

History of USS TAYLOR (DD/DDE 468) — 1941–1969

USS Taylor DD/DDE 468 was a Fletcher class destroyer. Thus, the history of the Taylor begins with the history of the Fletcher class destroyers. But before we begin this history, we need to review various Naval Treaties of the 1920's and 1930's.

Naval Treaties

The Washington Naval Treaty, also known as the Five-Power Treaty, was signed in 1922 by the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Japan. It limited the construction of battleships, battlecruisers, and aircraft carriers by the signatories. Although the numbers of other categories of warships, including cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, were not limited by the treaty, those ships were limited to 10,000 tons displacement each.

Later naval arms limitation conferences sought additional limitations of warship building. The terms of the Washington treaty were modified by the London Naval Treaty of 1930 and the Second London Naval Treaty of 1936.

But these treaties would soon become useless. By the mid-1930's, Japan and Italy renounced the treaties, while Germany renounced the Treaty of Versailles which had limited its navy. Thus, naval arms limitation became increasingly difficult for the other signatories.

Fletcher Class Destroyers

The Fletcher class, named for Admiral Frank F. Fletcher, was the largest class of destroyer ordered by the United States government at the time. It would be one of the most successful and popular with the destroyer men themselves. Compared to earlier classes built for the Navy, they carried a significant increase in anti-aircraft weapons and other weaponry, which caused displacements to rise. Their flush deck construction added structural strength, although it did make them rather cramped, as less space was available below decks compared with a raised forecastle.

The Fletcher class was the first generation of destroyers designed after the series of Naval Treaties that had limited ship designs heretofore. The growth in the design was in part to answer a question that always dogged U.S. Navy planners, that being the long range required by operations in the Pacific Ocean. The first design inputs were in the fall of 1939 from questionnaires distributed around design bureaus and the Office of the

Chief of Naval Operations. The design parameters specified the armament desired of the next class of destroyers: five five-inch guns, twelve torpedoes and twenty-eight depth charges. Speed requirements varied from 35 to 38 knots. Shortcomings in the earlier Sims class, which were top heavy and needed lead ballast to correct this fault, caused the Fletcher design to be widened by 18 inches of beam. As with other previous U.S. flush deck destroyer designs, seagoing performance suffered. This was mitigated by deployment to the Pacific Ocean, which is relatively calm.

In order to achieve 38 knots with a 500-ton increase in displacement, shaft horsepower was increased from 50,000 to 60,000 compared to the previous Benson and Gleaves classes. The Fletchers featured air-encased boilers producing steam at 600 pounds per square inch with emergency diesel generators providing 80 kilowatts of electric power. The main gun armament was five dual-purpose 5 inch/38 caliber guns in single mounts, guided by a Mark 37 Gun Fire Control System, including a Mark 12 fire control radar and a Mark 22 height-finder (both replaced by the circular Mark 25 radar postwar) linked by a Mark 1A Fire Control Computer and stabilized by a Mark 6 8,500 rpm gyro. Ten 21 inch torpedo tubes were fitted in two quintuple centerline mounts, firing the Mark 15 torpedo. Initial design for anti-aircraft armament was a quadruple 1.1 inch/75 caliber gun mount and six .50 caliber machine guns. Experience during World War II showed the need for increased light AA weapons. Later, ships were typically fitted with two twin 40mm Bofors mounts plus seven single 20 mm Oerlikon weapons. Initially, anti-submarine armament comprised two depth charge racks at the stern, augmented by up to six K-gun depth charge throwers as the war progressed. Also, more anti-aircraft weapons would be added at the expense of some of the anti-submarine weapons.

During World War II nineteen Fletcher class destroyers were sunk. Six more were damaged, evaluated as constructive total losses and not repaired. After the war the remaining ships were decommissioned and put into reserve.

