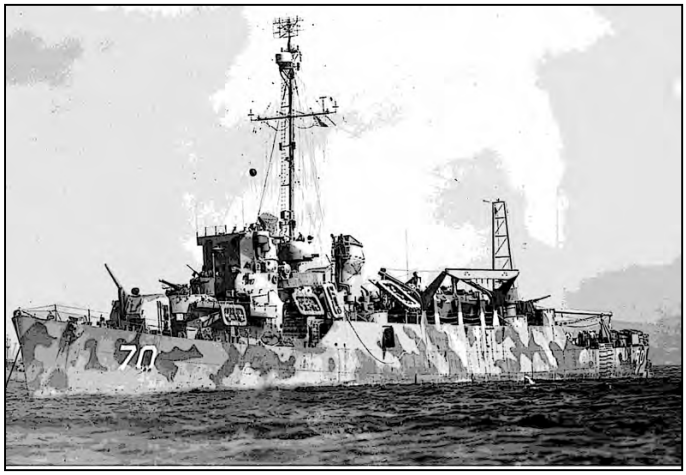
THE USS PAVLIC
APD-70

WW II
OKINAWA - 1945



"An account of a small ship's actions in the last big naval battle of the war."

by
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January 2006
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Contents

Acknowledgements:

In 1991 the first reunion of the men who served together aboard the USS Pavlic took place in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Most of the men who served together on the Pavlic came home in the Spring 1946. Although a few kept in touch, the majority of them did not see each other again for the next 45 years. They had returned to their home towns, got jobs, went to school on the G.I. bill, married, and raised their children. Around retirement, several of them decided it would be a good idea to try to organize a Pavlic Reunion Association. Arlyn Brockmeyer was the spark plug for the first reunion, with a lot of help from Jack Boland, Quint Weaver, and others. Unable to find me when they first started meeting, they concluded I had died sometime after the war. Finally, in 1994, thanks to the recollection of Martin Miller that I had attended Harvard, Jack Boland tracked me down through alumni records. All were pleased I was still among the living, especially me. I attended the reunion that year in Charleston, SC and got to see 34 of my old crewmates. I have attended most of the annual reunions ever since. It's been a pleasure to share memories of our time together on shipboard, and to discuss the events in our lives since that time.

In preparing this account of the USS Pavlic and her crew, I am very much indebted to others who have contributed significantly. Jack Boland, Communications Officer, wrote an excellent booklet in October 1993, Assignment Okinawa, The War Cruise of the USS Pavlic APD-70. It was a valuable resource for me in writing this booklet. All photos in the album were provided by Lt. George Miller, a gunnery office who had charge of the ship's camera, and the ship's photographer, Clark Clugston, a machinist's mate on the Pavlic. Some maps, and photos of other ships in the text were obtained from internet sites. The deck log was obtained from the U.S. National Archives which helped me better define when and where things happened.
Ralph Harris

THE USS PAVLIC APD-70
WW II - OKINAWA - 1945

by Radioman, Ralph Harris
Written January 2006, Rev .April 2007

I. THE SHIP... The **USS Pavlic** (APD-70) was built in Pittsburg as a destroyer escort, (the DE-669). It is shown below being launched. It was then floated down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to Orange, Texas, where it was to be modified to perform specialized functions to meet the

Navy's need for better amphibious invasion capabilities. This was in response to a costly invasion mishap at Tarawa in the Pacific. In that battle, Marine landing craft were stuck on a reef off shore and had to wade a half mile in to the beach under enemy gunfire, losing a third of the 5,000 men in the initial landing. The Navy decided they needed a ship that could deliver underwater demolition teams close in to shore to find possible obstacles that could impede landing craft. These "frog men" would blow up coral knobs, mines, or anything else the enemy might place in the way, days ahead of the initial assault wave. The ship also needed to be capable of providing close-in covering gunfire to protect the "frog men" from snipers. It was determined that destroyers and destroyer escorts could be modified to perform these functions. The modified ships, called "fast transports", were initially an adaptation of old four-stacker WW I destroyers. Improved models were subsequently made by modifying the newer-model destroyer escorts, "DE's". The Pavlic was one of the latter models, a converted Buckley-class DE.

Destroyer escorts were a new World War II ship development, requested by the British to protect convoys from the U-boat menace while going across the Atlantic. Destroyers were expensive, and in high demand for protecting major fleet units and numerous other missions. A somewhat smaller, but open ocean-capable escort ship was needed in quantity. It didn't require 40-knot speed like a destroyer, which had to run with 33-knot aircraft carriers. A 20-knot capability was sufficient for chasing the submarines of the day. Equipped with three 3" guns, a DE could duel with surfaced submarines if necessary. The 3" guns were not in turrets, so the crews had to man those guns in whatever weather or seas they found themselves. 5" guns in turrets were desired, but in short supply initially, so almost all early DE's were armed with 3" guns. Additional anti-aircraft defense was provided by a 1.1" Mk 2 quad machine gun and 20 mm guns. The principal target was the submarine, so DE's were well equipped with sonar detection systems, depth charges and "Hedgehog" missiles. **The USS Ahrens** (DE 575) above is a good example of a destroyer escort ship.

#136. USS Ahrens (DE 575)

DE's were 300 feet long and 36 feet wide at the widest point, and carried a crew of about 200 men. They had good surface search and air search radars, which made them very valuable at Okinawa in the radar picket patrols. After the North Atlantic submarine threat had been brought under control, use of the DE's in the Pacific kept increasing. In fact, production of DE's had increased to the point that they were looking for alternative missions for the ships. It was the ideal vessel for conversion to meet the Navy's needs for making more effective amphibious landings in the Pacific.

CONVERSION OF THE PAVLIC

Four large boat davits were added to the Pavlic to carry landing craft for vehicles and personnel, (LCVP's), also referred to as "**Higgins Boats**". These were flat-bottomed boats built to run right up on a beach, drop down the front ramp, which was also the front of the boat, and let troops run right out on the beach. They weren't huge, but could each put 40 fully equipped men ashore.

USS Pavlic crew members leaving the ship on their #2 Higgins boat.
Captain's gig in background. Yokosuko Harbor, after the surrender.

Higgins boats were used everywhere for putting men ashore for invasions. Eisenhower called Andrew Jackson Higgins, a New Orleans boat builder, "The man who won the war for us." **Pavlic's #2 Higgins boat** is shown above.

To provide temporary housing on the Pavlic for the added invasion troops who would go ashore in the Higgins boats, the outside deck passageways on each side of the superstructure were enclosed. Inside these newly created covered passageways, fold-up bunk frames were attached to the outside wall, 4-tiers high. Bunks were let down and used only when troops were aboard. The converted passageways allowed us space to temporarily bunk an additional 160 men. The photograph below (taken in more recent times) shows how it was possible to house all those additional men in the newly created ship passageways.

Our regular crew compliment was 200 men and 13 officers. Regular troop transport ships were called "AP's". The Pavlic was a troop transport ship with a destroyer-type hull, so was called an "APD" or "Fast Transport".

In terms of armament, the **Pavlic** had only one cannon, a 5" gun in an enclosed turret, the type they would have liked to put on the earlier DE's. She also had three sets of twin Bofors 40 mm guns, and six Erlikon 20mm guns. For submerged subs she had two depth charge racks on the stern, and from somewhere we had managed to acquire a 50-caliber machine gun, which was ultimately mounted up near the bridge.

The ship had good air-search and surface-search radars that let us know direction and distance of airplanes, ships, and landforms. A properly functioning radar was crucial, and our chief radar technician, Eugene Fellers, was to my mind, the most valuable man we had aboard.

