greatly. "Boy!" I noted to myself, "If all battles are like this I'm all for them!"

At about this time my exultation was dampened somewhat by observing a large explosion and fire on the *Boise* or her sister

ship. The glare showed what type cruiser she was, but I had no means of knowing which ship it was. The *Boise* dropped out of column, and the fire was put out very quickly. (I was later surprised at the amount of damage and number of deaths caused by the hit.)

After a third round of firing, we steamed away, one or two unknown ships still showing signs of fires.

During the lulls in the battle I had been kept busy. It was a constant effort to make the men conscious of the 5" gun that was training around over them. We'd had some men knocked out by muzzle blast, and I was trying to avoid recurrence of that, especially when we might need men urgently.

Also, I had to round up some of my repair parties to replace some of the shell handling room crew. They were pooping out a bit, and to keep up our rate of fire I decided to use some of my men, who do nothing until damage is sustained.

We steamed on for a while when we got news that the *Boise* was missing. A minute or two later the word came down that we were going back to look for the *Boise*—alone.

Way off on the horizon was a small fire. As we approached it it became a ship on fire. Burning fiercely all over as far as we could see.

We warily approached and zig-zagged back and forth five or six miles from it, but couldn't identify it. I remember that the outline of a small island was directly behind it. I remembered from the chart a name like "Saboo" or "Savoo." Throughout the morning it was "sayboo" to all of us. (Actually of course Savo Island, graveyard of the Jap Navy. . . .)

We closed to two or three miles and illuminated it by searchlight. Immediately came a chorus from all around: "Jap cruiser," "Jap can," "She has three turrets aft," "American can." My personal opinion at the time was that it was an American destroyer, one of our sister ships. Upon discussion with others and closer scrutiny, I began to have serious doubts. The fires and searchlight combined to make identification difficult. Hull damage, which was evident, didn't facilitate matters.

I kept wishing we'd close the distance. The searchlight was on only for 15 or 20 seconds and no one seemed to recognize it. Intermittent explosions made it even more eerie and fascinating.

The word was passed over the loud speaker system "The ship will send a boat to the burning vessel." After trying to think of a subtle way to ask if I could go, I sent word up by phone "Mr. Weems wants to know if a boat officer is going?" Word came back "Mr. Weems will go in the boat." I naturally thought I was in charge, so I made all preparations, named off personnel, told them what gear to bring, ordered the open motor whale boat lowered to the rail, etc. I checked assembly of water breakers, emergency rations, guns and ammunition and then climbed up to the bridge to report boat and crew ready.

I found Capt. Cooper telling Mr. Myhre what we were to do in the boat. Mr. Myhre was the boat officer. They arranged flare signals and a rendezvous. Tulagi was to be our goal if we missed the ship.

We clambered up into the whaleboat and were lowered into the water. There were easy black swells, but only a slight breeze. It was still pitch black.

We chugged over toward the ship, stopping to listen two or three times. Mr. Myhre didn't want to endanger boat and crew from either enemy action or explosions. Finally we came

500 or 600 yards away and cut the motor.

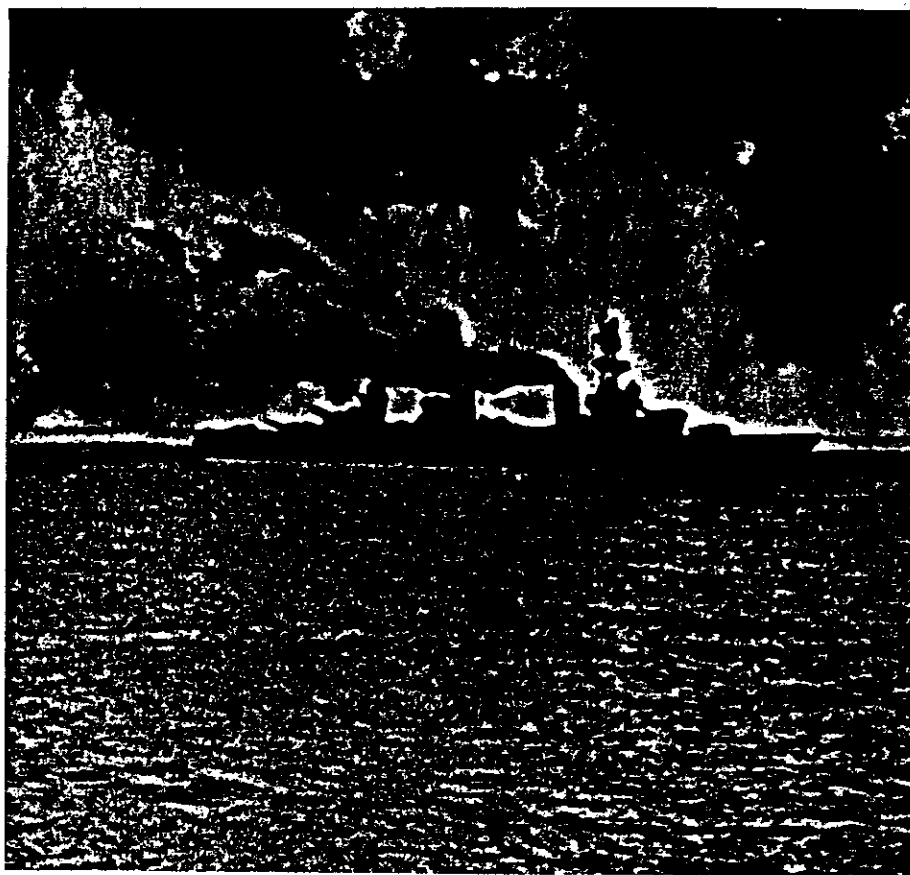
We could hear flames, and splashes of glass falling into the water, but there were no means of telling who she was, friend or enemy, cruiser or destroyer.

I began to feel frustrated that we had such a good chance to (1) save one of our ships (2) sink or capture an enemy ship, and weren't doing anything about it. In either case, after finding out who she was we could signal the *McCalla* and let her take appropriate action.

It became evident that we would wait there till sunrise unless something came up. Signaling to the stranger, or approaching it closer involved danger to eight men and the boat. I conceived of the wild idea of swimming down to the ship and identifying it. Of course I immediately dismissed the idea because (1) it would sound too rash and foolhardy (2) I wasn't too anxious to swim down to it. Sharks had been sighted all around the day before, and anyway, what if it *were* Japanese?

As it was about 1 or 1:30 there seemed to be a long wait ahead of us. Ye Gods, I figured—if it's ours millions of dollars might be lost by failing to act before daylight, when Jap planes would have it at their mercy. If it's Jap a

USS *Salt Lake City* performed one of the most heroic feats of the battle by interposing herself between the enemy and the badly mauled light cruiser, USS *Boise*. Repaired at Pearl Harbor after the battle, *Salt Lake City* later distinguished herself in the longest surface engagement of the war, the battle of the Komandorski Islands.





small determined boat's crew, well armed might very well capture it by surprise tactics. After all, she had been so badly damaged there was a chance she had been abandoned or that most of the crew had been killed.

I finally figured that a one-man identification party was the thing called for under the circumstances. I further figured that it should be me because (1) I knew I was the best swimmer in the boat and could handle myself fairly well (2) I wouldn't order a man to do such an obviously wild stunt (3) I thought I could make better decisions as to what to do than any enlisted man in the boat.

I broached the scheme to Lt. Comdr. Myhre and backed it up with many strong arguments. He debated and finally said, "O.K., Bee."

We made plans for rendezvous and signals while I was undressing. The Chief Pharmacist's Mate gave me some grease to cover myself with, to prevent harm if I had to float for a long period. I wore a rubber and a kapok life jacket to make doubly sure of sufficient buoyancy. I doped it out that if she were enemy and still well-manned, I might have a long swim or float ahead of me.

We discussed whether my .45 would function after immersion for an indefinite period. We settled that it would, but I decided against wearing it. It would make me an active combatant instead of a "survivor off of one of our ships" if there were Japs aboard. Thought a while and decided to leave my N.A. ring on. It might have the effect of getting better treatment if enemy caught me. Also, it was the only identification I had on me, my tag had broken off.

At the time I went in the water I figured I could last indefinitely, just floating around—barring sharks. I also felt I could make land in a day or so. (I didn't realize we were fairly close to Savo.) Said goodbye to Mr. Myhre and slunk off toward the ship. Was very displeased to note the strong phosphorescent wake.

When I was about six or eight feet ahead of the boat I heard "mumble mumble mumble—Mr. Weems!" whispered "Good night!" and dogpaddled on.

This latter was the harrowing part of the whole day's activity. The itchy-trigger-fingered sub-machine gunner in the bow of the

boat had been doping off for quite a while. He snapped to when he saw a dark man slink by, leaving a wake. He muttered, "There's one of them Goddam - - - !", threw his gun off "Safe" and was squeezing the trigger when our on-the-ball signalman said "Wait a minute!! I think that's Mr. Weems!" which it was, of course. He then talked the guy out of blowing me apart with a Tommy gun at two paces.

I figured I swam 500 yards. The official report says 200. In any event it was a rather pleasant swim. My face was dry, as I floated high out of the water. After about 10 minutes I noted a strong current carrying me along. I just floated with it, swimming cross-current only just enough to make sure I would track toward the ship. I wanted to leave as small a wake as possible.

At about 50 yards I distinctly saw a man standing at the rail, with a rifle in his arms—not pointing at me, just holding it in readiness. He was so intent and immobile I stopped swimming and just floated, to avoid attracting attention.

I began to make out features of the ship. She had depth charge racks in a position like ours (I was drifting down onto the stern). Her turrets looked different. Finally I saw white markings on stern, and became pretty sure she was a sister can. That "guy" on the fantail, however, discouraged my disclosing myself until I was *certain*.

I got to within 25 yards or so when the markings suddenly popped clear—"485." That was the only time I remember that my mind was really fuddled that night—for try as I could I couldn't remember the name of the 485, one of our squadron at that.