With the outbreak of the Korean War many Fletchers were returned to active duty. During this time 39 were refitted, reducing their overall main gun armament and the number of torpedo tubes to accommodate other weapons. A new ahead-throwing ASW weapon called Weapon Alpha was installed in many of the ships. Others carried trainable ASW Hedgehogs. Eighteen ships were redesignated as escort destroyers (DDE), optimized for anti-submarine warfare. These DDEs were reverted to destroyer (DD) designation in 1962.

USS Taylor DD/DDE 468

World War II

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 Choisseul 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 anti-aircraft 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.

Korean War

At the end of World War II, The Soviet Union and the United States divided Korea at the Thirty-Eighth Parallel. In 1948, a socialist state was established in the north under the communist leadership of Kim Il-sung, and a capitalist state in the south under the anti-communist leadership of Syngman Rhee. Both governments claimed to be the sole legitimate government of all of Korea and neither accepted the border as permanent. The conflict escalated into warfare when North Korean military forces, supported by the Soviet Union and China, crossed the border and advanced into South Korea on 25 June 1950. The United Nations Security Council authorized the formation of the United Nations Command and the dispatch of forces to Korea to repel what was recognized as a North Korean invasion. Twenty-one countries of the United Nations eventually contributed to the UN force, with the United States providing around 90% of the military personnel.

As tensions increased on the Korean peninsula, the Pentagon had another concern. The government was very worried about the potential danger developing as the Soviet Union increased its fleet of submarines. The United States Navy was limited in its anti-submarine warfare capability. An immediate answer was to recall to active duty many Fletcher Class destroyers. This would include Taylor, which was moved to the San Francisco Naval Shipyard on 9 May 1950. Three days later she began an extensive conversion to an escort destroyer, to be designated DDE 468 on 2 January 1951. The conversion included, among other things, removal of three of the five-inch gun mounts; installation of an anti-submarine warfare weapon, Weapon Alpha; and increasing the ship's speed to over forty knots. On 3 December 1951 Taylor was recommissioned at San Francisco, Commander Sheldon H. Kinney commanding.

On 3 February 1952 Taylor put to sea for a two-month shakedown period off San Diego. On 24 March she headed west to her new home port, Pearl Harbor, and arrived there on the Thirtieth. Following two months in the Hawaiian Islands, Taylor set out to return to the western Pacific for the first time since World War II. She stopped at Midway Island and Yokosuka, Japan, before joining Task Force 77 on 16 June to screen the carriers during air operations off the Korean coast.

During the five months that she spent in the Far East, Taylor drew several different assignments. Initially, she operated with the fast carriers and conducted bombardments of enemy-held positions along the coasts of Korea. During the second week in July, she returned to Yokosuka for upkeep, and then went to sea again for exercises which included several weeks of hunter-killer operations.

On 1 August, Taylor rejoined TF 77, and in September stood blockade watch off Wonsan for three weeks. Her blockade duty at Wonsan was far from passive, for on numerous occasions she was called upon to shell enemy shore batteries and lines of transportation, and to screen minesweepers during daily sweeps of the heavily-mined harbor.

Later, Don Wade, who served as a Seaman First Class aboard Taylor from 1951 through 1953, would give a vivid account of the Battle of Wonsan Harbor. He wrote, "Our job was to protect the mine sweeper, protect the marines on the island and keep the rail knocked out so the North Koreans couldn't ship supplies to the front line 60 miles below us. I was on the helm when they opened fire. I was given orders right full rudder and all ahead flank. The annunciator, Buddy Wedgeworth, took care of the flank. Captain Kinney went to the open bridge with his binoculars looking for enemy fire and couldn't locate their position. We moved to put up a smokescreen to bring the mine sweeper out to safety. She had to cut loose mining gear before she could move out. While this was going on, I went to my regular battle station in after steering in the near bottom rear of the ship. All I knew after that was shells hitting [nearby] and rocking the boat."

