

# HOBSON'S WAR

AFTER FIGHTING IN THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC, THIS HEROIC DESTROYER AND CREW WOULD BECOME VICTIMS OF A CAPTAIN'S POOR DECISION IN ONE OF THE NAVY'S WORST PEACE-TIME ACCIDENTS

BY GREG WILSON



USS *Hobson* (DD-464) wearing Measure 15 camouflage — a rare experimental pattern based on Royal Navy Admiralty camouflage but using American blue/gray colors. Only three ships were known to have worn this camouflage and *Hobson* was the only one to use white in the mix. The destroyer wore this pattern during late 1942.

**R**ichmond Pearson Hobson was born 17 August 1870 in Greensboro, Alabama, and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1889. After duty on USS *Chicago* he underwent additional training and was appointed Assistant Naval Constructor in 1891. Hobson then served at various Navy Yards and facilities, including a tour of duty as instructor at the Naval Academy. In the early days of Spanish-American War, he was with Sampson aboard *New York*, and arrived off Santiago 1 June 1898. In order to bottle up Cervera's squadron, Hobson took temporary command of collier *Merrimac*, which he would attempt to sink as an obstruction in the channel. The gallant attempt was made early 3 June under heavy Spanish fire, which disabled the steering gear of the collier. Hobson did sink *Merrimac*, but was unable to place her in the shallowest part of the channel. With his intrepid crew of six, he was picked up by Adm. Cervera himself, and treated quite chivalrously for his gallant expedition. Hobson was advanced ten numbers in

grade after the war and later, in 1933, awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic attempt to block the channel. After the Spanish-American War he worked on the repairing and refitting of captured Spanish cruisers at Cavite and at various shore stations of the Navy. Resigning in 1903, Hobson remained a staunch supporter of the Navy and during his subsequent career as a Congressman from Alabama, 1905-15, was a firm advocate of naval expansion. In 1934, by special act of Congress, he was advanced to Naval Constructor with a rank of Rear Admiral, and placed on the



The ship was named after Richard Pearson Hobson.

retired list. Rear Admiral Hobson died 16 March 1937 in New York City.

USS *Hobson* (DD-464), a *Gleaves*-class destroyer, was launched by Charleston Navy Yard, Charleston, South Carolina, on 8 September 1941;