

E. Andrew Wilde, Jr., Editor

**The U.S.S. *Spence* (DD-512) in World War II:
Documents, Recollections and Photographs**

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Spence Crewmembers (on 12/18/44) and Their Families:

First an introduction. I'm 73 years old, so I was a junior in high school when the Spence was lost. Later, I obtained a commission through the NROTC program and saw action aboard a destroyer in the Korean War. Much later (1993), I began compiling booklets similar to this one on destroyers sunk in World War II.

I selected the Spence solely because she was Bath-built. I had traveled to the public library in Bath, Maine, to obtain a copy of the newspaper article on the launching of another destroyer and then decided to copy launching articles for other Bath-built destroyers sunk in the war.

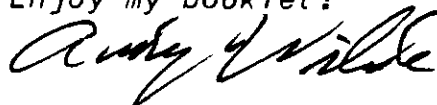
When I began the research for this booklet a few years later I didn't know if there were enough documents and photographs available to make it an interesting one. Was I ever surprised! The Spence had accumulated an illustrious war record before she was sunk, so I was able to include several of her action reports. Also, I was fortunate to be able to include firsthand accounts of the sinking by Lt.(jg) Krauchunas, CBM Beeman and QM2c Traceski. I'm still amazed by how quickly I was able to put together a 91-page booklet.

I'm indebted to Dave Meskill and Dick Strand for their support after they received advance copies and for the address lists they sent me. Thanks to them I'm distributing forty-five copies to crewmembers and their families - in addition to the fourteen copies I'm mailing to naval museums/libraries.

I'm sorry that I can't supply you with extra booklets, but I hope that you'll have copies made for family members.

Finally, I never charge for my booklets, but modest contributions will be appreciated.

Enjoy my booklet!



E. Andrew Wilde, Jr.

The U.S.S. Spence (DD-512) in World War II

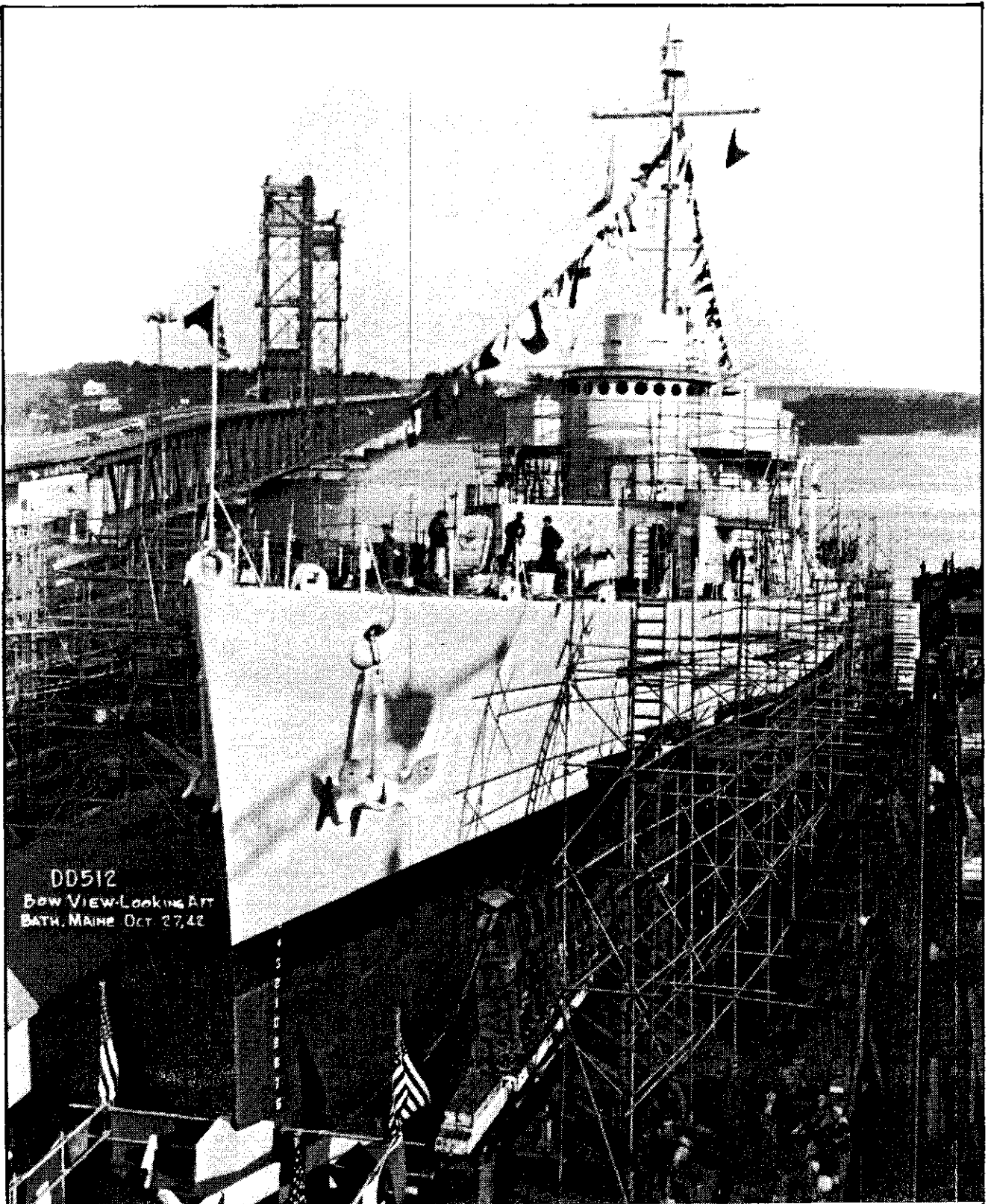
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E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2001

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

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



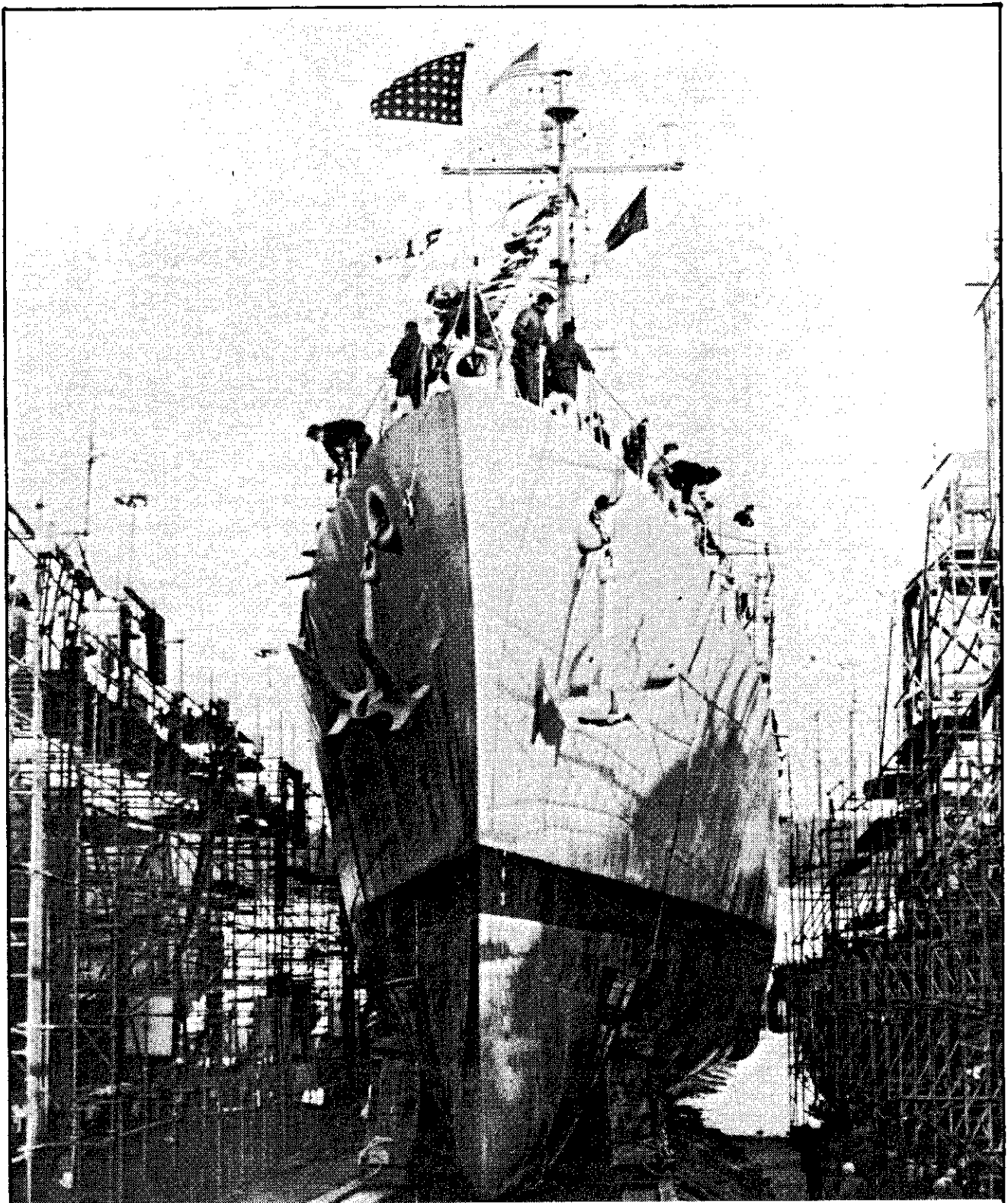
The "2100-tonner" Fletcher-class destroyer USS Spence (DD-512) on the ways and ready for launching at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, on 27 October 1942. The ship is "fully dressed" for the occasion with a rainbow of signal flags displayed from bow to stern over her mast. At the left, coastal Route 1 heads down east over the Kennebec River towards Wiscasset and Damariscotta.
(Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)



The Navy Department selected Mrs. Eben Learned, great-granddaughter of Captain Robert T. Spence, USN (1783-1826), to sponsor the destroyer USS Spence (DD-512). Captain Spence saw action during the war with Tripoli in 1801-3, and he was commended for his role in defending Baltimore against a superior British fleet during the War of 1812. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)



Mrs. Eben Learned christened the USS Spence (DD-512) at Bath, Maine, on 27 October 1942, as the town participated in the country's first wartime Navy Day observance with a daylong schedule of events climaxed by the launching of the Spence.
(Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)



The USS Spence (DD-512) slid down the ways into the Kennebec River at Bath, Maine, on 27 October 1942. This yard built 31 of these Fletcher-class vessels for the U.S. Navy before switching over to the 2,200-ton Allen M. Sumner-class destroyers in mid 1943. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)

BATH HAS APPROPRIATE NAVY DAY OBSERVANCE WITH EXERCISES AT THE BATH IRON WORKS AND LAUNCHING OF THE DESTROYER U. S. S. SPENCE

Iron Works Presented Army-Navy "E" Flag With Star for Continued Excellent Showing in Production—Special Navy Day Programs at Morse High and Other Schools

Navy Day observances in this city which began early in the morning hours with the displaying of flags throughout the business district, and outside homes in the residential sections, will conclude with a benefit dance for the Navy Relief Society in the evening.

Between those hours has been packed a period of activities and exercises that has never been equalled in Bath's history of the observance of that day.

At ten in the morning the navy barracks recently constructed on Western avenue were turned over to the Navy department with fitting ceremonies. At 10.45 a gigantic assembly was held at Morse High school with music and speakers on a program of Navy Day nature. Meanwhile fitting observances were being held in every school classroom in the city. At 3.40 in the afternoon activities centered at the yard of the Bath Iron Works where a three-quarter hour program was presented, featured by the presenting of the joint Army-Navy "E" banner, with star, to the plant and climaxed with the launching of the U. S. S. destroyer Spence. In the evening at City hall at 7.30 the first class of apprentices of the Iron Works will be graduated, and the dance at U. S. O. hall will conclude the city's tribute to the Navy and its men—Our first line of attack.

Today is the first wartime observance of Navy Day and throughout all of the day's activities could be felt the spirit of gravity and determination which seems to be settling over the people of this nation, a feeling which has not been lightened by the latest news from the Solomons. To the men of the navy

and to others who have friends and relatives out there, and on the many other fronts, the day is not one of celebration. To them it is rather a day of tribute, and of a rebirth of determination to prosecute this war with speed and vigor to the end that victory may be forthcoming in as short a time as possible.

AT THE IRON WORKS

Band

A. M. Man introduces Admiral W. P. Robert (Retired) as Master of Ceremonies

Mayor Rogers of Bath, Address
Capt. R. S. McDowell, USN (CC), Address

Capt. McDowell presents Army-Navy Pennant

G. B. Connard receives flag and has it hoisted

Band

C.Q.M. R. E. Furry, USN, Remarks

C.W.T. N. Cucinello, Remarks
J. W. Harkins, President Bath-erhood, Remarks

W. S. Newell, Address
Launching sponsor, Mrs. Eben Learned, introduced to audience

Band

Sponsor christens destroyer Spence.

At the Bath Iron Works Corp., the yard whistle sounded at 3.40 and the men left their work to assemble within hearing distance of the speakers' stand. The program opened with selections by the band and then Executive Vice President Archibald M. Main introduced the Master of Ceremonies, Admiral W. P. Robert, (Retired) U. S. N.

Admiral Robert presented the Mayor of Bath, Walter C. Rogers, who spoke as follows:

Greetings:

Men and women of the Bath Iron Works and Guests—

It is appropriate that the Navy League of the United States should take a leading part in

celebrating this Navy Day—the first anniversary since we became involved in this total war.

Navy Day was founded by the Navy League in 1922 and they have always advocated and worked for an adequate Naval Force.

The Navy which is our first line of defense and attack, keeps the enemy away from our shore and we may all agree that it is fortunate that the President of the United States promoted the rebuilding of a modern Navy some years ago.

The City of Bath has always enjoyed close association with the Navy and in addition to the many Naval vessels built here in the past we have built many for our modern Navy, of the best quality.

Bath has also contributed many men to the Navy, the most prominent of whom was the late Admiral Charles Hughes, whose flag hangs in Central Church (the tower of which may be seen from here) and the pew in which he sat as a boy and man is marked by a brass plaque bearing his name.

Our Navy has suffered some serious losses and has many outstanding victories to its credit showing how Free Men can and will fight for their democracy.

The men of the fleet, we all understand, are grimly determined to repay our enemies, with liberal interest, for their vindictive acts against us.

It is the recognized duty of the men and women in the Bath Iron Works to continue their fine labors in producing destroyers of the highest type—as they are now doing—expeditiously as possible with the thought in mind that our Navy men may have the necessary equipment to promote their efforts in defeating the unscrupulous enemies of the democracy which we love.

At the conclusion of Mr. Rog-

ers' talk Admiral Robert introduced Capt. R. S. McDowell, U.S.N., Supervisor of Shipbuilding for Maine. Capt. McDowell's address follows:

Capt. McDowell

This Navy Day finds us at the most solemn moment in world history. Across our free institutions lies the ugly shadow of brutal aggression. The men of the Navy are fighting grimly with determination—and purpose to restore the Light of Freedom to a darkened world, and to protect our shores and liberties from attack.

In connection with Navy Day, 142, the Secretary of the Navy has the following to say:

"Navy Day this year means more than at any other time in our history. It is a day of days on which we can rededicate our best efforts to our common cause as we pay tribute to the brave men of our fleet who are taking the battle to the enemy. Every American is proud of those men—they have earned every American's utmost gratitude."

Those are the words of the Secretary of the Navy.

These Navy men are fighting for you—for me—for all of us, and it is entirely proper that we set aside this one day in each year as Navy Day, a day on which to pay tribute to them.

From printed dispatches, and some of them quite recent and not entirely favorable, it is apparent that we have had to spread our Naval forces very thin in order to meet the tremendous demands of space imposed on them. For we have to fight on two oceans, bolstering the fleets of our Allies in far-flung outposts, convoying huge troop movements, guarding shipments of supplies to England, Australia, Africa, and Russia.

But today America is constructing the mightiest fleet the world has ever known. We are all fighting and working together—the man in uniform, the executive, and the man in overalls. Every day new ships are going into commission, ships of every description to make up a mobile, hard-hitting, closely inter-related team. And this is our part—we must continue to contribute to that team.

Let us re-affirm once again on Navy Day our faith in each other and in our common cause. Let us seize the present as the moment in which we will completely and fully utilize our potential and actual physical and moral power. Let us stand arm in arm—shoulder to shoulder—behind our Navy, a symbol of our might. Your Navy—first line of attack.

Last February, you men and women of the Bath Iron Works won recognition for your past performances, as then evidenced by the award of the Navy "E" for efficiency. I am pleased to inform you that, for the six

months period following that award, the Navy Department considers that your excellent work has been continued, and that this may be shown by the addition of a star to the award pennant. It is my privilege to award Mr. Connard, representing the officials and the men and the women of the Bath Iron Works, the Army-Navy Production Award pennant with star.

Capt. McDowell handed the pennant to George Baer Connard, general manager, who in turn presented it to men of the Charles F. Hughes, Navy club of America, who hoisted it to the yardarm of the company flagpole near the main gate.

A selection by the band followed:

Chief Quartermaster R. E. Curry was then introduced and spoke as follows:

Chief Quartermaster Curry

After acknowledging the numerous persons upon the speakers stand Chief Quartermaster R. E. Curry spoke to the audience as follows:

As a chief petty officer, I represent the enlisted men of the United States Navy and you as workmen in this yard represent, theoretically the enlisted men of the Bath Iron Works. Our duties are closely connected. We carry out the orders prepared for us by our superiors and the success of the war greatly depends upon how well we do our jobs. You all know Navy men, we in the Navy know Bath built ships and we can each of us look to the other as the best in their trade. We can do our fighting on these ships only on a comparative basis, how well they are built is how well we can fight with them. This new addition to a fleet of ships already on the firing line has been built with the intention of adding prestige to the Bath Iron Works as well as to the United States and United Nations, and we of the service intend to do the same from our angle. Fight them.

By thus working together, the enlisted men, we are literally interpreting the most sentimental words ever written. In the Constitution of the United States we find these words: "We, the People"—and we are the people, all of us and we are the posterity of which they wrote. They must have had us in mind when they turned over the job to us. To protect our inalienable rights.

This is a local scene and interpretation of the meaning of, We the people—the same is being enacted all over our country and throughout the world. The launching of this ship is but a local triumph, but the spirit that built this ship so quickly and well is rampant in every man in the military, as well as the builders of ships. We will fight them as well as you build them and from past performances we

together will do a mighty fine job.

We are all important cogs in an important machine and we will rise to victory with the battle cry of "One for all, and all for one." The men of the Navy and the men of this yard represent a cross section of all the people of the United States, coming from all walks of life. We are anxious to build a great fighting machine—the greatest in the world. Our hopes and prayers will always be that we may win this war and return to our civilian life secure in the knowledge that we have done a good job.

Survivor of Corregidor Speaks

Following C. Q. M. Curry, Chief Water Tender N. Cucinello, who was one of a group of men escaping from beleaguered Corregidor in an open boat and finally making their way to Australia talked briefly but interestingly of his experiences.

The next speaker was J. W. Harkins who spoke in behalf of the workmen at the yard.

Address of Mr. Harkins

Fellow-members of the Independent Brotherhood:

It is to you that I feel much credit is due on this occasion. Through your united efforts the Army-Navy E pennant will float from the Bath Iron Works' masthead.

For 51 years fighting ships of steel have been launched from this plant, dating back to Dec. 8, 1891, when the gunboat Machias, forerunner of the modern-day destroyer, slid down the ways to mark completion of the first steel vessel ever built in Maine.

In the half-century following the launching of the Machias the Bath Iron Works and its shipwrights have written brilliant pages into both, our peacetime and wartime efforts, but, I honestly believe that you men of the Independent Brotherhood, organized 100 percent, are writing the most glorious page of all.

The facts speak for themselves, much more emphatically than can be said. You have gone far beyond the World War No. 1 performance of the Bath Iron Works in both quality and quantity.

And so, I say again, that much credit for this day must rightfully go to you men of the Brotherhood.

I thank you.

The final speaker was President William S. Newell who congratulated the men on their accomplishment and praised them for their cooperation.

The sponsor of the destroyer, Mrs. Eben Learned, was then presented by Admiral Robert and following a selection by the band the sleek gray ship of war slid into the Kennebec.



The USS Spence (DD-512) at Boston, Massachusetts, where she was commissioned on 8 January 1943, Lt. Cdr. Henry J. Armstrong, Jr., USN, in command. After her shakedown cruise out of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, she served as an escort in the Atlantic and Caribbean. In July, 1943, she departed San Francisco after a brief stay at Hunters Point and headed for the war zone following some additional training at Pearl Harbor. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)

History of the USS Spence (DD-512)*

Spence

Robert T. Spence—born in Portsmouth, N.H., about 1785—was appointed midshipman in 1800 and was ordered to duty in *Siren*. The brig sailed for the Mediterranean in 1803 in Commodore Edward Preble's squadron. The following year, Spence participated in attacks on Tripoli and, on 7 August 1804, was an officer in the prize gunboat No. 9 when she was blown up by a hot shot that hit her magazine. Although the boat's stern was under water, he continued loading her forward gun; fired it; and, with his crew of 11 survivors, gave three cheers. Then, sitting astride the gun and waving his hat, went down into the water. Fortunately, he was rescued. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1807 and to master-commandant in 1813.

During the War of 1812, Spence superintended the building and equipping of the sloop-of-war, *Ontario*, at Baltimore and commanded the naval station there. He was commended by Commodore John Rogers for his promptness and ingenuity in laying obstructions to impede the British fleet as it approached Baltimore in September 1814. He was promoted to post-captain in 1815, commanded Naval forces at Baltimore until 1 July 1819, and served in that post again from May 1820 to May 1822.

Captain Spence assumed command of *Cyane* at that time and was ordered to the West Indies to help to suppress piracy. He later patrolled the African coasts to oppose freebooters and slavers there.

In July 1823, he resumed command at Baltimore and retained that position until his death in September 1826.

(DD-512: dp. 2,050; l. 376'6"; b. 39'4"; dr. 13'5"; s. 35.5 k.; cpl. 273; a. 5 5", 4 40mm., 6 20mm., 6 dcp., 2 dct. (hh.), 10 21" tt.; cl. *Fletcher*)

Spence (DD-512) was laid down on 18 May 1942 by the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine; launched on 27 October 1942; sponsored by Mrs. Eben Learned; and commissioned on 8 January 1943, Lt. Comdr. H. J. Armstrong in command.

Spence conducted her shakedown cruise out of Guantanamo Bay from 8 to 28 February. She then served as an escort in the Atlantic and Caribbean and had convoy duty in the Casablanca area in April. She was routed to the west coast and, on 25 July, got underway from San Francisco for Pearl Harbor.

Spence sailed on 25 August as a unit of Task Group (TG) 1.2 consisting of *Princeton* (CV-23) and *Belleau Wood* (CVL-24) to support troops who took possession of Baker Island on 1 September. On the 13th, she proceeded to Efate and arrived at Havannah Harbor on the 18th.

Spence was attached to Destroyer Division (DesDiv) 46 of Destroyer Squadron (DesRon) 23. The squadron sailed on 22 September for Tulagi, Solomon Islands. On the 28th, she set a surface craft on fire with her main batteries near Kolombangara and then patrolled

* Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. 6. Washington: U.S. Naval Historical Center, 1976.

between that island and Vella Lavella. On the night of 1 and 2 October, *Spence* was with a force off Vella Lavella to interdict Japanese shipping and helped to destroy 20 Japanese barges. The DD then made two escort runs from Tulagi to Purvis Bay during the first part of the month and ended October supporting landings on the Treasury Islands.

Capt. Arleigh A. Burke assumed command of DesRon 23 on 23 October, and the squadron became known as the "Little Beavers." On 1 November, *Spence* participated in the bombardment of Buka and Bonis airfields and of enemy positions in the Shortland Islands to support the landings at Cape Torokina, Bougainville.

In the early hours of 2 November, Task Force 39 intercepted an enemy force of two heavy and two light cruisers with six destroyers steaming towards Empress Augusta Bay. At 0231, *Spence* made radar contact at 16 miles. While closing the target, she received a hit below the water line but continued in action. The destroyer fired a spread of torpedoes at a ship 3,000 yards away and was rewarded with black smoke pouring from the target. As *Spence* retired to rendezvous with DesDiv 45, she spotted another Japanese force 4,000 yards away. She opened fire, was "on target," and watched one ship stop dead in the water and burn fiercely. Since *Spence* was low on ammunition, she called upon DesDiv 45 to pour shells into the ill-fated destroyer *Hatsukaze* which sank stern first. The Japanese light cruiser *Sendai* was also sunk in the engagement.