"Years later I found out the rest of the story. The mine sweeper was able to make it to safe water. The marines and South Koreans were on the island. We were out of range for the enemy to fire on us so they turned to the land. The marines tried to get air support but none came. So we went back in between the island and the mainland to give the marines protection. Now they are firing at us again. We got to the point of the minefield and were turning toward the mainland [when] we spotted their position in a cave. Now we could return fire. We fired two tracers to light up the sky. The third or fourth shell hit pay dirt and blew up the cave. We were lucky; we did not take a hit at all and that was our only battle."

Later in September Taylor headed south for a tour of duty on the Taiwan Strait Patrol during which she made a weekend port call at Hong Kong. In Late October, she returned north to the western coast of Korea, where she patrolled with two British warships, the

carrier HMS Glory and the cruiser HMS Birmingham. On 21 November, Taylor returned to Yokosuka, completing the first leg of her voyage home.

After conducting patrols in the western Pacific while en route to Hawaii, Taylor entered Pearl Harbor on 8 December. Following a month of leave and upkeep, she entered the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for a month of repairs. For the next three months, she conducted shakedown training in the Hawaiian Islands in order to integrate her replacements with the rest of the crew.

On 2 May 1953 Taylor exited Pearl Harbor to depart to the western Pacific again. She reached Yokosuka, Japan, on the Twelfth and, after visiting that port and Sasebo, put to sea to join a carrier task group built around Bairoko (CVE 115) and HMS Ocean (L 12) off the western coast of Korea. For the most part, she screened the carriers during air operations. However, on two occasions, she patrolled close to the enemy-held shoreline to discourage the North Koreans from attempting to take offshore islands held by United Nations forces.

Don Wade later wrote of another incident that took place at this time. "One day we were ordered to go look for a plane that went down in the Sea of Japan. The reason we were sent is because we were the fastest ship in the fleet. [Unfortunately] we were not able to locate the plane or pilot."

"On the way back to the fleet we spotted a san-pan floating in the water with five North Korean kids in it. They told us their village was attacked and their entire families were wiped out and they were fleeing North Korea. They went to a Christian school that gave them Korean Bibles and taught them about Christianity. They got in this small boat and went fishing for food. While they were out, a storm came and blew them further out to sea. We found them after five days at sea. The only possessions they had with them were their Bibles. We took them aboard and gave them showers, then offered them food in the chow hall. Before they would eat they blessed the food. It was astonishing they would pause to say the blessing when they hadn't ate in five days."

"Don't remember how long they stayed with us, about one to two weeks. Then the US government made us give them back to North Korea. It was a sad day for all of us; kids and sailors alike cried as we placed them in the Bosun's chair and lifted them to a bigger boat where they were handed back. I always wondered what happened to those kids."

Taylor returned to Sasebo on 1 June for eleven days of upkeep before heading for Okinawa and two weeks of anti-submarine warfare (ASW) training. On 25 June she returned to Japan at Yokosuka, but departed again almost immediately for duty with the Taiwan Strait Patrol. During that assignment, she visited Hong Kong once again, as well as Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where she trained sailors of the Taiwan Navy. Taylor returned to Yokosuka on 20 July and, after two days of voyage repairs, departed the Far East, arriving in Pearl Harbor on 31 July. Taylor's return to Pearl Harbor coincided very closely with the formal end to hostilities in Korea. The armistice came on 27 July 1953 when she had just passed the midpoint of her voyage, five days out of Yokosuka and four days from Pearl Harbor. On 1 August she entered the naval shipyard there for a three-month overhaul.

Taylor saw action in Korean waters during two deployments to the Far East. For her actions which occurred during the last two years of the Korean War, Taylor earned two battle stars.

Cold War

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.

Vietnam War

On 17 March Taylor got underway for the western portion of the South China Sea. She arrived off the coast of Vietnam on 21 March and patrolled there for the following five weeks. On 27 April Taylor headed back to Yokosuka for a brief stop, from 3 to 6 May, before returning to Hawaii, arriving at Pearl Harbor on 13 May. She then conducted local operations in Hawaiian waters until 6 December when she entered the drydock for another overhaul which was completed by mid-January 1966.

