

USS BASSETT DE-672
DE CLASSIFIED Episode 10
December 2021

Hello everyone and welcome to DE Classified, a podcast showcasing the history of destroyer escorts. Each month a member of USS SLATER's education crew will highlight a specific destroyer escort and share the stories of the sailors who served aboard these Trim But Deadly ships. I'm Shanna Schuster and today we are going to DE Classify USS BASSETT.

Edgar Rees Bassett was born in Philadelphia on March 10th, 1914. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve as a seaman 2nd class in February 1940 in New York City. Just over a year later he was commissioned ensign after earning his "wings" and he joined Fighting Squadron 42 in June as they were preparing for their first Neutrality Patrol cruise aboard USS YORKTOWN (CV-5).

Edgar was awarded air medals for his "aggressive" performance of duty in the beginning of the war, especially for his "strafing gun emplacements and enemy barrages during the raid of Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea on March 10th, 1942". He was also awarded the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty" during the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. Edgar shot down a Mitsubishi floatplane over Tulagi and shelled the Japanese destroyer YUZUKI as it fled Tulagi Harbor.

On the morning of 7 May he flew one of the fighters that protected Torpedo Squadron 5 in its attack on the Japanese carrier SHOHO. Later that day he helped to disperse a group of Japanese dive bombers and torpedo planes in the vicinity of YORKTOWN. The following morning, he flew a combat air patrol over Task

Force 17 and assisted in the downing of one enemy plane during the attack on his carrier.

Bassett was assigned to Fighting Squadron 3 with several other veteran pilots of Squadron 42 on the eve of the Battle of Midway. He flew one of the six fighters covering Squadron 3 in its attack on the Japanese Mobile Force. When the enemy combat air patrol swarmed over the torpedo planes and their escort, Bassett was shot down in flames at the outset and was killed.

In his honor, USS BASSETT was laid down as DE-672, a Buckley class destroyer escort, on 28 November 1943, at Orange, Texas. She was launched January 15th, 1944, and sponsored by Mrs. Margaret Bassett, the mother of Edgar. The ship was completed as a high-speed transport and redesignated APD-73 on June 27th. APDs were converted destroyers and destroyer escorts. They were used in Navy amphibious operations and intended to deliver small units such as Marines, Underwater Demolition Teams, and Army Rangers onto hostile shores. USS BASSETT held over 160 troops in addition to her crew of just over 200.

In the conversion of BASSETT from destroyer escort to APD, the superstructure was expanded to provide accommodations for the extra crew aboard. The original gun armament of three 3 inch 50s and two 40mm in a twin mount were replaced with one 5 inch 38 and six 40 mm in three twin mounts. The original six 20 mm guns were retained. BASSETT also carried two depth charge racks and eight K-guns.

APDs served grueling duty, they transported troops to beachheads, served as escorts for transports and supply vessels, conducted anti-submarine patrols, operated underwater demolition teams, conveyed passengers and mail to and from

forward units, and were involved in minesweeping operations. They were attacked by submarines, surface ships, and aircraft, and many were sunk or damaged.

On 23 February 1945, with Lcdr. Harold J. Theriault in command, the ship was commissioned. Theriault was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on 14 February 1914, making him a month older than his ship's namesake. As a graduate of Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Theriault had seen extensive service in the Atlantic. He placed the destroyer escort, USS HAYTER (DE-212), in commission in 1943. He commanded her from 16 March 1944 until 30 November 1944, when he was detached to commission BASSETT. Theriault's second command, BASSETT, had a routine career, reporting to the Pacific Fleet for duty on 1 May 1945. Following training, she reported for duty to Leyte in the Philippines. She delivered mail and passengers to various ports in the Philippines, and to Brunei Bay, Borneo.

Returning from Borneo to Leyte on 26 July 1945, BASSETT conducted antisubmarine patrols off the island. On August 2nd while on patrol she received reports of large groups of survivors in the water 200 miles away and altered course to investigate. Within 10 hours BASSETT joined in the rescue of survivors from the heavy cruiser INDIANAPOLIS (CA-35) which had been torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese submarine I-58.

