



the approaches to Leyte Gulf at the beginning of the Philippines invasion, and eight of their sister ships were among the escorts that brought the first reinforcement convoys to Leyte.

The frigates were detached for duty elsewhere early in 1945 when faster steam-powered DEs with more effective armament joined the 7th Fleet. The remaining 12 California-built ships performed training and patrol duties in Alaskan waters and the eastern Pacific.

Most of the Great Lakes frigates served in the Atlantic, a number escorting convoys to and from the Mediterranean. Several operated temporarily with task groups investigating reported

U-boat activity, and on one such mission the *USS Moberly* shared credit with a Navy DE for the destruction of the *U-853* off Nar-

ragansett Bay in May 1945. By that time, many of the frigates were being converted for weather-patrol duty, for which they were quite suitable because of their endurance and sea kindliness — they were much more comfortable in a seaway than DEs.

The conversion involved the replacement of the after three-inch gun by a small deckhouse for inflating weather balloons. Forty-four of the ships were so fitted, manning weather stations in both the Atlantic and Pacific.

Those serving in the Atlantic after VE Day had their decks and bridge structures painted bright yellow to make them more readily visible to aircraft on transatlantic flights, a form of *reverse camouflage* that did little for the ships' appearance.

WORLD WAR II NEARS AN END

As the war in Europe neared its end, many of the escort vessels flying American colors were clearly superfluous. Twenty-eight of the frigates were made available for Lend-Lease transfer to the then Soviet Union in the spring of 1945.

During pre-transfer overhauls, these ships had their most sophisticated equipment replaced by more primitive gear, after which they steamed to Cold Bay, Alaska. There the Coast Guard crews spent several weeks training their Russian replacements. The frigates hoisted their Soviet flags in July and August of 1945.

Smallest of the Navy's escort vessels manned by Coast Guardsmen were 10 submarine chasers — four of the 173-foot steel PCs and six of the 110-foot wooden SCs. Despite their size, several had more impressive

records than many of the larger vessels. Thus, the *PC 469* engaged the *U-154* in a five-hour battle in the Caribbean Sea in November 1942, damaging the enemy and emerging unscathed.

It went on to serve as control vessel at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, sinking two suicide motor boats and driving off a third in May 1945 and shooting down two Japanese aircraft six weeks later.

The General William Mitchell ... in some 20 months, this P-2 transport made 10 transoceanic voyages, traversing more than 165,000 miles and carrying 80,858 passengers.

Below: Crewmen of the German *U-550* abandon ship after being depth charged, rammed and shelled by Allied convoy ships. The *USS Joyce* rescued 13 of the *U-boat's* survivors.

