

SHIP'S HISTORY, U.S.S. FRANK KNOX (DD-742), 11 DECEMBER 1944 to 15 AUG. 1945

It was a cold, wintry day in Boston on the 11th of December, 1944 when the U.S.S. FRANK KNOX was commissioned. The grandstand at the side of the pier overflowed with people as the Executive Officer set the first watch. This was a ship to be watched - a new ship, of a new class built for a purpose. Her very name made her different. Hadn't Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King said at her launching "For Naval vessels have ever borne a greater name than the ship being launched today. We of the Navy are proud of the U.S.S. FRANK KNOX because of the man whose name she bears." Her officers and crew got out to make her ship worthy of that name, a ship that the Navy could be proud of in her own right.

Intensive training followed. Drills and exercises and problems. The various departments of the ship perfected procedures, trained many men who were aboard their first ship. Complex operations became almost instinctive. Coordination of effort approached closer and closer to the desired status where everything worked properly and smoothly.

Then back she came to Boston. More work. More structural changes. New and different and better gear installed. Her frigate specialized even further. She was to be a picket ship - the advanced guard, the ship that got out miles and miles in front of the main force, the ship that detected enemy planes and craft before the main force did and destroyed them before they could come within striking range of the aircraft carriers and battleships.

More training, more drill. More exercises. Constantly, incessantly day after day after day until the green ship that had been commissioned that cold winter day, was a fighting unit ready for anything a resourceful enemy could do.

But perfection under training conditions and perfection under fire aren't the same. The big problem was - how would these new men and this new ship act in battle. Nobody could predict - only time would tell.

Then came the job for which she'd been built. The time towards which all this training had been aimed. On 1 July 1945 the U.S.S. FRANK KNOX left Leyte with other units of the justly famed Task Force 39. Their mission, to bring the once mighty Japanese empire to its knees. Specifically the tasks were to send wave after wave of carrier aircraft against Japanese airfields and against the Japanese fleet; also to steam in to the Japanese coast, and hurl ton after ton of high explosive shells into their industrial plants.

To do all this, the fleet had to be protected against that last desperate gamble of a desperate enemy - suicide planes. That job of protection fell, in part to the U.S.S. FRANK KNOX. On every occasion that Task Group 38.4 was within striking range of the enemy she was out fifty miles ahead as a picket. With her were three other destroyers assigned in rotation from other units of the group.