

Dr. Philip Karl Boraas Lundeberg, a long-time member of the Naval Historical Foundation, had a distinguished career as a naval officer, historian, and museum curator. As a naval officer having earned his commission through the V-12 program, he served on the destroyer escort *Frederick C. Davis* and was one of three officers to survive when she was torpedoed by a German U-Boat near the end of World War II. That interesting story is told herein. Dr. Lundeberg was the first recipient of the Naval Historical Foundation's Commodore Dudley Knox Medal for Lifetime Achievement in the field of naval history. He passed away last Fall [2019] at the age of 96.

WINKLER: With all this training and everything, we're almost running out of war. So you finally get to your ship?

LUNDEBERG: Yes. I did join Frederick C. Davis in November of '44. She had just come back from the Mediterranean, bringing a distinguished combat record. She had 13 German and Italian aircraft stenciled on her stack. She had been fitted out for a special electronic mission there earlier. When she sailed for the Mediterranean in late '43 she was one of two ships (the other, USS Herbert C. Jones (DE 137) fitted with radio jamming gear installed at the Navy Research Lab in Washington. The purpose was to deal with Luftwaffe bombers that were using radio-controlled glider bombs against convoys and landing operations in the Med. Davis was involved initially in convoying between North Africa and Sicily. The high point of her career occurred in support of the Anzio beachhead. There she was underway almost constantly, dodging not only glider bombs, which her radio operators were jamming and diverting into the sea, but also shells from huge German railway batteries. The Davis also dealt with Axis frogmen who tried to come up and put limpet mines on the hulls of our ships. Our crew recalled that they would throw two-pound stun bombs into the water periodically. They actually caught one or more of these suicide swimmers.

WINKLER: Would you describe the Davis you said as a destroyer escort?

LUNDEBERG: The Davis was a 306-foot Edsall-class DE. When I reported on board at New York my first job was to check up on hull repair work being done at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In that way I learned the ship interior very quickly. I had a very understanding boss, Frank Hanson who was the First Lieutenant. Our Exec, LT Ferd Bambauer, was understanding too. I was assigned to one of the damage control parties during General Quarters. If we'd been in General Quarters when we encountered U-546, I would have been with that party in our damage control locker, located amidships, almost directly above where the torpedo hit. I would not have survived either.

WINKLER: Where did you meet the ship?

LUNDEBERG: New York, Brooklyn Navy Yard. After undocking and reloading ammo we went from there to Guantanamo Bay for ASW training operations. The Davis was being reprogrammed from an anti-aircraft mission to an ASW mission. We later acted as school ship briefly out of SCTC Miami. Then we went up to Mayport, Florida, to help escort carriers carry out flight qualifications offshore. It was there that we got the word in the middle of March 1945 to head north to Newfoundland for what proved to be Operation "Teardrop". At that time, as a junior officer I had no understanding of what was afoot, other than that we were going to be hunting German submarines. In December 1944, less than a month after we had left New York, Mayor LaGuardia had issued a warning to the people of New York regarding the threat of a missile attack on New York. Volume Ten of the [Samuel Eliot] Morison history gives the background on all the Intelligence that pointed to this. Our Captain may have understood a bit about the operation, but I had no knowledge of what was really afoot, and that's why I became interested later in the history of "Teardrop".

WINKLER: Before we get into that aspect, a little bit more introduction, as far as, the officers of the ship, the Captain, XO, the First Lieutenant.

Our officers were a very fine group of men. The great irony, tragedy, of the Davis' loss, was that not a single one of our ship's company officers who had served in the Mediterranean survived. Most of them were married men. We three officers who survived were all bachelors. I was the youngest. We visited a Baltimore widow of one our fellow officers-a very humbling experience and real motivator for writing condolence letters.

One of our three officer survivors, Ruloff "Rolf" Kip, was actually the Escort Division Radar Officer, who had been on board Davis less than a week, sent to work on some of our faulty radar. Bob Miner was the other one, my classmate at Columbia. Miner, as J.O. of the forenoon watch, had been in plotting the sonar contact, in CIC, at the time the torpedo hit. Our Exec, also in CIC then, was a burly Californian, Ferd Bambauer. I remember he was a jolly type, not your usual driver exec. I recall one evening when "Bam" led us in the wardroom, singing the old tavern song, "It Was Sad When That Great Ship Went Down." Our Captain, Jim Crosby, was younger. Crosby was from Seattle, just designated a Lieutenant Commander. He acted more like an exec. One of the things that Miner and I always regretted, was we weren't onboard long enough to get qualified as top watch standers. That was a frustration, of course, but they didn't have the time to mess around with that in those circumstances.

