

## Introduction

Hello! 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. This episode will discuss the USS *Begor*, her conversion from a destroyer escort to a high-speed transport, and her varied career beyond World War II. This episode was written by Cassidy Griffin and is presented by Giordano Romano.

## General Information

The USS *Begor* was laid down as DE-711, a Rudderow-class destroyer escort, by DeFoe Shipbuilding Company in Bay City, Michigan. Like most destroyer escorts, she was 306' long, 36'10" wide, and had a displacement of 1,450 long tons. She had a draft of 13'6" and a top speed of 23 knots, or 26 miles per hour, propelled by her 12,000-horsepower twin-Babcox and Wilson "D" Express boilers and turbo-electric drive with two GE steam turbines. However, two months after her launching on May 25, 1944, it was decided the *Begor* would be completed as a Crosley-class high-speed transport on July 17, 1944. She was then commissioned as APD-127 on March 14, 1945, under the command of LCDR. Benjamin T. Brooks, USNR in New Orleans. As part of the conversion to an APD, she lost most of her originally planned armaments, having only one 5"/.38 caliber gun, three twin 40mm guns, six single 20mm guns, and two depth charge racks. In place of the lost armament, she could carry four Higgins boats or landing craft, other vehicles, and 162 troops in addition to her complement of 204, consisting of 12 officers and 192 enlisted sailors.

## APD Conversion History

The Begor is one of the 94 Buckley and Rudderow-class Destroyer Escorts to be converted to APDs during World War II. Even before the war, island-hopping campaigns and their logistics were discussed, coinciding with the U.S. Marine Corps' rapid development of amphibious and raiding doctrines. Following these discussions, the Navy converted the USS *Manley* (DD-940) into APD-1, by removing her boilers, guns, and torpedo tubes to make room for troop and cargo space in 1938. The conversion was a success and both the Navy and the Marines ordered for more APDs to be produced. This decision proved crucial as the United States entered World War II.

During the Guadalcanal campaign, neither side had the overwhelming naval or air supremacy that had defined earlier amphibious operations in the war. This prompted the United States to ramp up its APD conversion program, to ensure that ships would be available to transport troops to beachheads and operate with specialized units while still participating in more traditional operations like escorting ships and conducting anti-submarine patrols. Beginning in August 1942, small units such as the Marine Raiders, Naval Underwater Demolition Teams, and the United States Army Rangers would be delivered onto hostile shores to perform reconnaissance and to demolish natural or man-made obstacles that could prevent larger ships from approaching. As APDs were designed to move up to 200 troops and 40 tons of cargo while still providing gunfire support, they were considered invaluable to this mission. After Guadalcanal, these ships were used by the Navy to conduct similar amphibious operations off the Solomon Islands and around New Guinea.

APDs were also used to deliver supplies to troops who were holed up on islands in the Pacific. During the Battle of Savo Island, Japanese forces used fast destroyers to deliver supplies near beachheads at night before U.S. forces could conduct air raids during the day. This system,

dubbed the Tokyo Express, was modified by the Navy to use APDs. APDs' cargo-handling facilities and Higgins boats allowed for supplies to be delivered closer to shore than possible by Japanese destroyers, ensuring supplies made it to U.S. troops. In this capacity, DEs converted to APDs proved ideal for deploying around small islands due to their speed, agility, and shallow draft. However, due to the scaled-back armaments, these ships became targets for enemy surface ships, submarines, and kamikazes, with half of the ships sent to Guadalcanal being lost.

