

John Austin Collett was born at Omaha, Nebraska on 31st March 1908, and was the eldest of the two sons of Austin John Collett and his wife Ruth Dahlman. He was only 17 when he first enlisted with the US Navy and after four years he graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1929.



Jack, as he was known, went into Naval Aviation and it was as Lieutenant Commander John Austin Collett that he was killed in action during the fierce Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands (aka Battle of the South Pacific) on 26th October 1942. At the time his aircraft crashed into the sea he was in command of Aircraft Torpedo Squadron 10. This photograph of Jack has been kindly provided by his nephew Jim Dahlman Collett (Ref. 59R2).

On that fateful day, Jack was flying the leading Avenger aircraft when he and the squadron were hit by a surprise attack from eight Japanese Zero fighter planes. With his Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber being the first plane to be hit, presumably killing the engine, it began to glide down towards the sea. The last sighting of the stricken aircraft, by the pilot of a following Avenger, was of Jack Collett climbing out of the cockpit onto the wing, from where he jumped before the plane crashed into the sea. His body was never recovered from its watery grave.

In 1944, two years after his death, the destroyer USS Collett (DD-730) was named in his honour, and the first captain of the ship was Commander James Dahlman Collett, his brother (below). The vessel was launched on 5th March 1944 by Bath Iron Works Corporation at Bath in Maine, and was sponsored by Mrs. C. C. Baughman as proxy for Mrs James Dahlman Collett (below). The vessel was commissioned just over one month later at the Boston Navy Yard on 16th May 1944.

Assigned to the Pacific Fleet, the USS Collett reached Pearl Harbour on 16th October 1944. In February 1945 it sailed daringly close to the Japanese coastline to strike at targets on Honshū, before giving air cover to the invasion of Iwo Jima from 20th to 22nd February. On 18th April the destroyer joined with four

other destroyers and an aircraft carrier, to sink the Japanese submarine I-56. After patrol duty off Japan, and guarding the carriers as they flew air cover for the landing of occupation troops, the USS Collett entered Tokyo Bay on 14th September 1945, and 4 days later sailed for a west coast overhaul.

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James Dahlman Collett was born at Omaha, Nebraska in 1909, the second child of Austin John Collett and his wife Ruth Dahlman. Like his older brother Jack (above), Jim, as he was known, also entered the Naval Academy in Nebraska in the Class of 1932.



By the time he married Margaret Peyton Calvert of Annapolis, Maryland at St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington D.C in 1936 he was Captain James Dahlman Collett of the US Navy. Margaret was born in 1913 and her father was a lawyer in Washington where she grew up. The marriage presented the couple with two sons, George and James. Jim was the Captain of the destroyer USS Davison, which was participating in the invasion of Sicily, when he heard the news that a new destroyer was to be named after his late brother.

On hearing the announcement he immediately put in a request to be the first captain of the vessel, which was approved by the navy. So it was that as Commander James Dahlman Collett that he later took command of the destroyer USS Collett. Jim served with the navy for a total of thirty years and eventually retired in 1962. During that time he was a Naval Attaché to Spain in the 1950's and his last assignment was as Base Commander in Newport Rhode Island. John F Kennedy's son was born in the Naval Hospital under Jim's command at Newport and the family has an autographed photograph of JFK thanking Jim Collett.