Frank Hanson, our First Lieutenant, was a veteran of the Anzio experience. Frank was very understanding in getting me into the operation, including coaching me on damage control.

WINKLER: An overview of, as you've written extensively on it so there's no need to go into a whole background of Operation "Teardrop", but I guess if you could give an overview of the background of why you deployed up to Newfoundland and I guess the circumstances of the torpedoing.

LUNDEBERG: At that stage of the war the German U-boat service was the only part of the Wehrmacht that was really still functioning. I remember, maybe twenty years ago, reading in Admiralty documents at the Public Record office in London, an RAF intelligence commentary, starting that the German Army is dead; the Luftwaffe is grounded, in shambles; the German surface navy is sunk, but the U-boat service is still active and dangerous, operating, not from France, but from bases in Norway. This particular final operation, which aroused concern of rocket missiles, was actually a final diversionary effort on the part of the U-boat command, which was headed at that point, not by Doenitz, (he had become overall commander of the German Navy and then the Führer), but by Admiral Eberhard Godt, who had long been his deputy. RADM Morison later interviewed Godt as well as Doenitz.

The idea of the German's final U-boat sortie was what I call a sort of a corollary or an off-shoot of Doenitz's "tonnage warfare" doctrine, which I deal with in my doctoral dissertation. Namely, to try to keep Allied forces away from the European Theater as much as possible, particularly air forces. In other words it exemplified the "pinning down" role of the U-boat service, late in the war, operating in the Caribbean, or wherever they could pin down allied forces far from Europe. The idea of this particular operation was that the seven boats of Gruppe "Seewolf" would return to the mid-Atlantic and resume operations against Allied convoys, this in March of 1945. These U-boats came out of Norway, undoubtedly knowing that it was all over. But they nevertheless went at it. They were instructed by Godt, "You must sink ships" and so forth. They got out there and of course found nothing. I've gone over the convoy records in the PRO at London covering the period. The convoys were diverted around the wolf pack. Meanwhile, our two successive barrier groups were waiting for them as they cruised slowly westward under snorkel. "Teardrop" was a tactically interesting operation because our carrier aircraft, although keeping on patrol even in terrible weather, were unable to get effective sightings on these snorkel boats. In heavy weather it's very hard to see a periscope or a snorkel, anywhere. So the problem was simply for the long destroyer escort patrol line to dig them out, which it did.

The first barrier group got three of the seven "Seewolf" boats. Our second barrier force came in at that point. Our ship actually got the first depth charge (one of our damaged depth charges) on the U-546. We got five out of the seven boats. Ingram was concerned to get them all. The memory of Operation Paukenschlag in 1942, I'm afraid, was still pretty strong at Naval Headquarters. They didn't want another experience like that. That's why Operation "Teardrop", as it was laid out, involved, not only land-based air squadrons, all the way around to Greenland and the Azores, but two huge surface barrier groups. As far as I can determine, it was the largest Allied anti-submarine hunter-killer operation in the war. It was successful. It was used by Ladislas Farago in the opening chapter of his book, *The Tenth Fleet*, as a portent of a future Soviet submarine missile threat to our East Coast,

WINKLER: What was the day that the Davis was hit?

LUNDEBERG: 24th of April, 1945, two weeks before V-E Day. Our ship had gotten a promising sound contact about 0830 in the morning. The U-546 was coming through our patrol

line at periscope depth. I understand that Paul Just, the U-boat captain, saw the loom of the carrier Bogue in the background, and I think that's what he was trying to get. But then he saw us through his periscope, coming about. As we approached, he fired his stern torpedo, an acoustic T-5 torpedo. It hit us at a range of 650 yards, which I think is practically point-blank. The Davis jack-knifed. All of the engine room spaces flooded very rapidly. The bridge area had sustained a tremendous wallop. The deck of the wardroom was blown halfway to the overhead, so you could imagine what happened to the people in the wardroom. I had been sleeping in the wardroom after I came off watch, early that morning.

WINKLER: Were you JR for the bridge or CIC?

