

## James E Clermont – Navy Bio

“I joined the Navy in 1942 and wasn’t supposed to be called until I graduated from Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis, MN in 1943. The Navy was short men so I graduated early and left for duty in March of 1943.

I went to Fire Control school in Newport, Rhode Island and later went aboard the Destroyer USS Herndon. The Herndon led the invasion force into Utah & Omaha Beach on D-Day. The other ships in our squadron including the battleships & cruisers were giving ten to one odds that we would not make it out from the beach alive. We opened fire about 5,000 yards from the beach and successfully eliminated all the German gun emplacements that we were assigned to hit. This allowed our troops to land with some degree of safety. We were straddled many times by German shore guns but we were not hit. After expending most of our ammunition we were relieved by another destroyer. That ship got hit almost right away. Another destroyer hit a mine and blew up. Alongside of us, the destroyer Meredith was hit by an aerial bomb. We picked up some of the badly wounded sailors. The Meredith later sank. Out of the six destroyers in our squad, only three of us came back. We were nicknamed the Lucky Herndon.

After Normandy we went to Southern France for another invasion. Before the invasion started we put a group of Army Rangers ashore in the middle of the night. We then went back out to sea and screened for the aircraft carriers. We rescued some downed pilots that were hit by German AA fire.

After Southern France we took a convoy to Alexandria, Egypt. On the way there the convoy ahead of us was badly damaged by German’s flying captured American P38 planes. We were ordered to shoot down any planes that came into our air space. When the war in Europe ended we went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific. My first battle station was on the 36-inch searchlight and later I was the pointer in the main battery gun director. I was on the Herndon for almost two years.

I was recalled into the Navy in 1950 during the Korean conflict and spent 15 months putting ships back into commission for the war.”