When daybreak came, so did between 70 and 80 enemy aircraft. But the Japanese lost over 20 planes while scoring only two hits on *Montpelier* (CL-57).

Spence retired to Purvis Bay on 3 November. The next day, she called at Tulagi and sailed with *Nashville* (CL-43) for Kula Gulf. On the afternoon of the 5th, she was operating northwest of the Treasury Islands when she was attacked by enemy aircraft. One plane dropped three bombs, but the closest fell 75 yards off *Spence's* starboard beam.

For the next three weeks, *Spence* performed patrol and escort duty in the Port Purvis-Kula Gulf area. On 24 November, the squadron was refueling in Hathorn Sound when ordered northwest of Buka Island to intercept Japanese shipping which American intelligence had learned would attempt to evacuate aviation personnel from the Buka-Bonis airfields. Early the next morning, the "Little Beavers" were patrolling the Buka-Rabaul route. At 0142, in St. George Channel, *Spence* made surface radar contacts at 22,000 yards. The range closed rapidly; and, at 0156, DesDiv 45 fired torpedoes at two Japanese ships and scored several hits. Several minutes later, American radar picked up a second group of three enemy ships. *Spence* and *Converse* were ordered to finish off the first group while DesDiv 45 bombarded the second group.

In the first group, *Onami* exploded and sank immediately while *Makinami* was battered into a helpless cripple. *Spence* and *Converse* opened on her with their main batteries and she sank at 0253. In the second group, DesDiv 45 sank *Yugiri*. Three of five Japanese destroyers had been sunk with no damage to DesRon 23! The squadron appropriately returned to Purvis Bay on Thanksgiving Day.

Spence operated out of Purvis Bay until late Janu-

ary 1944 when she patrolled near Green Island and Bougainville Strait. On 5 February, she participated in the bombardment of supply and bivouac areas at Hahela Plantation on the southeast coast of Buka Island. The next day, she sank an enemy barge with shellfire near Green Island. On the night of 9 and 10 February, *Spence* helped to shell Tiaraka and Teopasino, Bougainville. *Spence's* guns pounded Kavieng and Cape St. George, New Ireland, on the 18th; she then made a sweep of shipping lanes between Kavieng and Truk. The American warships encountered no ships so they returned to Kavieng and shelled it again on the 22d. On that day, *Spence* and DesDiv 45 sank a Japanese merchantman of about 5,000 tons with shellfire.

Spence operated with TF 39 from 1 to 24 March to support the landings on Emirau Island. On the 27th, she sortied from Purvis Bay with TF 58 for strikes against Palau, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai, Caroline Islands. From 13 to 25 April, *Spence* screened the fast carriers as they struck targets on New Guinea in support of the landings at Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay, and at Humboldt Bay, New Guinea. On the 29th and 30th, the carriers struck enemy shipping and installations at Truk, the powerful Japanese naval base in the Caroline Islands. The destroyer returned to Majuro for a period of upkeep from 4 May to 5 June.

Spence sortied with TG 58.4, the fast carriers, on 6 June, to attack the Mariana Islands. As aircraft struck the islands, the destroyer moved in and bombarded enemy positions on Guam and Saipan. The planes attacked Iwo Jima on the 16th and then returned to pound the Marianas. *Spence* participated in the "Marianas Turkey Shoot" during the Battle of the Philippine Sea on 19 and 20 June. On 23 and 24 June, aircraft bombed targets on Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. The destroyer conducted shore bombardment against Rota, Saipan, and Guam from 26 June through the end of the month setting fuel tanks afire and sinking two sampans on the 27th. *Spence* replenished at Eniwetok in July and, on 4 August, sailed for the California coast via Pearl Harbor and arrived at San Francisco on 18 August. She was drydocked all of September and, on 5 October, sailed for Pearl Harbor and the Marshalls. She arrived at Eniwetok on 31 October and was ordered to Ulithi in early November where she was assigned to TG 38.1, the Support Unit for the fast carriers of TF 38. She screened the carriers in Philippine waters as they launched attacks against Luzon during November and the first part of December.

On 17 December, *Spence* prepared to refuel and pumped out all of the salt water ballast from her tanks; but rough seas caused the fueling operation to be cancelled. The next day, the weather worsened and the storm turned into a major typhoon. As the ships wallowed in canyon-like troughs of brine, *Spence's* electrical equipment got wet from great quantities of sea water taken on board. After a 72 degree roll to port, all of the lights went out and the pumps stopped. The rudder jammed; and, after a deep roll to port about 1100, *Spence* capsized and sank. Only 24 of her complement survived. *Hull* (DD-350) and *Monaghan* (DD-354) were also sunk in the typhoon. *Spence* was struck from the Navy list on 19 January 1945.

Spence received eight battle stars for World War II service.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Obituary for RAdm. Henry J. Armstrong, Jr., USN (Ret.)
1903-1989*

Commanding Officer: 8 January 1943 to 8 July 1944

HENRY JACQUES ARMSTRONG, JR. '27



RAdm. Henry J. Armstrong, Jr. USN (Ret.) died on 5 April 1989 at Rossmoor Hospital, Walnut Creek, California, after a long illness. He requested that his ashes be sprinkled at sea by one of the ships of Destroyer Squadron 23. A memo-

rial service is being held at the Navy Chapel, Treasure Island, California.

A native of Salt Lake City, he received his early education there and attended the University of Utah for one year. He was appointed to the Naval Academy from that state to graduate with the Class of 1927.

On graduation, he served successively: in the repair ship MEDUSA, battleship COLORADO, destroyers HENSHAW and PRUITT, carrier SARATOGA, the Navy Postgraduate School, the Hydrographic Office, destroyer FAIRFAX, survey ship NAKOMIS, battleship OKLAHOMA, NROTC Unit, University of California at Berkeley, and C.O. of destroyer WATERS.

Shortly after the U.S. entry into WW II, he was C.O. of the destroyer, SPENCE and a charter member of the "Little Beaver Squadron," (DesRon 23), which operated to good effect in the Solomons Campaign under "31-kt. Burke;" and participating in the battles of Empress Augusta Bay and at Cape St. George. The squadron was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the Navy Unit Commendation and Cdr. Armstrong was awarded the Navy Cross, a Gold Star in lieu of a second Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal and the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V."

As C.O. of the DML, ADAMS, and as C.O. of MinDiv 8, he took an active part in the Okinawa Campaign; and after the cessation of hostilities, he organized and commanded a "guinea pig" squadron which was especially equipped for clearing mines. In

recognition of his high performance, he was awarded a gold star in lieu of a second Silver Star Medal, a Legion of Merit Medal and a Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V."

Subsequent duties included: Naval Attaché to Venezuela, Office of the CNO, and command of Des Ron 15 during the Korean War. In the latter assignment, he worked extensively in the harbor of Wonsan and coordinated shore bombardment missions there. He was awarded the Gold Star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit Medal for this service.

Later assignments included: staff (intelligence) for the Caribbean Command at Panama, C.Z., C.O. of the cruiser WORCESTER and finally, Chief of Staff for the Comdt. 9th. Naval District, from which duty he retired with the rank of rear admiral.

In addition to the personal decorations cited above, he was awarded: The Order of Bolivar, grade of Commander by the Venezuelan Government and The Order of Vasquez Nunez, grade of Commander by the government of Panama, and was entitled to various campaign, area and occupation medals.

Upon retirement he became a professor of engineering and mathematics at the City College of Oakland (California) which later was renamed Merritt College. He taught there for 11 years. During this period, his wife, Virginia passed away. Later, he married Elizabeth Allen Tudor.

He was active in community affairs and was a member of the California Commonwealth Club, The Lake Merritt Breakfast Club, Lions Club of Oakland, Naval Order of the U.S., The Navy League and the USNAAA. He was a communicant of St. Cuthbert's Episcopal Church.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, a daughter, Jan V. Armstrong, a son, Derek and ten grandchildren.

Elizabeth lives at 2055 Cactus Court #2, Rossmoor, Walnut Creek, Calif. 94595.

* *Shipmate* magazine, June 1989

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

"A Lovely Ship"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

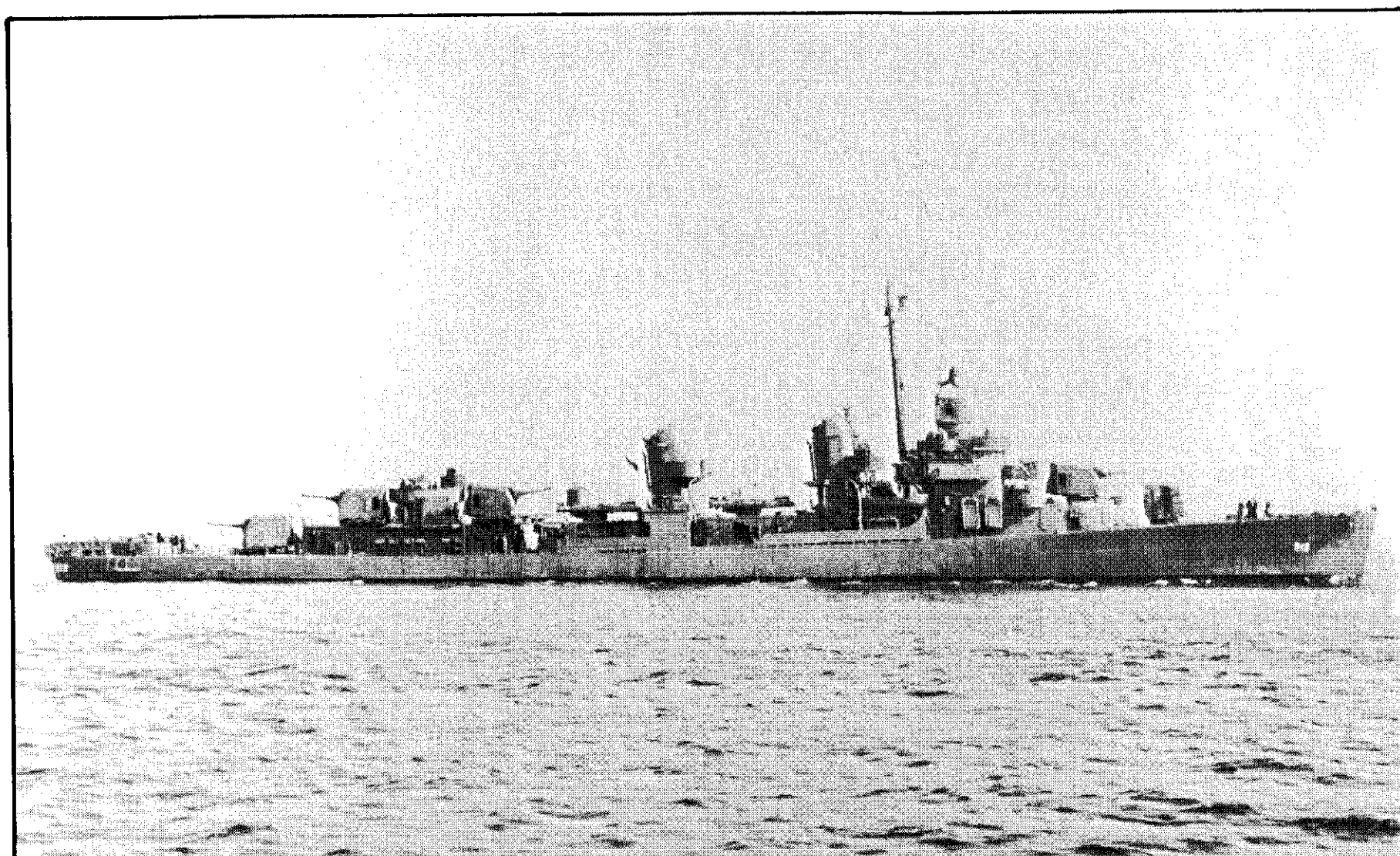
The spirit of the little ships reflects itself in that of their crews. Destroyermen are a bit apart from the rest of our man-of-war men. On their small ships they have to do without many of the comforts the crews of carriers, battleships or even cruisers enjoy. They live in cramped quarters. There is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

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

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

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

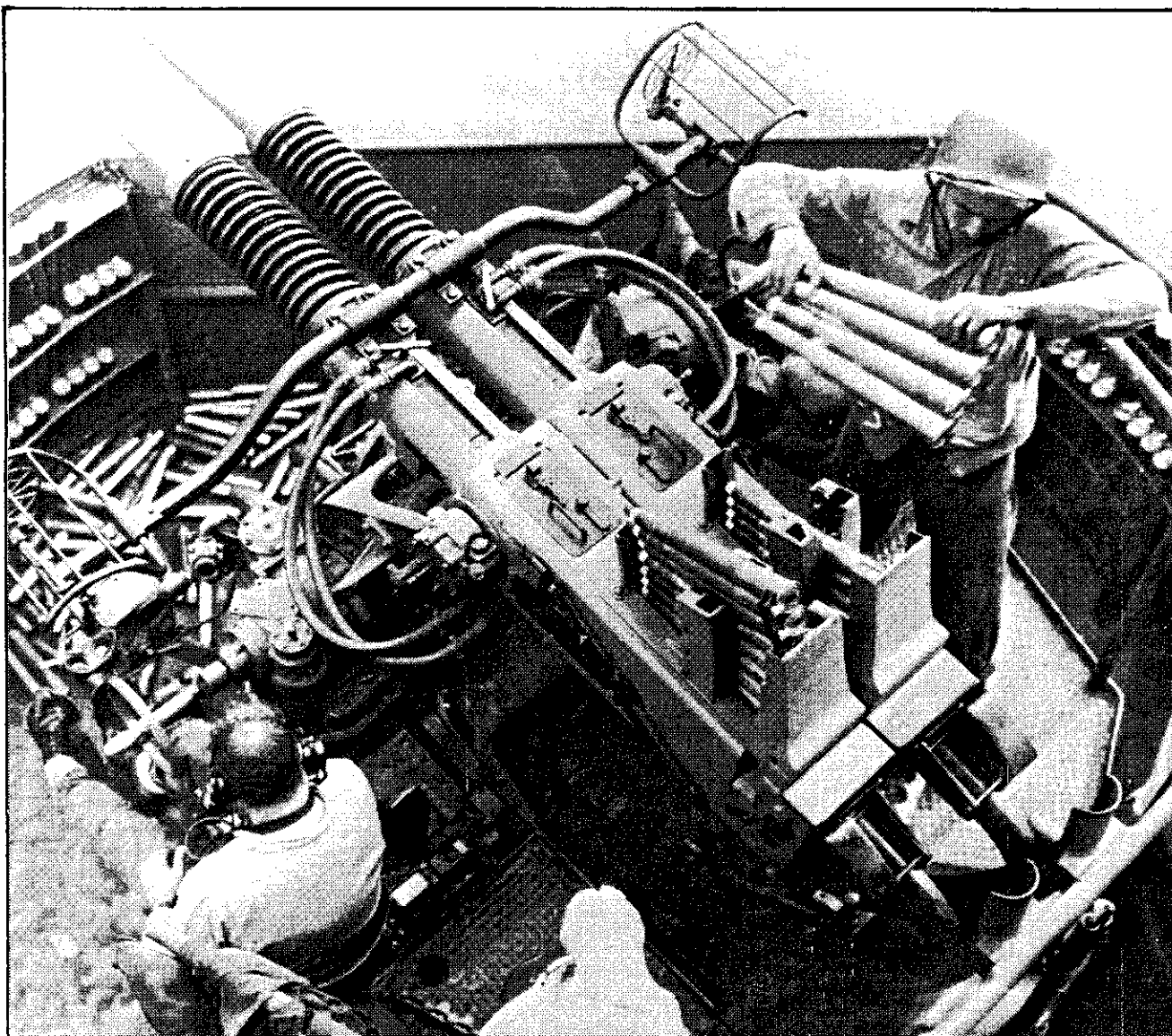
"Even cruisers are big pieces of machinery, but a destroyer is all boat. In the beautiful clean lines of her, in her speed and roughness, in her curious gallantry."



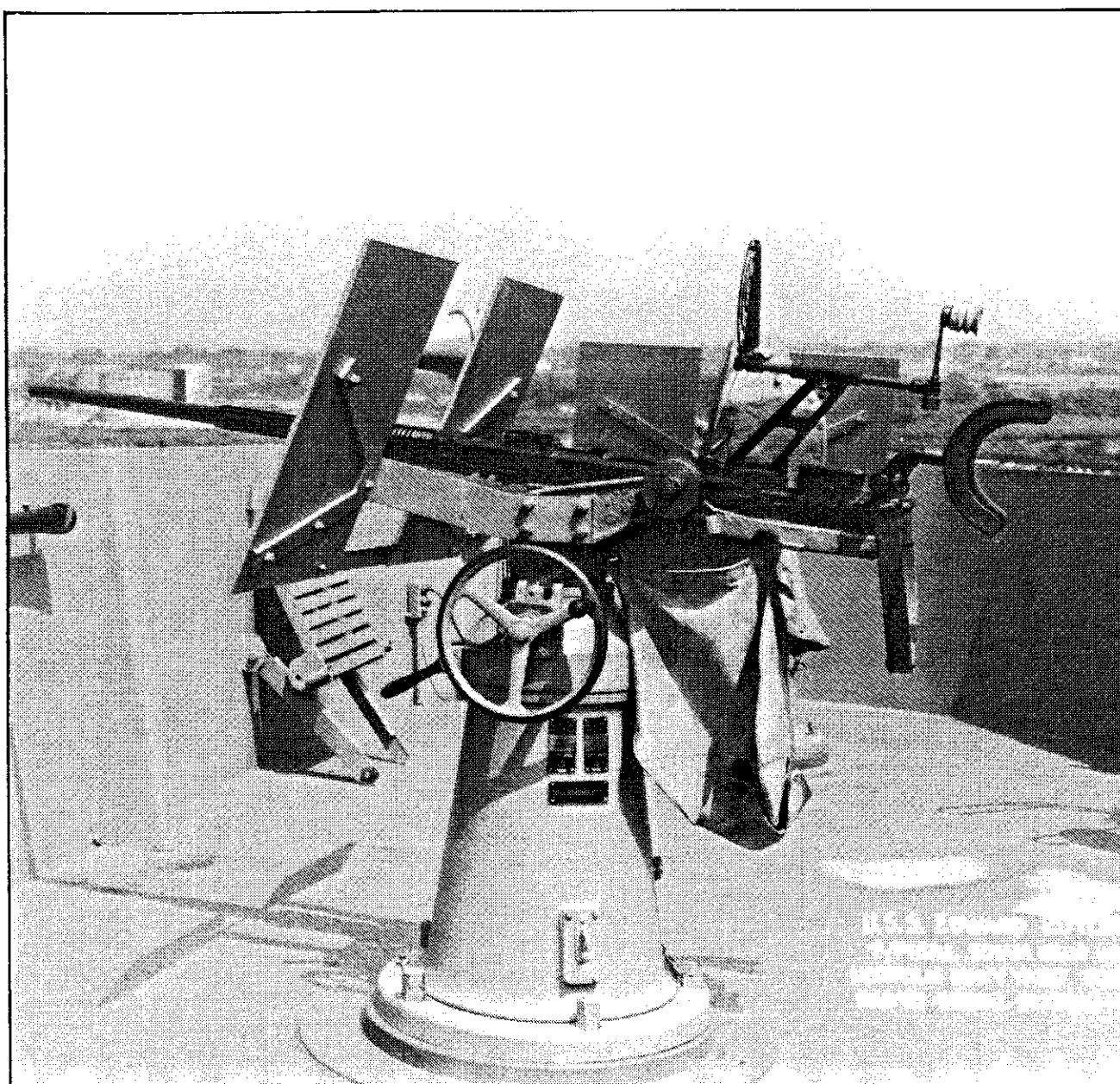
(Boston Harbor, 1943) The USS Spence (DD-512) (Lt. Cdr. H. J. Armstrong) was armed with five 5-inch/38 dual-purpose guns, two quintuple torpedo tube mounts, twin 40-mm Bofors mounts (originally two; later, five) and 20-mm Oerlikon machine cannons. For use against submarines she carried depth charges in two stern racks and six side projectors ("K-guns"). Characteristics of Fletcher-class destroyers were:

Standard displacement	2,050 tons	Draft	13'5"
Length overall	376'6"	Shaft horsepower	60,000 H.P.
Beam	39'4"	Rated speed	35 knots

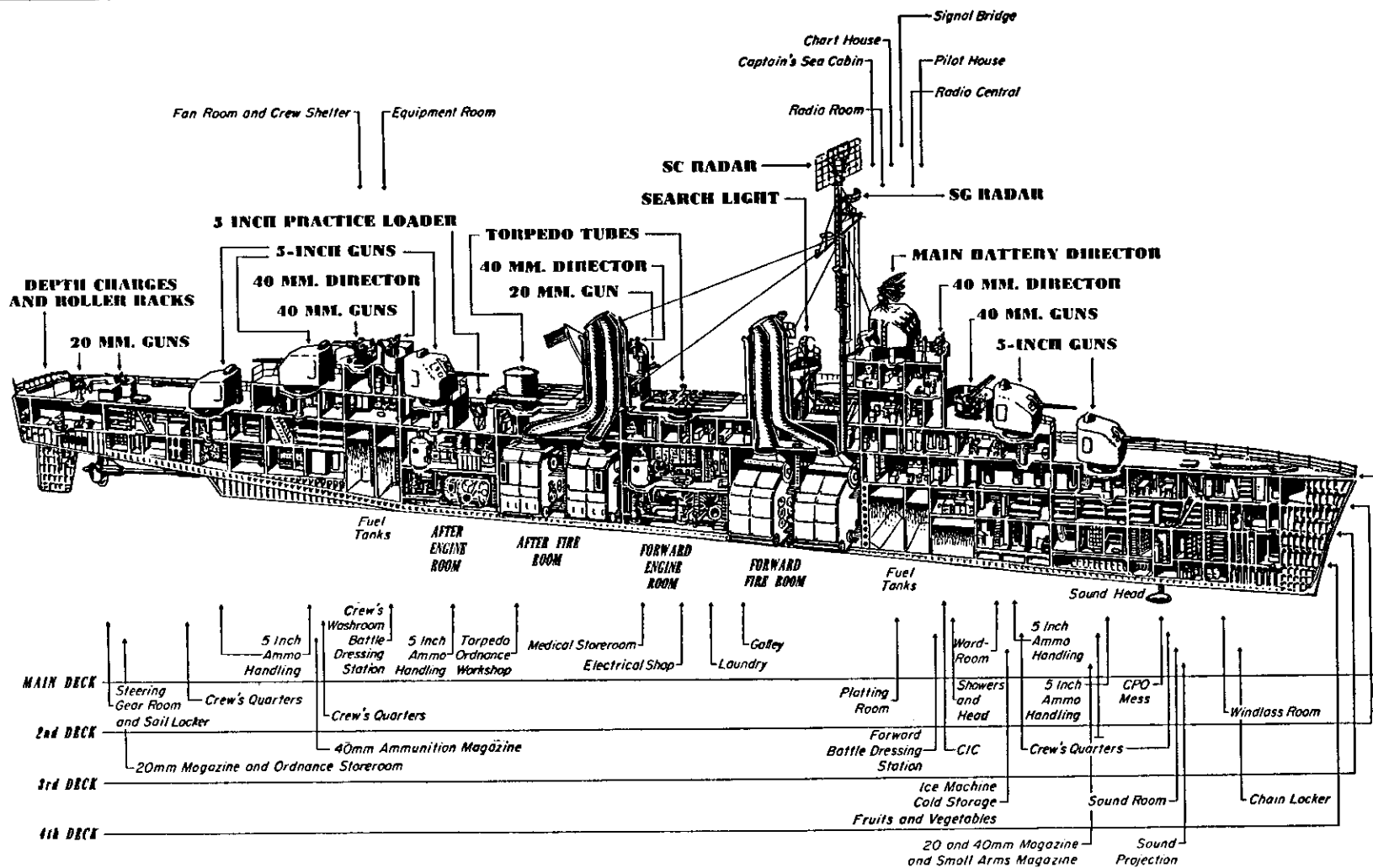
(Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)



