

The Warrington Incident  
(a true account)  
by Michael Gonzales, Jr.  
Mineman Chief Petty Officer (Surface Warfare)  
U.S. Navy, retired.

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When you are a soldier or even a pilot in battle, you see the targets that you aim at and sometimes even witness the result of your actions. Not so for the Navy Minemen that assembled the mines planted in Vietnam. Even though our fingerprints were still fresh on the mine cases, we were never present when the mine got its prey, whether it be friend or foe. This was not the case concerning the Navy destroyer, *USS Warrington*. We knew she hit two of our MK 36 Destroyers off the coast of Vietnam, in mid July 1972.

Investigations revealed pieces of Mk 82 general bomb casings imbedded in her hull. Mk 82 bombs were the 500 lb weapon that we converted into MK 36 Destroyers. Naive newspaper reporters speculated that it was a US mine that broke away from its "moorings." But what actually happened was that the *USS Warrington* had disregarded messages warning them about the area used for jettisoning bombs and Destroyers.

Pilots returning to their carriers had been directed to release their un-expended payloads in the "Unarmed" configuration, in the event that they had not been dropped on their targets. Evidently these two weapons were still armed. The interesting thing about this incident is that the components for these two Destroyers were more than likely processed by the crew (my crew) of building P-5, located in Naval Magazine Subic Bay, Philippines.

Coincidences in life are sometimes discarded, as such; just coincidence. But as far as my life is concerned, I tend to take note when life goes full circle. With that being said; I happened to be present when the *Warrington* was towed into the harbor, and I saw the gaping hole that our mines created? The irony being that I could have very likely handled the components of the weapons that caused that gaping hole. No Mineman, that I have ever met, can say that they have witnessed the result of their craft. But, I can.

Needless to say; I last saw the *USS Warrington* (DD843) on my birthday in 1972. As you read further you will discover the irony of that date.

Two weeks after the *USS Warrington* incident, the *USS Hollister* also hit two more Destroyers in another area of the South China Sea. Although the damage to the *USS Hollister* was not extensive, the *USS Warrington* was not so lucky. Her damage was far worse and she was eventually decommissioned and scrapped. I extend my deepest apologies to the captain and crew of the US warship *USS Warrington*.

As a tribute, the following is a short history of that ship and its brave crew:

The *USS Warrington* (DD383) was named after Lewis Warrington and commissioned at the New York Navy Yard on 9 February 1938. Lewis had been an officer in the Navy during the Barbary Wars and the War of 1812. He also temporarily served as the Secretary of the Navy. A movie was made about her actions in WWII, starring, Walter Brennan.

Unfortunately she was lost at sea during a hurricane with the loss of 348 officers and enlisted. Warrington's name was stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels on September 23, 1944.

The next ship to bare the name Warrington was commissioned *USS Warrington* DD843, on 20 Dec 1945 and had an illustrious history during the Vietnam War.

Her last mission before encountering the US underwater mines was on 15 July 1972, as she briefly pulled into port at Danang and then headed for the coast of North Vietnam to participate in Operation "Linebacker." On 16 July, she relieved *Hamner* (DD-718) of "Linebacker" duty and began her primary mission -- the destruction of North Vietnamese small craft and observation of communist Chinese merchant shipping. The following morning, while operating in company with *Hull* (DD-945) and *Robinson* (DDG-12), *Warrington* came under the rapid and heavy fire of enemy shore batteries; but she took prompt evasive action and avoided damage.

That same afternoon, however, luck abandoned her. At 1316, two underwater explosions close aboard her port side rocked the destroyer. She suffered severe damage in her after fire room, after engine room, and in the main control room. Her crew rose to the occasion, and their efforts enabled her to retire from the area at 10 knots. Later, the damage forced her to shut down her propulsion plant and ask *Robinson* for a tow.

Through the night of 17 and 18 July, her crew struggled against flooding caused by ruptured fuel oil and fresh water tanks, but she remained afloat the next morning when *Robinson* turned her over to *Reclaimer* (ARS-42) for the first leg of the trip to Subic Bay. *Tawakoni* (ATF-114) took over from *Reclaimer* on the 20th and towed *Warrington* safely into Subic Bay on the 24th. Throughout the six-day voyage, *Warrington's* ship's company worked magnificently to keep their ship afloat.

For a month after her arrival, *Warrington* received the special attention of the ship repair facility at Subic Bay to improve her habitability and insure watertight integrity. However, at the end of August, a board of inspection and survey found her to be unfit for further naval service.

Accordingly, on September 23, 1972, 28 years to the day (September 23, 1944) after her predecessor (*USS Warrington* [DD383]) was stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels, the *USS Warrington* DD843 was decommissioned at Subic Bay and her name was once again stricken from the Registry of Naval vessels.

The irony; September 23, 1972 is when I last saw the *Warrington* before she was scrapped. September 23 is my birthday. Life does in fact go full circle.

On 24 April 1973, she was sold to the Taiwan Navy for cannibalization and scrapping. So was the fate of the *USS Warrington* DD843.

To the brave crew off the *USS Warrington* (DD843) I extend a hardy "Hoozah! May the memory of your gallant history remain in the hearts and minds of all that knew you.

With deepest sympathy,

Michael Gonzales, Jr.

Mineman Chief Petty Officer, (Surface Warfare)

U.S. Navy, retired