

## USS Taylor (DD/DDE 468) World War II History — 1941–1946

USS Taylor DD/DDE 468 was named for Rear Admiral William Rogers Taylor (1811-1889). She was laid down on 28 August 1941 at Bath, Maine, by the Bath Iron Works Corp. Sponsored by Mrs. H.A. Baldrige, Taylor was launched on 7 June 1942. She was commissioned on 28 August 1942 at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston, Massachusetts, LCDR Benjamin Katz commanding.

Between the time Taylor's keel was laid down and her commissioning on 28 August 1942 the Japanese navy attacked the United States Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Taylor, and the country she served, were immediately at war. She began her career with the Atlantic Fleet. Assigned to Destroyer Squadron 20. Taylor did her initial training at Casco Bay, Maine, and made her shakedown cruise in the northern Atlantic. She was then assigned to coastwise convoy escort duty which lasted until Mid-November 1942 when she escorted a transatlantic convoy to a point off Casablanca. The transit was uneventful, except for the interception of a Spanish merchantman, SS Darro. Taylor sent a boarding party to the neutral ship. The boarding party then sent the Darro to Gibraltar to prevent her from transmitting information about the convoy to the enemy. With the convoy safely at its destination, Taylor returned to the United States at Norfolk, VA.

Receiving orders to transfer to the Pacific theater, Taylor departed Hampton Roads in company with Task Force 13. After transiting the Panama Canal and stopping at Tutuila in the Samoan Islands, Taylor reported at Noumea, New Caledonia, on 20 January 1943. From Noumea Taylor continued steaming west to Efate in the New Hebrides group, entering Havannah Harbor on 26 January. There she joined Destroyer Squadron 21, screening Rear Admiral Robert C. Giffen's Task Force 18.

Taylor departed Havannah Harbor on 27 January 1943 with the other ships of Task Force 18 to help screen an important echelon to Guadalcanal. Admiral William Halsey sent out a large screening force in the hope and expectation of a major naval engagement, a sea battle which never happened. However, at the battle of Rennel Island, the enemy subjected TF 18 to a scathing air attack. The ships brushed off the first attack with anti-aircraft fire, suffered negligible damage, and raced on to rendezvous with the other elements of the covering force. Japanese pilots finally scored a crippling torpedo hit on USS Chicago (CA 29). When USS Louisville (CA 28) took Chicago in tow, Taylor helped to screen the retiring ships as they steamed out of range of enemy aircraft. The following day more enemy planes attacked, striking Chicago with four more torpedo hits. Her

crew was taken off and the ships covering her returned to Efate, leaving Chicago to her watery fate.

On 4 February 1943 Taylor and the other TF 18 ships were transferred to Task Force 67, a cruiser-destroyer force, commanded by Rear Admiral Ainsworth. During February and March, Taylor screened cruisers USS St. Louis (CL 49), Honolulu (CL 48), and Helena (CL 50) during operations between Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal. During the night of 15-16 March, she joined destroyers USS Nicholas (DD 449), Radford (DD 446), and Strong (DD 467) in the fourth bombardment of the Vila-Stanmore Plantation located on Kolombangara Island in the central Solomon Islands. On 26 March Taylor cleared Espiritu Santo to escort Kanawha (AO 1), Aloe (YN 1), and six coastal transports to Guadalcanal.

On the nights of 4, 5, and 6 April, Taylor joined the other cruisers in sweeps up "the Slot" (New Georgia Sound) before being ordered back to Tulagi to pick up Kanawha. When Taylor was about to enter Tulagi, a strong Japanese air raid disabling Kanawha caused her mission to be cancelled. Taylor rang up 30 knots and cleared the area. During this time she claimed the destruction of three enemy planes and hits on two others.

For much of the month of April, Taylor escorted convoys between the Solomons and Espiritu Santo. Following a brief tender overhaul, Taylor accompanied the cruisers of TF 18 up the "Slot" twice between 4 and 14 May to cover mine laying operations in Vella Gulf. During the second operation, she and the other warships bombarded enemy installations at Vila, Bairoko Harbor, and Enogai Inlet.

