



Ensign Robert Tills would become the first US Navy officer killed in the Philippines.



While a chaplain conducts services aboard a destroyer escort, other crew members standby their depth-charge racks.



Flight jacket patch for VP-101.



Four GM Mod. 16-278A diesel engines with electric drive produced 6000-shp and gave *Tills* a top speed of 21 knots.

continued for ten days before *Tills* returned to Pearl Harbor for availability alongside tender *USS Algor* (AD-34).

The DE conducted post-availability exercises off Oahu before screening for *USS Sangamon* (CVE-26) in late February, while the escort carrier's planes carried out night flight training operations. Returning to Pearl Harbor on 2 March, the DE joined TG 19.3 two days later and formed around *USS Kasaan Bay* (CVE-69). Two five-day training cruises followed before *Tills* was briefly assigned to TG 19.2, whose nucleus was *USS Tripoli* (CVE-64).

After routine training and availability at Pearl Harbor, the DE embarked two Navy officers and 23 Navy and Marine enlisted men for transportation to the Marshalls. On 29 March, she rendezvoused with *Gilligan* (DE-508) and *Whitman* (DE-24), which helped her to screen the 17-ship PD-355T convoy to Eniwetok. After making port on 6 April, *Tills* rejoined TG 12.3, which conducted hunter-killer operations between the Hawaiian Islands and the Marshalls.

Following her 14 April return to Eniwetok, the DE remained with TG 12.3, steaming on anti-submarine patrols east of the Marshalls. On 20 April, a typhoon upset the group's routine by grounding *USS Corregidor's* aircraft and



*USS Tills* was a *Cannon*-class destroyer escort. She was armed with three 3-inch Mk. 22 cannon, a twin 40mm Mk. 1 anti-aircraft mount, eight 20mm Mk. 4 anti-aircraft guns, three 21-inch torpedo tubes, one Mk. 10 Hedgehog mortar, eight Mk. 6 depth charge projectors, and two Mk. 9 depth charge tracks.

pitching the small destroyer escorts in the heavy seas and 70-knot winds. The storm finally abated three days later, and the battered task group returned to Eniwetok.

Designated Task Unit (TU) 96.6.7, *Tills* departed the Marshalls on 30 April and arrived at Ulithi on 3 May. Two days later, the DE rendezvoused with UOI-9 and screened that convoy to the Ryukyus. *En route* to Okinawa, *Tills* sighted an abandoned Japanese patrol boat and sank the vessel with gun fire and depth charges.

Dropping anchor off Hagushi Beach on 10 May, the DE got underway soon thereafter and relieved *USS Starling* (AM-64) on screening duty in the transport area. On the 12th, *Tills* went to general quarters upon learning that enemy aircraft had been sighted. Spotting two planes emerging from the smoke screen, her gunners opened fire with the 40mm battery before a sharp-eyed lookout noted that the planes were friendly. The Bofors guns ceased fire immediately and the aircraft flew away undamaged.

Following her duties with the transport screen off Okinawa, *Tills* was assigned to the screen of Carrier Division 22 which contained escort

Sailors aboard an escort carrier watch as *Tills* sails in tight formation.

carriers *USS Santee* (CVE-29), *Chenango* (CVE-28), and *Block Island* (CVE-106). As these small carriers steamed toward Sakishima, their planes loaded bombs and prepared to launch. Their target, Sakishima, had been serving as a refueling base for enemy aircraft shuttling between Kyushu and Formosa and was thus an important link in the chain of air bases which supplied Japan's dreaded *kamikazes* offensive with its aircraft. *Tills* served as anti-submarine screen and plane guard for these strikes, which commenced on 1 June. The group returned to Kerama Retto to rearm and refuel before proceeding northward on 20 June for further strikes.



Elmo Zumwalt was in command of *USS Tills* from November 1950 through March 1951.

