

The U.S.S. COLLETT (DD730), built by Bath Iron Works at Bath, Maine, was placed in commission at 1500, 16 May 1944 at the Navy Yard, Boston, Mass. under the command of Commander James D. Collett, U.S.N. The ship was named for the brother of the skipper, Lt. Comdr. John A. Collett, who was killed in the Battle of Midway.

After a brief fitting out period and shakedown, the ship spent several weeks in escort and training duty on the east coast before receiving orders to the Pacific Fleet. Thus, it was not until November that the COLLETT arrived in the Forward Areas.

On 5 November, as a unit of Task Group 38.4, sortied from Ulithi for operations against the enemy. Thereafter, the COLLETT participated in every THIRD and FIFTH Fleet Operation until the termination of the war with Japan; Neutralization of enemy air power and shipping in the Philippine Area, occupation of Iwo Jima, bombardment of Okino Daito and Minami Daito Shima, occupation of Okinawa, and operations against the Empire from Kyushu to Hokkaido.

On the evening of 19 November, off the Philippines, the COLLETT was on station as Task Force strike picket. The day had been uneventful until dusk when four Japanese heavy bombers were spotted about seven miles to starboard, low on the water, heading for the Task Force some twenty miles distant. The ship opened fire with her main battery, and the bombers turned and came in for attack. Two torpedoes were launched, one passing close ahead, and the other close aboard on the starboard quarter. Two Bettys were shot down, one was hit and damaged, and the other left the area rather hurriedly.

In the second series of THIRD Fleet carrier strikes against Luzon, the major opposition was from the elements rather than the enemy, and the typhoon which caught the Fast Carrier Task Force in December caused far more damage than the Japs had ever been able to do.

Turning north, the Force struck Okinawa and Formosa in succession in the face of almost continuous enemy air activity, and, upon completion of these operations returned to Ulithi for replenishment and rest. At this time, too, operational command of the Fast Carrier Task Forces passed from the Commander THIRD Fleet to the Commander FIFTH Fleet. Thus it was as a unit of Task Force 58 that the COLLETT sortied from Ulithi early in February 1945 to take part in the first Tokyo strike. To the great surprise of all hands, opposition was slight, and after a day of uninterrupted pounding of the Tokyo Area, the Force proceeded southward to provide direct air support for the assault on Iwo Jima. At the conclusion of this operation, Desron 61 with the cruisers SAN DIEGO, VINCENNES, and MIAMI attacked Okino Daito Shima to keep their hands in on shore bombardment.

Toward the middle of March the Task Force commenced the preliminary strikes directed against enemy air power in the Kyushu-Southern Houshu Area as a preparation for the assault on Okinawa. The Japs reacted strongly with high altitude and Kamikaze attacks by day, and torpedo attacks, aided by illumination at night. A great number of planes was destroyed by the Force-Combat Air Patrols and ship's AA fire sharing in the destruction. The COLLETT had a number of brush with the enemy during this period, usually during the lonely hours on picket duty. On one occasion, when about to open fire on a plane closing rapidly, she was ordered to hold fire as a night fighter had contact. The night fighter closed rapidly, but so did the bomber. At last tracers appeared in the darkness and the Jap was finally splashed about 2,500 yards ahead of the ship. This sort of thing was a little wearing.

On another occasion - it was the COLLETT's lucky night to be picket again - the Japs selected her particular station to harass. From dusk until midnight there were bogies in generous quantity. An excellent illumination was staged, flares well placed in all four quadrants, and one plane made a torpedo run which missed. Once again the high maneuverability of the 2200 ton destroyer paid off.

On 18 April, off Okinawa, the COLLETT joined the MERTZ in working over a Jap submarine which had been detected in the area. Three runs were made by the COLLETT without apparent result, but the fourth attack was followed by a heavy underwater explosion. An oil slick three or four miles long gradually formed, and from this slick human remains and floating debris carrying Japanese markings were recovered. The submarine was considered definitely sunk, and the Commanding Officer awarded the Legion of Merit Medal.

