



USS *Vance* (DE-387; DER-387) USCGC *Vance* (WDE-487)



The USS *Vance* was named for Joseph Williams Vance, Jr. He was born on 4 December 1918 in Memphis, Tennessee and attended Southwestern University in Memphis from 1936 to 1938 and later the University of Florida at Gainesville before he enlisted in the Naval Reserve on 26 July 1940 as an apprentice seaman. After serving at sea in *Arkansas* (BB-33) during the late summer and early fall, he was appointed midshipman on 22 November and reported to *Prairie State* (IX-15) for further training. Commissioned ensign on 28 February 1941, Vance drew Asiatic Fleet duty and joined *Parrott* (DD-218) in the Philippine Islands on 16 April. His ship conducted maneuvers and exercises in the Philippine Archipelago through the summer of the critical year, 1941; and, as the international situation continued to be "tense and unpredictable," was dispatched on 24 November with her division-Destroyer Division (DesDiv) 58-to Tarakan, Borneo.

Soon after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 (8 December west of the date line), *Parrott* and her sister ships joined the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) effort to stem the Japanese tide sweeping down from the north. *Parrott* operated in the Netherlands East Indies archipelago until the fall of Java, participating in two major engagements-the Battle of Makassar Strait (24 January 1942) and the Battle of Badoeng Strait (20 February 1942). For his gallantry during the first action, ENS Vance was awarded the Bronze Star. As the ship's torpedo officer, Vance had charge of the destroyer's 12-tube battery of 21-inch torpedo tubes-in effect the ship's "main battery." On 23 January, DesDiv 58 began a final approach to the town of Balikpapan, Borneo, captured only that day by the Japanese. Dutch "scorched earth" policies and a Dutch air raid had set fire to most of the vital petroleum storage areas starting blazes which clearly silhouetted the Japanese transports lying to offshore.

On 24 January, in the initial phase of the Battle of Makassar Strait, Vance and his torpedo crews had bad luck. All eight torpedoes missed on the first run-in. The division turned and tried again-this time with success. Three "fish" ran straight and true from *Parrott's* tubes on the port battery, sinking 3,500-ton transport *Sumanoura Maru*. Within minutes, *Parrott* teamed up with *Pope* (DD-225) and *Paul Jones* (DD-230) in delivering a torpedo attack on *Tatsukami Maru*, holing her and sending her to the bottom shortly thereafter. Soon the American force retired in the confusion of the melee while the Japanese area commander sent his escorts on a wild goose chase after American submarines! Vance's bronze star citation took note that he had skillfully fired four salvos in a battle at close range, in which a wide variety of target speeds and approaches had been used and had directed the fire by means of an old-fashioned open sight. By his "ability, resourcefulness, and devotion to duty," Vance contributed substantially to *Parrott's* performance in the United States Navy's first surface action victory-a tactical one at best-in the war against Japan.

Parrott then continued her operations in defense of the Malay barrier, taking part in the Battle of Badoeng Strait on 20 February-an action in which the ship was damaged. The destroyer ended up in Fremantle with the remnants of the Asiatic Fleet scattered by the Battle of the Java Sea from 27 February to 1 March. Vance remained in *Parrott* through the spring, when he received promotion to lieutenant (junior grade) on 15 June 1942. As Allied forces gathered for the assault on Japanese-held Guadalcanal, Vance received orders to HMAS *Canberra*, as liaison officer with the Australian Navy. *Canberra*, once the prewar flagship of the Australian squadron, departed Wellington, New Zealand, on 22 July, bound for Guadalcanal and what was to be her final action. On 8 August, the Australian cruiser helped to screen American transports off the landing beaches and then in the evening retired, in company with *Chicago* (CA-29), to a night screening position south of Savo Island.

Unbeknownst to the Allied force, a Japanese cruiser formation steamed undetected down "the Slot" between Guadalcanal and Savo Islands. They soon opened fire with guns (8- and 5.5-inch) and the dreaded "long lance" torpedoes. *Chicago* took a torpedo forward, but *Canberra* took the worst punishment in the form of a veritable hail of shells which soon reduced her to a blazing wreck. During the engagement, LT(jg) Vance was killed in action.

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 (as of 1944): 3 x 3"/50; 2-40mm; 8 x 20mm; 3 x 21" torpedo tubes; 2 depth charge tracks; 8 depth charge projectors; 1 hedge hog.

History:

The Coast Guard-manned USS *Vance* (DE-387) was laid down on 30 April 1943 at Houston, Texas, by the Brown Shipbuilding Company. She was launched on 16 July 1943; sponsored by Mrs. John W. Vance, mother of the late LT(jg) Vance; and commissioned on 1 November 1943 under the command of LCDR E. A. Anderson, USCG. Following shakedown off Bermuda, *Vance* became the flagship for Escort Division (CORTDIV) 45 -- a Coast Guard-manned unit -- and convoyed a group of oil tankers from Norfolk, Virginia, to Port Arthur, Texas, and back. Upon her return to Norfolk, she served as a training ship for destroyer escort crews while awaiting the arrival of the rest of her division.

