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U. S. S. CONCRETE EX-OFFICER GETS THE NAVY CROSS

COMDR. KATZ, who left 90 Church St. for Sea Duty Becomes Solomons Hero

By Joseph Driscoll
By wireless to the Herald Tribune

An Advanced South Pacific Base, Oct. 25--Three years ago Benjamin Katz was enjoying the quiet life of a communications officer at 90 Church Street, New York, better known in Navy circles as the U.S.S. Concrete. When he was not at his desk he was motoring out to radio stations at Riverhead, L. I., and Bound Brook, N.J. He found time to read the New York Herald Tribune and an evening paper each day.

Then things began to stir. First, Katz was assigned to Iceland convoy runs as communications officer on the battleship Idaho. Then he got command of the old four-stacker destroyer Dallas on the Casablanca run.

But life really began for Katz last January when he was promoted to command one of the new Fletcher-type destroyers, of 2,100 tons net, which resemble light cruisers and actually gross around 3,000 tons. These speedy, heavy-hitting "tin cans" had a large share in driving the Japanese out of Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Kolombangara and Vella Lavella islands.

The new destroyers not only have prevented the Japanese from reinforcing the Solomons, but have slaughtered Japanese garrisons attempting to withdraw.

Member of "Fighting Irish"

To-day Commander Katz received his reward, the Navy Cross, which admits him to the mythical order of "The Fighting Irish," founded by his superiors, Captains Francis X. McInerney, Thomas J. Ryan and John D. Sweeney.

In President Roosevelt's name, Admiral William F. Halsey, commander of American naval forces in the South Pacific, cited thirty-nine-year-old Katz, who hails from Cambridge, Mass., and St. Paul, for "extraordinary heroism and distinguished service" during an engagement north of Vella Lavella on the night of Aug. 17-18.

Katz commanded a destroyer in Captain Ryan's group which intercepted and routed an enemy force comprising four destroyers and many barges trying to reinforce Japanese island garrisons. In the face of continuous torpedo and gun fire Katz's ship attacked and materially contributed to the destruction of two destroyers, four large barges and several smaller ones, ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ and damaged a third destroyer without injury to his own ship.

Short and slight of build, with dark hair and ruddy complexion. Katz told the story in his own words on his destroyer this afternoon.

"We first engaged the destroyers and then came back and worked the barges over", he said. "We stayed up all night and cleaned out the area pretty thoroughly. Very few Japs got ashore."

Unable to reinforce the besieged garrison, the Japanese began evacuating them.

"They didn't have much luck", Katz remarked.