

## Chapter 2: 1950-1951: A Squadron Is Born

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*We are destroyermen!  
A big-ship man would have trouble filling our shoes . . .  
We would have no trouble filling his.*

**Arleigh Burke, commander of the “Little Beavers”**

Like a limp penis, Korea hangs from China’s coast....

In 1945 the American Navy operated 377 destroyers. In 1950 only 137 were in commission. By the end of the Korean war, 110 had been reactivated to bring destroyer strength up to 247. The *USS Colahan* was one of them.

From “The Nifty Fifties Navy,” *Sea Classics*, a magazine given to me by Chris Woodyard:

*The 1950s was a challenging period for the US Navy. Emerging from World War Two as the most powerful naval force the world had ever seen, the postwar fleet became a mighty Navy in transition, a fleet faced with new mission doctrines mandated by the emerging “Cold War” with Russia, and changing technologies that were soon to reshape both surface and undersea warfare for all time.*

*If the emergence of the aircraft carrier as the premier surface warship was the major shift in naval warfare of the 1940s, then the advent of the deep-diving, nuclear submarine became the primary focus of naval thinking in the 1950s. The nuclear-powered submarine with its ability to strike fast and hard with little hope of detection, brought about a new emphasis in antisubmarine warfare that, in itself, was to dominate naval policy for decades to come.*

*As the Navy entered the decade of the ‘50s, it did so still largely equipped with war-built vessels.... Luckily, it was relatively easy to convert worn out wartime weaponry with the highly accurate missiles and rockets that fast began replacing the gun as the warship’s primary offensive armament.*

*[Some Fletchers got the ASROC antisub rocket launcher known as Weapon*

# Destroyer Squadron 17

Korean and Cold Wars

## Destroyer Division 171

Hull	Ship	Recommissioned	Depart for Korea
676	<i>Marshall</i>	27 Apr 51	23 July 51
682	<i>Porterfield</i>	27 Apr 51	23 July 51
686	<i>Halsey Powell</i>	27 Apr 51	23 July 51
802	<i>Gregory</i>	27 Apr 51	23 July 51

## Destroyer Division 172

Hull	Ship	Recommissioned	Depart for Korea
540	<i>Twining</i>	10 Jun 50	20 Aug 51
596	<i>Shields</i>	15 Jul 50	20 Aug 51
631	<i>Erben</i>	19 May 51	27 Aug 51
658	<i>Colahan</i>	16 Dec 50	20 Aug 51

*Alpha, which replaced the second five-inch gun mount just forward of the bridge. Weapon Alpha was magazine fed and sustained a high rate of fire. Destroyers equipped with this weapon were much more effective in ASW operations than the Colahan and her sisters in Desron 17, which retained their Hedgehog mounts through the decade.]*

*Despite the awesome threat of sudden atomic warfare and instant annihilation for most of mankind, the 1950s were pleasant times for those who wore navy blue. Days passed easily and cruises to far and distant shores were the eagerly anticipated order of the day with conscript sailor, regular and reservist alike sharing the thrill of visiting new ports-of-call with all their attendant high jinks and revelry.... Guns fired for drill rather than in anger, and the shrill whine of a bosun's whistle foretold nothing more ominous than a disciplined call for routine chores. The world was at peace ... after the Korean conflict.... During the tranquil moment in time in the late '50s the US Navy steamed on, confident in its ability to meet any new challenges it would face in the years ahead.*

“Standard” rudder will cause the ship to turn in a circle measuring a thousand yards in diameter. In *Fletcher*-class destroyers, standard rudder was 17½ degrees. If pressed, a *Fletcher* could execute “hard” rudder and reverse her course in an arc of only 400 yards in diameter.

The eight *Fletcher*-class destroyers that would constitute Destroyer Squadron 17 were Pacific War veterans, and all had been decommissioned in the months following Japan’s surrender. Now they were needed again.

**Colahan** — Morison VII: 257, 344, VIII: 418, XII: 319, 426, XIII: 316, XIV: 386.

**Twining** — Engaged in the capture of Saipan and Tinian, Operation Forager, June-August 1944. Engaged in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19-20 June 1944. With the *Colahan* in Task Group 38.2 when Halsey dashed north in pursuit of Ozawa, 25 October 1944, then returned to San Bernardino Straits after Halsey received Nimitz’s “The world wonders” message. Engaged in the capture of Okinawa, 14 March-30 June 1945.

**Shields** — The baby of Destroyer Squadron 17. Her keel was laid in August 1943, the very month the *Colahan* was commissioned, but she did not raise her own pennant until February 1945 and did not reach the war zone until May. Her Pacific War combat service consisted almost entirely of escort and patrol duty around Eniwetok, Ulithi, Leyte, Okinawa and Borneo. She won no battle stars in her first war.