I'm sure many of you have heard the story of the INDIANAPOLIS, it is the worst sea disaster in the history of the U.S. Navy. INDIANAPOLIS was a cruiser, twice the length of a destroyer escort, and much larger weaponry. The ship was built in 1930 in Camden, New Jersey. She frequently served as the flagship of the 5th fleet and served with honor from Pearl Harbor through the last campaign of WWII, while earning ten battle stars. Had the ship been torpedoed just 5 days earlier the outcome of the war, and history itself may have been very different.

After suffering a kamikaze attack 31 March 1945, she made her way to Mare Island Navy Yard for repairs. After the repairs and an overhaul INDIANAPOLIS received orders to partake in a top-secret mission of the utmost importance to national security. Transporting precious cargo to Tinian Island, the contents of the cargo was not known by the crew.

“The ship was looking good—new paint, some new guns. It was a very exciting time for this old country boy. Then we had sea trials. That was great, but then, all hell broke loose. The yard birds [shipyard workers] took all of the equipment off our ship in a big hurry! On July 15, we were out of Mare Island and into Hunters Point in San Francisco. Everything was very hush-hush and secret.” **Harold Bray, Seaman Second Class, Repair Division**

“Most didn’t pay attention at first, it was just the typical loading of supplies with the crane. But we knew something was going on. They had guards on station at all times. ’Course, we didn’t know what it was, but we knew it was a big deal, and we were glad to get rid of it by the time we reached Tinian.” **Louis “Kayo” Erwin, Coxswain**

“Rumors started flying all over the place. Wagers were being made and everybody was betting on what that crate contained. They were wagering it was anything from a new type of airplane engine to scented toilet paper for General MacArthur. Needless to say, nobody ever collected a nickel on that bet.” **Clarence Hershberger, Seaman First Class**

No one would have ever guessed the actual contents of the cargo.

“The shipment was no bigger than two old-fashioned ice cream freezers, cylindrical and of shiny aluminum. The lid of the bucket-like container was bolted down and out of the top protruded two eye bolts through which we ran a pipe whenever we carried it over long distances. Uranium being the heaviest of natural elements, the weight of this object was considerable, and it moved about as easily as a lump of lead... Actually, what we were transporting was one-half the essence of the [atomic] bomb with all the fusing, firing mechanism and casements removed... It seems unbelievable now that we did all we did, knowing as little as we knew of what the bomb, in that form, could do. We knew from what we had been told that the contents of our shipment were inert, but no one acted too sure about it.”

Major Robert Furman, Chief Intelligence Officer, Manhattan Project.

That’s right the INDY carried components of the Atomic Bomb across the Pacific, the same bomb that would be dropped on Hiroshima only a few weeks later.

After the crew offloaded the shipment, they stopped over at Guam, then continued a routine voyage from Guam to Leyte, which is a journey of about 1,200 miles due west across the Philippine Sea. Captain McVay, who hadn’t been in a war zone in quite a while asked about the tactical situation. “Things are very quiet,” Commodore James Carter, commander of Pacific Fleet’s advance headquarters, told him. The Japanese “are on their last legs, and there’s nothing to worry about.” Since the ship was under secret orders, she was not provided with anti-submarine escorts, like a destroyer escort. When Captain McVay turned into his sleeping quarters on the night of 29 July, the ship was steaming in relaxed condition at a modest speed, bulkhead doors were open for ventilation in the summer heat, and the ship was not zig-zagging or doing any evasive maneuvers on the overcast night.

Lieutenant Commander Mochitsura Hashimoto, captain of the Japanese submarine I-58, looked through his periscope and couldn't believe how fate placed him directly ahead of the path of an American cruiser.

“The big ships like Indianapolis didn't have sonar and they required some destroyers to be with them. Here we were going from Guam to the Philippines without a destroyer escort. They assured the captain everything was all right. We left thinking everything was fine. July 30 was a black, dark night and that submarine skipper, he looked towards the east and here was a little speck that he recognized as a ship. We were coming right toward him or fairly close, and he crash-dove, got in position, put his periscope on us and watched us.” **Loel Dene Cox, Seaman Second Class**

The first torpedo slammed into the bow on the starboard side, killing dozens of men instantly. A second torpedo struck amidships, igniting aviation fuel and flames soon engulfed the ship. The crew was soon abandoning ship and swimming for their lives, away from their ship before she took them to the depths along with her. INDIANAPOLIS sank in 12 minutes, her crew now alone in the ocean 280 miles away from land. About 300 men went down with the ship, and 900 made it into the water alive. Finding themselves floating in fuel oil, none of them could imagine that four days would pass before the Navy even knew the INDY was missing.