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

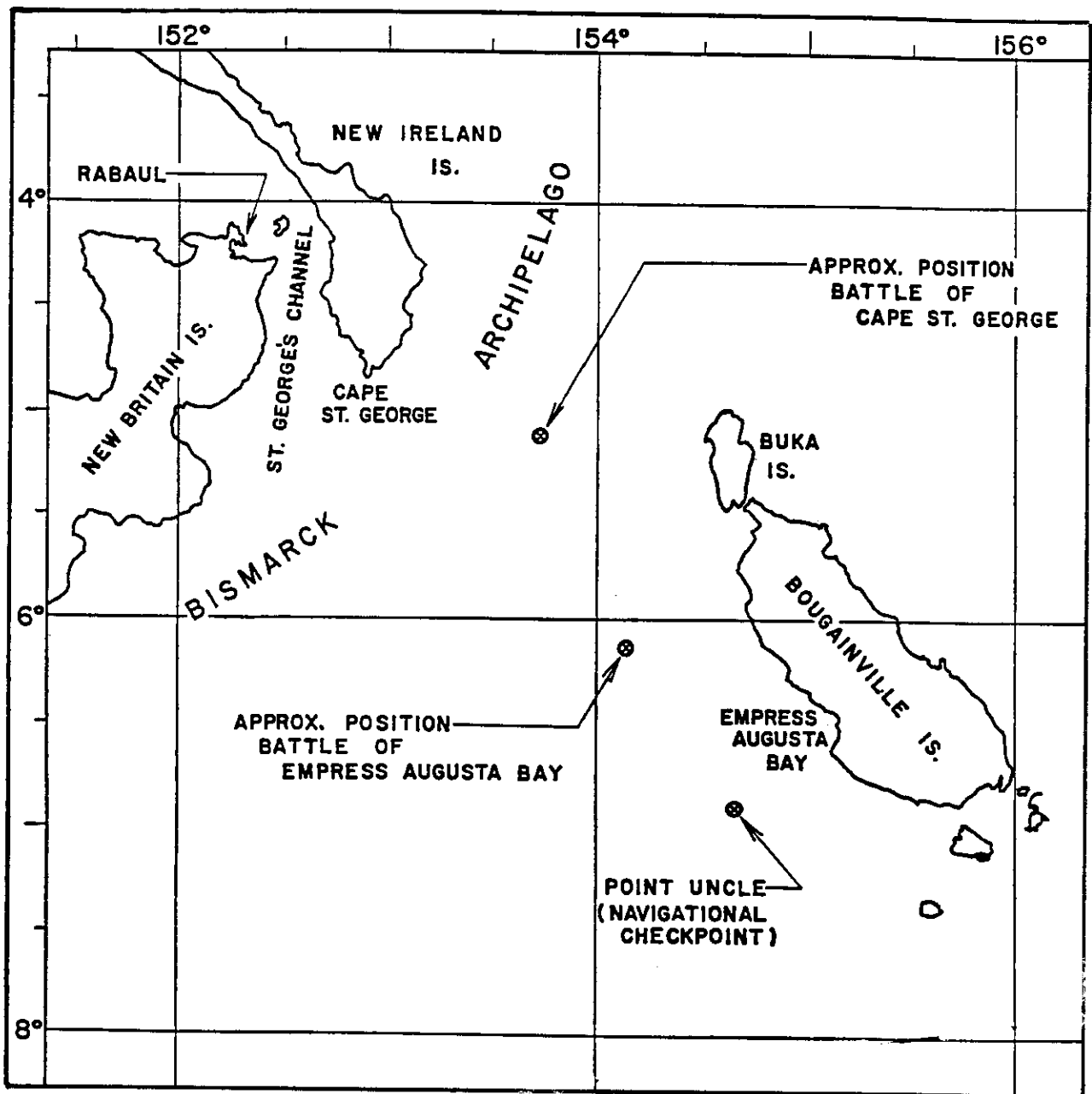


In 1941 the 20-mm Oerlikon air-cooled machine gun began to replace the .50-cal. water-cooled machine gun as the Navy's standard light antiaircraft weapon. (It was also called a machine cannon because it fired explosive shells.) This early Mark 4 version with an open-ring sight required a four-man crew: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



**TYPICAL WORLD WAR II DESTROYER
(FLETCHER CLASS)**

Map of Bougainville Island, Solomons Group,
and the Bismark Archipelago



Editor's Note: This map shows where the Spence fought the battles of Cape St. George and Empress Augusta Bay. Kavieng, New Ireland, where the bombardment took place on February 18, 1944, is just off the map at the upper left.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

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Narrative by: Chief Gunner's Mate N. J. Beeman, USN
USS SPENCE

Chief Beeman gives a brief account of the activities of the USS SPENCE up to the Central Pacific campaign. This consisted largely of convoy work and bombardment runs in the Solomons' area. Chief Beeman was one of twenty-three survivors of the SPENCE, which sunk along with the HULL and MONAGHAN during a typhoon on 18 December, 1944.

Film No. 339
Recorded: 2-16-45

Copy No. 1 of three copies.
Rough Transcript: Hatch, 17 Feb. 1945
Smooth Transcript: Stagias,
8 Feb. 1946

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Narrative by: Chief Gunner's Mate N. J. Beeman, USN
USS SPENCE

Lieutenant Tyler:

This is to introduce Chief Gunner's Mate N. J. Beeman of the SPENCE. This recording is in the Office of Naval Records and Library on 16 February 1946. The next voice is that of Chief Gunner's Mate Beeman.

Chief Beeman:

I went onto the ship shortly after commissioning, March 10th. They'd already had their shakedown. They told me of the rough time they'd had coming back from down South. Everyone seemed to take it pretty well. It seems as though they'd had some trouble with the Commanding Officer in the regulations aboard ship. Out of one division there were 40 some who went over the hill, which left us in quite a predicament.

After we left Boston we went to New York, picked up a convoy which took us 18 days to Casablanca. We left Casablanca and went to Gibraltar where we picked up a convoy and brought it back. We went from New York back to Boston and from then on the next two months convoyed carriers at high speed to Trinidad under speed runs.

One time coming back from Trinidad we were stopped at Panama and our orders were there that we should pick up our remaining torpedoes and proceed through the Canal. We left the next morning to go through the Canal. We stayed in Balboa three days, proceeded from there to San Francisco, Hunter's Point, where we got our final equipment and proceeded from there to Pearl Harbor. We spent one month in Pearl Harbor reconditioning and refitting things that had to be done, and our first adventure into the war area was at Baker and Holland Islands. We left the task force then at Baker and Holland Islands and proceeded down into the Solomons where we were stationed at Tulagi, there joined Task Force 39. She was made up of four cruisers, and eight destroyers. Our duty from there was more or less patrol through what they call the slot.

SAW SIX JAPS SHOOT THEMSELVES

Most of our operations through the Solomons was at high speed hunting barges, bombarding and whatever there was to do. We would go up around between Bougainville and Treasury Island where the Japs had been sending barges from one island to the other reinforcing--- at the time we were taking Treasury. We shot up several barges in the meantime, but our objective was more or less submarines, looking for bases which we never did find.

After the bombardments of Buka and Shortland Islands, which were conducted about every three days we would go back through the Slot and shoot everything we saw. One time shortly after the landing on Treasury Island we picked a Jap survivor out of the water, which always seemed very strange to me because we treated him as we would have treated any of our own men. We had a small cage in the after part of the ship where we kept him. We picked him up on Sunday and usually Sunday noon we always got a good meal. He was given the same as we were. He complained about the lights being on after he had eaten and asked if they might be turned out, motioning at them, so they turned the lights out for him. The guard said it seemed as though he were humming, or maybe contented; or maybe that's the way they went to sleep he didn't know. So, he thought about 15 minutes later he'd better check him to see how he was getting along and he found the Jap hanging to the overhead with a web belt that they had allowed him to keep.

About two weeks later we ran onto a bomber crew of Japs, including one officer and six men. They had a machine gun on the raft but there was no attempt made to strafe the ship. We watched them while they sat there in the raft. We were trying to get the raft alongside so we could pick up the men who were on it, and one by one they each took the gun, which we picked up after the shooting was over; they'd take it by the barrel and hold it in their hands while the officer pulled the trigger. He shot the six men and then shot himself. It always seemed very strange to me why they did it.

The landing on Bougainville came shortly after that. We had raided Buka and Shortland again to keep all planes on the ground, we were then going back to Treasury to fuel after we had made this run one night, so I've heard, the Japs figured that after we had been on such a long operation we wouldn't be anywhere in the area, no one there to bother them, they could come down, strike our forces, and beach-heads that were on Bougainville. We got word about four o'clock in the afternoon that there was a Jap task force proceeding towards that area. Four destroyers were fueling then, four of them hadn't fueled, anyway, the four destroyers that were still out there and four cruisers, headed back to meet them, while the others were sent word and got underway as soon as possible. The four destroyers that were left in port fueling caught up with us about ten o'clock at night. Well, the enemy had already been contacted. We proceeded on in the general direction of the task force, and I think the battle started about 3:30 in the morning. Our task force was almost the same as theirs, except they had one more destroyer than we did.

At first the cruisers started firing while the destroyers were still in their torpedo runs. Just as we were entering the torpedo run, just before we made the turn, one of our destroyers got hit and dropped out, while another one had executed the order of the turn

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on the stand by, and it, and the ship I was on ran together, colliding at 34 knots. -----Had come together, went apart and neither one was damaged too badly.

During the battle that night, so far as I know, I never saw any Jap ships leave the area but they said there were two of them that got away. The SPENCE got credit for two destroyers that night and also was struck by eight-inch shells. Very luckily it was a dud and only cut into the side of the ship, breaking open one fuel tank and letting the water and oil to come into the compartment above it.

We had asked for our air protection shortly after the battle had begun, somewhere around 4:15 in the morning and it should have been out at daylight. When we first noticed planes in the morning we never thought but what they belonged to us, that it was our own air coverage, so no one fired at them until they were directly overhead. The dive-bombers started peeling off. They turned out to be Japs, and out of all their bombing and strafing attacks, one ship was hit, the bomb landing on the catapult of one of the cruisers and the Damage Control Party had called the bridge and asked them what they should do with it, and in just a joking attitude, told them to "pick it up and frame it". Nevertheless they didn't.

GOT 40 JAP PRISONERS

Then after this operation we went back to port, and had the hole in our side patched and ~~were~~ back out in less than 48 hours to patrol this area around Bougainville until they got their full equipment (all of their equipment) on the beach. Then they started sending us farther north up around New Ireland.

One time on the second bombardment of Kavieng, we ran onto a Jap ship, a merchant ship, which was not escorted. We challenged, tried to get them to give up, being taken prisoner, the ship and all and take it in, but they wouldn't do it, I don't think they had more than a two inch or maybe a two pounder, but they were firing back at us. There were still the six destroyers running then and, of course, we had to sink it (the merchant ship) and get forty some Jap prisoners out of the water. Of course, they went with us on our second bombardment of Kavieng.

Before we got to New Ireland we split our force of six ships, four of them went down one side and two the other. My ship was on the west side of New Ireland which we were supposed to start the bombardment first to run all the ships that might be in there, destroyers and cruisers out on the west side where Captain Burke was with his outfit on the other side waiting for them. We ran two out, two destroyers that were in there went out until Captain Burke and the outfit started firing back, and they turned to come back into the harbor.

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One of them was sunk and one run aground. We then proceeded on southward down along the coast with them between New Ireland and New Britain and with us on the east side of New Ireland. They sank one AK and several barges on the inside that night. They were transferring personnel from New Ireland to New Britain. The next morning about daybreak Captain Burke and his ships went out through the south end of the Straits which is only about three or four miles across it. Not a shot was fired at them. They fired all their fish into the harbor of Rabaul, came on out the south end, where we joined them, and went back to port. From there we were transferred to the Mid-Pacific.

On November the 25th, we'd gotten word that they were transferring all officer personnel off Bougainville to Rabaul and were sent up to see if it was true or whether it had been a false report. We arrived there about nine o'clock at night and contacted ships travelling in that direction, so we waited to find out whether they were our own, one of the other groups that might be in there, or whether they really were Japs. They were challenged and no answer so three ships made the torpedo runs, and there were two hits out of the three ships, and the rest were sunk by shell fire, that was seven Jap ships sunk that night and we left, were back to our home port at daybreak.

E N D

ACTION REPORT

DEC 18 1943

ORIGINAL

USS SPENCE

DD 512

SERIAL 007

9 NOVEMBER 1943

ACTION REPORT OF NIGHT SURFACE ENGAGEMENT ON
NOVEMBER 1-2, 1943, TO WESTWARD OF EMPRESS
AUGUSTA BAY, BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND, SOLOMONS.

[COVERS ACTION AGAINST ENEMY SUR-
FORCES BY TASK FORCE 39 PROTECT-
ING BEACHHEAD GAINED BY INITIAL
LANDING ON BOUGAINVILLE, SOLOMONS.]

58670

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U.S.S. SPENCE (DD512)

c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.
November 9, 1943

Reg. No. 035-43.
11 811
R.S. No.

DD512/A16-3
Serial 007

S-E-C-R-E-T

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: Commander-in-chief, FIRST Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE .
(2) Commander Task Force THIRTY-NINE
n(3) Commandor THIRD Fleet.

Subject: Action report of night surface engagement on
November 1-2, 1943, to westward of EMPERESS AUGUSTA
BAY, BOUGANVILLE ISLAND.

Reference: (a) PacFlt Conf Ltr 24CL-42.
(b) PacFlt Conf Ltr 36CL-42.
(c) US Navy Regs. Art. 712 and 874(6).

Enclosures: (A) Narrative of action.
(B) Track chart of battle
(C) TBS Log
(D) Quartormaster log.

1. In compliance with the references, the action report
of the engagement with the Japanese Naval Forces, November 1-2, 1943,
action fought to westward of EMPERESS AUGUSTA BAY, BOUGANVILLE ISLAND
is submitted as enclosure (A).

2. This was the initial appearance of the USS SPENCE in
actual combat. The Commanding Officer views with pride the performance of
all hands. The absence of confusion, the ship being continually under fire
was most noteworthy. This excellent performance continued even after the
ship had actually been hit. Each enemy group was closed promptly and taken
then under effective torpedo fire and gun fire in keeping with the best
traditions of the United States NAVY.

H.J. ARMSTRONG

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S-E-C-R-E-TNAME AND DATE OF ACTIONNIGHT SURFACE ENGAGEMENT, USS SPENCE - November 1-2, 1943.

Until radar contact with the enemy had been established, Task Force 39, deployed in a column consisting of DesDiv 45, CruDiv 12, and Des Div 46 were conducting protective screening sweeps to westward of BOUGANVILLE ISLAND, November 1-2, 1943. The Task Force was deployed on base course 000°T, speed 25 knots. ComDesDiv 46 in the SPENCE was leading ship in the division, followed by THATCHER, CONVERSE AND FOOTE. At 0231 CruDiv 12 made a surface radar contact, bearing 306°, distant 16 miles. DesDiv 45 was ordered to attack this with torpedoes. At 0237 a radar contact was made on bearing 275°, distant 24,500 yards. CruDiv 12 then executed a turn one hundred eighty degrees, Des Div 46 executing a column right to 180°. The FOOTE executed a 180° turn necessitating that she cross our bow and drift aft to take station in column.

Upon receipt of the order to attack our contact with torpedoes, pursuant to orders of ComDesDiv 46, the SPENCE executed a column right, to course 270°, all ships of the division following except that the FOOTE had not closed up. Speed was increased to 32 knots at 0247, and at 0251 to 34 knots. At 0249 CruDiv 12 commenced firing on the enemy ships, the latter effecting illumination of CruDiv 12. The relative movements of the three units, enemy, CruDiv 12, and DesDiv 46, at 0257, placed the SPENCE in such a position that she began to run into the illumination intended for the cruisers. The SPENCE was uncomfortably placed between the fires of both the enemy and our cruisers. The Commanding Officer reported this to Com DesDiv 46, then stationed in Combat Information Center. A ninety degree turn to the left was then executed by TBS, which placed the division in a line of bearing on our port beam. Near miss splashes were observed at this time and shells could be heard passing overhead.

At 0300, having cleared the illuminated area, the division commander ordered a turn ninety degrees (270°) which would place the ships in column again, course 270°. At this time the THATCHER was observed bearing rapidly down on the SPENCE on the port bow and the SPENCE was maneuvered in an endeavor to avoid collision. In the short period of time available, collision was inevitable. The SPENCE was sideswipped. The damage aboard was lessened by executing a full right rudder, followed very shortly by left rudder to throw our stern away from the THATCHER, when it was observed that the bows were opening rapidly. The Damage Control parties functioned smoothly and promptly. An immediate inspection was made and a report was received that only minor damage had been received. The ~~elevating~~ elevating pointer, STEPHENS, D.E., S2c, gun #44, demonstrated extreme coolness in that when he saw the ships coming together he elevated his gun. This saved the gun from serious damage.

The SPENCE was illuminated, periodically, by starshells. The full benefits were not realized by the Japs, since the sky was overcast and an occasional drizzle was encountered.

At 0306 the USS FOOTE reported that she was out of commission and unable to maneuver. It later transpired that she had been torpedoed.

Enclosure (A)

NARRATIVE OF ACTION

SECRET

NIGHT SURFACE ENGAGEMENT, USS. SPENCE - November 1-2, 1943.

While closing the target, which appeared to be at least two ships on the PPI scope three shells fell close aboard to starboard, one of which pierced the hull of the SPENCE at frame 157. This opened up the hull on a diagonal line for a length of four feet, width one foot. The bulkhead between C-201-L, C-203-L, and C-7-F were all opened, permitting full passage of fuel oil and sea water into all compartments. Again, the Damage Control organization, under Lieutenant R. B. FOX, USNR, and Ensign S.R. PUTNAM, USNR, worked smoothly and quietly. A minor fire occurred, one mattress being burned. This was quickly extinguished. The Commanding Officer received only the most essential reports, thus cutting down much possible confusion and divergence of attention from the ensuing action. The hit caused contamination of the after fuel system before it could be segregated. The hole was stopped by use of shores, mattresses, and bags of beans. As the hole extended about a foot below the water level, the task of maintaining the hole closed against the force of seas as a result of high speeds was of great concern to all hands. A great deal of water and fuel were shipped into C-201-L and C-202-L. The only trace remaining of this shell was a small section of brass rotating band and a section of what appears to be part of the nose of a common projectile, six inch. Fortunately there was no force of explosion. Apparently the shell shattered at the hull and glanced out into the water. This must have been caused by the high angle of fall.

At 0311 a ship was observed to pass down our port side. At the time it was believed that this was one of our own force. The SPENCE then continued on in to press the attack upon the original target then observed as an elongated pip on the scope, bearing about 010°. This was regrettable, since it was later found that the first ship was an enemy. This supposition was substantiated, it was believed, for at 1311 we were illuminated on our starboard quarter, thus firing apparently coming from that target then being approached. This target unit is believed to have consisted of one ship which was tracked as slowly turning, as though crippled, and probably one or more screening vessels who tracked as circling the cripple, later standing away to the northwest at a speed of about 25 knots.

At 0320 SPENCE fired a half spread of torpedoes as directed by ComDesDiv 46, the firing being conducted by full radar contro, range 6,000 yards, torpedoes set on intermediate speed. No visual explosions were noted, but at the time predicted for torpedoes to cross the line, two underwater explosions were felt by the personnel aboard this ship. This target was not taken under fire since it was felt that it had been definitely put out of action, and, too, since a target was observed to the northwest. At 0330½ changed course to 320° to conduct a torpedo attack on the northwest target, the approach being conducted on a westerly course.

We continued to close the range until the target became dimly visible to the SPENCE, range then 3,000 yards, at which time the order was received, and executed, to attack with torpedoes. The remaining half salvo of torpedoes from the SPENCE, was fired to starboard, at 0352 and a retirement to port was executed. Again, no flashes of explosion were noted. Two very noticeable underwater explosions were noted, this coinciding with the time that the

NARRATIVE OF ACTION

SECRET

NIGHT SURFACE ENGAGEMENT, USS SPENCE - November 1-2, 1943.

torpedoes should have crossed the line. This shock was so heavy that the Commanding Officer had cause to instruct all repair parties to ascertain whether or not we had been struck again by shellfire. A heavy black column of smoke was observed rising vertically from the target. The range to the target group at this time was 9,000 yards, at which time the main battery opened fire, full radar control. The C.I.C. solution was used initially, closing the target to most effective gun range. Computer solution was used after firing had commenced. Return fire was noted, though no damages were incurred. DTB 1-42 gunnery spotting doctrine was used, a hit being obtained, as disclosed by a fire, after the second salvo, and on in spot of 200 yards, continuous ladder was applied. Consistent hits were obtained thereafter. The fire burned continuously, increasing in intensity.

at 0410 the SPENCE lost speed, slowing to 20 knots, due to battle damage incident to shell hit aft. As the ship had been rather low in fuel, since the SPENCE had just assisted in the EKA SHORTLANDS bombardments, the Commanding Officer was most concerned with the ships remaining uncontaminated fuel oil. The SPENCE sheered out to port, allowing the THATCHER and CONVERSE to continue in pursuit of the enemy. The THATCHER reported that the target observed on fire later sank, disappearing completely from the radar screen.

The SPENCE, then by herself proceeded to rendezvous with DesDiv 45. As the latter division believed us to be enemy we were taken under fire, bursts being observed to straddle us but distant about 50 to 100 yards. The Commanding Officer, from the traffic board on the TBS, realized that the above condition was present, and, immediately directed that firing be ceased. This was promptly executed, to the relief of all hands. No damage was received, however, the ship was the proud possessor of a few pieces of spent shell.

At 0452 fighting lights were used to indicate our position. These were observed by DesDiv 45. By use of TBS and true bearings our location was finally established and the SPENCE was directed to fall in astern of DesDiv 45 (ComDesRon 23), after which the ship was to effect a retirement toward Task Force Commander.

at this time, prior to meeting with DesDiv 45, the SPENCE located another target group on our PPI on course 345°, speed 10 knots. Course was brought to 070, at 0500, to close the target; the range was closed to 4,000 yards before it was definitely established that this was an enemy target. It is believed that this target group consisted of at least three ships.

At 0512 SPENCE opened fire obtaining a hit on the first full radar control salvo. This started fires which gave a good point of aim, the Gunnery Officer therefore shifted to partial radar control. Consistent hitting was observed. The target was soon burning fiercely. Three separate explosions were both seen and heard, two amidships and one aft. The target was dead in the water. No return fire was observed. An after gun mount was observed to be blown up in the air, and for end, in the light of the burning ship.

NARRATIVE OF ACTION

~~SECRET~~

NIGHT SURFACE ENGAGEMENT, USS SPENCE - November 1-2, 1943.

Although the ship had been definitely placed in a sinking condition, it was highly desirable to sink her quickly. As the SPENCE was running out of ammunition, ComDesDiv 46 requested that DesDiv 45 stand over and assist. DesDiv 45 closed promptly and took the target, recognized in the increased visibility as a FUBUKI class destroyer. At 0538 the target sank stern first, her bow projecting above the water about 100 feet, then she disappeared from sight and the PFI. The assembled units of Des Div 45 and 46 then rejoined the Task Force Commander.

IN SUMMARY, during the night action the SPENCE engaged effective three enemy groups, firing torpedoes at the first two groups. The first target is believed to have been left in a sinking condition, the second target was definitely set afire and left burning fiercely, and the third was seen to sink.

There were no personnel casualties. The damage received was the single shell hit and that due to collision.

It was noticed that the gun salvos could be followed and spotted accurately on the SG Radar screen. Hits which resulted in explosions caused a momentary noticeable increase in the size of the target pip.

It has been conclusively demonstrated that Destroyer Gunnery Doctrine when carried out properly, results in early and continued hitting. The enemy has not yet mastered radar for search or gunnery. It was specifically noted that they fired at our gun flashes, except for the period in which we were hit. Their gunfire was slow, disorganized and inaccurate.

The value of the 2100 ton class destroyer has certainly ascertained itself as an effective fighting ship.

The benefits obtained from the radar recognition system were disheartening. Possibly it may be that the IFF can be coordinated with the SG radar, both for "A" and "B" scopes. Recognition is still a "nightmare" and probably will continue so until some means of identifying the radar pips on the screen is possible.