Between late May and early July, 1943, Taylor performed escort duty. On 25 May, she cleared Espiritu Santo with Munargo (AP 20), escorted the transport to the 180th meridian, and returned to Espiritu Santo on 30 May. During her next assignment, escorting a convoy of troop transports to Guadalcanal and back, she provided defensive cover against Japanese planes which jumped the task unit on 10 June south of San Cristobal. After repairs at Espiritu Santo, Taylor served with the antisubmarine screen of escort carrier Sangamon (ACV 26) until 6 July when she headed for Tulagi to report for duty with Task Force 31.

For the next four months, Taylor supported the invasions of the central Solomons. In July, she supported the New Georgia landings. On the 11th and 12th, she covered the landing of troops and supplies at Rice Anchorage on Kula Gulf, as well as the evacuation of wounded. On the morning of the 12th, she attacked and damaged a Japanese RO-

type submarine, but could claim no definite sinking. That afternoon, Taylor was temporarily detached from TF 31 and reassigned to TF 18. She headed up the "Slot" with Admiral Ainsworth's cruisers to intercept a Japanese surface force. Ainsworth's ships were the same ones with which she had previously served, except HMNZS Leander replaced Helena after the latter cruiser was lost in the Battle of Kula Gulf. That evening, the Allied and Japanese forces met. Taylor and the other van destroyers launched torpedoes and then joined the remainder of TF 18 in engaging the enemy with their guns. It may well have been one of Taylor's torpedoes that slammed into Jintsu's hull just abaft her number two stack, ripping the Japanese cruiser in half. There is no way of knowing for sure, but the accumulated effect of the destroyer's torpedoes and the entire task force's gunfire cost the enemy their flagship and their commander, Rear Admiral Izaki.

Following the Battle of Kolombangara, Taylor reported back to TF 31 and resumed support for the amphibious operations in the central Solomons. On the night of 15 and 16 July, the destroyer took USS Helena survivors off Vella Lavella Island where they had found refuge after their ship went down. Almost a week later, on the night of 23 and 24 July, Taylor supported the landings at Enogai Inlet and participated in another bombardment of Bairoko Harbor. The following morning, her main battery joined in a bombardment of the Japanese positions around the Munda area of New Georgia.

On 30 July, Taylor departed Guadalcanal in company with a troop transport convoy bound for New Caledonia. She was detached en route to Noumea and ordered to join Task Force 37 at Efate. On 11 August 1943 Taylor, Nicholas (DD 449), O'Bannon (DD 450), and Chevalier (DD 451) were ordered to return to Guadalcanal and rejoin TF 31 for the Vella Lavella phase of the central Solomons operation. On 15 August they covered the landings. Two days later they were ordered out of the anchorage at Purvis Bay to intercept a force of troop-laden barges escorted by four destroyers. During the ensuing action off Horaniu, there was a heavy exchange of gunfire and torpedoes, but neither side lost a destroyer, although the Japanese ship Namakan was set ablaze. Later, the Japanese destroyers were able to escape but the American forces were able to sink two subchasers, two torpedo boats, and one barge before retiring. Two days later, the four American destroyers returned to the area northwest of Vella Lavella to seek out enemy barge traffic. Although they encountered no enemy ships, they did come under heavy bombing attacks by enemy aircraft throughout the evening. Over the next nine days, Taylor and the rest of the ships in her division made eight more trips up the "Slot" but saw little action.

Taylor departed Guadalcanal and the Solomons on 28 August to escort Titania (AKA 13) to Noumea. After a ten-day repair, rest, and relaxation period in Sydney, Australia, Taylor escorted a troop transport convoy from Noumea to Guadalcanal. She returned to the Tulagi-Purvis Bay area on 30 September to resume support of the subjugation of Vella Lavella. By this time, the Japanese had already begun to evacuate bypassed Kolombangara and would soon make the decision to do the same at Vella Lavella. Thus, Taylor and the other destroyers continued their nightly forays up the "Slot" to interdict barge traffic.

On the night of 2 October, Taylor, Terry (DD 513), and Ralph Talbot (DD 390) engaged enemy barges and a surface force in the waters between Choiseul and Kolombangara. Four nights later, the battle of Vella Lavella ensued. While they were to the south of New Georgia escorting a convoy, Taylor, Ralph Talbot, and La Valette (DD 448) were ordered to join O'Bannon, Chevalier, and Selfridge who were already engaged in battle with nine Japanese destroyers covering the Vella Lavella evacuation group. During the battle Chevalier and Yugumo were lost. Selfridge also received a torpedo hit and was damaged. Taylor went alongside Selfridge in the closing moments of the battle and evacuated most of her crew while a skeleton crew began their successful attempt to save the damaged destroyer. She then screened the two crippled ships while they limped back down the "Slot" to Purvis Bay.