As the survivors struggled to stay afloat, coherent, and alive not all their shipmates were so fortunate.

“Men began drinking salt water so much that they were very delirious. In fact, a lot of them had weapons like knives, and they'd be so crazy, that

they'd be fighting amongst themselves and killing one another. And then there'd be others that drank so much [salt water] that they were seeing things. They'd say, "The Indy is down below, and they're giving out fresh water and food in the galley!" And they'd swim down, and a shark would get them. And you could see the sharks eating your comrade." **Granville Crane, Machinist's Mate Second Class**

Imagine you are one of the survivors of the sinking. It's now four days later. The sinking had been bad enough. The explosions, the fires, the confusion, and the unstoppable tragedy. Then, the scramble for life rafts, floating nets, and even life preservers. But worse was yet to come. Thousands of gallons of heavy, black, boiler oil covered the sea and the swimmers. Hope for rescue faded, when no rescue ships or planes appeared the morning following the sinking. The injured suffered severe pain in the hot sun, stung by salt water; there were not enough medications, food, or water. By day 2, the groups of survivors had started to drift apart, eventually being spread out over 25 square miles of ocean, and from 55 to 80 miles from the spot of the sinking. Nobody knew that, because of bureaucratic screw-ups, the Navy thought the Indianapolis was either still safely enroute or tucked up at a port in the Philippines. Nobody was coming. By day 3, the sharks were taking a heavy toll. They were hanging onto the edge of a raft and, without warning, your buddy would scream and be dragged to his death in the jaws of a shark. Exhaustion and ingestion of salt water and oil were driving some sailors out of their minds. Though very few were driven to cowardice, most still tried to help and protect their shipmates. Others succumbed to delirium, and set out to swim to the mirage of a nearby island or ship; some shed their life jackets and simply upended like ducks, after telling their mates they were going below decks to their bunk or to get some fresh fruit from the galley. By the evening of day 4, you were

resigned to the fact that nobody was coming. You'd clung to the raft, to your prayers, to your memory of your girlfriend and parents, but now it was hopeless. You were dying of thirst, your kapok life preserver was waterlogged, and you could hardly move. It was time to let go. Faintly in the distance you think you can hear the rumble of a plane's engines. You shouted to your friends. Could they hear it? It was not a mirage; they saw it, too. Help was on the way!

Lieutenant Jr. Grade Chuck Gwinn, a PV-1 Ventura pilot was on a routine sector search when he spotted the oil slick. Assuming and hoping it was the trail of an enemy sub, he dove to 300 feet to take a closer look. That's when he saw oil covered men waving and splashing, to get his attention. He immediately dropped a life raft and radio transmitter. All air and surface units capable of rescue operations were dispatched to the scene at once.

First to arrive was an amphibious PBY-5A Catalina patrol plane flown by Lieutenant Commander (USN) Robert Marks. Marks and his flight crew spotted the survivors and dropped life rafts; one raft was destroyed by the drop while others were too far away from the exhausted crew. Against standing orders not to land in open ocean, Marks decided to land the aircraft in twelve-foot swells after a vote from his crew. They were able to maneuver his craft to pick up 56 survivors. Space in the plane was limited, so men were lashed to the wing with parachute cord. These actions rendered the aircraft unflyable.

