

## History of the USS DeHaven (DD-469)

**From Ships Data Section, Public Information Division, Office of Public Relations, Navy Department.**

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 **DEHAVEN**, a ship who's spirit continued to live in the hearts of the men who survived her.

The destroyer **USS DEHAVEN** was authorized by an Act of Congress on 27 Mar 1934. Built at the Bath Iron Works, her keel was laid on 27 Sep 1941 and she was launched on 28 Jun 1942. Miss Helen N. DeHaven, of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, granddaughter of Lieutenant Edwin Jess DeHaven, for whom the ship was named, served as the ship's sponsor.

Edwin J. DeHaven commenced his navel career with his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy on 20 Oct 1829, and served on board the US ships **NATCHEZ** and **ERIE** in 1830-31. During the 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, **DEHAVEN** lead 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 land 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, **DEHAVEN** remained on waiting orders until his death, 1 May 1865.

Commissioned on 21 Sep 1942 at Boston, **USS DEHAVEN** (DD-469) had as her first skipper, Commander Charles E. Toman. Commander Toman had served most of his time on submarines before taking over this new destroyer of the **FLETCHER** class. The executive officer, Lieutenant Commander I. 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 2 November, **DEHAVEN** joined USS **STANLEY**, 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 **DEHAVEN** plunged through the Pacific ground-swells day after day and finally saw land again for the first time upon their arrival at Tongatabu on 28 Nov 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, were unloading and loading commence on 7 December. It was one year since hostilities had started but the ship was not celebrating anniversaries. **DEHAVEN** 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 **DEHAVEN** was left with the last ship which had difficulty unloading. Several voyages between Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo completed the year 1942 and brought **DEHAVEN** 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 Sepiritu Santo. Following this assignment, the crew of the destroyer had a chance to go on a few swimming parties although the ship would grant no real shore liberty since all the ships there were on two-hour notice.

**DEHAVEN** 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 Japanese ships which approached Guadalcanal at night and brought supplies to the Japanese troops. They would drop supplies overboard on rafts and let the tide carry them in. While **DEHAVEN** was patrolling, the "Express" never attempted to aid the Japanese 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 Japanese 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 Japanese on shore almost daily. They were apparently afraid to reveal their positions and did not answer with return fire. But the men on **DEHAVEN** 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 Vila-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-engine 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, **DEHAVEN** continued patrol operation there until February.

During the day on 1 February, **DEHAVEN** was operating with Task Group 67.5, supporting the movements of six LCT's and one seaplane tender to help establish a beach head 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.

**DEHAVEN** 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 to

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 **DEHAVEN**. All guns opened up and three of the Japanese planes were sent spiraling in smoke and flame to splash into the sea. However, all six planes are believed to have dropped their bombs. **DEHAVEN** 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. Rown 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 stem 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 stem 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 AS2U KINGFISHER overhead did nothing to dispel the high spirits. One of the men waved his hand at the plane as it circled overhead. An LCT, which **DEHAVEN** 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 along-side to remove the stretcher cases and the FLETCHER soon eased alongside to take aboard the remainder of the survivors that were put ashore at Lunga Point on Guadalcanal. The wounded were removed from the NICHOLAS and were taken by ambulance to the base hospital there. When the survivors would be checked against the muster list, it was found that of the 14 ship's officers, 10 were killed or missing and 3 were wounded; among the 299 enlisted men, 157 were dead or missing and 35 were wounded.

The high tradition set by **USS DEHAVEN** was carried on by the second destroyer named **USS DEHAVEN**. 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.

## STATISTICS

### STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:

- 2,050 tons

### OVERALL LENGTH:

- 276 feet 6 inches BEAM: 39 feet 4 inches SPEED: 35 knots (plus)

### ARMAMENT:

- 5-5"/38 Caliber Guns
- 10-21" Quintuple Torpedo Tubes
- 40MM and 20MM Anti-Aircraft Batteries
- Depth Charges

Stenciled: 5/6/48



## USS DEHAVEN SAILORS ASSOCIATION

[What's New](#)   [History](#)   [Photos](#)   [Association](#)

[Messages](#)   [Ship's Log](#)   [Chat](#)

### 469 Rescue

Many of the survivors of the sinking of the USS DeHaven DD-469 owe their lives to the rescue efforts of the ships and sailors that accompanied them on that fateful day February 1, 1943.