I finally settled for singing out (in what I hoped was an authoritative and self-assured tone, yet ever so ever so *friendly*) "On board the American destroyer!" I tried a couple of more times, with nil results. I swam up to the stern and found my "sentry" to be a davit for depth charges, his "rifle" being the block and tackle.

I tried to catch on to the port propeller guard, but couldn't quite reach it. Noticing a slight list to starboard, I swam around to try the other guard, which would be closer to the water.

A most conveniently placed line was hanging

therefrom, so I tarzanned my way up it and crawled aboard. I tried to attract attention (favorable attention, of course) of anyone who might be left on board. No one was aft so I yelled back to the whaleboat "4-8-5." After several tries I got a faint answer "O.K." I heard the motor a little while later, while I was investigating.

Some of the damage was apparent aft, steam escaping, fire hoses led out, buckets, etc. All the guns were trained out. The deck was littered with all sorts of clothing and gear—most shoes and trousers piled neatly where their respective owners had left them when going over the side.

I paddled forward along the port side, shouting to see if anyone were aboard. Forward of No. 1 stack the ship was burning—from the waterline to the yard arm. There were hisses, crackles, crashes and minor explosions. I was thinking as I walked along and climbed the ladder to the foc'sle deck, how stupid an appearance I would present in my bare feet, skivvy trou and life jacket.

I had just about decided there was no one aboard . . . I concluded that I was almost right—no one aboard *alive*. The more grisly aspects of the following tour will be omitted for the sake of the ladies—and the gentlemen—and me. I'd just as soon forget them myself.

Suffice it to say that not all of the crew had been able to get off the ship. Where I was then standing near the foremast—there were sundry small fires burning in clothing, life-jackets, etc. The deck plates were warm there, but water dripping down my legs made it not too uncomfortable. I worked my way along the foc'sle deck trying to ascertain the condition of the super secret coding machine. By this time the deck was unbearably hot, and I regretted not having "borrowed" a pair of shoes from those left on the fantail.

The problem was solved by walking a step or two, then hoisting my feet clear of the deck by using handrails. In this process I gashed my foot on the sharp edge of a plow-like furrow left by an incoming 8" shell.

The coding machine was pretty well blotted—I could see through several bulkheads and fires supplied illumination. In fact, I could look down through several decks and bulkheads and see almost to the forward powder magazines . . . not yet exploded.

It was a surprise to me that the ship was as habitable as it was at that time. What appeared to be a mass of flames from a viewpoint several yards away from the ship, was a series of small fires, everywhere.

It was obvious that the tremendous fires previously had burned up nearly everything combustible, and that this was merely an aftermath of heat that had melted ladders, decks and bulkheads. I had seen what I needed to forward, and had toasted the soles of my feet slightly, so I worked aft again.

The forward stack was lying grotesquely on its side, and I could hear noises of steam and water coming out of its truncated base.

The starboard motor whale boat was still burning fiercely—probably the worst single fire then going on. It was on the main or weather deck where it could cause little harm.

I took a quick check on the after engineering spaces—apparently in fairly good shape, checked depth charges and then yelled out to Mr. Myhre that the ship could be salvaged.

He came alongside, took me in the boat and had us lie off 200 or 300 yards, in case of magazine explosion. We did hear more explosions, but nothing alarming.

Well, the upshot of the matter was that we all boarded her (the USS *Duncan*—"Whitey" Taylor's ship) at dawn and worked like Trojans on salvage operations.

Some of the things we did were: cleared walkways to work in, closed all watertight valves, doors and fittings, destroyed certain confidential items, extinguished fires, prepared depth charges as demolition agents in case Japs were around.

About one half hour after dawn (we'd just started working) a couple of planes came nosing around, but stayed three or four miles away at first. Our salvage party manned guns (all still loaded and trained out) and got ready to surprise any Jap pilot who thought the hulk was deserted. When the planes came roaring down and turned out to be American we were, to put it mildly, *very* pleased. They hung around all morning—rubber-necking and zooming up and down.

We rigged phones, prepared for emergency steering, checked draft readings to insure we weren't settling, drained water out of the above spaces, rigged emergency pumps, and collision mats.



An exuberant—and, as it later developed, inaccurate—*Boise* crew claimed six Japanese warships sunk at Cape Esperance when she limped home to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for repairs. The gallant cruiser's unfortunate nickname, "one-ship task force," did not endear her to the battle's other participants, anonymous because of security restrictions.

Which reminds me of one of the more interesting incidents. One of the seamen and I were over the side stuffing mattresses into waterline shell holes when we heard shooting on the foc'sle. "What's going on up there?" I yelled. "Oh nothin', Mr. Weems," came back the blasé answer, "We're just potting at a couple of 10-foot sharks who swallowed those shoes we just threw overboard." Ho Hum!

Around 11:45 we thought we heard a rumble in the forward fire room, but the ship still was floating pretty well down a couple of feet at the bow, and a list (at first to stb'd, then increasingly to port).

She'd been afloat in the same shape for 12 hours almost, so we felt rather certain she'd hold up a while.

The "Mighty Mac" had passed close aboard at 0600 but shouted they were going to look for survivors, and dashed over by Savo Island.

Throughout most of the morning we could see her on the horizon, but when we tried to signal her at 1145 that we needed pumps, we

found that our hand signal lamp wouldn't carry that far.

I became very Boy Scoutish and rigged a 36" searchlight mirror as a "heliograph." We flashed over and attracted their attention, but could not quite get a message through. We tried to send word "Need pumps" via the planes to the *McCalla*, but the pilots couldn't read the light.

We worked on the above projects and many others up until about 1200. The sun was terrific, and the water supply was practically nil. (I found some battery water in the electrical workshop and tiddled on that.)

About noon the *Duncan* lurched suddenly and started filling fast. We manned the boat again and were all set to shove off. I remembered an officer's sword and tried to save that and other personal items for any surviving officers. The exec's sword and a cheap ash tray were the only recognizable objects in the whole forward part of the ship.

We cast loose hurriedly (we thought she'd drop over on us for a minute) and lay off

about 300 yards. A suspicious small craft, loaded with men, was sighted about two miles away racing toward us.

Figuring the ship's machine gun battery to be better protection than one Tommy gun we went back to stand by the *Duncan's* guns.

The suspicious-looking craft was a Gyrene boat from Guadalcanal—(about 8 or 10 miles from G. C. proper—more to the U. S. held part). We warned them that we had just set the depth charges so we floated about 800 yards off the ship and watched her go down. She nosed down with a half twist, cocked the American flag in the air and exploded (one or two depth charges). We still saw about five feet of her fantail for a minute or two and then she disappeared.

When our boat was about a mile away we suddenly got a shock as though we had grounded on solid rock. It was a percussion wave from the *Duncan*. The whaleboat was lifted almost clear of the water, it felt.

Much transpired between the Marines and our boat's crew. The first answer to my questions were, "Captain Weems? Yeah, I've heard of him—Naw-sir, he's in a different outfit, I ain't seen him, I just heard the name."

The Marines told us about the Solomon

situation (pretty tense at the time) and the war in general. We were all headed back to Guadalcanal in the absence of the "Mighty Mac." All the sailors got in the Marine landing boat and the Marines manned our whale boat—a good example of the "greener pastures" theory.

Was sleeping peacefully in the bottom of the boat contemplating seeing brother Phil in several hours when the Marine boat conked out.

When we found the boat could make only two knots, we manned our own boat and set a course for Tulagi, our previously designated rendezvous.

About 2:45 we saw the *McCalla* zig-zagging toward us. We were picked up without trouble and clambered aboard to find 200 survivors of the *Duncan*. The Mighty Mac had not been idle all morning! I would not have thought 100 men could have lived through the damage the *Duncan* had taken, much less take to the water and be picked up.

Stories were exchanged and I went below to clean up. Rest was impossible; the whole ship was a shambles—wounded and unwounded men *everywhere*. I dashed out of a shower with a towel around me and observed the picking

The author with his father, Captain P. V. H. Weems, U. S. Navy.



up of three Jap prisoners. If subs had not been a menace we could have gotten many more. One looked as though he wanted to show us he was drowning himself—he couldn't quite make it. By the time the boat got him he was up for the 6th or 7th time.

Found Captain Taylor and Frank Andrews among the survivors, much to my great pleasure (and no small surprise. I had seen the carnage wrought on the bridge of Captain Taylor's ship).

.....  
P.S. (added just before mailing)

Have left out many details—especially in the last three or four pages but generally have covered my biggest "adventure" to date.

It was a fascinating experience all the way through, though thousands of others out here have better stories to tell, and can do a better job of the telling.

Anyway, I got a pair of binoculars and a commendation out of it. Later found I was recommended for the Navy Cross. Instead of the N.C. I'm told, on good authority, that I'll get a slightly different medal, the new Silver Star decoration. Captain Cooper, very deservedly, is to get a Navy Cross. Lieutenant Commander Myhre is getting the same thing as I—the Silver Star.

For me it is pretty much a gift—something for nothing. I'd gotten (1) a good time (2) a pair of \$150 glasses (3) a very flattering commendation from Commander Myhre. So I thought I'd been amply rewarded.

What's more I'd gotten my first command—a new can, only slightly (mis)used. For about 20 minutes or one-half an hour I'd been "Commanding Officer" and the only active member of my own crew.

Will write a less autobiographical letter tomorrow—if I can avoid the lure of ye olde "sack."