On 17 October, Taylor departed the southern Solomons with the other members of Destroyer Division 41. They provided escort cover for a convoy of troop transports to Efate where they reported for duty with TF 37. Between 23 October and 26 October Taylor would make a round-trip voyage between Efate and Noumea, escorting Lassen (AE 3) to Noumea and Aldebaran (AF 10) to Efate.

Commander Benjamin Katz, commanding officer of Taylor 1942-1944, wrote in his report, "Twelve officers and men from crashed planes were rescued in the course of the preceding operations. One enlisted man fell overboard from the SUWANEE and was rescued." This was just one of the many duties Taylor successfully fulfilled. CDR Katz also reported for the period no personnel casualties or major damage to Taylor. A lucky ship, indeed.

Taylor received a special commendation following the Solomons campaign from the Secretary of the Navy:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in commending

United States Ship Taylor For service as follows:

“For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during the Solomons Campaign, March 15 to October 7, 1943 ...

All personnel attached to and serving on board the U.S.S. Taylor from March 15 to October 7, 1943, are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION RIBBON.”

/s/ Francis P. Matthews, Secretary of the Navy.

Following the Solomons campaign on 31 October 1943 Taylor and her division were reassigned to the Central Pacific Force in preparation for the first step in the Navy's central Pacific thrust, the seizure and occupation of the Gilbert Islands. For this operation she was assigned to screen Task Group 50.1 which comprised carriers USS Lexington (CV 16), USS Yorktown (CV 10), and USS Cowpens (CVL 25). While screening these ships Taylor participated in raids on Jaluit and Mili in the Marshalls during the first half of November in preparation for the Gilberts assault. During the actual landings and occupations, she protected the carriers from enemy aircraft and submarines during air operations.

After the Gilberts operation, Taylor steamed with the carriers during raids on the Marshall Islands. Near the end of these operations, she joined La Vallette and USS San Francisco (CA 38) to shoot down two of four enemy “Kates” (carrier-based torpedo bombers) which had attacked the task group just after noon on 4 December.

In December 1943 Taylor was ordered back to the United States for extensive yard work in San Francisco. Upon completion of repairs, she departed 1 February 1944, for the western Pacific via Pearl Harbor. Reaching Kwajalein in the Marshalls on 18 February 1944, Taylor escorted a convoy to Eniwetok Atoll where she joined the screen of carriers Coral Sea (CVE 57) and Corregidor (CVE 58). The group cleared Eniwetok on 29 February and headed for Pearl Harbor where it arrived on 3 March. After 12 days of training operations and repairs, Taylor departed Pearl Harbor as part of a screen for Sangamon (CVE 26), Suwannee (CVE 27), Chenango (CVE 28), and Santee (CVE 29), and arrived in Purvis Bay near Guadalcanal on 27 March. On 5 April she was ordered to steam for Milne Bay, New Guinea, for temporary duty with the Seventh Fleet.

In April 1944 Taylor joined Task Force 77 at Cape Sudest for the amphibious assault at Humboldt Bay. During the assault, she screened aircraft carriers and acted as fighter director until 24 April when she departed to escort a convoy back to Cape Sudest. For the rest of the month Taylor would be alongside Dobbin (AD 3) in Morobe Bay. She then

escorted a convoy from Cape Cretin to the Hollandia invasion area and acted as fighter director ship once more. Having returned to Cape Cretin on 7 May she would depart again two days later to screen a convoy of LSTs to the Russell Islands subgroup in the Solomons. On 13 May, Taylor reported back to the Third Fleet in the Solomons, dropped off the convoy, and departed again to screen another convoy to New Caledonia. Taylor returned to the Solomons in company with Destroyer Division 41 and arrived at her new base of operations, Blanche Harbor, from which she would operate in the northern Solomons and Bismarcks area from 27 May until early August, 1944. On the night of 28-29 May, Taylor patrolled off Medina Plantation on New Ireland while her sister ships bombarded the area to neutralize mobile coastal guns. In early June she conducted antisubmarine operations with Destroyer Division 41 which then joined Task Group 30.4 for similar activities. On 10 June Taylor depth-charged an enemy submarine, forcing it to the surface, where she damaged the sub heavily with 5 inch and 40-mm fire. When the submarine submerged again, Taylor made two more depth charge runs and netted a probable kill. She then returned to Blanche Harbor on 15 June and operated in that vicinity until the first week in August.

