

Tuesday, May 8, 1945

p. 3

Coast Guard Fired First Shot And Took First Nazi Prisoner

Philadelphia Coast Guardsmen yesterday observed the surrender of Germany by recalling that their branch of the service fired the first American shot in the war against Germany, capturing the first enemy ship and taking the first Nazi prisoner.

It was in September, 1941, that the Coast Guard cutter Northland captured the Norwegian freighter Busko, loaded with equipment for a German weather station to be established in Greenland. The Busko was taken back to Boston and a Nazi-trained radio operator was taken prisoner.

New Attempt Stopped

A few weeks later the Northland again broke up an abortive German attempt to establish a listening post in Greenland—this time with Ens. Benjamin D. Fleet, Jr., of 3119 N. 16th st., leading a raiding party that captured one ship. One other German vessel was scuttled and a third was destroyed by the Coast Guard.

Another notable "first" of the Coast Guard in which Philadelphians participated was a battle during which the cutter Spencer blasted a Nazi U-boat which attempted to sneak into a convoy, and captured 40 crew members before sinking the submarine.

Commanding the Spencer was Capt. Paul R. Heineman, of 107 E. Gorgas la., Germantown, with seven other Philadelphians under his command. They were Charles B. Lockett, 2422 Aspen st.; Perley D. Wheeler, 5450 Windsor st.; Joseph A. Dedeo, 2528 N. Mascher st.; Jack L. Cooper, 2076 E. Victoria st.; John P. McCusker, 1013 Spruce st.; Michael Longo, 1116 Emily st., and John J. Curran, 823 W. Main st.

Rescue Off Normandy

At Normandy, an 83-foot Coast Guard vessel was among the first ships to come to the rescue of American fighting men blasted overboard by enemy guns. She was commanded by Lt. (j. g.) Albert B. Vernon, of 5710 N. 2d st., and rescued 97 men from the water in the face of constant enemy fire.

"The Coast Guard has done its job well in the war against Germany," Capt. Eugene A. Coffin, district Coast Guard officer in Philadelphia, said. "Now the Coast Guard will join the nation's other forces in concentrating on the grim task of all-out assault in the Pacific."

OldMagazineArticles.com