### Namesake

As with other DEs, the Begor was named for a sailor who lost his life in action earlier in the war: Fay Broughton Begor. A native of upstate New York, he was born on October 15, 1916, in Moriah, New York and stayed in the area until he earned his bachelor's degree from Schenectady's Union College in June 1937. He continued his education, moving to Montreal, Canada to earn an M.D. from McGill University in May 1941. In July of that year, he started as a resident intern at Montreal General Hospital. Seeing a need, on July 22, 1942, he returned to the United States and joined the war effort as an assistant surgeon with the rank of Lieutenant (junior grade). He executed his oath of office on September 4, 1942, and three days later, reported to the Third Naval District at the New York Navy Yard. On October 3, he was transferred to the Landing Craft Group, Naval Operating Base in Norfolk where he served in the Tank Landing Flotilla Group 18. On April 6, 1943, he transferred to the Pacific and found himself with Tank Landing Craft Group 22, serving aboard Infantry Landing Craft-Large (LCI(L)) 339 as a medical officer.

Later that year, under Operation Postern, Begor landed with the 9th Australian Division on the Huon Peninsula near Lae, New Guinea on September 4, 1943. During the operation,

Japanese aircraft attacked the beachhead and managed to hit LCI(L)-339 multiple times. Begor treated the wounded Australian sailors until he was severely wounded himself. After sustaining injuries to both legs, he was transferred to LCI(L)-338 then to the U.S. Army 87th Station Hospital at Buna. On the 7th, he was transferred again to a tank landing ship (LST-464) that had been reconfigured as a hospital ship, but sadly, he passed away from his injuries on September 9. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions and his widow, Mrs. Begor, sponsored his namesake ship on May 25, 1944. Fitting of his career, it is only appropriate that the ship that bears his name assisted in the same amphibious operations as its namesake.

## World War II

The *Begor's* career during World War II was not particularly long nor eventful. After its shakedown cruise, the USS *Begor* was assigned to the Pacific Fleet with TransDiv 106 under Captain F. W. Schmidt. On May 30, 1945, she arrived at Pearl Harbor and began convoy duties around the Marshall, Carolina, and Philippines Islands. On August 17th, she arrived in Guam before sailing with Underwater Demolition Team 21 and later joined units from the 3rd Fleet while enroute to Japan. On August 27th, the *Begor* entered Sagami Wan, and three days later, frogmen aboard the ship reconnoitered landing beaches in preparation for the next-day occupation efforts. After, she proceeded to Yokosuka Naval Dockyard, where she made dock surveys and demilitarized vessels there. After Japan surrendered in early September, the *Begor* departed for the United States on September 25, arriving in San Diego on October 21.

## Interwar Period and Operation Crossroads

After the war, the *Begor* operated primarily off the West Coast, conducting patrols in a relatively safe and stable environment, under the command of LCDR John Ashmore Harman.

She remained in this position until April 1946, when she was selected to be a drone control vessel during Operation Crossroads, a pair of nuclear weapons tests, while now under the command of LCDR Richard Kent Margetts. The test was to be the first nuclear weapons detonation since the bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, and was conducted to investigate the effect of nuclear weapons on warships. Under the supervision of Vice Admiral William H. P. Blandy, 95 ships were assembled in the Bikini Lagoon. Two plutonium implosion-type nuclear weapons, like the one dropped on Nagasaki, were created, each with a yield of 23 kilotons of TNT.

As part of the first test, codenamed *Able*, a bomb was dropped from the B-29 Superfortress *Dave's Dream* by the 509th Bombardment Group on July 1, 1946. The bomb detonated 520 feet above the target fleet but missed the aim point—the USS *Nevada* (BB-36)—by 2,130 feet. The reason for this discrepancy was never solved. Because of the missed aim point, only 5 of the projected 9 ships sank. Two attack transports sank immediately, followed by two destroyers within hours. The following day, the Japanese light cruiser *Sakawa* sank, as she had been located closer to surface zero to guarantee her end. Fourteen other ships took serious damage, most from the bomb's air pressure shock wave. Of these 14, eleven were located within 1000 yards of detonation and their orientation to detonation determined how much damage they sustained. More than a mile from detonation, the USS *Saratoga* (CV-3) was damaged by fire, which was determined to be caused by the addition of several aircraft onboard, each loaded with volatile aviation fuel. She managed to be put out and kept afloat. Despite these results, the 114 members of the invited audience, most of them members of the press, expressed disappointment.

