

USS AMICK DE-168

Hello and welcome to *DE Classified* a podcast showcasing the history of Destroyer Escorts. Each month a member of the USS SLATER's education crew will highlight a specific Destroyer Escort and share the stories of the sailors who served aboard these Trim but Deadly ships. My name is Viktor Montes, and I'll be your host this episode. Today I'll be covering DE- 168, the USS AMICK.

The USS AMICK was named after Eugene Earle Amick. And for the purposes of this episode, I will be referring to the man as "Eugene" and to the ship as "Amick," just to clear up any possible confusion that may arise from the names here. Now, we don't know much about the personal life of Eugene unfortunately. However, we do have some official records which can paint us something of a story that we can latch try to onto. Eugene was born in Booneville, Missouri on the twenty-sixth of January 1919. He enrolled in William Jewel College sometime in 1937, and later graduated from there in 1941. Later in 1941, on September 19th, Eugene enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve. After five months of service, Eugene was appointed to the rank of midshipman. After achieving that rank, Eugene entered the Midshipman's School at Northwestern University. Upon his completion through the school, he was promoted to the rank of Ensign and was assigned to the Heavy Cruiser USS ASTORIA (CA-34).

The ASTORIA is one of the better-known ships of World War Two (at least to my knowledge). She participated in such well-known battles as the Battle of Midway and the Battle of the Coral Sea. However, our tale brings us to her role in the First Battle of Guadalcanal. Something of a more tragic affair. The ASTORIA provided naval bombardments and other support to the Guadalcanal landings on the first day. (Specifically, the Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings). This carried through into the second day where she was transferred to go and help with the Savo Landings. During this time of the night (or really, early morning), a Japanese Task Force consisting of seven cruisers and one destroyer managed to sneak around the Savo Islands and engage the ASTORIA and her detachment. This Japanese Task Force accidentally surrounded the ASTORIA and began to bombard her. (Somewhat blindly). Although eventually, a lucky shell destroyed her superstructure causing a giant inferno to rage there. Soon after, her No1 Gun Turret and her Plane Hangers were knocked out as well. All of this caused a massive fire to spring out, which betrayed the ASTORIA's position to the Japanese forces. They soon dug into her like starving dogs, and the ASTORIA suffered 65 hits from enemy ships. Officially, 219 men were reported as casualties (Missing or Killed). Among these men was Eugene Amick.

Meanwhile, at the Newark Shipyards, a plethora of ships were being constructed by the Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Company. Among them, the soon to be USS AMICK. She was built early in 1943 and was finished within five months. The ship was sponsored by Eugene's then widow Mrs. Mary Amick. AMICK was commissioned for service on the twenty-sixth of July 1943. She was a Cannon Class Destroyer Escort, which you likely know what that means by this point. Though, if this is your introduction to the show, I'll go over it. Just in case. She had a length of about 305 feet, a beam of around 37 feet, a displacement of 1620 tons (full load), a top speed of 21kts (or around 25mph), and a range of 10800 NM. She sported a crew of 215. 200 of which were enlisted men, and 15 of which were officers. She was propelled by 4 Diesel Electric converted locomotive engines. She was armed to the teeth with 3 3/50 guns (76mm guns), 1 40mm Bofor AA gun, 8 20mm Oerlikon AA Guns, 3 mk15 21in torpedo tubes, 8 k guns (or depth charge ejectors), 1 hedgehog system, and 2 roller racks for depth charges.

The AMICK was a part of Task Force 62. She was Flagship of Escort Division 15 (of Task Force 62). She oversaw five ships including herself. To note, it was The AMICK (DE-168), her sister ship the ATHERTON (DE-169), the BOOTH (DE-170), the CARROLL (DE-171), the COONER (DE-172), and the ELDRIDGE (DE-173). It was this Escort Division that carried out eight successful round-trip crossings across the Mid Atlantic to supply Allied Bases in the Mediterranean.

From various bases on the Eastern Seaboard of the US and Allies bases nearby, and escorted merchant convoys to places like Gibraltar, Casablanca, Bizerte, Palermo, and Oran. These escort missions occurred from January 1944 to April 1945. During all this time, across all these missions and escorts, the AMICK only ever engaged with Enemy forces once. On the first of August, 1944, a small German Air Detachment flew out to harass the Escort Division 15 and the convoy she was escorting off Cape Bengut (which is just a little west of Algiers, Algeria). The German Planes were repelled, and none of the Allied ships involved were even damaged. She was then sent back to the Boston Shipyards to see reoufitting for further operations in the Pacific. There was one other real combat engagement that AMICK Participated in. This engagement was the Battle of Point Judith.