Love to all—  
Bec

F. A. Andrews, Captain, U. S. Navy.

\* \* \*

*This letter was written 19 years ago, and as Weems says "just as he saw it at the time." From my battle station on board USS Duncan, there certainly appeared to be at least two Japanese ships which received the brunt of the American cruiser's initial fire. I, too, would have described the picture of these Japanese ships just as Weems described them: "(1) pitch darkness (2) streams of tracers from the American ships (3) tremendous fires and explosions on the Japanese ships (4) ships fold in two (5) ships sink."*

*However, it must have been that our imaginations were working overtime that night, or that Japanese damage control was a lot better than we suspected. The official record of Japanese damage put together after World War II does not reflect exactly the optimistic picture which most American participants thought they observed that night. In actual fact the Japanese losses were:*

*1 Cruiser sunk  
1 Destroyer sunk  
1 Cruiser—major damage  
1 Destroyer—minor damage*

*The American losses were:*

*1 Destroyer sunk  
1 Cruiser—major damage  
1 Cruiser—minor damage  
1 Destroyer—major damage*

*The Japanese forces, considering they were caught absolutely flat-footed, certainly deserve some credit for the means by which they were able to minimize damage to themselves.*

*But in any case, this article was meant to pass on to the reader the thoughts of a young man in battle action: As has been said before, war is hell; and yet with all happenings, however bad, there is still a certain amount of good. The aspect of battle which brings out the best in a young man is one of the few good things about war. This private letter of a son to his parents certainly illustrates the point.*

★

*Freedom involves responsibilities as well as rights, obligations as well as privileges.*

**Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, U. S. Navy**



# Staten Island Advance

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1991

## Honor pushed for vet who never came home

### Civic group trying to get park renamed

By JEFF O'HEIR  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Joseph Manna left home when he was 17, and his family has waited for his return ever since.

You might remember him. He lived over on Leyden Avenue in Mariners Harbor, attended McKee Vocational and later transferred to Port Richmond High School. He was a smart kid and went to City College to study radio technology. Several weeks after enrolling, he left college.

"I don't know why he left," his brother, Tony, was saying last week. "He should have kept going to college. He would have been a lot better off."

But Manna wasn't like that. It was World War II, and he felt he had to go.

Now, an Island group is proposing naming a small park in Mariners Harbor in his honor.

Tony was the family athlete, while Joe was the observer. He'd hang out on the sidelines of the old sandlot football fields and cheered Tony's team, the Mariners Harbor Condors, on to three local championships. And when he wasn't working at a neighborhood candy store, Joe would walk around the streets with a camera, snapping anything that interested his young imagination.

Joe might not have been the athlete Tony was, but he still had a way with the local girls. He was a good-looking kid with thick, light brown hair, a wide mouth and prominent chin. Looked a little like Sinatra. Tony still laughs when he thinks about how Joe

stole one of his girl friends away. "But we didn't fight about it," Tony said. "No... we were always pretty close."

The brothers came to America with their mother, Letizia, and older brother, Nick, from Licignano, Italy, a suburb of Naples. Their father came over several years earlier, saved a little money and sent for the family. They never regretted the move. How could they? This was America.

"As we grew older, we realized what it was like to have anything you wanted," Tony said. "All the things that we never had in Italy, we had it in America."

When the Condors weren't playing sandlot ball, the brothers rooted for the Naval Academy team. To them, there was no other team. So it only made sense that when talk of war turned to reality, Tony enlisted in the Navy. And it's easy to understand the disappointment he felt after he was rejected for high blood pressure.

War was a little different back then. There were clearly defined enemies whose evils were undisputed.

While the newsreels flickered across the big screens of the St. George, Paramount, Palace and Empire theaters, Tony and Joe watched the horrors of war blown up larger than life and as realistic as death could get. The brothers saw the Germans kill their European neighbors and watched as the Japanese carried out their



Community Board 1 is considering naming a park after Joseph Manna, shown in this Navy photo, who was killed during World War II.

own plans a world away. The brothers realized America was the only country that could stop them.

That was the main reason Joseph Manna felt he had to take his brother's place in the United States Navy.

"I still feel, deep in my heart," Tony said, his voice caught for several seconds in his throat,

"that I should have been the one to go."

But it was Joe who went. And it was Joe who died.

Only 17 at the time, he needed his mother's signature to enlist. At first, she refused to sign. But then she realized this was what her youngest son wanted. Her hand trembled as she signed the papers.

But not nearly as much as it did about a year later when she held the letter. It doesn't matter what the letter said. After reading "your son was killed..." nothing else it says can bring him home.

The USS Duncan, the destroyer upon which Joseph Manna, seaman first class, served as radioman, was sunk by a Japanese torpedo in waters around the Solomon Islands Oct. 11, 1942, during the battle of Cape Esperance. In May of 1943, Mrs. Manna received this letter from Edmund B. Taylor, Commander, U.S. Navy.

"The night of our last battle," it read in part, "the Duncan was one of a task unit consisting of cruisers and destroyers assigned a mission to prevent the further landing of reinforcements on Guadalcanal by the Japanese."

"Our task unit succeeded in contacting a Japanese force of heavy cruisers and destroyers shortly before midnight. We caught the enemy by surprise and in the resulting action, our forces sank at least three enemy cruisers, four destroyers, and possibly more. At this time, this was one of the largest surface engagements in which our Navy had ever been involved."

"During the early stages of the battle, the Duncan succeeded in closing the enemy to within a very close range and launched torpedoes, two of which hit a Japanese cruiser. While making our torpedo attack, the Duncan was hit repeatedly. The damage caused our ship to sink several hours later. The survivors were rescued the following day."

"Your son Joseph's battle sta-

tion was at the emergency radio outlet in the chart house on the navigating bridge level. After we launched our first torpedo we received several shell hits on and in the close vicinity of the bridge level. One of these exploded in the end of the chart house... One officer and all of the radiomen stationed in that area are missing."

"It is with the deepest regret that I write you that I believe that your son was killed instantly while at his battle station. I most sincerely wish that I could encourage you to hope that he is still alive."

His body was never found, nor did he receive a funeral. But, after 48 years, Joseph Manna might finally be coming home.

Last month, the Mariners Harbor Civic Association presented Community Board 1 and borough hall officials with a proposal to name a small park after Joseph Manna. Located in Mariners Harbor, the park is bounded by the Staten Island Expressway, Forest Avenue and Goethals Road North.

Joseph Carroll, district manager of Community Board 1, said he will support the proposal when it is presented for a vote at December's board meeting. City Councilman Jerome X. O'Donovan said he also would support the proposal when it's presented to the Council for a final vote.

"This would be the homecoming my brother never had," said Tony Manna, who lived in Mariners Harbor for more than 50 years before he moved to Charlotte, N.C., several years ago. "It sure would."







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



## NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE  
MORNING NEWSPAPERS  
JUNE 5, 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Addressing Reverend Mr. Edwards, Rear Admiral Hayler said:

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

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

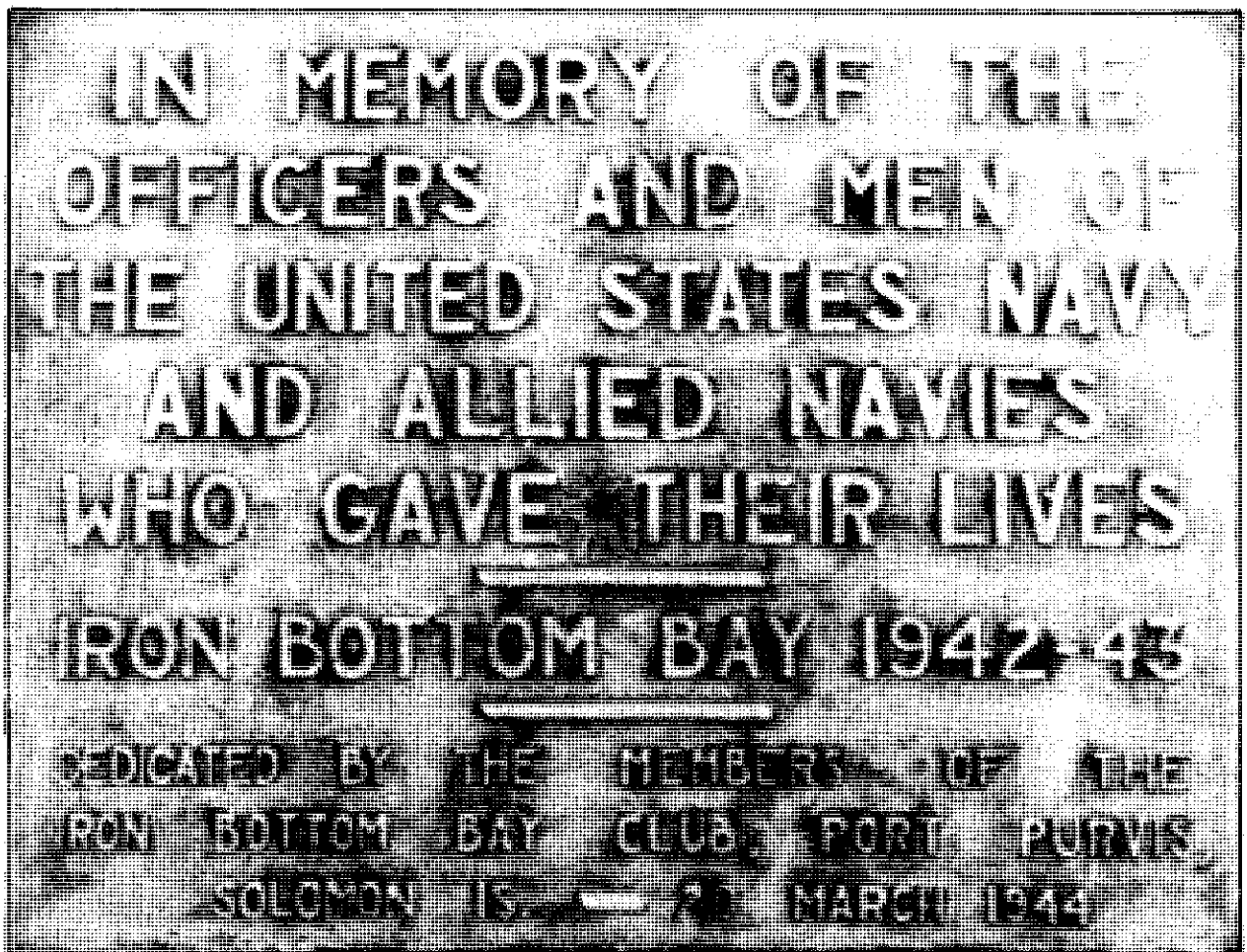
The plaque carries this inscription: "In memory of the officers and men of the United States Navy and Allied Navies who gave their lives -- Iron Bottom Bay -- 1942-43 -- Dedicated by Members of the Iron Bottom Bay Club -- Port Purvis, Solomons Islands -- 20 March 1944".