The air-burst detonation of the *Able* test was preferred for two reasons: surface materials do not get drawn up into the fireball, and the fireball radiation only lasts for a couple of seconds

before fission products rise and disperse in the stratosphere. While radioactive fallout will still fall back to the ground and pollute the local area, these detonations are considered 'self-cleansing' as the radiation levels are significantly less than those of a ground-burst detonation. After the test, there was no significant local fallout. In line with these results, while some materials on board ships close to the detonation became radioactive, mostly from the neutron particles from the fireball, most of the ships themselves did not become radioactive, a major breakthrough. Within a day, nearly all surviving ships were reboarded for inspections.

However, the amount of neutron and gamma radiation these ships were exposed to would kill all crew. Animal testing aboard the ships confirmed these results. Animals were placed aboard 22 target ships in areas that would normally be occupied. These animals consisted of 57 guinea pigs, 109 mice, 146 pigs, 176 goats, and 3,030 white rats. Of these animals, 10% were killed by the air pressure shock wave, 15% by radiation, 35% were euthanized within 3 months, and 10% were later killed as part of a long-term mutation study, mostly mice placed outside the expected lethal zone. The animals that did survive the blast, did because of the nature of single-pulse radiation, the type seen from air-burst detonations. If you are far enough away from surface zero, initial exposure is survivable.

In the end, this experiment showed that every unprotected location on a ship close to detonation received 100 sieverts of initial radiation from the fireball. For context, a sievert is a unit of radiation that measures the biological effect of absorbed ionizing radiation, and a dose of 8 sieverts is considered lethal even with treatment. Even those deep inside the ship, where radiation levels would be reduced by 90%, would still receive a fatal dose of 10 sieverts. As the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, a non-profit organization concerned with science and global security, put it: "A large ship, about a mile away from the explosion, would escape sinking, but

the crew would be killed by the deadly burst of radiations from the bomb, and only a ghost ship would remain, floating unattended in the vast waters of the ocean.” Despite the conclusive results from Test *Able*, the second test, *Baker*, proceeded on schedule.

For the second test, which took place on July 25, 1946, the bomb was detonated 90 feet underwater. The bomb was suspended beneath landing craft LSM-60 halfway to the seabed. Upon detonation, the underwater fireball became a rapidly expanding bubble of red-hot gas. The bubble pushed against the water, creating a supersonic hydraulic shock wave capable of crushing the hulls of ships while hitting the seabed and water surface simultaneously about 4 milliseconds after detonation. In the seabed, a 30’ deep, 2,000’ wide crater was left, and at the surface, a spray dome was seen. Once the bubble hit the air, it started a supersonic atmospheric shock wave, creating a condensation cloud. Within a second, all the water within a 500’ radius of the bomb was removed by the gas bubble, which lifted 2 million tons of spray and sand into the air. The bubble continued and rose 2,500’ per second into a hollow cylinder 6000’ tall and 2000’ wide with walls 300’ thick. As the water began to fall, about 12 seconds after detonation, it created a 900’ base surge, which managed to roll over ships, causing severe damage and covering them in radioactive matter. Eventually, the bubble slowed to the speed of sound in water or a mile per second. As this happened, the water rushed back into the bubble space, creating a tsunami. Eleven seconds after detonation, the wave was 1000’ from surface zero and 94’ high. By the time this wave hit the Bikini Atoll, it was a nine-wave set that tossed landing craft onto the beach and filled them with sand. Even without the threat of radioactivity, the explosion caused massive amounts of damage to ships, the seabed, and surrounding islands.

Radioactive sea spray caused extensive contamination, and due to the ground-burst detonation, about 10.6 pounds of plutonium and 3 pounds of other fission products remained in

the local environment. These 13.6 pounds of radioactive material mixed with 2 million tons of spray and sand. This mixture either sank to the bottom of the lagoon or was carried away by the tide or the wind-driven currents. A small amount of radioactive materials were thrown into the air, mostly from the base surge which served as a “fog bank of radioactive mist,” and was carried several miles from the detonation site.

