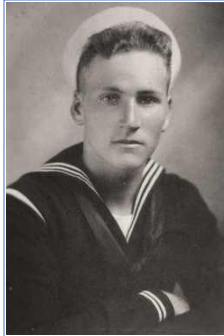


U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)



David William Hodges
circa 1940
Source: FindaGrave.com

Marblehead Biography David William Hodges

David William Hodges' parents were William Henry Hodges (1874-1956), a farmer, and homemaker, Mary L Robertson (1877-1928). They grew up on farms around Farmersville, Montgomery County, Illinois, and married in 1895.

At some point between Mar 1909 and May 1915, the family decided to try their luck farming in Oklahoma. David was born in Cheyenne, Roger Mills County, Oklahoma on 13 May 1915. The Dust Bowl had not yet struck Oklahoma, but in any case, the Hodges family moved several times within the state, and then struck out for Redlands, California.



David as a child
Source: Ancestry.com

When David was almost 13, his mother, Mary, died in Redlands. His dad later remarried a widow, Mary Eva Settem, whose late husband, John Theodore Settem was a carpenter, as David's dad was. Perhaps the families knew each other through that profession. In any case, the Settems also lived in Redlands, a seven-minute drive from the Hodges' home. This marriage brought in a step-brother, who was five years David's junior. David's siblings were Charles Francis (1896-1968), Clellier Ray (1898-1939), Clarence Wiley (1900-1965), Earl Henry (1907-1972), Zella Edna (1909-1949), Huldah Elizabeth (1920-1977), and stepbrother John Bastion Settem (1920-1983). David and his siblings appear to have attended Redlands High School.

David enlisted in the Navy on 12 Oct 1939 in Los Angeles, CA, and was assigned service number 3808745. He received basic training at the San Diego Naval Training School. Destroyer tender *USS Rigel (AD-13)* appears to have been his first ship. On 18 Jan 40, in Shanghai, China, David, a Seaman 1st Class (S1c), first came aboard light cruiser *USS Marblehead (CL-12)* via veteran Navy transport *USS Henderson (AP-1)*.

Marby, as the ship was affectionately referred to by her crew, was the [third vessel](#) named after Marblehead, MA, the birthplace of the American Navy. After joining the Asiatic Fleet in 1938, *Marby* typically wintered in the Philippines and summered in China, but also visited other exotic locales such as British-controlled Burma (today's Myanmar) and Hong Kong; French-controlled Saigon (today's Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam), and other ports in East and Southeast Asia. David was aboard *Marby* on 31 Mar 40 in the Cavite Navy Yard when a [Pan Am China Clipper](#) landed in Manila Bay on one of its regular runs to the Philippines before the war. However, in late-Sep 1940, as relations continued to sour with Japan, which by then controlled of all major Chinese ports except Hong Kong, *Marby* left China for good, departing [Tsingtao](#) (after which the famous beer is named) and ending her long association with China. David was still a S1c, but on 16 Nov 40, while the ship was in Manila, he was advanced to Storekeeper 3rd Class (SK3c).

Other than a cruise to Guam in January, *Marby* spent nearly all of 1941 in Philippine waters visiting the central and southern Philippines islands of Cebu, Jolo, and Tawi Tawi, in addition to Manila, Cavite and Miraveles. These were not leisure visits. At that time, like most of her sister ships in the Asiatic Fleet, *Marby* was obsolete by naval standards of the early 40s, particularly compared to Japanese ships in her class. Aware of this, *Marby*'s skipper, Brooklyn-born Arthur Granville Robinson, had intensified the crew's training for war while his boss, Admiral Thomas Hart was closely monitoring negotiations between the U.S. and Japan that had begun in Apr 41 in Washington. Those talks ended with the last U.S. proposal prior to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Unofficially named the Hull note (for then Secretary Cordell Hull), the proposal was delivered on 26 Nov 42.

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Hart, it seems, was aware of the Hull note and that the Japanese were unlikely to accept it. He may have also known that they were moving more bombers into Indochina and preparing to invade Thailand. He took swift action ordering the fleet out of Manila ahead of expected hostilities. *Marby* departed on Nov 25th. By the evening of 27 Nov 41, she anchored off [Jolo Island](#) at the southwestern tip of the Philippines near Borneo. The ship was darkened for increased security.

