

**A Collection of Stories and  
Memories by Members of the  
United States Naval Academy  
Class of 1963**



**Compiled and Edited by Stephen Coester '63**

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# Dedicated to the Twenty-Eight Classmates Who Died in the Line of Duty



## United States Naval Academy

### Class of 1963

### Line of Duty Deaths

 Peter Vermaire 1974 Aviation Accident	 John Davis 1972 Aviation Accident	 John Burke 1968 USS Scorpion	 Don MacLaughlin 1966 KIA Vietnam	 Thomas Puckett 1963 Aviation Accident	 David Shore 1974 Aviation Accident	 Dan Moran 1967 KIA Vietnam
 George Farrin 1968 USS Scorpion	 Charles Lamberth 1968 USS Scorpion	 Ken Buell 1972 KIA Vietnam	 John Worcester 1965 KIA Vietnam	 Skip Templin 1966 KIA Vietnam	 James Connaughton 1968 Aviation Accident	 Jerry Pinneker 1968 KIA Vietnam
 Stephen Toth 1972 USS Liberty	 Stan Smiley 1969 KIA Vietnam	 James Patterson 1967 KIA Vietnam	 Bill Fitzgerald 1968 KIA Vietnam	 Vance Schufeldt 1977 Aviation Accident	 Carl Doughtie 1965 KIA Vietnam	 Chuck Marik 1966 KIA Vietnam
 Paul Forman 1965 Aviation Accident	 Chuck Galloway 1966 Aviation Accident	 Charles Tozur 1966 Aviation Accident	 Alex Palenscar 1967 KIA Vietnam	 Jim Reynolds 1969 Aviation Accident	 Rick Trani 1968 KIA Vietnam	 Patrick Wilkes 1965 Aviation Accident

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.*

*Laurence Binyon 1914*

## Vietnam Stories

### SHOT DOWN OVER NORTH VIETNAM by Jon Harris

My Vietnam story:

The USS Independence with Air Wing 7, including my new squadron, VA-72 (A-4E's) arrived at Yankee Station on July 1st, 1965, just in time for Independence Day. On my 63rd combat mission (ironically enough) on September 20, 1965, I joined six other pilots and crewmen having being shot down over the North. Two air force pilots (including the one captured by the Chinese and held in their prison until February 12, 1973) and the entire four man crew of a rescue helicopter looking for the other pilot, were captured and held as POWs for seven and a half years.

The Alpha Strike I was on that day was the first major strike into Hanoi, meant to destroy a bridge running to the north as the major supply route from China. My plane was hit during the engagement, and I was forced to eject about halfway to the coast. Having been told that there was a rescue helo aboard a cruiser off the coast, I found an extraction position halfway up a mountain hiding in elephant grass, where I could see a village below, but would be able to be picked up if the helo came my way. After a couple of hours of praying and hoping, it did come my way, circled around behind the mountain (to dump my weight of fuel), was shot at by the bad guys causing the RESCAP A-1 pilot to strafe that area and quiet them down, and came to a hover while it let down the horse collar. As it began to ratchet me up, the helo had to turn out over the valley to gain airspeed, and I was dangling 500 feet or more from terra firma. Finally in the helo, we began taking taking antiaircraft fire as we approached the coast south of Haiphong. One blast was close enough to unbalance the rotor blades, and the pilot had to continually press (what he later told me was) the "self-balancing" button...so it was a rough ride to the cruiser...which was at flank speed the entire two hours of the rescue

heading directly toward the coast so that the helo would have enough fuel to make it back.

It was later reported in the book, *Alpha Strike Vietnam*, by Jeffrey L. Levinson, that this was the first recovery of a pilot shot down over North Vietnam. Knowing how many friends, squadron-mates, shipmates, and classmates endured such interminable and horrendous experiences as POWs, there has always been a lingering sense of survivor's guilt mixed with the exultation of the moment and the recognition over the years that somehow those others on that day punched my ticket and let me get home. I have never forgotten.

Fittingly enough, the Independence departed Yankee Station for our homeward trek on Veteran's Day, November 11, 1965.

## THE VOLUNTEER by Ray Heins

It may be little noted in other states, but Tennessee is proud to be known as the Volunteer State. Thus the University of Tennessee fields teams known as "The Volunteers". And long before I was ten years old, I was a huge fan of the Double A baseball team, the Nashville Vols. So I was fully aware, and I knew that the name came from the historic tendency of Tennesseans to volunteer for wars. Revolutionary, Civil, World - you name it, Tennessee was standing in line to enlist. This awareness played no small role, I am sure, in my decision to volunteer for in-country service in Vietnam.

