
INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A STORY SHARED BY 4300 USS HENRY W. TUCKER SAILORS

These men over a period of 28 years have one thing in common. They all served on the Destroyer **USS Henry W. Tucker (DD/DDR 875)**. This narrative could just as easily be the story of many thousands of other US Navy sailors who shared many of the same experiences and served in hundreds of Destroyers, Destroyer Escorts and many other types of ships in the Western Pacific during the cold war years after WWII. In a very real sense, because she was continuously assigned to the Western Pacific, the **USS Henry W. Tucker** was involved in almost all the Asian portion of the cold war years.

It is a labor of love that I have for the experience of being a part of this special chapter in US Naval History. That chapter is a small part of what is affectionately known as "Tin Can Sailor". I was one of those sailors aboard **USS Henry W Tucker (DD/DDR 875)**, a GEARING Class destroyer. The GEARING Class destroyer was conceived as the last new development of the destroyer during World War II. It was basically a "stretched by 14 feet" SUMNER Class destroyer to allow more seaworthiness, more range and more room to house the coming myriad of new electronic and propulsion gear. All Gearing Class destroyers and **TUCKER** was only one of 98 of them, have had many common experiences and there are over 425,000 men who can claim to have been in a GEARING Class Destroyer. A Table of GEARING Destroyers has been included as Appendix II to summarize the service of all 98 of those ships.

HOW THIS NUMBER OF SAILORS WAS ESTIMATED

It is a reasonable assumption that the average length of duty in **TUCKER** for a sailor is approximately 2 years. (This is just a guess, but it is based on a random sampling of 50 sailors from the USS Henry W. Tucker website crew list.) Therefore, **TUCKER's** 28 years of navy service divided by 2 is 19. The crew compliment has always been approximately 230 sailors. Therefore: 19 times 230 = **4370 sailors**. Probably the same can be said of all 98 GEARING class destroyers. Using these assumptions, 98 Gearings with an average of 30 years of service comes to over 425,000 sailors. Having shared these calculations, I have been told by others that my crew estimations may be too low. The real numbers may be as much as 15% more.

WHY THIS BOOK WAS NAMED HACHI NANA GO

USS Henry W. Tucker (DD/DDR 875), although beginning her commission as a Navy ship on the Atlantic side of the United States in 1945, was soon transferred to the West Coast. Becoming a proud member of the SEVENTH Fleet, she made 18 trips to the Far East covering almost all of her 28 years. Although she made many trips to Japan during her US Navy commission, for three of those deployments she was home-ported for about 2 years each in Yokosuka, Japan. She was heavily involved in 2 major wars (Korea and Vietnam) and numerous crises throughout the Far East, including Laos, China, Taiwan, Russia and Korea.

There were many nicknames for **TUCKER** throughout her history, but there is only one nickname that stands out as universal to her 28 years of service. Most all sailors who served in **TUCKER** had the experience of visiting Japan. It was there when going ashore one would hear the familiar "**Hachi Nana Go**" native Japanese would call **TUCKER** sailors. This phrase, in Japanese, means 875.

GEARING CLASS DESTROYERS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC VIEW

All 98 of these Destroyers were built in the late stages or very shortly after WWII and most were in service until the mid-1970's, and had approximately 30 years of naval service. Sixty of those destroyers were subsequently sold to other navies of the world and continued to be in service for another 15 to 20 years. Take note of *Appendix II* table of GEARING destroyers. This table chronicles the origin through the final disposition of each of those ships.

Presently there are only two GEARING class destroyers available in the United States for public view as Museum ships.

USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. (DD 850) is at Fall River Massachusetts and **USS Orleck (DD 886)** is available for public display in Lake Charles Louisiana.

There are four others that may be viewed elsewhere.

The former **USS Rush (DD 714)** was sold to South Korea and now is on display at Jinhae South Korea as a museum ship. Jinhae lies at the southern tip of South Korea and is the site of the only US Naval base in South Korea. The former **USS Hawkins (DD 873)** was in service until 1999 with the Taiwanese Navy, then the forward superstructure (Pilothouse and Combat Information Center) was removed and moved to become a shore based museum. The former **USS Power (DD 839)** was the last Taiwanese Gearing class destroyer to be decommissioned in 2005. She was towed to a temporary location where plans have been made to convert her to a museum ship.

