



## USS *Howard D. Crow* (DE-252)



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Howard Daniel Crow was born in Alvarado, Texas on 2 February 1918, and was commissioned ensign after completing Naval Reserve Midshipman's School, Northwestern University, 14 March 1941. Ensign Crow reported to battleship *Maryland* 29 March. In the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941, *Maryland* was moored inboard of *Oklahoma* and received two bomb hits, one of which killed Ensign Crow.

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DE-252: *Edsall* Class Destroyer Escort

Displacement: 1,253 tons standard; 1,102 tons full load

Length: 306' oa

Beam: 36'7"

Draft: 10' 5' full load

Machinery: 2-shaft Fairbanks Morse diesels, 6,000 bhp

Range: 10,800 nm at 12 knots

Top Speed: 21 knots

Complement: 186

Armament: 3-3"/50; 2-40mm; 8-20mm; 3-21" torpedoes; 2 depth charge tracks; 8 depth charge projectors; 1 hedge hog

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## History:

USS *Howard D. Crow* (DE-252) was launched by Brown Shipbuilding Company, Houston, Texas, on 26 April 1943. She was sponsored by Miss Viola Elaine Warner, the late ENS Crow's fiancée. The warship was commissioned 27 September 1943 under the command of LCDR D. T. Adams, USCG.

*Howard D. Crow*, Coast Guard-manned, conducted drills in Galveston (Texas) Bay (1-9 October 1943), "to acquaint the crew with their vessel." Proceeding thence to New Orleans, LA, where she took supplies on board, the new destroyer escort then depermed and carried out compass calibration, ultimately clearing the waters off the Crescent City on 18 October 1943, bound for the West Indies. "Incessant drilling enroute," mused one ship's chronicler, "set the crew to wondering if the shakedown had already been initiated." She then conducted her shakedown -- "Daily drills at battle stations, tactical maneuvering, and anti-submarine exercises that gave [the crew] a chance to realize that the shakedown period was rigorous and demanded hard and diligent work from all hands" -- out of Bermuda (22 October-18 November), after which time she underwent post shakedown availability at Charleston, SC (20-30 November). Soon thereafter, after departing Charleston, *Howard D. Crow* encountered "her first heavy weather [en route to Norfolk, Va.] off Cape Hatteras. All hands," observed one Coast Guardsman, "with the exception of a few old salts, came to learn the meaning of the term 'sea-sick' by experience."

Arriving at the Naval Operating Base (NOB), Norfolk, on 1 December 1943, *Howard D. Crow* served as a training platform for destroyer escort crews, embarking nucleus crews daily, then proceeding to the operations areas in the vicinity of York Spit Channel, conducting the prescribed exercises, then returning to NOB Norfolk an hour before the end of the first dog watch. After a day off (13 December) at the end of that period of work to prepare for "extended duty," *Howard D. Crow* became a part of Task Force (TF) 66 (CDR John Rountree, USCG) on 14 December, serving initially as a check out vessel for the outward-bound convoy UGS-27. Directed to take charge of a delayed section of UGS-27, the explosive-laden freighters *James M. Wayne* and *James McCosh*, in company with her sistership *Ricketts* (DE-254), *Howard D. Crow* and her consorts sailed during the first watch on 15 December, catching up with UGS-27 on 20 December and taking her assigned station. After turning over it's charges to British escort vessels on New Year's Day 1944, TF-66 reversed course and stood out of the Strait of Gibraltar.

*Howard D. Crow*, however, soon received orders about an hour before the end of the first watch on 2 January 1944 to return to the open sea to report to the British

destroyer HMS *Malcolm*, reportedly in contact with a U-boat. Forming a scouting line with *Pettit* (DE-253) and *Ricketts, Howard D. Crow* and her sisterships found no evidence of *Malcolm's* presence (she would learn later that the British warship had been ordered to return to the convoy that she had been escorting when she had first made contact with a submersible) but did obtain a radar contact half-way through the mid watch on 3 January. After her challenge had gone unanswered, *Howard D. Crow* fired three 3-inch illuminating projectiles that soon disclosed a Portuguese "coasting vessel...apparently running in a circle off Casa Blanca [sic] with the idea of entering [the harbor] after daylight." The trio of destroyer escorts returned to Casablanca later that morning.

