

## **USS GEARING (DD-710) - A BRIEF HISTORY**

The destroyer USS GEARING (DD-710) is one of the best known ships of the US. Navy—she was one of the first (the leader, as her Latin motto "DUX" implies) of what was to become known as the GEARING (or long hull) Class Destroyer, a svelte product of late World War II Naval architecture and technology designed for a longer cruising range and considerably more accurate firepower than war-vintage predecessors.

The USS GEARING (DD-710) is the first and only vessel named in honor of Commander Henry Chalfant Gearing, Captain Henry Chalfant Gearing, Jr., and Lieutenant Henry Chalfant Gearing, III. The keel was quietly laid on 10 August 1944, and working with a speed which may never again be witnessed in a shipyard, the Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Company sent GEARING down the ways at Port Newark, New Jersey on 18 February 1945 in a total of just 192 days. The daughter of the late Commander Gearing, Mrs. Thomas M. Foley sponsored the ship at commissioning ceremonies 3 May 1945.

For seventeen years the GEARING bore and used efficiently her anti-submarine and anti-aircraft weapons: two hedge hog ahead-thrown ASW weapon mounts, depth charges, torpedoes, three 5-inch 38 caliber twin dual-purpose gun mounts, and five 40 millimeter machine gun mounts; in the early 1960's however, GEARING and other ships in her class began to show signs of age and obsolescence. Under the Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization (FRAM) Program she was virtually reborn and given an estimated eight more years of service

The FRAM conversion replaced the entire superstructure, previously of steel, with lighter aluminum and left her with only two 5-inch 38 caliber twin gun mounts (fore and aft), but the ship was given a greater anti-submarine capability in the form of anti-submarine rockets (ASROC) in addition to two triple-tube torpedo launchers forward of the bridge in place of the obsolete hedge hogs. Included in the FRAM was the installation of DASH—the drone antisubmarine helicopter which is no longer in service, but the changes to the ship's configuration have found value in today's VERTREP (vertical replenishment of the ship by helicopter) and HIFR (helicopter in flight refueling).

The GEARING spent her entire lifetime in the Atlantic Fleet. After shakedown off Cuba, GEARING reached Norfolk 22 July 1945 and trained pre-commissioning crews for other destroyers until putting in at, Casco Bay, Maine, on 5 October 1945. Celebration of Navy Day from 26 to 29 October 1945 at New London, Connecticut, gave 5,000 citizens the chance to board the powerful destroyer. Subsequently GEARING put in at Pensacola, Florida 4 November 1945 to screen carrier RANGER during carrier qualification operations.

Returning to Norfolk 21 March 1946, she conducted peacetime operations along the Atlantic coast of North and South America, in the Caribbean, visiting Montevideo, Uruguay and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. GEARING sailed 10 November 1947 on her first Mediterranean cruise, calling at Algeria, Malta, Italy, and France before mooring again at Norfolk 11 March 1948, and duplicated this long voyage from 4 January to 23 May 1949.

During the fall of 1949 GEARING took part in Operation Frostbite, an Arctic cruise test and development of cold weather techniques and equipment. She continued operations off the east coast of the United States and in the Caribbean through 1950. Another voyage 10 January to 17 May 1951 brought her from Norfolk to the Mediterranean and return. The remainder of the year was occupied by training cruises as far north as Halifax and south to Cuban waters. Out of Norfolk, midshipmen training cruises highlighted GEARING's career. Northern European ports and the Red Sea alternated with the Mediterranean as cruise routes. In 1954 she became part of the Atlantic Fleet Hunter Killer Force to participate in the now annual affair known as Operation Springboard. Between 1957 and 1959 the GEARING exercised in Operation Novorock with the Canadians, the Joint Civilian orientation cruise, and LANTFLEX 2-58 and 2-59. Port visits were concentrated on the East Coast of the United States and the Caribbean. As a unit of Destroyer Squadron FOUR her homeport became Charleston, South Carolina in 1959.

In 1961 while on a South Atlantic cruise as flagship for Deputy Commander South Atlantic, GEARING was called upon to intercept and apprehend the hijacked Portuguese liner SANTA MARIA. The first naval ship in the area, GEARING was used as the negotiation flagship for the negotiation Admiral, Rear Admiral Allen Smith.

In the summer of 1962 the FRAM I conversion gave GEARING a new silhouette and she made Newport, Rhode Island and Destroyer Squadron TWENTY her new home. On 24 October 1962 GEARING became the first American ship participating in the Cuban Blockade to intercept a Cuba-bound Russian vessel—the BUCHAREST, out of Odessa.

Two Mediterranean, three Caribbean, and one midshipmen cruise to Montreal, Canada, brings us to 10 May 1965, when the ship commenced forty days at sea patrolling the mouth of the harbor at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The ship and ship's company were awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for their part in the operation.

In the fall of 1965 GEARING deployed for four months on a Mediterranean and Red Sea cruise during which the ship stationed herself off the coast of Karachi, Pakistan for eleven days ready to evacuate U.S. citizens from that politically upset city had the need arisen.

Two overhauls and a myriad of assignments later, in August of 1970 GEARING was assigned the duties of a Naval Reserve Training Ship in New London, Connecticut. The GEARING's last Mediterranean cruise took place in late 1971; she was the first Naval Reserve Force ship to participate in SIXTH Fleet operations, the experience enabling the reservists to observe first hand the day to day operation of the strategic operations of the fleet in the Mediterranean.

The GEARING's last primary mission was twofold; the training of Naval Reservists on two week active duty cruises scheduled heavily throughout the past years, and the maintenance on her Fleet Readiness ASW capabilities by her nucleus crew in the event of assignment to an active duty squadron and deployment.

On 2 July 1973, the USS GEARING was decommissioned, and in November 1974 was sold to AARDVARK INTERNATIONAL and scrapped.