The 1944 book, [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#), a detailed, compassionate description of the saga of the *USS Marblehead*, unfolds two days later, on 29 Nov 41, with *Marby* anchored farther southwest, off [Tarakan Island](#), northeast [Borneo](#), [Dutch East Indies](#) (today's [Indonesia](#)). Cables and pillboxes were already lining Tarakan's beaches to discourage enemy landings.

Unbeknownst to Admiral Hart and the crews of the ships that comprised it, the Asiatic Fleet's days were numbered. In the remaining four months of the fleet's existence, despite significant disadvantages in numbers, technology, firepower and air cover, the crews on those ships would play a heroic yet tragic role in delaying [Japan's conquest of Southeast Asia](#). Many men and ships would be lost, but *Marby* would defy the odds.

On 8 Dec 41, at Tarakan which was west of the international date line, at 03:28 hours, *Marby* received word of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Her alarms blared moments later and the [crew's response](#) foretold the spirit and training which would later save her. The ship sailed farther southwest ahead of the Japanese onslaught which would hit the neighboring Philippines within hours. On 9 Dec 41 she refueled in the oil port of [Balikpapan](#), Borneo, before moving on to [Surabaya](#), [Java](#), where, on 25 Dec 41, *Marby's* skipper, [Captain Arthur Granville Robinson](#), granted the crew Christmas leave despite the threat of Japanese air attack. It would be their last break for some time.

By 31 Dec 41, *Marby* was in the [Flores Sea](#) between Surabaya and [Darwin](#), [Australia](#), escorting a convoy which included the [MS Maréchal Joffre](#), a [Vichy French](#) (Axis) ship that had been brazenly captured in Manila Bay by American naval aviators and used to escape the Japanese. That little known but inspiring episode in American Naval History, ultimately resulted in the French ship being recommissioned as the [USS Rochambeau \(AP-63\)](#). On 2 Jan 42, *Marby* temporarily became "[Radio Darwin](#)" in that northern Australian backwater port that would serve as the base for regrouping surviving Allied warships.

On 8 Jan, David and his shipmates left Darwin and sailed north as part of an Allied initiative to stall Japanese aggression in Java. On 24 Jan, she covered the retreat of four American destroyers ([Paul Jones](#), [Parrott](#), [Pope](#) and [John D. Ford](#)) after their successful night attack on Japanese forces in the [Battle of Balikpapan](#).

On 4 Feb 42, while enroute to another attack on the Japanese, *Marby* took two direct bomb hits and a very damaging near-miss from a squadron of Japanese bombers off the north coast of Java in what became known as the [Battle of Makassar Strait](#). Thus began, for most of *Marby's* crew, their "escape from the jaws of death." Ablaze, rapidly taking on water, and steaming in an uncontrollable, but very predictable circle because a direct hit had jammed her rudder, *Marby* seemed doomed. But instead of finishing her off, the Japanese assumed the ocean would complete what their bombs had begun, so they reported *Marby* as sunk, and went after bigger prey, the heavy cruiser [USS Houston \(CA-30\)](#). However, in reporting *Marby* sunk, Japan's Imperial High Command got everything wrong – the date, the location, the nearest land mass, and even the water-body (it was the Bali Sea). Importantly, they got the "sunk" part wrong too!

The Asiatic Fleet, Nov 1941

"On November 25, the MARBLEHEAD sailed out of Manila Bay for Dutch North Borneo. Only two days before Admiral Hart called a conference of his senior officers. There weren't too many as the 'Asiatic Fleet' actually applied only to the MARBLEHEAD and HOUSTON, thirteen overaged destroyers of World War I vintage, and their tender BLACK HAWK, twenty-nine submarines with their tenders, the CANOPUS, HOLLAND and OTIS, the tanker PECOS, a few minesweepers plus some antiquated gun boats and the five Yangtze River gun boats. The air arm consisted of 30 PBYS of PATWING 10 tendered by the LANGLEY. The BOISE joined later... 'Gentlemen,' Hart began, 'the negotiations going on in Washington have reached a critical stage and I have come to the conclusion that the time has come to put the initial phase of our basic plan into effect at once, that is the deployment of our surface craft to the southward so they will not be trapped in Manila Bay if hostilities actually begin. Robinson, I want you to take command of a detachment consisting of the Marblehead and the Black Hawk and the destroyers, then proceed to Dutch North Borneo and await developments. I have secretly informed the Dutch Admiral of this move but no one else so you should make your visit appear as much as possible to be of a routine nature. ... If everything goes well in Washington, I will call you back in a couple of weeks. Otherwise, goodbye, good luck and God bless you!"

