

Theodore J. Smith

U.S. Navy USS Spangler, Pacific Theatre



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I went to the draft board and enlisted on my 18th birthday, May 3, 1943. After boot camp at Great Lakes, Illinois, I was sent to the Naval Training Center at Norfolk, Virginia. I learned about poison gas, rowing boats and swimming. We were trained on how to fire large and small guns. We departed for the Navy Supply Depot in New Orleans, Louisiana where I was assigned to be a crew member on the Destroyer Escort USS Spangler DE 696. On October 31, 1943, 11 officers and 199 sailors shipped out to Bermuda for shakedown and maneuvers. We found out about big waves and massive swells and rolling 72 degrees on several occasions. My story is also my ship's story.

After Bermuda, we came into Boston Harbor with 8 inches of sea ice all over the ship. We were joined by 3 destroyers and deported for the Pacific through the Panama Canal. At Bora Bora on January 20, 1944, we received orders to rendezvous with

convoy Task Unit 116.15.3 as the flagship of Commander, Escort Division 39 and head for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands. By mid-February we were escorting Alnitah (AK-127) to Bougainville and rounded out the month patrolling off Treasury Island. We escorted convoys of men and materials to Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, Florida Island, Majuro, Emirau, Rendova and Manus.

In late May, 1944, we sailed from Tulagi to the Admiralty Islands with a supply of hedgehog depth charges and delivered them to the USS England DE 635, the Raby DE698 and the George DE 697. The next day we rendezvoused with these ships, and the Hazelwood DD 531 and, together we steamed north to Hoggatt Bay. Making contact on a Japanese submarine, my ship and the England went to the attack, but were not successful. During the night, we lost contact with the enemy. After a few hours, the Japanese commanding officer obligingly surfaced between the Raby and the George and switched on its searchlights. My ship attacked with 24 depth charges, but without success. The England's depth charges brought about a huge explosion and a watery grave for the Japanese sub.

After an overhaul of my ship in late September, 1944, we operated out of Purvis Bay on escort assignments and anti-submarine warfare. The Spangler was all over the Pacific calling at Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Barika Island, Tulagi, Eniwetok, Tarawa and Hollandia.

On New Year's Day, 1945, the Spangler was assigned to escort duty on the Guam-Ulithi supply route and had the additional assignment of hunter-killer operations. We escorted many ships, including the Tombigbee, the Marlin, the Canaveral and the Sumner. We went to Guam on February 5 escorting LST's, the SS James Kelly and USS APC 47 to Saipan Harbor. Later, we escorted the SS John Drake Sloat and Columbia Victory to Iwo Jima and performed air-sea rescue patrol off Saipan and the Mariana Islands. Throughout April, May and June, 1945, our major task was escorting and protecting

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convoys of troops and supplies from Japanese submarines. The Spangler also saw duty in the South China Sea, the Solomons, the Marshalls, the Carolines and the Marianas, anchoring or docking approximately 60 times in the PTO.

After the war ended, we docked at Pearl Harbor on September 22, 1945 taking on fuel and fresh water. We left the same day for San Pedro, California arriving on September 28, 1945. I had served on the Spangler for 2 years and 18 days. Two other Springfield men, Edison Garner and Raymond I. Stephens, also served on the Spangler. The following year, I married Betty Marie Peontek on June 1, 1946 and we have five wonderful children, two girls and three boys. I became a union carpenter and have worked and lived in Springfield all my life.

Ted Smith has been a loyal member on the World War Illinois Veterans Memorial Committee for the past 4 years.

Theodore J. Smith
Springfield, IL

<http://ussspangler.net/Memoirs/tsmith.htm>



USS Spangler DE-696

- My Navy Days! - By Ted J. Smith -

Theodore Junior Smith, better known as Ted was born May 3, 1925 in Springfield Illinois, the home of Abraham Lincoln and the Illinois World War II Memorial. Ted was the son of Theodore C. and Ethel I. Smith of Springfield Illinois and he presently resides at 406 south Livingston Street. He served in the Navy from June 11, 1943 to February 18, 1946 and was discharged from the USS Spangler DE-696 as a Seaman 1st Class His Story:

"I went to the draft board on my 18th birthday and told them I wanted to go next call. By June 11, 1943, I was in the U.S. NAVY at Great Lakes, IL. After boot camp I went to the Norfolk Virginia Navy station to learn about poison gas, rowing boats, swimming, training and firing big and small guns. I and many more sailors were transported to the Navy Supply Depot, New Orleans, Louisiana and here I became a crew member on the Destroyer Escort USS SPANGLER DE 696." Going To War:

"On October 31, 1943, eleven officers and one hundred ninety nine sailors shipped out to war. Our new ship and crew went to the vicinity of Bermuda for shakedown and manning everything on the ship. We found out about the big high waves and massive crestless swells. Our ship went over and under the water, we rolled seventy two degrees several times.