I had been in naval service for several years before the U.S. became involved in southeast Asia. As a midshipman I was on a

destroyer in Cuban waters during 1962, before the missile crisis and Blockade. Another destroyer, where I served as Communications Officer, participated in the "Quarantine" of the Dominican Republic in 1965. I was on that same ship when I heard the news of the Tonkin Gulf Incident in 1964. That incident was the effective trigger for US involvement in Vietnam. Two years later, I was joining my next destroyer as the Engineering Department Head, as it prepared for deployment to the western Pacific and Vietnam. At that point, a call went out from the Bureau of Naval Personnel for volunteers to serve in-country in Vietnam. The Navy had many billets for junior officers, on rivers, coasts, and both ashore and afloat in advisory positions.

Why, you may ask, would I even consider volunteering to go? 26-year old me might answer "This is My War. It's already two years old, and I wonder how long it will continue. Wars don't come along all that often, and it would be a shame to miss it altogether. After all, I'm from the Volunteer state. Furthermore, I've watched plenty of World War II movies. Many of them take place in the wide Pacific. Those khaki uniforms are the same ones I wear now, and this is my chance to be one of those brave, heroic men sweeping the seas clear of hazards to Freedom. And this is a war of right versus wrong; of communist invaders in democratic South Vietnam. Why would I NOT volunteer?"

Well, there WAS a possibility of injury or death. Furthermore, the kinds of duties offered were rather different from anything I would expect to fall into my career path, and volunteering would require my

early departure from this Chief Engineer job. Not especially career enhancing. Anti-war protesters? Screw those long-haired Peaceniks; they must not be allowed to subvert our nation.

There was just one compelling counter-argument, to my mind - I had met a girl, and it was serious. However, that relationship blossomed at a time when it was too late to call off my adventure - my letter was already in.

So, off I went. Two months of Pre-Deployment and Counter-Insurgency school, for instruction in Vietnamese culture and language, weapons familiarization, and a week of SERE school - "Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape". A week with no food, little rest, and mistreatment by a bunch of make-believe enemies with a POW camp.

The late-blooming romance led to a quick wedding, a brief honeymoon, and a move into a furnished apartment before I reported back for a very long plane ride: San Francisco to Saigon, via Alaska for refueling. It was March, 1968 - days after the "Tet Offensive". Arrive Saigon at 7:00 A.M. (9:00 P.M. the previous day, according to our body clocks). Hot and dusty. Badly damaged airport terminal. Climb on an Air Force bus with heavy window screening (to deflect grenades). Driver sporting a sawed-off .30 cal carbine on the dash. Lengthy drive through a teeming Oriental city, sandbag bunkers everywhere. Welcome to My War!

My assignment was to guide and assist the commanding officer of a 112 foot patrol craft in what turned out to be a Coast Guard like function. We were deployed for 45 days at a time to patrol the coastline, preventing clandestine resupply via fishing or other boats. During deployment our vessel operated out of one of four Coastal Zone HQ's; between deployments we returned to Saigon for repair and resupply. Never in my year did I feel personally threatened. There were unfocused neighborhood threats - sometimes at night you could hear mortar rounds fired and landing within a block, but the target was a police station down the street. Rarely, explosives were found attached to the undercarriage of vehicles used to transport servicemen - but never one I was in.

Once during a deployment to the remote Fourth Coastal Zone, centered on Phu Quoc Island (near the Cambodian border on the southwest tip of Vietnam) we had the misfortune of finding a reef. The vessel sat, for seven days, within a few hundred feet of jungle-covered shoreline. We remained partly submerged until a U.S. salvage ship arrived to extract, patch, and tow us back to Saigon.

My year was lightened by a single, seven day R&R in Hawaii with my bride. We spent Christmas together, despite everything. In those Pre-TSA days, she even brought a small Christmas Tree to brighten our hotel room. Then, in March 1969, I climbed aboard another chartered airliner for the trip home. It seemed ever so much quicker than the trip west! Landing in San Francisco, I transferred

immediately to another plane, and continued on to San Diego where I was greeted by my wife. Protesters? Never saw one.

Looking back, my risk was rewarded. I am proud to have served my country at a difficult time. My service was never a black mark in my world - the armed forces were well insulated from the haters. Five years later I was shamed by my country's failure to live up to promises of support once we departed, but by then I was moving on in my career, which was NOT damaged by my year as an advisor. Today, forty years afterwards, once-Communist Vietnam seems closer to an ally than an enemy. I don't know what happened to the South Vietnamese people I met, but do know many have been living in the USA for years.

Sometimes, now, I wonder - what was it all about?

A MEMORABLE SONG by **Ray Heins**

LYRICS: "DETROIT CITY" – Mel Tillis, 1963

Recorded by Bobby Bare

I want to go home, I want to go home,  
Oh Lord, I want to go home,

Last night I went to sleep in Detroit city,  
And I dreamed about those cotton fields and home,  
I dreamed about my mother,  
dear old papa, sister and brother,  
And I dreamed about that girl,  
whose been waitin' for so long,

I want to go home, I want to go home,  
Oh Lord, I want to go home,

Home folks think I'm big in Detroit city,  
From the letters that I write they think I'm fine,  
But by day I make the cars,  
by night I make the bars,  
If only they could read between the lines,

I want to go home, I want to go home,  
Oh Lord, I want to go home,

I rode a freight train north to Detroit city,  
After all these years I've been wasting my time,  
I'll take my foolish pride,  
on a southbound freight and ride,

Go on back to the ones,  
I've left waitin' so far behind,

I want to go home, I want to go home,  
Oh Lord, I want to go home.