The excellent battery performance demonstrated by the SPENCE is attributed to the training and indoctrination initiated by Lieut. B.W. SPORE, US Navy, formerly the gunnery officer, and now the executive officer, and to the initial and continued efforts upon the part of the present gunnery officer, Lieut. (jg) A.W. BEDELL, USNR. This officer conducted the firing in a most commendable and "bloodthirsty" manner.

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

ACTION REPORT

ORIGINAL

USS SPENCE

DD 512

SERIAL 00-3

NOVEMBER 8 1943

DAMAGE SUSTAINED BY THE USS SPENCE IN
COLLISION WITH THE USS THATCHER ,
NOVEMBER 2, 1943 .

62033

U. S. S. SPENCE (DD 512)

~~SECRET~~
SECRET

% Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California,
November 8, 1943.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet.
Via : (1) The Commander Destroyer Division Forty-Six.
(2) The Commander Destroyer Squadron Twenty-Three.
(3) The Commander Task Force Thirty-Nine.
(4) The Commander Third Fleet.
(5) The Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Damage sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in collision with the
U.S.S. THATCHER, November 2, 1943.

Enclosures: (A) ^XExcerpts from the TBS log, U.S.S. SPENCE, November 2, 1943.
(B) ^XExcerpts from the quartermaster log, U.S.S. SPENCE, November
2, 1943.
(C) ^XList of Damage sustained by U.S.S. SPENCE.

1. During a night engagement to the westward of Bougainville Island, Solomon Islands, at 0301 love, November 2, 1943, the U.S.S. SPENCE suffered collision with the U.S.S. THATCHER. Both ships were operating with Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX, assigned to Task Force THIRTY-NINE. At the time of the collision the night was very dark, objects discernable for only about six hundred yards. The sea was moderate to calm, with but slight wind.

2. Just previous to the collision the division had executed a ninety degree turn to the left, placing the ships on a course of 180°, the ships formed abeam to port was: SPENCE, THATCHER and CONVERSE, the FOOTE endeavoring to take her station on the extreme left. The division was in the process of clearing the cruiser formation and proceeding to make a torpedo attack. Speed was thirty-four knots. The division was under fire by the enemy force and had been illuminated by star shells on the starboard quarter.

3. The division was maneuvering to avoid blanking off the fire of our own cruisers and to proceed in to attack with torpedoes under the orders of Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX who had taken his station in the Combat Information Center, U.S.S. SPENCE, from which station voice (TBS) orders were being issued to the division, a receiver, in parallel, located on the bridge.

4. At 0300 the division commander gave the order, by TBS voice, "Standby to execute turn nine, DOVER, LEON and ACME acknowledge". This order was acknowledged by the other three ships.

62033 **FILMED** -1-

DECLASSIFIED - OPNAV INST 5500.30
BY 916 DATE 2-10-04

~~SECRET~~
~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Subject: Damage sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in collision with U.S.S. THATCHER, November 2, 1943.

4. (Con't) The Commanding Officer, USS SPENCE acknowledged receipt by the 21 MC (internal communication) and immediately concerned himself with ascertaining that we would clear the cruiser formation, by an examination of the remote PPI in the pilot house, and a quick examination of the starboard side to see that all was clear. Promptly thereafter the order was received by TBS, paralleled by the 21 MC, to "Execute turn nine, EEON (THATCHER) acknowledge". An acknowledgement was received.

5. The Officer of the Deck, as observed by the Commanding Officer, USS SPENCE, promptly caused the rudder to be put to right standard and the rudder angle indicator gave prompt indication that the rudder had gone over as desired. The ship started her normal swing to starboard. The Officer of the Deck, Lieutenant Jared W. Mills, USNR, then stationed by the port door of the pilot house, shouted "ship approaching sharply on port side, close aboard". Both the Commanding Officer and the Officer of the Deck immediately ordered "full right rudder" which was promptly applied. It was quickly noted that the ship reported (THATCHER) was approaching rapidly at a sharp angle on our bow, well into her turn to starboard. The THATCHER then sideswipped the SPENCE, both ships then swinging outboard. As the SPENCE had applied full right rudder and it was observed that the THATCHER had then applied full left rudder both bows opened rapidly. The Commanding Officer, SPENCE, ordered "left rudder" which action threw our stern away from the THATCHER. The ships immediately opened out, the division reforming and proceeded into the attack.

6. The damage sustained listed in enclosure (C), has not been of such nature as to remove this ship from full wartime operating condition.


H. J. ARMSTRONG.

FB4-46/L11-1

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

Serial 0042 To USS SPENCE Secret Letter DD512/L11-1(00-3)

Dated November 8, 1943.

~~SECRET~~

November 10, 1943.

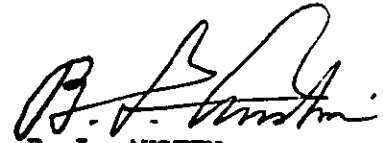
From: The Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX.
To: The Commander in Chief, U.S. FLEET.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE.
(2) Commander Task Force THIRTY-NINE.
(3) Commander Third Fleet.
(4) Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Damage sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in collision with
the U.S.S. THATCHER, November 2, 1943.

1. The subject damage was incurred while maneuvering at
high speed in battle and while actually under enemy fire.

2. The commanding officers of both ships involved kept
their ships fighting for over two hours until the enemy forces not
sunk had withdrawn from the field of battle. The THATCHER then took
the torpedoed U.S.S. FOOTE in tow until relieved by a tug.

3. No further action is recommended.


B. L. AUSTIN.

COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON TWENTY-THREE

FC4-23/L11-1
Serial 0017

% Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.,

21 November 1943.

~~SECRET~~

SECOND ENDORSEMENT

C0 USS SPENCE Secret
ltr DD512/L11-1 serial
00-3 dated November 8, 1943

From: The Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE.
To: The Commander in Chief, U. S. FLEET.
Via: (1) The Commander Task Force THIRTY-NINE.
(2) The Commander Third Fleet.
(3) The Commander in Chief, U. S. PACIFIC FLEET.
Subject: Damage sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in collision
with the U.S.S. THATCHER, November 2, 1943.

1. Forwarded.

2. Immediately following the night action in which this collision occurred the Squadron was at sea. The THATCHER proceeded out of the area so that information concerning the THATCHER is not now available. This report is being forwarded in order to avoid delay.

3. In night actions Destroyers operating at high speeds under enemy gunfire must be quickly maneuvered. The quickest way to maneuver is by the use of a radio voice circuit. This method is used by all units in this area and is believed to be proper. However, the use of voice radio circuits does lead to misunderstanding sometime, which may have been the cause for this collision.

4. No recommendations are made.

A A Burke
A. A. BURKE.

FE24-39/L11-1
(0061)

UNITED STATES THIRD FLEET
FLAGSHIP of COMMANDER TASK FORCE THIRTY-NINE

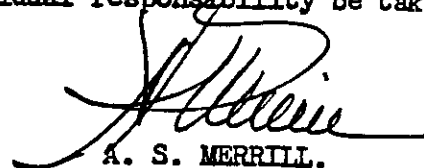
~~SECRET~~

30 November 1943.

THIRD ENDORSEMENT to
CO USS SPENCE Secret
ltr DD512/L11-1 serial
00-3 of 11-8-43.

From: Commander Task Force THIRTY-NINE.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via : (1) The Commander THIRD Fleet.
(2) The Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Fleet.
Subject: Damage sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in collision with the
U.S.S. THATCHER.

1. Forwarded.
2. This was the first division night torpedo attack, simulated or actual, that had been conducted by this division as a unit. THATCHER had just joined the task force after a period of escort duty. The conditions of almost total darkness, opposition by enemy gunfire, the high speed of maneuvering imposed on the division in the delivery of an effective attack, all apparently were contributing causes of the collision. There appeared to be no failure of communications. Both ships were effective fighting units throughout the engagement until SPENCE was slowed by battle damage not the result of the collision.
3. The absence of THATCHER now undergoing repairs at a mainland navy yard prevents further investigation at this time.
4. In view of the attendant circumstances and the excellent account of themselves given by both vessels in the night engagement, it is recommended that no further action in the fixing of individual responsibility be taken.

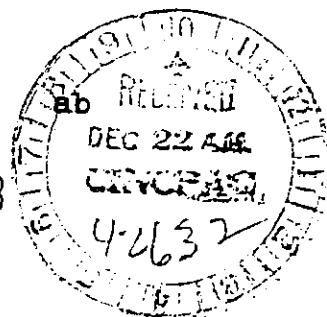

A. S. MERRILL.

cc: ComDesRon 23
ComDesDiv 46
CO USS SPENCE

CONSOPAC FILE
L11-1/(11)

Serial 002719

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



18 DEC 1943

~~SECRET~~

4th Endorsement on
CO USS SPENCE Secret
ltr. DD512/L11-1,
Serial 00-3, dated
8 November, 1943.

From: The Commander South Pacific.
To : The Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via : The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Damage Sustained by the U.S.S. SPENCE in
Collision with the U.S.S. THATCHER.

1. Forwarded concurring in preceding endorsements.
2. In view of the splendid records of both ships in the battle, subsequent to the collision and the circumstances under which the collision occurred, further action for fixing individual responsibility is deemed unnecessary and none is contemplated by this command.

I. H. MAYFIELD,
Acting Chief of Staff.

Copy to: CTF 39
ComDesRon 23
ComDesDiv 46
CO USS SPENCE

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED	
Authority	<u>NND 755024</u>
By <u>SKA</u>	NARA Date <u>7/12</u>

USS SPENCE - DD512

Projectile Damage

2 November 1943

BOUGANVILLE

Prepared by

US Naval Drydocks
Hunters Point

0124391

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED	
Authority	NND 755024
By <i>BKA</i>	NARA Date 2/12

On the morning of 2 November 1943, while acting as flagship of Destroyer Division 46, Destroyer Squadron 23, Task Force 39, the USS SPENCE received War Damage as detailed below:

At about 0100, November 2nd, Task Force 39 engaged four Japanese heavy cruisers and about eight to ten destroyers 50 miles West of Cape Molke, Bouganville Island. The enemy was attempting to intercede the American Landings at Augusta Bay.

At 0247, the USS SPENCE received a hit from an eight inch shell from one of the enemy cruisers which struck the destroyer aft on the starboard side at about frame 157 and at the level of the first platform. The shell did not penetrate the hull of the destroyer, but glanced off into the water without exploding. As a result of the hit, a hole about 18 in. by 6 in. was made in the shell of the ship at the waterline level and at the junction of four compartments; Crews' Quarters, C-201L and C-203L; and Fuel Oil Tanks C-7-F and C-9-F, as noted in Plate 1. Compartments C-201L and C-203L were flooded to a depth of one to two feet while fuel in the Fuel Oil Tanks C-7-F and C-9-F, was contaminated by salt water entering through the opening. Bulkhead 157 was buckled for a distance of two feet inboard of the shell and from two feet above the level of the first platform to about four feet below the first platform. The first platform deck was distorted from about frame 152 to 162 longitudinally, and to a distance of five feet inboard of the shell. The outer plating itself was damaged to a smaller extent; an area less than six feet by three feet being affected. H.P. Photo #1897-44-54 shows location of damaged shell with plating removed.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority <u>NND 755024</u>
By <u>SKA</u> NARA Date <u>2/12</u>

When hit, the USS SPENCE was steaming north at 34 knots. Her speed was not affected by the damage to the shell. Moreover, no appreciable change of trim resulted from the damage to the shell since the hole was just above the waterline. No drafts were taken.

Immediately after the incident, the leak was plugged by means of a collision mat from the outside and by similar means from the inside. The flooded areas were pumped out by use of submersible pumps. Further leakage, which occurred when the ship made left turns, was held in check by use of the pumps. A patch was welded over the hole at Purvis Bay, on Florida Island.

No machinery were affected except Ammunition Hoist Number Four to Number Four and Five, "5 inch" 38 caliber guns. Electric power for this hoist was shorted out at the switchboard panel, due to the flooding of compartment C-203L. This rendered the hoist inoperative, thus necessitating hand passing of ammunition.

None of the ship's complement was injured by the hit.

The fighting efficiency of the ship was not greatly reduced but, due to contamination of and loss of fuel oil, the USS SPENCE subsequently turned back from further pursuit of the enemy.

0124391

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF SECOND NAVY CROSS CITATION:¹

COMMANDER HENRY JACQUES ARMSTRONG, JR.
UNITED STATES NAVY

"For distinguishing himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity in action as Commanding Officer of the USS SPENCE during a night surface engagement with a larger Japanese task force on the night of November 1-2, 1943. During this period the task force of which the USS SPENCE was a unit destroyed 2 Japanese cruisers and 3 Japanese destroyers and forced the remainder of the Japanese to flee, thereby preventing the Japanese task force from reaching our transports in the vicinity and materially contributing to the successful establishment of our beach-head on Bougainville Island. By his fearlessness, calmness and gallant determination on the exposed bridge of his ship he set an example of conduct under stress of battle that was an inspiration. His relentless fighting spirit and courageous devotion to duty, maintained at great risk in the face of grave danger throughout the 3-hour battle, was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

* * * * *

¹ Retyped from a draft citation on an index card at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The wording may have been changed on the formal citation.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

ACTION REPORT

DECLASSIFIED

ORIGINAL

USS SPENCE

DD 512

SERIAL 0013

27 NOVEMBER 1943

REPORT OF SURFACE ENGAGEMENT OFF ST. GEORGE
CHANNEL ON NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 24-25, 1943

[COVERS SINKING 4 JAP SHIPS AND
DAMAGING 2 BY SHIPS UNDER COMMANDER
DESTROYER SQUADRON 23.]

60208

OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY

~~SECRET~~

U.S.S. GEORGE (DD512)

DD512/A16/ejm
Serial 0013

27 November 1943.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED - DOD DIR. 5200.9
of 27 SEP 53

From: The Commanding Officer,
To : The Commander-in-Chief, PACIFIC FLEET.
Via : (1) The Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE.
(2) The Commander Task Force THIRTY-NINE
(3) The Commander South Pacific.

Subject: Report of surface engagement off ST. GEORGE CHANNEL on
night of November 24-25, 1943.

Reference: (a) PacFlt. Conf. ltr., 24CL-42.
(b) PacFlt. Conf. ltr., 36CL-42.
(c) U.S. Navy Regulations, Articles 712 and 874(6).

Enclosure: (A) Narrative of action.
(B) Track Charts (See ComDesRon 23 serial 0018).
(C) TBS Logs (See ComDesRon 23 serial 0018).
(D) Chronological Logs (See ComDesRon 23 serial 0018).
} Missing upon
RECEIPT IN DESK

1. In compliance with the references, the action report of the engagement with an enemy Task Force off ST. GEORGE CHANNEL, on the night of November 24-25, 1943, is submitted herewith as Enclosures (A) to (D) inclusive.

2. On the evening of November 24-25, 1943, Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE, consisting of Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE, (less STANLY and AULICK), and Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX, (less FOOTE and THATCHER), commanded by Captain A.A. BURKE, U.S. Navy, was operating across the BUKA-RABAUL line in anticipation of an attempt to evacuate aviation personnel from BUKA. This task had been directed by Commander Third Fleet in his despatch 241123, and as further amplified by despatch 240052. The Squadron was proceeding on a northerly course, column of divisions, with Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX formed 225T, 5,000 yards from Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE. At 0141 the DYSON and SPENCE made report of a surface contact bearing 082T, 22,000 yards. The squadron at that time was located 52 miles, bearing 130T, from CAPE ST. GEORGE. A speed of twenty-five knots, course 280T, was obtained on the enemy ships, then determined as three in number. Clearly we had succeeded in getting astride the BUKA-RABAUL main line.

3. In accordance with Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE doctrine, Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE proceeded directly for torpedo attack position, with Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX following but offset, in position to support their torpedo attack, as well as to cope with any other vessels which might have threatened. All proceeded according to plan, Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE fired torpedoes, and retired to avoid enemy torpedoes. The torpedoes struck the enemy with devastating results, one ship disappeared in a sheet of flame. Of the other two, one exploded violently. The third ship may have received a torpedo but it remained underway.

FILMED

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OFFICE
COMANDANT-IN-CHIEF

24 NOV 1943
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U.S.S. SPENCE (DD512)

DD512/A16/ojm
Serial 0013

27 November 1943

~~SECRET~~

Subject: Report of surface engagement off ST. GEORGE CHANNEL
on night of November 24-25, 1943.

4. To Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX was assigned the task of completing the annihilation of this group of ships, since, by this time a second group of ships, number three, had been discovered at 0201, bearing 090 T, 16,000 yards from Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX, 11,500 yards from Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE.

5. In accordance with orders from Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE, Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX then proceeded to attain a position to complete the destruction. Under orders of Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX the CONWAYS fired a half spread of torpedoes from range 4,600 yards. The SPENCE'S torpedoes were held in reserve, a single half salvo having been deemed necessary by Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX. The target ~~was~~ ^{was} in water. This spread resulted in one, the smaller of the pips, disappearing and possibly a hit on the larger pip. The division was then maneuvered to clear possible torpedo water, then came about and commenced firing.

6. The shooting was excellent, as noted by radar and by visual ^{observation}. The SPENCE used mixed salvos of Anti-aircraft common and common. This target proved to be a tough one to sink, considering the number of effective salvos which landed. It finally sank at 0253, at least four major explosions having been observed.

7. This vessel is believed to have been a YUPARI type light cruiser, as confirmed by Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX's Ranshaw recognition officer. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX, with the area then cleared of enemy ships, headed north to close Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE, which division was effectively engaging the second group of enemy ships, in spite of the fact that the latter had boat a hasty retreat in that direction. However, before Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX would rejoin, Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE had, as observed, sunk the one enemy ship within range. The Squadron then rejoined and headed to westward to overtake two damaged enemy ships, noted as escaping. One of these was known to be badly damaged. Since no contact had been established by 0405, the southern tip of NEW IRELAND having been identified in our radar screen, the chase was reluctantly abandoned. The Squadron then came to course 150 T, there being no one else left to fight. A very surprised and confused enemy force of ships was practically annihilated, with no damage whatsoever to our ships.

8. The absence of confusion and the clock work manner in which the action was carried out was a tribute to our excellent doctrine and to the efficient Combat Information Centers of this Squadron.


HENRY J. ARMSTRONG.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~
ENCLOSURE (A)

I COMMENTS ON AND SUMMARY LEADING UP TO THE BATTLE

(A) Composition of Own Forces

Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE
Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE
Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE
CHARLES AUSBURNE (DD570)(F)
DYSON (DD572)
CLAXTON (DD571)

Captain A.A. BURKE, USN

Captain A.A. BURKE, USN
Commander L.K. REYNOLDS, USN
Commander R.A. GANO, USN
Commander H.F. STOUT, USN

Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX
Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX
CONVERSE (DD509)
SPENCE (DD512)

Commander B.L. AUSTIN, USN
Commander D.C. HAMBERGER, USN
Commander H.J. ARMSTRONG, USN

(B) Preliminary Situation

1. Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE, operating directly under Commander Third Fleet, was engaged in (a) assisting in covering of echelon landings in Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville Island, Solomons, (November 22-23, 1943), (b) covering the mining activities off the Shortlands Islands, and covering Empress Augusta Bay offshore (November 23-24, 1943) and (c) to prevent evacuation of the enemy air activities from BUKA (November 24-25, 1943).

2. The foregoing had necessitated (a) departure of the Squadron from Purvis Bay, Florida Island, at 32 knots, to arrive off CAPE TOROKIN as directed, departure having been taken at 1300 on November 22, 1943. (b) As a result of the long run (370 miles), at high speed, it was necessary to retire on HATHORN SOUND, MUNDA AREA, at speed 31 knots (200 miles) November 23, 1943. This retirement had been directed by Commander Third Fleet. The Squadron fueled at HATHORN and returned to the covering position the evening of November 23, 1943 retiring again for fuel on the morning of 24 November. This required 31 knots to insure that the Squadron again attain our covering position on the evening of November 24. However, on this date the Squadron received orders to cover the BUKA-RABAU line (320 miles). The schedules were very successfully met, in spite of the fact that SPENCE had but three boilers, tube failures having occurred in number four boilers limiting her speed to 31-32 knots.

3. The only friendly surface forces in the BUKA area were a number of Peter Tare Boats, operating as far north as QUEEN CAROLA HARBOR, BUKA ISLAND. These were operating under Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE, having been directed to keep within ten miles of the coast.

4. The black-cats, operating under Commander Task Force THIRTY-THREE, had been informed of the operations of Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE. This task force also had been directed to furnish night fighter protection during moonlight and fighter cover after daylight.

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5. The plan of initial search, as promulgated by Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE, was that the squadron was to arrive at a point fifty-five miles west of BUKA at 0145 love, thence north for five miles south-east astride the BUKA-RABAUL area until necessary to retire. Retirement was to commence at 0300 love, November 25, 1943.

(C) Probable Enemy Forces in the Immediate Area.

1. Latest information available, from photographic reconnaissance of RABAUL, indicated that a possible light cruiser (YUBARI) class, possibly damaged, and nine destroyers, of which one was damaged, one destroyer tender, nine merchantmen, and two tankers, were located in the harbor.

2. The BUKA area had become untenable for enemy surface vessels during daylight, as a result of own repeated air attacks over the area.

3. The expected evacuation from BUKA would possibly have to be effected by cruisers and destroyers, since the length of the RABAUL-BUKA-RABAUL run, with the hours of darkness available, required a high speed naval force to insure accomplishment with a minimum of danger.

4. Enemy submarines were reported in the area but none were encountered.

(D) Weather

1. A wind, force 2, from the east south east, with a calm sea was obscured. The sky was overcast, with comparatively low ceiling. Visibility was estimated, due to darkness, to about 3000 yards.

II COMMENTS AND SUMMARY OF THE BATTLE

1. Initial contact bearing 085°, 22,000 yards, was established with the enemy at 0145 love, November 25, 1943, a very excellent Thanksgiving rendezvous conceived by the Creator and as directed by Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE, 52 miles bearing 130° from Cape St. George.

2. The squadron proceeded directly to attack in accordance Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE doctrine. Regretfully, this doctrine assigns Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX to a screening - protective task. The doctrine, however, is designed to provide maximum protection to Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE, to insure that the initial torpedo attack be delivered at effective and close range. The surprise element, too, of permitting torpedoes to reach the enemy before opening with gunfire, by either division, also proceeded according to plan. Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE launched its torpedo attack, with the three enemy ships distant, about 4,000 yards, from an excellent position, port bow of that force. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX, also on the port bow of the enemy, was then closing, maneuvering to retain supporting station for Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE. At 0157 the enemy was distant 8700 yards, bearing north east from SPENCE, when Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE launched torpedoes and retired to clear possible torpedo water of the enemy force, preparatory to commencing firing.

3. This torpedo attack arrived with devastating effect upon the enemy. Of the three targets observed on the PPI scope, one disappeared completely, and

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one diminished in size so as to be almost off of the scope. Heavy explosions and flames were observed. These persisted for a short time, then all was dark. There can be absolutely no doubt that one was sunk and one was broken up. The third enemy ship, whether hit, or not, was tracked so as to head north for 2700 yards, then to reverse course and head south east, for 2000 yards, at which place it stopped.

4. At 0158 the SPENCE made a bogie contact, bearing 043T, distant seven and a half miles. This was the only bogie contacted in this area. The absence of bogies was attributed to our heading offshore, to our operating in a new area, and to the very valuable chasing tactics of our night fighter earlier in the evening.

5. At 0158 Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE had made contact with a second surface group of targets, three ships in all, distant about 11,000 yards, bearing 090T. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX was then ordered to finish off all enemy vessels remaining in the first group, while Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE proceeded on to intercept the second group, then tracked as fleeing north.

6. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX then maneuvered to a position with the enemy group bearing 045, distant 4600 yards, from which point the CONVERSE only, was directed to fire a half spread of torpedoes to finish off the group. The smaller of the two pips was observed to disappear from the screen at the time that these torpedoes arrived on the line. One, and possibly two underwater explosions were noted. Possibly the ship of the larger pip received a hit. This would have made two hits on this target, later identified as a YUBARI class cruiser, providing Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE torpedoes had also hit her. However, initially this ship had been slightly on the off side of the group.

7. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX was then maneuvered to clear possible torpedo water, the range being opened to 6,000 yards, at which range, the division on a north-easterly course, commenced firing was executed at 0229. The firing was excellent, successive direct hits being noted by both radar, and, as the progressive fires aboard the enemy ship increased in intensity, then by actual observation. At least three large explosions were noted. The ship was afire from bow to stern. The SPENCE expended 297 able able common and 61 common projectiles. Flashless powder was used throughout the firing, however, an occasional smokeless powder discharge was noted.