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

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

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

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



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

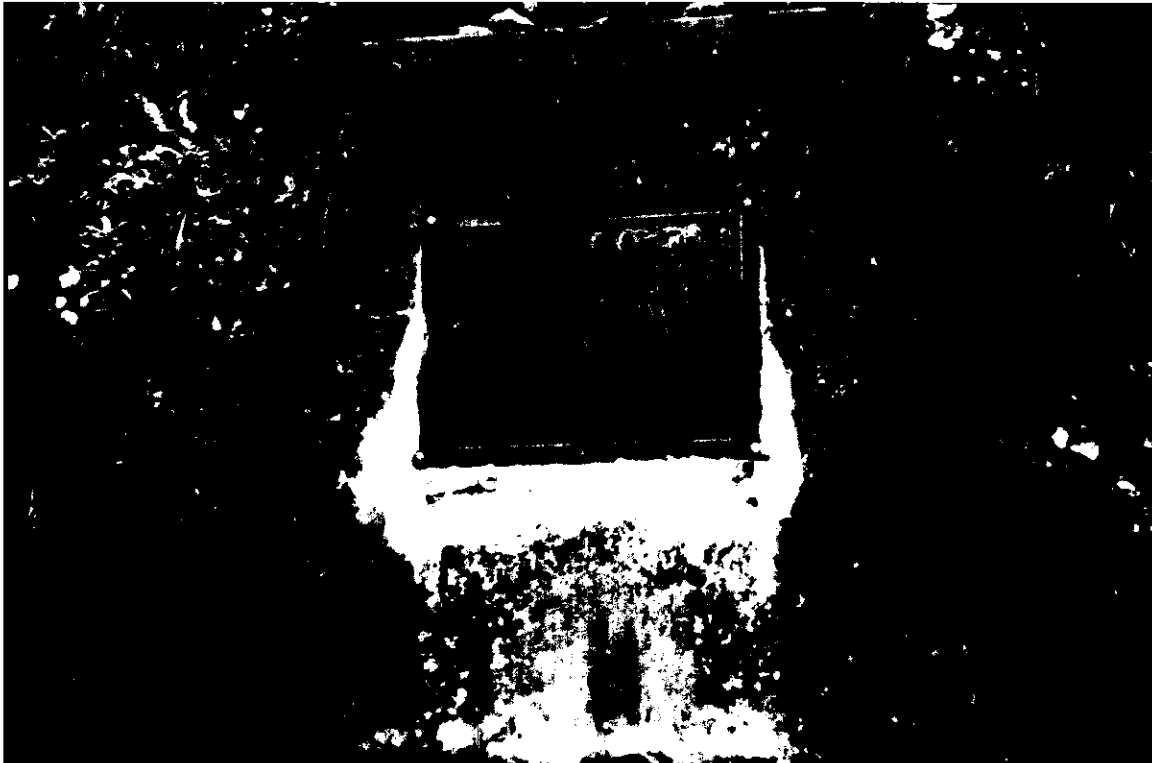
- Commander James C. Shaw, the major contributor to Volume V of Samuel Eliot Morison's History of United States Naval Operations in World War II: The Struggle for Guadalcanal (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1949). Rear Admiral Shaw, USN (Ret.) died on December 4, 1988.

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

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.  
March, 1995



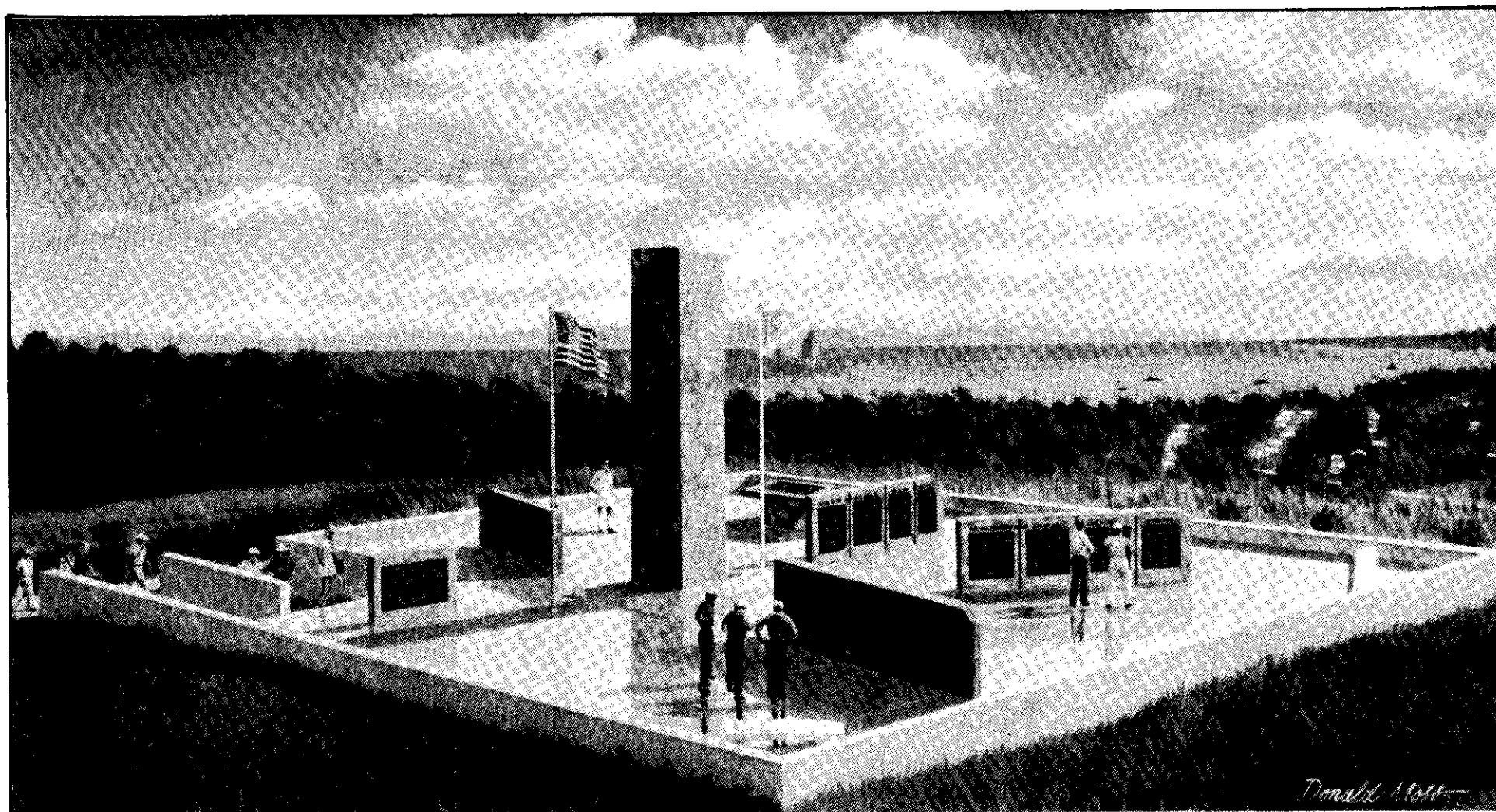
The Monument at Purvis Bay, Florida Island,  
Solomon Islands, as it looked in August, 1993.  
(Dedicated on April 30, 1944)



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







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

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

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

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

HORNET, WASP

HEAVY CRUISERS

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

LIGHT CRUISERS

ATLANTA, JUNEAU

DESTROYERS

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

MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS

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

TRANSPORTS

COLHOUN, GEORGE F. ELLIOTT,  
GREGORY, LITTLE

FLEET TUG SEMINOLE

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

BATTLESHIPS

NORTH CAROLINA  
SOUTH DAKOTA

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

ENTERPRISE, SARATOGA

HEAVY CRUISERS

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

LIGHT CRUISERS

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

DESTROYERS

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

DESTROYER MINESWEEPER ZANE

CORVETTE

KIWI (ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY)

MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT PT-59

TRANSPORTS

BARNETT, ZEILIN

CARGO SHIPS

ALCHIBA, ALHENA

SEAPLANE TENDER MC FARLAND



### THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN

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

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

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



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

THE BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE

11-12 OCTOBER 1942

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

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

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

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





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

**JAPANESE NAVAL VESSELS  
SUNK OR DAMAGED DURING THE  
GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN**

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



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

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



The U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) in World War II

APPENDIX

- I. Executive Officer's firsthand account of the night surface action early on October 11, 1942, together with his list of: ". . . officers and men deserving especial praise for their exemplary conduct under the most trying conditions." Lt. Comdr. Bryan used stationary from the Duncan's rescue ship, the U.S.S. McCalla (DD-448).
- II. Statements made by seventeen survivors shortly after they were rescued (Lt. Comdr. Bryan's report is dated October 14, 1942.):

Enclosure

Survivor

(A)	Ensign Frank Arland ANDREWS, USN
(B)	Ensign Wade H. COLEY, USNR
(C)	BOYD, David Hershey, CTM, USN
(D)	Lt. Philip Frederick HAUCK, USN
(E)	MAGEE, Lester, CMM, USN
(F)	BORCYCKOWSKI, Francis M., CMM, USN
(G)	Lt. Philip F. HAUCK, USN (also (D), above)
(H)	HOLT, Arthur Harold, CWT, USN
(I)	COLBECK, Thomas Richard, CFC, USN
(J)	BOEHM, Roy Henry, Cox, USN
(K)	WOOD, Clovis, S1c, USN
(L)	VEITCH, Henry Thornton, S2c, USN
(M)	GRIFFIN, Cyril Bateman, WT2c, USN
(N)	SOLOMON, Harry Lee, CMM, USN
(O)	CHAMBERLAIN, Whitney A., CSK, USN
(P)	DUCKWORTH, Chapel Dell, CGM, USN
(Q)	PACKWOOD, William Roger, FC2c, USN
(R)	DUVAL, Ward Edward, S2c, USN

\* \* \* \* \*

Editor's Note:

This material was copied from the originals in Lt. Comdr. Bryan's personal file and is courtesy of his daughter, Nancy Bryan Weller, in April 1997. Rear Admiral Bryan died in 1966.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
May, 2000



U. S. S. Mc CALLA (DD488)

October 14, 1942

From: Lt. Comdr. L. A. Bryan, U.S.N.,  
Executive Officer, U.S.S. DUNCAN  
To : Commanding Officer, U.S.S. DUNCAN  
Subject: After Action Report - Battle off Savo Island,  
October 11, 1942.  
Reference: (a) U.S.N.R., Article 948.  
Enclosures: (A) to (R) Statements of Survivors.

