

THE BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

Lieutenant-Commander Richard Wainwright, USS GLOUCESTER

USS GLOUCESTER, Off Santiago de Cuba, 6 July 1898

have the honor to report that at the Battle of Santiago on July 3 the officers and crew of the GLOUCESTER were uninjured and the vessel was not injured in hull or machinery, the battery only requiring some slight overhauling.

It was the plain duty of the GLOUCESTER to look after the destroyers and she was held back, gaining steam, until they appeared at the entrance. The INDIANA poured in a hot fire, from all her secondary battery, upon the destroyers, but Captain Taylor's signal, "gunboats close in," gave security that we would not be fired upon by our own ships. Until the leading destroyer was injured our course was converging, necessarily, but as soon as she slackened her speed we headed directly for both vessels, firing both port and starboard batteries as the occasion offered.

All the officers and nearly all the men deserve my highest praise during the action. The escape of the GLOUCESTER was due mainly to the accuracy and rapidity of the fire. The efficiency of this fire, as well as that of the ship generally, was largely due to the intelligence and unremitting efforts of the executive officer, Lieutenant Harry P. Huse. The result is more to his credit when it is remembered that a large portion of the officers and men were untrained when the GLOUCESTER was commissioned. Throughout the action he was on the bridge and carried out my orders with great coolness. That we were able to close in with the destroyers—and until we did so they were not seriously injured—was largely due to the skill and constant attention of Passed Assistant Engineer George W. McElroy. The blowers were put on, and the speed increased to 17 knots without causing a tube to leak or a brass to heat. Lieutenant Thomas C. Wood, Lieutenant George H. Norman, jr., and Ensign John T. Edson not only controlled the fire of the guns in their divisions and prevented waste of ammunition, but they also did some excellent shooting themselves. Acting Assistant Surgeon J. F. Bransford took charge of one of the guns and fired it himself occasionally. Acting Assistant Paymaster Alexander Brown had charge of the two Colt guns, firing one himself, and they did excellent work. Assistant Engineer A. M. Proctor carried my orders from the bridge and occasionally fired a gun when I found it was not being served quite satisfactorily.

Lieutenants Wood and Norman, Ensign Edson and Assistant Engineer Proctor were in charge of the boats engaged in saving life. They all risked their lives repeatedly in boarding and remaining near the two destroyers and the two armored cruisers when their guns were being discharged by the heat and their magazines and boilers were exploding.

Of the men mentioned in the several reports I would call special attention to John Bond, chief boatswain's mate. He would have been recommended to the department for promotion, prior to his gallant conduct during the action of July 3. I would also recommend to your attention Robert P. Jennings, chief machinist, mentioned in the report of Mr. McElroy. I believe it would have a good effect to recognize the skill of the men and the danger incurred by the engineers' force.

Brooklyn Eagle (27 July 1898), page 3.