

NAVAL HISTORY MUSEUM
MACHINIST EDWARD WILLIAM FORSTER,
UNITED STATES NAVY, DECEASED

Edward William Forster was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, October 8, 1884, and died August 10, 1942 as the result of wounds received the day before when the USS VINCENNES in which he was serving was attacked and finally went down in the Battle of the Solomon Islands. The USS FORSTER, destroyer escort (DE-334) was so named in his honor, and was commissioned in the U.S. Navy in January, 1944.

He enlisted in the United States Navy at Norfolk, Virginia on August 25, 1919, and had continuous service, having reenlisted in the Navy seven times. He was warranted Machinist to date from June 25, 1942.

Joining the cruiser VINCENNES on August 17, 1940, that vessel was on patrol duty in the Atlantic, from Iceland to the Caribbean, and the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, December 7, 1941, VINCENNES was at Cape Town, Union of South Africa. The ship was immediately ordered to proceed in convoy to Australia. Her first engagement with the enemy was in May, 1942, Battle of Midway, when she came under air attack and shot down a plane 100 yards short of the ship's bow. Her gunners were credited with shooting down three more aircraft in that engagement.

A gallant attempt to prevent superior Japanese forces from endangering American positions on Guadalcanal, in the first Battle of Savo Island, cost the VINCENNES her life on August 9, 1942. The heavy cruiser was virtually shot to pieces as Japanese surface ships sent 57 known shell hits and one torpedo into her hull and superstructure. In the furious action that followed throughout the night, at 2:50 a.m., she capsized to port and went down in 500 fathoms of water, taking with her two other heavy cruisers of the same task group.

Machinist Forster was awarded the Purple Heart Medal posthumously. He had the Good Conduct Medal with three bars for enlisted service, and was entitled to the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and World War II Victory Medal.