LUNBEBURG: CIC, yes. After coming off the midwatch, I just laid down on the couch in the wardroom, expecting we'd be going to General Quarters again. Bob Miner came down to get a cup of coffee. He said, "Phil, there's nothing much going on. Why don't you go back aft and get some real sleep." Which I did. That's why I survived. Coxswain Levi Hancock was in the forward crew's mess hall, just coming up the ladder when the torpedo hit. He saw the bulkhead from the forward engine room cave in. He saw everybody killed immediately. He bounded up out of the hatch onto the main deck with a shattered leg. That was one of our survivors' most dramatic memories, which Levi recounted at Janesville. Our skipper, Captain Jim Crosby, was killed on the bridge. The officer-of-the-deck, Lt(jg) John McWhorter, was catapulted all the way down to the forward 3"50 gun tub. When we interviewed the crew at Boston we tried to find out if anybody knew anything about the fate of our captain. One of our sonar men, Eugene Pakanowski, had been up there at the time, came out of the sound shack and had seen the whole situation on the flying bridge, but had been so shocked that he couldn't deal with it at the time. I ran into him in the street in Washington maybe a year or so later on. He explained to me that Captain Crosby had literally been split right down the middle by one of the mainmast's metal steel shrouds. When I explained this to Admiral Morison I suggested that somehow we better not be too graphic for the sake of the family, so he wrote in the narrative that Crosby was felled by a shroud. So that was another elusive vignette that we managed to include.

I was very fortunate. When the torpedo hit I was asleep in after officer's quarters. I can remember sort of a metallic bang, as if we had a collision. I managed to get the door of after officer's quarters open and started heading out, getting some people to try and close the watertight hatches that were not closed as yet. The deck began to incline and we knew it was going down. We went topside and tried to deal with the depth charges. Most of our men were already in the water. When I went into the water it was not like Midshipmen's School, where we jumped off a tower thirty-five feet as if we were leaping from an aircraft carrier deck. I literally walked right into the water and then managed to get out to a life raft and was there when one or more of our depth charges went off. That's where we got underwater blast concussion, which was not understood by all the ships that dealt with us. One of the ships, the USS Flaherty (DE 135), a sister-ship, came in and started rescuing. They got three men, including Levi Hancock, but then they got contact on the submarine and so they had to go off on that. Most of us were in the water about an hour, an hour and a quarter. Some were in about four hours and there were

unfortunately some of those who didn't get Purple Hearts at the time. We dealt with that recently, with great help from Senator John Warner of Virginia, a Navy veteran himself.

WINKLER: It's kind of cold in the water up there.

LUNDEBERG: It was about 45 degrees. We were suffering from hypothermia and it sort of froze our people. Seaman Ray Adcock recalled that when he was picked up by USS Otter, they told him that his blood was beginning to freeze. For people who go through a depth charging, even though they had no external flesh wounds, the common feature is shock. Most of us had no recollection of actually being picked up or rescued. I was brought on board the Hayter. They tell me that I answered some questions, but I have no memory of that at all. The last thing I remember is seeing a ship approaching and then waking up in a bunk. Sheer animal instinct under shock carried us through.

WINKLER: Do you recall seeing the Davis go under?

LUNDEBERG: No, not at all. We were in the swells there you know. You don't sit in a life raft, you just hold on to a life raft and try and keep your head up out of the water. We had a few instances, where people went a little bit berserk and tipped their life raft over. We lost some people in the water from the depth charges or from exhaustion. One ship, the Otter picked up eighteen deceased men and eight who were alive. One, Palumbo, was badly injured. When the escort carrier Core reported back to Minerd's inquiry from BuPers about what happened to these men, they explained that the one man had had surgery and that the others were, quote "in good health." They didn't understand that these men were not only survivors of the ship sinking but they had survived the depth charging as well. People passed blood in their urine. They passed blood through their rectums, as in my experience. That's not in the medical record at all, probably not even observed.

WINKLER: Although you would think by this time of the war there would be something they would look for because they had four years of this type of...

LUNDEBERG: The Navy Medical Corps had developed documentation on such injuries early in the war. We include this material in our correspondence with Senator John Warner. The Navy had held a symposium on underwater blast or immersion blast concussion in 1942, based probably on the experience of the Rueben James and Jacob Jones. They published it, with articles including photographs of autopsies of men with ruptured guts, intestines, lungs, and so forth. They knew this phenomenon. I'm giving you a copy of the 1943 BuMed instruction on first aid for survivors of disasters at sea. One of the things, on the very first page they get into this business of underwater blast concussion at sea, and the fact that shock is the most evident thing but that's not all. We were in sick bays on board the Bogue and the Core. The Bogue did a great job. When we got back to Boston there was no follow up. We were not taken to any hospitals despite the fact that we had all been depth charged. The only thing I can remember in the short term about all this experience was a strong aversion to sudden loud noises. Remarkably, I have never dreamt about this episode.