

KARL EUGENE LEWIS, 1934-1952

(Dorothy Clark Lewis, Eva Flack Clark, Emma Overmyer Flack, Jonas C. Overmyer, Daniel Overmyer, John of Pickaway Overmier)



Karl E. Lewis

Karl Eugene Lewis was born on July 31, 1934, in Clinton, Clinton Co., IA, the son of Alfred Lorrell Lewis and Dorothy Arroll Clark. He attended Clinton H.S. and dropped out at the age of 17 to join the U.S. Navy. He did his bootcamp in California and was assigned as a Seaman to the destroyer USS *Hobson* (DD-464) during the Korean War.¹⁸⁵

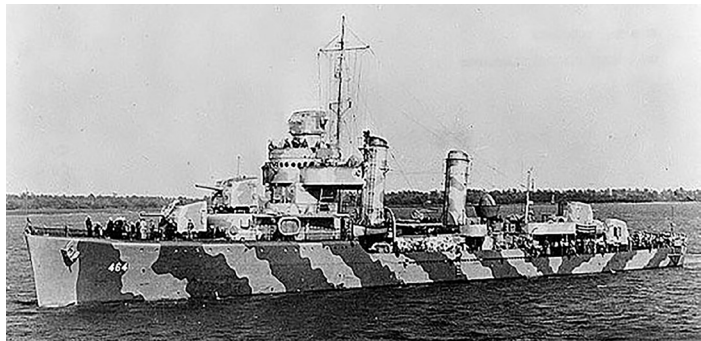
The *Hobson* was a support ship for the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp* (CV-18). The two ships were part of a 25-ship Task Group en route to the Mediterranean before being deployed to Korea. The *Hobson* had a new commanding officer Lt. Commander William J. Tierney. On the night of Apr. 26, 1952, the *Wasp* was conducting night flying operations under simulated war conditions, when a terrible accident occurred.

“As the *Wasp* turned into the wind to recover her aircraft, the *Hobson* was expected to remain to the rear of the larger ship in case a pilot had to ditch into the sea. Instead, LCDR. Tierney ordered a series of turns that caused his Officer on the Deck, Lt. William A. Hoefler, to question those decisions. The discussion reached such a heated level that in an extremely rare breach of protocol, Lt. Hoefler, who had been on the *Hobson* for sixteen months, actually walked off the bridge. As he stood just outside the wheelhouse, LCDR. Tierney continued to give commands and when Lt. Hoefler realized what was about to happen, he rushed back in and yelled ‘Prepare for collision! Prepare for collision!’ Both men looked to their right and straight at the bow of the *Wasp* headed directly for the *Hobson*. In the instant of stunned silence just before impact, LCDR. Tierney, without a word, ran toward the onrushing vessel and threw himself overboard into its path. Seconds later the USS *Hobson* was struck amidships, she rolled onto her port side and was cut completely in half.”¹⁸⁶

An estimated 150 crew members were sleeping in their berthing compartments at the time. The *Hobson* sank in less than 5 minutes.

“Many of *Hobson*’s crew were trapped below decks, their escape cut off by the ship’s severed underbelly, rushing waters and the panic of many men who had never been at sea. As the sailors fought the freezing torrents, desperately searching for a way out - screeching sounds of twisted metal around them - their darkest fear quickly became reality: They would drown at sea.”¹⁸⁷

176 crew members lost their lives. Karl Eugene Lewis was one of them. The *Wasp*, meanwhile, sustained a 75-foot-long gash to its bow, but fortunately lost no crew. The men of the *Wasp* did all that they could in the rescue effort and managed to save 61 sailors.

USS *Wasp*USS *Hobson*

Karl did not live to see his 18th birthday. He is remembered today with a gravestone at Clinton Lawn Cemetery, Clinton, Clinton Co., IA.