A photograph of **Pavlic** APD 70 in her wartime camouflage is shown below. The photo is a pretty clear depiction of our class of APD. Note the high boat davits amidships. The port davit here has been slid out for launching or retrieving a **Higgins** boat. The outside deck modifications are also visible which provided temporary housing for extra troops.

USS Pavlic at Yokosuka Harbor, 1945

In fighting our island-hopping battles of the South Pacific, the APD greatly assisted in putting underwater demolition teams (UDT's) in close to shore to scout out, identify, and hopefully, destroy obstacles to the landing craft of an invasion force. The APD also facilitated the landing of small forces around the islands, and the 5" gun provided some shore bombardment capability and daylight anti-aircraft capability.

We didn't have radar fire control for our guns, so our nighttime fire control was not good. Kamikaze raids at Okinawa typically started at dusk and ran on into the night, so the planes could see us, and our wake, much easier than we could spot them. On a clear night, out on the deck, you could see this beautiful, shimmering, phosphorescent wake astern, pointing at us like a big white arrow. From our air-search radar, we knew the direction in which to look for "bogies", but the gunners couldn't fire until they were close enough to see visually, and by that time, they were right on us. The APD was not an especially safe ship to serve aboard.

Up-to-date destroyers of the day had five or six 5" guns, with radar fire control and shells with proximity fuses. They were thus able to engage kamikazes sooner, at higher altitudes, and more effectively than we could. Our one advantage was that we could zigzag faster than a destroyer.

II. TRIP TO THE WAR ZONE.....

Pavlic's route to the war zone, dates and locations:

December 18, 1943	Pittsburgh, PA	Pavlic launched as the DE 669
December 29, 1944	Orange, TX	Pavlic APD –70 Commissioned
January 20, 1945	Bermuda	Pavlic conducts shakedown tests
February 22, 1945	Norfolk, VA	Readied for sea.
February 28, 1945	Panama Canal	Entered the Pacific Ocean
March 15, 1945	San Diego	Final provisioning
April 13, 1945	Hawaii	Final Training Completed, sailed for Japan
April 19, 1945	Majuro, Marshall Is.	
April 28, 1945	Ulithi, Marianas Is.	
May 3, 1945	Okinawa, Ryukyu Is.	

I boarded the **Pavlic** at Norfolk and was assigned to be a member of the radio crew. My job was to copy code, which I did as we went through the Caribbean and Panama Canal, up the west coast to San Diego, and then out to Hawaii. My General Quarters station was "bridge radioman", which put me up on the flying bridge when there was a "red alert", an attack situation.

We spent three weeks in Hawaii, practicing gunnery and cooperating with underwater demolition teams (UTD"s) training off Maui. We did not work with UDT's after that, but a lot of APD's did. There were 1000 UDT personnel clearing the approaches to the beaches for the Okinawa landings, which happened a month before we got there.

While we were in Hawaii, the actual invasion of Okinawa took place, April 1, 1945. We heard rumors of suicide planes but didn't really believe them. Going on liberty into Honolulu from Pearl Harbor, I remember going past the huge blackened hulk of the **USS Franklin** (CV-13), a big aircraft carrier, that had just gotten back to Hawaii under her own power after being heavily damaged by dive bombers off the coast of Japan. That really brought the war home to me. The picture right gives you some idea of what she looked like after 2 bomb hits.

Photo # 80-G-273880 USS Franklin burning and listing after Japanese air attack, 19 March 1945

Leaving Hawaii, we provided anti-submarine escort for various ships, first to Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, and then on to Ulithi, in the Carolines. Ulithi was a huge anchorage with small islands all around it, and was the marshalling point for all the fleet operations from there to the west at that time, principally for the mopping up operations in the Philippines and support of the Okinawa campaign.

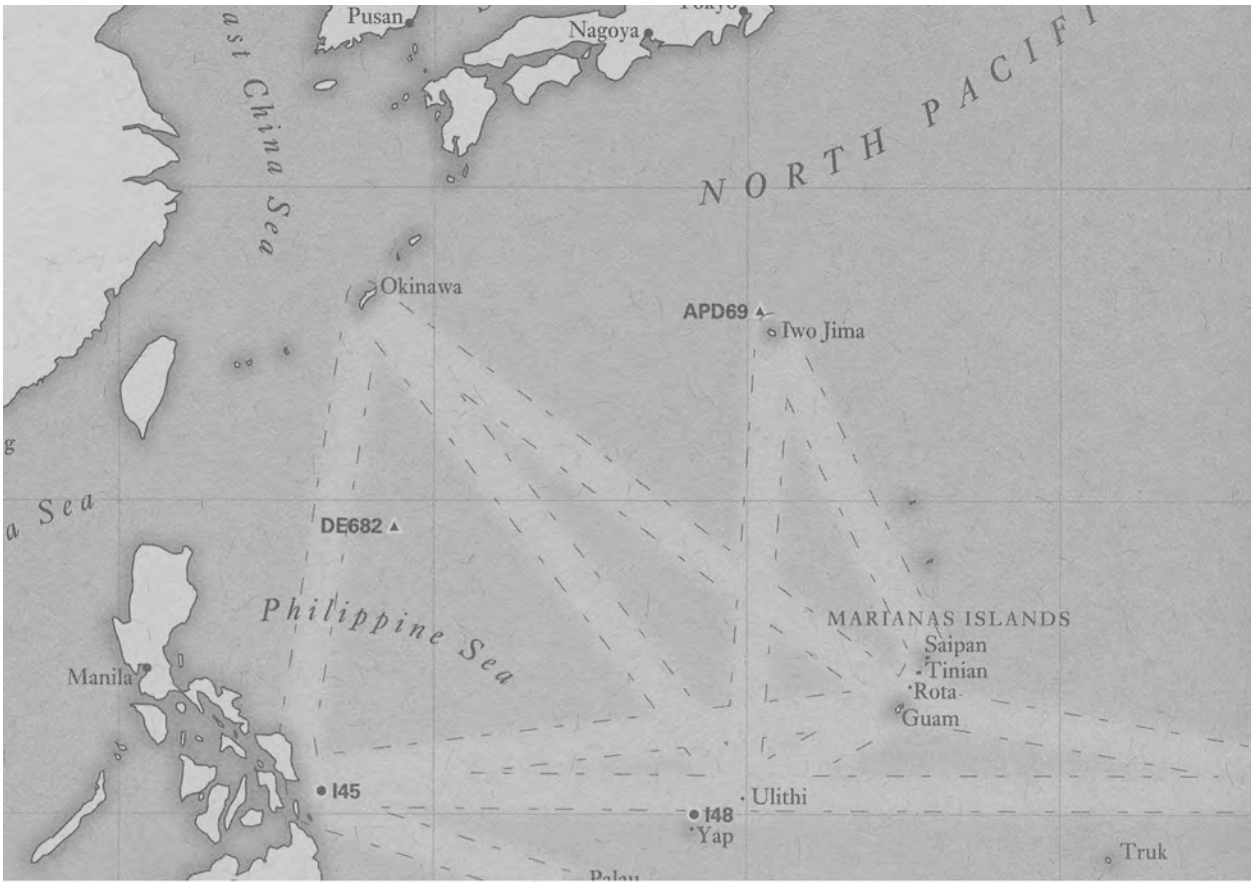
The atoll ran roughly twenty miles north and south by about ten miles across enclosing a vast anchorage with an average depth of 80 to 100 feet. For a few months it was the biggest and most active naval base in the world. Like most ship's crews there, we got ashore on the little island of Mog Mog and were issued a couple of cans of beer.

By the time we got to Ulithi, Iwo Jima had been invaded to provide emergency airfields for B-29 raids originating from Tinian and Saipan to bomb the Japanese mainland.