1. In compliance with reference (a) the following report is submitted:

(a) As executive officer my regular battle station was at secondary conn, but due to the recent transfer of the communication officer there was no sufficiently trained officer available for assisting in conning the ship. On verbal orders from the Commanding Officer I was directed to remain on the bridge until released just prior to action, to assist in conning. At about 2315 the DUNCAN was following the FARENHOLT in column and attempting to gain the van of the cruisers after force had reversed course to 230 degrees T. when action commenced. It was at this moment that I sighted a Jap cruiser close aboard on our starboard bow, silhouetted in the searchlight beams of own cruisers to port, who were engaging another Jap cruiser and several destroyers further ahead. I called the attention of our Commanding Officer to the target, and he immediately directed that the torpedo battery fire on it. He further turned away, to port, to uncover the torpedo tube. At this stage the last cruiser in own line opened fire, catching the DUNCAN in crossfire. DUNCAN was hit many times from both sides forward of #1 stack. The ship burst into flames immediately and all control from the bridge was lost. I started aft but was blocked by the flames from the fire-room and radio shack area. It was impossible to get either forward or aft, since Gun #2 was burning furiously and ammunition from our ready boxes was exploding continuously both forward and aft of the bridge area. Since the bridge ladder was blocked off I directed that the forestays, which had been carried away, and signal halyards be hung over the starboard wing of the bridge for use in lowering the men into the water. Since it was impossible to get away from this area, and it appeared that to remain longer would unnecessarily endanger life the Commanding Officer directed the personnel that had gathered there to abandon ship. The Commanding Officer and I made one last tour of the area and attempted to use the various means of communications once more, but without success.





Subject: After Action Report - Battle off Savo Island,  
October 11, 1942.  
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(b) The following named officers and men are deserving of especial praise for their exemplary conduct under the most trying conditions:

(1) Ensign Robert L. Fowler, III, D-V(G), U.S.N.R., (deceased) - Torpedo Officer - coolly setting up the torpedo fire control problem and firing one torpedo before being knocked out.

(2) Ensign Frank A. Andrews, U.S.N. - First Lieutenant - Starshell Control Officer at night at Gun #3 - for taking charge of the ship from Secondary Conn, attempting to steer clear of the subsequent action, and put out the fires. He only abandoned ship when all steam and water failed. His statement is attached (Enclosure "A").

(3) Ensign Wade H. Coley, E-V(G), U.S.N.R. - Assistant Engineer Officer - 1<sup>st</sup> machine gun Battery Officer - for coolly taking charge of the after fireroom and attempting to regain steam and keep power on the ship. He was one of the last to leave. His statement is attached (Enclosure "B").

(4) BOYD, David H., CTM(PA), USN - Battery Captain - for efficiently taking charge of his mount after the torpedo officer was knocked out, and firing torpedoes with local control and obtaining an additional hit on the Jap cruiser. His statement is attached (Enclosure "C").

(5) Lieutenant Philip F. Hauck, U.S.N., Gunnery Officer - for efficiently controlling his battery under most adverse conditions and obtaining hits on both targets - a cruiser and a destroyer. His statement attached (Enclosure "D").

(6) All members of Forward fireroom who refused to leave their stations after the first hit, until they had straightened out the damages - subsequently being killed by the second shell hit:

WINZENRITH, W.M., WT1c	ALLEN, D.M., WT1c
DIETZ, T.E., WT2c	ROBERTS, E.V., Flc
SMITH, A.P., WT2c	DUNISCH, D.G., Flc
TRIPP, T.J., Flc	

Statement by Magee, L., CMM, USN attached (Enclosure "E").



Subject: After Action Report - Battle off Savo Island,  
October 11, 1942.

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(7) OLEK, Roman J., MM1c, USN - for efforts beyond the call of duty. Though severely wounded made repeated efforts to keep down and help fight the fires. Statement by BORCYCKOWSKI, GMM, USN, attached (Enclosure "F").

(8) PAIGE, Lennon T., CY, USN }  
SOBELMAN, J.S., FC1c } For efforts to  
QUEEN, S.K. & BILBRO, J.A., FC3c }  
save Ensign R. L. Fowler and successfully bringing him through the night. Statement by Lt. Philip F. Hauck, USN, attached (Enclosure "G").

(9) BOYLE, WT2c, for devotion to duty. Statement by HOLT, A.H., CWT, USN, attached (Enclosure "H").

(10) COLBECK, T.R., CFC - for efficiently handling serious casualties in the Plotting Room. For abandoning ship with COMBS, FC1c, to get around the fires amidships and return aboard aft. Statement by COLBECK attached (Enclosure "I").

(11) RIZZI, R.M., Slc (deceased) - For remaining at his station though severely wounded and continuing to serve his gun. Statement by VEITCH, H.L., Jr., attached (Enclosure "J").

(12) CORMACK, J.A., Slc (deceased) - Trunnion operator 20 m.m. Gun #1.

TAYLOR, R.L., GM2c (deceased) - Gunner 20 m.m. #1.  
Both men stuck to their posts despite heavy shells bursting all around them. Statement by VEITCH, H.T. Jr., S2c, USN, attached (Enclosure "K").

(13) ALLAN, W.B., SC2c, V6, USNR - For efficiently taking charge of the men in his handling room under most trying conditions when his men were panicky. Statement by VEITCH, H.T., Jr., S2c enclosed (Enclosure "L").

(14) GUENTHER, MM2c - stationed in #2 fireroom - for devotion to duty. Statement by GRIFFIN, C.R., WT2c, USN, attached (Enclosure "M")

(15) HOLT, AH., CWT, USN - In charge of firerooms - for superhuman efforts to put out fires forward and keep steam up aft. All his men are unanimous in praising his leadership under exhausting conditions.



Subject: After Action Report - Battle off Savo Island,  
October 11, 1942.  
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(16) BORCYCKOWSKI, F.M., CMM, USN - for exhausting efforts to put out fires in the forward part of the ship. His work was an inspiration to the remainder of his repair party.

(17) SOLOMON, H.L., CMM, USN - For efficiently handling his engineroom under most adverse conditions. Statement by SOLOMON, H.L., CMM, USN, attached (Enclosure "N").

(18) FLOWERS, PhMlc - for efficient and untiring efforts to administer first aid both during and after the battle. His work undoubtedly saved many from more severe reactions. After being rescued and taken on board the McALLA he continued his duties without rest for another 24 hours.

(19) CHAMBERLAIN, W.A., CSK, USN - for cool resourcefulness and initiative in giving correct instructions to the plotting room crew. Statement attached (Enclosure "O").

(20) DUCKWORTH, C.D., CGM, USN - for devotion to duty under hazardous circumstances. Statement attached (Enclosure "P").

(21) Statement of PACKWOOD, W.R., FC2c. Attached (Enclosure "Q").

(22) Statement by DUVALL, Slc, USN, battle lookout on director platform attached (Enclosure "R").

(23) GRIFFIN, C.B., WT2c, USN - for devotion to duty in making every possible effort to keep steam up in #2 fireroom. The fireroom crew states that his conduct was of the highest and was an inspiration to all near him.

  
L. A. BRYAN.



Duncan was steaming in company with force, when order came thru and was passed over entire battle circuit for information "we are turning 180°". After the turn control reported radar contact bearing 025. I noticed gun #3 & #4 trained on that bearing. At approximately one minute later, a Jap destroyer passed abeam parallel to our course at what seemed about 1,000 yds. Not more than 15 secs a Jap cruiser relative bearing 025 distance about 2500 yds. was suddenly illuminated by our force and about 10 salvos from other ships seemed to hit the cruiser. Control instantly gave commence firing, and our guns opened fire. We fired approximately 4 salvos from #3 & #4 of which most seemed to hit. The Jap cruiser looked all red, and almost instantly broke at the foremast and started down. Duncan was going what seemed like about 25 or 30 knots and closing the enemy. Suddenly after our fourth salvo we got hit and the soot, steam, and smoke prevented me from seeing anything more.

I went aft where a crowd had started to gather. It was clear there, and I could see nothing around us. I went to secondary conn and the aft engines and steering aft ~~xxx~~ were the only ones on the line. Steering aft straightened rudder out and then I gave hard right rudder to try and beach the DUNCAN on what I later found out was Save Island. But there was considerable firing in that direction so I gave hard left rudder. We cleared that spot and I gave hard right again, but about that time aft engine room secured because there was no steam left. Mr. Kabat, Mr. Coley had been trying to get more steam, but were unable. The gang back aft abandoned ship later at Mr. Kabat's orders. Mr. Coley and myself and a group stayed aboard. Mr. Coley, Chief Borcykowski and Chief Holt were working below in aft boiler trying to pump salt water for purposes of making steam in boilers. But the pump could not build up enough pressure. We attempted to put the fires out but to no avail. I later abandoned ship with the remainder of the crew.

*Frank A. Andrews*

-----  
ENCLOSURE (B) 1.1\* Battery Officer, General Quarters station  
Aft. Conn. Mr. W.H. Coley.

Enemy had been reported on our starboard bow. Direction of opening fire from ships on our port bow was such that I believed them to be the enemy. Control did not designate targeted - did not give orders for 1.1\* to open fire. Received hits fwd. fire room, and flame and smoke made visibility impossible.

Gave orders for 1.1\* crew to fight fires, flood 1.1\* and 20 MM magazine and dump gasoline and kerosene. Believed bridge had control.