8. Since this ship was obviously finished, and since Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE had indicated by TBS at 0221, that the services of Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX were needed to northward, our course had been taken so as to keep the first ship under fire as long as possible, and still to permit closing Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE. With the only ship remaining 11,200 yards ceased firing and continued on to close Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE, until at 0247 Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE indicated by TBS that it was his desire that we sink the ship before rejoining. Some amount of trouble had been experienced with the TBS receiver of the CONVERSE which had delayed receipt of this information by Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX. SPENCE at this time relayed the desires of the Squadron Commander on to Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX and we promptly headed back to complete our destruction.

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9. At 0258 heavy explosions and flames were noted on the enemy ship, after which no target remained. Flickering fuel oil fires were observed on the water, after which all was dark. The target was definitely sunk. Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX then came about to close Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE.

10. Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE, by this time had gone off of our radar scope. The chase continued, at 31 knots, on a northerly course, until 0326 when contact was again regained with that division. Contact was assisted by the numerous explosions and flames observed on the ships being fired on by Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE. No enemy contacts were noted by SPENCE. Destroyer Division FORTY-FIVE had definitely sunk the ship before we could rejoin and again get in our "left-hook".

11. At 0334 Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE had assembled again, on a course 265°, heading toward ST. GEORGE CHANNEL, in an endeavor to overtake the two ships known to have escaped, one of which had been badly damaged, seen to circle at one time.

12. At 0405, with no contact having been established Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE commenced retirement to the south-east, having made a very nice land fall on CAPE ST. GEORGE bearing 275, distant 33 miles, by Sugar George.

13. What was expected to be a very grim and business like morning, thanks to the aircraft of BUKA-RABAU, surprisingly proved to be uneventful. No air coverage was possible, apparently, until 0700, at which time the welcome sight of friendly P-38's cleared up the situation no end.

III CHRONOLOGICAL LOG IS SUBMITTED AS ENCLOSURE (D)

IV ENEMY ACTIONS NOTED - COMMENTS

1. It is believed that the element of surprise was so completely exploited that the heart was taken out of the enemy from the start. Confusion was most apparent.

2. The first group had little opportunity to engage us. Prefunctory firing was reported, though the results were not observed. The CONVERSE reports having been struck by a dud torpedo.

3. The second group made no effort to support the first, and merely headed north at a high speed, having been alerted by the initial torpedoes and gunfire.

4. Of the six enemy ships contacted, four were definitely sunk. One was damaged badly and may not have reached port. One definitely escaped.

V SPECIAL COMMENTS ON OWN FORCES

1. On November 22, number four boiler of SPENCE was a casualty, as a result of tube failures while the ship was making 33.5 knots. This was most disheartening, as the ship had finally, as a result of a very much needed, but interrupted overhaul of six days, felt that our immediate engineering troubles were over. The ensuing three days of high speed, from 30-32 knots are a tribute to a very hard working engineering staff, under Lieutenant (j.g.) J.A. MAYLOR, USN.

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It was necessary to combine the engineering plants at speeds above 30 knots. The extreme danger from a chance enemy hit was clearly recognized. An extremely vigilant watch was necessitated to keep the feed water (only 7600 gallons as a result of having to expend some 4000 to insure protection to number four), properly balanced between the plants.

2. The gunfire of the SPENCE was both accurate and deliberate. The target was fairly smothered by salvos. Just what kept it afloat so long is a wonder, possibly a tribute to the enemy water-tight sub-divisions.

3. It is considered that the entire squadron, as observed by the SPENCE, functioned like clockwork. The absence of confusion, and the deliberateness of selecting and closing targets was outstanding.

4. The SPENCE Combat Information Center gave all of the answers. The Commanding Officer had but to examine the bridge remote PPI and ask questions, these being immediately forthcoming. The identity of all ships participating was carefully maintained.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Commanding Officer is most proud of the SPENCE. The action, though conducted in the enemy area, under the apprehension that we had but three boilers, was well fought by all hands. After three hard days of general quarters, the personnel were anything but rested.

2. The coolness and deliberateness of the Gunnery Officer again became apparent.

3. The engineering force are deserving of the highest praise.

4. Recommendations for awards will be made in separate correspondence.

VI LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

1. Difficulty of TBS communications with Commander Destroyer Division FORTY-SIX were quite a handicap. SPENCE, fortunately, was able to serve as a relay ship, though, again, this was most uncertain. The necessity for a TBS rigged aft is most apparent.

2. An additional SG (SGA) would increase our effectiveness both for tracking, recognitional features, and for fire control assistance.

3. The combination of remote PPI and Combat Information Center were exploited fully, with most heartening results.

4. The addition of IFF to SG would be of great benefit.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

NAVY CROSS CITATION¹

COMMANDER HENRY JACQUES ARMSTRONG, JR.
UNITED STATES NAVY

"For distinguishing himself conspicuously by extraordinary heroism and brilliant performance of duty in action as Commanding Officer of the USS SPENCE during a night surface engagement with a Japanese Task Force on the night of November 24-25, 1943. In this engagement 5 ships of Destroyer Squadron 23, of which the USS SPENCE was a unit, sank 4 Japanese ships, seriously damaged another and damaged the 6th before she escaped without loss or damage to our own ships. Commander Armstrong fought his ship with gallant determination and remarkable courage and by his cool aggressive spirit in seeking out and fearlessly engaging a powerful foe of the Japanese Force. His remarkable calmness under fire and reckless disregard of his personal safety in pressing home the attack against the enemy was an inspiration to his brave crew and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service."

* * * * *

¹ Retyped from a draft citation on an index card at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The wording may have been changed on the formal citation.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

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ACTION REPORT

ORIGINAL

USS SPENCE

DD 512

SERIAL 006

27 FEBRUARY 1944

ACTION REPORT OF THE U. S. S. SPENCE, THE FIRST BOMBARDMENT OF KAVIENG, NEW IRELAND, 18 FEBRUARY 1944.

67977

OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY

DD512/A16-3/gwt
Serial 006

U.S.S. SPENCE (DD 512)
c/o Fleet Post Office
SAN FRANCISCO,
CALIF.

1944 MAR 24

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
FLAG OFFICE
RECEIVED

27 February 1944

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From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, FIRST Fleet.
Via: (1) The Commander Destroyer Division Forty-Six.
(2) The Commander Destroyer Squadron Twenty-Three.
(3) The Commander Task Force Thirty-nine.

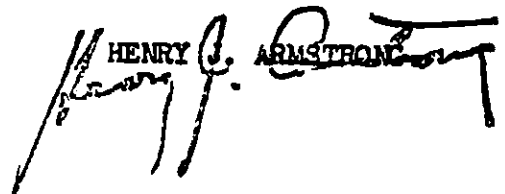
Subject: Action report of the U.S.S. SPENCE, The First Bombardment of KAVIENG, NEW IRELAND, 18 February 1944.

Reference: (a) PacFlt Conf. ltr. 2CL-44.
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Art. 712, 874(6).

Enclosures: (A) Narrative of action.
(B) Chronological Account of Action (See CDS 23 serial 0012.
MISSING (C) TBS Log (See CDS 23 serial 0012 of February.)
(D) Track Chart (See CDS 23 serial 0012 of February.)
(E) Action report of Action against Japanese Aircraft, February 18, 1944.

1. In accordance with reference (a) and (b) the report of action covering the activities of the U.S.S. SPENCE, during the First Bombardment of KAVIENG, NEW IRELAND, and subsequent action against Japanese Aircraft is submitted as enclosures (A) to (E) inclusive.

2. This was the first bombardment by surface vessels against the Japanese stronghold.

HENRY C. ARMSTRONG


Advance copies to:

X Cominch
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Comdesron 23

Comdesdiv 46

USS CHARLES AUSBURNE

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USS STANLY

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File (3)

War Diary (1)

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CLASSIFICATION THIS CORRESPONDENCE
CHANGED TO *Confidential*
AUTHORITY *15-25*
DATE *3-25-44*
PAB

NARRATIVE OF ACTION

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

1. In accordance with ComSoPac Operatinn Order 5A-44 DesRon 23 less AULICK, CLAXTON, THATCHER, and FOOTE operated with CruDiv 12 supporting the occupation of GREEN ISLANDS.
2. At 1300 love 17 February 1944 in accordance with ComThird Fleet Operation Order 5D-44 DesRon 23 parted company with CruDiv 12 at point "Timber" and proceeded westward to arrive off KAVIENG prior to dawn 18 February 1944, to conduct a bombardment of KAVIENG, and to destroy all shipping encountered.
3. At 0450 by TBS the squadron was formed on Division Line of bearing 290°T and commenced the approach on course 117°T, speed 20 knots. At 0627 with NORTH CAPE bearing 131°T range 14,500 yards the squadron changed course to the firing course, 085°T. At 0640 the SPENCE commenced firing at its first designated target, the KAVIENG airstrip, to prevent enemy aircraft from taking off. Numerous fires were observed at the north end of the airstrip. The spotting plane reported that the runway was being hit hard and that no planes were taking off.
4. At 0647 the SPENCE shifted fire to the supply dump south east of the main KAVIENG warf, conducting fire at this target until 0710.
5. The spotting plane observed and reported that a destroyer was standing down the main harbor at high speed. The squadron course was reversed by turn movements and the SPENCE was directed to take the destroyer under fire. Every effort was made to shift fire and hit the destroyer. CIC determined quickly that the range was extreme, 18,000 yards to be exact. Control was unable to sight the ship because of the smoke of the bombardment, then underway, and the islands which partially obscured the ship. Nevertheless, by use of indirect fire controlled from CIC and plot, fire was shifted to the destroyer. The spotting plane reported that the salvos were landing short, the destroyer having retired beyond our maximum range.
6. A few salvos were fired at the only visual shipping in the harbor, these appeared to be grounded merchantmen. Then fire was shifted to the revetments and plane repair areas north of the KAVIENG Airstrip.
7. From 0710 until 0750 Japanese shore batteries on NORTH CAPE kept up a slow but continuous fire on the squadron with what appeared to be 5" or 6" dual purpose guns. Salvos landed uncomfortably close on both sides and astern. The SPENCE, as rear ship of the formation most certainly received her share of attention from these batteries. One coastal gun consistently fired over the ship, deflection rather good, but fortunately over ranging about two to five thousand yards. By radical maneuvering the ship escaped damage, though it used up a few of its lives.
8. At 0745 by TBS the squadron formed Division columns and commenced retirement to the eastward of NEW IRELAND, speed 28 knots.

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7. The SPENCE single ship radar plane was positioned up-bay-head, bearing about 180°T, distant 16 miles. This was soon sighted visually, circling the formation. At 0805 the plane commenced a glide attack on DisDiv 45. At 0810 a bomb was dropped, landing about 100 yards ahead of the CHARLES F. AUSBURNE. The SPENCE had been tracking the plane for 20 minutes and took the "Dave" under fire with range then 8,000 yards. No hits were observed. The plane continued his glide and disappeared flying low over the water going toward NEW IRELAND. At 0820 the "Dave" returned making a similar approach on the squadron, the SPENCE opened fire at range of 10,000 yards with plane bearing 110°T. Fire was continued until the "Dave" turned away, without dropping bombs. It retired toward NEW IRELAND and was lost from view. It is believed that the squadron firing must have injured this plane as it lost altitude rapidly and stood off, flying low, at a decreased speed, making no efforts to maneuver.

10. At 1310, in accordance with ComThirdFleet despatch orders, the squadron changed course to proceed to the vicinity of EAST CAPE, NEW IRELAND, in order to intercept two Japanese destroyers reported as enroute there from CAPE ST. GEORGE. The Coast was searched thoroughly from CAPE BUN BUN to the southward but no trace of the reported destroyers was found. At 1900 the squadron formed in column on course 207°T and bombarded the CAPE ST. GEORGE Radar station at close range. The SPENCE, last ship in column, commenced firing at 1925, at range of 5,000 yards, and completed at 1927. Visibility was very poor because of growing darkness and smoke of previous bombardment but fires and hits were observed in the vicinity of the radar station both during and after the bombardments.

11. Upon completion the squadron set course to retire to HATHORN SOUND for fuel.

COMMENTS.

1. During the bombardment a salvo interval of eight seconds was used. All guns functioned perfectly. The continuous firing heated the gun barrels to such a temperature that all five canvas bloomers were burned off.
2. Indirect fire was used throughout, except for the short interval during which time visible shipping was under fire in the harbor.
3. The navigator ran a continuous radar plot in CIC, keeping the plotting room informed of the instantaneous range to the center of the target area. The plotting room officer used an overlay spotting diagram to move the MPI over the target area.
4. Because of failure of the SPENCE spotting frequency transmitter the plane could not hear this ship. Never-the-less, the plane's spots were applied whenever they concerned the target being fired on by the SPENCE.
5. The spotting plane, "Pointer", did an excellent job of it. There was no opportunity for a mutual conference before the firing. The

squadron Commander, briefly, by VHF, outlined the targets of the various firing ships. The spotter continued to give a very good play by play description of the firing, even though continuously under heavy AA fire from below. Each ship, when possible, fired a ranging salvo for spotting purposes. The plane was able to quite effectively place the subsequent patterns. Granted, what with five ships firing, there was bound to be some confusion, however, this was surprisingly controlled.

6. Had white phosphorus projectiles been available in the area these would have assisted the spotting materially.

7. The shore batteries will require even closer attention in the near future, as they demonstrate the seeds of effective firing. Bombarding at such a remote location from our own bases, will prove of great embarrassment to some ship in the near future, unless this is accomplished.

8. Fire discipline^{ive} and battery performance were excellent. There were no casualties. All target areas were thoroughly covered. The full allowance of ammunition, 1,000 rounds, was expended.

9. Thirty nine rounds of star shells were fired to clear coppering from the bores. These projectiles were fired so as to open at short altitudes above the supply dump. From the smoke observed some of these must have started fires. The ship at that time was not supplied with the new nose fuses for the stars. These would have been quite valuable for incendiary purposes.

10. The radar navigation which controlled the indirect firing proved both successful and very simple.

DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY

1. As reported by the plane, the initial targets, the aircraft strip, taxi junctions, and revetments were well covered. It is believed that, from smoke observed, a fuel dump was destroyed.

2. The plane reported that the supply dump southeast of the warf was quite thoroughly "plastered". Numerous pillars of smoke were observed from fires burning in the area.

DAMAGE TO OWN SHIP

1. No damage whatsoever was incurred, either from enemy gunfire or from ship board casualties.

2. The nearest enemy shell hit about fifty yards off the port beam. Numerous six or eight inch splashes were observed, all overs. One

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Enclosure (A) to Commanding Officer, U.S.S. SPENCE,
letter DD512/A16-3/gwt, Secret serial 006, of 27 February 1944.

gun, of similar size, was observed as placing its salvos quite short of the ships ahead.

3. The enemy firing, especially of the 4 - 5 inch size, appeared rather good. Some indications were present that a fire control system exists in the KAVIENG defenses.

4. A line of cans, about five inch in diameter, projecting about eight inches out of the water were noted. These were about 4,000 yards off of the mine field, and about parallel to the outer limits given for the field. The SPENCE was about one hundred and fifty yards off of this line when the single splash landed fifty yards abeam. Possibly these cans not only mark the mine field, but also serve as ranging marks for the shore battery.

OUTSTANDING EVENTS.

1. The SPENCE conducted itself in a most commendable manner. There was no confusion whatsoever. The fact that we were constantly the target for the shore batteries, as evidenced by the numerous near splashes, in no way detracted a single mind from the mission in hand. The damage control parties functioned calmly, extinguishing the burning gun bloomers during the actual firing.

2. The Commanding Officer is personally proud to have such a command. Any attempt to single out any one officer or man for special comment would be a difficult task, since all wholeheartedly contributed.

3. The Combat Information Center, under the direction of Lieutenant Burns W. SPORE, US Navy, Executive Officer, and the Control Party, under Lieutenant (junior grade) Arthur W. BEDELL, USNR, Gunnery Officer, conducted themselves in a most commendable manner.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

**BRONZE STAR MEDAL CITATION:¹
(with Combat "V")**

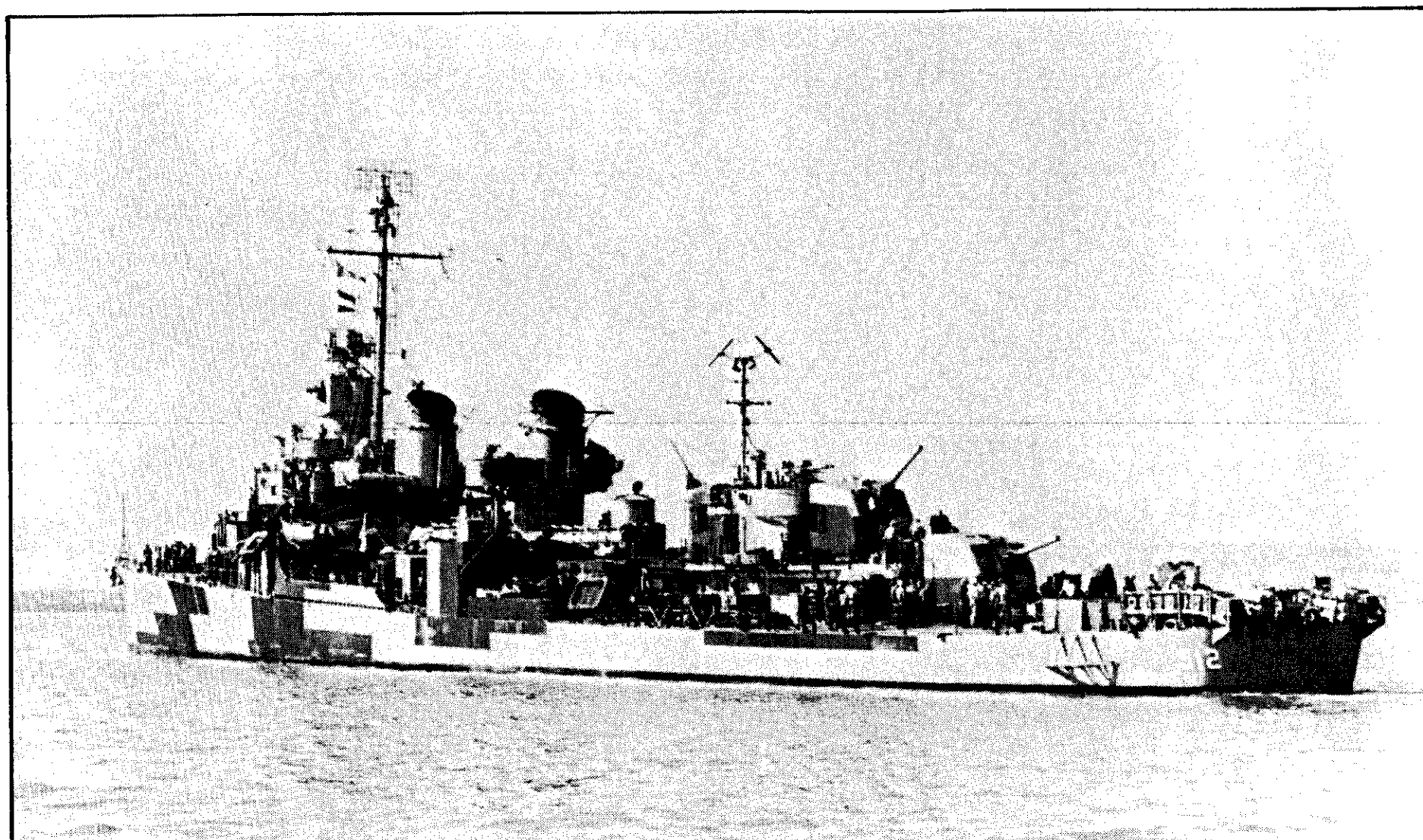
**COMMANDER HENRY JACQUES ARMSTRONG, JR.
UNITED STATES NAVY**

"For heroic achievement as Commanding Officer of a destroyer operating as a unit of a destroyer squadron during the first antishipping sweep northwest of the Bismarck Archipelago, and the first bombardment of enemy shore installations at Kavieng, New Ireland and on the Duke of York Island, between February 17, to 23, 1944. During this period Commander Armstrong's ship participated in the destruction of two enemy naval auxiliary vessels, a large enemy cargo ship, a minelayer and four barges, and inflicted heavy damage on enemy shore installations. Although subjected to Japanese aerial attacks and intense artillery fire from enemy shore batteries, Commander Armstrong successfully carried out his aggressive and determined attack without damage to his ship. Through his skillful leadership, courage and determined fighting spirit, he contributed to the destruction of enemy naval units and the successful operation of the squadron. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

** * * * **

1 Retyped from a draft citation on an index card at Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The wording may have been changed on the formal citation.

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



The USS Spence (DD-512) (Lt. Cdr. J. P. Andrea) on October 4, 1944, after six weeks of availability at the Hunters Point yard in San Francisco. The short mainmast shown was added to carry antennas for the radar intercept and jamming equipment installed at this time to counter Japanese airborne radars. The after twin 40-mm Bofors mount can be seen just aft of this mast. The Spence was armed with four additional twin 40-mm mounts; two forward of the bridge and two abreast the after stack. The two clusters of tanks between the stern depth charge racks are smoke generators. When compressed air was mixed with the chemicals in these tanks it produced a dense white smoke. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)

New York Times, January 11, 1945

3 U. S. DESTROYERS LOST IN A TYPHOON

The Hull, Monaghan, Spence
Sunk in the Pacific—Other
Craft Victims of Enemy

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10—Three United States destroyers, the Hull, Monaghan and Spence, were lost recently in a typhoon in the western Pacific, and four LST's and three smaller vessels were lost as a result of enemy action, the Navy announced tonight.

These latest sinkings brought the Navy's total losses since the beginning of the war to 254, including fifty-four destroyers. All the losses obviously were in connection with earlier phases of the Philippine campaign.

In addition to the four craft of the LST (landing ship, tanks) type, the vessels sunk by the Japanese included a motor torpedo boat, a small submarine chaser and a small auxiliary vessel. No details were given.

Hit by Typhoon Suddenly

The three destroyers were participating in combat operations when they were struck by "a typhoon of severe intensity which developed with great rapidity," the Navy said. A number of other vessels also suffered damage.

"The importance of the operational situation was such that the operations in hand could not be

suspended or altered because of weather conditions."

Lieut. Comdr. James A. Marks, 29 years old, of Washington, commanding officer of the Hull, a 1,395-ton destroyer in service since 1935, was rescued along with four other officers and forty-nine men out of the ship's approximate complement of 175. The Hull, which was at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, had participated in the Guadalcanal, Kiska, Makin, Kwajalein, Eniwetok and Saipan campaigns.

Twenty-four of the Spence's personnel, including one Supply Corps officer, were saved. Presumably her commander, Lieut. Comdr. James P. Andrea, 31, a native of Union City, N. J., went down with her. The Spence, a 2,050-ton destroyer, commissioned in January, 1943, had participated in action at Casablanca, Treasury Island, Empress Augusta Bay, Buka, Kavieng, Rota and Guam.