In August 1965 Taylor would stand duty as a recovery ship for the GEMINI space capsule. James O'Neill, who was LTJG on Taylor from 1965 to 1967, wrote a story for the Tin Can Sailor Quarterly Magazine, summer 2016 edition.

“The USS Taylor (DD 468) was assigned to be a GEMINI space capsule recovery ship during the period of 21-29 August 1965. In preparation for this assignment, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard installed a large recovery rig on the port side of the fantail. I guess the design philosophy was ‘just stick it somewhere’ because the rig increased the ship’s normal three-degree port list to five degrees.”

“As part of the GEMINI assignment the Taylor was placed on a four-hour standby for the entire period. The question now became how to manage liberty for the crew; i.e., just how much liberty can the crew have and still be available to get underway within four hours? The solution was obvious. We would set up a three-section watch bill and put a sign-out log on the quarterdeck. Any crewman going off the ship would be required to provide a contact phone number where he could be reached. Thus, liberty would be normal with the exceptions of the phone contact requirement – problem solved.”

“... during one of the first evenings of our assignment period the call came down. We were to get underway for a recovery ASAP. The XO rushed to the quarterdeck, grabbed the log book, and called the first number. He reached an organization called ‘Dial a Prayer.’ With a rotary dial phone [the only phone on the ship] in his hand and ‘Dial a Prayer’ as the initial response, the XO soon realized just how much trouble we were in. The XO quickly divided the sign-out log pages up and assigned pages to one or two others who ran off to find additional phones. After eliminating the listings that had the number for ‘Dial a Prayer,’ the result was some limited success in getting a bartender or two to roust people out of the base EM Club, a bar or two on Hotel Street, and a few other hangouts. In practical terms, there were just too many phone calls to make and not enough time to make them ...”

“We got underway with essentially an enhanced duty section, probably about one-half of the crew ... All in all, we were called out twice and each time we came home without a capsule or an astronaut. I do recall that on one of the missions the USS Chipola (AO 63) highlined the body of a deceased sailor over to us. We stored the body in the reefers. Almost needless to say, having a corpse stored in with the provisions became the source of a plethora of sick humor concerning the menu on the mess decks. We would have made Hannibal Lecter proud.”

On 7 February 1966 Taylor departed Pearl Harbor with the other ships of Destroyer Division 111, destination once again the western Pacific. Arriving at Yokosuka ten days later, she spent eight days undergoing voyage repairs. On 25 February she departed Yokosuka to join Task Group 70.4 off the coast of Vietnam the following day.

Taylor patrolled Vietnamese waters until 15 March, when she headed north to patrol the Taiwan Strait. While in Taiwanese waters, she paid a port visit to Kaohsiung. When her relief arrived on 12 April, Taylor departed for Hong Kong for a five-day visit.

On 21 April Taylor returned to Yankee Station, a point in the Gulf of Tonkin about 90 miles east of North Vietnam, from which carriers launched their strikes against the enemy, to resume operations in support of American and South Vietnamese forces ashore. These operations included "plane guarding," following close astern of the aircraft carrier during flight operations, and screening carriers from potential hostile intruders. Taylor was also assigned to "the Gunline," providing close-ashore or "brown water" naval gunfire support for ground forces between 28 April and 1 May. She then departed the South China Sea heading for Sasebo, Japan, for necessary maintenance. She conducted anti-submarine warfare drills from 26 May to 10 June before resuming patrols in the Taiwan Strait on 11 June. Clearing this area again on 5 July, she rejoined Task Group 70.4 on 7 July and entered Yokosuka the following day. After a week of preparations, she departed Yokosuka to return to Pearl Harbor, where she arrived on 22 July.

On 2 August Taylor began a tender availability period alongside Prairie (AD 15) which lasted through the end of the month. Following a short cruise for gunnery practice, Taylor commenced a restricted availability which lasted until late in November. During the first two weeks in December she made a round trip voyage to Pago Pago, American Samoa. Crossing the Equator, Taylor once again observed the ancient tradition of inducting the pollywogs into King Neptune's Court in order to become shellbacks. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 16 December for holiday leave and upkeep.