Assisted in the unmooring evolution by the harbor tug YT-208, *Howard D. Crow* stood out shortly after the beginning of the first dog watch on 7 January 1944, and on the westward voyage, escorted the New York section of the returning convoy GUS-26 to its destination (23-24 January). Ordered to proceed thence to the New York Navy Yard, the ship remained there (drydocked on 29-30 January for repairs to her sound gear) until she got underway on 5 February to proceed to the waters off Montauk and Block Island for refresher training with TG 23.9. By that point, on 4 February 1944, LCDR R. E. Bacchus, Jr., USCGR had relieved LCDR Adams of command. She pushed on for Casco Bay on 8 February, escorted *Tuscaloosa* (CA-37) as that heavy cruiser carried out exercises in those waters (14 February), returning thence to New York via the Cape Cod Canal and Long Island Sound.

*Howard D. Crow* sailed from New York on Washington's Birthday (22 February 1944) with Task Group (TG) 21.9, with convoy CU-15. The passage began uneventfully enough, but during the first watch three days out, the merchant tankers *El Coston* and *Murfreesboro* collided during a gale, leaving both badly damaged and burning. *Ricketts's* men braved burning oil and heavy seas to rescue 33 men from the latter. *Howard D. Crow* anchored in Lough Foyle, Ireland, on 5 March. A week later (12 March), she sailed in the screen of convoy UC-15, standing up the Ambrose Channel on 22 March. Following an availability at the Naval Supply Depot, Bayonne, N.J., more training ensued, as the destroyer escort got underway on 2 April with four of her sisterships for Area "R", exercising with a friendly submarine and motor torpedo boats in the Montauk, Block Island, training area, completing her work-ups on 5 April to moor at Staten Island the same day. On 6 April, *Howard D. Crow* and her sisters sailed in the screen of convoy CU-20.

At noon the following day (7 April 1944), Sea1c Thomas J. O'Brien, USCGR, accidentally cut the back of his left hand with a knife while slicing a cake, severing the tendons of two fingers and incising the back of the hand; *Howard D. Crow* proceeded at full speed to *Marchand* (DE-249), the division flagship, to transfer the injured sailor for treatment by the division medical officer. Lowering her motor whaleboat at 1400, she transferred O'Brien at 1415, and then began steering courses to recover the craft while her sistership stood by and screened the evolution. The boat's fuel line clogged, however, and it went dead in the water, forcing *Howard D. Crow* to maneuver to recover it. While the heavy seas

complicated the crew's hooking-on, the boat shipped water, and the trailing line on the releasing hook carried away five times because of the excessive rolling of the ship. The boat swamped at 1500, however, and was cut loose from the forward davit, sinking at once and leaving its crew at the mercy of the heaving sea. ENS John G. Pickard, USCG, recovered the unconscious Sea1c Anthony Alessi, USCGR, and CEM Horace L. Thomas, USCGR, managed to fasten a line around ENS Marvin T. Duncan, USCG. Sailors on deck hauled in Duncan, saving him from drowning, but before Thomas could reach safety, a wave threw him against the hull and knocked him unconscious; he sank from sight, beyond recovery. For his selfless heroism in saving ENS Duncan, CEM Thomas received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, posthumously. Artificial respiration failed to revive Sea1c Alessi, whom CPhM John L. Magee pronounced dead at 1915; Alessi was buried at sea with full military honors at 1013 the next day.