In February 1944, the ship conducted local escort operations before joining the New York section of Convoy UGS-33, bound for Gibraltar. Her section

rendezvoused off Norfolk with the remainder of the convoy and its flagship, *Bibb* (WPG-31), and set out across the Atlantic. On 7 March, *Vance* departed Casablanca with GUS-33 for the return voyage and put into the New York Navy Yard on the 23d for availability.

Vance next got underway on 12 April, with the other ships of CORTDIV 45 and a Navy-manned destroyer escort division, to screen the 102 merchantmen of convoy UGS-39 to Tunisia. Arriving at Bizerte on 3 May, the warship left Tunisian waters eight days later, bound for New York with GUS-39. Off Oran on the 14th, a German U-boat slipped through the screen of escorts and torpedoed two merchantmen. *Vance*, holding the "whip" position of the screen (where she had the duty of shepherding stragglers) came up through the convoy, sighted the periscope, and attempted to ram. The U-boat "pulled the plug" and dove deeper, evading the onrushing escort's sharp bow. *Vance* remained on the scene for 10 hours, subjecting the U-boat to depth-charge and hedgehog attacks, until relieved by a squadron of Navy destroyers. Three days later, after an extensive hunt, the relief ships sank U-616.

Altogether, *Vance* made eight round-trip voyages to the western Mediterranean and followed each with availability at either Boston or New York. Four times the ship engaged in training exercises out of Casco Bay-sharpening up her antisubmarine and gunnery skills. On 14 July 1944, *Vance* helped to fight off a German air attack against an Allied convoy off Oran. During most of the voyages, the destroyer escort held the "whip" position in the convoy-a grueling and sometimes frustrating detail since merchantmen frequently displayed a lack of discipline and straggled behind the convoy. Carrying the division doctor on board, *Vance* on occasion would take on board men from other ships for medical treatment.

On 2 May 1945, *Vance* departed New York with her last Mediterranean-bound convoy. On the morning of 11 May-four days after Germany had surrendered -- *Vance* sighted a light up ahead in the convoy and rang down full speed to investigate. Upon closing the light, the destroyer escort discovered a surfaced U-boat, U-873, which had been at sea for 50 days. While the submarine began to run, *Vance* hailed the erstwhile enemy in German by bullhorn, ordering the submariners to heave to. *Vance* placed a prize crew on board the captured U-boat who delivered the prize at Portsmouth, NH, on the 16th.

Vance then underwent alterations to her antiaircraft armament and soon got underway for the Pacific. However, she arrived too late to participate in anything but training operations and returned to the east coast for decommissioning. In mid-October 1945, she underwent a pre-deactivation availability before proceeding south to Green Cove Springs, Florida. On 27 February 1946, *Vance* was decommissioned and placed in reserve.

She was commissioned into the Coast Guard as a cutter and re-designated WDE-487 on 9 May 1952. She was stationed at Honolulu, HI and served on Ocean Station QUEEN from 2-23 August 1953 and again on 4-24 October 1953. The Coast Guard then decommissioned her on 3 April 1954 and returned her to the Navy.

The ship remained in "mothballs" for the next nine years, before she was towed to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in November 1955 for conversion to a radar picket destroyer escort. The extensive alterations involved the addition of: improved air-search radar, extensive communications equipment, and complete facilities for fighter-direction operations. It also entailed the enclosing of the entire main deck areas amidships to provide accommodations for officers and men. Designated DER-387, *Vance* was recommissioned on 5 October 1956 at Mare Island, LCDR Albert M. Brouner in command.

Between March of 1957 and the end of the year, *Vance* was homeported at Seattle, Washington, as a unit of CortDiv 5 and completed eight patrols on various stations of the Radar Early Warning System in the northern Pacific. Each tour lasted approximately 17 days, and the ship maintained a round-the-clock vigil with air-search radars, tracking and reporting every aircraft entering or approaching the air space of the northwestern United States. On Labor Day 1957, *Vance* drew emergency duty-an engineering casualty prevented the assigned ship from going out-and got underway in a fast 75 minutes. Although she was only manned at 60 percent of her complement (because many of her officers and men were ashore on leave or liberty and could not be notified in time to return to the ship before she weighed anchor) *Vance* was deployed for 12 days and completed a successful mission.

On 1 June 1958, the radar picket escort ship's home port was changed to Pearl Harbor; and she began operating with CortRon 7. One month later, she departed Hawaiian waters for a 29-day patrol on the mid-ocean picket lines which provided radar coverage from Alaska to Midway Atoll. *Vance* thus became the first ship on the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line in the Pacific and the first to sail under the newly organized Pacific barrier patrol. In mid-January 1959, following routine overhaul and refresher training at Pearl Harbor, *Vance* again took station on the mid-Pacific stretch of ocean on her second DEW-line deployment.

Vance continued to conduct regular DEW-line patrols until May of 1960, when CortRon 7 was dissolved. At that time, she rejoined CortDiv 5 and served with her old unit into 1961. On occasion, the picket ship took Russian trawlers under surveillance-undoubtedly while the communist vessel was returning the compliment.