After nightfall, the destroyer escort USS CECIL J. DOYLE DE-368, the first of seven rescue ships, used its searchlight as a beacon and instilled hope in those still in the water. Now, every sailor knows that you run a dark ship in wartime. Any stray light from a loose door, small lantern, flame of a Zippo, or a lighted cigarette could cause a Japanese submarine to unleash its torpedoes. The DOYLE sailors

were at first alarmed and confused. What was their captain doing, making them a target for any enemy warship for miles around? But they quickly learned the reason and got ready to look for survivors; boats were prepared; lookouts lined the rails; orderlies gathered food, clothing, and medical supplies

Captain Claytor's actions had the desired effect. Survivor Edward Brown said, "When the Cecil Doyle's searchlight lit up the sky, one could not believe the relief we felt." Bill Akines said that if Claytor hadn't aimed his searchlight at the sky, he would not have lived. Richard Thelen added, "It probably saved many of us who were only clinging on by a thread." Joe Kiselica said, "When I first saw those beams of light low and far on the horizon, I thought I had died and was going to go to heaven on one of those beams. Then I realized it must be a ship. If we could just hang on for another night, we might make it. We must not sleep. We must keep our faces out of the water for one more night."

CECIL J. DOYLE and six other ships picked up the remaining survivors. After the rescue, Marks' plane was sunk by *DOYLE* as it could not be recovered.

Many of the survivors were injured, and all suffered from lack of food and water (leading to dehydration and hypernatremia; some found rations, such as Spam and crackers, among the debris of the *Indianapolis*), exposure to the elements (dehydration from the hot sun during the day and hypothermia at night, as well as severe desquamation due to continued exposure to saltwater and bunker oil), and shark attacks, while some killed themselves or other survivors in various states of delirium and hallucinations. Only 316 of the nearly 900 men set adrift after the sinking survived.

Hundreds of sharks were drawn to the wreck by the noise of the explosions and the scent of blood in the water. After picking off the dead and wounded, they began

attacking those still alive. The number of deaths attributed to sharks ranges from a few dozen to 150. "Ocean of Fear", a 2007 episode of the Discovery Channel TV documentary series Shark Week, states that the sinking of *Indianapolis* resulted in the most shark attacks on humans in history.

Now lets head back aboard the BASSETT and check in with the crew. I've haven't informed you yet, that not everyone was onboard with the rescue operations aboard BASSETT. Stories say that there were orders for the ship to turn back before rescuing anyone, and there was a mutiny before all was said and done.

We asked our National Archives researcher and Warship International Editor, Chris Wright, to check the Archives for more information on BASSETT's involvement with the rescue. The first step was to get the official records, deck logs, and war diary from the time of the rescue from the National Archives. What he found was that all the pertinent documents for BASSETT's participation in the rescue were missing. Even the pages from the pertinent pages from Transport Division 107's War Diary were missing. Interpret that any way you want.

What we did have was an excellent account of BASSETT's participation in the rescue by one of her boat officers, Ensign Peter Wren. Peter only made one brief reference to the "Mutiny," obviously wishing that the ship be remembered for her heroic contribution, rather than any controversy involved. We also have Tom Balunis' account of Bill Van Wilpe's participation in the rescue, one of the true heroes of the night. A USS BASSETT weblog contains several photos and accounts of the events on the ship that night. Richard Hulver's book, "A Grave Misfortune: The USS Indianapolis Tragedy" details the findings of the BASSETT inquiry. The Muster Rolls of BASSETT are available, and a look at the officer transfers on and off of the ship provides some insight. And finally, the deck logs

and action reports of the other ship's that participated in the rescue give some insight into BASSETT's participation.

BASSETT's timeline for the night of the rescue began on 2 August 1945, at 1430, when she received orders to proceed to search for survivors from an unknown ship. At 2230, she went to General Quarters. At 2242, the first rescue ship on the scene, Graham Claytor's USS CECIL J. DOYLE, illuminated the sky with her searchlights as encouragement to the men in the water. In contrast, the mood aboard BASSETT was apparently one of suspicion, as the possibility that the men in the water were Japanese being used to lure the Americans into a trap was considered. DOYLE would use her searchlights intermittently after midnight, but strangely there are no reports of BASSETT seeing DOYLE's searchlights. Aboard BASSETT, at 0052, the first life raft was sighted.

Right here, it should be noted that as an APD, BASSETT was much better suited to a rescue mission than a standard DE. An APD had four boats available, as well as expanded berthing and medical facilities, including a doctor aboard. By one o'clock in the morning, BASSETT had launched three of her lifeboats. Boat 1 was commanded by Ensign Jack Broser, Boat 2 by Ensign Peter Wren, and Boat 3 by Ensign Ken Hager. There is no mention of her having her full complement of four lifeboats, and if so, why the fourth boat was not launched.