INTRODUCTION

Finally, the former **USS Steinkaker (DD 863)** was sold to Mexico and at the time of this writing is still in service. It is used to combat drug smuggling and as a Mexican Naval Cadet training ship. If you happen to be in the docks area of San Francisco at the right time, you may be able to get a glimpse of her. She has been making a training voyage to San Francisco every year.

THERE WERE OTHER SHIPS NAMED TUCKER

The first **USS Tucker (DD 57)** was the lead ship of her class of destroyers. The ship was named after Commodore Samuel Tucker, USN, who was a Captain during the American Revolution. General George Washington gave Samuel Tucker his commission in 1776 when the US Navy was formed. This ship was commissioned 11 April 1916 and served in the U.S. Navy until 16 May 1921. In 1926 this ship was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard where she served until 5 June 1933.

The second **USS Tucker (DD 374)** was a MAHAN Class destroyer. She was also named after Commodore Samuel Tucker and her hull number was **DD 374**. Built in 1936, she unfortunately struck a mine near the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific on 4 August 1942. Attempts to tow her to port were unsuccessful and she sank.

In 1942, the JOHN C. BUTLER Class Destroyer Escort **DE 377** was to be built and assigned the name Henry W. Tucker, but the ship was cancelled. Therefore, the name Henry W. Tucker was given to the Gearing class destroyer **DD 875** two years later.

There were also two Liberty ships. The **Liberty ships** were cargo ships built in the United States during World War II. They were British in conception but adapted by the U.S.A., they were cheap and quick to build and came to symbolize U.S. wartime industrial output. **These ships were operated by the Merchant Marine but were NOT "Man-O-Wars"**.

The first of these was **SS Henry St. George Tucker**, Hull number **37**. This ship was launched in February 1942 and remained in service until it was scrapped in 1966. Henry St. George Tucker was a congressman from West Virginia and participated in the formulation of the Constitution of the United States.

The second was **SS Thomas T. Tucker**, Hull number **269**. This ship was launched in August 1942, but ran aground in November 1942. Thomas Tudor Tucker was a former Treasurer of the United States, having been appointed by Thomas Jefferson.

In this document, **USS Henry W. Tucker (DD/DDR 875)** will be referred to most often simply as **TUCKER**. The Navy biography of the ship's namesake Henry Warren Tucker is included in "THE MAN" section.

A NOTE ABOUT DATES AND TIMES USED IN THIS HISTORY

The International Date Line at the 180th meridian is located just to the west of Midway Island. Midway was many times the fuel stop along the route that US Navy ships often took while heading to the Far East from the west coast or returning home. When crossing the International Dateline going west, ships move up a day on their calendar. This means losing the next day of the week by jumping the calendar ahead. When the ship returns to the Continental United States (CONUS) the opposite is true. Ships move their calendar back and gain a day of the week. For example, **TUCKER** could lose a Tuesday going to Westpac and six months later could celebrate two Saturdays on the way home.

Dates used in this document are generally the local date. However, in some cases the other or home date may have been used. This may happen when a newspaper article is mentioned, or a cited important event occurred, or even a date mentioned in a letter from home to a Tucker sailor.

Times are all written as military time; i.e. 24-hour time. Therefore 1100 is 11:00 AM, 2400 is midnight etc.

A NOTE ABOUT COMMAND ACRONYMS USED IN THIS HISTORY

This document is liberally sprinkled with acronyms used to identify the Commodore of various groups of ships. Some of the more rare groups are actually identified in the text, but many are repeated. I will mention a few so you will get the drift of how these acronyms were constructed:

COMDESDIV 52:	Commodore Destroyer Division 52	(Usually a Captain)
COMDESRON 3:	Commodore Destroyer Squadron 3	(Usually a Captain)
COMCRUDESGRU:	Commodore Cruiser Destroyer Group	(Usually a Rear Admiral)
COMCARDIV 2:	Commodore Carrier Division 2	(Usually a Rear Admiral)
COMSEVENTHFLEET	Commander Seventh Fleet	(Usually a Vice Admiral)

