

## The USS Emmons: A Legacy of Honor and a Model of Courage

The decisions we have made in the past are often very reflective of our choices yet to come. In this sense, the traditions and legacy we hold onto help to mold our future. The words of Admiral George W. Anderson reflect an understanding of this idea and an appreciation of the history of the United States Navy. If we are to understand the trajectory that the Navy is to take in the future, it is first important to understand the base upon which it is built. Perhaps one of the most iconic representations of the ideals embodied by the modern-day Navy can be found within the actions of the crewmen aboard the USS Emmons during World War II.

In the midst of World War II, the crewmen of the USS Emmons served a crucial purpose to the American armed forces. As a part of the Allied war effort, the ship patrolled the waters across the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and helped to escort countless ships to safety in dangerous territories. The USS Emmons's work was invaluable in ensuring that the United States and its allies remained protected from tangible Axis threats.

Even so, towards the latter part of World War II, the crewmen of the USS Emmons demonstrated their dedication to Navy ideals in perhaps the most ultimate way possible. Following rigorous training in the islands of Hawaii and conversion from a destroyer to a destroyer minesweeper, the USS Emmons was transferred to duty in the Pacific Ocean and took on the role of helping to secure the waters around Okinawa before its invasion. However, on April 6, 1945, the ship was faced with heavy resistance from Japanese forces, and she (as well as her partner in the operation, the USS Rodman) was bombarded with a massive attack from Japanese kamikaze planes. After the USS Rodman was struck by a rogue plane, the USS Emmons immediately provided cover to its injured ally, even while the Japanese forces continued their attack. While her crew fought valiantly and managed to shoot down several

kamikazes, the USS Emmons was eventually overwhelmed by the kamikaze attacks, and her crew was forced to abandon ship. Sixty crewmen died defending their ship and their country, and seventy-seven more were wounded as a result of those attacks.

Is there truly any greater statement of one's total confidence in their country and honor for what it represents than to willingly put one's life on the line for it? These men fought heroically to protect our country and its values of life and liberty, and, as Admiral Anderson said, they did so while looking with "pride and confidence in both directions". The crewmen recognized how their actions were built upon a rich tradition of fearlessness and valor, and they boldly pursued a future where no person would ever have to suffer under tyranny or persecution.

Just as the crewmen of the USS Emmons have a history of dedicated service and selfless sacrifice, the United States Navy has followed in the footsteps of their service. Ultimately, I believe that the Navy will continue to follow this path — not just for the honor they hold for those who lived and fought valiantly aboard the ship, but also for the model of patriotism that they provide both for our armed forces and for each American. If tradition of past excellence is what drives the United States Navy in its future endeavors, then it is doubtless that this unmatched example will provide it with what it needs to carve its own path of selflessness, sacrifice, and justice for many decades to come.