

Division of Naval History
Ships' Histories Section
Navy Department

HISTORY OF USS SHERIDAN (APA 51) (EX AP 96)

The auxiliary attack transport, USS SHERIDAN was built by the Moore Shipbuilding Company in Oakland, California, and was acquired and commissioned by the U. S. Navy on 31 July 1943. USS SHERIDAN was named for a county in each of the states of Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming, and was sponsored by Mrs. Thomas Rolph.

USS SHERIDAN was constructed in 1943, and participated in six operations in the Pacific during World War II. SHERIDAN participated in the Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, Marianas, Leyte, Luzon, and Okinawa Gunto operations.

Commander John J. Mockrish, USNR, assumed command of USS SHERIDAN on 31 July 1943, as her first commanding officer.

After a short shakedown period in the San Diego and San Francisco area, SHERIDAN sailed from the latter on 1 October 1943 with cargo and troops for points in the Pacific.

SHERIDAN arrived in Noumea, New Caledonia on 18 October 1943, debarked her troops, and commenced unloading her cargo. She sailed to Lambertson Harbor, Wellington, New Zealand on the 21st, and on 1 November, sailed for Havannah Harbor, Efate Island, New Hebrides in company with the battleship USS MARYLAND, and attack transport USS MONROVIA.

Operating as a unit of Task Force 53, USS SHERIDAN participated in the capture of Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands. The First Battalion, Eighth Regiment, of the U. S. Marine Second Division, which consisted of 1553 officers and men with attached units, formed the landing team aboard SHERIDAN. SHERIDAN arrived in Tarawa Atoll on 20 November 1943, with various other vessels of the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Two salvos of 5 inch shells landed within 100 yards of SHERIDAN, almost hitting some landing craft moving to various ships, however, no hits were observed.

Naval gunfire and serial bombardment continued intermittently throughout 22 November, on assigned targets on Bititu Island.

When SHERIDAN sailed from Tarawa Atoll on 24 November, eight boats and crews, plus one officer were unable to return to the ship. Four officers and 43 men of the beach party were also unable to return.

SHERIDAN sailed on the 24th in company with USS MONROVIA, and Task Group 53.1, which was composed of DOYEN, HEYWOOD, BIDDLE, and LA SALLE enroute for Pearl Harbor.

They arrived in Pearl Harbor on 2 December 1943, and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Vice Admiral Gromley, Rear Admiral Turner and their Staffs came aboard on an inspection trip.

SHERIDAN returned to San Diego on 13 December 1943 and conducted practice amphibious landings near San Clemente Island and Las Pulgas Canyon in California until 5 January 1944, when she returned to San Diego. From 5 January to 13 January 1944, SHERIDAN had her boats repaired, was provisioned, and embarked.

SHERIDAN sailed on 13 January 1944 for Lahaina Roads, Maui, in the Hawaiian Islands. She arrived on 21 January, and sailed the following day for Kwajalein with Task Group 53.2.

SHERIDAN arrived at Kwajalein Atoll on the 31st. She transferred all troops to LSTs the same day, and moved to the transport area for the remainder of the day. United States forces bombarded Kwajalein Atoll all day of the 31st.

SHERIDAN served as a temporary hospital ship during the battle at Kwajalein until the hospital ship USS SOLACE reported. She carried out various assignments until 8 February when she sailed for Pearl Harbor.

Arriving at Kahului, Maui, Hawaii, on 17 February, she unloaded all Marine troops and equipment, and sailed for Pearl Harbor, arriving the same day. SHERIDAN conducted landing craft exercises off the Hawaiian Islands until 30 May 1944, when she sailed with Task Group 52.3 (Rear Admiral H. Hill, USN) enroute to Eniwetok, Marshall Islands. Task Group 52.3 was composed of USS CAMBRIA, SHERIDAN and MONROVIA.

The task group arrived at Eniwetok Atoll lagoon, Marshall Islands on 9 June 1944, and SHERIDAN immediately commenced transferring various troop elements to assigned LST's. On 16 June, four enemy planes were sighted crossing the transport area, to the westward of Saipan Island, but quickly passed out of range.

Two days later, while the group were returning to the transport area, sixteen unidentified planes approached the formation. However, they were later identified as friendly.

The same day, 245 casualties were brought aboard SHERIDAN, and the bodies of 12 deceased were buried at sea.

SHERIDAN had completed discharging all marine cargo and equipment on 20 June when Commander Task Group 52.2 ordered 25 boats, 4 officers and 81 enlisted men from SHERIDAN to remain for duty with the Force Control Officer off Charon Konoa, Saipan. They later joined SHERIDAN in Pearl Harbor.