On 5 August Taylor changed operational command from the Third fleet to the Seventh Fleet. She began her duty with that fleet with a practice bombardment of the Aitape area of New Guinea late in August and a practice landing at Moffin Bay conducted on 6 September. This action was in preparation for the landings on the island of Morotai in the Netherlands East Indies on 15 September. Taylor would be in almost continuous action, acting as fighter director ship, as a unit of the invasion force's antisubmarine and antiaircraft screen, and escorting convoys to the landing area until mid-October.

Between 18 and 24 October, Taylor assisted in screening the second reinforcement echelon for the Leyte invasion. During a Japanese aerial assault on 24 October, Taylor laid a smoke screen to protect the convoy. That night, as the Battle of Surigao Strait opened, Taylor and the other destroyers of her division were anchored near the entrance of San Pedro Bay. Though she did not actually join the surface engagement, Taylor joined the support force on the following morning. After that, she patrolled the vicinity of Dinagat Island with a unit known as the "torpedo attack force." On 27 and 28 October she screened the escort carrier group TG 77.4. During this time she rescued a downed fighter pilot from the Enterprise (CV 6), and a seaman from Petrof Bay (CVE 80). All the while Taylor helped defend against almost continuous Japanese air attacks.

On 29 October, Taylor joined Task Group 77.2 and departed the Leyte Gulf area. After visits to Seeadler Harbor, Ulithi Atoll, and Kossol Roads, she returned to Leyte Gulf on 16

November. Between 16 and 29 November she continued to screen TG 77.2 and to patrol the eastern entrance to the Surigao Strait. During this time the task group came under heavy enemy air raids, climaxed by a large attack of kamikaze suicide planes and dive bombers on 29 November. Taylor claimed one sure kill and two assists during those raids. She then cleared Leyte Gulf for almost a month at Seeadler Harbor before returning to Leyte on 28 December to prepare for the invasion of Luzon.

On 4 January 1945 Taylor departed Leyte Gulf as part of the screen for the cruisers in the covering force. The following day Taylor spotted two torpedoes running toward her formation. After giving the submarine alarm, Taylor launched a depth-charge attack on the enemy submarine, a midget sub. Following those attacks she rammed the submarine, sinking it. During the allied approach to Lingayen Gulf and in the days following the landings, Taylor and her sister ships were subjected to a series of heavy air raids. Taylor assisted in splashing at least two of the attackers. Through the end of January, she screened the cruisers and the escort carriers on patrol west of Luzon.

From early February through mid-June 1945, Taylor operated out of Subic Bay in the Philippines. Between 13 and 18 February, she participated in an extensive bombardment of Corregidor and of the Mariveles Bay area of Luzon to support minesweeping operations, and to pave the way for an assault by airborne troops. Early in March Taylor's guns helped reduce enemy shore installations in support of the recapture of Zamboanga on Mindanao. She also covered the minesweepers while they cleared the way for the invasion force. On 15 March, Taylor returned to Corregidor where she bombarded caves on the island's western cliffs. On 26 March, the ship participated in the amphibious assault on Cebu Island providing heavy pre-landing shore bombardment along with Boise (CL 47), Phoenix (CL 46), Fletcher (DD 445), Nicholas (DD 449), Jenkins (DD 447), and Abbot (DD 629).

After a short two-day sightseeing visit to Manila, Taylor cleared the Philippines with Boise, Phoenix, two Australian warships, and four other American destroyers to support the amphibious landings in northeastern Borneo. En route, she captured five Japanese who were attempting to escape from Tawi Tawi on a raft. On 27 April, Taylor and her sister ships reached the vicinity of the invasion, Tarakan, a small island located just off the eastern coast of Borneo and north of Makassar Strait. There she operated until 3 May, delivering pre-invasion bombardment and call fire. On 3 May, two days after the actual landings, Taylor departed Tarakan to resume duty in the Philippines, where for the remainder of the month she conducted training operations.

