



Type: shipwreck, [destroyer](#), *Benson* class, U.S. Navy (similar to [USS Turner](#))
Built: 1941, Staten Island NY USA
Specs: (348 x 36 ft) 1620 displacement tons, 266 crew
Sunk: Thursday October 21, 1943
cut in two by tanker *Bulkoil* - 38 casualties
Depth: **260 ft**

Murphy (DD-603) was laid down 19 May 1941 by Bethlehem Steel Corp., Staten Island, N.Y., launched 29 April 1942, sponsored by Miss M. Elsie Murphy, daughter of Acting Lieutenant Murphy; and commissioned 23 July 1942, Comdr. Leonard W. Bailey in command.

Following shakedown to Casco Bay, Maine, and escort duty off Halifax, Nova Scotia, Murphy joined the Center Attack Group, Western Naval Task Force, at Norfolk, sailing in late October for Fedhala, Morocco, to participate in operation "Torch," the invasion of North Africa. Arriving off the landing beaches November 7th, 1942 the destroyer regulated the waves of landing craft which were scheduled to land in the early morning of the 8th. Weather disrupted those plans. The landing beaches again came under Vichy fire after daybreak. U.S. General Patton landed at 8am (the largest landing with 19,000 men), and the beachheads were secured by later in the day.

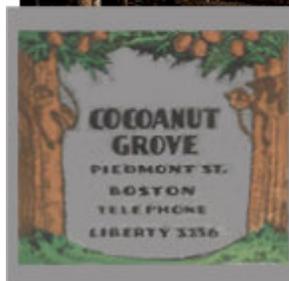


The Murphy gave fire support off Point Blondin at which time the ship was hit in the after engine room during a furious exchange of fire with the Sherkhi battery, losing three men killed and 26 wounded.

Immediate damage control measures prevented any serious damage and Murphy's crew was able to effect repairs in time to Join other fire support ships in silencing the Cape Blondin guns. The plucky warship remained off Fedhala, driving off an enemy air attack November 9th until sailing for Boston to complete repairs, arriving on the 24th.,1942. On shore leave while repairs were effected, several crew members visted a popular night club, the Cocoanut Grove. On November 28th 1942, a huge fire occurred at the Cocoanut Grove Night Club in Boston. At least one Murphy crew member along with 10 or so others was spared, by being pushed into a walk-in freezer off the kitchen.



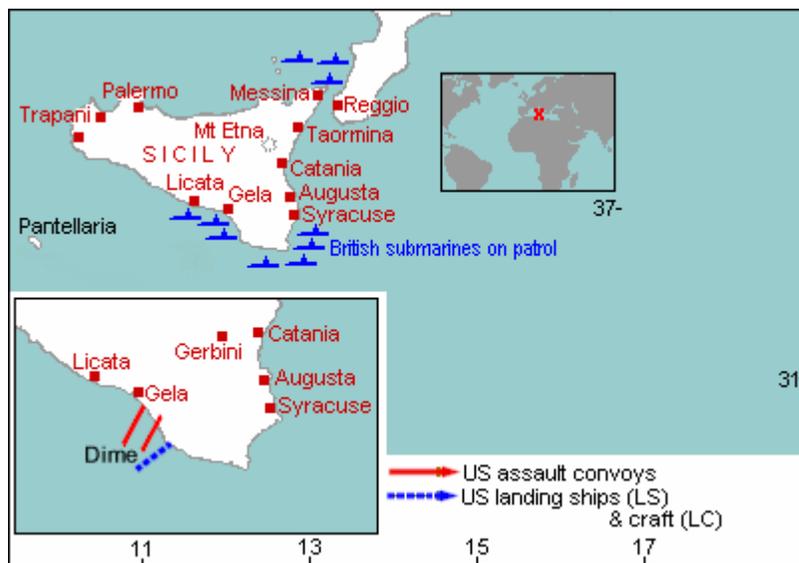
The Cocoanut Grove
Nightclub Fire
November 28, 1942