As the war was winding down, and it became clear that Germany wasn't going to win, Karl Dönitz (then leader of Nazi Germany) issued orders to all German Submariner Crews to surrender to Allied forces. One U-Boat however (U-853) refused this order, and continued operations attempting to disrupt Allied

shipping across the Atlantic. Three days before Nazi Germany surrendered to the United Nations, U-853 sank an American Collier, BLACKPOINT, off the coast of Rhode Island. BLACKPOINT sent out a distress call which was received by the First Naval District in Boston. The Frigate MOBERLY, Destroyer ERICSSON, and Destroyer Escort Sisterships AMICK and ATHERTON were diverted to the area to search for the U-Boat. This battle has been done with detail in a previous episode of this podcast on the Atherton herself, seeing as she was credited with the kill. If you wish to learn more, definitely check out that episode. I'll briefly cover the events here.

As the ships arrived, they began a sweep with their late war sonar systems. They discovered U-853 just after midnight and began bombardments. An oil slick was spotted; however the ships continued their attacks throughout the night.

While her sister ship was getting all the glory in participating in one of the last naval engagements in the Battle of the Atlantic and securing the last German U-Boat kill in American Waters, the AMICK had peeled away from the engagement. This was much to the chagrin of her crew however, as the young men who served aboard wanted a taste of glory for themselves.

Regardless, AMICK was transferred to the Pacific Fleet on May fifth, 1945. She sailed to Guantanamo Bay, where she undertook a week of training, and then proceeded to the Panama Canal Zone. After crossing through the Panama Canal, she briefly based herself in San Diego. Though she would soon depart for Pearl Harbor. After arriving there, the AMICK underwent another two weeks of training. From here, she would continue several more escort missions as the war in the Pacific wound down. These Operations largely took place in the Western Pacific, escorting Allied convoys to islands such as the Marshalls, Marianas, Ryukus, and Carolines. Late into the Summer of '45, AMICK became the flagship for the area's anti-submarine patrol.

On the Twenty-Third of August, 1945, the AMICK was sent to Peleliu with a detachment of high ranking Marine and Naval Officers. Her mission here was to host surrender talks for all Imperial Japanese forces in the Northern Palau Islands. Japanese officers were brought on board to negotiate terms, and by the first of September of that year, the Japanese forces had surrendered. Now, the AMICK was only one of many Destroyer Escorts which filled that role. The role of mopping up any resistance left in various Japanese hold outs across the Pacific, bypassed and left behind in the Island Hopping Campaign of the Allies.

Japan has surrendered to the United Nations later in September, 1945. The AMICK aided with occupation duties across the Pacific, and just generally celebrated for the next few months. And by November, 1945, the AMICK began her long trek back to San Diego. She was retransferred to the Atlantic Fleet soon after arrival, and was sent to Green Cove Springs, Florida to be mothballed. She remained mothballed for the next nine years, until on June Fourteenth, 1955, the AMICK was loaned to the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force under the Mutual Defence Assistance Program. This program aimed to essentially transform Japan into a US base and bulwark against Soviet and Chinese influence in the region. These old DEs would serve as a sort of check against the Soviet Submarine Fleet which was considered quite formidable at the time. Though it must have brought up some confusing emotions in both the Americans who fought to defeat the Japanese, and the Japanese who felt the Allies had humiliated them after the war.

In Japanese service, the USS AMICK (DE-168) was renamed to JDS Asahi (DE-262). “Asahi” means “morning sun” in Japanese, and has some obvious symbolism associated with the national spirit of Japan at the time. The Asahi served under the Japanese for the next thirty years, finally being returned to US Service sometime in 1975. Asahi returned to San Diego, where she was reclassified as a Frigate due to agreed-upon global conventions for naval standards. In the following year (1976), Asahi was sold to the Philippine Navy. She was renamed the BRP Daku Sikatuna. Her namesake in the Philippine Navy, Daku Sikatuna, was a Chieftain of the Dapitan Kingdom on the Bohol island in the Philippines, sometime during the early modern era. This chieftain made an alliance with Spanish Conquistador Miguel López de Legazpi, forging the first official treaties between the Philippines and the Spanish Crown. This obviously holds great significance in the history of the Philippines, living with the legacy of previous Spanish Colonialism.

But in 1979, the Daku Sikatuna was sent up to South Korea for refitting. This would be needed for her more prominent role in the Philippine Navy. This refitting would finish sometime in 1980, and for the next nine years, the Daku Sikatuna served as the flagship for the Philippine Navy. Though in 1989, the poor girl was scrapped. Her saga ended, but her legacy would live on.

Thank you for listening to DE Classified. This podcast is brought to you by the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum aboard USS SLATER. You can find a transcript of this episode, accompanying photos, and a bibliography at [USSslater.org/DE Classified](http://USSslater.org/DE%20Classified). I’m Viktor Montes and I hope you join us next

month to DE Classify the story of Frank Slater aboard USS SAN FRANCISCO.