Excerpts from the Diary of Admiral A.G. Robinson, then Captain, and *Marby's* skipper. Robinson willed his diary to John P. Bracken, then a Lt. Jg. and his Aide. Source: Bracken's 1993 book [The Call of the Siren](#).

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Eleven sailors were killed in the bombing, and some of the many injured would die in the coming days. David had two old friends aboard *Marby* - Yeoman Beaufort Gabriel and his brother, Ralph, a ship's cook. "They had been old pals since the days when the three of them rose at "five o'clock every morning to go down to the office of the Redlands Facts to get their newspapers and start their delivery." After the bombing, Beaufort, unharmed, was searching for his brother. While entering "the forward citadel, the area between the two upper 6-inch guns, where many of the wounded were laid out, he heard someone call his name and looked around. It was Ralph, and he was uninjured. But hardly had Beaufort been swept by the great surge of relief he felt on seeing Ralph, when Ralph knelt down beside one of the injured men. As Beaufort got over to them, he found it was their old friend Dave Hodges. A corpsman was pumping morphine into Dave's charred body. 'Gee,' Ralph said, doing his best to control his voice, 'it's too bad you got singed like that, Dave. We got some things to do, but we'll drop back after a while. Just take it easy, kid. You'll be O.K.' And both of the Gabriel boys went off to fight the fires, knowing their friend was dying."¹

Official records, including his gravestone, say David died that day, 4 Feb 42, but a passage in *Where Away* suggests otherwise. It describes the scene in Tjilatjap, Java when *Marby*'s wounded were being transferred to a Dutch hospital train. "The next man to go was Dave Hodges from Redlands, California. As his two old friends, Beaufort, and Ralph Gabriel, said goodbye, they already knew that he would not live to reach the hospital."² The date was 6 Feb 42. Years later, this was verified by Phil Settem, the son of David's stepbrother, John Bastion Settem, who was aboard destroyer *USS Stewart (DD-224)*, one of the vessels that escorted *Marby* to Tjilatjap after the bombing. In a comment on the Findagrave.com entry for David Hodges, Phil Settem wrote the following: "David HODGES actually didn't die on Feb. 4th, but rather on Feb. 6th. I'm guessing he very possibly died while enroute to the hospital. (I provided Craig Chariton with naval records verifying the date). In addition - my dad, John B. SETTEM, told me he was able to go see David before he was taken ashore and put on the train to go to the hospital."³



Earl Henry Hodges
U.S. Army ca 1940
Source: Ancestry.com

Each of David's brothers registered for the draft in WWI and WWII, and in some cases both, however service records were found only for Earl and John Settem. Earl served in the U.S. Army during WWII, but details of his service (e.g., combat theater and period of service) could not be located. Like his father, Earl was a carpenter, though he may have also pursued other careers after the war.



John Bastion Settem
ca 1940
Source: Ancestry.com

David's stepbrother, John Settem, the last member of the Hodges family to see David alive, was serving on the destroyer *USS Stewart (DD-224)*, also a U.S. Asiatic Fleet vessel which, like *Marby*, had been incorporated into the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA⁴) Command with the primary objective of slowing the Japanese advance across Southeast Asia. *Stewart* was in the Battle of Makassar Strait with *Marby* but suffered little damage and escorted *Marby* to Tjilatjap, Java. It is unclear how and when Settem learned that his stepbrother was badly wounded, but he was able to see David prior to the latter's transfer from *Marby* to the Dutch hospital train on 6 Feb 42.⁵

¹ [Where Away](#), electronic version, page 159 (page 129 in the hard copy version).

² [Where Away](#), electronic version, page 210 (page 180 in the hard copy version).

³ [Findagrave.com](#)

⁴ On 15 Jan 42, the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command was activated. Its objective was control of the "Malay Barrier", a notional line running down the Malay Peninsula through Singapore and the southernmost islands of NEI. ABDA was all that stood in the way of the Japanese. British Marshall Archibald Wavell was given overall command, and initially, Admiral Thomas Hart led its naval forces. Doorman succeeded him.