Ten ships were sunk and any ship within 1,000 yards was seriously damaged by water pressure, including the USS *Arkansas* (BB-33), which ended up rolling over and sinking into the crater on the seabed, the USS *Saratoga* (CV-3), and the Japanese dreadnought *Nagato*. The German heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* did not sink until Christmas time. Heavy radioactivity prevented hull repairs, so she was towed to the nearby Kwajalein Atoll where she capsized in shallow waters on December 22, 1946. Plutonium was found in the captain’s quarters, without the presence of fission products. The submarine USS *Shipjack* (SS-184) was sunk but was successfully raised at Bikini Atoll, before being towed back to California. She was eventually sunk again as a target ship in 1948. Another submarine, the USS *Dentuda* (SS-335) had a skeleton crew aboard and was placed 3,000’ away from the detonation site. She submerged to avoid the base surge and managed to escape serious contamination and hull damage, being successfully decontaminated, repaired, and briefly returned to service. Two other ships, the USS *Fallon* (APA-81) and USS *Hughes* (DD-410) were in sinking condition, prompting them to be towed and beached on the island. As for LSM-60, no identifiable part of her was ever found, leading scientists to believe she was vaporized.

While scientists and researchers anticipated radioactive contamination, they were not prepared for the full extent left by the *Baker* test. Many believed only a handful of ships would be contaminated beyond repair. In reality, almost all of the 90 or so target ships could not be



decontaminated. Sailors tried scrubbing off the radioactivity first with water, then soap, and finally lye. They even attempted to sandblast bare metal to remove all contamination but were unsuccessful. The USS *Independence* (CVL-22) which previously survived the *Able* test with significant damage to her flight deck, underwent 4 years of decontamination experiments at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, before being scuttled near Farallon Islands. Despite these problems, 4,900 men boarded target ships within 6 days of the test, with no protective clothing offered.

It was later discovered that neutrons from the blast converted the stable sodium-23, a common component of salt water, into the highly radioactive sodium-24. This product remained in solution contaminating hulls, onboard desalination systems of ships in or entering the lagoon, and the water used for decontamination. From this, sailors inadvertently contaminated their living quarters. Fireboats attempting to wash off contamination were sprayed with radioactive runoff, eventually leading to one being taken out of service. More than half of the provided Geiger counters ended up shorting and became unavailable, and crewmembers from two ships—the USS *Wainwright* (DD-419) and the USS *Carteret* (APA-70)—had to be evacuated after becoming overexposed. Even support ships ended up being contaminated. When they entered the lagoon, their hulls became radioactive. As a result, sleeping quarters for these ships were moved away from the hulls into the center to protect sailors.

In the end, plutonium-detection tests conducted aboard ships and on fish from the lagoon on August 10, 1946, ended the test. Based on studies from the Manhattan Project, the program responsible for developing nuclear weapons, showed that 1 microgram of plutonium per worker is the maximum tolerance dose, a dose with a low probability of complications. Tests performed aboard the USS *Rockbridge* (APA-228) in November showed 2 milligrams of plutonium still

present, about 2000 times the maximum tolerance dose. A third nuclear weapons test, *Charlie*, which was planned for early 1947 was canceled as well.

All surviving target fleet was towed to the Kwajalein Atoll, where live ammunition and fuel were offloaded in uncontaminated water during August and September. Eight ships and 2 submarines were towed back to Hawaii for radiological inspection, and an additional 12 target ships were only lightly contaminated and could be manned and sent back to the US. In the end, 89 ships, including those not part of the target fleet, had to be scuttled, with only 9 ships managing to be decontaminated enough to be scrapped. Over the next two years, these 89 ships were scuttled off the Bikini or Kwajalein Atolls, near the Hawaiian Islands, or off the coast of California. The remaining support ships were decontaminated as necessary, and either received radiological clearance before returning to service or were used for decontamination experiments. One support destroyer, the USS *Laffey* (DD-724) required “sandblasting and painting of all underwater surfaces, and acid washing and partial replacement of salt-water pipes and evaporators” before it could be cleared for service again.