Pavlic's Path Across the Western Pacific

On April 29th we left Ulithi with two other APD's escorting a convoy of nine other ships heading for Okinawa.

The next map shows the geometry for the final phase of the war with Japan. You can see the advantage of having Iwo Jima as an emergency landing field for the B-29's damaged during their raids on Japan when trying to return to Saipan and Tinian. You can see how kamikaze raids would be possible from the southern island of Kiushu and from Formosa (Taiwan), perhaps a 300 mile flight to get to Okinawa. You can also see what a strategic spot Ulithi occupied as a major anchorage for all the supply and repair ships necessary to sustain the fleets operating in the Philippines and at Okinawa while still being pretty much insulated from Japanese forces.

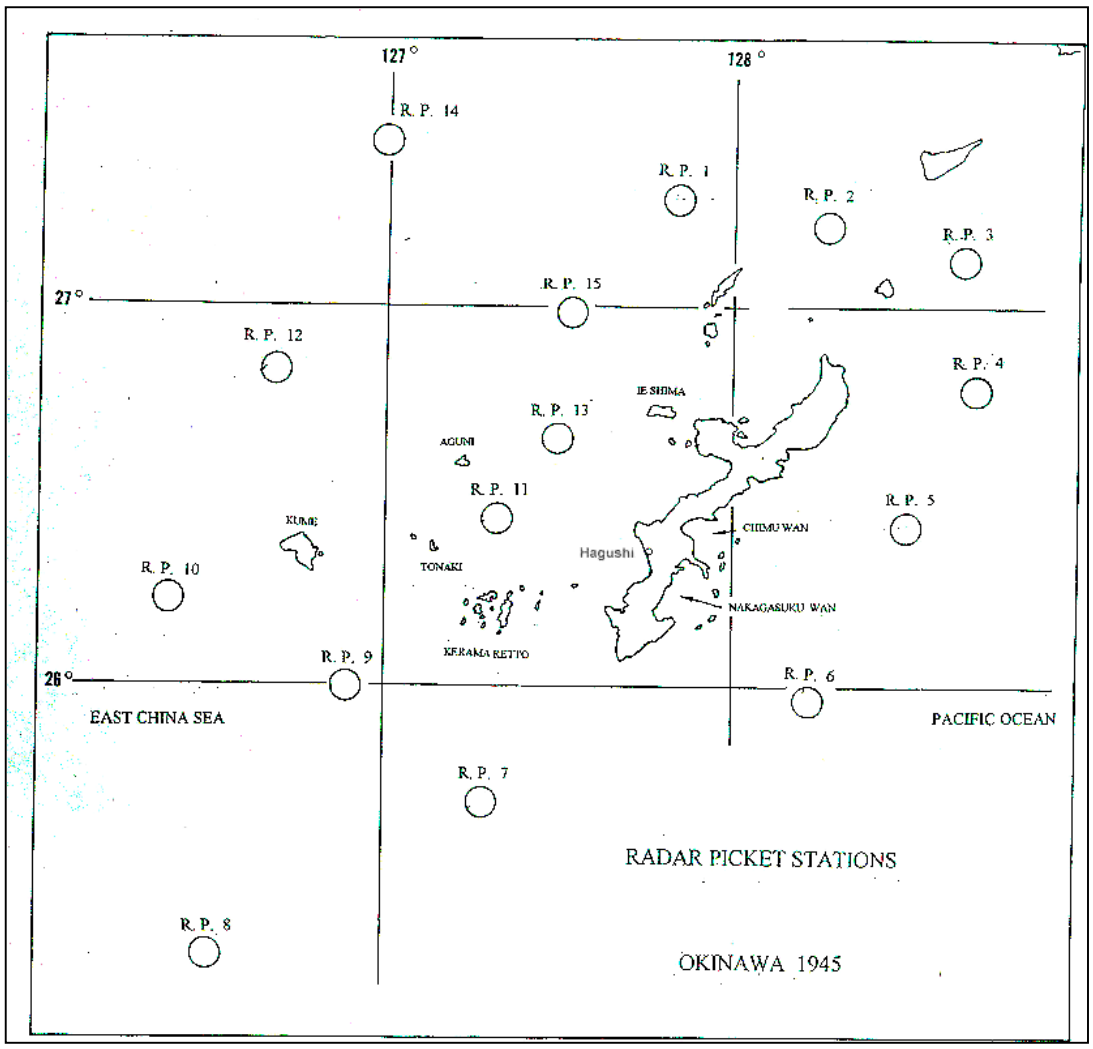


Anti-Kamikaze and submarine patrol

The map of the Okinawa region below shows the way destroyers were positioned around the island to form radar picket stations capable of monitoring air activity. R.P. 10 for example is the location of Radar Picket station 10. The initial invasion in late March 1945 resulted in the occupation of a small cluster of islands, Karama Retto, west of the southern tip of Okinawa. This location became a fleet supply and repair anchorage, crucial to operations at Okinawa.

On April 1st, the main invasion force went ashore on the southwest shore of Okinawa on the beaches near Hagushi. There were hundreds of ships in the Hagushi anchorage bringing in the men, munitions, supplies, etc. needed to conduct the campaign, and it was essential to protect them. The radar picket screen was devised as a means to get radar early warning of enemy planes approaching the anchorage. Kamikazes flew down from Kiushu, the southernmost of the main Japanese Islands 300 miles to the north, and also from Formosa, 300 miles to the southwest. For kamikazes, since it was a one-way trip, most of them had sufficient range capability that they could vary the approach direction quite a bit.

The actual land fighting on Okinawa was going southward below Hagushi against heavily fortified ridges that ran across the island.

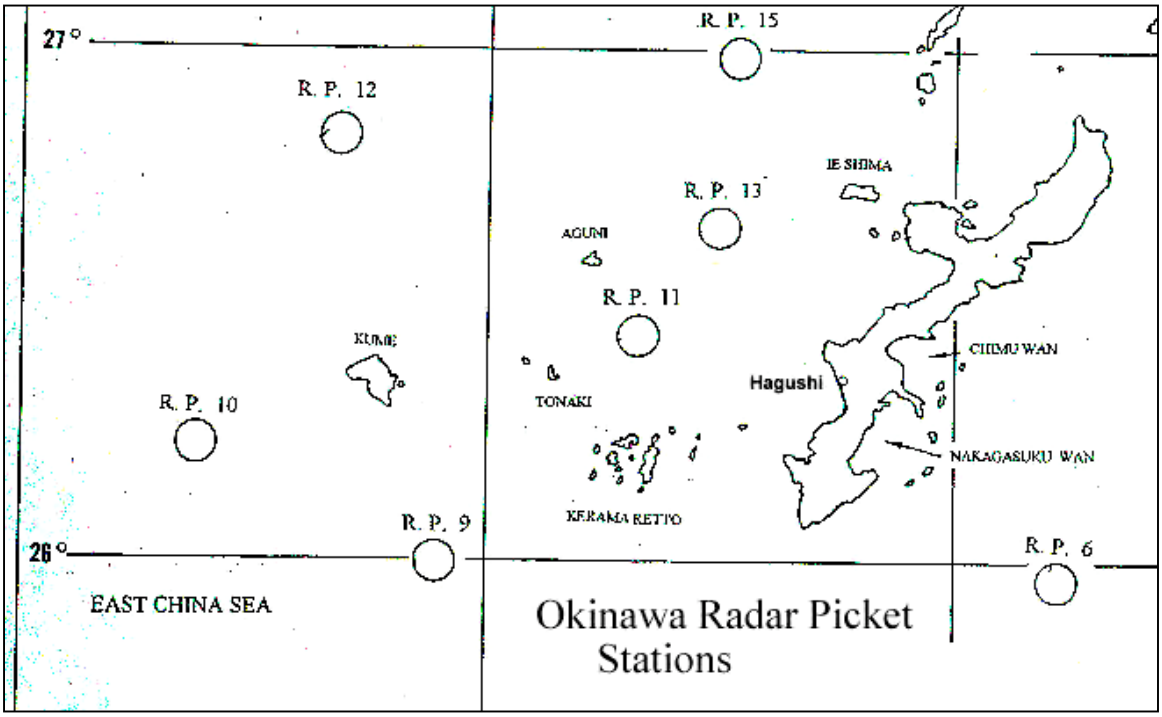


May 3, 1945

We dropped anchor at the Hagushi anchorage at about 4:30 pm and found ourselves not far from the battleship **New Mexico**. Everything seemed peaceful and we were on deck looking south to the horizon where battleships and cruisers were bombarding the shore. You could see the smoke from a battle ship salvo, perhaps 10 miles away, and then, about a minute later, you'd feel the pressure wave hit your face. I think the New Mexico had come into the anchorage after having her turn at bombarding.

