

WWII and Coast Guard veteran turns 100

By Robert Martin, USAWC PAO 06 April 2023



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Thomas Taylor, Coast Guard and WWII veteran will turn 100 on April 14. Thomas is a resident of Butler Street Senior Living in Harrisburg, Pa. The retirement center is attempting to have 100 birthday cards sent to him for his birthday. Below is little story he likes to tell.

Cards can be mail to

Butler Street Senior Living

Activities department: Thomas

3251 Butler St,

Harrisburg, PA 17103

Taylor is from Johnstown, Pa., and was a welder before World War II broke

out. He decided to join the Coast Guard, hoping to stay close to the U.S., first traveling to Houston, TX, then to Charleston, S.C., where he would board his ship the USS Landsdale. During the train ride across half the country, Taylor's shipmates came to his aid once when he was not being served food by train staff because of the color of his skin. Taylor said the men on the ship always treated him like he was an equal.

He went across the Atlantic Ocean eight separate times, escorting convoys. Taylor was transferred to another ship after becoming too ill to return before his assigned ship was sent to sea.

When joining this new ship, the USS Falgout, Taylor asked the captain if he could be moved to the vessel's topside; on his last ship, he was consistently within the ship. He wanted to see some action. His captain was surprised by the request because many wouldn't willingly volunteer for such an assignment. Taylor got his request and was assigned to a gun mound.

On the night of 20 April 1944, in the Mediterranean Sea he was at his gun mound when he noticed sparks in the air. Taylor said that Germany would send torpedo bombers painted black to fly over the ships at night, and they would fly so low that many times you could see sparks coming from the engines in the dark.

That night they didn't torpedo his ship. Instead, the aircraft chose two other ships in the convoy; SS Paul Hamilton that lit up the sky when it exploded and Taylor's old ship the USS Landsdale was sunk.

After the war, Taylor returned to school, where he met his wife and had a child, but the sea was in his blood now, and he returned to work on ships again.