Went down to main decks, helped fight fire, run hoses, etc. After conn reported an officer was needed to conn the ship. Reported to Mr. Kabat bridge did not have control. Mr. Kabat was directing men fighting fire which was spreading aft.

Had reports from aft. engine room and fire room that they were O.K.

Told Chief Borcykowski to get the ship going astern to aid in fighting fire and to enable us to see where we were going. Had radio men try to call main radio, via radio.

After fire room reported loss of feed water and no steam; no pressure on fire mains. (Cont'd).





ENCLOSURE (B) Cont'd.

Word was passed to abandon ship. Volunteers stayed aboard. Got steam secured in after engine room in hope that remaining steam pressure in boiler would run fire and bilge pump long enough to get salt water in the boiler. Steam pressure was not great enough.

Received word fwd. magazine had not been flooded. Again passed word to abandon ship. Volunteers stayed aboard.

Manned the hand fuel oil pump in after fire room to bring up steam pressure for fire and bilge pump. There was not enough water left in the boiler.

Connected up gasoline pump to feed water to the boiler. The cold water flashed into steam, the resulting pressure forced water and steam back out of the pump. Again abandoned ship, volunteers stay aboard.

Set up gasoline pump on stb. side to fight fires; it would not start. Gathered up all CO2 extinguishers and all buckets to fight fire on starboard side.

Ammunition was exploding intermittently since fire started. Increasing explosions and flying debris made fire fighting impractical. Ordered men to abandon ship. Had one raft and made another of 4" x 4" shoring. We were the last to leave, time 0136, 12 October, 1942.

I saw no action that would be a discredit to the men. All the men were calmly doing their jobs. No man abandoned ship until word was given. In particular, men from the after part of the ship who remained aboard deserve credit. There was no risk or sacrifice they would not have made to save the ship.

The following list of officers and men is by no means complete. It includes only the ones I saw and was with most of the time. Their action, resourcefulness and leadership was particularly meritorious: Lieut. Kabat. Ensign Andrews. CWT Holt. CMM Borcykowski. CFC Colbeck. CTM Boyd. Dawson. Boyle. Bacsik. Higgins. Olek. Combs.

Again, the list is not complete, the last group of men to leave the ship, about 15 or 20 men, should all be included.

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ENCLOSURE (C) D.H. BOYD, CTM. Events during the battle as I saw them.

At the time of commence firing Watson and Scott were on the tubes. Star shells had been fired and I saw two targets, what I believe was a Jap DD and CL. Control set up the problem and fired the center barrel with the tube trained on about 55° train. A few seconds after we were hit forward on stbd. side and then I believe a second time before an order of fire two was given. Then we lost communication with control. We were next hit on #1 stack. The flames, sparks and smoke were coming aft heavily and visibility was poor. We then saw the forward stack starting to fall so we all went aft. After the stack which fell outboard was down, I went forward and saw flames blazing up around the torpedo tubes. My first thought was to get rid of torpedoes before the war heads exploded. I climbed up on the tubes and was about to jettison the torpedoes when I saw a cruiser on the stbd side at about



ENCLOSURE (C) Cont'd.

3,500 yds. It was too good a shot to waste so I led her with about 23° sight angle and fired. Target angle was about 270° and I estimated her speed at 25 knots and fired. I waited to see the results of that shot which hit the cruiser amidships. Then before I could get another shot out we had started turning hard to port and I didn't have time to fire a second shot.

I looked then for a place to fire the remaining three torpedoes and as it looked clear to our starboard which was then facing the Island I fired the other three torpedoes. However the right barrel had not fired though I didn't know it at the time. I then went back to after conn and started to help get fire hose led out to put out the fires and was so engaged when some one said that there wasn't anyone at after con. So I went up to after conn at about the same time that Ensign Andrews got there, and stayed with him.

It appeared that we had turned to port into the cross fire of a running fight so continued to turn to get away from it. We then headed down what we thought was the north west side of Guadalcanal but before we got very far we lost boiler pressure and stopped. We then went to the assistance of the fire fighting party but gave that up as there was no pressure on the fire mains.

Shortly after this five star shells were dropped on our port quarter and it looked as though someone were trying to get a range on us so Lt. Kabat passed the word to abandon ship.

I would like to state that all the men who were aft, however a little bewildered, did a good job all around.

*David Hershey Boyd*

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ENCLOSURE (D)      Main battery gun control.      Lt. P.F. Hauck.

The main battery opened fire on a cruiser on our starboard bow, range about 3300 yds, radar ranges. Guns and director in automatic, fire control solution good. First shots landed short of the target waterline. A spot of up 200 was applied and all remaining salvos were observed to pass into the superstructure area. After about 8 salvos were fired the target was observed to "blow up" and fire was shifted to a destroyer to the right of the cruiser, range about 2250 yd. without waiting for a computer solution, using radar ranges.

Two salvos both hitting were fired before the ship (DUNCAN) was hit in the bridge area and director. Operation, radar, and all communications went out. I directed the director crew to remain within the director shield while I went below to take control of the forward battery at gun #2. Upon observing Gun #2 and the superstructure below the bridge to be on fire, I passed word up to the director for the crew to lay down to the bridge. I left the ship when directed by the Executive Officer.

When the gun director and communications went out, guns #1, 3 & 4 went to local control. Gun #1 fired one shot at the destroyer but further firing was impracticable due to the rapid swing of the ship. Gun #2 was entirely out of commission due to an explosion in the upper handling room.

*P. F. Hauck*



ENCLOSURE (E) In charge of fwd. Engine room. CMM Lester Magee.

On or about 2344 I heard first gun salvo. About 2350 enemy salvo hit number 1 fire room. Fire room telephone talker reported number 1 fire room badly shot up. Ordered number 1 fireroom to secure. Number 1 fireroom secured but refused to leave station until the fire room was straightened out. About three minutes later, contact with #1 fire room failed.

Upon ordering #1 fire room to secure, we closed the bulkhead stops going to #1 and #2 boilers and the auxiliary steam stop. We opened our aux. steam stop coming from aft in order to keep our generator and pumps running.

One shell hit port side about frame 99 just about the water line. Shrapnel hit the generator board, port side, cutting out power and tripping generator. Cut in emergency electrical power from #2 generator coming down the stbd. side. Secured #1 generator.

Enemy shells hit machine shop, setting it ablaze. Secured intake and exhaust blowers because flames and smoke was coming down the blowers. Steam supply from the after fire room failed. Fire main pressure from #1 flushing pump dropped from 120 to 5 lbs. All our communication went dead and could not contact any other stations.

Tried to send messenger to after stations for information but was unable to leave the engine room due to both the escape hatches being enveloped in flame.

Heat, smoke and gases forced me to order my men to secure the engine room and go out through the escape hatch on the stbd. side which was made possible by the after repair party putting out the fire around the hatch. We abandoned the forward engine room about 2400.

All men carried out their duties promptly and remained at their stations calmly until the word to secure was given. Then ~~they~~ they left in an orderly fashion. I would like to commend the men in #1 fire room who gave their lives in order to secure their fire room in such a manner as not to endanger the rest of the ship.

Lester Magee

ENCLOSURE (F)

CMM Borcykowski.

Commendation of Olek, R.J., MM1c.

Stationed at the forward repair party, despite his wounds, Olek went to the after part of the ship on account of the fire on the forward part of the ship. He lent all possible assistance to the fighting of the fire and when he abandoned ship, he towed DeOnofrio, F2c, clear of the ship, never once mentioning his wounds to DeOnofrio or any one else.

Borcykowski



ENCLOSURE (G)

Statement concerning Ens. R.L. Fowler by  
Lt. P.F. Hauck.

Ensign Fowler was lying on deck alongside the torpedo director with a severe neck and head wound. As Paige, CY, passed him en route from gun director to bridge, he administered morphine. Upon leaving the gun director, Sobelman, FC2c and Bilbro, FC3c joined Queen, Slc in administering first aid to Mr. Fowler. The three above named men then assisted Mr. Fowler down to the bridge, thence to the foc'sle deck. A line formed of individual lanyards was then made and Mr. Fowler was passed into the water. While in the water, Mr. Fowler was placed on a mattress. Shortly thereafter the mattress sank and Mr. Fowler having lost his life belt, was without support. Sobelman removed his belt, placed it on Mr. Fowler, and joined Queen and Bilbro for support.

*P. F. Hauck*

ENCLOSURE (H) In charge, both firerooms. CWT A.H. Holt, U.S.N.

I wish to commend Boyle, WT2c for his actions during the night of 11 Oct. 1942. Boyle's battle station was with the after repair party. When the forward fireroom area was hit and enveloped in escaping steam, fire and smoke, Boyle repeatedly ventured as near as possible to the fireroom hatch with fire hose, in attempts to help put out the fires. Throughout the entire action, from time of receiving first damage, until abandoning ship, he was constantly on hand and many times endangered his own life to fight fires and help keep the ship afloat.

*A. H. Holt, C.W.N.J.*

ENCLOSURE (I) I.C. Room (Plot). CFC T.R. Colbeck, U.S.N.

Received order commence firing at 2330, checked fire 2333, commenced firing on new target. Stable element started to vibrate. I stepped over to adjust, received shell in I.C. room. Shell entered overhead at doorway and exploded. I.C. electrician, Christensen, EMLc, received full effect of explosion, this is what saved the rest of computer crew. Hess, FC3c, notified bridge I.C. room hit. Myself, tried to contact all stations. Received weak voice over line. All stations dead. Power failure bell was ringing. Combs, FC1c cut ships gyro to battery, running O.K. Checked and found all fire control circuits dead. D.C. power lights on I.C. panel were still on.

I.C. room flooded with about 4" water. Ordered Pallansh, FC3c, Hess, FC3c, Ham Slc and McDowell Slc to carry Christensen, EMLc to mess hall. They placed him on a table.