There was also a troopship nearby unloading men to small craft to take them ashore. Suddenly there was a burst of gunfire from the New Mexico, and several of the men being unloaded were killed. Somehow a 40 mm battery hadn't been properly secured, or someone was fooling with it, and it happened to be pointing at the troopship and not us. Being killed by friendly fire is especially disheartening. As you can see from the photo, the New Mexico was a pretty imposing ship.

That very afternoon we were assigned to an anti-submarine patrol station, B-7, and had hardly gotten there when we were sent on out to Radar Picket Station 10, about 70 miles west of Okinawa, to search for survivors of a kamikaze attack. Unbeknown to us, Kikusui #5, a mass raid of about 130 kamikazes and a similar number of protecting fighters, had begun.



It was 10:30 pm when we reached Radar Picket Station 10 and we used our 24" searchlights to scan the waters. Normally, we couldn't smoke a cigarette outside the ship in

order to keep the ship dark, so turning on a searchlight was a major departure. With kamikazes around it was a trifle foolhardy. A radar picket station would be a location, sailed in a 3-4 mile long figure 8 pattern, so we had a lot of dark ocean to search in. We didn't find anything until 11:45 pm when someone saw a small point of light in the water. Two sailors from the **LCS-25** were in the water and one had a flashlight, otherwise we'd never have found them. Lord knows how we kept from being sunk by a kamikaze that first night! The first thing the survivors said when we got them aboard, was "turn off that damn light!." Paczkowski, E.J. Electrician's Mate 3rd class, 726 32 49 and Mancini, J.A., Seaman 1st Class, 908 84 10 were the two crewmen from the LCS-25 that we brought aboard.

Radar Picket Station 10 had been manned by the **USS Aaron Ward** (DM 34), the **USS Little** (DD 803), **LSM-195**, and **LCS's, 14, 25, and 38**. **Aaron Ward** was the lead ship and coordinated with the Combat Air Patrol to help them intercept incoming kamikazes. She and the **Little** were both very capable destroyers and were reinforced by the antiaircraft fire power of the LSM and the LCS's. Those smaller ships were commonly called "pall bearers" by the destroyer men. An LCS (Landing Craft, Support) was a derivative of an LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry), both flat- bottomed craft designed to come in close to shore to support an invasion. The LSM (Landing Ship, Medium) was a similar craft with a lot of firepower. In fact, the LSM-195 was also equipped with rockets.

The destroyer **Little**, a Fletcher class destroyer, is shown below. The **USS Fletcher** (DD 445) was the first of this class of destroyer, so there had been about 350 others of this class made before the **Little (DD 803)**, so she was a new, up-to-date, ship.

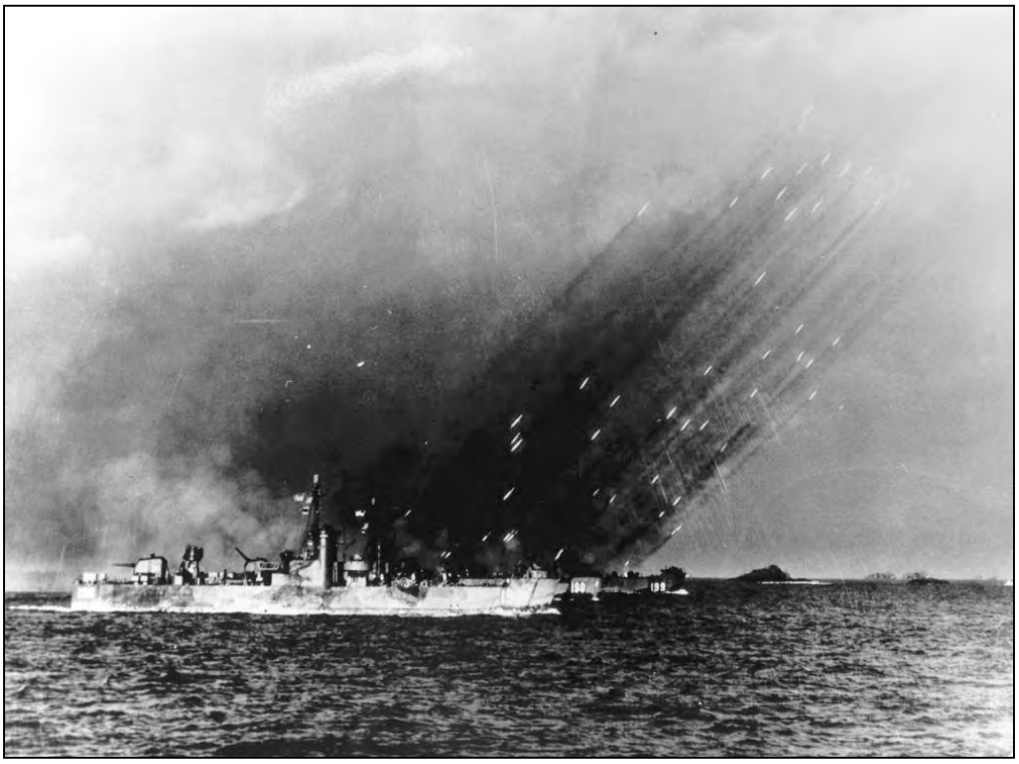
The **USS Little**, above. The **USS Aaron Ward**, below, was a still newer Sumner-class destroyer. Note the three twin 5" gun turrets.

Landing craft support ships, like the **LCS(L)-25** at right, were referred to as "pallbearers". LCS-L's were derived from the LCI, a flat-bottomed ship that could deliver infantry right in to the beach. The LCS was designed to bring antiaircraft capability and close-in fire support for troops going ashore, and could go into shallow water in relative safety, water-wise, without risking more valuable ships. They carried three dual-mount 40 mm guns and thus had as

much effective anti-aircraft fire as the Pavlic did, hence providing good back-up support to the destroyers on the radar picket stations.

Another type of landing craft support ship, the LSM-R, were also flat-bottomed for close-in bombardment of shorelines. The "R" meant they were equipped with rockets as well as guns. The ship at right is a sister ship to the **LSM-R 195**, sunk at Radar Picket Station 10, to which the Pavlic was dispatched to rescue the crew.

USS LSM(R)-196



LSM's were also used to support the radar picket stations. The photo left shows three of them in action bombarding a beach with rockets.