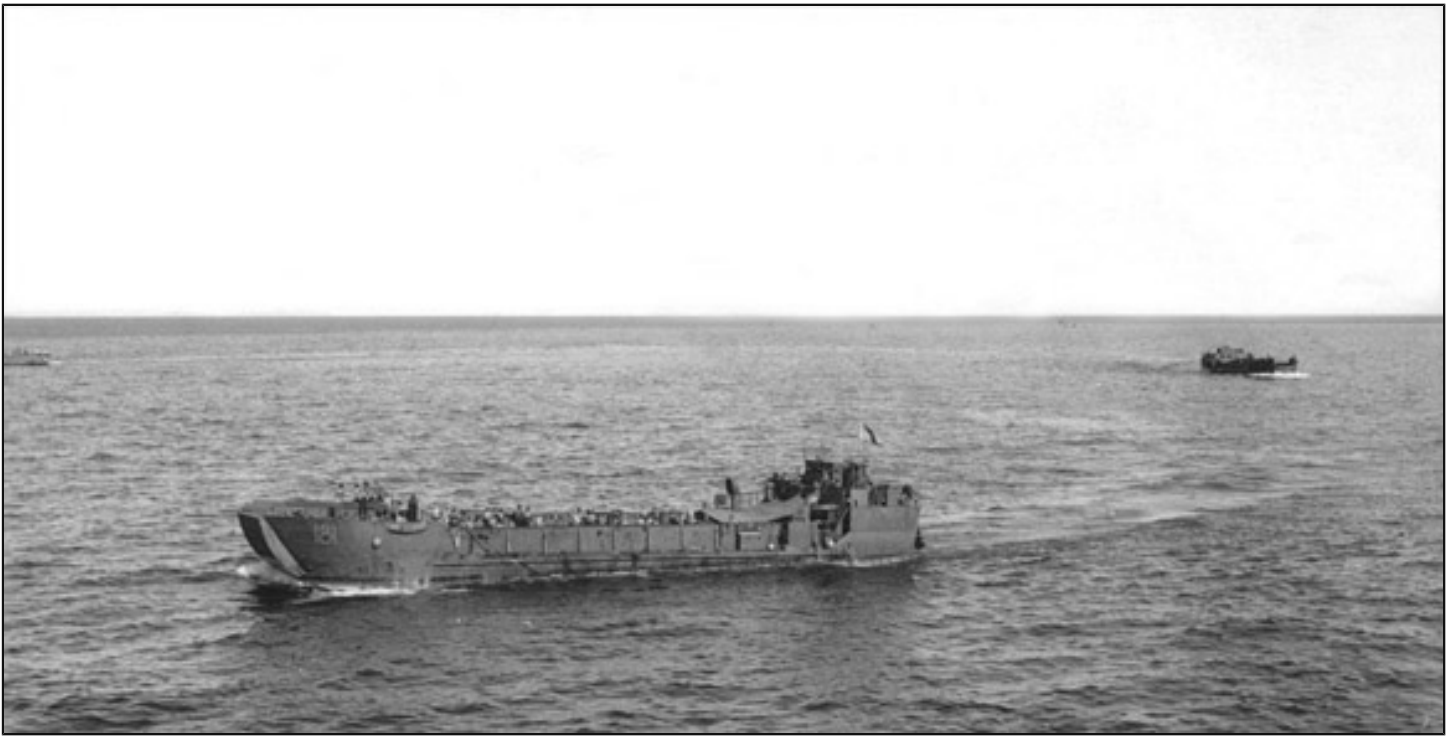
Most of the severely injured were immediately taken aboard the USS Nicholas DD-449 and put ashore at Lunga Point, Guadalcanal. The less seriously injured were taken aboard the USS Fletcher DD-445 from the two LCT's that plucked the survivors from the water. They too were delivered to Lunga Point.

Below are some photographs of that rescue. Click on any picture for hi-resolution version.

*All photos are official Navy photos with thanks to Dave McComb and Earl Faubion*



The LCT's begin their rescue with the USS Radford looking on



The LCT's now full of survivors swing into position alongside the Fletcher DD-445



Coming alongside



Fletcher crew members look on at the rescued 469 survivors

Copyright © 1997-2006  
DeHaven Sailors Association  
2531 N Kingsdale Rd, Joplin, MO 64804-1340  
417-499-4947  
[Contact Us](#)