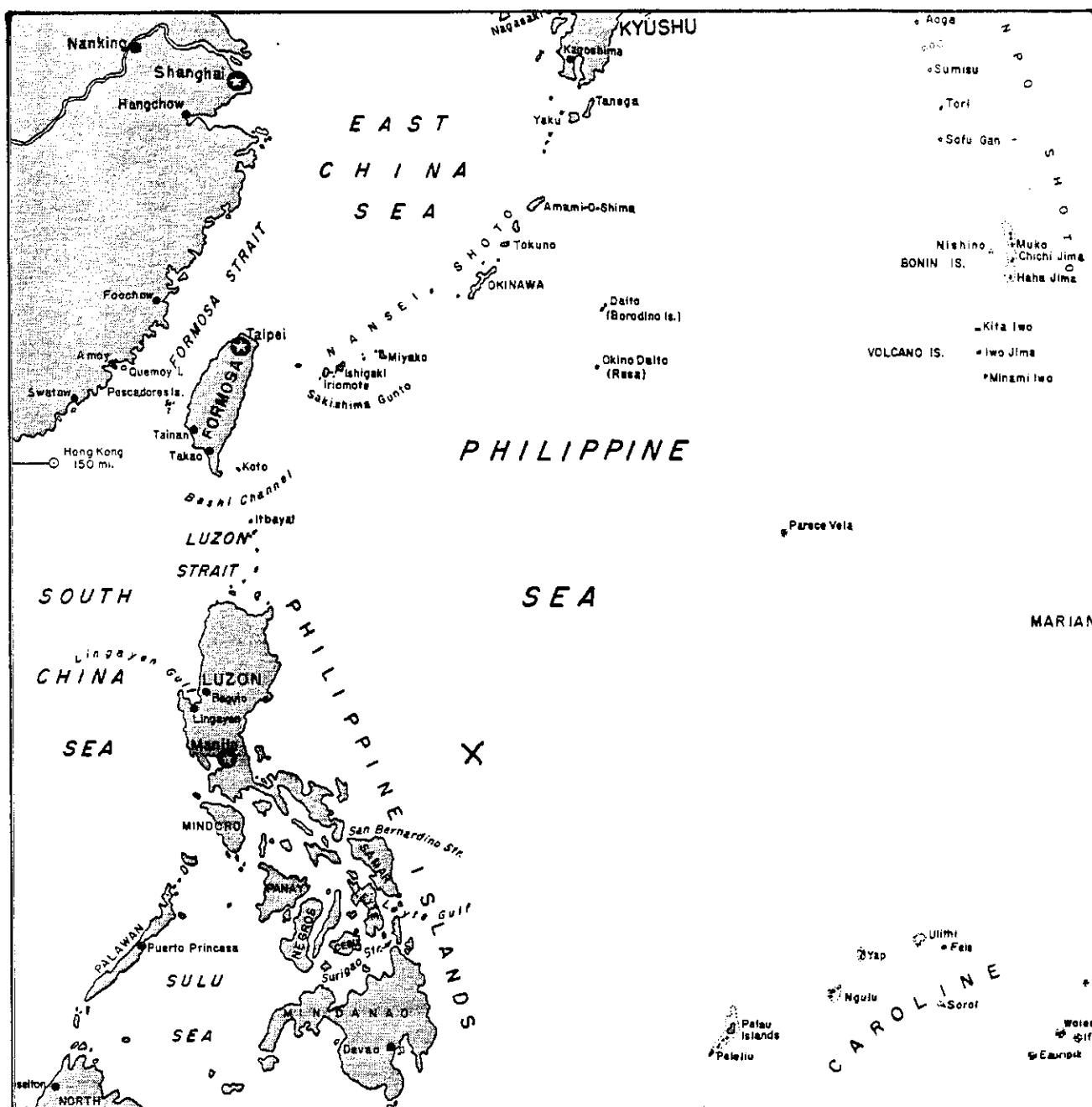
Only Six Rescued

Only six of the Monaghan's personnel were rescued. Her commander, Lieut. Comdr. Floyd B. Garrett Jr., 29, Little Rock, Ark., is presumed lost. Since her commissioning in April, 1935, the 1,395-ton Monaghan had fought in the Aleutians, the Gilberts and the Marianas.

The Navy reported that a thorough search of the area by aircraft and surface vessels was conducted over a period of days. A court of inquiry is investigating all circumstances.

These announcements, the Navy said, bring it up to date in reporting losses of all surface craft during the Philippine campaign up to Dec. 31, 1944.

Map of Western Pacific



The USS Spence (DD-512) capsized and sank in a typhoon on December 18, 1944, about 240 miles off southern Luzon, Philippine Islands (X above). Only 24 of her 339-man complement survived. Two other destroyers were also lost before the storm subsided, and many other ships sustained major damage. Personnel casualties suffered by Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet totaled about 80 injured and 790 dead or missing. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz stated that the damage "represented a more crippling blow to the Third Fleet than it might be expected to suffer in anything less than a major action".

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Narrative by: Lieutenant (jg) A. S. Krauchunas, SC, USNR
USS SPENCE

Lieutenant Krauchunas, Supply Corps Officer, was the sole surviving officer of the SPENCE when it was lost in a typhoon off the Philippines on 18 December 1944. Apparently rather reluctant to talk of his experiences in the sinking and subsequent rescue, he gives a very brief account of the sinking. He also mentions some highlights of the SPENCE's operations in the Central Pacific campaign.

Film No. 339
Recorded: 16 February 1945.

Copy No. 1 of one smooth copy.

FILMED

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Narrative corrected

CONFIDENTIAL Film No. 332
DECLASSIFIED Decoded 15 Feb. 1945

Lt.(jg) A.S. Krauchunas, SC, USNA.

After the squadron of "Little Beavers" left the South Pacific, they arrived into the Central Pacific Area, Marshall Islands. Their home base was no[✓] K[✓]ajuro from which they operated continuously with the Fifth Fleet.

Our first operation with the Fifth Fleet was a raid on Ponape, Yap, and Peliliu. After conducting air strikes against these islands, we returned to our home port of Majuro for repairs, fuel, provisions, etc. Our next operation was in support of the invasion of Hollandia, New Guinea. This operation was on the 23rd and 24th of April. This invasion being a complete success, our air power was no longer needed and returned to Alibates in the Manus Island. After a short stay there for necessary supplies, the Fifth Fleet struck at Truk^K, Ponape and Satawan on the way back to Majuro. This was during April 29 to May 1, 1944.

Upon completing these operations, our task group was sent into the Marianas to support the invasion of Saipan and Tinian, a period from 11 June to 10 August, 1944. During this same operation, we were in support of the invasion of Guam. On 15 and 16 June, this task group proceeded to Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima^J, Bonin Islands to conduct air strikes against this group. This is the first time the American Fleet dared to venture so close to the enemy. Two days were spent on air strikes catching the Japs definitely by surprise.

Upon refueling, reprovisioning at Eniwetok, our new base, we returned in support and patrol of Guam. The Jap Fleet had been contacted some distance from our Task Force. Their plan being—to send their planes over our Fleet, refuel on Guam airfields and return to their carriers. Their fleet remaining out of reach of our planes at all times.

~~DECLASSIFIED~~

Contact was made on a group of 60 to 70 planes approaching our task group. Our fighters were sent up to meet them and bombers were sent out to bomb the air strip on Guam to stop any attempt of the enemy planes landing there. Our fighters shot down 369 planes during the day and more were wrecked trying to land on the bombed airstrip. There were two other attacks and each was repulsed successfully.

During one of the attacks, a Jap plane followed some of our returning fighters until it dove over a carrier dropping its bombs. Luckily they missed. The plane streaked past the screening destroyers who had many shots at but were not able to bring it down. The covering air patrol, seeing our shots hitting the water, were able to see the plane and bring it down after a long chase.

Upon completion of this operation, our squadron was sent to the States, Hunter's Point Drydocks, for an overhaul during August 19, 1944 to October 5, 1944. After the overhaul, we proceeded to the forward area via Pearl Harbor for minor adjustments, training, and target practice. Our next base became Ulithi, where we joined the Third Fleet. Our first operation was to conduct air strikes on Luzon and they were successful with little loss of personnel and damage. Our next operation was to aid in the support of the invasion of Mindoro on 14, 15, and 16 of December, 1944. Ours was to maintain aircraft over all the airfields on Luzon. On the 17th of December, 1944, a rendezvous for fueling was made but the seas were too rough for the SPENCE to fuel and were ordered to proceed with several tankers and fuel on the 18th. The typhoon began its fury on the next day and it was impossible for an attempt to fuel. Orders were given to ballast ship at 0900 since the ship had only 12% fuel and was rolling heavily. These rolls exceeded 50°. At 1100, the power was gone due to water seeping into the fire room through vents. The ship was caught in the huge swells.

Page 3 CONFIDENTIAL
~~DECLASSIFIED~~

The first huge swell rolled the ship 75° from which it recovered but the next one rolled her over trapping all those below the main deck, passageways, Radio shack, CIC, wardroom, etc. 50 to 60 men managed to get off into the water from their stations topside. They clutched to life rafts, floater nets, life jackets or whatever they managed to get ahold of. The wind blew them out of sight of ship within a few minutes. No one saw the ship sink and was last seen floating upside down. The gale lasted for another 8 hours before it subsided and during this time many were drowned being in a shocked and dazed condition. The gale, approximately 115 knots, subsided that evening to about 15 to 20 knots. There were four groups of men floating in the darkness. These groups who ultimately became the survivors were a life raft, floater net, and 3 men and 1 man.

The floater net which contained nine men had many unusual experiences. The men began to suffer from the hot sun that burned any exposed areas of the skin. The floater net had two kegs of water, no flare, no medicine kit, and no food kits, all of which broke off during the vicious typhoon. Water was given out once every three hours in order that it would last longer.. A can of vegetable shortening was picked up and spread over the men's sunburned areas. Two search planes flew overhead ~~and~~ but did not see us. One of the men became unconscious and slipped from the net several times before he was missed. Of the three men to die, he was the first. His name was Ensign George W. Poer. At midnight, December 20, 1944, Lt. (jg) John Whalen slipped from the net. The other man had become unconscious some time before but was held on the net by Charles Wohlleb, WT3c but it became necessary to let him go.

At 0300 on the morning of 20 December, 1944, an aircraft carrier slipped into view on the horizon, we did everything in our power to attract

(page 4) ~~DECLASSIFIED~~

The carrier heard us and dropped smoke bombs and flares to mark our approximate position and it continued on its way. Within a half and hour, destroyer appeared from the other direction but we were not successful in attracting its attention. Shortly, another ship appeared and it found the flares which the carrier had dropped. This ship was the USS SWEARER WHICH EVENTUALLY picked us up.

Another group of men, unknown to us at this time, were drifting some distance away. One man distinguished himself ^{by} ~~but~~ saving men on five different occasions but lost his own life when he attempted to save the last man. His name was Henry Oliver TAGG, MMlc, USN and has been recommended for citation.

Three other men were picked up after having drifted for two days and nights. They were tied together with five life jackets, lines, and floater ring. Two of them had been unconscious for some time but were held by David MOORE, Stlc, who is credited with saving their lives. USS TABBERER was the rescue ship.

William Keith, Slc, was picked up by the USS GATLING after he had been floating by himself for two days and nights. Being delirious his was an experience which was interesting. He claimed that drowning was not his way of dying, so he claimed that a Japanese torpedo was floating by and he chased ^{it} for some time. He wanted to set it off and blow up with it.

All of these men were sent back to ULITHI where they were treated for any ailments they might have had. They are on their way back to the States for a well-earned and deserved leave of 30 days.

A.S. Krauchunas
Lt. (jg) SC USNR

26 DEC 1944

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander, Service Squadron TEN.
Subject: Officer and Enlisted Personnel - Survivors
of the U.S.S. SPENCE (DD-512).

1. The following named officer and enlisted personnel of the U.S.S. SPENCE (DD-512) were rescued by this vessel at the time and date in the areas listed below:

0400(I) - 20 December 1944.

Latitude: 14° 27'N.

Longitude: 128° 07'E.

- ✓ Lieut(jg) Alphonso Stephen KRAUCHUNAS, (252437) SC, USNR.
- ✓ TRACESKI, Edward Francis, QM2c, 666-95-23, V6, USNR.
- ✓ ROSLEY, Albert (n), TM3c, 602-76-50, V6, USNR.
- ✓ WOHLER, Charles Francis, WT3c, 809-07-28, V6, USNR.
- ✓ SEHNERT, Maurice Donald, S1c, 578-03-90, V6, USNR.
- ✓ GROUNDS, Charles Leslie, S2c, 944-09-26, V6, USNR.

1530(I) - 20 December 1944.

Latitude: 14° 30'N.

Longitude: 127° 53'E.

- ✓ CALLIER, Lawrence (n), GM3c, 342-73-13, USN.
- ✓ MILLER, Edward Albert, S1c, 710-70-27, V6, USNR.
- ✓ MOORE, David (n), S1c, 272-06-49, USN.

2. All of the above personnel were suffering from immersion and shock, having been in the water for a period of approximately 41 hours and 52 hours respectively.

3. CALLIER was transferred on 22 December 1944 to the U.S.S. NEHANTIA BAY (CVE-74) for medical treatment as an emergency case, diagnosed as pneumonia.

J. M. TRENT

cc: BuPers.
Com3rdFlt.
ComDesPac.
ComSerForPac.
ComDesRon 23.
ComCortDiv 44.
FltRcdsOff.
File.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Firsthand Account Of Sinking By Al Krauchunas¹

"The morning of the 18th arrived and all Hell broke loose about 0900. It was easy to see that no fuel could be taken on, so ballasting began. At 1000, one of the whale boats washed away. The waves were tremendous, being at least 50 to 60 feet high. The gale was clocked at 115 knots and it was raining, making visibility less than 100 yards. Reports were coming over the TBS (talk between ships) that several escort carriers had caught fire after planes had broken loose on both flight and hangar decks. Reports were also coming that men were being swept overboard by the huge waves. The skipper, hearing this latter report at least 10 different times, suggested that all men topside not on watch seek shelter in their compartments. Most of the men went down below decks.

"Polhemus and Bean had been topside most of the morning standing close to the radio shack passageway, where I had been contented until about 1020. I left them and went below and hit the sack. Now during most of the morning, it had been impossible to eat anything on the wardroom table. All the chairs were secured to the table, as was the lounge. The lounge had broken its fastenings and was running wild most of the night and morning before one of the mess boys could be found to secure it. (He was white as a ghost when he came in.) At about 1100, Larry Sundin came rushing by my room saying that the water was leaking into the fire and engine room. About 5 minutes later the lights went out and that was enough for me. I got up and went toward the quarterdeck, but stopped in the wardroom for a glance. I saw Bellion, Coach, Smith, and several of the new officers in there, but God said, "Al, don't go in." I started to go out to the main deck when I noticed Doc Gaffney, our new sawbones, sitting in the captain's cabin. He was scared as all Hell, as was I, but there was nothing one could do. I sat down on my bunk with my back against the bulkhead. We were listing at this time toward the port side. Evidently it was the ballast washing around in the big tanks. Actually it becomes harmful instead of an asset since the water with much free surface is hard to keep under control. At about 1100 we took a terrific roll to port and recovered. Later I found this roll was 75 degrees. Before I could get my heart out of my mouth from that big roll, I was lying flat on my back on the bulkhead, and books and ash trays were falling all around. I knew that she had rolled on her side. I scrambled into the passageway and towards the entrance, but upon reaching there, it was all full of water already. My whole life passed in front of me and I stared death right in the face. Suddenly I noticed light coming from above and saw that the radio shack passageway was still opened. I scrambled, still on my knees, around the ladder and out into the water. I took three long strokes when I heard the gushing and sucking noise behind me and the suction was terrific. I swam as only if a tiger or crocodile was behind me and after swimming for a few minutes, which seemed like hours, I looked back and there was the SPENCE turned completely over. It was a tragic sight - one that will never be forgotten. I swam to a floater net that contained about 15 to 20 other men, many of them I don't remember very distinctly, but neither Poley or Bean were there. Chief Wartender Johnson handed me a life jacket that was floating by. I had thrown up several times by this time from swallowing oil and water, and I think this snapped me out of the daze and shock that most of the others were in. Connolly, Signalman first, was right next to me in the net.

"His death was horrible. He gave up almost immediately. Why. I don't know. He would say, "I can't go on anymore, I can't, I can't!" I held him up for a

¹ Excerpt from a letter written in 1945 by the sole surviving officer from the USS Spence (DD-512), Lt.(jg) Alphonso S. Krauchunas, Supply Corps, USNR, to his predecessor, supply officer David T. Meskill, about the loss of the Spence during a typhoon in December, 1944. His letter appeared in the summer 1993 issue of KIDDS COMPASS, newsletter of the Louisiana Naval War Memorial.

while until a huge wave dragged the net completely under water, tearing all of us from the net as if we were leaves. Upon breaking the surface, we would all have to swim back each time this happened. Several wouldn't come back. Connolly went the first time.

"The wind died down some eight hours later, and only then could we begin to breathe freely. There were only nine of us left: Sehnert, Wohlleb, John Whalen, Ens. George Poer, Traceski, Rosley, Heater, Grounds, and myself. During the night, the next day everything was a horrible dream. Experiences that I won't mention because they were numerous and too bad to recall now with my wife and little Karen sitting here in the room with me. I wish all this could be forgotten.

"Whalen, Poer and Heater died on the morning of the 20th. At about 0300 an aircraft carrier slipped into view. We screamed as loud as the six of us could and attracted their attention. They dropped smoke flares to mark our position and continued on their merry way. An hour later, a DE, the U.S.S. SWEARER, found us, and from there on it was life again. From here, we were brought back to Ulithi and assembled on a transport after spending a week on a hospital ship. From the other 23 survivors, I was able to get a great deal of information as to who was seen in the water at any time. Those who were not seen could have only been in one place; below decks. It is hard to believe that anyone like Poley, Bean, Kleckley and many others died as they did in their compartments, without any light and utter confusion and hysteria going on. All of this happened so suddenly that even the captain was not able to get off the bridge; or Carrigan, or the Exec., Lt. Andrews, a new officer.

"Since leaving Ulithi, Chief Gunner's Mate Beeman and I, senior survivors, flew back to Washington for temporary duty. I wrote a letter of condolence to each parent, wife, or next of kin of each man who was lost. There were a lot of other things that had to be done, but the greatest task was answering these letters and seeing many of the parents who came to Washington to see me. I was there for a month and came home to Kalamazoo for my leave, but it is different because many of the parents in this sector are coming over to visit me for any information that I may have concerning their son or husband. I didn't mind it at first, but it gets worse and worse as it goes along. When the mother cries her heart out in front of you, it is unbearable. I have written over 500 letters and more come in each day. Knowing that you keep in contact with many of the parents, I thought that this information would help in case they ask you any questions."

* * * * *

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Citations for NAVY AND MARINE CORPS MEDALS Awarded:¹

LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE ALPHONSO STEPHEN KRAUCHUNAS
SUPPLY CORPS, UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE

CITATION:

"For heroism in assisting and rescuing men in the water following the capsizing of the U.S.S. SPENCE in a typhoon on 18 December 1944. He took charge of the situation following the disaster and under his direction the rescue operations were efficiently carried out. He made many sacrifices for the safety and comfort of fourteen survivors aboard a life raft, and his courage and judgement contributed greatly to their ultimate rescue. His initiative, resourcefulness and conduct were at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

* * * * *

DAVID MOORE, STEWARD'S MATE FIRST CLASS
UNITED STATES NAVY

CITATION:

"For heroism in assisting and rescuing men in the water following the capsizing of the U.S.S. SPENCE in a typhoon on 18 December 1944. After the typhoon had subsided, he found himself alone in the water with several life jackets, and a short time later saw two shocked and delirious men clinging together. During the night of 19 December 1944 the two men became unconscious and he supported them until they were rescued twenty-two hours later. His conduct was at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

* * * * *

¹ Typed from draft citations on index cards filed at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard. The formal citations may have been reworded. TAGG, Henry Oliver, MM1c, USN, may also have been awarded this medal, but I was not able to find his citation at the Naval Historical Center.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

U.S.S. SPENCE, TYPHOON & SENIOR SURVIVING OFFICER
by Edward F. Traceski, U.S.S. SPENCE Survivor¹

Previous plans called for a refueling rendezvous with 3 oiler units on 17 December, 1944. Early in the morning, barometer readings indicated an approaching storm. Weather conditions became worse. At 1000, readings revealed a rapidly slumping barometer and winds up to 30 to 45 knots. The SPENCE was ordered alongside the NEW JERSEY to replenish her almost empty tanks. The SPENCE had been detailed numerous times to leave the screen to go on high-speed "pilot rescue missions," thereby depleting her fuel supply more rapidly. Conditions for taking on fuel were very unfavorable with swells up to 20 feet. Fuel lines were lashed to keep from slipping away. Yawing became greater with excessive rolling and hoses were snapped. Collision with the NEW JERSEY was always a threat. In fact, paint on both vessels was scraped in their attempt to take on oil. The storm was now raging with greater intensity with winds up to 40 knots. Since they were unable to refuel, the SPENCE and two destroyers were ordered to depart with the oiler group. After attempting to take on fuel the remainder of the day by the stern to bow method, this effort was abandoned because the lack of visibility did not permit the spotting of the inflated canvas ball to which the line was attached. This line would have permitted the oil hose to be pulled over the bow of the SPENCE. No ballast was taken on since word was received from the group commander that refueling would be started at sunrise the following morning.

The morning of 18 December, 1944 found raging winds from 50 to 60 knots and very limited visibility. It was apparent no fuel could be taken on so ballasting was started. Reports were coming in over the TBS (Talk Between Ships) of fires on several of the escort carriers from planes breaking loose on both flight and hangar decks. Further reports indicated ships of the oiler unit escort were having difficulty in maintaining steerage as well as men being swept overboard by the huge swells. As a result, the skipper, Lt. Comdr. James P. Andrea, concerned about the safety of his crew, ordered all topside watches secured and suggested all personnel not authorized topside to go below. During an early morning meeting skipper Andrea was appraised by Lt.(jg) Larry Sundin, Chief Engineer, the plant was operating on one boiler and fuel was at 10% capacity. He also reported headway at 8 knots could be maintained for 24 hours. Ballasting began in the morning with Chief Watertender George Johnson stating approximately 16,000 gallons of seawater had been taken in the empty tanks. The ship was not completely battened up so as to allow normal traffic.

At approximately 1030, Krauchunas left the galley after being assured sufficient sandwiches had been prepared for the crew since preparation of regular chow was out of the question. Clutching the handrail as the ship pitched and tossed in the huge waves, he made his way amidships to the Disbursing Office. A routine check revealed cabinet doors, furniture and equipment had been made secure. All appeared in order. Krauchunas was now faced with the hazardous footing and raging wind to the wardroom. He observed the whaleboat being torn from its once secure position as tons of water poured over it as the SPENCE heeled to starboard. Thoughts came to his mind as the whaleboat swept by narrowly missing him as to the method used in securing a "loose whaleboat" from the ship's records. Surely, the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts would have the solution, but it could wait until the next day. Slowly and steadily, Krauchunas overcame the blinding mist, wind and heavy water to stumble into the passageway leading to the wardroom completely

¹ Excerpt from a narrative which appeared in **TYPHOON COBRA**, privately published by Theodore F. Owin, c. 1995, describing the ordeal experienced by the ship's only officer survivor, Lt.(jg) Alphonso S. Krauchunas, Supply Corps, USNR. Retyped, unedited, by E. A. Wilde, Jr., in August, 2001.

drenched. He observed that Storekeepers Polhemus and Bean had departed from the passageway where they had spent most of the morning. Several people still remaining stated both had gone down to their quarters. During the night, a lounge had broken loose from its fastenings running wild most of the time. A mess steward was able to tie it and all chairs to the wardroom table.

Krauchunas decided to seek relief from the pitching and rolling by "hitting the sack." Arriving in his stateroom, he removed his damp clothes and donned fresh dry ones, including "non-regulation" white wool sweat socks. As he lay in his bunk listening to groaning and unusual sounds and noises arising as the SPENCE fought bravely to lift her shuddering bow from under the mountainous waves, he observed loose chairs and wastepaper baskets slide into and out of the room as if to seek a haven from the continuous bucking and rolling. At about 1100, a telephone ring was heard in an adjacent room. Soon Lt.(jg) Sundin peered into the room saying, "You better get topside, Pay, we're taking water down the stack into the fire and engine room." Still, Krauchunas was not impressed with the severity of the situation. To him, the SPENCE was still a bulwark of strength and stability. However, as Sundin closed the watertight hatch leading from the officers' quarters, the lights blinked, dimmed and finally went out. Dim emergency lights came on. Now concerned with the sudden turn of events, Krauchunas slipped on a pair of rubber-soled moccasins and made his way to the watertight hatch. He opened and closed it behind him. He then climbed up the ladder leading to the wardroom passageway. He opened the horizontal watertight hatch and climbed out, almost falling back down the ladder as he reached to grasp and close it. The hatch was finally battened down and made watertight again. Krauchunas peered into the wardroom where he could faintly see some of his fellow officers: Lt.(jg) Bellion, Lt.(jg) Robinson, Ensign Smith and several others on lounges and loose chairs, each with a concerned look. The atmosphere here was not at all encouraging to Krauchunas, so he turned and started down the darkened passageway toward the main deck, struggling to remain upright and to keep from being thrown against the bulkhead. As he passed the Captain's compartment, he heard a voice spouting a few words of anger and disgust. Entering the cabin, he noticed the ship's medical officer, Lt.(jg) Gaffney, sitting in the Captain's chair and having some difficulty in controlling the chair rolling from one side of the compartment to the other. Both exchanged words of fear and some assurances regarding the storm. Krauchunas felt his concern and worry had eased, so he decided to remain. He sat down on the lower bunk of a double bunk unit when the SPENCE took a sudden roll to starboard of about 75 degrees. She remained in this position for agonizing moments and breathless eternity, then slowly but surely the SPENCE with all of its heart and last bit of strength started to come upright.

