

Turner Times

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

MARCH, 1999

TURNER'S FINAL DAYS

Editor's Note — This is an important anniversary year for us and for Turner. It was 30 years ago that the decision was made to decommission DD/DDR-834 and sell our proud ship for scrap. This is a eyewitness account of her last days.

**By Raymond De Castro, LT.,
'68-'69**

Sometime during the spring of 1969, by reviewing CINCLANTFLT's deployment schedule, I learned that the Turner was scheduled to go to WestPac to provide naval gunfire support services off the coast of Vietnam. Most of the junior officers did not really think much of it at the time since those long range schedules tended to undergo many changes before ships actually received their assignments.

Later, we began to take the possibility of WestPac a lot more seriously after we received orders to participate in gunfire training at the facility off Culebra Island near Roosevelt Roads during the month of July 1969. About the same time, I recall that we received a visit from the Navy's Bureau of Inspections and Survey in the person of Rear Admiral John Bulkeley, the officer who transported General Douglas MacArthur out of the Philippines and was later featured in the movie "They Were Expendable". I do not recall what the result of the Insurv inspection was; probably I was too junior to be informed of something like that.

I do recall that in mid or late August 1969, Capt. Chertavian informed the wardroom that Turner would be decommissioned. The readers might

remember that as a result of President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization of the war, the U. S. armed forces began a period of consolidation and I assume that Turner got caught up in that.

Needless to say, I was shocked to hear the news since the Turner had just won a Battle Efficiency and a ASW Award for DESRON Eight. Also, I had just been assigned as the ship's CIC Officer. I was looking forward to performing that job in what undoubtedly was going to be a challenging deployment which would have afforded me the opportunity to work with one of the most skilled Navy men I had ever met, RDC Termini. Indeed, throughout my service on the Turner I was privileged to work with many true professionals such as, RMC (later Warrant Officer) Sullivan and RM2 Matheson. There were so many radiomen, signalmen, ET's, and radarmen aboard Turner who were "first class" in work ethic and demeanor, that I only wish I could remember their names now so I could thank them all by name for the help they gave me, an inexperienced ensign.

I remember watching her moving slowly out of the Mayport turning basin. Then, something made me run to my car and drive out to the carrier docks and walk to the end of them so that I could stand and watch her as she was towed away

The three or four weeks prior to Turner's decommissioning are still a blur to me. I remember that the ship became a beehive of activity. Much more so than when a ship is getting ready for deployment because we had to remove everything of any use, pack it and send or take it to wherever we were directed to do so. Equipment, ammunition, publications, the ship's records and files, all went. In addition, of course, officers and men had all to be reassigned to new duty stations. I am sure that this period of time must have been really hectic for Capt. Chertavian and the XO, LCDR Ralph Doe. It was such a busy time that try as hard as I can, I can not recall how those last weeks passed, nor what I did during them.

I do remember the Captain informing me that I would remain behind with a dozen or so men to watch over the Turner until she was turned over to the mothball fleet. I do not know why I was chosen; perhaps it was just because it was convenient since I was to be re-assigned to duty as Chief Staff and Operations Officer for Commander Destroyer Division 82 right at our homeport of Mayport, Florida. In retrospect, either LTJG Carl Mousseau, the Main Propulsion Assistant, or LTJG David Spaustat, the First Lieutenant, might have been better choices because of their billets; but, the Captain perhaps figured that I could hardly get into too much trouble since we were to be tied up next to the destroyer

(Continued on page 4)

CAPTAIN ALBERT CARLSON, C.O., 1948-1950, DIES AT AGE 86

I am responding to a letter you sent my father, Capt. Albert Carlson (USN Ret.) asking for information for the Turner Times. I am sorry to tell you that my father died February 8, 1998, after a long battle with cancer. We buried him at Arlington National Cemetery in October and a number of his Annapolis classmates and their wives attended (Dad graduated with the class of '35 and was 86 when he died). It was a moving experience -- a whole company of sailors, an honor bank, a caisson drawn by four pure white horses accompanied by a horse and rider, taps and a flag ceremony. I am sorry Dad didn't have a chance to participate in the Turner Times. I know the Navy was very important to him and he was happiest aboard ship. Thank you for including him in your efforts.