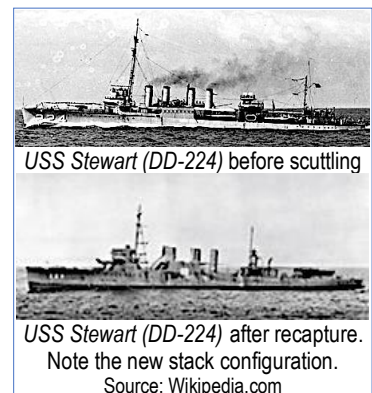
⁵ Note: Official records state that David died on the day of the Battle of Makassar Strait, 4 Feb 42, but as mentioned previously, Settem's son, Phil, confirmed in a [www.findagrave.com](#) entry that his dad spoke to David on 6 Feb 42: "David HODGES actually didn't die on Feb. 4th, but rather on Feb. 6th. I'm guessing he very possibly died while enroute to the hospital. In addition, my dad, John B. SETTEM, told me he was able to go see David before he was

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After she buried her dead and saw to it that her non-ambulatory wounded, such as David, were in the care of Dutch medical professionals, *Marby*, no longer fit to fight, left Tjilatjap for the U.S., gambling that she could hold together, avoid her enemies, and get further repairs enroute. *Stewart*, however, with Settem aboard, stayed behind to fight, and “on the night of 19-20 Feb 42, was engaged in the Battle of Badung Strait. ABDA Commanding Officer Admiral Doorman had split his remaining ships into three groups to attack Japanese forces landing in Bali. *Stewart* led the second group, and in several brief, furious engagements, she came under very accurate fire from enemy destroyers. Her boats were shot away, her torpedo racks and galley were hit, and a crippling shot aft below her waterline opened seams and flooded the steering engine room though the steering engine continued to operate under two feet of water.”⁶

Stewart reached Surabaya the next morning. As the most damaged ship in the battle, she was first to enter Surabaya’s floating drydock on 22 Feb, but poorly supported, she fell off the keel blocks and onto her side in twelve feet of water, bending her propeller shafts and causing further hull damage. With the port under air attack and in danger of falling to the enemy, *Stewart* could not be repaired, and orders were issued for her destruction. Her remaining crew left Surabaya on 22 Feb [John Settem was transferred to the *USS Tulsa* (PG-22), a dated patrol gunboat commissioned in 1923, the same year as *Marby*.⁶

Despite charges being set off inside her, a Japanese bomb damaging her amidships, the drydock containing her being scuttled, and her name being struck from the U.S. Navy list, *Stewart* refused to die! Later in the war, American pilots began reporting an American warship operating within enemy waters. It sported a Japanese-trunked-funnel, but its original four-piper hull was unmistakable (see comparative photos at right. After a year underwater, the Japanese had raised *Stewart*, repaired her, armed her with two 3-inch guns, and commissioned her as *Patrol Boat 102* assigned to the Japanese Southwest Area Fleet as an escort vessel. Though not directly involved in the action, on 23 Aug 44, she was operating in consort with the anti-submarine vessel *CD-22* when the latter sank submarine *USS Harder* (SS-257) with all hands, using depth charges. In Nov 44, *PB-102* arrived at Kure, Japan for repairs, anti-aircraft battery augmentation, and a foremast addition.⁶



On 28 Apr 45, *PB-102* (aka *Stewart*) was bombed by US Army aircraft off Mokpo, Korea and transferred to Japan’s Kure Navy District in Aug 45. After the war, she was repossessed in Hiro Bay by U.S. forces. In an emotional ceremony at Kure on 29 Oct 45, the U. S. Navy recommissioned her, but simply as DD-224 since the name *USS Stewart* had been given to another ship by then. On the way home, her engines failed near Guam, but she made San Francisco in Mar 46 at the end of a towline. In May 46, she was decommissioned and sunk off San Francisco as a target for U.S. aircraft. Despite her unusual career, *USS Stewart* (DD-224) and her various crews, including John Bastion Settem, earned her the following: China Service Medal, American Defense Service Medal (w/“FLEET” clasp), Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (w/two battle stars), World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Medal (w/“ASIA” clasp), and Philippines Defense Medal.⁶

David William Hodges is listed on pages 83, 159, 220, 287 and 296⁷ in the electronic version of the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with input from Phil Settem (indirectly) and from Ancestry.com, Wikipedia.com, Newspapers.com, FindaGrave.com, and other Internet records.
Corrections, additions, and photos are welcomed by email to spwade@gmail.com.

taken ashore and put on the train to go to the hospital." This is consistent with the final paragraph of page 210 in the electronic version of [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

⁶ [Wikipedia](#)

⁷ Corresponding to pages 61, 129, 180, 240, and 249 in the hard copy of [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).