Monday Maritime Matters

Description

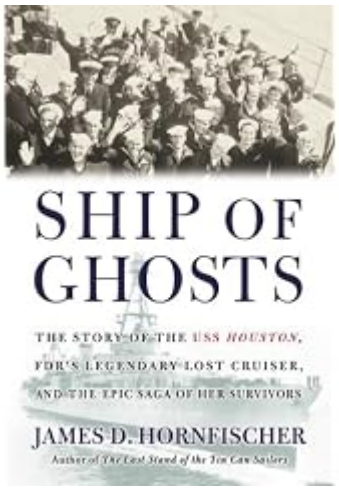
Ã¢â‚¬Å“You men are young, I have lived the major part of my life and I am willing to go.Ã¢â‚¬Â•


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Commander George Rentz, USN, Chaplain Corps

He served in two wars of his country, WWI and WWII. He has the distinction, albeit one wouldnâ€™t necessarily ask for, of being the only Navy Chaplain in WWII to be awarded the Navy Cross.Born in 1882, he graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and became a Presbyterian minister before the US became engaged in WWI. Entering the service as a Lieutenant, Junior Grade, he was assigned for duty with the 11th Marine Division and served in France. Remaining in the Navy after WWI, he rose through the officer ranks, attaining the rank of Commander in 1924.Serving on a variety of ships during the peacetime before WWII, he transfered from the USS AGUSTA to USS HOUSTON (CA-30) in 1940 when HOUSTON relieved AUGUSTA as the Asiatic Fleetâ€™s Flagship.When the war began, the Asiatic Fleet was cut off from support from the States and left, along with other Allied Australian, British and Dutch vessels, with no substantial air power in support, to fend for themselves. During the several battles with the Japanese forces, Chaplain Rentz fearlessly walked the decks topside, providing verbal encouragement to the gun crews.At the Battle of Sunda Strait, As HMAS PERTH and USS HOUSTON made a run for the open Indian Ocean and found themselves right in the middle of a Japanese amphibious assault, CDR Rentz died. He survived the sinking of the HOUSTON, but gave his place on a spare seaplane float and his life jacket to others of the crew, as they awaited their fate in the Java Sea at night. For this act of selflessness, CDR Geoge S. Rentz, USN was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

The story of this series of events, and the fate of those of the USS HOUSTONâ€™s crew who did survive is well told in Jmaes Hornfischerâ€™s second book, â€œShip of Ghosts:â€•



â€œShip of Ghostsâ€• tells the story of the history of the USS HOUSTON (CA-30)I found this poem at MaritimeQuest written for CDR Rentz:

COMMANDER GEORGE S. RENTZ Ã¢â‚¬â€œ Chaplain, USS HOUSTON

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A man of cloth, he chose to be,
among the men who followed the sea.
Dedicated to our crew Ã¢â‚¬â€œ with infinite care,
he tended and wounded with earnest prayer.

Unmindful of danger as the bombs rained down,
this man of god was always found.
Beside the dying and those terrible nights,
bringing strength and courage Ã¢â‚¬â€œ and final rites.

Thrown into the sea on the fateful night,
he watched our battered Houston sink from sight.
Seeking a raft in the light of a flare,
he knows that god had answered his prayer.

A sailor at his side clinging to the raft,
was woundedâ€™ and strength was ebbing fast.
Having no life belt to keep afloat,
his chance of survival was indeed remote.

Without a thought for self, but he careful haste,
the chaplain fitted his life belt to the sailors waist.
The hours passed, and come dawn,
the sailor was safe, but the chaplain was gone.

He had followed the law of the apostles Creed,
his life the price of a noble dead.
He went to his lord with no regret,
our fighting chaplain weâ€™ll never forget.

May his soul rest in peace Ã¢â‚¬â€œ forever and ever, amen.

With reverence and affection,

Lloyd V. Willey
11-21-78

One ship has been named to honor the heroism of CDR Rentz, the USS RENTZ (FFG-43).



Built in Todd Shipyard in Seattle, WA, she commissioned on 6/30/1984. Assigned to the Pacific Fleet, RENTZ participated in EARNEST WILL convoy operations in the Persian Gulf, and, quite notably, was one for the group of US warships to visit China in 1986. From the RENTZâ€™s Wikipedia entry:

> On November 5, 1986, Rentz was part of an historic visit to Qingdao (Tsing Tao; Ã©Â•â€™Ã¥Â²â€º) ChinaÃ¢â‚¬â€•the first US Naval visit to China since 1949. Rentz was accompanied by two other ships, the Reeves (DLG-24) and Oldendorf (DD-972). The visit was officially hosted by the Chinese Peopleâ€™s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). (â€œAfter 37-year absence, U.S. vessels visit China,â€• New York Times Nov. 6, 1986, Sec. A, p. 3)

If you like this type of history, make sure to backpedal a day and catch the Blogging Sea Lawyer, Eagle1, with his â€œSunday Ship Historyâ€• series. This week he talks about BRINGING THE HEAT, BABY!â€•

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Date Created
August 27, 2007
Author
admin