-- E. Katherine Dashiell

Final Roll Call

We have learned since our last issue that these shipmates have answered the call of the Supreme Commander:

Albert, Vincent		
Atkinson, Virgil		'55
Erlenbach, Peter	GM3	'52-'55
Green, William		
Howard, Edgar C.	HMCN	'60
Mills, Sr., William		
Obermaier, Fred		
O'Keefe, Francis		'55
Phelps, Donald	RM3	'45-'46
Stanowski, Walter E.	GM1	'60

FROM THE OF THE PREZ

I hope that you and your families had a Happy Chanukah, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. It is the wish of myself and the entire USS Turner Association that you and your families have the best new year ever in 1999. I would encourage all of you, once again, to reach out to a fellow shipmate to join us at the next reunion in August. I'm quite sure it's going to be one of the best reunions ever, but we need the participation and input of each and every one of you.

In April, 1798, the Congress established the Department of the Navy, and authorized the construction of a series of frigates. Our forefathers, in their infinite wisdom, knew that a strong Navy was needed to protect our coastline and surrounding waters. Control of the seas is vital to our well-being, and that America needed a fleet able to deal with any adversary. It is not by accident that not one of the past century's wars was fought on our shores. The U.S. Navy today is, and must always remain, "second to none." The more constrained access to overseas bases, ports, and airfields becomes, the more we are likely to depend on our Navy. Secure sea-based forces have become a stabi-

lizing ingredient in our strategic nuclear deterrence.

In order to maintain a strong Navy we must have good personnel. Patriotism is not something to be scoffed at, nor is honesty negotiable. Respect for service and sacrifice must not be allowed to wither away. Whenever the chance presents itself we should reach out to today's young people with the concepts embodied in naval service, i.e., honor, courage, and commitment.

As the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, has written on the 200th Anniversary of the Navy, "The future is bright." America's Navy is still sailing proudly into a bright future!

—Harry

P.S. May I extend the best wishes of all USS Turner personnel to our shipmate, Mr. Arthur Breen, to his wife, and to their son Arthur, Jr. Arthur, Jr. recently underwent a successful heart transplant operation. He had waited nine months for a donor heart while confined to a New York hospital. Young Arthur is doing well, has returned to work, and is to be married this coming April.

HELP/SOS/ MAY DAY

We have 900 odd names on our roster and mailing list. This tells us there are tons of good tales among us to share about our TURNER days: sea stories (only a shred of truth is required), memories, fascinating careers or whatever. We need to hear about them from YOU. If we are to keep the *TURNER TIMES* afloat, and worth reading, we need your input. You don't need to be a Mark Twain to write for our newsletter. If you kept a TURNER log book, you can write for the *TURNER TIMES*. Anyway, you probably won't recognize your prose after we mess with it to fit. So, please take pen or word processor in hand and send something to me: Mel Edwards. There are several of you who have called either Pete Varley or me and told us those wonderful stories. All we ask is that you put pen to paper (or type-writer key or personal computer) and mail us those stories so we can all share your memories.

Oh, by-the-way, the blank column below is the one you didn't write and the one on the right is the one that did get written.

Turner Times Staff Additions

W. T. Door and C. W. Closet have joined the *Turner Times* staff. You will be seeing their by-line from time to time. While most of us, if any, have not read them extensively, we know them well.

I WAS THERE THE FIRST TIME!!!

By George Crosson, QM3, '60-'62

When John Glenn recently returned to space, to the delight of all us "Senior Citizens", those of us who were aboard the Turner back in February of 1962 could also reminisce about his first trip into space. This was the first Mercury capsule flight scheduled to orbit the earth and the Turner was assigned to one of three drop zones in the Atlantic.

These were fledgling early days of the space program and we were dealing with low-tech concepts in capsule retrieval aboard the Turner. A davit that swung out over the side, equipped with a hook to grasp the top of the capsule, was out cutting edge technology. A bobbing capsule being retrieved by a bouncing and lurching destroyer presented a challenge to the crew and some serious consternation about its effectiveness.

We were part of a group of 20,000 people that were involved in this mission. The Turner was stationed off of the Bermuda tracking station, which was a backup for Cape Canaveral. As the liftoff time approached, there were countless delays. Problems occurred with the Atlas booster and the Mercury capsule, the seas turned angry and menacing, and the launch went through a series of delays. The Turner headed for Bermuda while we waited for abating winds and calmer seas.

