

HISTORY OF U.S.S. CALVERT (APA32)

The U.S.S. CALVERT was commissioned at 1500, 1 October 1942. The vessel was moored port side to Pier #7, Norfolk Navy Yard and was commanded by Captain D.W. LOOMIS, USN. From the date of its commissioning until 21 October 1942 the vessel was anchored or operated in the vicinity of the Norfolk Area.

The Task Group Commander's forwarding endorsement to the action report of the CALVERT for the North African campaign states: "On the morning of 22 October 1942, while exercising off Cove Point Light in the Chesapeake, the U.S.S. HARRY LEE, combat loaded and prepared to leave in Operation Torch, suffered a machinery derangement which necessitated the transfer of the embarked troops and the entire cargo to the U.S.S. CALVERT, a newly commissioned vessel, undergoing organization, untrained and untried in amphibious operations. Captain J.W. WHITFIELD, USN, with twenty three of his officers and the crews of his landing craft exchanged ships and completed the transfer of troops, eighteen landing boats, cargo and combat equipment, combat loaded the U.S.S. CALVERT, and sailed from base HYBO to join the overseas expedition on 25 October 1942. So well and efficiently was the transfer accomplished that upon arrival off SAFI, FRENCH MOROCCO on the morning of 8 November 1942, the ship to shore movement from the U.S.S. CALVERT in coordination with the U.S.S. HARRIS and the subsequent unloading of the transport was carried out with expedition and timeliness to the end that the U.S.S. CALVERT made her full contribution to the success of our aims in Operation Torch. Captain J.W. WHITFIELD, USN, commanding first the U.S.S. HARRY LEE then the U.S.S. CALVERT and the officers and men under his command in the U.S.S. CALVERT are commended to the Task Force Commander for special recognition of the meritorious performance of an arduous, exacting and dangerous task."

On 14 November 1942, the CALVERT departed from North African shores and arrived in the Norfolk area on 24 November. In January 1943, Captain A.P. MULLENIX, USN, relieved Captain J.W. WHITFIELD, USN, as Commanding Officer. The ensuing months were devoted to various exercises and drills in amphibious tactics. This vessel was assigned to assist in the training of various Army elements who would later assault the enemy held beaches.

Captain L.A. THACKREY, USN, relieved Captain A.P. MULLENIX, USN, on 9 April 1943 and the vessel continued its participation in debarkation drills, gunnery exercises and tactical maneuvers along the Atlantic Coast between Norfolk, Virginia and New York.

On 12 June 1943 this vessel sailed in company with a large task force and moored in the harbor of Mers El Kebir, Algeria on 22 June 1943 to make final preparations for participation in the assault on Sicily.

On 2 July 1943, while making these preparations and while fully combat loaded, a fire occurred in #1 hold in which several hundred tons of ammunition were stored. BROTHERTON, Donald Earl, EMLC, USN, descended into the hold, from which heavy smoke was pouring, and with courageous disregard for his own safety assisted in ~~hauling~~ to the upper deck, a box of smoking chemical grenades, which by the heat they generated would soon have ignited the ammunition surrounding them. For his courageous action and devotion to duty, BROTHERTON was recommended by the Commanding Officer for the degree of Legionnaire in the Legion of Merit.