



# USS *Moberly*, PF-63

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A city in north central Missouri and county seat of Randolph County.

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Builder: Globe Shipbuilding Co., Superior, Wisconsin.

Length: 303' 11"

Beam: 37' 6"

Draft: 12' 8" fl

Displacement: 2,230 tons

Propulsion: 2-shaft VTE, 3 boilers

Range: 9,500 nm at 12 knots

Top speed: 20 knots

Complement: 190

Armament: 3 x 3"/50; 4 x 40mm (2x2); 9 x 20mm; 1 x Hedgehog, 8 x depth charge projectors; 2 x depth charge racks. For those frigates fitted out for weather patrol duty, the after 3-inch gun was removed and a weather balloon hanger was added aft.

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## **Commanding Officers:**

LCDR Leslie B. Tollaksen, USCG  
LCDR Berthold Papanek, USCGR

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## **Official Coast Guard History:**

The Coast Guard-manned frigate USS *Moberly* (ex-Scranton) was built by the Globe Shipbuilding Company of Superior, Wisconsin, and ferried down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and thence to Houston, Texas, where she arrived on September 5, 1944, where work on the frigate was completed. She was commissioned December 4, 1944 under the command of LCDR Leslie B. Tollaksen, USCG. She proceeded to Bermuda on December 23, 1944, for shakedown the *Moberly* arrived at Philadelphia on January 29, 1945, for post-shakedown availability.

The *Moberly* departed Hampton Roads on February 22, 1945, on her first convoy escort duty across the Atlantic and arrived at Oran, Algeria on March 11, 1945. She departed on the return trip March 18th but had to turn back. She departed a second time on April 17th, and arrived at Boston on May 4th, for a 16-day availability.

Immediately prior to the end of the European War, on May 6, 1945, the *Moberly*, along with the USS *Atherton* (DE-169), contacted, attacked and destroyed a German submarine, the *U-853*, in the vicinity of Block Island, Rhode Island. The submarine had recently sunk an American merchant ship, the SS *Black Point*, in a daring attack just ten miles off the coast. The *Moberly* and the *Atherton* arrived on the scene three hours later. The sub was discovered shortly thereafter hiding on the bottom in shallow water and a night-long attack began. The sub was pounded to pieces and thus became one of the last enemy submarines sunk in the Atlantic and the first to be destroyed on the bottom in American waters. The commanding officer, LCDR Tollaksen, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for this feat. The executive officer, LT G. K. Kelz, USCG; the anti-submarine officer, LTJG G. E. Raycraft, USCGR; the gunnery officer, LT S. F. Regard, USCGR; and the engineering officer, LTJG J. H. Moore, USCGR were given letters of commendation. A German submarine silhouette was authorized painted on the ship's bridge, and the officers and crew to wear the Engagement Star in their American Theater Ribbon.

The vessel left New York for a second trans-Atlantic trip on May 22, 1945, and arrived at Oran on June 8, 1945. She returned to New York by June 18, 1945, via the Azores. Proceeding to Boston on July 6, 1945, she was made ready for duty as a weather ship in the Pacific and departed on July 31, 1945, with the *Gladwyne* for Pearl Harbor, via the Canal Zone. She arrived at Majuro, September 5th and Kwajalein October 8th. She patrolled Weather Station H from November 14th to December 6th, 1945, when she returned to Pearl Harbor. From then until March 31, 1946, she was on Weather and Plane Guard duty out of Pearl Harbor. She patrolled Weather Station #2 from April 3rd to April 22nd, 1946. While on station she was decommissioned as a naval vessel and immediately recommissioned a Coast Guard vessel on April 15, 1946. LT Carl McNulty, USCG became commanding officer May 10, 1946. She again patrolled Weather Station #2 from May 20, 1946 to June 3, 1946, after which she

departed Honolulu for San Francisco June 20, 1946. Proceeding to Seattle on June 29, 1946, *Moberly* was decommissioned on August 12, 1946.

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"USS MOBERLY (PF-63) OFF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF., IN EARLY 1946."; Photo No. NH-79077; courtesy of Donald M. McPherson, 1974. U.S. Naval Historical Center Photography -- Released.



"COAST GUARD DEPTH CHARGES SCORE IN LAST U-BOAT KILLING: Off Point Judith, Rhode Island, crewmen of the Coast Guard-manned frigate USS Moberly watch the surface boil as a pattern of depth charges scores the final kill in the long, uphill battle against Nazi U-boats in the Atlantic. Working in teamwork [sic] with three navy vessels, the Coast Guard ship destroyed the

submarine on Sunday, May 6 [1945]. The Moberly operates as a unit of the Atlantic Fleet."; CG Photo No. 4557; photographer unknown.