At 0110, CECIL J. DOYLE's log noted BASSETT's searchlight to the north, and they exchanged visual signals. Claytor asked BASSETT to assist DOYLE, but BASSETT was already engaged in rescue operations of her own. Radio communications were not established. At 0121, BASSETT brought her first survivors aboard. By 0450, with 150 survivors aboard, BASSETT requested medical assistance from USS MADISON (DD-425). At 0515, LTjg. H.A. Stiles

was transferred to BASSETT via a lifeboat and remained aboard for the trip to Samar. At 0548, with several other rescue ships on the scene, BASSETT reported that she was heading to Leyte.

Commanding Boat 2 was Ensign Peter Wren. Wren enlisted in Navy on 28 December 1941, and completed boot camp in Norfolk, Virginia. The highest rate he earned as an enlisted man was Storekeeper first class. He was commissioned as a line officer from Columbia University in April 1944 and was assigned to the USS COATES (DE-685) in the Atlantic fleet. He was transferred to BASSETT in April 1945.

Wren's account of his boat's first return trip to BASSETT probably sheds considerable light on the "Mutiny." Directed by Lt. Ralph Horowitz, the CIC officer, Wren's boat located a group of 75-100 survivors. In trying to identify if the men in the water were American, Wren called out "Who are you and what ship are you from." According to Wren, the response from the sailors was, "Just like a dumb officer, always asking dumb-ass questions."

Realizing that there were more men in the water than he could handle, Wren used the FCR radio to have Jack Broser's Boat 1 assist. Communications were a problem, in that radio communication was lost when the boats were in the trough. Six to ten-foot swells were running that night, and the men in the water were covered with oil. The only light available was provided by handheld battle lanterns. In addition, the lifeboats had high freeboard, making pulling the survivors aboard very difficult. Initially, the rescue craft had only four men aboard, the coxswain, engineer, bow hook, and the officer in charge. More were needed to effect rescue.

Wren described the night as the blackest overcast night he'd ever encountered. As he prepared to return to BASSETT with his first load of survivors, the ship was showing no lights, and Wren radioed CIC requesting that they turn on lights to guide him back.

This was apparently the critical moment on the bridge of the BASSETT. It would appear that Theriault, the captain, was reluctant to turn on lights for fear of being torpedoed. According to sonar man Gunnar Gunheim, who was in the sound hut just forward and below the bridge, a seaman yelled out, "Look at that fish," in reference to a large shark in the water. The captain mistook the exclamation to be a reference to a torpedo and gave the order "All head full!" and yelled "Get the lifeboats aboard and let's get the hell out of here." A throttle man, Gene Bell, told Wren that he did receive the full ahead order in the engine room, immediately followed by an "All stop" order. The Chief Engineer Lt. William Anderson made his way to the bridge four decks up, to find out what was going on.

Topside, we can only speculate, but it would appear that the Executive Officer Lt. James W. Henderson, and two other officers, countermanded the Captain's order, and said, "No way. We are going to stay here until we get every survivor aboard." It would appear that events on the bridge, coupled with Peter Wren's plea for illumination, forced the officer's to take action and remove the Captain from the bridge, to complete the rescue.

According to Peter Wren, Captain Theriault was confined to his quarters for the duration of the rescue. The lights were turned on to guide the lifeboats back to the ship, and the rescue effort continued through the night. The first INDIANAPOLIS officer rescued was Ens. Don Blum, in Wren's second trip. He was ushered to the bridge after pickup and was told he could sit in the Captain's chair because "He

would not need it.” In the end, BASSETT saved 151 men, more than any other ship, involved in the rescue.

There were incredible feats of heroism by the BASSETT. The officer in charge of Boat 1, Ens. Jack Broser, went into the water twice to rescue survivors. Another hero of the night was a brawny 19-year-old gunner’s mate from New Jersey, Bill Van Wilpe. Initially, Van Wilpe helped bring survivors aboard on the fantail. An expert swimmer of incredible strength, he realized the greater need was to help in the lifeboats. He volunteered to go aboard Jack Broser’s boat, to assist in pulling men out of the water. When they arrived on the scene, without orders, Van Wilpe dove into the water to boost survivors aboard. Broser ordered him back aboard, but Van Wilpe challenged him to assist him in the water, which Broser did. As the boat prepared to depart, Van Wilpe insisted on remaining in the water to keep the spirits up of those remaining. On their last trip, three survivors were washed overboard while attempting to board BASSETT. It was documented by several witnesses that Van Wilpe dove in and brought all three back to the surface.