Heard somebody ask for a hand from top of ladder. Found doctor Broccolo attempting to drag King, CPhM down to mess hall. Lent a hand and placed King on mess table. Went back up ladder and found galley passage way blocked with debris. Went towards wardroom, found

(Cont'd)





ENCLOSURE (I) Cont'd.

it was on fire. Asked to have fire hose passed up. Received fire hose, but no water pressure. Attempted to put fire out with CO2 tank. Stopped fire for a few moments and then returned to mess hall. Asked the Doctor if he needed any help. He said he didn't have any medical supplies, so he couldn't do anything. He pronounced Christensen as being dead and said he was going forward through CPO quarters and out. Just then, we received two hits in mess hall. The first hit started a fire. McDowell put it out and the four of us, McDowell, Combs, Pallansch, and myself went up the ladder, over the debris in galley passageway and got to starboard door and found a hole in door. When looking through, saw a wall of flame and heard the hiss of steam, so turned back and tried to go out port door, but found it blocked. Turned back to starboard door, opened it, and dropped on deck to escape any possible steam. McDowell went through the door and over the side, followed by Pallansch, and then Combs and myself. After hitting water, made my way to Combs and he suggested going aboard aft, so we made our way over to the ship and they dropped us a telephone cable and then passed us a line which I tied around Combs. They hoisted him aboard and then I tied the line around myself and came aboard. After this, Combs and I worked with Ensign Andrews, Lt. Kabat and Ensign Coley, aft.

*Thomas Richard Colbeck*

ENCLOSURE (J)

#1 Handling Room.

*BOEHM, R.H. COYN*  
~~H.T. Veitch, Jr., S2c.~~

Rizzi, R.M., S1c, Gun #2 handling room, 2nd Powderman, while badly wounded by shrapnel and burns continued to send powder up to mount. The powder tins were so hot that they blew up in the handling room.

*Roy Henry Boehm*  
*WOOD, R. S1c*

ENCLOSURE (K)

~~H.T. Veitch, Jr., S2c.~~

Cormack, J.A., S1c stuck to his trunnion station on Machine Gun #1 (20 MM) with shells bursting all around.

Taylor, R, GM2c last words were that his only regret was leaving his wife and not seeing Australia. He died in the straps of his gun, #1 20 MM machine gun.

ENCLOSURE (L)

#1 Handling Room.

H.T. Veitch, Jr., S2c.

Allan, W.B., SC2c in #1 Handling room held men in handling room by force, with assistance of Veitch, H.T., S2c. Men left and when explosion came, hatch was open, left open by men leaving. Allan turned on sprinkling system, and closed hatch. Then all men left. Veitch gave life jacket to Whelan. McCleary had two and gave Veitch one.

*Kenny Thornton Veitch, Jr.*



ENCLOSURE (M)

#2 Fire Room.

Griffin, C.B., WT2c, USN.

The men in #2 fire room carried out their orders and stayed at their post until we were completely out of water. Everything was done to keep power on our ship. I want to remark on the performance of Guenther, MM2c, who helped with my job, as well as his own. Also Dawson, WT1c who kept a cool head even though he was overcome by gas and smoke, several times. He kept his watch steady. We had to shift to emergency feed water as our main feed pressure was so low we could not feed two boilers properly. We had to shift back and force tie out. Feed water was completely expended. The fireroom force consisted of:

(checks)  
Griffin, C.B., WT2c/ Dawson, WT1c (in charge)  
De Felice, F2c (on burners) Kandravi, Flc (on burners)  
Davis, A.W., Flc (Pump man) Pastore, Flc. (JP phones)  
Lyons, F2c (superheater & throttle)  
Guenther, MM2c whose battle station is air compressor in #2 fire room.

*C.B. Griffin*

ENCLOSURE (N)

After engine room.

COMM H.L. Solomon, U.S.N.

Action started at 2344. The first indication that we had been hit, was when smoke and fumes came down the vent blowers. I secured the blowers as the after engine room was filling with smoke. After repair party asked for extra hose, as we were running hose up to them through the escape patch, another explosion occurred and we lost contact with #1 fire room and had a faint contact with #1 engineroom and #2 fire room, and we lost our feed water. I had the vacuum drag line opened and had after fire room start #2 emergency feed pump and they were unable to get any feed water. #2 fire room had to secure #3 & #4 boilers. Received word to secure #2 engine ~~room~~ room from the Chief Engineer. Few minutes later, received word to secure engine room and abandon ship. Secured all steam valves, ordered all personnel to leave engine room and we secured hatches.

After getting on the topside the fire room force went back to the fire room to try to feed the after boilers with salt water. I asked for men to go back to #2 engine room to light off again. Olek, MM1c although wounded tried to help, ordered him to stay on the topside. #2 fire room was unable to feed the after boilers with salt water and we abandoned the engine room again, stayed on the topside until word to abandon ship was passed.

All personnel in #2 engine room carried out their duties calmly and only left their stations when I ordered them to.

*Harry Lee Solomon*



ENCLOSURE (0) Captain's Talker(JA circuit) on bridge.

W.A. Chamberlain, CSK, USN.

We were steaming second in column, USS FARENHOLT leading on course 070 or 080 true, when we received a voice message over TBS in color code to change course to 230 true.

As we commenced the turn to port, another message over TBS announcing "4 Bogies" and giving bearing and distance was heard. Then another message announcing "5 Bogies" came immediately.

Word was passed to the control officer who immediately reported 4 excellent pips on ED radar, on same bearing and range.

We had completed the turn by that time, and were ~~stead on~~ <sup>were changing course to</sup> course 230 true. Word was passed to stand by for action. The FARENHOLT appeared to turn left and our cruisers on our port bow opened up with ~~starshells~~ starshells and service ammunition. Then a ship or ships aft on our port side opened up, and the firing was across our bow and stern. Firing went on for what I estimate as one minute and then ceased. We did not open fire because of the following:

When firing first started, control reported on a target.

When illumination lit up the area, ships lay on both sides and ahead of us, and it was hard to determine which was which. Captain asked if we were on an enemy or on one of our own ships. Control reported that they were not positive, so we held our fire.

After a lull of an estimated 20 seconds, illumination and firing commenced again. We were turning to ~~port, towards our own forces~~ <sup>starboard</sup> when a Japanese vessel appeared on our starboard bow, at about 1200 yds. The Captain and Executive Officer both saw her at the same time and exclaimed that it was a perfect setup for torpedoes. I issued order to Torpedo director to fire one torpedo. Seconds afterwards, our ships were firing on her, including our own battery, opening up for the first time. Whether our torpedo hit her, I do not know. She burst into flames appeared to break up and sank within seconds.

Then a Japanese ship, what I think to be a cruiser, appeared on our starboard side, just forward of the beam, coming through the smoke at a target angle to us of about 285 degrees. We opened fire on her and later, I found out that the Chief Torpedoman fired two torpedoes on her, scoring hits with both.

Then the Japanese got their guns firing for the first time. We took a salvo on our starboard side - most of the hits forward, and evidently two in #2 handling room. The concussion knocked me against the bulkhead and the flash blinded me momentarily. During the few moments that I was blinded, I felt numerous shells hit the DUNCAN. After regaining vision, I could see we were in a cross fire, apparently almost midway between both forces, and were getting hit from both sides. After taking hits from both sides and realizing our forces were firing on us also, the Captain ordered the Battle lights (recognition reply) turned on. Lights functioned only a few seconds, when they went out, probably as a result of the hit in I.C. room, or the hit on director platform. I was told about that hit later.

No one in the Pilot house was hurt, but the pilot house was filled with smoke and debris. Complete order was observed at all times, and all hands that I saw and heard kept cool heads.

Ports were opened in an effort to drive out the smoke but to no avail. Communication was lost after we took the first salvo and was

(Cont'd)



ENCLOSURE (C) Cont'd.

not regained except for a weak signal from plotting room. Colbeck, CFC, USN, informed me that they had sustained a hit in the I.C. room, that the place was flooding, a fire had started in that area, and asked for orders. He also said all power was out, the switchboard panels were shot away and the computer inoperative.

The Captain was busy so I took it upon myself to order him to get his men together, rescue the payaccounts if possible, and stand by for further instructions, and to be ready to abandon ship if necessary.

Communication was then entirely lost and all phone circuits and public address systems inoperative. Also, we lost steering control and could not raise secondary con or steering aft to shift control.

There were wounded or dead men, number unknown, on the starboard wing of the bridge by the searchlight platform and Sam Albright, SMlc,

USNR, was sitting on the starboard pelorus platform, doubled over, covered with blood and moaning. I figured that he had been wounded in the stomach.

The fire, smoke and showers of sparks and debris were rising to the bridge from #2 handling room while the ammunition there was exploding. The Captain said, in effect, "Get the Kapok life jackets, Boys, and you had better leave while you still have time. Good luck to all of you."

I secured 3 kapok jackets and gave two of them to persons I couldn't identify. The 3rd, I put on, and we lined up to go over the side. The first 3 or 4 men went down the side or jumped, and then a light manila line was rigged to the voice tube. I was about the 5th one over. The line reached only a little over half way to the foosle deck, and when I reached the end, someone above fell on me, I dropped to the deck and bounced over the side.

In the water, I met Lieutenant Hauck, gunnery officer, and Paige, CY, USN. We tied ourselves together with Manila lanyards and I gave a rubber pneumatic life belt that I had to Paige as he did not have a kapok. We swam all night, trying to make an island to starboard of the action, and during the morning, the USS McCALLA showed up. We made our way to her and were later taken on board.

All hands on the bridge appeared cool and calm, and showed an exceptionally high degree of courage. In the heat and excitement of battle, I was not able to observe any outstanding action on the part of any one particular person, my attentions being directed solely on the Captain for orders, and for occasional glimpses of the Japanese vessels.

I wish to say that all Japanese ships seemed to burst into flames after sustaining about 6 hits, and that they all sank quickly except for one or two in a running fight to the westward.

