

Subject:July 1972 mine strike

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From:Derick Hartshorn <DerickH@charter.net>

To:heimlichfamily@comcast.net

Hi,

I have an article that the author asked me to submit to The Dashpot, The Assn. of Minemen quarterly journal.

I thought it might be of interest and further clarification to your web site readers and shipmates.

Sincerely,

Derick S. Hartshorn

Webmaster, minemen.org

The USS Warrington Incident

When you are a soldier or even a pilot in battle, you see the targets that you aim at and sometimes even witness the result of your actions. Not so for the Navy Minemen that assembled the mines planted in Vietnam. Even though our fingerprints were still fresh on the mine cases, we were never present when the mine got its prey, whether it be friend or foe. This was not the case concerning the Navy destroyer, USS Warrington. We knew she hit two of our Mk 36 Destructors off the coast of Vietnam, on July 17, 1972.

Investigations revealed pieces of Mk 82 general bomb casings imbedded in her hull. Mk 82 bombs were the 500 lb weapon that we converted into Mk 36 Destructors. Naive newspaper reporters speculated that it was a US mine that broke away from its "moorings." But what actually happened was that the USS Warrington had disregarded messages warning them about the area used for jettisoning bombs and Destructors.

Pilots returning to their carriers had been directed to release their un-expended pay-loads in the "Unarmed" configuration, in the event that they had not been dropped on their targets. Evidently these two weapons were still armed. The interesting thing about this incident is that the components for these two Destructors, were more than likely processed by the crew (my crew) of building P-5, located in Naval Magazine Subic Bay, Philippines.

Coincidences in life are sometimes discarded, as such; just coincidence. But as far as my life is concerned, I tend to take note when life goes full circle. As you read further you will discover the truth in that statement. Was it coincidence that I happened to be present when the Warrington was towed into the harbor, and I saw the gaping hole that our mines created? The irony being that I could have very likely handled the components of the

weapons that caused that gaping hole. No Mineman, that I have ever met, can say that they have witnessed the result of their craft. But, I can.

Two weeks after the USS Warrington incident, the USS Hollister also hit two more Destroyers in another area of the South China Sea. Although the damage to the USS Hollister was not extensive, the USS Warrington was not so lucky. Her damage was far worse and she was eventually decommissioned and scrapped. I extend my deepest apologies to the captain and crew of the US warship USS Warrington.

As a tribute, the following is a short history of that ship and its brave crew:

The USS Warrington (DD-383) was named after Lewis Warrington and commissioned at the New York Navy Yard on 9 February 1938. Lewis had been an officer in the Navy during the Barbary Wars and the War of 1812. He also temporarily served as the Secretary of the Navy. A movie was made about her actions in WWII, starring, Walter Brennan.

*Unfortunately she was lost at sea during a hurricane with the loss of 348 officers and enlisted. Warrington's name was stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels on **23 September 1944**. Please take note: **(Coincidentally, September 23 is my birthday)**.*

The next ship to bear the name Warrington was commissioned USS Warrington DD-843, on 20 Dec 1945 and had a illustrious history during the Vietnam war.

Her last mission before encountering the US underwater mines was on 15 July, as she briefly pulled into port at Danang and then headed for the coast of North Vietnam to participate in Operation "Linebacker." On 16 July, she relieved Hamner (DD-718) of "Linebacker" duty and began her primary mission -- the destruction of North Vietnamese small craft and observation of communist Chinese merchant shipping. The following morning, while operating in company with Hull (DD-945) and Robinson (DDG-12), Warrington came under the rapid and heavy fire of enemy shore batteries; but she took prompt evasive action and avoided damage.

That same afternoon, however, luck abandoned her. At 1316, two underwater explosions close aboard her port side rocked the destroyer. She suffered severe damage in her after fire room, after engine room, and in the main control room. Her crew rose to the occasion, and their efforts enabled her to retire from the area at 10 knots. Later, the damage forced her to shut down her propulsion plant and ask Robinson for a tow.

Through the night of 17 and 18 July, her crew struggled against flooding caused by ruptured fuel oil and fresh water tanks, but she remained afloat the next morning when Robinson turned her over to Reclaimer (ARS-42) for the first leg of the trip to Subic Bay. Tawakoni (ATF-114) took over from Reclaimer on the 20th and towed Warrington safely into Subic Bay on the 24th. Throughout the six-day voyage, Warrington's ship's company worked magnificently to keep their ship afloat.

For a month after her arrival, Warrington received the special attention of the ship repair facility at Subic Bay to improve her habitability and insure watertight integrity. However, at the end of August, a board of inspection and survey found her to be unfit for further naval service.

*Accordingly, on 23 September 1972, (the day of my 22nd birthday), 28 years to the day after her predecessor (USS Warrington (DD-383) was stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels, the USS Warrington DD-843 was decommissioned at Subic Bay and her name was once again stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels. On 24 April 1973, she was sold to the Taiwan Navy for cannibalization and scrapping. **Life does in fact go full circle.***

So was the fate of the USS Warrington (DD-843).

To the brave crew off the USS Warrington (DD-843) I extend a hardy “Hoozah! May the memory of your gallant history remain in the hearts and minds of all that knew you.

With deepest sympathy,

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