The small boats had to struggle through ten-foot swells and a thick layer of surface bunker oil. The survivors were surrounded by schools of sharks. Van Wilpe was not the sole hero among the Bassett rescuers, but certainly one of the most notable. The care that the INDIANAPOLIS survivors received from the BASSETT crew could only be described as outstanding. Faced with the horrific wounds and sounds of men in agony, the survivors described their treatment aboard as most compassionate. Because of the fresh white paint in the troop quarters, and the care they received, many of the survivors thought they were on a hospital ship.

The total number of survivors rescued varies with different sources. But as Wren described it, “You should realize that the crew of the USS Bassett recovered 158

survivors, two of which died on board. With a crew of 206 men and officers, subtract those who had to stay on watch, maintaining the ship's operations. Wherever a crewman on watch could be spared to help along those who were off watch, all were helping the survivors. Bringing them from the sea and getting aboard was difficult, but the job of caring for them became one on one.

Remember, these sailors spent four days floating in salt water. They had to be washed free from the fuel oil, especially their hair, eyes, ears, and nostrils. They needed to be washed tenderly around the chafed arms, neck, and chin areas, from the lifesaving life jackets. The washing was followed by clothing, bedding down, and feeding. The onboard procedures continued from just after midnight on August 2nd until they were ashore in Samar after 0830 hours on August 4th. That's about 32 hours of constant care.

Following their delivery of the survivors to Samar, accusations of cowardice, incompetence, and malingering during the rescue of the survivors were brought against the skipper of BASSETT, by his executive officer. There was a special investigation by the Navy Inspector General and it was determined that there were no serious faults of which Theriault was guilty, and that the accusations primarily stemmed from personal differences between the two officers.

Richard Hulver's book, "A Grave Misfortune," includes some of the minutes of the inquiry. Unfortunately, Hulver omits large portions, including the findings of the investigation, general chronology of BASSETT's service, and biographies of officers. The specifications presented mostly relate to an improper performance of duty and poor judgment, relating to seamanship during the rescue. At no time is there any indication that Theriault was not in command of the vessel during the

rescue. A reading of the transcript does emphasize the difficulties the crew encountered in making the rescue under adverse conditions.

Following the inquiry, while the rest of the rescue ships were back at sea performing the onerous and sickening task of body identification and burial, the Navy decided to send the USS Bassett crew to Hollandia, New Guinea. They left Samar on August 6 and learned about the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima while they were at sea. The crew was given a week of rest and relaxation, staying at what Van Wilpe referred to as an "Officers' Rest Camp." They remained there for 1 week filled with food usually reserved for only officers. The crew got the impression that the Navy wanted to get them out of the picture for a while. They didn't want any more controversy over the rescue, and this was a way of saying, "Let's forget about the whole rescue incident and go and take a little vacation. You guys did a good job rescuing those 152 men, and now it's time to relax and forget about everything for a while." Bill said it was a reward for the crew, and to help quiet things down. They were being rewarded for their silence, while the navy swept the controversy under the rug. Time at a rest camp was a good way to get the crew's mind off what had taken place.

The muster roles tell the final chapter. On 30 August 1945, Theriault was transferred to Navy Base Hospital 114 for hospitalization. That same day, Lcdr. Wallis C. Wetlaufer arrived on board from USS DIACHENKO APD-123, as temporary Commanding Officer. On 26 September, Theriault returned aboard from the hospital. Five days later, on 1 October, Wetlaufer was transferred to USS WASATCH (AGC-9) to await further orders. The quarterly muster roll dated 1 October is signed by Theriault and Henderson. Two weeks later, on 14 October 1945, Theriault was transferred to the Bureau of Personnel for reassignment. That same day, Lcdr. Wallace C. Wetlaufer was transferred back from USS

WASATCH, to take command of BASSETT once again. Henderson, the XO was released from the ship on 1 November, to return to the states. Wetlaufer was relieved on 13 December 1945, for separation. On 1 January 1946, the muster roll was signed by CO Lt. C. L Nagle, and the XO was now Ralph Horowitz. This disagreement, mutiny whatever you want to call it, did not get solved with a week of rest and relaxation.