During the first three months of 1967, Taylor conducted local operations around Hawaii, made repairs, and generally prepared to return to the western Pacific in late spring. Following an Operational Readiness Inspection in mid-April, she departed Pearl Harbor on 18 April to join the Seventh Fleet in the Far East. On 25 April, she changed operational control from the First to the Seventh Fleet and three days later steamed into Yokosuka. Shortly after this, Taylor departed Yokosuka with USS Hornet (CVS 12), USS Davidson (DE 1045), and USS Walker (DD 517). The task group headed north around the northern end of Japan to the Sea of Japan. During this transit the American ships were shadowed by three different Soviet ships, ATR *Gidrograf*, *Besslednyy* (DD 022), and an older *Krupnyy* Class guided missile Soviet destroyer (DDG 025). At times the task group would be overflown by Soviet bombers. The Soviet ships appeared separately, but each tried to harass the Americans and slip through the screen in order to get near the carrier. The American destroyers took turns trying to keep between the carrier and the Soviet ships. It took a great deal of maneuvering and excellent ship handling by the officers of the deck to cover for the carrier.

James O'Neill, LTJG aboard Taylor 1965-1967, gives an example of the ship handling during this incident. "I was serving as a Junior Officer of the Deck on the USS Taylor (DD 468) during these encounters. I think the record shows that the Taylor did as much shouldering as the Walker, although it did not suffer the misfortune of a collision (or two)."

"I remember one sequence in which, during the course of shouldering, the Soviet ship backed down and swung astern of us from starboard just as we were coming up on the stern of the Davidson. I am not sure whether that Soviet ship was the DD 022 or the DDG 025 because we shouldered both ships, as well as a Soviet trawler, during this period. I do recall looking down onto the deckhouse of the Davidson and waiting for the crunch of metal on metal as we carved a big hatchet mark into its stern."

" 'All engines back emergency full, right hard rudder' came the conning order from skipper, Commander James D. Taylor. Just as the bow of the Taylor slid slightly to the right and opened a perceptible gap to the starboard of Davidson, 'shift your engines, shift your rudder' came the command, and the race was on. The Soviet ship headed down the port side of Davidson, the Taylor down the starboard side. When the bow of the Taylor cleared the Davidson by about a ship length (@440 ft), CDR Taylor brought his ship left under the bow of the Davidson and just to the starboard side of the Soviet Ship as the pair continued on toward the Yorktown. This kind of maneuvering went on for hours at a stretch. Scary stuff for a Junior Officer, but CDR Taylor thrived on that kind of challenge – his legendary seamanship—a story for another day. I am glad we stopped doing that."

"My review [of USS Taylor deck logs] showed, among many interesting entries, that our task force was overflown by two TU-16 Badgers on two occasions, once with a US A3D Sky Warrior escort. Entries also clearly show that our focus was on shouldering to prevent harassment of the carrier while following the rules of the road. Appropriate whistles sounded, and flag hoists were displayed ... no deck log captures the level of detail and the sheer excitement of the moment that I just described."

Joe Kuhar who was a radioman first class on Taylor in 1967 tells his story. "We left Yokosuka, Japan, and we were going around the northern tip of Japan, down to the Sea of Japan and right after we made the turn to go south on the Sea of Japan, we were only maybe like 200 miles from Vladivostok, Russia, ... one day on the horizon from – this looked like an old junker of a ship. It wasn't a military ship, but it had probably 20 big antennas on it and what they were doing was they were spying on us and trying with

their antennas here, trying to measure our radar frequencies, our radio frequencies and they followed us and harassed us, trying to get inside the circle of destroyers for a couple days.”

“And after we chased them off, then a Russian destroyer appeared and was playing the same kind of games, trying to break into the inner circle of destroyers. Well, while they were trying to do that, this Russian destroyer, all I remember it had a number 022 on it, collided with the USS Walker and so that Russian destroyer limped away and we continued on and the Walker sustained some structural damage, but nothing to stop it from continuing.”