**Erben** — Strikes on Kwajalein in December 1943. Engaged in Gilbert Islands Operation, 10 November-10 December 1943. Engaged in Marshall Islands Operations (Kwajalein and Eniwetok), 29 January-23 February 1944. With the Seventh Fleet under Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid at Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay and Humboldt Bay (Hollandia Campaign), 22 April-13 May 1944. Engaged in capture of Guam, 21 July-10 August 1944. Invasion of Leyte, 17-25 October 1944. Capture of Okinawa, 14 March-30 June 1945.

Destroyer Division 171, Destroyer Squadron 17, consisted of the *Halsey Powell* DD686 (1943), the *Marshall* DD676 (1943), the *Porterfield* DD682 (1943) and the *Gregory* DD802 (1944).

**Halsey Powell** — Capt. H.B. Jerrett shifted his flag from *Colahan* to Halsey Powell in May 1944, after the *Colahan* ran aground at Kwajalein. Like *Twining*, the *Halsey Powell* served in Rear Admiral J.B. Oldendorf's fire support group at Saipan and Tinian. With *Colahan* in TG 38.2 on 25 October 1944 in pursuit of Ozawa's force. With *Colahan* in Vice Admiral W.A. Lee's battleship-cruiser support unit (TG 38.1), also in Rear Admiral M.L. Deyo's cruiser light support unit (TG 38.3), liberation of the Philippines, 1 December 1944-23 January 1945.

Samuel Eliot Morison's History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. XIV, Victory in the Pacific, 1945:

*Following the Inland Sea strikes on 19 March [1945], TF 58 retired slowly, sending fighter sweeps over southern Kyushu to keep enemy aircraft grounded. A quiet morning on the 20th was followed by a lively afternoon. Admiral [Rear Admiral R.E.] Davison's TG 58.2, still covering Franklin, came under attack by enemy aircraft. At 1454 Hancock opened fire on a Zeke coming in on her port beam at about 500 feet. Halsey Powell, which had just topped off fuel alongside, cast off and was in the process of getting clear when the burning Zeke, having missed the flight deck of the Hancock, crashed the destroyer's main deck near the after 5-inch mount. Her steering gear was jammed, a collision with Hancock narrowly averted, speed was reduced to about ten knots, and 12 men were killed and 29 wounded. The kamikaze's bomb went right through Halsey Powell's hull without exploding.*

**Marshall** — Screened Rear Admiral L.T. DuBose's cruiser division in Rear Admiral A.E. Montgomery's Carrier Task Group 58.2, Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19-20 June 1944. With *Colahan* in Rear Admiral Gerald F. Bogan's TG 38.2 on 25 October 1944, then was shifted to Rear Admiral Badger's TG 34.5. In the liberation of the Philippines, 1 December 1944-23 January 1945, the *Marshall* was assigned to Rear Admiral E.W. Hanson's battleship and cruiser support unit in Bogan's TG 38.2. (During this period of time, the *Colahan* and *Halsey Powell* were with Montgomery's TG 38.1.) With Task Force 58 (Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher), Okinawa campaign, 14 March-30 June 1945.

**Porterfield** — Engaged in the Marshall Islands campaign in support of the northern landings, 31 January 1944. Cited in Morison's Vol. VII, Pages 238-9:

*Destroyers Porterfield and Haraden, lying off Ennubirr and Ennumennet outside the lagoon, raked these islets with high explosives, augmented by carrier-based air bombardment.... Finally the boat waves were formed at 1435 and started in to their afternoon objectives. Haraden covered the landings at Ennubirr while Porterfield supported that on Ennumennet. Each landing team was preceded by three LCI gunboats and 18 LVT-As, while Porterfield and Haraden made smoke off Obella Island in order to shield the boats against possible enemy fire on their southern flank.*

[For more on *Porterfield*, see Morison VII: 242, 346, VIII: 410, XII: 319, 427, XIII: 318, XIV: 57, 133, 226, 373.]

**Gregory** — Commissioned in 1944, the *Gregory* got a late start in the Pacific War, but she fought valiantly against *kamikazes* at Okinawa. Morison, Vol. XIV, Victory in the Pacific, 1945:

*There was air-surface action all around Okinawa on that bloody afternoon and evening of 6 April [1945]. Destroyer Gregory, Lieutenant Commander Bruce McCandless, was part of the outer antisubmarine screen off southern Okinawa, with APD Daniel T. Griffin and destroyer escort Witter in an adjoining station. Two Vals attacked at 1612. Gregory shot down one; the other went for Witter, nine miles distant, crashed her and killed six men.... [On April 8] Gregory ... was attacked by a Sonia that evening. Although pieces were shot off it by machine-gun fire, it kept coming, and crashed amidships, abreast of the forward fire room. Then a second and a third came in, and were shot down close aboard. Commander McCandless got his fires out in short order, and Gregory steamed into Kerama roadstead under her own power.... She proceeded to San Diego for repairs. [Repairs were not completed until after the war.]*