INTRODUCTION

A task group is a temporary ship grouping for a specific purpose or mission, although some task groups are semi-permanent. Taiwan Patrol is an example of one of these long-standing task forces. They are usually headed by SOPA (Senior Officer Present Afloat). Within the Seventh Fleet, these groups are formed and numbered as typically 70.1.2 or some such numbered designation. Upon completion of the mission, the task force is dissolved and the member ships are re-assigned to resume other duties. If remaining at sea for training exercises or steaming independently, the ship may not be part of a new task group.

A NOTE ABOUT RANKS AND RATES USED IN THIS HISTORY

Throughout the 28-year tenure of **TUCKER** (and even today) Naval Officer Ranks from Ensign to Admiral have not changed much. Specialties among the officer ranks are not indicated by their rank, only by their assigned duties.

The same cannot be said of enlisted rates. As weapons, propulsion systems, sonar, radar and communications became increasingly more common and complex, the need for more specialized, lengthy and sophisticated training of enlisted personnel became apparent. Many new rates were introduced along with the methods to care for and repair the newly commissioned equipment. Along with those new rates came a new set of testing criteria for advancement.

At least partly due to the new technical rating specializations, many times, **TUCKER** sailors over the years were loaned temporarily to other ships to assist in the repair or tuning of the equipment of their specialization. Methods of travel to and from other ships varied in circumstance. It could have been helicopter transfer via "horse collar", via whaleboat, or highline by "bosun" chair. This sharing of technical help also occurred sometimes when the ship was in port. That would possibly mean that an individual technician may voluntarily give up some liberty time to support the technicians of another ship in need. It is with pride for all the **TUCKER** crew that one of their own can be of service to other ships in their own quest for total readiness.

Throughout this history, various individuals have been identified as part of a particular episode or story. The rank or rate used in this history is generally the one held by the sailor at the time if known. Subsequent advancements in rank or rate are not mentioned.

This historical narrative was put together based upon many stories and various shipmates' attempts, particularly the Commanding Officers, to chronicle the **TUCKER** history. Individual diaries, three other published books about **USS Henry W. Tucker** and a lot of research on various websites dedicated to individual US Navy ships, the Korean and Vietnam Wars and the US Navy were used for this compilation. Note that a table of sources of more than 300 images and photos used in this narrative has been included.

A **TUCKER** sailor's life was certainly not all liberty ports and fun and games. Most monotonous days were filled with drills, demanding and sometimes dangerous mission requirements, training and practice drills with other ships and constant vigilance while at sea. It goes without saying that the harder and longer you work, the more you enjoy the short but appreciated free time. There were numerous times **TUCKER** was in harm's way. Fortunately, **TUCKER** was not a casualty of her many perilous missions. Other ships were not as fortunate.

I hope that all sailors who read this history will come away with awakened long stashed away fond memories of their time aboard ship. A time that in retrospect, was instrumental in shaping the character of the remainder of our lives. I know it has done that for me. For those of you who have family members who were a part of this chapter of history, I believe you may come to an appreciation of the events and dedication to duty that shaped his life.

REMEMBERING YOUR NAVY DAYS

The following is from an Email I received that puts a sailor's life changing experiences into perspective. The author is Captain Lew Thames, U.S. Navy (Ret). Among other ships, he served in **USS Taylor (DDE 468)** and **USS Carpenter (DD 825)**. He then served as Commanding Officer in **USS Richard B. Anderson (DD 786)**.

I WAS A SAILOR ONCE

I liked standing on the bridge wing at sunrise with salt spray in my face and clean ocean winds whipping in from the four quarters of the globe - the ship beneath me feeling like a living thing as her engines drove her swiftly through the sea.

I liked the sounds of the Navy - the piercing trill of the boatswain's pipe, the syncopated clangor of the ship's bell on the quarterdeck, the harsh squawk of the IMC and the strong language and laughter of sailors at work.

INTRODUCTION

I liked Navy vessels - nervous darting destroyers, plodding fleet auxiliaries and amphibs, sleek submarines and steady solid aircraft carriers.