Finally the "Go" was given and the Atlas booster lifted the Mercury capsule into space. Glenn's flight lasted for three orbit when the decision was made for reentry. A one second error on Glenn's part would cause a five mile dispersion error in the landing zone where the fleet was waiting,

so accuracy in timing was critical.

Unfortunately, the capsule didn't land in the Turner's area, but our high-tech engineering paid off, as the destroyer Noa (DD-841) made the first and only retrieval ever made by a destroyer. When John Glenn blew the side hatch of Friendship Seven, he stated how happy he was to be back with people, and in this case, destroyer people.

Thirty-six years later, as we perceive our own heads getting balder and our hair turning grayer, as John's has, we can really identify with this American hero – Well Done, John Glenn!!

Mel Edwards adds:

I was on the ship when we started Project Mercury. It was 59 I think. It could have been late 58. The first thing they did was test the parachute system. They made some capsules out of boiler plate and pushed them out of a C-130. The squadron was equipped with primitive direction finders. So, out would go the capsule, on would come the beacon, off would go the ships to charge up to this huge semi-floating parachute to wrap it around a screw or suck it into the water main injection. When none of these disasters occurred we tried to pick the capsule up with a boat davit, which we did, but.... Keystone Cops comes to mind. The good part of this project was spending a lot of time in St. Thomas (which had no tour ships and only two hotels) and San Juan, a good liberty port.

LAST DAYS

(Continued from page 1)

tender in our own homeport. In any case, he was probably counting on the Senior Chief and the men he assigned to me to keep me straight and the Turner safe.

When the final day came on Friday, 26 September 1969, I think a ceremony was held early that morning. I really don't have a recollection of the ceremony, but one must have been conducted. All officers and men were gone by the time I signed myself out (since I was the only officer left aboard) from the USS Turner at 1200 local time. I still have the original of my orders, which read, in part:

"Your orders are hereby modified in accordance with BUPERS message 252347Z SEP 69 to read as follows:

Upon decommissioning of USS Turner (DD-834) and when directed detached, report by letter to INACTSHIP-FAC, Orange, Texas for temporary duty for about three weeks at Mayport, Florida instead of report to COMCRUDES-FLOT TWELVE for temporary duty. Upon completion of temporary duty and when directed, carry out the remainder of your basic orders. Provisions remain."

According to the fitness report that I later received from the Commanding Officer of the Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility, Orange, Texas, I was on "Temporary Duty in Charge of Security of Turner (ex-DD834) moored at Mayport, Florida awaiting tow".

Looking back now, it seems strange that actually I signed my own orders that morning of 26 September 1969 "by direction". I guess that by that time, the XO had already been detached from the ship, leaving me as the only officer to assist in the Ship's Office's tasks.

I have been unable to find the roster and call list of the men assigned as the last crew of the Turner, which I had made up shortly after the decommissioning. I know that I kept it for a long time thereafter but can not now locate it. In any case, I do remember the Senior Chief Petty Officer who was of a great

deal help to me during the next three weeks. I am sure that if I saw a roster now I would recognize his name. I believe he was either an MMCS or an ENCS.

The three weeks passed by us rather slowly. I remember that walking through the ship was an eerie experience; where there had been activity, there was now silence. The only things that remained of that live ship were just a few scraps of paper lying about in the interior spaces. During one of my walks through the ship, I managed to salvage from the Ship's Office a book entitled "U.S. Destroyer Operations in World War II" by Theodore Roscoe. The XO before LCDR Doe, LCDR Vincent P. McDonough used to select excerpts from the book from time to time and insert them into the Plan of the Day. I still have that book.

We quickly set up a watch schedule and a sounding routine, set up the quarterdeck watches as usual on the port side just forward of the after turret, and just waited for the tow. Three events broke up the routine.

Sometime in early October there was a hurricane warning and I was called back aboard in the middle of the night by the CRUDESFLOT 12 staff duty officer to rig up some additional lines and fenders just in case the blow actually came. As I drove back to Mayport to arrange for the work to be done, I sure was wishing that LTJG Spaustat had stayed behind instead of me, but the Chief and the men did just fine.