Like the Able test, animal testing was conducted, though this time only using pigs and rats. Because of the radiation levels, sailors were unable to board and check on the animals for several days. All of the pigs and most of the rats died in the meantime from radiation exposure. After *Able*, much of the public interest surrounding *Baker* focused on animal welfare, so researchers lied about the test’s radiological effects on the animals in the press.

However, the largest radiological effects affected the residents of the Bikini Atoll. Due to continued nuclear testing, the island was deemed unfit for subsistence farming and fishing. All 167 residents of the island had to be evacuated aboard LST-861 and moved to Rongerik Atoll.

There, both the new and old residents struggled to get sufficient food supplies for the massive population increase, prompting the U.S. Navy to provide food and water in the beginning weeks. However, these shipments soon stopped. By January 1947, visitors to the island reported malnutrition. In July, residents were reported as facing potential starvation, and by January 1948, residents were reported as emaciated. In March, former Bikini Atoll-residents were evacuated to Kwajalein and then moved to Kili in November. Kili, however, was a poor substitute for Bikini Island, as it was  $\frac{1}{6}$  the land mass, previously uninhabited, lacked basic support structures, and had no lagoon or protected harbor for fishing, forcing the residents to become dependent on food shipments once again.

In 1954, the United States continued nuclear testing in the Bikini Atoll, and over the next four years, 21 more nuclear weapons were tested, with only one being an air-burst detonation. The first after Baker, on March 1, 1954, was the dirtiest. The 15-megaton bomb, dubbed *Castle Bravo*, was the most powerful device ever detonated by the United States and led to radiation injuries to islanders living in the Rongelap Atoll, about 92 miles away from the Bikini Atoll, which was later evacuated due to the contamination. In the 1970s, Marshall Islanders attempted to resettle the Bikini Atoll, but radioactivity in the food ended these attempts. As of 2017, the Bikini Atoll is still uninhabited, and 4000 descendants of the Bikini evacuees have scattered across the Marshall Islands and the world.

Despite attempts by researchers to limit radiation exposure and sickness in Operation Crossroads' participants, one study showed that their life expectancy was shortened by an average of three months. In the end, test *Baker's* official report concluded: "Removal of radioactive contamination of the type encountered in the vessel targets...cannot be accomplished successfully." The Navy, in an effort to stymie potential contamination, equipped ships with

Countermeasure Wash Down Systems, which would spray salt water over ships if nuclear war was deemed imminent in the hopes of preventing radioactive materials from settling in the ships' cracks and other systems. In spite of the scientific breakthroughs, test *Baker* is most often remembered for being the world's first nuclear disaster and the first case of immediate radioactive fallout from a nuclear explosion. Its mark on the Marshall Islands is still felt today by residents and researchers.

After the *Begor's* participation in Operation Crossroads where she managed to escape radioactive contamination, the ship returned to the United States in October 1946 and resumed normal peacetime operations along the West Coast. In July 1947, she traveled to the Far East, returning to the United States in February 1948. She did this trip again from August to December 1949. Due to her experience in Asia, the *Begor* was well-suited to aid U.S. war efforts in the Korean War that began in July 1950.

#### Korean War and the Hungnam Evacuation

As war raged on the Korean Peninsula, the *Begor* served two tours of duty. The first began on December 7, 1950, under the command of CDR. William Anderson Walker III. Originally, she was tasked with helping underwater demolition teams and British commandos ashore behind enemy lines before assisting in one of the largest humanitarian evacuations in American history.