I liked the proud names of Navy ships: Midway, Lexington, Saratoga, Coral Sea, Antietam, Valley Forge - memorials of great battles won and tribulations overcome.

I liked the lean angular names of Navy "tin-cans" and escorts - Barney, Dahlgren, Gurke, Mullinix, McCloy, Damato, Leftwich, Mills - mementos of heroes who went before us. And the others - San Jose, San Diego, Los Angeles, St. Paul, Chicago - named for our cities.

I liked the tempo of a Navy band blaring through the topside speakers as we pulled away from the oiler after refueling at sea.

I liked Liberty Call and the spicy scent of a foreign port.

I even liked the never-ending paperwork and all-hands working parties as my ship filled herself with the multitude of supplies, both critical and mundane in order to cut ties to the land and carry out her mission anywhere on the globe where there was water to float her.

I liked sailors, officers and enlisted men from all parts of the land, farms of the Midwest, small towns of New England, from the cities, the mountains and the prairies, from all walks of life. I trusted and depended on them as they trusted and depended on me - for professional competence, for comradeship, for strength and courage. In a word, they were "shipmates"; then and forever.

I liked the surge of adventure in my heart, when the word was passed: "Now set the special sea and anchor detail - all hands to quarters for leaving port," and I liked the infectious thrill of sighting home again with the waving hands of welcome from family and friends waiting pier side.

The work was hard and dangerous; the going rough at times; the parting from loved ones painful, but the companionship of robust Navy laughter, the "all for one and one for all" philosophy of the sea was ever present.

I liked the serenity of the sea after a day of hard ship's work, as flying fish flitted across the wave tops and sunset gave way to night.

I liked the feel of the Navy in darkness - the masthead and range lights, the red and green navigation lights and stern light, the pulsating phosphorescence of radar repeaters - they cut through the dusk and joined with the mirror of stars overhead. And I liked drifting off to sleep lulled by the myriad noises large and small that told me that my ship was alive and well and that my shipmates on watch would keep me safe.

I liked quiet mid-watches with the aroma of strong coffee - the life-blood of the Navy permeating everywhere.

INTRODUCTION

And I liked hectic watches when the exacting minuet of haze-gray shapes racing at flank speed kept all hands on a razor edge of alertness.

I liked the sudden electricity of "General quarters, general quarters, all hands man your battle stations," followed by the hurried clamor of running feet on ladders and the resounding thump of watertight doors as the ship transformed herself in a few brief seconds from a peaceful workplace to a weapon of war - ready for anything.

And I liked the sight of space-age equipment manned by youngsters clad in dungarees and sound-powered phones that their grandfathers would still recognize.

I liked the traditions of the Navy and the men who made them. I liked the proud names of Navy heroes: Halsey, Nimitz, Perry, Farragut, John Paul Jones and Burke. A sailor could find much in the Navy: comrades-in-arms, pride in self and country, mastery of the seaman's trade, an adolescent could find adulthood.

In years to come, when sailors are home from the sea, they will still remember with fondness and respect the ocean in all its moods - the impossible shimmering mirror calm and the storm-tossed green water surging over the bow and then there will come again a faint whiff of stack gas, a faint echo of engine and rudder orders, a vision of the bright bunting of signal flags snapping at the yardarm, a refrain of hearty laughter in the wardroom and chief's quarters and mess decks.

Gone ashore for good they will grow wistful about their Navy days, when the seas belonged to them and a new port of call was ever over the horizon.

Remembering this, I will stand taller and say,

"I WAS A SAILOR ONCE AND I WOULD DO IT AGAIN."

More detail about where this **TUCKER** historical information originated can be found in the "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS" section, where I have given credit to all who graciously helped me put this together. Also, the Sources of images used in this history (Appendix II) lists the person or Web location of all the photos, drawings and maps. Finally, the section called "STATISTICS" has been put together to help summarize the 28 years **TUCKER** was in service to the United States Navy.

I hope you enjoy reading this history as much as I enjoyed organizing and writing it.

Gary T. O'Neil ET3, 1963-1966,

Editor