

## USS McCaffery Summarized History

The USS McCaffery was laid down in October, 1944 by Bethlehem Steel Company in San Pedro, California, launched in April, 1945, and commissioned in July, 1945. The McCaffery was a Gearing class destroyer with the following specifications: length – 300 feet; beam – 41 feet; draft – 19 feet; displacement – 2,400 tons. The armaments consisted of 5” dual purpose guns, 40mm guns, torpedoes, and depth charges. The typical ship's company consisted of 340 officers and enlisted men. In several shipyard overhauls over the years, the 40mm guns and depth charges were removed, replaced by ahead thrown anti-submarine weapons called hedgehogs, and a drone ASW helicopter.

The ship is named in honor of Lt. Col. Joseph P. McCaffery, USMC, commanding officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Raider Battalion, who was killed in action on 1 November 1943 on Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands. Lt. Col. McCaffery was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

The USS McCaffery had a rich and distinguished career in support of our country, sailing all over the world, serving in the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Vietnam. In the post-WWII era, the McCaffery operated in the western Pacific off China and Japan. In 1949 after a shipyard conversion to destroyer escort, the McCaffery transferred to the Atlantic Fleet, and operated out of her home port of Newport, R.I. The ship participated in anti-submarine warfare operations in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. In 1950 and 1951 the McCaffery deployed to Korea, providing naval gunfire and plane guard support.

Between 1951 and 1961, the McCaffery operated in ASW operations in the Atlantic, completed six Med cruises, one to northern Europe, and one to South America in early 1957. In 1961 the McCaffery went through a 7 month FRAM overhaul in the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard, and in 1962 changed her home port to Mayport, FL. After a 6 month Med deployment, she participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis naval quarantine.

From 1963 to 1965, the McCaffery served as a communications relay ship for the Mercury space program, school ship for Fleet Sonar School in Key West, and cruises to the Mediterranean in 1963, northern Europe in 1964, and the Red Sea and Persian Gulf in 1965.

In 1966 the McCaffery operated in the Atlantic, supporting space recovery missions and the Fleet Sonar School. In 1967 the McCaffery deployed to Vietnam, providing naval gunfire, plane guard, and carrier screening support.

Between 1968 and 1970, the McCaffery operated in the Atlantic in ASW operations as part of a NATO task force, and Polaris submarine test support. In 1971 the McCaffery conducted surveillance operations off Cuba, and in late 1972 into early 1973 deployed to Vietnam for the second time.

In August 1973, after 28 years of distinguished service, a Naval Ship Inspection Board determined that the McCaffery's steaming days were over. The ship was decommissioned on 1 October 1973, and sold for scrap.

The USS McCaffery was a fine ship with a distinguished service record. She saw combat in Korea and was awarded two Battle Stars. The McCaffery participated in the Naval Quarantine during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For her combat service in Vietnam, the McCaffery was awarded three Battle Stars.

The McCaffery sailed the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, the Caribbean, the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Tonkin. She transited the Panama, Kiel, and Suez Canals, and made port calls in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa. The McCaffery crossed the equator several times, making the ship a Shellback, and crossed the Arctic Circle, becoming a Bluenose as well. A distinguished career indeed, and, most important, she had an outstanding crew.

Summary by Doug Hackett LTJG 1961-63

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