BASSETT was assigned to Amphibious Group 8, to take part in the occupation of Japan. She supported the landings at Wakayama, before serving as a harbor entrance control ship. Detached from these duties on November 18th 1945, BASSETT participated in the massive homeward bound movement of veterans, Operation "Magic Carpet."

The ship was decommissioned on 29 August 1946, at Green Cove Springs, Florida, until she was recommissioned on 7 December 1950, as part of the build-up of the fleet after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, with Ld. Cmdr. Demetrius Vellis in command.

Over the next seven years BASSETT operated out of Norfolk with assignments in Havana, St. Thomas, and Puerto Rico. She escorted convoys, participated in amphibious landings, and performed plane guard duty. In June 1952 she began her first midshipmen training cruise, which took her to Scotland and several French ports.

In 1953 BASSETT continued her duty and stood plane guard duty for USS MINDORO (CVE-120). In June of 1954, unrest in Guatemala prompted her dispatch to the region to observe the situation. Upon her return she carried out another midshipmen cruise to Canada and Puerto Rico.

In 1955 she was underway searching for a Navy hurricane-hunting plane lost in the Caribbean while tracking Hurricane "Janet." Her five-day hunt proved unsuccessful, and the plane and her crew were never found.

She received orders to proceed to British Honduras, today's Belize, to assist victims of Hurricane Janet. While en route her orders were altered, sending her to the Mexican port of Tampico, where floods caused by the hurricane had engulfed 32,000 square miles of Mexican territory, causing loss of lives and property. While there, the crew carried out relief work and brought supplies to the residents and rescued marooned people. The crew finished this assignment and returned in time to spend Thanksgiving 1955 with their families.

BASSETT was decommissioned a second time on 26 November 1957, at Norfolk, Virginia, until struck from the Naval Register on 1 May 1967. Then BASSETT was transferred to Colombia, commissioned ARC ALMIRANTE TONO (DT-04) on 6 September 1968, and served through the mid 1970s until struck from the Colombian Naval Register and broken up for scrap at an unknown date.

Harold Theriault went on to serve in the Korean War and served twenty years, retiring with the rank of commander. Tom Balunis' account of Bill Van Wilpe's participation in the rescue, brought the story to light, but it received little attention. In the end, most felt that a "Secret Deal" had been made, by which the USS BASSETT crew did not bring charges against their captain, and the Navy would not bring charges of mutiny against the three USS Bassett officers who overturned the captain's orders. Documents, depositions, and the BASSETT's action reports disappeared from the records. And as a result of this "Deal," none of them would

be put in for any medals or commendations either. Peter Wren said that was fine by the crew because what they accomplished was their great reward. They saved over 150 fellow sailors. And the crew kept their word all these years. They sought no additional recognition. Thus, many men deserving of recognition never received it.

Thank you for listening to DE Classified. This podcast is brought to you by the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum aboard USS SLATER. You can find a transcript of this episode, accompanying photos, and bibliography at usslater.org/de-classified. My name is Shanna Schuster and we'll see you next month when we DE Classify USS STEWART.

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/b/bassett-i.html>

https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/03/27/setting_the_record_straight_loss_of_the_uss_indianapolis_and_the_question_of_clarence_donnor_113248.html

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Bassett

<https://www.achrnews.com/blogs/17-opinions/post/88784-a-hero-among-us>

<https://www.pbase.com/butlers/indianapolis>

<https://www.history.com/news/uss-indianapolis-sinking-survivor-stories-sharks>

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/surviving-sinking-uss-indianapolis>

<https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/ships/modern-ships/indianapolis.html>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f0eedcc6d27416d718eca4f/t/5f35728291c57613acbd7965/1597338248591/Doyle.PDF>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VA-42_\(U.S._Navy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VA-42_(U.S._Navy))