In mid-June Taylor rejoined the Third Fleet at Leyte Gulf, and for the remainder of the war screened various units of that fleet. During the latter part of the month she screened aircraft carriers operating south of Okinawa which conducted air strikes on Sakishima Gunto. On 25 June she returned to Leyte Gulf and remained there until 8 July when she departed in the screen of Task Group 30.8, the logistics group for the fast carriers of Task Force 38. Taylor operated with TG 30.8 off Honshu until 3 August when she joined the screen of one of the fast carrier task groups, TG 38.4. On 8 August she resumed duty with the logistics group for five days. On the thirteenth Taylor rejoined TG 38.4 just in time to be a part of the last offensive actions directed at Japan.

When President Truman announced that Japan had accepted the peace terms, Admiral William Halsey in turn went on the radio to announce the news to the fleet. Ensign John C. McCarthy on Taylor later wrote, "There was no cheering, no clapping or back slapping. No hand shaking. Just stunned silence. Then one voice spoke for all: 'I can't believe it. But if it's true, what's next? Do we go home now?'"

No, Taylor would not be going home yet. Following the cessation of hostilities on 16 August 1945 Taylor patrolled off Honshu with the fast carriers. On 23 August she joined Nicholas and O'Bannon in the screen of USS Missouri (BB 63) for the purpose of entering Tokyo Bay on 23 August. They would be the first American warships to enter these waters since the war began.

How were these destroyers chosen for this honor? They were part of Destroyer Squadron 21 which had fought in almost every major battle in the Pacific war, beginning with Guadalcanal, with great distinction, often against incredible odds. Admiral William Halsey believed that Desron 21 was a key factor in holding the line in the Solomons until help arrived, an achievement of the admiral's that may have saved the Pacific war. He, thus, honored these remaining destroyers from the squadron to lead his armada into Tokyo Bay.

LTJG Carl Alfsen wrote about Taylor's time entering Japanese waters. "27 August 1945 ... At 0945 the Taylor, being on the port bow of the main body, was the first U.S. warship to enter SAGAMI WAN BAY since the outbreak of the war. At 1220 we dropped the hook only 1600 yards from the beach. The city of KAMAKURA was laying before our eyes. On the beach hundreds of Japanese were congregating in groups to witness the mighty fleet."

“28 August 1945 – The completion of our first full day in SAGAMI WAN entitled us to a movie on the forward [deck]. Com third fleet ordered all ships in the bay to turn on their anchor lights for the night – a new city had sprung up on the shores of HONSHU by the mere twist of a switch.”

“29 August 1945 – At 0500 in company with the NICHOLAS, O’BANNON, MISSOURI, and IOWA, we got underway for our entry into TOKYO BAY. As we turned into the channel leading from SAGAMI WAN to TOKYO BAY, we observed several white flags of surrender flying from Japanese gun emplacements. Mines were thick as flies, but we had the mine sweepers clearing the path for us.”

One of Taylor’s duties on the day of surrender was to pick up reporters on the dock and ferry them to the Missouri. Among these reporters were three Japanese correspondents. At this time Taylor had a mascot, Subic, a small yellowish dog that had been picked up in the Philippines. Talk around the ship was that Subic had been mistreated by the Japanese during the occupation. When Subic saw the Japanese, not knowing that hostilities had ended, he immediately ran up to one of them and bit him on the leg. Ensign John McCarthy, the officer responsible for seeing to the welfare of the correspondents, pulled Subic off the Japanese reporter. This is considered to be the last hostile action of World War II.

Taylor would operate in the Far East for a couple more months. One of her tasks, done in conjunction with Nicholas, was to transport 250 allied prisoners of war from various camps to a hospital ship. On 10 October she departed Japanese waters to return to the United States.

Arriving in San Francisco on 1 November, preparations were begun to deactivate the ship. On 31 May 1946 USS Taylor (DD 468) was decommissioned and placed in reserve at San Diego.

During the Pacific war, Taylor saw major combat action from the time she arrived in the Pacific in January 1943 until the end of hostilities in August 1945. These actions included Rennell Island, southern Solomons, New Georgia, Kula Gulf, Gilbert Islands, Hollandia, Western New Guinea, Leyte Gulf, Corregidor-Bataan, southern Philippines, Borneo, and Okinawa. Also included were escort and antisubmarine operations, shore bombardment, and anti-aircraft actions. For all this activity Taylor earned 15 battle stars and a place in history that will live on forever.