*Howard D. Crow* and her division-mates saw CU-20 safely into Lough Foyle on 17 April 1944, then stood out again with returning convoy UC-20 on 24 April once more bound for New York, arriving on 3 May. Following a brief availability at the New York Navy Yard, the destroyer escort again reported to TG 23.9 for training. Together with rest of CortDiv 20, she then conducted refresher work in the waters off Block Island (16-19 May), after which time she prepared for her next voyage across the Atlantic as part of TG 21.9. Standing out on 21 May with convoy CU-25, delivering it safely to its destination ten days later, *Howard D. Crow* then shepherded convoy UCT-25 back to the United States, reaching New York on 16 June. She proceeded thence immediately to Boston to undergo an availability (17-28 June), after which time she conducted post-availability training off Montauk (28-29 June), then steamed to New York to join another convoy, TCU-30, standing out, bound for the British Isles, on 2 July.

Reaching Londonderry on 11 July 1944 without incident, *Howard D. Crow* began the homeward voyage on 17 July, with UCT-30. After seeing a detachment of motor vessels to Boston, she returned to the Navy Yard Annex at Bayonne, then pushed on on 6 August for the New London operating area for a brief stint of training. Picking up convoy TCU-35 at New York, the ship sailed for the British Isles on 11 August, reaching Londonderry eleven days later. *Howard D. Crow* shepherded UCT-35 on the westward run, detached on 2 September to escort the British escort carrier HMS *Trouncer* to buoy XS. Her escort mission completed on 5 September, the ship ultimately reached Earle, N.J., on 5 September. Following an availability at the Navy Yard Annex, Bayonne, the ship sailed for the waters off New London, conducting exercises there until returning to Earle on 18 September. She began the next east-bound passage on 20 September, with convoy CU-40, winding up that stint by escorting the Clyde section to its dispersal point ten days later.

Shepherding UC-40B on its way (10-20 October 1944), *Howard D. Crow* conducted further training off New London, then again set course toward the British Isles, in convoy CU-46 (7-17 November), then UC-46A westbound (22 November-3 December). Reaching New York on 3 December, she remained

there for over a fortnight, sailing for the waters off Montauk Point on 18 December, returning to New York on 22 December and spending Christmas there, then sailing the following day (26 December) in the screen of convoy CU-52, bound, once more, for the British Isles. *Howard D. Crow* escorted the Liverpool section of CU-52 to its destination on 7 January 1945, standing out of the Mersey River and commencing the westward voyage, in the screen of UC-52B, six days later. She arrived back in New York on 23 January, mooring at the New York Navy Yard annex, Bayonne, late that day to begin a period of availability soon thereafter.

LT John M. Nixon, USCG relieved LCDR Bacchus of command in February, 1945. Later that month, on 11 February 1945, *Howard D. Crow* stood out of Gravesend Bay, during the forenoon watch, having checked the outgoing vessels in convoy CU-58 a short while before. She patrolled the Ambrose Channel, checking the ships standing out, then proceeded to take her assigned station. That afternoon, she escorted the tanker *Bulkfuel* to her position in the convoy, then set the full war cruising watch. At 1639, however, after having just tested various alarms, *Howard D. Crow* investigated a sonar contact. She fired 24 Mk. 10 antisubmarine projectiles commencing at 1653, hearing subsequent explosions beneath the surface and obtaining at least one direct hit. The ship sounded the general alarm at 1659, then fired four depth charges at 1717, sighting air bubbles and an oil slick. Less than a quarter of an hour later, the destroyer escort fired three more charges. Soon thereafter, at 1800, sistership *Koiner* (DE-331; Navy-manned) joined the engagement, dropping three patterns of depth charges, the first at 1831, the second at 1841, and the third at 1854, bringing up more oil but finally classifying the contact as "non-sub." The two destroyer escorts soon resumed their voyage Britain-ward. *Howard D. Crow's* and *Koiner's* victim was, most certainly, the German Type IXC submarine U-869 (Kapitanleutnant Hellmut Neuerburg) that, having failed to receive instructions re-routing her to another patrol area, found herself in CU-58's path.

