

## USS Taylor (DD/DDE 468) Cold War History — 1953–1964

In the five years between 1 March 1954 and 1 March 1959, Taylor completed five more deployments to the western Pacific. During each deployment she conducted training exercises and made good will visits to Far Eastern ports. When not in WestPac, she conducted normal operations out of Pearl Harbor.

On 19 February 1955 Taylor departed Pearl Harbor for duty in the western Pacific, with a refueling stop at Midway Island. Upon crossing the international dateline, a proper initiation ritual took place for all of the crew who had not crossed before.

Taylor encountered some heavy weather one day out of Japan, when she ran into a dangerous storm. Gene Trahan, who was MM3 on Taylor from 1954 to 1957, remembers that storm vividly. He had come aboard as MMFN just four months out of boot camp. The crossing would be his first.

The crew was lined up as usual on the port side waiting to go into the chow hall. They were sitting on the benches at the tables when the ship took a heavy roll and many of the guys fell off the benches with their lunch trays falling on top of them. Later, with the waves pounding the port side, the crew lined up on the starboard side for dinner which consisted of sandwiches to go. By the time Trahan got there, the bread was gone and all that was left was cold cuts and cheese on crackers.

Announcements would come that Taylor had taken a 38 degree roll and later a 45 degree roll. Access was no longer permitted on the main deck and eventually not even on the 01 deck. With no movement about the ship, Trahan was unable to go on watch and the people in the engineering spaces stood their watches the entire night. Gene spent the night in his top bunk but was unable to sleep. In order not to roll out of his bunk, he held onto overhead electrical cables. Some who had been able to fall asleep rolled out of their bunks making a loud thump when they hit the deck. When the ship's bow went under the waves, the propellers came out of the water making her shake. He wondered if she would ever come up.

The next day the seas settled down to a "tolerable level." But Taylor had been through quite an ordeal, even taking a 58 degree roll, when a maximum safe roll was considered 60 degrees. By the time Taylor got to port in Japan, she had just one per cent fuel left, as one of the fuel tanks had been contaminated by seawater. A P-500 pump had broken

loose and gone overboard, and parts of bulkheads and railings had been torn off. She would need extensive repairs.

During Taylor's sixth post Korean War deployment in 1959-60, she visited Australia for the celebration commemorating the victory at the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. In order to get to Australia, Taylor had to cross the Equator, which required observance of a time-honored Navy tradition that was several hundred years old. The "pollywogs," those who had never crossed the Equator, would be inducted by the "shellbacks," those who had been across. The process would begin with each pollywog going before King Neptune's court and being found guilty immediately of all charges. The pollywog would then go before the royal baby and kiss its belly which was often covered in grease. Next would be a visit to the royal barber who cut away the pollywog's hair. Of course, all pollywogs are sick and consequently have to take the royal medicine which is a mixture of things none of us want to know and a taste that lingers for at least two days. Next comes a crawl through the royal garbage chute followed by a plunge in the royal pool (which, surprise, surprise, is actually clean water), and finally a hosing down to get some of the garbage off. With this completed, the pollywogs are now shellbacks, and are issued official certificates and identification cards to prove it.

Upon Taylor's return to Pearl Harbor on 26 May 1960, she conducted normal operations until December, when she entered the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for a major overhaul before deploying to the western Pacific again in August 1961.

In lieu of her annual western Pacific deployment, Taylor would spend the spring and summer of 1962 in the mid-Pacific as one of the support units for Operation "Dominic." This operation consisted of a 36-detonation atmospheric nuclear test series. The first phase ran from 25 April through 11 July 1962 and the second phase ran from 2 October through 3 November 1962. Some nuclear weapons were dropped from aircraft, some were warheads on rockets fired into the air, and some were detonated underwater. This series of tests marked the end of US and USSR atmospheric detonations.

Dale Lorey who served on Taylor as SH3 from 1960 through 1963 tells of his experience with Operation "Dominic." In July 1962 they were ordered to report to deck one at 11:30 p.m. for a test. They were told little but were provided goggles and instructed to use their arms to shield their eyes against what would be a major blast.

"Everybody was apprehensive. But when you're in the ocean as far out as anybody can see, it doesn't really do you any good to be scared. And when you're infallible, nothing

can hurt you. The ensuing silent explosion of a hydrogen bomb 200 miles in the air and 100 miles away created the brightest light I had ever seen, so intense I could see right through my skin to the bones and blood vessels beneath. I call it a biggest x-ray anybody ever had. You could literally see right through your arms. And you could see water splashing off the side of the ship. We stood looking for hours at this nonsense.”

“For hours afterward the ensuing cloud was a blood red color. The crew was in awe but finally calmed down and went to bed. In the morning several seamen including myself were ordered to scrub the decks with seawater where Geiger counters were ticking to reveal radioactive ‘hot spots.’

Returning to Pearl Harbor, Taylor began an extensive repair period which would last the rest of the year. During this time, she reverted to the classification of destroyer and was again designated DD 468 on 7 August 1962. Local operations in the Hawaiian Islands occupied the remainder of 1962 and the first six months of 1963.

On 4 June 1963 Taylor left Pearl Harbor with a hunter/killer group bound for duty with the Seventh Fleet. During this deployment to the western Pacific, she called at Kobe, Japan; Hong Kong; Okinawa; and Kushiro as well as the base ports of Yokosuka, Sasebo, and Subic Bay. The call at Kushiro, a fishing port on Hokkaido, the northernmost of the Japanese home islands, constituted Taylor’s contributions to the People to People Program and aided immeasurably in developing greater understanding between the peoples of the United States and Japan. For the remainder of the cruise, Taylor was engaged in numerous unilateral and bilateral training exercises. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 29 November.

Taylor operated locally in Hawaii until April 1964, when she entered drydock for a three-month overhaul. In July she resumed operations in Hawaiian waters. These operations continued throughout most of the fall of 1964.

On 23 November Taylor left Pearl Harbor in company with Yorktown (CVS 10) and Thomason (DD 746) to return to the western Pacific. Following a stop at Midway Island, she made port at Yokosuka, Japan, on 3 December. Four days later she put to sea for two weeks of combined anti-aircraft/anti-submarine warfare exercises conducted with Hancock (CVA 19) and Strauss (DDG 16) near Okinawa.

On 19 December Taylor cleared Sasebo and rejoined Yorktown and Thomason for a voyage to Hong Kong. The three ships remained in the British Crown Colony for five days

before clearing port for a series of special operations conducted in the Philippine Sea. At the conclusion of that duty she put into Subic Bay on 23 February 1965. After four days in the Philippines, Taylor headed back to Sasebo where she arrived on 3 March.