In company with two divisions of destroyers, the COLLETT conducted a day bombardment of Kita Daito Shima and Minami Daito Shima in the southeast Nansai Shoto group. No opposition was encountered except irregular small arms fire; spotting planes reported considerable damage inflicted on the target areas.

About this time, unpleasant noises began to be heard in the after part of the ship, and soon it was apparent that something had let go on the port propeller shaft. The ship was detached from Task Group 58.1 and proceeded independently to Ulithi where drydock inspection revealed a broken strut. Repairs were completed on the 2nd of May, and for several days thereafter the COLLETT was out on picket duty 60 miles southeast of Ulithi to give early warning of air attack from Jap-held islands in the vicinity. On the 9th, the ship rejoined Task Group 58.1 in actions supporting the campaign on Okinawa. Save when the Force struck airfields on Kyushu the Japs left us pretty much alone and concentrated on the ships near the beach. For a couple of days off Kyushu, however, there was enough activity to keep every one occupied. The 14th of May was one of those days. At 0700 the COLLETT, with adjacent ships, shot down a Judy which had elected to try landing on one of us. During the course of the morning the Task Group destroyed 21 enemy planes by gunfire alone.

Early on the morning of 5 June (By this time we were THIRD Fleet again), there was another workout with a typhoon. Throughout the night, wind and sea had been building up rapidly from the southeast, and between 0600 and 0700 the HORNET barograph showed winds of 100 knots - which was plenty for most of us. The ship behaved extremely well in the steep and confused seas although it was frequently necessary to ring up full speed on one engine and use full rudder to keep the ship headed up into the wind. The COLLETT was outside the formation which minimized danger of collision in the zero visibility, and there seemed little cause for concern until ships began reporting damage - flooded steering engine rooms, weakened structure, and then the PITTSBURGH reported that a hundred feet of her bow had broken off and was floating away. Suddenly it began to seem quite rough. About 0700, we entered the center of the typhoon, and the wind dropped rapidly; the seas, however, were extremely confused, rising like pyramids and falling suddenly, not at all like the long, regular seas customary in the open ocean. About forty minutes after entering the center, the wind started to blow again, now out of the northwest. But we were in the "safe" semi-circle, and when her head was brought close to the wind again, the ship rode surprisingly well. Before long, the force of the storm had slackened noticeably, the visibility improved rapidly, and we found ourselves with the SWENSON and a stray merchantman that had become separated from the logistics group. The Task Group was well dispersed - no other ships were in sight and the merchantman confessed that his knowledge as to his whereabouts was extremely hazy. The COLLETT and SWENSON led him to the rendezvous with the Task Group, and about 1500 the Group was reformed.

Some of the ships looked a little peculiar: the HORNET and BENNINGTON, for example had their flight decks hanging down over their bows, and the PITTSBURGH was a good deal shorter than designed, but all ships were accounted for. By the middle of June the Force had retired to San Pedro Bay, Leyte, P.I., for repairs and replenishment.

On 1 July 1945, Task Force 38 sortied from San Pedro Bay for what was to prove the longest and the concluding operation of the war. Offensive action began on the 20th with a strike against Tokyo, and from then until the end of the war Task Force 38 stood off the coast of Japan, launching strikes from Kyushu to Hokkaido and punctuating these with heavy bombardments of shore installations and light forces' anti-shipping sweeps at night.

Destroyer Squadron 61 made one of these anti-shipping sweeps on the night of 22-23 July. The plan called for entering the Sagami Nada from the East, rounding O'Shima and making exit through the western passage. Because of the short nights of the season and the distance to be covered, high speeds were required, and even without delays down would find the squadron uncomfortably close to Tokyo - with no air cover. Our ability to make the necessary speed was problematical too, as a typhoon had just passed that way and left a troublesome sea behind. Fortunately, however things worked out very simply. As the squadron tore into the Sagami Nada, a convoy of three merchantmen and one escort was discovered sneaking around Misaki to the North. Eighteen torpedoes were fired, and all ships opened up with five-inch batteries. Two merchantmen were believed to have been sunk, a third probably sunk, and the escort damaged. At 0010, the squadron commenced a high speed retirement to the southeastward and proceeded to rendezvous with the Task Force.