“And the next day a Russian guided missile destroyer, 025, came on the scene and they tried, they tried the same maneuvers to get inside of our circle and Walker again had a collision with this Russian destroyer 025 ... So this Russian destroyer, this 025, sent a flashing light, international code flashing light, to our ship and wanted us to board their ship to check the damage that was done. So our commodore sent a message to the admiral who was riding in the aircraft carrier and relayed the message that they wanted us to board to check out their damage.”

“Well, I was lead radioman, so I was getting all of our portable radio equipment ready and we had an officer on board ship that spoke Russian, so we were getting this little boarding party ready to go aboard this Russian ship to see – check their damage out. Well, we had to wait for the okay from the admiral, and so we sent the message telling the admiral we see this flashing light request that we board their ship and the response from the admiral was since when can you copy international flashing light? So, we never did go aboard, never did go aboard.”

“And also during that period of time there was Russian like U2 planes, I think they might have been called Bears, and they would swoop down on the carrier to try to keep them from putting their planes in the air, and the anti-submarine carriers all they carry is fixed wing and helicopters, they don’t have jet fighters or nothing like that. So these planes, Russian planes, would be swooping around the area and we sent off to the Thirteenth Air Force in Japan and they’d send out some U.S. fighter planes and U.S. fighter planes would chase these Russian spy planes away.”

“There was never any shots fired or anything like that. They’d like fly underneath them and then fly up in the air and just like either going to move or we’re going to have a collision, that’s what it looked like.”

The story made the Honolulu Star Bulletin with the headline "Russian, U.S. Warships Collide in Japan Sea." In the story it reported "The Soviet vessel made several close approaches to the ships of the task group including at least two which came within 50 feet ... " One of those 50-foot approaches was off Taylor's starboard quarter.

During the first half of June, Taylor participated in exercises with units of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force and ships of the Republic of Korea Navy. This seemed tame after the encounters with the Soviet ships. After two days in port at Sasebo, she got underway on 19 June for her first line period on Yankee Station. Between 22 May and 25 June, she plied the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin, planeguarding for Hornet (CV 12) and providing gunfire support for Allied forces operating ashore.

On 27 June Taylor put into Subic Bay. After a tender availability at Subic Bay and a visit to Manila, she put to sea on 10 July to participate in SEATO exercise "Sea Dog." Between 26 and 28 July she visited Bang Saen on the Gulf of Thailand. After three more days on Yankee Station, from 28 July to 1 August, Taylor departed for Taiwan where she arrived on 3 August, remaining there until 15 August, when she headed back to the coast of Vietnam.

From 19 August to 11 September Taylor cruised along the Vietnamese coast providing Naval gunfire support as needed by the forces operating ashore. During this period, on 28 August, Taylor celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday while anchored in the mouth of the Saigon River just off Vung Tau. Grilled steaks and a giant birthday cake made everybody happy.

Taylor departed the coast of Vietnam on 12 September heading for Hong Kong and a five-day stop. She then returned for another tour of duty in the Gulf of Tonkin, after which she returned to Yokosuka on 11 October.

On 16 October Taylor departed Yokosuka to return to Hawaii, arriving at Pearl Harbor on 23 October. She then commenced her regular overhaul on 11 December. Repairs and modifications occupied her time through the first three months of 1968. Taylor completed overhaul on 22 March and conducted sea trials during the first week in April. Later, engineering problems forced the postponement of further operations until the end of the month. She then began preparations for refresher training which was conducted in May and June.

On 27 June Taylor departed Pearl Harbor for San Diego, California. She conducted operations, primarily gunnery drills at San Clemente Island from 3 to 11 July, after which she headed back to Hawaii. En route Taylor conducted shore bombardment exercises at Kahoolawe Island, then entered Pearl Harbor on 17 July.