SHERIDAN sailed in company with USS HARRIS, HEYWOOD, and WINGED ARROW on the 21st enroute to Eniwetok arriving on the 25th.

SHERIDAN then immediately commenced transferring casualties from and to HARRIS, HEYWOOD, and WINGED ARROW. SHERIDAN sent 46 slightly wounded casualties to HARRIS and received on board for further transfer, 176 more seriously wounded casualties.

She sailed on 26 June in company with Transport Unit 51.18.18 for Pearl Harbor. After their arrival in Pearl Harbor on 3 July 1944, SHERIDAN commenced transferring U.S. Army, Marine, and Navy casualties to various shore hospitals. A total of 362 were debarked

The following day, SHERIDAN embarked officers and men of the 132nd Engineers, a detachment of the 306th Infantry Division, U.S. Army. After the loading of troops, cargo, and equipment, SHERIDAN sailed for Eniwetok on 9 July 1944.

SHERIDAN arrived in Eniwetok on 17 July and sailed on the 18th for Guam. Upon her arrival in Guam, SHERIDAN sighted flares over Guam Island, plus numerous fires. SHERIDAN debarked Army personnel on 23 July, and cargo on the 24th prior to moving to Agat Bay, Guam the following day.

An intensive bombardment continued off the island of Guam as the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers bombarded the beach. Due to the difficulty encountered by the boat crews on the reefs at Guam, there were periods of delay due to damage and grounding.

Each evening a large percentage of the transports and cargo ships left the area on a "night retirement". Leaving the area where the ships were most liable to be attacked and return again at dawn. The slow process of unloading troops and cargo would then be resumed.

SHERIDAN sailed on 28 July 1944 enroute to Pearl Harbor via Eniwetok. She arrived on 10 August, and on 30 August, Commander A. H. Guthrie, USN, reported aboard SHERIDAN and relieved Commander John J. Mockrish, USN, as Commanding Officer.

U. S. Army cargo, supplies and equipment were loaded aboard SHERIDAN during the month of August, plus a total of 1370 enlisted men and 69 officers embarked. Commander Task Group 33.2 ordered SHERIDAN underway on 15 September 1944 for Eniwetok, Marshall Islands.

The Task Group arrived at Eniwetok on 25 September, and anchored in the Northern Anchorage at Eniwetok Atoll. The Task Group sailed for the island of Manus, Admiralty Islands on 1 October 1944.

They arrived on 3 October and sailed on 14 October enroute to Leyte Gulf to participate in the landings on Leyte Island as part of the Central Philippines Attack Force (T.F. 77, Vice Admiral T. C. Kinkaid, USN).

On 20 October, Sheridan sailed through Surigao Strait and into Leyte Gulf. She arrived and anchored in the Southern Transport Area and received orders to land the landing force. SHERIDAN completed her general unloading on 22 October. During this period, a total of 78 U.S. Army, 1 Navy and 5 civilians were received on board. USS HONOLULU was hit by an aerial torpedo on 20 October, and it is believed this was the only hostile plane sighted in the area.

Commander Task Unit 79.14.2 ordered SHERIDAN enroute to Hollandia, New Guinea on 22 October 1944. While sailing through Surigao Straits enroute to Hollandia, New Guinea, an enemy plane was reported in the area, and was shot down by screen vessels south of the formation.

Upon their arrival in Humboldt Bay, New Guinea, Captain Paul H. Wiedorn, USN, relieved Commander Allen H. Guthrie, USN, as commanding officer of SHERIDAN.

The ship got underway on 5 November, 1944, for Noemfoor Island to load Army troops and equipment. After loading, SHERIDAN sailed in company with COMET, MERCURY, KNOX, and CUSTER from Noemfoor Island enroute to Leyte Gulf, Philippines.

Task Unit 79.15.4 sailed through Surigao Straits and into Leyte Gulf on 18 November 1944. It was here that part of the unit experienced a heavy air attack. USS ALPINE was damaged by an enemy suicide plane which crashed into her port side. SHERIDAN debarked personnel and completed discharging all cargo and equipment the same day, and sailed the following morning enroute to Manus Island.

SHERIDAN arrived on 24 November, and Task Unit 79.15.5 was disbanded. SHERIDAN was then attached to Transport Division 38.

SHERIDAN sailed on 28 November 1944 in company with Transport Division 48 enroute to Torokina via Finschafen. The Transport Division entered Empress Augusta Bay on 1 December, and anchored off Torokina Point, Bougainville Island. During their stay here, SHERIDAN embarked an advance echelon of the Army's 37th Division, and loaded Army combat cargo and equipment.