The destroyer next escorted convoys between New York and Panama, and Norfolk and Casablanca, until joining the "Dime" attack force, (Task Force 81), screening for the invasion of Gela, Sicily. Operation 'Husky' was to take place on July 10th, 1943 in the early morning hours. The entire operation involving three separate landing areas was joined by British Forces. All total, 3,200 allied ships, 4,000 aircraft and massive amounts of troop deployments made this the largest armada ever assembled to that point. After bucking choppy seas, the Americans arrived at their designated locations shortly after midnight. US Seventh Army forces with 66,000 troops under command of General Patton, spearheaded the beach landing at Gela at 2:45 a.m. Although shocked by this surprise assault, the enemy quickly recovered, but were soon subdued by cruiser and destroyer gunfire.

While engaged in patrolling the beachhead, Murphy was straddled by near misses from a night air attack, puncturing her stern and wounding one man. She was again attacked two nights later, being missed by 100 yards by a German dive bomber, but continued her fire support off Sicily into August. Then, while escorting a group of transports to Palermo, she was once again attacked by dive bombers; but this time she splashed two enemy planes.

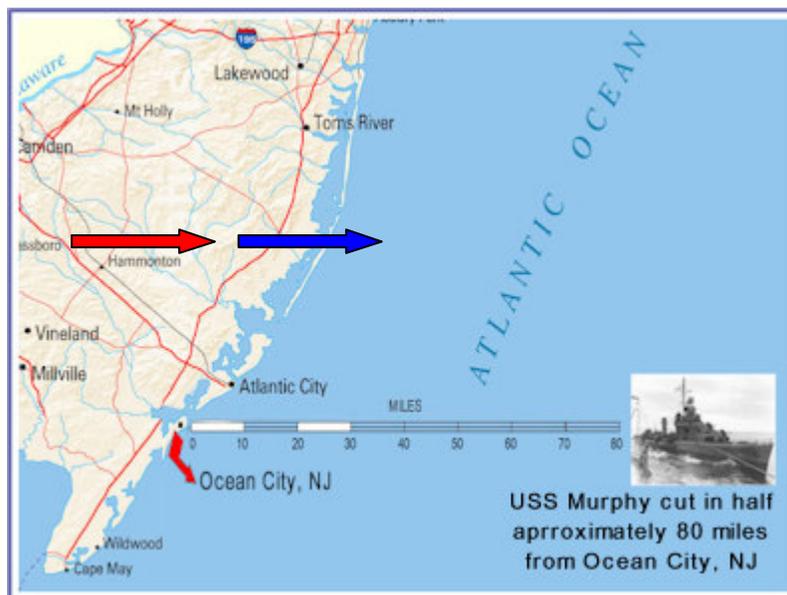
As the Germans and Italians prepared to evacuate Sicily across the Strait of Messina, the Allies started the final push - along the north coast aided by three small amphibious hops and Eighth Army up the east side from Catania with one small landing. Gen Patton's men entered Messina just before Gen Montgomery's on the 17th. Sicily was now in Allied hands. The Italian surrender was also affected in Sicily



Murphy returned to the United States following the end of the Sicily invasion. There it was assigned to escort United Kingdom bound convoys of supplies. Standing out of New York Harbor, approximately 80 miles east of Ocean City, New Jersey on October 21st, 1943 the destroyer along with the convoy was running blacked out as a protective

measure in the event German U boats might be partoling the area. The Murphy was sent ahead of the convoy after radar indicated the possibility of submarine activity. The tanker 'Bulkoil' suspecting a torpedo attack, taking preventive measures, turned and stuck the Murphy on the portside between the bridge and forward stack . One surviving crew member of the Bulkoil was standing on the bridge and saw his ship strike the Murphy.

The forward half of the ship, sheared off, and slowly sank. Communications had been cut and it was only the rising water that alerted the crew to try and escape, many now upside down. lowly sank, taking 38 officers and men with It.



The after section was kept afloat and was towed into New York Navy Yard where, following a 7-month repair Job and replacement of the entire bow.