Three weeks later, Taylor departed Pearl Harbor on 5 August setting a course for the Gulf of Tonkin. After fueling stops at Midway, Guam, and Subic Bay, she arrived on station off Vietnam on 21 August. After screening and plane guarding duty for Intrepid (CVS 11), she then departed Vietnamese waters with the carrier and destroyers Maddox (DD 731) and Preston (DD 795) for Sasebo, Japan. During this movement, Taylor and Intrepid swapped some personnel. The general purpose was to see how the other half lived. The Intrepid personnel got a much bumpier ride aboard Taylor than did the Taylor personnel on the carrier.

Following a short stay in Sasebo, Taylor returned to the Gulf of Tonkin on 5 September for air and surface surveillance as well as anti-submarine warfare exercises and planeguarding for the carriers. On 19 September Taylor moved in closer to the coast to provide naval gunfire in support of troops ashore. This duty continued until 6 October, when she departed the combat zone to return to Subic Bay for repairs, supplies, and ammunition. On 20 October Taylor returned to the coast of Vietnam, again providing naval gunfire support for forces ashore.

This line period was followed by visits to Cebu City and Subic Bay in the Philippines, after which she resumed duty on the gunline during late November and early December.

On 4 December Taylor departed the combat zone with the task group and set a course through the Luzon Strait to Yokosuka, where she arrived on 12 December. Christmas in Yokosuka was a lonely time for everybody. Taylor would return to Yankee Station by New Year's Day 1969.

In mid-January 1969, Taylor departed Vietnamese waters for the last time. Before departing Subic Bay, the crew was given two options: going straight back to Pearl Harbor or extending the cruise in order to go to Australia and New Zealand. By a nearly unanimous vote, the crew opted for extending the cruise. Taylor then departed Subic Bay to visit Manus Island; Wollongong and Melbourne, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; and Pago Pago, American Samoa. Of course, this would entail crossing the Equator and once again, according to ancient tradition, the pollywogs were treated

“royally” by the shellbacks. After all this, Taylor arrived back in Pearl Harbor on 28 February.

For her actions in the Vietnam War Taylor earned six battle stars, a fitting last tribute to one of the United States Navy’s most gallant fighting ships.

Final Decommissioning

In May 1969 a board of inspection and survey looked Taylor over with a critical eye and determined that she was unfit for further naval service. Her years of service to her country had finally worn her out. Early in June Taylor was moved to San Diego, California, and was decommissioned. USS Taylor (DD/DDE 468) was stricken from the Navy list on 2 July 1969, and transferred to the Italian Navy at the same time. The crew was dressed in whites as the ensign came down for the last time and the quarterdeck watch left the ship. The Italian crew then went aboard the now designated Italian ship Lanciere (D 560). She would serve Italy until January 1971, when she was decommissioned and struck from the Italian Navy list. Subsequently, she was cannibalized to maintain her sister ship still serving in the Italian Navy.

Epilogue

Taylor was a magnificent ship. And she was a lucky ship. For all her actions in World War II her crew suffered no casualties, nor any combat fatalities during her entire lifetime of service. She suffered more damage from storms than from combat.

It took a special breed of man to serve in the tin can Navy, and Taylor’s officers and men were every bit of that special breed. Nine of her officers would achieve flag rank. Taylor and her crew received special recognition in her Navy Unit Citation. Admiral William Halsey had two other ways of recognizing Taylor for her service. He ordered that Destroyer Squadron 21, which included Taylor, to escort USS Missouri into Tokyo Bay for the Japanese surrender. Taylor was, in fact, the first US Navy ship to enter Sagami Wan on 2 September, 1945. Further, Halsey wrote, “It was a privilege to have had the USS Taylor under my command in the South Pacific, and later as a part of the Third Fleet. She admirably performed every mission assigned to her and her officers and men may be justly proud of their fine record.”

The Taylor crew, as well as their families, indeed, should be justly proud of their service aboard that ship. And while the Navy Hymn was not written for Taylor people specifically, the fourth verse seems very appropriate.

O Trinity of love and power!
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.