During their stay at Torokina, an intensive training program was carried on by the Division. Gun crews were drilled each morning in tracking shore based aircraft, making simulated torpedo and dive bomber attacks on the ships in the harbor, in preparation for the forthcoming operation.

Commander Amphibious Group 7 ordered the Division enroute to Huon Gulf on 17 December, and during the morning and afternoon, various drills and exercises were held including damage control problems, tactical maneuvers, debarkation drills, and tracking of target planes making simulated attacks on the formation by all gun crews.

They anchored at Huon Gulf, New Guinea, on 19 December, and sailed the following day for Manus Island. Commander Task Group 79.1 ordered SHERIDAN underway the latter part of December enroute to Lingayen Gulf.

On 8 January when SHERIDAN was passing through Mindoro Straits, and entering the South China Sea, an enemy twin engine bomber appeared over the formation, and dropped two dud bombs near the column leaders. As they passed Mayagao Point, Luzon, three Japanese attack bombers attacked the formation, and were shot down immediately by carrier-based F4F fighters.

USS KITKUN BAY was hit by a suicide crash plane on the early evening of the 8th.

The formation entered Lingayen Gulf the following day, and an enemy plane crashed into the HMAS AUSTRALIA, carrying away one of her stacks.

SHERIDAN remained in Lingayen Gulf only one day, and sailed on 9 January for Leyte. During her stay in Leyte Gulf, SHERIDAN fulfilled necessary logistic requirements and made all preparations for the forthcoming operation.

She sailed on 26 January 1945, in company with Task Unit 78.3.2, enroute to Luzon.

The Task Unit arrived at La Paz, Zambales Province, Luzon on 29 January and commenced tactical debarkation of assault troops. The ships sailed the following day for Leyte, and remained there until the latter part of March, when SHERIDAN steamed in company with Task Unit 51.13.11 to proceed to the target which was Okinawa Shima, in the Ryuku Islands.

On 1 April, SHERIDAN arrived at Okinawa and commenced debarking troops of the U.S. Army. While steaming to the Transport Area near Kerama Rotto, a twin engine enemy plane crash dived into the column of ships, grazing USS TYRRELL.

SHERIDAN experienced numerous air alerts during the early days of April, but had no encounters with enemy planes. Commander Task Force 51 ordered SHERIDAN to proceed to Pearl Harbor via Guam on 5 April. SHERIDAN arrived in Pearl Harbor, and sailed for Mare Island, California, where she underwent an overhaul.

SHERIDAN then proceeded to San Diego on 1 July for refresher training in amphibious maneuvers. Various drills and amphibious landing exercises were conducted in the San Diego area during July 1945.

Commander Western Sea Frontier ordered SHERIDAN underway on 15 July 1945 for Samar via Eniwetok.

On 5 August 1945, SHERIDAN entered Surigao Straits, Leyte Gulf, and anchored in San Pedro Bay to debark 86 Naval passengers. She sailed the same day for Guiuan Roadstead, Samar, P.I.

SHERIDAN was entering Big Pier Zamboanga, P.I. on 15 August 1945 when news was received that World War II was officially declared at an end. She moved to Subic Bay, Luzon, on 26 August and sailed the following day for Tokyo Bay in company with Task Group 33.1.

The ship operated off the coast of China, Philippine Islands, and Okinawa during the months of September, October, and November. She returned to San Diego on 23 December 1945 with troops of the 5th Marine Division.

SHERIDAN was decommissioned and stricken from the Navy list on 12 April 1946. She earned six Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for the following operations and engagements:

- 1 Star/Gilbert Islands Operation -- 20 to 24 November 1943
- 1 Star/Marshall Islands Operation -- Occupation of Kwajalein Atoll - 31 January to 8 February 1944
- 1 Star/Marianas Operation
 - Capture and Occupation of Saipan -- 15 to 22 June 1944
 - Capture and Occupation of Guam -- 22 to 28 July 1944
- 1 Star/Leyte Operation -- Leyte Landings -- 20 October to 18 November 1944
- 1 Star/Luzon Operation -- Lingayen Gulf Landing -- 9 January 1945
- 1 Star/Okinawa Gunto Operation -- Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto -- 1 to 5 April 1945

USS SHERIDAN also earned the Navy Occupation Service Medal for the following periods -- 2 September 1945 to 7 October 1945 and 8 November 1945 to 8 December 1945.

* * * * *

STATISTICS

DISPLACEMENT	13,910 tons	BEAM	63 feet
OVERALL LENGTH	459 feet	SPEED	16 knots

* * * * *