Early in 1961, *Vance's* communications capabilities were extensively augmented during an overhaul at Pearl Harbor. After resuming DEW-line patrols late in the spring, the ship received orders in August 1961 designating her an ocean station

vessel with TF-43, Operation "Deepfreeze 62." Temporarily based at Dunedin, New Zealand, *Vance* served as a communication relay ship for aircraft bringing in vital supplies to the Antarctic stations from New Zealand. She remained on station in the cold, bleak, southern waters into March 1962, when she headed home via Melbourne, Australia, and Papeete, Tahiti, to Pearl Harbor. She soon resumed duties on the DEW-line and-but for periodic interruptions for maintenance, replenishment, and training-devoted herself to the task of operating mainly off the Aleutian Islands through February 1965.

In the mid-1960's, with the advent of improved radar and early-warning capabilities, the radar picket escort ship was rapidly approaching obsolescence. However, as the United States stepped up its efforts to aid the South Vietnamese government in countering internal and external communist aggression, the ship received a new lease on life. In Vietnam, a ship of this nature could be invaluable for coastal patrol work. Accordingly, in February 1965, *Vance* was ordered to the Western Pacific (WestPac). On 25 March 1965, she sailed from Pearl Harbor, in company with *Brister* (DER-327) and *Forster* (DER-334), as Task Group (TG) 52.8, bound for the Philippines.

En route from Subic Bay to waters off the coast of Vietnam, *Vance* rescued CAPT Leland D. Holcomb, USAF, who had ejected from a burning F-100 Super Sabre fighter plane. *Vance* took station in Operation "Market Time" on 11 April 1965. From that day until the 24th, she operated near the 17th parallel as a part of Task Unit (TU) 71.1.1. During the assignment, she maintained communications between airborne Convair EC-121K Constellations and Commander, TU 71.1.1, in *John W. Thomason* (DD-760). Subsequently from 15 May to 4 June, *Vance* returned to "Market Time" surface surveillance-this time in the Gulf of Thailand near the border dividing South Vietnam from Cambodia. She operated in company with small minesweepers (MSO's) and embarked a Vietnamese Navy liaison officer to aid in the ship's "visit and search" activities. She continued these activities until sailing for Hawaii early in September and arrived at Pearl Harbor on the 18th.

Vance returned to "Market Time" station in mid-January 1966, and then participated in Operation "Masher," the amphibious operation designed to clear northern Binh Dinh province of Viet Cong insurgents. Next moving to the Gulf of Thailand once more, the destroyer escort conducted close-support and logistics operations with Navy PCF's (swift boats) and Coast Guard WPB's in interdicting communist coastal supply traffic, often boarding 30 vessels per day.

Underway on 11 April to patrol off Cap de Ca Mau, the southernmost tip of South Vietnam, *Vance* monitored coastal junk traffic and seagoing vessels, surveying traffic patterns in the South China Sea. Later, off Binh Dinh, she closed to investigate a trawler and came under fire from Viet Cong ashore. Although the ship's skin was pocked by bullets, *Vance* briskly returned the fire with her 3-inch battery, driving away or killing the unseen but pestiferous snipers.

In a more humanitarian vein, *Vance* and a "Swift" rescued 56 men, women, and children from a swamped boat near Qui Nhon. For several hours, *Vance's* men cleaned and fed babies; made old women as comfortable as possible; and gave away blankets, towels, and food. Relieved by *Haverfield* (DER-393) late in July, *Vance* headed for Hawaii and got as far as the San Bernadino Strait before she was ordered to return to Vietnam for further "Market Time" duty. On 6 August, *Surfbird* (ADG-383) relieved the destroyer escort on station and allowed *Vance* to sail again via the Philippines for Pearl Harbor.

On 15 January 1967, *Vance* returned to the Far East for another 7th Fleet deployment and relieved *Koiner* (DER-331) off the mouth of the Saigon River. Once again, *Vance's* duties involved hunting for contraband-carrying craft attempting to infiltrate from the north to deliver their cargoes to the Viet Cong. *Vance* tracked all ocean-sized vessels and stopped and searched junks and sampans-tedious and frustrating but vital work.

The ship conducted two more "Market Time" patrols during her third WestPac deployment and, between missions, underwent a tender availability at Kaohsiung, Taiwan; rest and recreation at Hong Kong; and upkeep at Subic Bay. At the end of her last "Market Time" assignment, she patrolled the Taiwan Strait between communist China and Taiwan before returning to Pearl Harbor for routine overhaul. In late 1967, the ship began her final WestPac deployment in which her duties were similar to those of her third deployment. She subsequently returned to the west coast of the United States late in 1968 for inactivation.

Placed in reserve, at the Inactive Ship Facility, Vallejo, *Vance* was decommissioned on 10 October 1969, struck from the Navy list on 1 June 1975, and scheduled to be used as a target.

Vance received seven battle stars for service in Vietnam.



"DESTROYER ESCORT IN THE ATLANTIC: This trim craft is a Coast Guard-manned DE (Destroyer Escort) on convoy duty in the Atlantic. The guns of the DEs have given protection to the streams of merchant ships and transports carrying troops and supplies for the Allied lines in Europe."; no date; Photo No. 4450; photographer unknown.

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