**A Brief History of the USS Herndon DD-638**

The USS HERNDON DD-638 was a Gleaves Class destroyer that served in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific theatres of World War II. There were a total of 66 Gleaves Class destroyers built at various shipyards in the United States between the years 1938 and 1942. Of those 66, eleven were lost in action during the war.

The USS Herndon DD-638 was the second ship of war named after Commander William Lewis Herndon. The first ship, USS Herndon DD-198, was transferred to Great Britain as part of an exchange prior to the US entry into the war. The ship was later renamed the HMS Churchill. Sold once again to the Soviet Union, the ship was reported lost in action by the Soviet Navy in 1945.

The ship’s namesake, William Lewis Herndon, went down with his ship, the CENTRAL AMERICA, In September of 1857 in a storm off North Carolina. Prior to the sinking of the ship, Commander Herndon and his crew saved 152 of the passengers on board. In memory of his actions and courage, a monument was erected and still stands on the grounds of the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

HERNDON DD-638 was launched from Norfolk Navy Yard in Portsmouth, VA on February 5th, 1942. A great grand-niece of William Lewis Herndon, Lucy Herndon Crockett, served as sponsor. The ship was commissioned on December 20th 1942 and Commander Granville A. Moore, USN came aboard as skipper.

During World War II, the HERNDON earned three Battle Stars. The first star came during July/August of 1943 during the Invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky). The invasion of Normandy (Operation Overlord) in June of 1944 merited the second battle star followed by the Invasion of Southern France (Operation Dragoon) in August/September of 1944. Most officers and crew on board the ship were given the following service medals: The America Campaign Medal, The European, African & Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, The Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the China Service Medal, The Navy Occupation Service Medal, The Good Conduct Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

Following shakedown and training, the Herndon made its first trip escorting a convoy from the US to North Africa during March and April of 1943. She had her first taste of battle at Sicily, being in the Task Force assigned to furnish fire support and to cover the landing of troops at Gela. The Herndon participated in the screening of assault vessels against aircraft and submarine attacks. She remained “on the line” from July 10th to August 2nd.

After the Sicilian campaign, the Herndon escorted and screened troop convoys from the United States in the massive buildup prior to the Invasion of Normandy. In the spring of 1944 the Herndon reported to Commander of US Naval Forces in Europe for duty. Then began an intensive period of training in preparation for the invasion. On D-Day June 6th, 1944, the Herndon was off Omaha Beach down front in “Bald Headed Row” ahead of the first assault waves. During heavy counter fire from shore batteries, she bombarded enemy targets ashore.

It was during this time, June 6th and the following days, the Herndon received its nickname “Lucky.” While several other ships in the area were hit with enemy mines, bombs and shore batteries, Herndon escaped unharmed. War Correspondent, Thomas H Wolf, served on board the Herndon during the D-Day invasion and documented and illustrated the events to newspapers back home in the US.

Beginning on the 15th of August 1944, the Herndon acted to screen assault ships and guard from enemy aircraft and earned its last battle star at the Invasion of Southern France. She was detached from duty on the 29th of August and proceeded again to serve as escort for convoys in the Atlantic. In February of 1945, the Herndon served as an escort destroyer on the first leg of Franklin Roosevelt’s historic journey to the Yalta Conference. She also served as an escort upon the president’s return to the states.

On November 28, 1944, Commander Moore was relieved of command by Lieutenant Commander Albert T Church, Jr., USN, of Bremerton Washington.

On the 28th of April 1945, The HERNDON passed through the Panama Canal and reported for duty with the Pacific Fleet. Here she was assigned duties as escort for carriers and patrol duties in forward areas of the Pacific theatre.

On the 16th of September 1945, at Tsingtao Bay, China, Japanese Vice Admiral Kanako, IJN, surrendered Japanese controlled naval vessels to Rear Admiral Settle, USN in ceremonies held on the forecastle of the HERNDON.

During the remaining fall of 1945, the HERNDON continued to escort captured Japanese vessels along the coast and assisted in the movement of surrendered troops. Starting on December 5th, she became part of Operation Magic Carpet, the transfer of US troops back to the States.