In this action at Radar Picket Station 10, the **USS Little** (DD 803) and the **LSM-195** were sunk by kamikazes. The **USS Aaron Ward** (DM 34) was

very badly damaged, also by kamikazes. The **LCS-25** was dismasted by a kamikaze. The two sailors we pulled out of the water were from the **LCS-25**. The **Little** was hit by three kamikazes, the **Aaron Ward** by six. Between them they had also shot down five more kamikazes. The **Little** lost 30 men, the **Aaron Ward**, 42 dead, 54 wounded. The **LCS-83** helped fight the fires on the **Aaron Ward** and rescued many of the men from the **Little**. The **Aaron Ward** was towed in to Kerama Retto for repairs. Photos taken there give you some idea of the destruction that many of the radar picket destroyers suffered from kamikaze attacks.

When you look at what happened to the superstructure of the **Aaron Ward**, you wonder why more men weren't killed. In spite of the damage, she was patched up enough to steam under her own power and later limped 3,000 miles back to the States, where she was ultimately sold for scrap. War or no war, I wouldn't have wanted to try sailing across the Pacific in that ship.

Another view of the **Ward**, shown below, taken from the starboard side of the ship, shows even more clearly the extent of the devastation. There were a lot of similar examples of damaged ships that could be seen when going in or out of Kerama Retto. In the course of the Okinawa battle, over 350 ships were damaged by kamikazes.

USS AARON WARD DAMAGED

May 4, 1945

The next morning we thought we'd found one more survivor, but when we got closer we found there wasn't much left below the life vest. The guys in the Higgins boat had to fight off sharks to get him to the ship. He had been one of the crew of the **LSM-195** that had been sunk. That afternoon between general quarters alarms, the captain and Dr. Putzel conducted a burial service, and he was slipped over the side. The deck log said, "At 1928 burial services were conducted by commanding Officer, Lt. Cmdr. C.V. Allen, USNR, for **Ruhlman, George J**. (rate unknown), serial No. 952 62 47, who was killed in action May 3rd, 1945 in the service of his country, while serving aboard the **USS LSM-195**. His remains were committed to the sea in position Lat. 26 deg. 37.5 N, Long. 127 deg. 21.0 E".

In fairness to the captain, I think that had been the practice earlier in the war in the South Pacific, but we never did that again. At Okinawa, there were transport ships and hospital ships for the wounded, and transports that returned the dead to the States--or they might be buried in temporary graves ashore.

I note from internet data, that that morning of May 4th, at about 7:30 am, while we were still searching for other survivors at radar picket station 10, elsewhere in the radar picket screen, the veteran destroyers Luce (DD 522) and Morrison (DD 560) were both sunk in attacks by multiple kamikazes. Luce lost 126 out of a crew of 312, Morrison lost 152.

May 8,1945

USS England (DE 635) was patrolling with us on station A-37a. The **England** was the best submarine hunter of the Pacific fleet. Before coming to Okinawa she had already sunk six Japanese subs. Unfortunately, she was hit the next day by kamikazes while on radar picket duty on a nearby station, (37 killed, 9 wounded), and while not sunk, had to be towed to Kerama Retto, eventually repaired at Leyte, and then was able to get back to the States under her own power. The **England** was given a Presidential Unit Citation.

USS ENGLAND

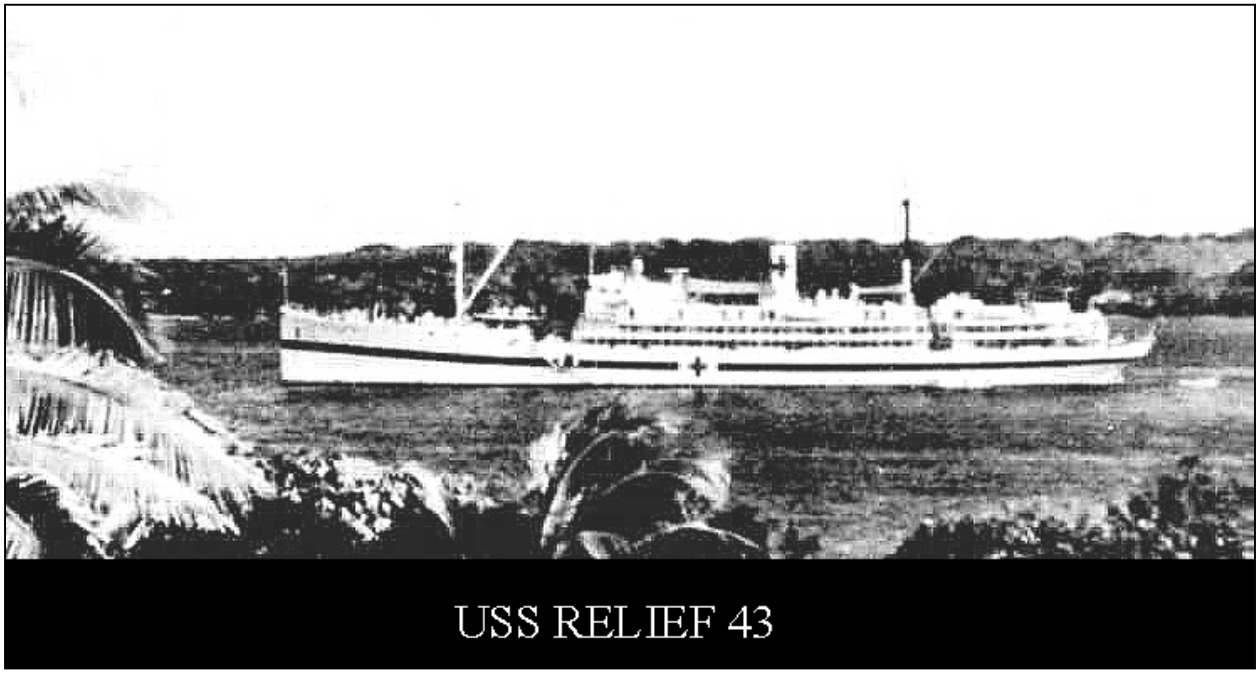
May 9,1945

We were patrolling station A35a with the **USS Oberender**, (DE 344). At 6:53 pm she was hit by a kamikaze. We lowered 3 boats to pick up survivors and got three sailors. **Oberender** was towed to Kerama Retto but was beyond repair. (24 sailors killed or wounded). **Oberender** appears to have been an updated DE in that she has 5" enclosed gun turrets fore and aft. However, I don't see any radar fire-control antenna, so, like us, she wouldn't have found them very useful in a night attack. We returned to the Hagushi anchorage and transferred the three survivors to the **USS Crescent City** (APA 21)

USS Oberender. (DE-344) Destroyed at Okinawa in May 1945

May 10. 1945

We escorted the hospital ship **USS Relief** AH 4 as it left Okinawa en route Guam, in case of a kamikaze attack. We stayed with her until beyond the range of Japanese planes. Escorting a hospital ship was against international convention at the time, but another brightly lit hospital ship, the **USS Comfort**, had taken a kamikaze hit at Okinawa not long before then, which had wiped out a whole surgery and killed a lot of people. Needless to say, sailing along not too far behind a brightly lit ship wasn't a very desirable job with kamikazes in the area.



USS RELIEF 43

Escorting the hospital ship was a bit of luck for us, because we were away from Okinawa when Kikusui #6 took place, another mass kamikaze raid. On the morning of May 11th, the destroyer Hugh W. Hadley (DD 774) reported raids coming in totaling 156 planes and called all the CAP airplanes to intercept them. During an hour and forty minutes, the Hadley managed to shoot down 20 planes and was hit by another two plus a kamikaze Baca bomb. Destroyer Evans (DD 552) accounted for 13 more, 4 of which hit and completely disabled her. Both destroyers were towed to Kerama Retto for temporary repairs and then were towed back to the US and scrapped.

In this mass raid two kamikazes also hit the aircraft carrier Bunker Hill with Admiral Mitcher aboard. That took her out of the picture for the rest of the war.