Krauchunas was showered with books, ash tray and other loose items as he rolled backwards off the bunk into the passageway, a drop of 5 to 6 feet. He scrambled on all fours toward the hatchway left open by some departing soul. Another wave rolled the SPENCE onto its side. Gushing water poured in forcing him back into the ship. He grabbed for and luckily clutched the railing of the ladder leading up to the radio shack deck. The ship continued on its roll and was almost completely upside down. Krauchunas was now completely under water clinging desperately to the railing like a flag in a gale as tons of water tried to suck him into the wardroom area. He opened his eyes and saw the outline of the open hatchway about 20 feet away but was unable to overcome the force of intruding sea water. With lungs bursting for air and no apparent way of replenishing them, he experienced a hopeless feeling and thoughts as: "Is this death?" "Is this the way a person dies?" "What will death be like?" "Will it be peaceful or fiery hell?" He began to relive an incident which occurred in childhood. As a boy of six years of age, he walked into a neighborhood store and removed a box of animal crackers from a shelf, placed it under his coat and walked out without paying. He now regretted having done this and was reliving the incident as if he were in the store this very moment.

Another huge swell rolled the SPENCE onto her side again momentarily. The incoming flow of the water had stopped. The passageway leading out of the radio shack deck came up out of the water causing Krauchunas to surface. He gasped for air, taking 4 or 5 huge gulps of air, and pulled with all of his might over the ladder towards the opening. The SPENCE began to settle back to its overturned position amidst gurgling and sucking sounds with water pouring through the opening again. Krauchunas is unable to recall what transpired from this point on until he vomited several times after gagging on oil and salt water. This snapped him out of the shocked daze he was in. He looked around for something to cling to since he was treading water with no life jacket a few feet from the overturned SPENCE with her freshly-painted red bottom. It was no longer a bulwark of strength and stability. Life jackets had been washed off of gun stations and were floating about. One was handed to Krauchunas by CWT George Johnson who disappeared from the area almost immediately. He bumped into a second one and placed it around his legs, making him very buoyant. He was swept back against the one-inch steel hull through which screams and curdling yells could be heard, indicating the chaos and bedlam inside. Krauchunas became concerned about getting caught in the suction of the ship should it sink. Visibility was almost zero as winds of 90 knots whipped up needlelike spray from wave tops like a blinding snowstorm. A young seaman, Charles F. Wohlleb, popped up from below the water, gasping desperately for air. He had been in the after fireroom hatch and was able to crawl out, struggling through various wires, braces and equipment, until he reached the surface. Wohlleb had been prepared since he was wearing a life preserver. (He still has it now.) Both made their way toward the sound of shouts and screaming. The waves were 30 to 40 feet high. The SPENCE was no longer visible. A floater net had rolled out of a cradle alongside the smoke stack as the ship turned on its side. 18 to 20 people were clutching and grabbing for a hold on to it with each struggling for himself. As waves would break over the floater net, it would turn and roll as the force of the water dictated throwing men off again and again. The life jackets would bring the men to the surface after being buffeted in the powerful current like leaves in the wind. As one surfaced, he was faced with the task of locating and swimming back to the net. One by one they would return only to be torn off again. Some would not make it back. John Connolly, SM2c, was one in a shocked state attempting to hang on, crying, "I can't go anymore. I can't. I can't." Krauchunas held on to him for several minutes shouting encouragement only to be torn away from the net again. Connolly was not seen again. On another occasion, a strong and husky 220-pound machinist's mate, name not remembered, was having great difficulty in holding on to the net alongside Krauchunas. He would release his grip on the rope and begin to sink into the water. Krauchunas would grab him by reaching down and pulling the heavy body to the surface, begging the machinist's mate to hang on. He slowly slipped away from the net, and Krauchunas could only stare at the sinking body as it disappeared from sight. There was no effort made to survive by several others. It was apparent the effect of the SPENCE rolling over was so traumatic to many that they were unable to come out from their state of shock. Those who did continued to battle for survival. After several hours, a canvas bag containing a huge 20-man life raft floated in the area. Henry O. Tagg, MM2c, screamed with joy thinking greater safety was now at hand. He unzipped the bag pulling out the huge deflated life raft. Still screaming frantically, he triggered the air cylinder inflating the raft. Three men and Krauchunas rolled into the now bouncing and dancing life raft. Krauchunas, however, sensed a lack of stability in the raft and jumped out, returning to the floater net. The three men and the life raft were never seen again after disappearing in the blinding spray.

According to reports, the peak of the typhoon was at approximately 1530, with winds up to 115 knots. After being buffeted, tossed and swallowed by the mountainous waves since 1109 when the SPENCE rolled over, 6 enlisted men and 3 officers were clinging to the net as the raging storm suddenly subsided at nightfall. The

holocaust could be seen disappearing in the distance as the most beautiful South Pacific evening came into being. The swells and waves were almost non-existent for the following: Lt.(jg) Al Krauchunas; Lt.(jg) John Whalen; Ensign George W. Poer; Charles Grounds, S2c; Albert Rosely, TM2c; Maurice Sehnert, Slc; James Heater, Slc; Edward F. Traceski, QM2c; and Charles F. Wohlleb, WT3c, as they floated silently under the stars on the now stable and solid floater net. It had now become a huge round mass of rope and rubber blocks with about 2 feet of it protruding above the water. Lt.(jg) Whalen was unconscious having been placed on top of the net, and after several hours his heart stopped beating. He was permitted to slide off the net and slowly sank to his watery grave amid prayers. James Heater also became unconscious. He had been held in the arms of Charles Wohlleb for several hours. A heart beat could not be located, so he was allowed to sink slowly in the darkness.

An inventory of survivor gear and supplies was taken. The following items were found: 2 five-gallon kegs of water, flares, K rations, signal mirror, several small medicinal whiskey bottles, a dye marker and a hatchet. Krauchunas took the responsibility of tying the 2 water kegs next to his position on the net. The hatchet was tied to a lanyard and allowed to drop 25 to 30 feet in the water under the net. He placed the dye marker, signal mirror and whiskey bottles inside of his shirt for safe keeping. He instructed the remaining supplies be returned to the container (a shell casing) and to be secured to the net. Later, the container came loose and disappeared while those remaining were taking cat naps. Each person had his position around the floater net to keep from overloading one side and rolling it over.

Even though the water was warm under normal circumstances, each person was constantly shivering during the night. Cat naps were taken by each as they fell asleep for 20 to 25 minutes at a time. One swallow of water was permitted by Krauchunas each three hours. Since it was impossible to raise the water keg out of the water to permit drinking, the person would have to submerge and place his mouth over the spigot while Krauchunas would open the valve for the one swallow. During the night, spirits were quite high but not knowing what lay ahead. Speculation took place as to where the group would drift. Would it be the Philippine Islands or a Jap-held island was the topic of conversation. Flashes were seen in the distance over the horizon indicating some type of bombardment, bombing and explosions.

Dawn came early with the sun rising in the east. As it rose higher and higher, its rays would beam down upon the group as well as reflect off the calm water, causing quick sunburn and blisters. Lips became cracked and sore. Shirts were raised overhead for protection against the blistering sun. Objects would be sighted floating some distance away. One item appeared to be a table floating with its legs up, and another one was a glittering gold object reflecting the sun rays. Charles Wohlleb volunteered to leave the net and investigate. After swimming some distance he returned pushing the can of vegetable shortening ahead of him. The hatchet which had been tied to a lanyard below the net was retrieved and used to open the can. The shortening gave tremendous relief as each spread some over his face and hands. Four planes flew overhead during the day. The dye marker was used without success of being seen. The signal mirror was used time and time again in an attempt to attract the attention of the planes. Nightfall came and the shivering became worse. The sun rays were no longer available to heat the water to a depth of 3 or 4 feet. Water was still being rationed to one swallow every three hours, but requests for more became more frequent as time went by. The sun rays and salt water began to take an effect on several people. Their speech indicated that delirium was setting in. Hallucinations and illusions became more and more prevalent. Krauchunas had been leading the prayers from time to time began a singing atmosphere in an attempt to subdue the tension. One person had disappeared in the darkness unnoticed. Upon his return to the net Krauchunas asked him where he had been. The response was: "I saw a Coca-Cola sign in a grocery store all lit up and I wanted some. I got an apple instead." He was attempting to bite on a rubber

block that had broken away from the net. While dozing off momentarily, Krauchunas was grabbed from the rear by a frantic and screaming seaman who wanted to seize the water kegs, but he was quickly subdued with the help of Wohlleb.

During the night, Ensign George Poer had slipped away from the net while others were catnapping. He had a position immediately to Krauchunas's left, who upon awakening from a short catnap noticed the empty space. Krauchunas roused Wohlleb, who was to his immediate right, and inquired if he had noticed Poer leaving the net. He stated he had not but suddenly said, "There he is!" He had spotted Ensign Poer face down in the water held afloat by his life jacket about 50 feet away. It was not known how long he had been in this position. Krauchunas was under the impression that Poer had demised and felt obligated to retrieve his dog tags. He instructed Wohlleb to watch the two water kegs while he left the net and swam towards the submerged figure. Krauchunas lifted Poer's head out of the water and reached for the dog tag chain. Poer's eyes opened and he angrily shouted, "Why did you wake me up? I want to sleep. Let me alone!" Krauchunas was stunned by this turn of events. He persuaded Poer to return to the net. Some time later, while the group dozed off, Poer disappeared and was never seen again. Six people now remained out of the nine who had survived the raging typhoon.

The salt water, lack of sleep, hunger and worry continued to take its toll. The delirium factor was becoming more serious by the hour. One of the group began shouting, "A ship! It's a ship!" Krauchunas had been resting his head on his arms while holding on to the net slowly raised up, thinking another illusion was taking place. His eyes, burning from the salt water exposure, opened wide and spotted an aircraft carrier on the horizon with a bearing headed directly towards the floater net. All six people became alive with anxiety and hope. Whose carrier was it? Was it a Jap? We are in enemy waters, don't yell; let's make sure. Traceski, QM2c, recognized the ship to be a small U.S. aircraft carrier as it approached nearer and nearer. The group of six strained their lungs, yelling, calling, screaming in an attempt to attract attention. The carrier was now broadside about 100 yards away but showing no sign of activity or recognition that the group had been heard or seen. It continued on its way, soon to disappear over the horizon. Despair prevailed again.

However, unbeknownst to the frantic and disheartened group, a lookout on the carrier heard the shouts and screams. He reported immediately to the officer of the deck. It was learned later that several rafts were thrown over the side along with flares to be used if seen. The O.D. broke radio silence and reported the position of the shouts and yells. The carrier had been a participant of a search group looking for survivors 40 or 50 miles away from two other destroyers that had capsized: U.S.S. HULL (DD350) and the U.S.S. MONAGHAN (DD354). The carrier had developed a fuel leak and was ordered to return to Ulithi, a Navy anchorage.

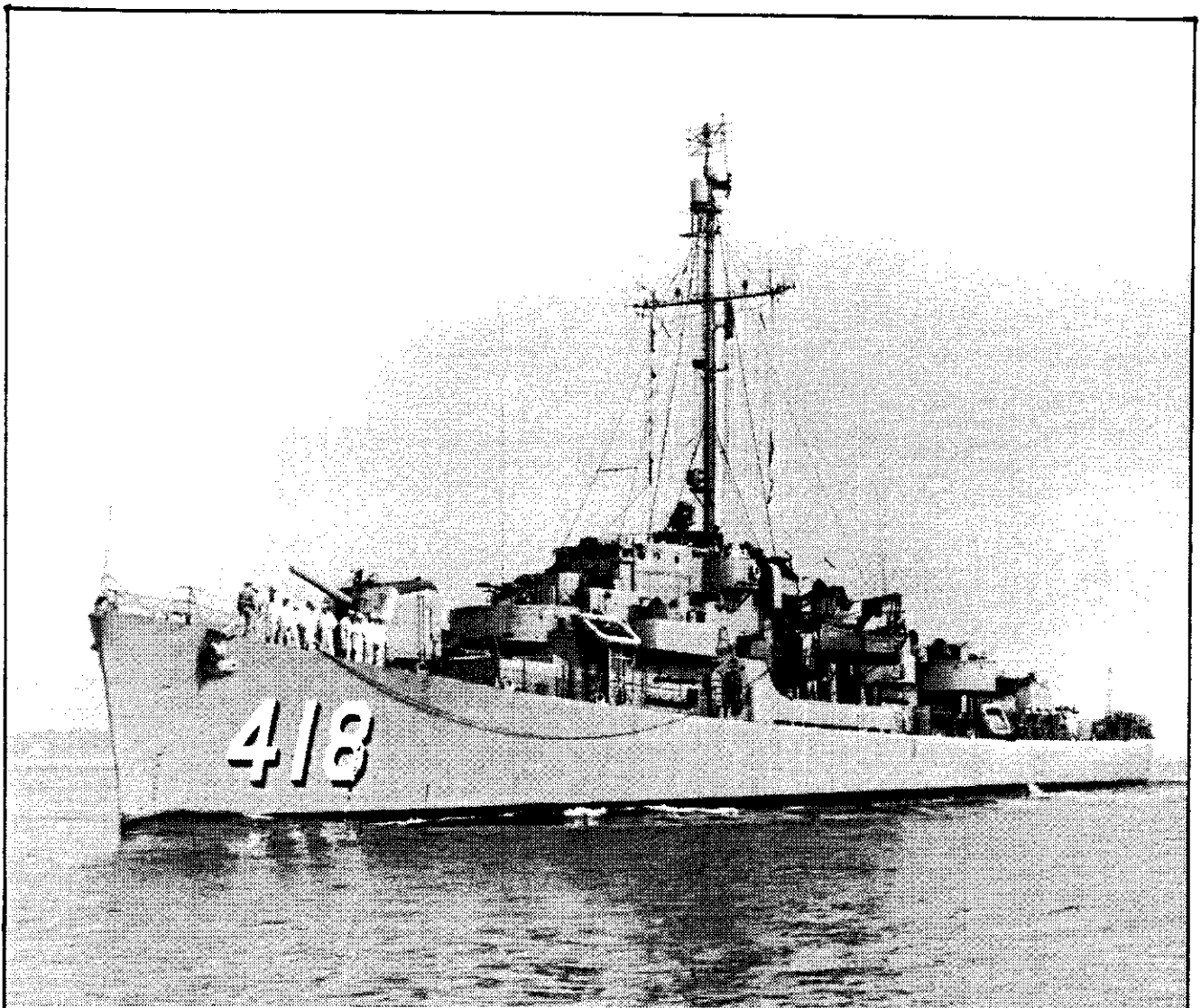
The seas had begun to become somewhat rough, with swell up to 4 and 5 feet. Krauchunas was having a very difficult time calming those whose hopes were dashed away with the disappearing carrier. A short time later, two masts were spotted in the direction of where the carrier was first sighted. The masts became outlines of two small ships that were becoming larger and larger as they approached upwind of the floater net. One ship turned to port, while the second continued on its original course, placing it approximately 400 to 500 yards away. Again, six lusty sets of lungs shouted and yelled hoping to attract attention. A voice pierced the darkness as it blared over the loud speaker system. "Survivors in the water, we hear you but cannot see you. Yell once if you want us to turn to starboard, or yell twice if we are to remain on course!" One single yell went out loud and clear. The destroyer escort, U.S.S. SWEARER (DE15), turned to starboard and headed toward the six anxious and eager shivering figures still clinging to the net with only their heads above water. The ship neared the floater net to within 50 yards. Krauchunas and the group shouted, "Stop, stop. You are running us down!" The SWEARER slowed to a stop and turned broadside. A searchlight was turned on and be-

gan a sweep across the wavy waters. Each time the beam was directed at the net, it was behind a swell of 4 or 5 feet. The search light was now trained directly towards the shouts and yells. Six white faces appeared in the light beam as the floater net rose to the top of a swell. The voice on the loud speaker shouted, "We have spotted you. Remain where you are!" Shortly, a swimmer appeared with a line from the ship. He smiled when a remark was made, "What took you so long?" He tied a line to the floater net and signalled to the ship. The net was pulled alongside the rolling ship broadside in the swells. As the floater net rose to the crest of the swell, the ship's deck was dipping down, permitting anxious and helping hands to grab one of the survivors as the ship rolled. Krauchunas was the last to be removed. He was asked if he was able to make it to the wardroom. He attempted to step and pitched forward toward the steel deck. He was grabbed by two husky officers before he could hit the deck. Blankets were placed over his shivering body, and he was carried into the lighted wardroom. He was informed later that he kept repeating, "Take care of the others first." He was assured that they were. He was also told later that he asked to be searched and that a report be made as to the amount of money he had in his possession. A report was later given to him indicating that he had \$18.00 in his water soaked wallet. As he sat in the chair covered with blankets his body continued to shake and shiver. He recalled drinking 5 or 6 cups of hot black coffee, and the warmth began to creep down his legs and throughout his body.

In conversations with officers later, he learned the pharmacist's mate arrived after tending to the enlisted men and noticed his immensely swollen feet. He cut the wool sweat socks off and later described the feet to be twice their normal with a color shade of streaked orange and black indicating a lack of circulation. The woolen socks apparently had shrunk in the water, causing his feet to swell and making circulation impossible. He was carried into an officer's compartment and placed in a bunk with his feet on pillows to ease the throbbing pain. He was informed that two shots of morphine were administered before he lapsed into a deep sleep at approximately 0600. He slept continuously for 21 hours, when at about 0300 he awoke shouting, "The ship is rolling over. The ship is rolling over!" He leaped out of the bunk, shoving and pushing his way past a young seaman placed on watch to oversee the slumbering survivor. He burst into the dim-lit wardroom, heading for the darkened passageway to slide into the water and safety. As he passed the green colored wardroom table he noticed that a pitcher of water and glasses were not sliding off the table. This brought him back to his senses and made him realize that the ship was not rolling over. The young seaman then reached him and assisted his return to the bunk.

Forty-five hours had expired since the SPENCE capsized when 3 more survivors, Edward A. Miller, Slc; David Moore, STlc; and Lawrence Callier, GM3c, were rescued by the SWEARER. Shortly after, word was received that 14 others had been picked up by the USS TABBERER. They were: Harley R. Ayers, S2c; Floyd Balliett, S2c; Nyle Beeman, CGM; Carlton Burian, Slc; Henry Deeters, CMM; James M. Felty, CWT; George W. Johnson, CWT; Roger O. Lancaster, TM2c; Lyndon M. McAllister, EMlc; Albert L. McKinstry, Slc; Edward M. Paleski, Slc; Frank F. Young, TM3c; James P. Scalese, Slc and Ramon Zasadil, Slc. The final survivor to be rescued was William E. Keith, S2c, picked up by the USS GATLING. Seaman Keith was in the water longer than any survivor, with only a gray life jacket keeping him afloat. He commented later to Krauchunas that he was not going to die, because he would ride the "damned Jap torpedo all the way to Tokyo." At about 1000 the rescue ship USS SWEARER steamed into Ulithi Harbor on Christmas morning, and the 9 survivors were treated to the most memorable turkey and dressing dinner. Krauchunas was transferred immediately to the hospital ship USS SOLACE (AH5) for further treatment of "immersion feet."

* * * * *



(Post-war view) On December 20, 1944, the destroyer escort USS Tabberer (DE-418) (Lt. Cdr. H. L. Plage, USNR) rescued fourteen Spence survivors two days after their ship had been sunk by Typhoon COBRA. The destroyer escort USS Swearer (DE-186) (Lt. Cdr. J.M. Trent, USNR) rescued nine more, and a destroyer, the USS Gatling (DD-671) (Cdr. A.F. Richardson), picked up a single survivor. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph.)

NAVY DEPARTMENT

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PRESS AND RADIO
UNTIL 6 P.M. (E.W.T.)
FEBRUARY 11, 1945

USS TABBERER, DESTROYER ESCORT, RESCUED 55 PERSONNEL
FROM DESTROYERS SPENCE AND HULL LOST IN TYPHOON IN THE
WESTERN PACIFIC

AN ADVANCE PACIFIC BASE --(Delayed)-- The howling typhoon that sank three destroyers and claimed the lives of about 500 United States sailors brought together two men from Somerville, Massachusetts, who had lived a half mile apart but never met until they shook hands in the roles of rescuer and rescued 10,000 miles from home on the deck of the USS TABBERER.

Theirs was one among many tales of heroism that came out of the typhoon for during the night the TABBERER rescued 11 more survivors and when daylight came still more were picked up until there was a total of 55. Only men from the USS SPENCE and the USS HULL were taken aboard, for the USS MONAGHAN, the third destroyer, went down some distance away.

The two Somerville men were Ralph E. Tucker, Chief Radioman, U.S.N.R., 6 Herbert Street, who spotted a light on the water as he rigged an antenna after the TABBERER's mast was carried away, and Henry J. Deeters, Chief Machinist's Mate, U.S.N., 56 Mount Vernon Street, who had been aboard the SPENCE.

Tucker had been on the TABBERER since she was commissioned last June. She had operated in the Pacific and was "on station" when the storm gathered. Many ships were in the area. Some were light on fuel, which meant the storm would strike with worse effect. Visibility began to drop.

Presently the TABBERER received orders and her skipper, Lieutenant Commander Henry L. Plage, U.S.N.R., 633 Techwood Drive, Northwest, Atlanta, Georgia, responded that they would be carried out. The TABBERER swung to the right. Visibility dropped to about 20 feet while the wind rose in intensity until it was clocking 122 knots.

The TABBERER, like other ships, was caught in the trough and pitched in mighty jerks from port to starboard, starboard to port. Several times the clinometer registered 72 degrees. The waves were literally mountainous.

In the late afternoon the TABBERER's mast, severely weakened, was carried away, and with it went all communications save visual signals.

Ten hours passed and Lieutenant Commander Plage decided the storm had abated sufficiently to permit an effort to rig an antenna. Tucker was chosen for the job for he had the most experience. While the anxious eyes of the skipper and the crew followed him Tucker mounted the smoke stack. Presently he scanned the water, blinked, and called to the skipper;

"Captain, light on the port beam about 500 yards away!"

Presently the skipper brought the TABBERER around in a complete circle alongside the man in the water. Cargo nets were dropped over the side to make it easier to bring the man aboard. He was from the HULL and

reported that other men were nearby in the water. Before daylight the TABBERER brought in 11 more survivors, keeping her searchlights ablaze in defiance of any enemy in the area. When dawn came 43 more men were taken from the sea.

Individual acts of heroism were many. Lieutenant Robert M. Surdam, U.S.N.R., 9 Richmond Avenue, Hoosic Falls, New York, dove into the water to save a man from being eaten by a shark.

There was a sidelight on Lieutenant Surdam, a sort of quirk of fate. Lieutenant Surdam escaped a hurricane to endure a typhoon. He had been assigned to the USS WARRINGTON and was detached to take over as executive officer of the TABBERER. The WARRINGTON went down during a hurricane last year in the Atlantic.

Others dived into the sea to help save men of the HULL and the SPENCE. They included Louis A. Purvis, Boatswain's Mate, First Class, U.S.N.R., 184 Ridgewood Road, South Orange, New Jersey, and Lieutenant Howard J. Korth, U.S.N.R., 2155 4th Street, Bay City, Michigan, a former football player at the University of Notre Dame.