As she arrived, China had just formally entered the conflict, and 250,000 Chinese troops were threatening units from the United Nations as they tried to maneuver through the mountains of North Korea. Around the Chosin Reservoir, UN forces found themselves halted by the rapidly moving Chinese People's Volunteer Army. In the Battle of Changjinho or the Battle of the

Chosin Reservoir, Lt. Gen. Steven Rudder, the Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, and his 30,000 soldiers were surrounded by 120,000 Chinese troops while combating harsh winter weather conditions and harsher terrain. After 3 days of fighting, the U.S. and her allies were successful in breaching the encroachment but suffered heavy losses as they retreated to Hungnam, along a road dubbed the “Hell Fire Valley.” Both sides suffered heavily, with over a thousand U.S. troops killed in action and thousands more perishing from cold weather or being declared missing in action. In total, there were 17,843 casualties just for the United States.

On December 9, as troops were breaking out of the Chosin Reservoir, General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, ordered the evacuation by sea of the United States X Corps. These evacuation orders included the 1st Marine Division, the 3rd and 7th Infantry Divisions, and the Republic of Korea I Corps’ 3rd Infantry Division and the Capital Infantry Division.

Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander Naval Forces, Far East, alerted Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, the amphibious commander, to prepare. In conjunction with British, Australian, and Canadian evacuation efforts off North Korea’s West Coast, Doyle began deploying U.S. naval forces off Hungnam and Wonsan, along North Korea’s East Coast. As a result, the *Begor* was immediately sprung into action as she participated in these evacuations, known as the Hungnam Evacuations, from December 9 to 24. Starting on the 10th, Doyle’s Task Force 90 began withdrawing military personnel, refugees, vehicles, and cargo from North Korea as they made their way south from the mountains in vehicles or by foot, in the largest sealift since Okinawa in 1945.

Allied forces continued to fight their way south and battled the biting cold weather. Air cover was provided by the nearby airfield at Yonpo until it was abandoned on December 14. Then aircover was taken over by Navy and Marine carrier-borne planes, from ships like the USS *Philippines Sea* (CV-47), USS *Leyte* (CV-32), USS *Princeton* (CVL-23), and USS *Valley Forge* (CV-45). With a plethora of smaller ships, they provided fire support and airdropped supplies on the beleaguered forces moving towards Hungnam. Around Hungnam, Task Group 70.8, under Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, moved into a defensive perimeter. The cruisers *St. Paul* (CA-73) and the *Rochester* (CA-124), 6 destroyers, and 3 rocket ships put a ring of fire between allied and enemy forces. The USS *Missouri* (BB-63) joined this effort on December 16 and used her 16” guns to protect the fleeing soldiers. Between December 7 and 24, combatants fired 18,737 5” rounds, 2,931 8” rounds, 162 16” rounds, 71 3” rounds, 185 40mm rounds, and 1,462 rockets at Chinese and North Korean forces. This culminated in the destruction of the bridge leading into Hungnam, the Songchon River Bridge, with the intent to slow the Chinese advance. With the withdrawal of UN forces, over 36,000 square miles of North Korean territory was left to enemy forces, who decided not to contest the evacuation efforts.

By Christmas Eve, Task Force 90 had evacuated 105,000 military personnel, 91,000 Korean refugees, 17,500 tanks and vehicles, and 350,000 tons of cargo. In addition, Marine and Air Force transports airlifted another 3,600 troops, 196 vehicles, and 1,300 tons of cargo. Along the West Coast, British, Australian, and Canadian forces evacuated 69,000 military personnel, 64,000 refugees, 1,000 vehicles, and 55,000 tons of cargo out of Inchon through January. In total, 177,600 military personnel, 155,000 refugees, 18,696 vehicles, and 406,300 tons of cargo were evacuated from North Korea during the entire operation. What could not be evacuated was

destroyed by Navy underwater demolition teams to ensure very little of military value would be left behind.

The Battle of the Chosin Reservoir laid the foundation for the current political relations between the United States and South Korea and the Hungnam Evacuations have become the largest sea-borne, military evacuation of civilians under combat conditions in American history. The humanitarian part of this mission was not originally part of the plan, but ships stepped up to ensure that as many refugees as possible made it to safety. One example, the merchant ship, the USS *Meredith Victory*, carried 14,000 refugees while rationing the limited food and water onboard. During the journey south, 5 children were born. To this day, there are about a million descendants of the Hungnam Evacuation across the globe, who remember the sacrifices their families made for a better life.

