

Preface

The USS Fiske was a Gearing Class destroyer, the last of the World War II design destroyers. She served the US Navy from November 1945 until June 1980 and was then transferred to the Turkish Navy where she served as the TCG Piyale Pasa (D350). The former Fiske was heavily damaged in 1996 when she ran aground and was scrapped in early 1999. Altogether this ship served two navies for over 54 years.

When this book was first conceived it was to be a history with first person stories blended in. Over the years since it has become more of a collection of personal stories with history inserted. It has been said before that if something isn't written down it may as well have never happened. It is for that reason that this work came into being. I believe that the small stories contained within these pages have as much importance as the 'Big' histories that are written.

Chapter III

(DD 842)

November 1945 – April 1952

Call Sign NBBU

Motto: "Detect and Destroy"

When commissioned in November 1945 *Fiske* carried the then standard armament package of three dual 5"/38 gun mounts; three 40mm quadruple mount AA guns; two 40mm twin mount AA guns; five 20mm twin mount AA guns; one quintuple 21" torpedo tubes; six 'hedgehog' mounts; and, two depth charge racks. The additional 40mm and 20mm AA guns were added to all destroyers shortly after Japan started using kamikaze attacks against our fleets. All of this armament was packed onto the decks of a ship that was 390'6" long and 41'1" at her widest point.

With this much armament onboard the Gunnery Department was a large percentage of the crew. A look at the commissioning day roster reveals several rated Gunner's Mates and Specialist ratings that can be assumed to be involved in effectively employing that firepower. One of those crewmen was GM2 Robert J. Lewis. His family submitted the story below.

The 'Gun Boss'

While we were in the Charleston Naval Yard for final outfitting the Gunnery Officer invited some of us to his home in Boston. It was a very nice place and he was a very nice guy. We were served drinks by a Butler. I can't remember his name but I do remember that the address on his house had only one number!



Robert J. Lewis, GM2 1945-46

I won't say that all my time onboard Fiske was all 'Beer & Skittles' but she was my first ship and many of the shipmates that were onboard with me in the early 1960's continue to be some of my closest friends these many years later.

My greatest single regret is that I have so very little to add to my stock of "Fiske Tales" for the first decade of her life. It seems I started this project too late. Falling back on the oft quoted Tom Clancy, "If it isn't written down it never happened."

Chapter VI

(DD 842) – Reserve Fleet

September 1973 – June 1980

One of the stories from the end of the Fiske's career came from Jim Nordstrom, a chief Quartermaster. It is an example of the challenges that developed when the Navy began having women on board.

"At the time those two young ladies reported aboard having females aboard ship was still quite new. I was a reserve Chief Quartermaster at the time and had been assigned to the Fiske on and off from the time she was transferred to the reserve fleet. If I remember correctly it was a 2 week ACDUTRA, and I spent a lot of time training the jg. and ensign in navigation, both open sea, inshore and celestial. We even had them steering the ship which they got a big kick out of.

Again it was quite a while ago, but I remember one of them being very short and we had to provide her with a milk crate to stand on when she was on watch so she could read the gyro for various evolutions. One time we did a practice unrep and she was conning from the milk crate. I believe it was Beulah and to see that she was CO of an AO makes me feel good I had a part in that career."

'Fiske Tales'

Take Two

'440 Volts'

I think that about everyone knew MMI Jess Davis. Jess was working, I think, in the Reefer Room. I was working on a vent controller in the compartment above the Reefer Room, ergo the Mess Line. As was usually the case on Fiske we were at sea, going from someplace to someplace else - standard operation. I had my hands in the controller when Jess came over.

Out came the hands and we engaged in conversation about some inane thing. The ship was going soft and smooth at the time, a really nice ride. During the course of the conversation I put my hand on the door of the controller. Jess put his hand on my shoulder and the conversation continued. Suddenly the ship lurched, my pinky touched a hot contact, my other reflexed and Jess went flying to other end of the compartment.

Jess came back, somewhat puzzled and angry, demanding to know why I hit him!!!! After I told him what had happened we both had a roll on the floor laughing fit and got to conversing again. Pretty soon up came the hand to my shoulder again, up came my hand to the controller door and ----LUCK being a fickle lady the ship lurched, finger on hot contact again and Jess went flying again!!!! We both laughed at the sheer stupidity of our actions that tears rolled down our collective faces. Both his and my job of the time was finished and we left the area. I think that Jess would agree that 440 volts can pack a pretty hefty punch. I hope he still smiles at the remembrance.

John Frazer EM1 1960-1965

Afterword

Author's/Editor's Comments

. . . I won't say that all my time onboard *Fiske* was all 'Beer & Skittles' but she was my first ship and many of the shipmates that were onboard with me in the early 1960's continue to be some of my closest friends these many years later.

. . . Any errors found, mistakes made in time and/or place are mine alone. As I was finalizing this revision I realized that this isn't entirely a history. This is in essence a scrapbook. A scrapbook put together by one common feature – the USS *Fiske*. It is hoped that this 'scrapbook' will bring everyone that reads it some fond memories.

To all that served onboard her, their families and friends it is my fondest wish that some of these 'tales' bring back thoughts of a time long gone. Of serving onboard the "best damned 'Tin Can' that there ever was". I wish the very best to all with fair winds and following seas.

G. E. Beyer USN retired

Brief Bio

Born: 10/23/1940

Graduated HS: May 1958

Joined the Navy: 10/1959

Graduated College: May 1976 BSEd (dual major – History & Science)

Retired from the Navy: June 1980 and moved family to north Idaho

Cannot conceive of living any where else