

DMS 41/A12
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U.S.S. DORAN
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SHIP'S HISTORY

The DORAN (DD 634) was built in the Boston Navy Yard, and commissioned on 14, 1942. She is a unit of the 1700 ton Bristol Class, a group mass produced in 1942 while the larger war time Fletcher Class was getting into production.

The DORAN'S shakedown cruise was greatly curtailed so that she would be available for the forth coming North African Invasion. She reported for duty with the Atlantic Fleet in early September, took part in a month's pre-invasion maneuvers and sailed with the invasion fleet in early October 1942.

She was assigned to the Southern Task Force whose objective was Safi, French Morocco and took part in the pre-invasion bombardment. She also put a landing force ashore in a small boat to capture a Vichy submarine driven ashore by other naval forces. The landing force were the only DORAN men to set foot on African soil that trip as the ship remained continuously underway for 42 days without provisioning or anchoring. The Thanksgiving dinner of '42 which consisted of flapjacks, rice and fried eggs, the only stores remaining, is still remembered by the "plank owners".

She returned to New York after the invasion and spent the rest of the winter of 42 - 43 in convoying fast troop ships to Casablanca. On her first convoy trip, she was stationed in advanced picket station, as she was one of the few ships then provided with a new type of radar. With this, she discovered a wolf pack of Nazi submarines lying on the surface in the convoys path. In the ensuing engagement, she provided illumination for the battle ship, cruiser, and destroyer escort. The heavy losses suffered by the Nazis caused them to give up wolf pack attacks against well protected, fast convoys. While in Casablanca at the end of this trip, she went thru the only German air raid on that port on January 1, 1943.

In February of that year she stood by the crippled transport "URUGUAY" which had been rammed by the tanker "SALOME" while zigzagging and escorted her to Bermuda.

The rest of the winter was marked by bad weather, but otherwise uneventful.

In May of 1943, the DORAN, with the rest of the squadron, were taken off combat duty and reported to the Chesapeake to prepare for the Sicilian invasion. Her trip over to Sicily and the initial invasion are able described in John Masco's "To All Hands". While the invasion forces were gathering in Oran, the DORAN patrolled outside the harbor and celebrated July 4th by attacking and engaging a German submarine. After the first invasion, the DORAN engaged in control and fire support work along the South and West coasts of Sicily, operating with the British Monitor "ABERCROMBIE" and the famous "Galloping Ghost of the Sicilian Coast" the U.S.S. PHILADELPHIA. During this period, she was operating with the British fleet so much of the time that she was referred to as H.M.S. DORAN.

Ordered to return to the United States for new duties in August '43, she was leaving Bizerte one night just as the heaviest German raid of the war on that port took place. She was heavily bombed and strafed by planes diverted from Bizerte by the heavy AA fire over that port. Despite German claims the next morning to have sunk an American destroyer attempting to escape from Bizerte harbor, she escaped serious damage and joined an escort carrier killer group for the voyage back to New York.

After a welcome two weeks overhaul in New York, the ship went to Maine waters for maneuvers prior to reporting for new duty. The DORAN suffered her only loss to date when an officer was lost overboard in a gale en route to Portland.

The winter of 43 -44 was notable only for its unusually severe weather. The ship was engaged in its old job of escorting fast troopships, this time to British ports via the North Channel route. During this winter the ship visited Londonderry, Belfast, Greenock, Glasgow and Cardiff. The high point of the winter was Christmas Day, 1943 when the ship was caught in a hurricane south of Iceland. The barometer went down 153 points in less than eight hours and dropped 40 more before the center of the storm passed. Christmas dinner had presightedly been eaten prior to departure from Glasgow. On another rough trip later that year, it was necessary to perform an appendectomy in a near gale. It was successful with the Chief Boatswain's Mate in attendance to lash the Doctor and patient to the Wardroom table.

With the coming of warm weather, the squadron returned to the Mediterranean for duty and took part in various feints at points on the coast of Southern France and North Italy to help keep the Germans guessing and offbalance during the Allied drive beyond Rome. This division was held in reserve during the actual Southern France invasion and returned to the U.S. shortly afterwards.

The winter of 44 -45 started out as a repetition of 43 - 44 with the ship making a convoy run to Liverpool. The DORAN was the first U.S. war vessel to visit that port, and all hands will long remember the lavish hospitality offered by the Royal Navy and people of Liverpool.

The rapidly developing situation in both Europe and the Pacific caused a change in the schedule, and the DORAN reported to the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C. for conversion for special bombardment duties in support of the Marine Corps. These plans were again cancelled and the ship left for the Caribbean for duty with carriers on pre-Pacific shakedown. She was in Panama at the time of the Battle of the Bulge and was promptly sent back to Boston.

With the successful outcome of the Battle of the Bulge, the DORAN was assigned duty as flagship for slow convoys on the Norfolk - Oran run and was engaged in this seemingly dull duty until May of 45 when the last great flurry of German submarine activity put all hands once more on their toes.

With the end in Europe only a matter of days, and sufficient fleet destroyers already in the Pacific, the DORAN reported to Charleston, S.C. for conversion to a Destroyer Minesweeper and her number became DMS 41. During her almost three years duty in the Atlantic, no vessel she had escorted had been lost by enemy action.

The hasty conversion caused by urgent demands in the Pacific for fast minesweepers left many items incomplete or partially complete when she left the Charleston Yard and, after a short and hectic shakedown in Norfolk, departed Panama. In Panama it was found she was unsuited for war cruising and, as yards on both coasts were filled with Okinawa casualties, she stayed in Panama for three weeks while ship force made all possible repairs. Shipshape once more, she arrived in San Diego in time to celebrate V-J day and, with the consequent drop in the urgency of yard work, was allotted some time for repairs before proceeding to the forward areas.

Leaving in early September for Okinawa, she arrived just in time to run into the now famous typhoon of October '45. She rode the storm out at sea and on her return to port rescued all the crew of a transport plane forced down by the weather. For his excellent seamanship and ship handling on this occasion the Captain, Lieutenant Commander Charles H. Hutchins, U.S.N.R., received a letter of commendation from the Commander Minecraft, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

With her crew already seriously depleted by demobilization, the DORAN proceeded with her squadron to the Yellow Sea to sweep Japanese minefields closing the entrances to Korean, North Chinese, and Manchurian ports. In this, her first sweeping operation, the DORAN distinguished herself by sweeping more mines and losing less gear than any other vessel present.

With the completion of this sweep, the DORAN was based on Sasebo, Japan and assigned courier duty. By a lucky coincidence, she arrived in Shanghai, China just before Christmas '45, giving all hands a holiday in this metropolis of the East that helped make up for being farther from home than ever before.

With the coming of 1946, the thoughts of all hands turned to completing the sweeping job in Asiatic waters as soon as possible and returning to the U.S. for a well deserved overhaul for the ship and demobilization for most of the crew.

Following is a list of successive Commanding Officers during the war period together with home addresses:

Commander Howard W. Gordon, Jr., U.S. Navy - 1600 West North Ave., Baltimore, Md.
Commander Norman E. Smith, U.S. Navy, - 2318 Yosemite Drive, Los Angeles, Calif.
Lieut. Comdr. Charles H. Hutchins, USNR - Rural Route #3, Terre Haute, Indiana.
Lieut. Comdr. Pemberton Southard, U.S. Navy - 101 Rutledge Ave., Charleston, S.C.

Pemberton Southard
P. SOUTHARD,
Lieut. Commander, U.S. Navy,
Commanding.

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