

9/11/42 - 2/1/43

HISTORY OF USS DE HAVEN (DD 469)

It is the fortune of some ships to fight valiantly and victoriously to the end of a war and return to friendly shores with bands playing and bunting streaming. Other ships fight with equal courage only to sink during battle with some unscathed, others interned in hospitals with still others committed to the deep. There is little fanfare for scattered groups of survivors returning to home shores for reassignment. They are men who have taken a beating for a victorious cause. Such were the men of the USS DE HAVEN, a ship whose spirit continued to live in the hearts of the men who survived her.

The destroyer USS DE HAVEN was authorized by an Act of Congress on 27 March 1934. Built at the Bath Iron Works, her keel was laid on 27 September 1941 and she was launched on 28 June 1942. Miss Helen N. De Haven, of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, granddaughter of Lieutenant Edwin Jess De Haven, for whom the ship was named, served as the ship's sponsor.

Edwin J. De Haven commenced his naval career with his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy on 20 October 1829, and served on board the United States Ships NATCHEZ and ERIE in 1830 - 31. During twenty years of distinguished service, he served aboard many famous ships. In 1839 he served aboard the USS VINCENNES, flagship of the U. S. Exploring Expedition under Charles Wilkes, which made the famous cruise to the Antarctic and among the Pacific Islands. Serving aboard USS SOMERS, he took part in the first expedition against Alvarado in the early part of the trouble with Mexico. Placed in command of the Grinnel Rescue Expedition in 1850, De Haven led the search for Sir John Franklin and made scientific explorations. The two vessels of the expedition, ADVANCE and RESCUE, were caught in the ice west of Greenland in September and drifted for nine months. The expedition failed to find Franklin but discovered and named Grinnel Land. At the beginning of the Civil War, he requested active duty, but was pronounced physically unfit. Placed on the retired list in February 1862, De Haven remained on waiting orders until his death, 1 May 1865.

Commissioned on 21 September 1942 at Boston, USS DE HAVEN (DD 469) had as her first skipper, Commander Charles E. Tolman. Commander Tolman had served most of his time on submarines

before taking over this new destroyer of the FLETCHER class. The executive officer, Lieutenant Commander J. P. Huntly had come from the aircraft carrier USS YORKTOWN which had been sunk in the Battle of Midway.

From Boston, Massachusetts, the destroyer steamed to Casco Bay, Maine for shakedown training. Several weeks were spent taking training and exercise cruises from Casco Bay before steaming to Boston for post-shakedown availability. Arriving at Norfolk, Virginia on 8 November, DE HAVEN joined USS SAUFLEY, USS COLUMBIA and USS INDIANA on a voyage through the Panama Canal by 14 November and on westward to the war in the Pacific.

The crew of DE HAVEN plunged through the Pacific groundswells day after day and finally saw land again for the first time upon their arrival at Tongatabu on 28 November 1942. The crew had their first liberty here and everyone went ashore and ate coconuts and explored the tropical terrain before departing for Noumea the next day to escort a convoy. The ships of the convoy were taking Army troops to Guadalcanal to relieve some of the Marines who had been there since the beginning.

Departing Noumea on 3 December, the destroyer protected the troopships on the voyage to Guadalcanal, where unloading and loading commenced on 7 December. It was one year since hostilities had started but the ship was not celebrating anniversaries. DE HAVEN screened the transports for about a week off Lunga Point, occasionally patrolling outside Tulagi Harbor.

During the period spent in the Solomons region, the personnel became more polished in their specialties, such as radar, fire control and sound gear. The ship was at Guadalcanal for about a week. While she patrolled, the various ships of the convoy went away one by one until DE HAVEN was left with the last ship which had difficulty unloading. Several voyages between Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo completed the year 1942 and brought DE HAVEN to Espiritu Santo during the early part of January, where she joined a large part of the South Pacific force which was anchored there.

From this anchorage, the ship received orders to rendezvous with the tanker SS WILLIAM IRISH and escort her from Noumea to Espiritu Santo. Following this assignment, the crew of the destroyer had a chance to go on a few swimming parties although the ship could grant no real shore liberty since all the ships there were on two-hour notice.

DE HAVEN was assigned to Task Group 67.5 under the command of Captain Briscoe, Commander Destroyer Squadron FIVE, who's flag was in USS FLETCHER. Other ships in the group were destroyers USS RADFORD, USS NICHOLAS and USS O'BANNON. This group was under Admiral Halsey, who had a new idea for stopping the "Tokyo Express." This force was called the "Cactus Striking Force" and was broken down into small units to conduct hunter-killer search against submarines and other vessels in the lower Solomons area. The "Express" was the name given to the Jap ships which approached Guadalcanal at night and brought supplies to the Jap troops. They would drop supplies overboard on rafts and let the tide carry them in. While DE HAVEN was patrolling, the "Express" never attempted to aid the Japs on shore.

