

confusion followed the terrific blast amidships. There was perfect discipline at all times. One of the first things the men did was to set the machinery of the cutter's supply of depth bombs on "safe" so that they would not explode if the ship sank, thus imperiling men in lifeboats in the vicinity. There were no survivors among the seven members of the watch in the fireroom, engineroom and auxiliary engineroom.

The blast destroyed or carried away three of the HAMILTON's seven lifeboats. This did not leave enough boats for the entire crew, so the uninjured remained on the ship, some of them as long as an hour, so that the injured could be removed in the remaining boats. One hundred and one men were taken off by the destroyer USS GWIN which pulled alongside the crippled cutter, being one of the two destroyers only a few miles away. Another group was in a lifeboat only half an hour before they were picked up by an Icelandic fishing trawler. Just after leaving the cutter they had picked up seventeen men, two of them badly injured. These men had been catapulted into the sea when their lifeboat capsized. The sea was intensely cold. The waves were mountainous.

On finally reaching shore, these forty men were taken to a native Iclander's home where they were given dry clothing, food and first aid treatment. Their host was the wealthiest citizen of the small fishing village. Other groups of survivors taken to homes of native fishermen received similar excellent treatment. A group in one lifeboat, unable to transfer seven badly injured men into a trawler, were towed ashore by the trawler. Eighty-four men were taken to the hospital immediately. All but the more severely injured were released in a day or two.

When the explosion occurred, five men were trapped in a closed and darkened companionway. All were badly burned by live steam. Although portions of his hands and arms were burned, one of them, Seaman Howard Wolf, struggled with the compartment's steel

door and finally managed to free his companions and himself. Some of his companions were injured more than he.

When the deck of a room over the engineroom was blown out, a few men were hurled into the wrecked and steam-filled engineroom below, where boiling water slopped about as if in some satanic cauldron. Another man fell fifteen feet through a warped grating into this steaming cauldron and crawled up a stanchion to reach a lifeboat. The steam was so terrific that when he crawled out, his normally straight hair was reported to be curled.

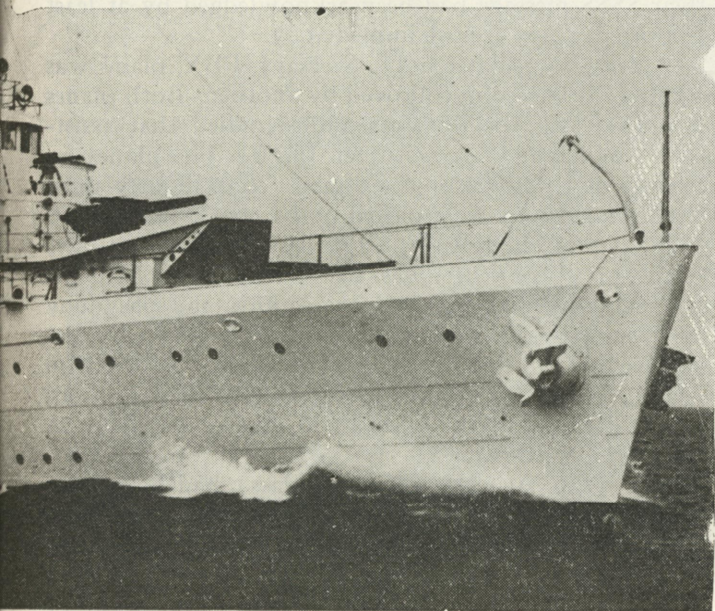
Army base hospital attendants in Iceland were surprised to find among the survivors one man with a broken leg already in a cast. He had been a patient in the "sick bay" after an accident aboard the HAMILTON. When the explosion occurred he was knocked from his hammock to the floor and momentarily stunned. The next thing he remembered was being picked up and put on a stretcher and carried out to a lifeboat.

The ALEXANDER HAMILTON was one of the Coast Guard's newest and finest cutters. Built at the New York Navy Yard at a cost of \$2,500,000, she was commissioned on March 4, 1937. She was 327 feet long, 41-foot beam and had a draft of 12 feet 6½ inches. Her displacement was 2,216 tons. With a steel hull, she was fitted with a geared steam turbine, with twin screws. She was capable of a maximum speed of twenty knots and an economical speed of 12.5 knots. Her cruising radius at a maximum speed was 4,700 miles, and at economical speed 9,000 miles. She was an oil burner with a fuel capacity of 135,940 gallons. Her normal peacetime complement was twelve commissioned officers, four warrant officers and 107 enlisted men. Her wartime complement was sixteen commissioned officers, five warrant officers and 200 enlisted men.

CGC ACACIA

The Coast Guard Cutter ACACIA, (Tender Class), enroute from Curacao, Netherlands West Indies, to Antigua, British West Indies, was sunk March 15, 1942, by a submarine of unknown nationality. The crew of about thirty to thirty-five officers and men were all rescued by a Navy destroyer and arrived at San Juan, Puerto Rico, the following day. The cutter was on temporary duty at Williamstad, Curacao, Netherlands West Indies, when a dispatch was received March 12, 1942, from the Commandant of the Tenth Naval District, with orders to proceed, when in all respects ready for sea, to Antigua, British West Indies, and complete some unfinished work there. Preparations were made to leave on the following day. Fuel, water, and provisions were ordered and taken on at once; routing instructions were obtained from the British Naval Office, and permission was granted to sail the next morning, March 13th, at 0530.

The weather was clear on both the 13th and 14th, with a moderate easterly wind at sea. The entire day of the 14th was uneventful. At daybreak on March



ward vessel to be destroyed by the enemy in World War II. Authentic stories about the loss of other Coast Guard vessels will appear in future editions of this publication.