Following this mission, the *Begor* returned to amphibious operations along the Korean peninsula. On April 7, 1951, the *Begor*, as part of Special Task Force 74 along with the *Wallace L. Lind* (DD-703), *Massey* (DD-778), *Fort Marion* (LSD-22), and *Saint Paul* (CA-73), helped the Royal Marines' No. 41 Commando unit raid rail line and tunnels. This operation was a success, with the commandos' destructive efforts slowing the enemy's resupply mission. As a result, North Korean forces had to work to repair rail facilities during the night while hiding crews and locomotives in tunnels during the day to avoid further destruction from American forces. The *Begor* returned to the United States after finishing her tour in September of that year.

The *Begor's* second tour of duty to the Korean War was from November 14, 1952 to August 12, 1953, where she was responsible for participating in patrol and underwater

demolition team operations. After the signing of the armistice on July 25, 1953, she assisted in post-Armistice POW exchanges before returning to the United States later that year.

### Post-War and Decommissioning

Even after the end of the Korean War, the *Begor* continued traveling between the West Coast and the Far East. Between July 1954 and March 1955, she returned to Vietnam and participated in another humanitarian operation, Operation Passage to Freedom. From August 16 to September 30, 1954, U.S. ships relocated scores of refugees, military forces, and equipment from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. U.S. forces were responsible for building shelters, rationing food and water, and providing medical care at ports and onboard transport ships. Over the operation, nearly 311,000 people were moved into the South, and they formed the basis for non-Communist resistance during the Vietnam War.

After she returned from Vietnam, the *Begor* remained along the West Coast before being decommissioned and placed into the reserve fleet on July 20, 1959. She was briefly recommissioned on November 20, 1961 then decommissioned again on July 13, 1962. Almost 7 years later, on January 1, 1969, she was redesignated as Amphibious Transport, Small, LPR-127. Finally, on May 15, 1975, she was struck from the naval vessel register before being sold for scrap for \$60,000 to the National Metal and Steel Corporation in Terminal Island, California on December 6, 1976.

Over the course of her long career, she earned six medals: the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Occupation Medal with an "ASIA" clasp for her work during World War II; the National Defense Service Medal; and the Korean Service Medal with five battle stars and the United Nations Korea Medal for her service during the



Korean War. For a relatively small ship, the *Begor*'s service stands out amongst the rest for her varied career and participation in not one, but two, major humanitarian operations in Asia.

### Conclusion

Like many ships who served during the span that included World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, the *Begor* participated in a variety of operations and missions, allowing her sailors to point to many important moments to explain their naval careers. In her service across the Pacific, the *Begor* witnessed many things and helped many people, whether it was doing amphibious or evacuation missions across these three conflicts, aiding in the development of nuclear science, or just patrolling the United States. All destroyer escorts—or high-speed transport ships in this case—have a story, and DE Classified is committed to sharing those stories in memory of these sailors and the countless lives they saved.

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 [USS Slater.org/DE Classified](https://USSSlater.org/DEClassified).

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Photos with Captions





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IN PROUD MEMORY  
OF  
**FAY BROUGHTON BEGOR**