Despite his heavy duties as Commander of the Third Fleet, Admiral William F. Halsey Jr., U.S.N., took time to visit the TABBERER. He presented Lieutenant Commander Plage with the Legion of Merit and commended the men of the TABBERER for their heroism.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

List Of Officers, 18 December 1944¹

	<u>Rank</u>	<u>File #</u>	<u>Primary Duty</u>
James Paul ANDREA	LCDR	78691	Commanding Officer
Frank Van Dyke ANDREWS	LT	85558	Executive Officer
John J. BELLION	LTjg	162753	Communications Officer
John WHALEN	LTjg	190145	Ass't. Comm. Officer
Lester V. ROBINSON	LTjg	226186	Torpedo Officer
Vincent McCLELLAND	LTjg	226650	Gunnery Officer
Lawrence D. SUNDIN	LTjg	140955	Chief Engineer
George P. ISHAM	LTjg	283347	1st Lieutenant
David H. COLLINS	Ltjg	228891	Ass't. Gunnery Officer
Paul R. HARNISH	LTjg	265613	(Recently assigned)
Charles P. BICKEL	ENS	311441	Ass't. Engineering Off.
Donald H. SMITH	ENS	311684	C.I.C. Officer
William I. F. SELLERS	ENS	270206	Sonar Officer
George W. POER	ENS	314713	Ass't. Engineering Off.
Rexal H. KISSINGER	ENS	388450	Ass't. Gunnery Officer
Robert W. BRIGHTMAN	ENS	389396	Machine Gun Control
Herbert LUEBBE	ENS	314069	Ass't. C.I.C. Officer
William R. LIGON	ENS	384519	2nd Division Officer
John C. GAFFNEY	LTjg (MC)	218939	Medical Officer
Alphonso S. KRAUCHUNAS	LTjg (SC)	252437	Supply/Disbr. Officer

* * * * *

¹ Sources: The List Of Officers for November 1944 and the list of officers who died when the ship went down in Typhoon COBRA on 18 December 1944 compiled by the lone surviving officer, Lt.(jg) Krauchunas.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Muster Roll Of The Crew, 18 December 1944

ADAMS, Vern Oliver	881-27-92	S2c
ADAMS, William Jerome	653-03-80	S1c
AKERS, James Robert	634-87-36	F1c
ALARIE, Earl Joseph	212-74-66	TM3c
ALDRICH, Raymond Earnest	960-89-45	F1c
ALEXANDER, George James	893-07-88	S2c
ALEXANDER, Thornton Ross	878-90-08	F1c
ALLEN, Edgar Arthur	931-94-72	F1c
ALLEY, George William	613-64-00	S1c
ANASTOFF, Carl (n)	615-26-86	MM2c
ANDERSON, James (n)	305-82-18	MoMM1c
ARVOLD, Arthur Allen	306-21-67	S1c
ASHCRAFT, William Davis	838-88-52	S2c
ASHWORTH, Jr., Ernest (n)	647-26-57	GM1c
ASMUS, Charles Benjamin	952-23-06	S2c
AULENBACH, Edward Joseph	923-00-25	S2c
ARMBRUST, Almon Lee	960-92-47	S2c
AUBE, Harold Nicholas	643-61-23	S2c
(S) AYERS, Harley Robert	955-80-08	S2c
BAEDER, Francis Elmer	650-48-97	GM2c
BAIR, Allen George	921-14-19	S2c
BAILEY, Jr., Walter Richard	655-47-95	S1c
BAIR, Lewis John	860-26-22	S2c
(S) BALLIETT, Floyd (n)	557-30-80	S2c
BAREN, Lionel (n)	643-61-48	S2c
BARR, Robert Neil	821-57-59	S1c
BARRAS, Sidney Theo	576-25-40	MM3c
BEACHY, Jonas Elijah	608-40-20	S1c
BEAN, Charles Reed	895-13-57	SK3c
BEARROWS, Charles Gordon	853-85-75	S1c
BEATY, Douglas Clinton	939-22-59	S2c
BEAUMONT, Cletus Edward	862-86-07	S1c
(S) BEEMAN, Nyle James	316-76-54	CGM
BILLINGSLEY, Jr., Ernest Edmond	671-12-77	S1c
BLACKBURN, Oliver (n)	634-88-46	S1c
BLANTON, Sr., Warren Thomas	873-32-52	F2c
BLOOM, Jr., Axel Warner	554-27-03	F1c
BLOOMQUIST, Harold Edward	859-68-68	S1c
BODAG, Michael (n)	894-30-51	F1c
BOONE, Joseph Patrick	634-88-47	TM3c
BOWMAN, Richard Glenn	301-26-37	S2c
BRADSHAW, Jr., Raymond	202-15-20	GM3c
BRANDL, Harry George	652-57-72	RT1c
BRITZMAN, Glen Gerald	258-54-96	S1c
BROCH, Peter (n)	726-12-71	SF3c
BROCHU, Edward Albert	607-54-48	MM2c
BRONIS, Henry (n)	623-17-80	EM3c
BROWN, Paul Thomas	293-00-13	F1c
BROWNING, Alva Leon	634-89-65	SM3c

BRUCHERT, Jr., Albert John	945-52-54	F2c
BRYANT, Harold Lester	206-93-26	CY
BUCK, Walton Grayson	351-10-23	S1c
BUCKLEY, William Joseph	809-16-19	RdM3c
BUCZEK, Edward Clarence	725-72-75	WT3c
(S) BURIAN, Carlton Robert	800-12-25	S1c
BUSBY, Wallace Hugh	275-13-91	F2c
BUTTS, Harry Lee	634-87-70	WT2c
BYRD, Joseph Elmer	836-02-55	StM2c
CAHILL, Christopher Daniel	666-91-78	S1c
(S) CALLIER, Lawrence (n)	342-73-13	GM3c
CAMPTON, Gilbert George	651-52-03	WT3c
CARLS, Jack William	312-71-63	FC3c
CARRIGAN, Harlan Kenneth	400-22-69	CQM
CAYER, Albert Fredrick	602-22-22	RdM3c
CHALFANT, George Raymond	615-20-26	S1c
CHAMPAGNE, William Anthony	238-73-09	BM1c
CHASTAIN, James Wilson	279-93-98	Cox
CHRISTIANSEN, Wesley John	964-40-94	S2c
CHRISTENSEN, George Lewis	883-72-73	S2c
CLARK, Donald Cleon	666-91-51	S1c
CLARK, Stillman (n)	843-10-02	S2c
CLOUTIER, Marcel Gregoire	554-50-05	EM1c
COBB, Robert Marcus	624-76-86	EM3c
COLEMAN, Manuel William	877-32-89	F2c
CONNOLLY, John Emmett	611-65-50	SM2c
COOK, Jr., William Wickliff	203-27-95	S1c
COOPER, Frederick (n)	645-51-73	Std3c
COPE, Robert Earl	862-03-44	S2c
COPELAND, Roosevelt (n)	645-52-29	CK3c
COPPENS, William Arthur	305-46-60	WT1c
CORDER, Frank Bill	828-07-98	S1c
CRAVER, Charles Robert	636-12-14	Bkr1c
CRAWFORD, Newton Craig	863-93-50	S1c
CRITESER, Gordon Lee	393-81-53	S2c
CROOKS, Fred Thomas	627-39-94	S1c
CRUMP, Walter Ray	347-12-98	S1c
CULLER, Alvin Jay	956-68-07	S2c
DALRYMPLE, Jr., Arthur Garfield	274-87-01	WT3c
DAVID, Jerome Anthony	852-21-02	S1c
DAVIS, Calvin Martial	634-29-85	M1c
DAVIS, Edward Nelson	560-40-79	SoM3c
(S) DEETERS, Henry John	274-25-75	CMM
DE VAUGHAN, James Frank	831-95-37	StM1c
DEWAN, Jr., Benjamin Thomas	668-93-96	RdM2c
DI STANISLAO, Frank "S"	809-29-56	F1c
DOMMELEERS, Daniel Victor	706-61-79	RdM2c
DUDA, Alfred Francis	666-49-98	GM3c
EDWARDS, Simpson (n)	841-43-39	StM1c
ELBURN, Charles Franklin	602-76-43	S1c
ELLISON, Lowell Eugene	865-54-28	S1c

ELLWANGER, Fred Otto	821-46-80	F1c
ELWELL, Jr., Roland Douglas	203-75-30	S2c
ESLER, Gilbert John	310-87-41	CBM
FAUST, Kyle Howard	321-24-33	CMM
(S) FELTY, James Millard	265-86-42	CWT
FERGUSON, George Joseph	707-73-60	FCR1c
FILANNINO, Frank Carl	809-33-11	S1c
FINCH, David Lawrence	622-92-10	SM3c
FINCH, Hugh Alvin	604-45-37	S1c
FINN, Martin Francis	403-00-48	MM2c
FORD, Joel LeRoy	376-41-51	S1c
FORRY, Dudley Clair	570-51-42	SoM3c
FROST, Frank Bert	723-09-81	MM2c
FROST, Myron Delbert	876-06-45	S2c
GARY, Leroy Joseph	576-79-39	S1c
GEHLE, Willard Fred	669-77-50	WT2c
GEHR, John Thomas	707-74-62	RM2c
GIBBONS, William Henry	607-40-21	RM2c
GIFFIN, Freeman Franklin	623-86-25	MM2c
GILL, Francis Joseph	652-43-03	SF1c
GOODWIN, Edward Waldo	666-06-55	S2c
GORDON, Jack (n)	943-79-63	S2c
GOVERNILE, Frank Paul	944-36-68	F1c
GRABOWSKI, Joseph Charles	207-39-71	MM1c
GRADDY, George Washington	830-24-85	F2c
GRAY, John Merrill	664-33-46	CRT
GRAY, William Howard	313-70-10	S2c
GREENWALD, Jr., Henry William	708-16-56	S1c
GRILLO, Roy Robert	883-75-00	S2c
(S) GROUNDS, Charles Leslie	944-09-26	S2c
HAAK, Menno Martin	858-95-47	S1c
HAKENSON, Warren Irvin	639-76-32	F1c
HAMPTON, David Dillon	565-29-79	RT3c
HANSEN, John Howard	730-14-69	GM2c
HARISKEVICH, Rudolph (n)	807-93-67	S1c
HARRIS, Earl Robert	312-26-18	S1c
HEALY, Lorin Carson	884-80-80	F1c
HEATER, James Patrick	890-29-73	S1c
HEAVERLO, Clarence Joseph	859-33-29	S2c
HECKART, Billy Dean	866-14-81	S1c
HEINTZ, Sr., Edwin Thomas	945-53-68	F2c
HENSLEY, George William	410-08-34	EM1c
HILL, Harold Homer	258-08-99	GM1c
HOLLAND, Clarence Everette	295-83-42	GPhM
HORKEY, Franklin William	602-79-63	B1c
HOSFORD, Leonard David	907-90-96	S1c
HUFFMAN, Walter Lewis	613-14-88	S1c
HUPPERT, Carlton Joseph	852-18-35	PhM3c
JACKSON, Lawrence Nathaniel	295-42-64	CK2c
JANKOWSKI, Stanley Edward	710-70-17	SC3c
JOHNSON, Clarence Elmer	730-14-75	WT2c

	JOHNSON, George Albert	402-94-68	BM1c
(S)	JOHNSON, George William	375-79-14	CWT
	JONES, Bennie Joe	357-40-09	S1c
	JORDEN, Jr., Harry Ellsworth	855-38-13	S2c
	KARL, John William	809-30-48	S1c
	KAUFMAN, Harold Donald	386-95-73	S2c
	KAUFMANN, John Clarence	871-29-46	Bkr3c
(S)	KEITH, William Everett	882-76-32	S2c
	KELIN, Vernon (n)	671-83-25	S2c
	KELLEY, Jr., Thomas Raymond	860-15-49	S2c
	KELLY, Brady Leon	631-26-56	S2c
	KELLY, Carlyle Xavier	860-38-81	S1c
	KELLY, John Joseph	386-60-55	MM3c
	KENDALL, Leonard Forest Jay	581-01-84	S2c
	KESTLE, James Raymond	386-54-08	MoMM3c
	KITTLE, James Robert	613-42-43	MM3c
	KLECKLEY, William Woodrow	575-13-45	SC2c
	KOSTERS, Henry Anthony	871-83-71	S1c
(S)	LANCASTER, Roger Otis Lawrence	608-87-17	TM2c
	LARA, Eddie Manuel	372-54-15	SoM3c
	LASORSA, Louis Joseph	666-94-38	S1c
	LESCHINSKI, Thaddeus John	402-86-75	TM1c
	LESHER, Robert Louis	225-17-59	FC2c
	LEWIS, John Franklin	875-87-68	RT2c
	LINDSETH, Theodore Sverre	758-22-51	F2c
	LOUGHERY, Edward Alexander	666-92-02	S1c
	LUNDGREN, Arthur Lee	639-76-50	F1c
	LUNDGREN, Lloyd Otto	639-76-33	S1c
	LUTHER, Francis Eugene	337-84-71	S1c
	LYBRAND, Robert Lenoye	604-35-76	SC1c
	MARCONI, Carl Carmen	875-46-80	S1c
	MAHAFFEE, Lawrence Morgan	858-86-07	S1c
	MAHAN, Henry Ford	203-37-38	FC3c
	MANCHISI, Peter Paul	809-94-56	QM3c
	MARGET, Glenn Edwin	619-28-43	F2c
	MARTIN, Andrew Joseph	342-73-14	SC3c
	MARVEL, Robert Edward	651-04-99	GM2c
	MASSA, John Duncan	576-78-35	S1c
	MATHES, Frank Eugene	877-32-74	F2c
(S)	McALLISTER, Lyndon Marsh	212-36-94	EM1c
	McCRARY, Hubert Elliott	893-38-31	F2c
	McEACHERN, Glen Ellis	956-61-03	S1c
	McFADDIN, William Cecil	411-33-12	MM1c
(S)	McKINSTRY, Albert LeRoy	666-91-53	S1c
	McQUERRY, George Pershing	956-98-21	S2c
	MERGENTHALER, Elmer John	669-09-77	Y1c
	MERRITT, Roy Louis	552-29-69	TM3c
	MILEY, Frank Buren	644-88-84	EM2c
	MILLER, Cecil Louis	680-21-36	WT3c
(S)	MILLER, Jr., Edward Albert	710-70-27	S1c
	MONNIG, Harold Anthony	628-01-94	F1c

(S) MOORE, David (n)	272-06-49	St1c
MOORE, John "H"	620-68-28	EM2c
MURPHY, Hugh (n)	646-79-08	F1c
MYERS, Frederick Paul	212-48-65	BM1c
NAQUIN, Roy Joseph	274-95-15	S2c
NEAL, Ralph Douglas	722-12-93	S2c
NEELY, Clifford "E"	855-43-90	S2c
NETOLICKY, George Stanley	851-40-48	S1c
NEVINS, William Bryan	642-88-76	MM3c
NOSE, Allen Jacob	626-40-17	MM3c
OESAU, Andrew John	706-36-13	RM2c
ORASI, Harold William	205-18-05	SC3c
OWENS, Muriel Grant	382-52-51	SM2c
(S) PALESKI, Edward Michael	807-59-48	S1c
PAUER, Joseph Anthony	725-68-97	WT2c
PAYTON, Russell (n)	382-98-95	S1c
PENPRAESE, George Howard	804-22-70	F2c
PERA, Aldo (n)	666-92-08	S1c
POLHEMUS, John Donald	563-03-59	SK1c
POWELL, Curtis Thomas	844-45-93	S1c
POWELL, Luther Keneth	844-45-90	S2c
POWERS, Dorman Muskeward	722-15-33	S2c
PURVIS, Joe Earl	272-64-77	Cox
REAMS, Charles Howard	662-44-63	SoM1c
REDMOND, James (n)	707-56-81	S1c
RICHARDS, Donald Garth	600-72-02	MM1c
RIDGE, Edwin Gerard	647-31-65	MM3c
RINGUIISO, Francesco Carmen	642-35-26	WT1c
ROBERTS, Harvey David	639-76-44	Y3c
ROSEN, Samuel (n)	400-46-69	BM1c
(S) ROSLEY, Jr., Albert	602-76-50	TM2c
ROSSI, Sr., Joseph Anthony	945-52-53	F2c
RUTTER, James Vernon	821-21-35	S1c
RYAN, Harry John	666-91-83	MM3c
SARLI, Michael (n)	817-33-41	Cox
SAXON, John Joseph	614-05-43	BM2c
(S) SCALESE, James Peter	244-73-55	S1c
SCHMIDT, Frank Arthur	629-35-31	SC3c
SCHNEIDER, Benjamin Monroe	658-57-57	MM1c
SCHNELL, George Fredrick	713-04-74	F2c
SCHOEN, Andrew Steve	305-57-49	MM2c
SCHULT, Howard Alfred	639-03-71	EM2c
SCHWARTZ, David Ernest	871-61-04	S1c
SCHWARZ, Paul Frederick	224-71-65	TM1c
(S) SEHNERT, Maurice Donald	578-03-90	S1c
SELDERS, Everett Ernest	956-89-19	SoM3c
SEPANSKI, Alexander Leon	224-80-83	TM2c
SHEPHERD, Marion "L"	629-93-09	S1c
SHERER, Edward Gilman	666-91-71	Cox
SHROPSHIER, Louis Howard	552-14-78	MM1c
SHUPEK, John (n)	706-39-51	RM2c

SLAGLE, Benjamin Earl 975-04-64 F2c
SLAUGHTER, Layton William 560-34-73 WT1c
SMALL, Norman Eugene 648-95-34 F1c
SMITH, Charles Albert 873-08-72 S2c
SMITH, Jr., Carl Glee 616-06-61 FC2c
SMITH, Donald LeRoy 872-01-58 F1c
SMITH, Jerome Herbert 706-08-93 S1c
SMITH, Robert Eugene 853-59-04 M3c
SNYDER, Karl Homer 952-21-00 SoM3c
SPOTTS, Virgil Dean 342-79-23 S1c
SPRADLING, Frenchy (n) 853-71-51 S2c
SPRINGBETT, William George 817-69-05 S2c
STAFFEN, Howard Franklin 866-52-67 S2c
STALDER, Duane Jay 285-28-47 SC3c
STEIN, Warren Jacob 809-07-31 FC03c
STEPP, Edgar Everett 958-71-06 S2c
STEVENS, Max John 618-59-75 EM3c
STEVENSON, Richard Louis 874-76-00 S1c
STEWART, Jr., David Leroy 873-03-79 F1c
STEWART, Robert Wayne 554-79-28 S1c
STRAND, Robert Louis 652-77-60 MM2c
STRASZYNSKI, Philip John 602-76-37 S1c
STROMBERG, Vernon Ardell 757-61-87 Y3c
STROUP, Bernard Carlton 725-20-49 S1c
SULLIVAN, Francis Mathew 208-71-00 FC3c
SULLIVAN, Robert Al 907-75-45 F2c
SUNDBECK, Clarence Vincent 639-20-08 MM2c
SVOUROS, George Anthony 727-17-94 SoM3c
SWERZBIN, Ralph Joseph 623-54-80 S1c
TAGG, Henry Oliver 258-24-64 MM2c
TAPOVIC, Peter (n) 622-01-98 MM1c
TATE, Ernest Jefferson 575-29-21 S1c
TAYLOR, Robert Jackson 828-79-66 S1c
THOMPSON, Frank Allison 641-39-61 WT2c
THOMPSON, Thomas Naughton 603-87-65 RM2c
THORPE, Errol Martin 885-89-64 S1c
TIGHE, Rody Joseph 712-93-92 F2c
(S) TRACESKI, Edward Francis 666-95-23 QM2c
TRYON, Perry Raymond 765-25-91 S2c
TURNER, Claude (n) 629-35-33 F1c
VINALD, Willard Henry 607-13-57 RdM2c
VINING, James Otto 829-20-36 S1c
VOTTA, Gerard Vernon 826-62-76 Y3c
WALLACE, John Joseph 602-76-38 MM3c
WATERS, Earl Victor 945-51-34 F2c
WEAVER, Carl Robert 244-20-57 FC3c
WEISER, Edwin Maurice 826-53-48 Cox
WEISSENBORN, Wayne Wyllie 305-60-79 PhM2c
WHITED, Cleo Parson 834-67-78 S1c
WIDMEYER, Richard Clark 614-98-62 MM2c
WILDENHAIN, Leo Joseph 204-70-40 FC2c

WILHELM, William Eugene	602-76-10	RdM3c
WILLIAMS, James Benjamin	834-92-88	S1c
WILLIAMS, Joel Junior	846-86-14	S2c
WILLIAMSON, Burnis Farrior	856-35-89	Cox
WILSON, Frank Everett	381-70-91	S1c
(S) WOHLLEB, Charles Francis	809-07-28	WT3c
WOITKOVICH, John Leon	306-43-79	S1c
WOOL, Jr., Frank Francis	666-48-51	MM2c
WRIGHT, Robert Arnold	313-65-36	F2c
WRIGHT, William Philip	602-76-33	RdM3c
YAKSICH, Jr., George Frank	860-76-68	F1c
(S) YOUNG, Frank Frederick	642-25-94	TM2c
(S) ZASADIL, Ramon John	727-07-32	S1c
ZINAMON, Morris Louis	251-20-29	S1c

* * * * *

1 Sources: The list of those who died as a result of the typhoon on 18 December 1944 reported by the sole surviving officer, Lt.(jg) Alphonso S. Krauchunas, SC, USNR, on 8 February 1945, and the deck logs of the three rescue ships.

(S) Survived the sinking on 18 December 1944.

Summary Of Casualties:

	<u>Died</u>	<u>Survived</u>	<u>Complement</u> <u>on 12/18/44</u>
Officer	<u>19</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>20</u>
Enlisted	<u>296</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>319</u>
TOTALS	<u>315</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>339</u>
	(93%)		

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
October, 2000

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Form Used To Notify Next Of Kin

CASFORMTEL 1-T

Pers 5321

13 January 1945

TELEGRAM

THE NAVY DEPARTMENT DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR

IS MISSING WHILE IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY X AS YOU

UNDOUBTEDLY KNOW THE SHIP TO WHICH HE WAS ATTACHED

WAS LOST IN A RECENT TYPHOON IN THE PACIFIC AREA X THE

NAVY DEPARTMENT DEEPLY REGRETS DELAY IN NOTIFICATION BUT

CASUALTY LIST HAS JUST BEEN RECEIVED X WHEN FURTHER

INFORMATION IS RECEIVED IT WILL BE FORWARDED TO YOU

PROMPTLY X

VICE ADMIRAL RANDALL JACOBS
CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

"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.

U.S.S. Spence (DD-512)

Photograph Credits

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source Code/Ident. No.</u>
On the ways, Bath Iron Works, 10/27/42	NA 19-N-44575 <u>A</u>
Sponsor, Mrs. Eben Learned	NA 19-N-44571 <u>A</u>
Christening, Bath, Maine, 10/27/42	NA 19-N-44572 <u>A</u>
Launching, Bath Maine, 10/27/42	NA 19-N-44573 <u>A</u>
Starboard bow view, Boston, 1943	NA 19-N-42093
Starboard beam, Boston, 1943	NA 19-N-42092
Twin 40-mm Bofors mount	RWP N-6569 <u>A</u>
20-mm Oerlikon mount	NA 19-N-31965
Port quarter, Hunter's Point, Oct., '42	NA 19-N-80398 <u>A</u>
USS <u>Tabberer</u> (DE-418) (rescue ship)	USNI Order with photocopy

* * * * *

Key to Sources:

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

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

USNI U.S. Naval Institute Photo Service
291 Wood Road
Annapolis, MD 21402
(410) 295-1022

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
September, 2000

The U.S.S. Spence (DD-512) in World War II

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Miscellaneous:

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- BuShips correspondence file, USS Spence, Record Group 19, National Archives.
- Casualties folder, USS Spence, National Archives.
- Deck logs, USS Spence, National Archives.
- Muster rolls, USS Spence, on microfilm, National Archives.
- Oral histories, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.
- Ships' Histories Branch files, USS Spence and USS Tabberer, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.
- WWII Citations file, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard.

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
August, 2001

About The Editor

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

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

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

Historical Compilations by the Editor:

(Destroyer/Destroyer Escort Hulls in World War II)

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


* * * * *

Notes:

* Total for two engagements with the enemy

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

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



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 Author Wilde, E. Andrew.
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² Portland Public Library, Portland Room, Portland, Maine

⁴ Tin Can Sailors, Inc., Research Library, Somerset, Massachusetts
US Naval Academy, Nimitz Library Special Collections, Annapolis
U.S. Naval Institute, History Division, Beach Hall, Annapolis, MD

U.S. Navy Memorial's Research Library, Washington, D.C.
USS Slater (DE-766) Library, Albany, New York

* * * * *

Notes:

¹ Only ships which participated in the Guadalcanal Campaign:
Aaron Ward, Barton, Colhoun, Cushing, DeHaven, Duncan, Laffey,
McFarland, Monssen, Preston, Walke.

² Only Bath-built ships: DeHaven, Drexler, Emmons, Meredith,
Spence, Strong

³ Only ships sunk off the Normandy Beachhead: Corry, Glennon,
Meredith

⁴ By appointment only: (508) 677-0515

E. A. Wilde, Jr.
June, 2006