[\[Click here\]](#) for a detailed narrative of this attack.]

Reaching Southampton, England, without further incident on 23 February 1945, after having been detached with the English Channel section of CU-58 on 19 February, *Howard D. Crow* sailed for home on 26 February with convoy UC-58A, joining the London Section of that assemblage at the outset of the voyage. Mooring at the New York Navy Yard on 9 March, for a brief availability, the ship then proceeded to the Casco Bay operating area, exercising on one occasion with the Italian submarine *Maheli* (24 March). *Howard D. Crow* then shepherded CU-64 from the United States to the British Isles (31 March-10 April), seeing the Le Havre, France, section to its destination (11 April) before putting in to Southampton on 12 April. She then escorted UC-64A into Southampton (16 April), then joined UC-64B on 19 April; she prosecuted a submarine contact she first picked up at twilight that day, delivering five attacks, utilizing hedgehog projectiles and depth charges upon what LT John M. Nixon, USCG, believed to be a "possible submarine." During the first watch on 22 April, *Howard D. Crow* made two

hedgehog attacks, expending 48 Mk.10 projectiles, and firing or dropping 28 depth charges with no verifiable results.

The German surrender in early May 1945, concluding the war in Europe, found the ship at New York, undergoing a period of repairs and alterations that increased her anti-aircraft machine gun battery -- "a good indication," wrote one observer, "that the [Howard D.] Crow was to see the Pacific very shortly." She then carried out one more convoy escort cycle in the Atlantic, seeing CU-71 (20-30 May) to Southampton and UC-71 (3-11 June), the latter being dispersed soon after leaving the English Channel, on 4 June.

*Howard D. Crow* departed New York with CortDiv 21 on 19 June 1945 for the Chesapeake Bay operating areas; she conducted shore bombardment exercises off Bloodsworth Island on 20-21 June, standing out during the mid watch for Guantanamo Bay, which she reached on 24 June; then, following refresher training in the Guantanamo-Culebra [Puerto Rico] operating areas, she departed Guantanamo on 3 July, bound for the Canal Zone. Reaching Coco Solo, C.Z., on 6 July, she transited the Panama Canal the following day. Then, after a brief time at San Diego, Calif. (15-18 July), she sailed for Pearl Harbor, T.H., arriving there on 25 July. She served as school ship for gunnery students on 2 August, then conducted further exercises in the Hawaiian training area, practicing anti-submarine warfare tactics (5-6 August), then working with the submarine *Sargo* (SS-188) (13 August). She moored alongside sistership *Pettit* on 14 August, where she celebrated V-J Day.

Instead of returning to the U.S., however, *Howard D. Crow* and her sisters proceeded thence to Eniwetok, in the Marshall Islands; underway on 27 August 1945, she crossed the International Date Line at the end of the first watch on 31 August and arrived at her destination on 6 September. Underway on 12 September to rendezvous with the submarine *Scabbardfish* (SS-397), *Howard D. Crow* met the Eniwetok-bound boat on the 14th, and reached their destination the following afternoon. On 16 September, the destroyer escort sailed for the Solomon Islands, and reached Tulagi on 20 September. On 5 October, however, *Howard D. Crow* grounded on a shoal, 400 yards from Tanambogo (the buoy marking the shoal was discovered missing). The commanding officer, LT Frederick T. Carney, USCGR, who had relieved LT Nixon just three days before (2 October), donned a shallow water diving outfit and personally inspected the damage, finding all propeller blades to be bent and nicked.