May 12, 1945

We were in Hagushi anchorage under evening air attack when the battleship **USS New Mexico** was hit by one of two kamikazes, in spite of a huge anti-aircraft barrage from the whole anchorage. I was watching from the flying bridge and could see these two dots coming in high over the anchorage. They then commenced to dive into a huge hail of antiaircraft fire. One simply crashed into the sea, but the other hit the battleship. It was evening and getting dark, but you could still see quite well. There was a dramatic photo taken from a nearby ship, which helps you picture the kind of devastation a kamikaze could cause. (54 killed, 119 wounded) We weren't very close to the New Mexico when this happened. The photograph makes it look like it was midnight, but I think that is just the effect of the explosion on the film exposure.

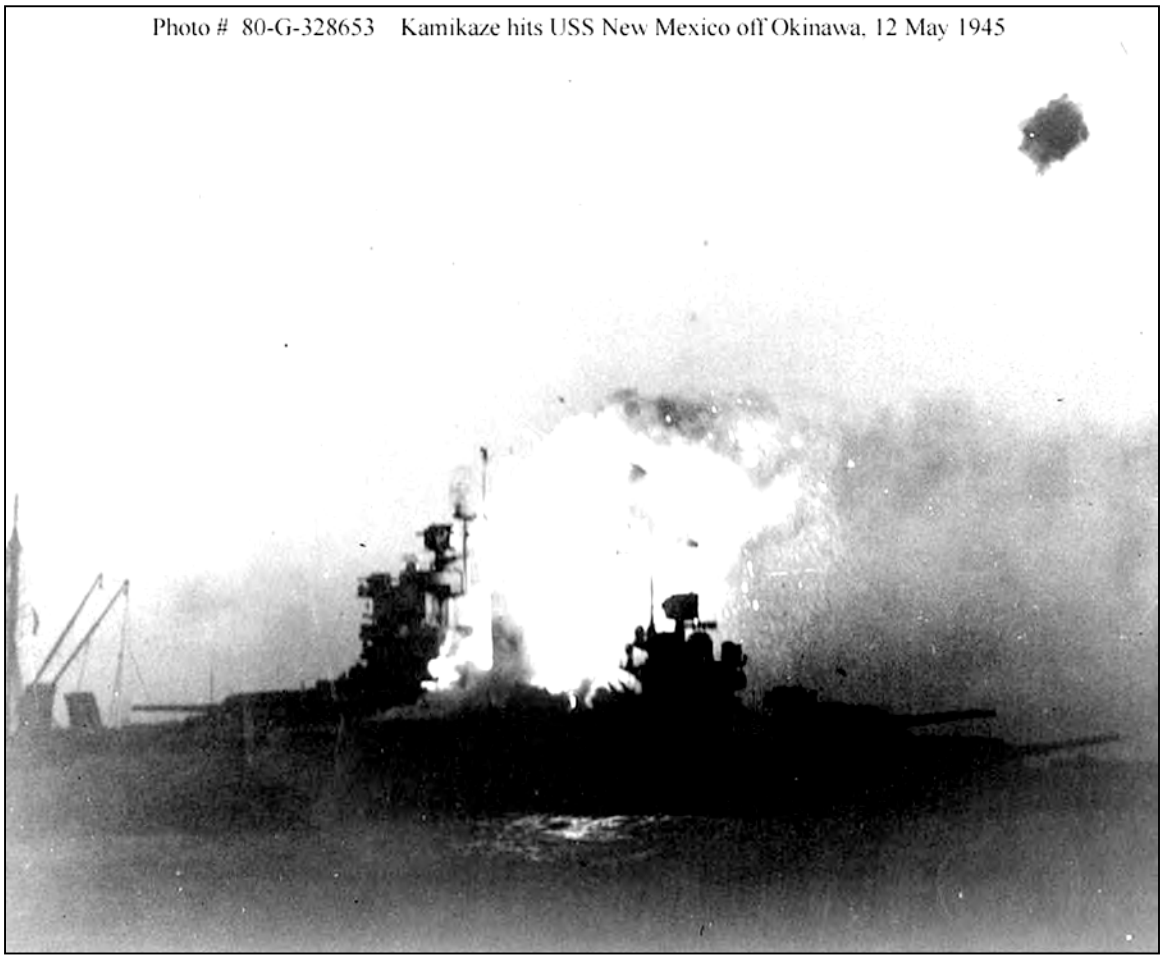


Photo # 80-G-328653 Kamikaze hits USS New Mexico off Okinawa, 12 May 1945

May 20, 1945

We were patrolling station A35 with the destroyers **USS Thatcher** and **USS Boyd**, when we came under kamikaze attack. The Thatcher was hit by a kamikaze. We went alongside Thatcher to help fight fires and pick up casualties. Boyd was on her other side doing the same. We both had to break away because of more planes threatening in the area. We took three casualties aboard, one dead. We took the two wounded to the hospital ship **Relief** in Hagushi anchorage and then returned to station. We transferred the body of Mason, RM3c (initials and service number unknown) to the **USS Crescent City** (APA 21) the next day.

Thatcher had been hit by a low-flying "Oscar" aft of the bridge. The kamikaze also carried a bomb which blasted a 6-foot by 9-foot hole between the bilge and the keel (14 killed, 53 wounded). Thatcher limped to Kerama Retto for repairs and ultimately, under her own power, returned to the States, where she was scrapped. This is what Thatcher looked like in happier times:

We later received a note from the Thatcher that I managed to retain:

DD514/P6

U.S.S. THATCHER (DD514)

Care of Fleet P.O.
San Francisco, Cal.
21 July 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. PAVLIC (APD 70).

Subj: Letter of appreciation from U.S.S. THATCHER.

1. The Commanding officer, officers and crew of the U.S.S. THATCHER wish to express their deep gratitude to the U.S.S. PAVLIC for their fine work and aid given us when this vessel suffered a suicide plane crash the evening of 20 May.

2. The PAVLIC'S coming alongside aiding with, and removing some casualties was considerate and well done.

3. Upon leaving the area we of the THATCHER thank you very much and wish you the best of luck.

s/ C.R. CHANDLER

May 27,1945

The 27th through the 29th of May proved to be the most hectic of our days at Okinawa. In the early morning of the 27th we were patrolling station B-28 on anti-submarine screen, when we made a sonar contact. At 1:40 am we attacked, dropping five depth charges. At 1:47 am we again attacked with five more depth charges. With the other destroyer escorts, **Yokes** (APD 69), **Hubbard** (DD 748) and **Rednour** (APD 102), we continued the search until, at 5:03 am, we again made sonar contact and dropped four more depth charges. This time a large oil slick appeared which continued to expand. We were pretty sure we got him, but an oil slick can be a deception technique and, without more evidence, we couldn't formally claim him. However, we passed the area again the next day and the oil slick was still spreading.

The picture left shows a depth charge explosion behind **Pavlic**, which I think was taken during training off Bermuda. In combat, our cameraman had other duties, and I know of no pictures taken on our ship during combat.

We refueled at Kerama Retto and picked up 16 depth charges and went back on patrol with the **USS Ingram** (APD 31). That evening at 8:15 pm we commenced firing on a boogie on the starboard side and splashed him.

I remember hearing the CIC reports on the sound power phones giving the azimuth and range of the bogie from our air-search radar. The azimuth stayed constant as the range steadily decreased so we knew he was coming for us. Even though CIC could tell you where to look, the gunners had to spot him to get their sights on him. As the range got short you could hear the gunners trying to find him in the growing darkness. "I can't see him, I can't see him!" --- 'I see him, I see him!". There is a burst of 40 mm gunfire and everyone scrunches down waiting for the impact. Finally we realize that they'd splashed him and we all relaxed for a bit.