*Moberly* has just fired a hedgehog pattern as the charges drop in a circular pattern ahead of the frigate.



"USS Moberly (PJ-63) H H Pattern exploding."; 6 May 1945; Photo No. NRL(MOD) 29402; photographer unknown.

*Moberly's* hedgehog charges explode as they hit the ocean's floor.



"Whaleboat retrieving wreckage from the oil slick left after U-853 was sunk off Block Island by USS Moberly and Atherton, 6 May 1945."; Photo No. NH 48878 (M) 3186; photographer unknown. Naval Historical Center photograph, released.

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### **DANFS History:**

*Moberly* (PF-63), originally designated as PG-171, was reclassified PF-63 on 15 April 1943. She was laid down as *Scranton* under Maritime Commission contract by Globe Shipbuilding Co., Superior, Wisconsin on 3 November 1943. She was launched 26 January 1944 and was sponsored by Mrs. Howard J. Snowden, renamed *Moberly* 28 June 1944. She was placed in service from 1 to 7 September during transfer to Houston, Texas, for completion of construction by Brown Shipbuilding Co. She was commissioned at Houston 11 December 1944 under the command of LCDR Leslie B. Tollaksen, USCG.

After shakedown off Bermuda, *Moberly* reported to the Atlantic Fleet '8 February 1945 for escort duty. Assigned to TG 60.1, she departed Norfolk, Virginia, 22 February in the screen of North African bound convoy UGS-76. She reached Oran, Algeria, 10 March, thence sailed the 18th with westbound GUS-76. Transferred to TG-60.7 on 29 March, she joined the eastbound convoy UGS-82 in mid-Atlantic and returned to Oran 8 April. Once again, the frigate sailed for the United States 17 April. The escorts left the convoy off New York about noon 5 May and headed for Boston.

In company with *Atherton* (DE-169) and *Amick* (DE- 165), *Moberly* approached Buzzards Bay late that afternoon, only 2 days before Germany surrendered. At 1854, on orders from CTG 60.7 in *Ericsson* (DD-440), then at the southern entrance to the Cape Cod Canal, the ships turned about to search for a reported German U-boat off Block Island. At 1740, *U-853* had torpedoed and sunk *Black Point* within sight of Point Judith, Rhode Island, as the American collier headed for Boston.

With LCDR Tollaksen in tactical command, the ships reached the area at 1920. They formed a scout line off Block Island and began a sweep to seaward at 2010. Within 15 minutes *Atherton* detected the snorkel submarine, bottomed in a depth of 18 fathoms. The DE dropped depth charges at 2028 and during the next 30 minutes fired two full spreads of hedgehogs.

Working as an effective hunter-killer group, *Atherton* and *Moberly* continued the search and destroy operations. At 2341 the escort launched hedgehogs which brought large amounts of oil, air bubbles, and debris to the surface. The two ships delivered four more attacks in the early hours of 6 May, and by dawn oil and flotsam littered the ocean. The ships recovered such conclusive evidence as planking, life rafts, a chart tabletop, clothing, and an officer's cap, which indicated the accuracy and severity of the earlier attacks. To be certain however, they pounded the lifeless U-boat throughout the morning; thence, at 1240 TG 60.7 headed for Boston with "brooms at mastheads."

*Moberly* operated between Boston and New York until 31 July when she sailed with three other frigates for the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal 5 August and reached Pearl Harbor the 23d. Six days later *Moberly* and *Gladwyne* (PF-62) sailed for the Marshall Islands to begin weather station and plane guard patrols. The frigates reached Majuro 5 September, and during the next 6 months they alternated on patrolling their assigned area out of Majuro and later out of Kwajalein.

*Moberly* returned to the west coast early in April 1946 and subsequently served in the 13th Naval District. She decommissioned 12 August 1940. Authorized by the Secretary of the Navy for disposal 29 August, *Moberly* was struck from the Navy list 23 April 1947. She was sold for scrapping to Franklin Shipwrecking Co., Hillside, N.J., 27 October 1947.

*Moberly* received one battle star for World War II service.

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**Sources:**

*The Coast Guard At War, Transports and Escorts*, Vol. V, No. 1.

*Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1922-1946*. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1992, pp. 148-149.

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. IV, p. 400.

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