*Howard D. Crow* transported CAPT Walter G. Thomson, D-V(G), USNR, Commander, Southern Solomons, and a party of seven officers and 31 men to the Russell Islands on 13 October 1945, then returned the captain and his party back to Guadalcanal the next day. The destroyer escort sailed for Eniwetok on 20 October, arriving five days later, then, two days later, entered the auxiliary floating drydock AFDL-7, where the ship's force scraped and painted the bottom over the ensuing days. Undocked on 1 November, the drydock crew having been "unable to do a satisfactory job of repairing [the] screws with [the] facilities at hand,"

*Howard D. Crow* sailed for Pearl Harbor late that afternoon. The destroyer escort reached Pearl on 9 November, and entered the concrete floating dry dock ARDC-2 two days later. Undocked on 20 November and assigned to the Hawaiian Sea Frontier the same day, she sailed for Weather Station B (within 100 miles of 42°N, 172°W) in the northern Pacific, arriving there on 29 November, where she remained, carrying out her meteorological work, using her engines only at mealtimes to reduce rolling when the winds varied from force 3 to force 7.

By 6 December 1945, however, evaporator failure and the lack of fresh water compelled *Howard D. Crow* to radio Commander, Hawaiian Sea Frontier, of her plight. Directed to head for Midway, she ran out of all fresh water by the first watch on 7 December. With the crew substituting fruit juice and beer at meals for water, and using water from breakers for cooking and baking, the ship reached Sand Island, Midway, on the afternoon of 8 December, receiving 3,200 gallons of fresh water after her arrival. Following evaporator repairs, *Howard D. Crow*, embarking 25 men from NOB Midway for transportation to the Navy Personnel Staging Center at Pearl, got underway for Oahu on 13 December, but suffered an evaporator casualty during the first watch one day out. By the next day (15 December), her crew and passengers were back to canned fruit juice and beer in place of water and coffee; the exhaustion of the last of the fresh water forced her cooks to use sea water for boiling eggs and washing dishes. Ultimately, *Howard D. Crow* made port on the 16th, her fresh water tanks empty. Three days later, she sailed for the west coast of the United States.

Two days before Christmas of 1945, en route to San Pedro, *Howard D. Crow* overtook the disabled large infantry landing craft LCI(L)-29, that had left Pearl on 14 December and was also en route to the west coast, and took her in tow. Transferring her charge to the fleet tug *Moreno* (ATF-87) an hour after the end of the mid watch on 27 December, the destroyer escort moored at San Pedro that evening. Proceeding thence on 7 January 1946, she transited the Panama Canal for a second time (13 January), clearing Coco Solo on 15 January, bound for New York, reaching her destination on 20 January, where she received an availability in connection with her planned transfer to the 16th (Inactive) Fleet. Departing New York on 20 February, *Howard D. Crow* arrived at St. John's River, Jacksonville, FL, on 22 February. Shifting to Green Cove Springs, FL, on 15 March, she was decommissioned there on 22 May 1946 and was placed out of commission, in reserve. By that point, on 27 March 1946, LT B. H. Kelmer, USCG had replaced LT Carney as the commanding officer.

All of her Coast Guard crew had been removed by the time of her decommissioning.

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*Howard D. Crow* (DE-252) at anchor, 2 April 1944, following her availability at Bayonne. Note effectiveness of the two-tone Measure 22 (5-N Navy Blue and 5-H Haze Gray) camouflage, her designating number (252) in 24"-high white numbers, and her armament -- open-mount 3"/50s (two forward, one aft), her 40 millimeter mount, aft, and the 20 millimeter Oerlikons. Her ASW armament consists of the hedgehog forward, just aft of Mt. 31, two depth charge tracks on the fantail, and depth charge projectors ("K-guns") along the main deck, aft, four on the starboard side, four on the port. Also note the single 26-foot motor whaleboat and davits, and life rafts and floater nets. (National Archives Photograph 19-N-76715, Bureau of Ships (19-LCM) Collection, Box 425, Still Pictures Branch, College Park, Md.)



No official caption listed; photo dated 20 Feb 1945; no photo number; photo by "Mac Quavice [?] on D.E. 253"



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