

Eller Profile: Admiral Donald T. Eller (1906-1994)



Donald Temple Eller was a career Naval Officer. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1929 and commanded the destroyer USS Burns (DD588) during World War Two. He participated in the invasion of the Gilbert Islands and operations on the Marshall and Marianas Islands.

In January 1944, the Burns, under then Commander Eller, was in the area of the Marshall Islands. It had just completed picking up three airmen whose plane had been forced to ditch, when the ship came upon four Japanese ships, a medium tanker, a medium transport and two smaller ships. The Burns' second salvo caught the tanker which exploded. That illuminated the other ships, which were quickly dispatched. According to one of the rescued airmen, Lt. Guy Brown, "It was all over in half an hour."

When the Burns returned the rescued airmen to their carrier, Brown says the entire carrier crew cheered the Burns.

During his long naval career, Eller also served in Nicaragua, on the Yangtze patrol in the North African invasion and, after the war, in Italy and at the Pentagon. He was the recipient of the Navy Cross.

Eller was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Petersburg, Virginia, where he attended public schools. Upon his death, Donald's ashes were buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. Later, some ashes were also buried at Pohick Church (in Northern Virginia), next to the body of his first wife.

This profile was provided by Harvey W. Powers, Donald Eller's nephew and a member of the Eller Family Association.