The veteran warship rejoined the fleet in time for the Normandy invasion. On 5 June 1944, Murphy departed Portland, England, assigned to the assault area off Vierville, France, better known as Omaha Beach. She remained there, giving fire support and conducting screen duty for the transports through mid-June, engaging in a gun duel with enemy shore batteries 8 June, and repelling numerous German E - boat and torpedo attacks.

In July, Murphy steamed south to the Mediterranean operating with Task Force 88, the Aircraft Carrier Force in operation "Draagoon," the invasion of southern France. She conducted fire support, plane guard, and screening duties during the landings and then departed for New York for overhaul in early September.

During the planning stages, the operation was known as *Anvil*, to complement *Operation Hammer*, which was at that time the codename for the invasion of [Normandy](#). Subsequently both plans were renamed, the latter becoming [Operation Overlord](#), the former becoming *Operation Dragoon*; **D-Day was scheduled for the August 15, 1944** On August 15, 1944, Allied forces in the European Theater during [World War II](#) invaded southern France, following the June 6 [Invasion of Normandy](#), France, commonly referred to as "D-Day." That invasion, Operation Anvil, later renamed "Dragoon," occurred at the Gulf of Leon east of Marseilles. Operation Anvil was planned as a supporting action for Operation Overlord, the Allied attack on Normandy. The Anvil invasion marked the beginning of one of the most successful, but controversial campaigns of the war.

The destroyer resumed operations in late 1944, joining cruiser Quincy at Norfolk to escort that ship carrying President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Malta and Great Bitter Lake, Egypt, Conferences. Upon arrival at Great Bitter Lake, Murphy was detached and ordered to Jidda, Arabia, to transport King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia and his party to the Conference. Transiting the Suez Canal, she anchored off Jidda 11 February, taking on board the royal party the next day. The destroyer got underway immediately with her valuable supercargo settled in a tent on her forecastle and arrived Great Bitter Lake on the 15th.

With her passengers disembarked, the warship then sailed for New York for a minor yard period, joined an antisubmarine "killer" group on duty off New England and Nova Scotia, and then in May escorted one of the last convoys to Oran, Algeria, and back. On 2 June 1945, with war in the Atlantic won, Murphy entered the Boston Navy Yard for refit prior to assignment to the Pacific Fleet.

The veteran warship departed Boston 10 July, steamed via the Panama Canal to the west coast, and then on to Okinawa, arriving 9 September. Being assigned to the 5th Fleet on occupation duty in southern Japanese waters, she escorted USS *Sanctuary* (hospital ship), running clearance for mines in route to Nagasaki, Yokosuka, Wakayama, and Nagoya until departing Okinawa 21 November for the United States. She steamed via Saipan, Pearl Harbor, San Diego, and the Panama Canal. There is an incident in the annals of aviation that has defied explanation since December 5, 1945. On this day an entire squadron of US Navy torpedo bombers utterly vanished from the face of the earth. Wreckage implies an accident, the mistakes of man and machinery or the vicissitudes of nature; but to disappear implies destruction on a scale with which we are not familiar...or a fate of which we cannot conceive.

The disappearance of the "Lost Patrol," "Lost Squadron," or "Flight 19," as it is interchangeably called, was by all acceptable standards an "impossible" disappearance. It is, in fact, one of the most mysterious, if not the most mysterious, disappearance in the history of aviation. This was not just the disappearance of one aircraft, like Amelia

Earhart disappearing over the Pacific in her Lockheed Electra in 1938, or like Glenn Miller disappearing over the English Channel in a light reconnaissance aircraft in 1944. This was the disappearance of *5 large* torpedo bombers while flying in formation, during peacetime, while on a routine training exercise. They were not flying in a war zone like Glenn Miller. Nor were they flying between far-flung ports and distant islands like Amelia Earhart.

Arriving at Charleston to prepare for inactivation. She decommissioned there 9 March 1946, and Joined the Charleston Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet where she remained into 1969.

Murphy received four battle stars for World War II service.

-- from Navy historical records