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ENCLOSURE (P) Statement of DUCKWORTH, C.D., CGM, USN

I was temporarily blinded when the first salvo hit the starboard - probably from sand in the 40 m.m. foundation. I ~~closed~~ my eyes and noticed that #4 gun had ceased firing. I climbed inside and found that the control system was out. After shifting to local control I started forward and found I could not reach #1 and #2 guns. I then went to #3 gun handling room and found that it had been flooded. At this point I was called to the 20 m.m. clipping room and ordered to set all depth charges on the starboard side on safe by the Chief Engineer. After setting the starboard depth charges on safe I checked all others and then found that the firemain was out throughout the ship. I assisted in relaying word from secondary conn to steering aft and from steering aft to engine room, before and after the engines stopped. I found that most of the ship's company had abandoned ship, so I went to #4 handling room and broke out a number of powder tanks for the men that called for them, giving one to the Chief Engineer. I checked with the pharmacist's mate in regards to taking the wounded and found that they had already gone.

*Chapel Dell Duckworth*  
Chapel Dell DUCKWORTH, CGM(AA), USN

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ENCLOSURE (Q) Statement of PACKWOOD, W.R., FC2c(M), USN,  
Battle station - Director.

The first indication of actual presence of the enemy I had was when there appeared on our FD Radar screen in the director several pips, indicating ships off our starboard bow. The Radar operator picked out the closest target and by continuously sending ranges to plot, a problem was set up on the computer. The last range sent to plot was 2250. About that time starshells appeared in the air and simultaneously the firing from our ships began. Almost immediately the enemy began firing in return. From previous reports, we had learned that there were two enemy cruisers and six destroyers. We purposefully maneuvered into the cross fire as much as necessary to protect out cruiser force and in so doing, torpedoed one enemy cruiser, completely destroying same. We then opened fire with our main battery on the other enemy cruiser. The first salvo hit the target but was slightly low. The rangefinder operator ordered a 200 yard up spot in range which I applied before our next salvo was fired. The second salvo hit just aft of the bridge at about the waterline and the third and fourth salvos appeared to hit in approximately the same place. By that time the target was no longer visible because of the fire and smoke from it. After the fourth salvo we were hit and the director was put entirely out of commission as were all means of communication. When the gunnery officer saw that the director could be of no more use, he told us in the director that he was



ENCLOSURE (R) Continued.

going down to the director platform and take charge of the machine gun battery and that we could follow if we liked, which we all did, as there was much flame both forward and aft of us and the director was an uncomfortable position. On the way down, SOBELMAN, J.S., FC1c(M) found the torpedo officer very gravely wounded and asking for help. SOBELMAN took off his own life jacket, strapped it around Mr. Fowler (torpedo officer) and by sheer strength and determination managed to get him over the side and, with the assistance of several others began towing him toward the nearest land. When I reached the bridge after leaving the director, someone told the Captain that gun #2's magazine was going off any time so the Captain gave the order to abandon ship. We were all on the starboard side and the Executive Officer told some of us to go over on the port side and break out the life net. We tried to, but were unable to reach it. A cable and a line were secured at the bridge and the other end thrown over for escape lines. Before I left, I noted large fires at #2 gun and below where #1 stack was. I then abandoned ship at orders from the Executive Officer.

The foregoing is true to the best of my knowledge.

*W. R. Packwood*

W. R. PACKWOOD, FC2c(M), USN.

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ENCLOSURE (R)      Statement of DUVALL, S2c, Battle lookout on  
Director Platform.

I observed 2 torpedoes in succession leave the DUNCAN. The first one struck the bow of the Japanese cruiser on our starboard bow. The second torpedo struck the cruiser's port quarter.

*Duvall W.E.*

DUVALL, S2c, USN  
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The U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) in World War II

Photograph Credits

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source Code/Ident. No.</u>
On the ways, stbd. bow, Kearny, NJ	NA 19-N-29446
Sponsor, Mrs. Dorothy Clark	NA 19-N-29454
Official Party, launching, 2/20/42	NA 19-N-29453
Stbd. bow, u/way, Kearny, 4/16/42	MM Order with photocopy
USS <u>Wasp</u> (CV-7), aflame, 9/15/42	NA 80-G-391481
Stbd. beam, under way, 10/7/42	NHF NH 90495
Gun plat., USS <u>Aaron Ward</u> (DD-483)	NA 19-N-30718
1.1-inch quad mount	RWP N-11247
20-mm., Mk 4, Oerlikon mount, 1942	NA 19-N-31965
USS <u>McCalla</u> (DD-488), stbd. beam	NI Order with photocopy
Monument, Purvis Bay, Fla. Is., 1944	NA 80-G-275700
Monument plaque (on above)	NA 80-G-240318

\* \* \* \* \*

Key to Sources:

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

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

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

MM Mariners' Museum Research Library and Archives  
100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606-3759  
Phone: (757) 596-2222

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

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
February, 2001



# The U.S.S. Duncan (DD-485) in World War II

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- COMDESRON 12: 10/23/42
- USS Duncan (DD-485): 10/16/42
- USS McCalla (DD-488): 10/12/42

### Conversations:

- Capt. Frank A. Andrews, USN (Ret.), survivor
- Robert L. Fowler, Jr., son of Lt.(jg) Fowler, K.I.A.
- Richard T. Wharton, Jr., son of Lt.(jg) Wharton, survivor

### Miscellaneous:

- "Battle Books" at the National Archives, listing the Duncan's casualties on 10/12/42 (a machine-generated casualty report prepared by the Bureau of Naval Personnel c. 1946).
- COMSOPAC (Commander South Pacific Force) correspondence file for medal recommendations. (National Archives)
- Personnel Diary (Muster Rolls) for Duncan on microfilm at the National Archives.
- Ships' Histories Section file for Duncan, Naval Historical Ctr. War Diary, Duncan, at the National Archives.
- WWII citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.  
February, 2001





### 2006 ADDENDUM

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

#### Editor's Note:

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There must be much consternation in Tokyo these days, because



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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

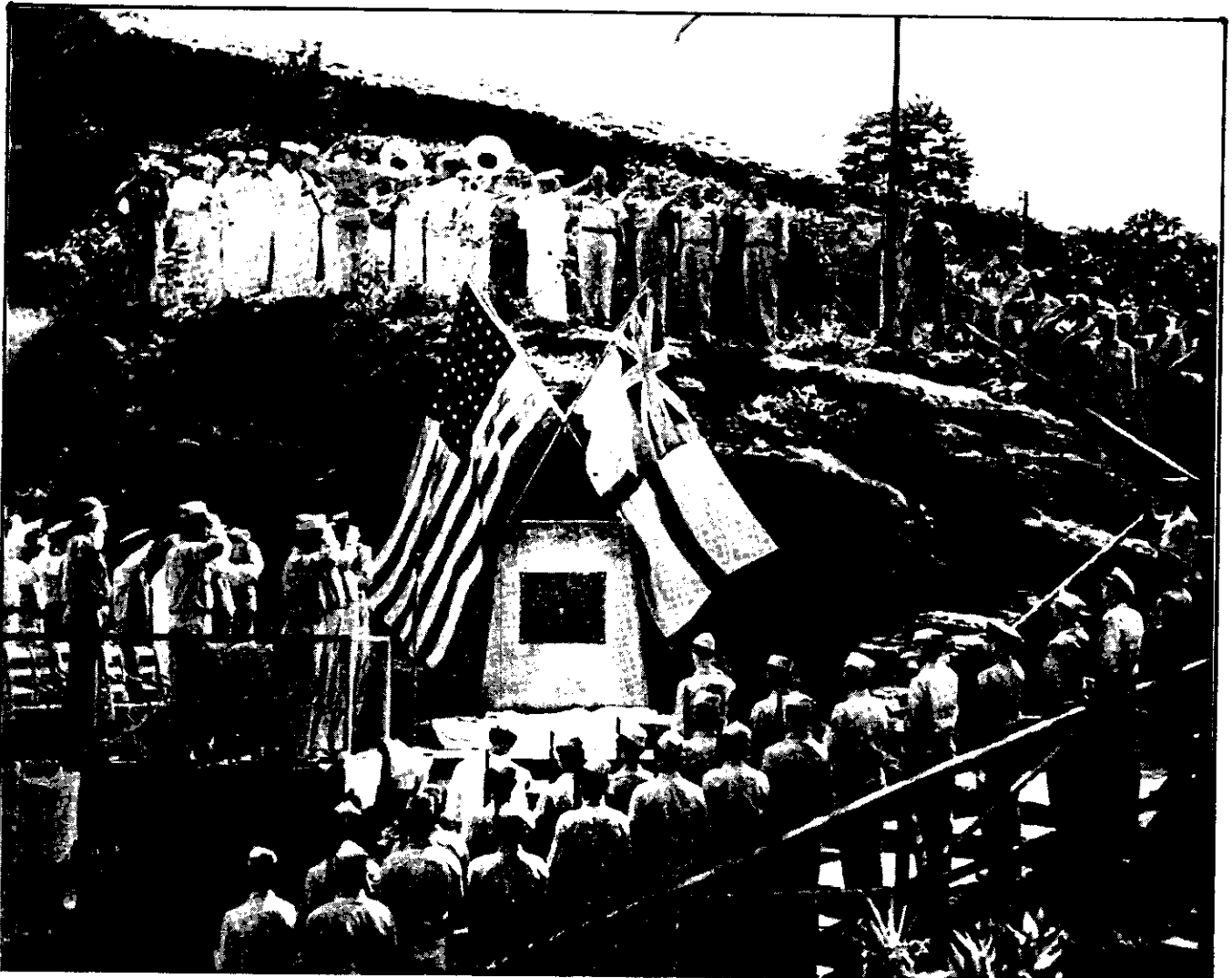
*Friday I flew over to \_\_\_\_\_ in one of our planes to line up and invite the "big wigs" stationed there and the press. It certainly was a delightful trip. It was a beautiful day, and it was nice to fly and to see some of the country from the air, as scenically - and from a distance - it is very grand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

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

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

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





### About The Editor

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

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

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



Historical Compilations by the Editor:

(Destroyer/Destroyer Escort Hulls in World War II)

<u>United States Ship</u>	<u>Date Sunk/ (Damaged)</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Killed/ Wounded<sup>1</sup></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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