M. D., C. M., (Mc GILL)  
LIEUTENANT (J.G), MEDICAL CORPS, U.S.N.R.

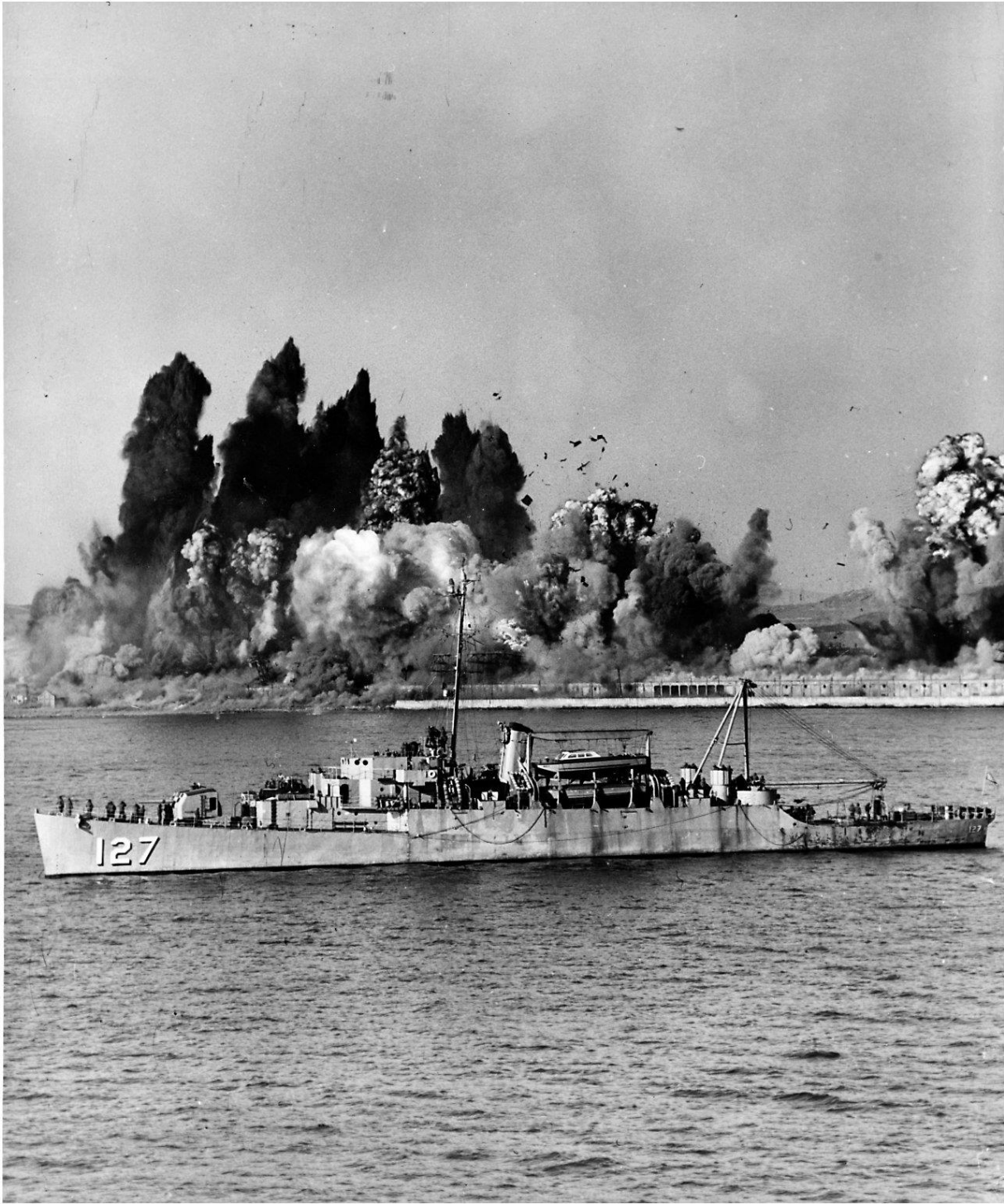
WHO WAS POSTHUMOUSLY  
AWARDED THE NAVY CROSS FOR HIS  
GALLANTRY UNDER FIRE ON THE  
BEACHES AT LAE, NEW GUINEA.  
IN SEPTEMBER 1943

AND

IN TRIBUTE TO THE FOUR HUN-  
DRED GRADUATES OF MCGILL UNIVER-  
SITY WHO ARE SERVING WITH THE  
ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED  
STATES OF AMERICA











LIFE