My story is also my ship's story, she took us there and she brought us back.

After Bermuda we steamed into Boston, Massachusetts with eight inches of sea ice all over the ship (an excellent photo of the Spangler covered in ice can be viewed in Dave Rehmeyer's Memoirs). We left Boston on December 24, 1943 with three big Destroyers, headed for the Pacific via the Panama Canal. We arrived at Bora Bora in the Society Islands on 20th January 1944. Then received orders to rendezvous with convoy Task Unit 116.15.3 as the flagship of Commander, Escort Division 39 and to head for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands. In mid-February, we es-

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corted USS Shasta (AE-6) to Purvis Bay, Florida Island in the Solomons, and then took up patrol station off Guadalcanal two days later. After escorting USS Alnitah (AK-127) to Torokina Point on Bougainville, we rounded out the month patrolling off Blanche Harbor, Treasury Island, and off Purvis Bay.

For the next Three months, we escorted convoys on shuttle runs between various islands in the South Pacific. During that period, we visited Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, New Caledonia, Florida Island, Majuro, Emirau, Rendova, and Manus.

In late May, we sailed from Tulagi to the Admiralty Islands with a supply of hedgehog depth charges for USS England (DE-635), USS Raby (DE-698), and USS George (DE-697). We rendezvoused with the three ships at Manus on the 27th, delivered our cargo, and the four ships sortied the next day to join a hunter/killer group formed around USS Hoggatt Bay (CVE-75). Our task group was steaming north during the waning hours of 30 May when USS Hazelwood (DD-531) made a sound contact on the Japanese submarine, RO-105. While the England and my ship, the Spangler headed toward the southern end of the scouting line, the USS Raby and the USS George charged to the attack. Both ships attacked the enemy, but with no apparent success. During the night, they lost contact with the submerged enemy. However, after a few hours, the Japanese commanding officer obligingly surfaced between Raby and the George and switched on his searchlights. The USS England and my ship the Spangler raced toward the shaft of light which fixed RO-105's position for us perfectly. By 0500 on the 31st, we were in contact with the Raby and the George, and with the officer in tactical command (OTC). At first light, the Raby and the George each attacked the Japanese sub in quick succession. When their efforts failed, My ship joined the fray. We attacked with 24 depth charges, but without success. The USS England's full pattern of depth charges at 0735 brought a huge explosion and a watery grave to RO-105.

On 2 June, the ships joined Task Group (TG) 30.4 and returned to Seeadler Harbor at Manus. My ship, the USS Spangler, continued to operate with the USS Hoggatt Bay until the 21st, when we headed for

Purvis Bay and overhaul. From the completion of overhaul in late July until the end of September, we operated out of Purvis Bay on escort assignments and antisubmarine warfare training. During that period, we called at Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Barika Island, Tialaki, Eniwetok, Tarawa, and Hollandia. In October, We became station ship at Funafuti in the Ellice Islands. However, we was so employed only briefly and soon returned to Purvis Bay and escort duty and, for the remainder of 1944 screened ships shuttling to Kossol Passage, Ulithi, and Guam."



Can you spot Ted in the photograph? He's the only sailor clearly visible without a neckerchief...Take a close look!...Do you see him now?

When asked why he didn't have a neckerchief?...Ted explains, "I was standing watch at the gang plank when a buddy walked up and asked if he could borrow my tie (neckerchief). I gave it to him but now without asking, 'Why!' He said they were getting ready to take the crew's photograph up on the foredeck. Well, I wasn't about to be left out of that photo, so I ran forward and found myself a good spot to stand (barely)! That's me on the right side with my arm stuck out and my hat tilted to the side." "My ship was assigned a new base of operations to Guam on New Year's Day 1945 and assigned

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to escort duty on the Guam-Ulithi supply route and the additional duty of hunter-killer operations." (The ships deck log for the next few months read as follows:)"

Jan. 1—we escorted USS Tombigbee to Ulithi, West Caroline Islands.

Jan. 9—we escorted SS Sea Marlin to Pelelin Island, Palan Islands,

Jan. 10—escorted USS Baretta to Ulithi.