Our kill was confirmed by the destroyer, **USS Abercrombie**, (DE 343). However, there was still a large-scale kamikaze attack in progress so we were again at general quarters at 11:20 pm. Shortly afterward we were shooting at another bogie along with several other ships. It was splashed, but someone else was credited with the kill. At 11:43 pm, a ship on the port bow was hit by another kamikaze, and it turned out to be our old friend the **USS Rednour (APD 102)**, shown below.

We proceeded to the **Rednour** to assist with firefighting and stopped to put a boat in the water to send a doctor to them. Their doctor was killed when the kamikaze hit. We carried an extra doctor aboard because we had been designated a rescue ship. An unidentified ship eight miles to starboard had also been hit. That was probably the **USS Braine** (DD 630), which was hit by two kamikazes and severely damaged that night (50 killed, 78 wounded).

May 28, 1945

That same night at 1:10 am we began taking evasive action to avoid enemy aircraft in the vicinity. At 1:28 am we opened fire on a Betty bomber on the port bow at a range of about 500 yards. She missed our bridge narrowly and was subsequently shot down under fire from several ships. Since my general quarters station was on a voice radio in the upper sound hut at the top of the bridge, that was a close one for me.

At that time, we had Captain Kennaday, our transport division commander, aboard. One of the boys told me he was outside on the flying bridge as the kamikaze came straight in at him and was standing there firing his 45 caliber handgun at it. That takes guts. I was inside the upper sound hut at the time so didn't see it.

Captain Kennaday, Commander, Transport Division 105

At 6:00 AM we headed back to Hagushi Anchorage but were immediately ordered to Radar Picket Station 15 to pick up survivors of the destroyer, **USS Drexler.** The Drexler had sunk by the time we got there, but the LCS 114, who must have been one of the "pall bearers" on station with her, had 134 of her survivors, which we took aboard and transported about 30 miles to the large troop transport, **USS Crescent City,** at Hagushi Anchorage, by 12:45 PM. That's where those extra 150 bunks we had came in handy--to help cope with all the casualties.

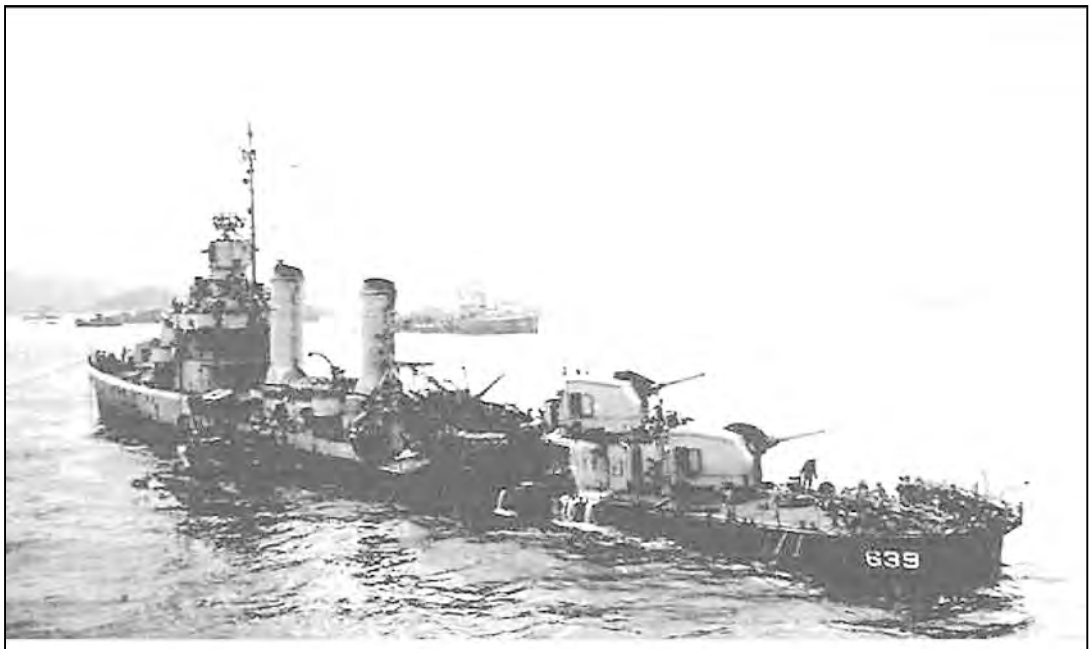
USS Drexler

The **USS Drexler** and **USS Lowry** (DD 770) were initially attacked by two kamikazes. They downed the first, but the second dove on Lowry and somehow blundered into Drexler. Badly damaged, Drexler kept firing and helped splash three more bogies, but a fourth crashed her superstructure causing a huge explosion. She sank stern-first within a minute of the second hit, hence the heavy casualties (168 dead, 52 wounded). At 6:00 PM we were at Flash Red again in the Hagushi anchorage with all guns manned.

May 29, 1945

At 12:30 that night we got underway to go to Radar Picket Station 16 to pick up survivors from the **USS Shubrick** (DD 639). At 2:00 AM we were again at general quarters. We closed with the **USS Van Valkenburgh** (DD 656) at Radar Picket Station 16 and took aboard Shubrick survivors. Shubrick had been attacked by two aircraft. She shot down one but the other crashed into the ship superstructure at a 40 mm gun. There was a lot of damage from the plane and the gasoline fire. The bomb it carried blew a 30-foot hole in the starboard side causing flooding in an engine room. One of the ship's depth charges exploded further damaging her, but apparently blew out the fire. Shubrick had 35 killed or missing and 25 wounded. She didn't sink. She was towed to Kerama Retto for repairs and was later able to limp back to the United States.

We hurried back to Hagushi Anchorage and by 7 AM were transferring Shubrick personnel to the **USS Clinton** (APA 144).