On 15 August, Japanese acceptance of the Allied surrender terms was announced, and shortly thereafter many Japanese planes were shot down in the vicinity of the Task Force. One of these planes crashed in flames 8,000 yards on the port bow of the COLLETT. Evidently some Japs hadn't received the word. On the 17th of August, Commander Collett was relieved as Commanding Officer by Commander C. R. Hems, U.S.N. For the next month, the ship served in the screen of carrier groups furnishing air cover for the occupation forces. This work, while highly essential, was also highly boring, and all hands were overjoyed to receive orders on 13 September 1945 to proceed to Tokyo Bay to arrive on the 14th.

Early next morning the COLLETT steamed past the scene of her recent encounter off Misaki, past Yokosuka, and anchored in Tokyo Kaiwan - She had been 76 days continuously at sea.

On the 20th, she was underway again, this time as part of a Task Group returning veterans to the United States for discharge. Enroute, a stop was made at Okinawa to take on passengers, and on the 24th the Group took its departure and set course for Pearl Harbor, arriving on 4 October 1945 to replenish and effect a final distribution of personnel according to their designated ports of entry.

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As a unit of Destroyer Squadron 61, the COLLETT, during her war career participated in actions which earned for her crew six engagement stars and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one bronze star.

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Four days were spent in redistribution of personnel and on the 9th of October the COLLETT was underway, this time for San Pedro, Calif. The trip back was made in seven days, arriving on the 15th. A brief stay in San Pedro was enjoyed by all hands. The first leave section shoved off on thirty days annual leave on the morning of the 16th. In the meantime the ship was preparing to celebrate Navy Day at Fort Houser, Calif. Navy Day was celebrated in real Navy tradition for the first time in four years. The ship was opened to inspection by the public and 6,500 visitors filed over the gangway during the day.

On the following day the ship got underway for Mare Island, Calif, and a much needed overhaul. Although there wasn't any extensive work done, many minor repairs were completed with some new additions to the ship. Upon arrival and during the stay in the states most of the original commissioning crew were transferred for discharge. After completion of the overhaul and test runs the ship got underway on 5 January 1946 for San Diego, Calif. Twenty-three days of refresher training at San Diego and the COLLETT was once again on its way to the forward area - destination, Shanghai, China.

Before leaving the states the Squadron designation was changed from Destroyer Squadron 61 to Destroyer Squadron 9.

The trip was made via Pearl Harbor, Eniwetok and Guam, arriving in Shanghai on 4 March 1946. The ship was immediately assigned to the SEVENTH Fleet. The COLLETT's first assignment was the North China Mail Run to Tsingtao, China with mail and passengers, leaving Shanghai on the 11th and arriving in Tsingtao on the following day. On the 13th, the ship was again underway on another mail and passenger run to Taku, China, arriving and departing Taku on the 14th of March, returning to Tsingtao via Siaochn Shan Island, where the ship assisted in salvaging an LST which was aground on the island. On the 14th of March Commander Harms was relieved as Commanding Officer by Commander Paul S. Savidge Jr., U.S.N.

Only for a week did the ship remain idle, on the 20th she was ordered on another mail and passenger run to Jinsen, Korea and returning to Tsingtao on the 23rd of March. On 15 April the COLLETT got underway for five days Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercises. During this period personnel from the COLLETT were transferred to the USS POMFRET (SS391) for temporary duty as observers. On 23 April the ship repeated this training for another three days. On 4 May the COLLETT left for Shanghai for an indefinite stay and five days operations at sea with Fast Carrier Forces.

The COLLETT's 2nd Birthday finds the ship in Shanghai, China in company with various Men-of-War of many nations. The occasion was properly celebrated with a fine party ashore for all hands.

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