

SHIPS SECTION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
NAVY DEPARTMENT

WAR HISTORY OF THE USS MASON (DE-529)

Built at the Boston Navy Yard, the USS MASON was launched on November 17, 1943. The MASON was sponsored by Mrs. David N. Mason of Scarsdale, N. Y., mother of the late Ensign Newton Henry Mason, USNR, hero pilot of the Battle of the Coral Sea. The destroyer escort was named in honor of Ensign Mason.

Following her shakedown cruise which took her to Bermuda in May, the MASON saw her first convoy duty the next month through submarine-infested waters between Charleston, S. C., and Bermuda. From July, 1944, to April, 1945, the MASON was on convoy duty between this country and Europe. She crossed the Atlantic five times, making two trips to England and three to Oran, Algeria.

While numerous undersea contacts were made on these voyages, the MASON was never the target for German torpedoes and never had the opportunity of sinking a Nazi submarine. On one occasion, as the escorts of Task Force 64 entered the approaches to the Straits of Gibraltar, there were several calls to general quarters aboard the MASON following reports that one ship traveling in convoy some 60 miles ahead had been torpedoed. Additional air coverage was provided for the MASON and other ships of the convoy. She later proceeded to Oran without incident.

While on convoy duty with Task Force 64 in January, 1945, en route from Oran to New York, the MASON suffered minor damage when she collided with a wooden derelict, probably a barge. She proceeded to Bermuda for emergency repairs.

While enroute between New York and Norfolk, Va., in early April 1945, the MASON was the locale for Navy motion picture photographers in "shooting" scenes for the "The Negro Sailor," a Navy film which has recently been released for public showing.

The MASON was the first Naval vessel with a predominately Negro crew. Under the command of Lieutenant Commander William M. Blackford, USNR, of Seattle, Wash., the MASON crew initially consisted of 160 Negroes and 44 Whites.

Destroyer escort vessels like the MASON are larger than corvettes but smaller than destroyers. They are designed for escort or convoy duty, weigh 1300 tons, and are about 300 feet in length.

The USS MASON was de-commissioned by the Navy as of October 16, 1945.