A few days later, we noticed that the ship had taken on a rather pronounced list to port, and the Chief had to do some pumping of some tanks down somewhere where the snipes used to live. This time, my wish was for LTJG Mousseau who should have been there. Soon enough the ship righted itself, and all became serene and quiet again on the Turner.

The third event was the winning

of the World Series by the New York Mets. I remember that we made an exception to the military routine we had set up and listened to the radio broadcast of the games most of the days the games were played. The officers and men of the tender next to us, or from the Flotilla staff, must have been jealous, but I figured the guys had earned the chance to listen since they were having to carry out what really was dreary and sad duty. No one outside Turner interfered with our listening to the Series.

Finally, I was informed by the Commanding Officer of the Inactive Ship Facility that USS Umpqua (ATA-209) would arrive on 14 October 1969 to inspect Turner for towing. Upon their arrival, the C.O. of Umpqua (LT P.P. Brown) presented me with a checklist that I had to fill out. He and I inspected the ship and he accepted responsibility for her on the morning of 15 October 1969. At approximately 0900 Umpqua got underway with Turner in tow.

I remember watching her moving slowly out of the Mayport turning basin. Then, something made me run to my car and drive out to the carrier docks and walk to the end of them so that I could stand and watch her as she was towed away. In my mind's eye I can still see her proud hull number 834 moving slowly past where I was standing. I stood looking to seaward for a long time until I could just see her radar mast and a small portion of her hull. A quarter of a century of service in the U. S. Navy was over for her. This was a very sad ending for such a proud ship. I turned away slowly and drove over to report for duty to the staff of DesDiv 82 at 1130 that morning.

TURNER ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

PHOTO GENERATES MEMORIES

The Turner Times received the following letter after printing the photo of Turner's Engineering Department of 1946 in the December issue. -Editor

Christmas Eve, 1998

Dear Pete:

Just received my issue of the Turner Times (December, '98) and the picture of the Turner Engineering Department - 1946 prompted me to take a long, hard look at it. The guy on the extreme right, second row, I'm sure is Herman Vickery. If you take another look at this picture, Herman's name was listed with a question mark. This was Herman as I remembered him. I stood engine room watches with him frequently and we were good friends, even though I was a member of the Turner crew for a very short time - November '45 to February or March, '46.

I was in school in Newport preparing to put an LSD in commission in Mobile, Alabama, when the two bombs were dropped in August, ending the war. I was almost immediately reassigned to the Turner, most likely as a replacement for some crew member who became eligible for discharge because of time served. I believe the Turner was one of 12 Gearing class destroyers that were headed for Japan.

I caught up with the Turner at Colon at the entrance to the Panama Canal and managed at least one liberty in, what appeared to me at least, the most God-forsaken place in the world. It certainly left a lasting impression. We passed through the canal and I especially remember how our condensers reacted to the fresh water of Gatun Lake. If I remember correctly, it took a day to transverse the canal. What an experience!!

We proceeded to San Diego for a

short lay-over and, on the way up, were buzzed by four P-38s that took everyone by surprise. We sure were proud that they belonged to us. I might note that the P-38s shot down more enemy aircraft than any other fighters, including the vaunted P-51s and the F-4Us.

The next lay-over was Pearl Harbor and then on to Japan with a stop at Wake or Midway to discharge a passenger thought possibly to have bubonic plague. It turned out actually to be the mumps. We proceeded on our journey and encountered the most horrendous storm I've ever been in at sea. We lost considerable equipment stored and fastened on the fantail. This storm was so violent that only rarely could one catch a glimpse of any of the other ships in our squadron.

To conclude my letter, Pete, it was 52 years ago today that our little fleet of Gearing class destroyers pulled into Tokyo Bay and we caught our first glimpse of Mt. Fuji, one of the most beautiful mountains I've ever seen. We did encounter some mines and exploded some with, I believe, 20mm guns. The power of these

mines was so great that I can understand why striking one would ultimately sink a ship. As a member of the Turner crew, I did visit many other coastal cities in Japan and, for the most part, it was a memorable, rewarding experience.