USS SHUBRICK

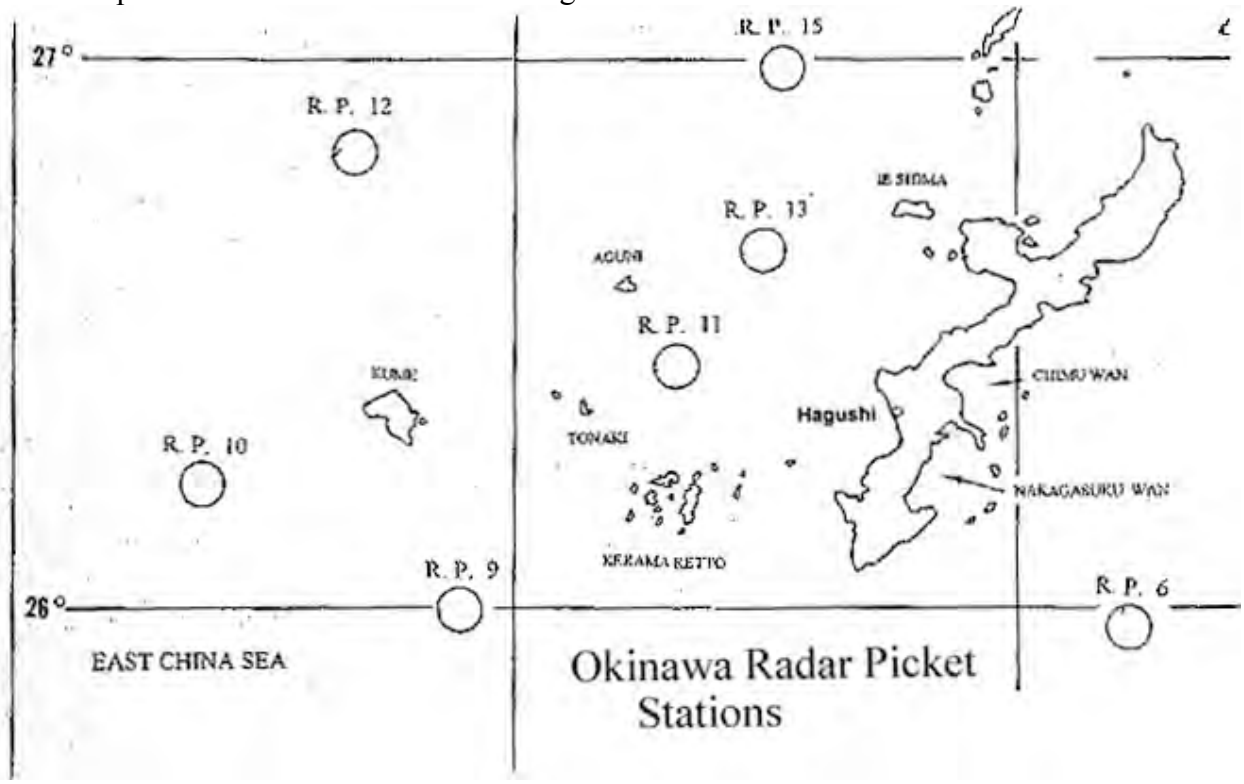
USS SHUBRICK DAMAGE

June, 1945

Our patrolling assignments continued through June with no further narrow escapes. However, the deck log showed that we were at general quarters 46 times in May and 39 times in June, so it hadn't slacked off too much. In July the deck log showed only 10 times at general quarters, but we weren't out of the woods yet.

July 2, 1945

We were patrolling at station C-4 off Ie Shima, where Ernie Pyle had been killed earlier, when, at 1:49 AM, "a low-flying airplane crossed over our starboard quarter and dropped an unidentified object into the water, about 100 yards astern", that quote from the deck log. (That unidentified object was apparently a torpedo). My understanding from the guys who were on watch was that it passed right underneath the ship and out the other side. We had a shallow draft, ten to twelve feet with maximum fuel load, and the Japanese aerial torpedo must have been set for deeper hulls. We weren't at general quarters, so we were dead ducks if the torpedo had been at the right depth. It would have been a disaster, whatever our state of readiness, because a Japanese torpedo would cut our ship in half. Fletcher class and Sumner class destroyers sat 2 or 3 feet deeper in the water at 14-15 feet. A light cruiser would have a draft of about 20 feet.



July 22, 1945

We were on anti-submarine patrol at station L-1 guarding the entrance to Chimu Wan, a bay on the east coast of Okinawa being used as a seaplane base. There were several seaplane tenders there, ships that supplied and cared for the PBY's (Catalinas) and PBM's (Martin Mariners) that were based there. Those planes were routinely taking off and landing there. Having friendly planes approaching was not unusual, and they were identified by their "IFF" signal. "IFF" stood for Identification, Friend or Foe.

At 1:21 AM an unidentified plane approached from 4,000 yards, bearing 230 deg. relative, showing weak friendly identification. At 1,000 yards it dropped a torpedo. At 1:23 AM it was opening range. It was a beautiful moonlit night and the OOD, Mr. Keeley, in spite of CIC (Combat Information Center) observing the plane on radar for several minutes before the attack, didn't sound general quarters or tell the gunners to open fire, presumably because of fear of shooting down a friendly. The Japanese apparently did have some capability in simulating our IFF signals.

The torpedo went directly under the ship and would, again, have sunk us if set for the right depth. We didn't get off a shot and we could see the torpedo wake going away from the ship. We lucked out, but it wasn't one of our finer moments. I might have survived this hit because I was on the 12 to 4 AM watch and was just taking a message up to the bridge when it happened. I might possibly have been blown off into the water, but would probably have survived somehow. If I had been sleeping below decks in my bunk not far from the spot where the torpedo would have impacted, I wouldn't have known what hit me.

July 24, 1945

We were doing anti-submarine patrol off Chimu Wan. The **USS Dyson** (DD 572) joined us in the evening to provide added anti-aircraft coverage. Similarly, the next day when we moved to Station K-1 off Buckner Bay, the **USS Converse** joined us at 7 pm to provide added anti-aircraft coverage. I mention this only because these two veteran destroyers were two of the five destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 23, the "Little Beavers" who, commanded by Captain Arleigh Burke, distinguished themselves in the Solomon Islands campaign. They each received 11 battle stars and a Presidential Unit Citation.

August 1, 1945

For several days we had been patrolling Station L-1 off Chimu Wan. A typhoon was approaching, coming north from the Philippines, and most of the other ships had left to ride out the storm at sea, or avoid it if they could. We kept waiting for orders to leave and put to sea. I guess we had to be last because they couldn't leave the bay without antisubmarine protection until all the other ships were gone. The typhoon was almost upon us. Half the sky was black. At 6:04 PM we finally got orders and proceeded to escort the **USS Burrows** (AP 6) and the **USS ST. John's Victory**, heading south into the typhoon.

The seas were humongous. You could temporarily stand on the walls because the ship was rolling so hard. Sleeping was difficult because of the motion and some of the fellows were badly bruised from falling from upper bunks onto the steel deck. Our bunk frames were stacked 4-high. I had a bottom bunk right over the footlockers, so didn't have much of a problem. In fact, I slept right through our maximum roll, reported to be 49 degrees. We were two full days riding out the storm and returning to Patrol Station Love off Chimu Wan.

It's a wonder we survived that typhoon, since we hadn't taken aboard fuel for eight or nine days and had been steaming steadily. Looking at the deck logs now, it appears we went out to ride out the typhoon with about one quarter of our fuel capacity. In an earlier typhoon in the Philippines, the US lost three destroyers because they had been unable to refuel before the storm hit and were too top-heavy. The wind force and seventy-five foot waves made three of them roll over and capsize. In that typhoon, typhoon Cobra, Admiral Halsey's fleet lost the destroyers **Spence, Hull, and Monaghan**, and 27 other ships were damaged. 778 sailors died. **USS Tabberer** (DE 418) rode out the storm, losing her mast and her radio and radar capability, but

persisted in searching for survivors for two days, though badly damaged herself. She managed to rescue 55 men which is really amazing in rough seas like that. It appears that DE's and APD's were surprisingly seaworthy.

August 6, 1945

We were patrolling at Nakagusuku Wan, by now changed to the name Buckner Bay, when the B-29 bomber, **Enola Gay**, dropped "Little Boy", an atomic bomb, on Hiroshima, Japan.

August 8, 1945

We had now shifted to the west side of Okinawa and were patrolling at screening station Able off Ie Shima. We didn't know it then, but Russia had entered the war against Japan in "Operation August Storm" unleashing a battle-hardened combination of armies of one and a half million men. They rapidly defeated a Japanese army of a million men in Manchuria in a couple of weeks of fighting spread over an area the size of Europe. It is hard to know the impact of this huge army defeat on Japanese thinking, but the choice between a U.S. occupation army and a Russian occupation army, may have hastened the emperor's decision to surrender to the U.S.

August 9, 1945

For us it was still the same patrolling and general quarters routine when the second atomic bomb, "Fat Man", was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. We weren't hearing anything like news broadcasts so the word didn't get to us right away. The Japanese still hadn't surrendered.

August 14, 1945

We steamed to the other side of Okinawa to Nakagusuku Wan (Buckner Bay) to fuel and take aboard 12 depth charges. There we joined the **USS Sims** with ComTransDiv 105 aboard, **USS Barr** (APD 39), **USS Runnels** (APD 85), **USS Bass** (APD 124), and **USS Wantuck** (APD 125) and at 11:25 pm we all got underway to join the Halsey's Third Fleet on its way to Japan.