This mission was soon halted for the bombardment of Guadalcanal and Kolombangara Islands in the Solomons. The destroyers, in addition to escorting the cruisers of the BROOKLYN-ST. LOUIS class to the scene of the bombardment, took an active part in shelling the shore establishments themselves. The targets were principally the Villa and Stanmore Plantations, where it was believed the Japs were bringing oil and supplies for their aircraft. It took about two days of steaming to get to the destination and around midnight of 20 January, the ships arrived off Guadalcanal.

The destroyers, in cooperation with the Army, pounded the Japs on shore almost daily. They were apparently afraid to reveal their positions and did not answer with return fire. But the men on DE HAVEN knew that they were laying it on hot and heavy for the firing was accurate and destructive.

On 24 January, the destroyers steamed to Kolombangara Island, into the long reach of Kula Gulf and worked over the Villa-Stanmore Plantations and other targets. As soon as the bombardment was over, the destroyers raced out of Kula Gulf and caught up with the cruisers. On the way back to Guadalcanal, the ships were followed by twin-engined bombers. The Japanese planes dropped flares which were somewhat disconcerting. However, no bombs were dropped as the ships presented poor targets by heading through one rain squall and into the next. Arriving back at Florida Island, DE HAVEN continued patrol operations there until February.

During the day on 1 February, DE HAVEN was operating with Task Group 67.5, supporting the movements of six LCT's and one seaplane tender incident to the establishment of a beachhead at Marovo on Guadalcanal. In the afternoon the destroyer was engaged in anti-submarine patrol, covering the return to

their base of two LCT's. At 1445, when about 3 miles south of Savo Island, the skipper of the ship was notified by a shore control post that they were in condition Red.

DE HAVEN went to general quarters immediately and steered a course to the northeast. At 1457, a flight of nine unidentified planes was sighted broad on the starboard beam at 25,000 yards. The ship's guns were ordered to track the planes until they could be identified. The planes were on a course on which they would pass well astern of the ship. About a minute later, the planes were identified as enemy and six of them changed course sharply and came directly toward DE HAVEN.

All guns opened up and three of the Japanese planes were sent spiralling in smoke and flame to splash into the sea. However, all six planes are believed to have dropped their bombs. DE HAVEN was hit by three bombs and further damaged by a near miss. All way was lost after the first hit and shortly thereafter the ship began to settle by the bow. No serious fires were seen but a cloud of yellow smoke hovered over the ship for about a minute as the bow began to settle into the water.

The commanding officer was killed on the bridge by a bomb explosion which wrecked the superstructure. Lieutenant J. J. Rowan survived and had this to say: "I was on the bridge when the second bomb exploded near it. My leg was badly injured and my shoe blown off, but I was lucky.....The ship was seriously damaged and began to sink rapidly. I crawled to a place where I could fall into the water and paddle away... The quick thinking of Ensign Clem C. Williams (the only officer who was not killed or wounded) saved many lives. He set all the ash cans (depth charges) on safety before he left the ship. If that hadn't been done, the ash cans probably would have gone off under water and men swimming nearby would have been badly injured or killed.

With the stern going up and the bow sinking under, Ensign Williams checked to see that no one else was on deck before he plunged over the side into the water. About 30 seconds later, the destroyer's stern rose sharply and she went down to the bottom. Williams made it to a floater net on which about a dozen men were clinging. The water was heavy with fuel oil but the current was carrying them toward Savo Island. The morale of the men was very high and the appearance of an OS2U KINGFISHER overhead did nothing to dispell the high spirits. One of the men waved his hand at the plane as it circled overhead. An LCT which DE HAVEN had been escorting approached the scene with its ramp down and all survivors in sight were helped aboard by the energetic men of her crew. Ensign Solomon, who was the skipper of the LCT did a fine job.

of maneuvering his vessel into favorable positions for getting the men out of the water as quickly as possible. First aid was rendered to the wounded and morphine was administered to those who were in severe pain.

It was not long before the destroyer NICHOLAS came alongside to remove the stretcher cases and the FLETCHER soon eased alongside to take aboard the remainder of the survivors who were put ashore at Lunga Point on Guadalcanal. The wounded were removed from the NICHOLAS and taken by ambulance to the base hospital there. When the survivors could be checked against the muster list, it was found that of the fourteen ship's officers, ten were killed or missing and three were wounded; among the 299 enlisted men, 157 were dead or missing and 35 were wounded.

The high tradition set by USS DE HAVEN was carried on by the second destroyer named USS DE HAVEN. The new ship had to be a fine ship with a fine crew to hold high the torch of freedom for which the men of DD-469 fought and died. The things we Americans believe in, live for and enjoy can be attributed to the valor of such as these.

S T A T I S T I C S

STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:	2,050 tons	<u>ARMAMENT</u>
OVERALL LENGTH:	376' 6 inches	5-5"/38 Calibre Guns
BEAM:	39' 4 inches	10-21" Quintuple Torpedo Tubes
SPEED:	35 knots (plus)	40MM and 20MM Anti-Aircraft Batteries
		Depth Charges

Stencilled: 5/6/48

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USS DE HAVEN	DD 469
USS FLETCHER	DD 445
USS NICHOLAS	DD 447
USS O'BANON	DD 450
USS RADFORD	DD 446