Jan. 16—returned to Guam with USS Aries and USS Tombigbee.

Jan. 23—escorted USS Tombigbee back to Ulithi Island.

Jan. 28—escorted USS Canaveral to Peleliu Island, Kossol Passage, West Caroline Islands.

Jan. 30—sailed alone to Ulithi.

Feb. 1—escorted USS Sumner to Guam.

Feb. 5—escor- ted LST 449, LST 275, SS James Kelly and USS APC 47 to Saipan Harbor.

Feb. 10—we were patrolling as plane rescue ship between Tinian and Saipan Island.

Feb. 23—escorted for S11-1S. John Drake Sloat and S.S. Columbia Victory enroute to Iwo Jima Island.

Feb. 27—Steamed to Saipan Island from Iwo Jim.

March 1—We had the assignment as air-sea rescue patrol on station "Able" off Magicienne Bay, Saipan Island, Marianas Islands.

March 28, - We escorted USS ATF-81, VSS Woodbine and USS LST-786 to Iwo Jima.

April 3—we patrolled the east coast of Iwo Jima and later that day patrol the western side of Iwo Jima.

April 4—we took a convoy back to Sapan.

April 17—we escorted USS Mankar, USS Lanier and SS Robert Fulton to Iwo Jima.

April 21—we went to Saipan and, **from April 26 to May 27**, we were Station Ship at Saipan. **May 28**. we went to Guam for patrol, screening and convoy duty.

June 12—we escorted USS General R.E. CALLAN TO Eniwetok Island Marshall Islands.

June 16, - we escorted USS Oconto and USS Braxton to Guam.

June 21—convoy to Saipan.

June 25—back to Guam.

June 27—Patrol station, - July 1, we were underway en route to Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands as escort to USS Bougainville (CVE100).

July 6—we escorted U.S.S. Okanogan to Guam.

July 11— we assumed duty as-escort for U.S.S. Makin Island (CVE93) en route to Okinawa, and rendezvous with U.S.S. Santee (CVE29).

July 15—we was at Okinawa with these two ships and we escorted U.S.S. Santee (CVE29) back to Guam.

July 22— we were underway enroute to Air Sea Rescue station.

July. 28—we were in Dry-Dock ABSD-6, Guam Island, Marianas.

August 20, 1945—we were underway enroute Okinawa Jima with convoy consisting of ATA195 towing APL28, APL33, ATR75 towing BD270:, YTB299, and PGM28'.

We reached Okinawa Jima August 29. August 30 we escorted U.S.S. La Grange (APA124) from Okinawa Jima to Guam.

"On September 13, 1945 my ship got underway with Raby (DE698) enroute to Pearl Harbor, Hawaiian Islands, Vis Eniwetok., Marshall Islands. We stoped at Pearl Harbor on 22 September to take on fuel and freshwater and left the same day for San Pedro, California and arrived on September 28th. I left this ship (USS Spangler) November 17, 1945, and served onboard 2-years 17 or 18 days. Two other Springfield, Illinois men were also on the Spangler. Their names are Edison Garner and Raymond I Stephens."

Ted and another friend enjoyed freehand drawing in their spare time. The drawing of the Spangler in this website's Memorabilia Section was drawn by Ted in 1945 and is example of his abilities. He said he did the drawing on the back of a food carton food was shipped in. The drawing hung in the Spangler's mess hall for awhile.

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Illinois World War II Memorial:

Ted's war time service was recognized in an article published in the Illinois Times in December 2004. This was part of an overall effort by Illinois World War II Memorial Association to honor all 987,000 Illinois veterans who served and specifically the 22,000 veterans who didn't come home.

In the article, written for the Illinois Times by Job Conger, a Springfield poet and writer, Ted was quoted as saying "I didn't want a strip or anything to do with going up in rank. I got in there because the war was on...We had a variety of guns and depth charges (aboard the Spangler) and three torpedos that we never used....Our job was to protect the ships in convoys transiting from island to island. We had firing practice all the time I was stationed on gun No. 1. Someone would hand me a shell and I'd hand it to the loader. We never fired guns at anything in combat." Mr. Conger concluded his article with this quote from Ted: "I'm thrilled I served, but if you want to know how my life was changed by the war, I have to tell you that marriage changed my life

more than my time in the war zone."

As a side note to the above, not too many months after Ted returned home from the service he married Betty Marie Peontek on June 1, 1946 and they have "five wonderful children, two girls and three boys