

LCDR John Austin Collett (1908-1942)

Edited by Frank Olderr, Dec 2011

The USS COLLETT is named in honor of LCDR John Austin Collett (1908-1942). He was nominated to the Naval Academy from Nebraska; he was in the Class of 1929. Later, Collett went to Pensacola and became a Naval Aviator.

On 26 October 1942, Collett was the commanding officer of Torpedo Squadron VT-10; he died that day in the fierce battle of Santa Cruz in the defense of the Solomon Islands in the Pacific when his TBF-1 Avenger aircraft was shot down. LCDR Collett and Aircrewman Stephen Nadison Jr. were killed in the crash. (The third crewman, Tom Nelson, survived the war.) VT-10 flew off the USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6) which was part of Task Force 16 under RADM T.C. Kinkaid. Many details of the actions of that day are described in the cv6.org website.

There were 3 crew members of a TBF-1: the pilot, the turret gunner, and the radioman/bombardier/ventral gunner.

John Austin Collett was the older son of Austin Collett and Ruth Dahlman. John's younger brother James was also nominated to the Naval Academy from Nebraska; was in the Class of 1932. James became a surface officer. He was the Commanding Officer of the USS DAVISON (DD-618) in the Med when he learned that a destroyer was going to be named for his brother. James' request to be the first CO of COLLETT was granted; he was the CO from commissioning in May 1944 until the end of WWII. James' last duty station was as Commander of the Newport Naval Base in the 1960s.

Editors Note: The information above was compiled from Change of Command brochures and from Internet sources. We are especially grateful for details furnished by Jim Collett, the nephew of John Collett and son of James Collett in Dec 2011.