

25 November 1944

SPEEDLETTER

To: The Chief of the Bureau of Ships.

One month ago today this vessel was a unit of an escort carrier group that contacted and engaged in surface action a large enemy task force consisting of battleships, cruisers and destroyers. The commanding officer believes that the subsequent engagement was such as to test the ordnance equipment, machinery and hull under the most trying conditions. The action lasted about two hours. Early in the action in company with two other destroyers the *Hoel* and *Johnston*, a torpedo attack was made on the leading enemy heavy cruisers. This vessel then attacked the enemy battleships with the remaining torpedoes. A hit was made. From the very first this vessel engaged in counter battery fire with enemy battleships and cruisers. Numerous five inch hits were observed in the superstructures of the enemy vessels. The hits on the enemy battleship temporarily silenced her batteries and made possible the retirement from the torpedo attack. For about twenty minutes, toward the end of the action, an enemy heavy cruiser was engaged. This was ended by the heavy cruiser turning away apparently to put out several small fires, and one large hangar fire which were visible. A total of 1025 rounds of 5"/38 AA common and common projectiles, and all torpedoes were fired without a single casualty of any description due to materiel failure. About an hour later 157 rounds were fired in anti-aircraft action by all guns including the gun which had previously been put out of action by enemy gunfire. The ruggedness of the fire control equipment was much in evidence because during the whole battle the guns were in automatic and the vessel was maneuvering radically. Although the right end of the rangefinder was shot away, the FD (fox dog radar) remained in commission throughout except for a five minute period when an eight inch shell hit forward, shorted the electrical system, causing a temporary overload. At this time SGA (sugar george able radar) proved itself to be an admirable fire control pinch hitter. The performance of the engineering plant was excellent except for three separate emergency back bells the plant was operated at full power for the entire time. Stack as well as chemical smoke was used. A terrific strain was placed upon the hull when it was necessary to operate at full power for forty minutes although flooded forward to about frame 42 as a result of enemy hits. We are proud of our materiel, machinery, and the hull that carries them. We would appreciate it if you would inform those who designed and built the hull and its machinery and equipment how we feel about it.

A.T. Hathaway

Commanding Officer
U.S.S. Heerman (DD532)