I eventually transferred to the USS Duncan, DDR-874, for my return trip to the U.S.A. I complied enough points for discharge while on duty in Japan. I went to Japan on the Turner, returned to the U.S.A. on the Duncan and was discharged at Great Lakes in May of 1946.

I don't know whether or not my wife and I will attend this years reunion, but we certainly wish all who do attend a good time and if Herman Vickery shows up, give him a special greeting from me, one of his old shipmates.

Sincerely,

Al Dommer, MM2, '45

How Did You Salute??



Short-timer!



Squared Away

WEBSITE A

The official USS Turner website at http://members.aol.com/turn834/tom/index.htm is certainly a success. Tom Shingleton and Ken Yost have worked hard and deserve a large Bravo Zulu. Here are some selected comments from those who have visited our "homeport"

Dear Sir:

My father is Cdr. Scott Turner. After finding out about this website from him via e-mail, I viewed it and am printing out all of it! I must say that I am very moved by it. My parents have shared so many stories about the war and the times of their lives. It is so hard for those of us who did not experience it to truly appreciate it, however the sacrifices of those who have come before us have given us the lives, the opportunities, and the freedom that we sometimes so callously take for granted.

Thank you for sharing this piece of history with those who served on the USS Turner and allowing them to remember that part of their lives, each in his own way. Thank you, also, for sharing this with the rest of us who were not there so that we might share in the memories as well.

Sincerely,
Barbara Turner Walro

I've enjoyed watching your website develop. My father, Paul H. Avery, Sr., was on the original skeleton crew that took the ship from Bath, Maine back to Boston. He recalls that approx. 19 men comprised the skeleton crew. He stayed with the ship through the end of the war. He is 73 years old, and is in excellent health. We would like to see his name added to the roster. My dad was a radioman during his time on the Turner. We look forward to hearing from you soon. - Libby McCraw, Gastonia, NC

The U. S. S. Turner Reunion Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to locating and keeping us in contact with our former shipmates. The Association Officers are:

President Harry Tice (' 57) **Vice President** Pete Varley (' 66 69)
Treasurer Mike Quinn (' 56 59) **Secretary** Dick Shanaberger (' 54 55)

The Turner Times is published periodically, by the dedicated staff members shown below, to help communicate Association news and facilitate the sharing of memories. Suggestions and items of interest can be submitted to either of us. Originals will be returned, if requested.

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Thanks!! I love it & the music gives me goose bumps & brings tears to my eyes. Why? I have no idea Music like that always does. Good luck, Helen

I found the USS Turner DD/DDR834 website and it really looks good. I served aboard from 1951 to 1955. I have attended a few reunions in the past. It is good to see the Turner posted on the internet. I hope other shipmates see it and get interested in the reunions. Sal Rafala, YN2

Like the Turner web page, can't wait till it is completed. It will be a great asset. Peter J. Annesi

Beautiful!!! I was a "plank owner" on the USS Witek DD-848. The photo of your ship touched my heart. Thanks -Anon.

You people have done a great job. A job, "Well Done". The Turner Website on the Internet is "Great". Seeing the picture of the Turner and the roster of my old shipmates sure brings back good memories. Thank you. Tony Almeida

I just came aboard your site, you deserve a 4.0. I am the 98-99 Chairman of the USS GOODRICH DD/DDR 831 Association. Our ships were in DesRon 8 and I believe DesRon 14 also. I enjoyed your pages

and would like to set up a page for the "Goody". Any help would be appreciated. Tom Durning BM3 62-64

Our site has also won two awards!! Jake's 'Yankee Station' has honored us with the Big E award for Website Excellence on a Naval Theme. They said: Sir,

Jake of 'Jake's 'Yankee Station' wishes to honor the USS Turner website with it's 'prestigious' Big E award for Website Excellence on a Naval Theme'. Your site was viewed for originality, usefulness of information, graphic design, and was found to add an outstanding artistic flair, careful and concise design, and a wealth of information. Your site only enhances the originality of our Internet community. Job well done! You certainly have earned it. May all who come to visit your Site be equally touched, and moved by your tribute to this mighty warship, but more so, to those men who served in her. As it has been said, a ship is only a ship, when her crew is aboard.. may you always have Fair Winds, and Following Seas"

We have also won the 'Spirit of Ships' award given to select US Naval vessel websites. If you haven't visited yet, now is the time.