

I served on the USS South Dakota 1943-44.

At the age of 18 I was drafted into the Navy in May, 1943 and directly following boot camp at Sampson in New York State I was sent to Norfolk, VA (Jul or Aug, 1943?) for assignment to the USS South Dakota. The ship was in dry dock at the time, but we soon set sail for the South Pacific. I was placed in the Fire Control Division and my watch station was trainer in the aft twin 5" gun director. What # director was the aft one? Did we meet? My battle station was in the plotting room where I cranked data into our primitive computer. As a Seaman 2nd class I also did a stint as a mess cook. I was on the ship long enough to earn four battle stars on my Pacific Area ribbon (Marshalls, Gilberts, etc.). The ship was given a small quota of slots for the Navy V12 college training program, so I applied and was accepted. As a passenger on the USS Princeton I returned to the States in the spring of 1944 and enrolled in the V12 program at Dartmouth College. The balance of my naval career was quite checkered. Two semesters at Dartmouth, then attending midshipman school at Fort Schuyler, NY. Account of illness I lasted only 30 days at this 90day wonder school. Then radar operators school at Point Loma, San Diego followed by stint in the Armed Guard as the radar operator aboard a Liberty Ship making a run from Florida to England and return to Boston, and finally marking time prior to discharge as a loafer aboard an LST on a voyage from San Francisco Bay to Portland, OR. I checked out in April 1946 and returned to Dartmouth to complete my degree.

Dwight Smith