#####

“Oh Lord, I want to go home!” It wasn’t the first time I’d heard the song, but it struck a particular resonance when I heard it in Saigon.

It was summer, 1968. I’d been married since January, in Vietnam since March. My duties involved 30-to-45 day deployments from Fleet Command HQ, on the Saigon River, to coastal patrol zones. I was the only American on a Vietnamese navy gunboat – HQ-611 – as the advisor to the commanding officer.

I found the Vietnamese language very difficult. Despite a five-week, 200 hour immersion course with native speakers, I could do little more than say hello, and tell a taxi driver to drive straight, turn left, or turn right.

Between deployments, I had daily contact with other advisors at the Fleet Command headquarters. On patrol, however, I felt quite alone. No wonder Captain Quynh once observed to me that “You seem very melancholy.”

There were many bars in Saigon, but they were sketchy, expensive, and not very appealing to me as a newly-wed. The officer’s club, on the rooftop deck of the Hotel Rex, was a lot more like it. The crowd there frequently numbered close to a hundred; security was such that everyone was able (and required) to remove their personal weapons at the entry (still on the roof level, but outside the bar). On occasion, they had musical groups – usually Korean, for reasons unknown to me – who performed American songs, reportedly learned completely phonetically. They had very convincing twangs, and could have been readily accepted in Nashville, but apparently understood nothing of what they were singing.

The most popular song they did was “Detroit City”, with its “I want to go home” refrain. When we sang along with it, which was almost always, we really meant it!

Having grown up in Nashville, country music had seeped into my blood, even during the years when country wasn’t cool. The accents and the phrases were similar to those I heard from family, friends, school mates.

The “want to go home” theme certainly captured a longing shared by every American in Vietnam. Even the volunteers (yes, there were many of us) were frequently lonely, and fully aware of the anti-war sentiment among the population back home. Sometimes it seemed the chaos back in the states was equal to that in-country. While in Saigon between patrols, I read of the assassinations, first of Martin Luther King, then of Bobby Kennedy, in the Armed Forces newspaper “Stars and Stripes”. It seemed surreal; “How can this be?” we thought, and we asked each other. (No one I knew favored Kennedy; indeed we feared he would immediately abandon the Vietnamese we had come to admire; but murder was far beyond the pale; who would be next???)

Early on in my year in Vietnam, I purchased a portable radio/cassette recorder. This I took with me on patrols. Sometimes at night, as the gunboat patrolled offshore, I brought the radio up on deck, and listened to music programs broadcast over the AFRTS – Armed Forces Radio and Television Network. This is where I really felt alone, and the homely refrain of “Detroit City” expressed my feelings very well indeed. (I don’t remember hearing Robin Williams’ character from “Good Morning, Vietnam”, but I did listen to his radio station.)

Now the same music transports me back to those melancholy days when I was just 28. I’ve long since made it back home, but somewhere along the way, lost my youth. From here, it doesn’t seem quite so bad back there in Detroit City. There were moments of adventure, and unparalleled opportunity to see very foreign places. The people were generally friendly, and happy to have us there defending them. I walked alone (wearing a six-gun with cowboy-style

gun belt) in villages far from Saigon, and children gathered as to a magnet. On many occasions, I relaxed with other advisors, over dinner, or beers, or over coffee. While in Saigon, I had virtually no duties, so many hours were spent playing board games in the Fleet Command building.

Still, there was that constant desire to “go home”. Every serviceman was given a “DEROS” upon arrival – his Date of Estimated Return from Overseas. The tour was twelve months – no more, no less (unless you were a marine – 13 months – or something unfortunate happened). We kept that in mind always. When we heard the song, and sang along with it, I think everyone felt less alone – united, ironically, by the desire to be somewhere else!





## Air Raid in the Tonkin Gulf by Ray Heins

“I hate the mid watch. Relieve at 15 minutes before midnight, off at 03:45. With breakfast at 7:00, ‘Turn to’ at 8:00, there’s not much sleep to be had. Oh well, at least I’m better off than the Sailors – with 40 men in a berthing compartment, they can’t even choose to sleep in till 8:00.”



These musings

coursed through my head as I stood the mid-watch, as “Evaluator” in CIC – the Combat Information Center. It was December, 1966. PARKS was assigned to North SAR station in Tonkin Gulf, maybe 20 miles southeast of Haiphong, North Vietnam. Somewhere nearby was our loose companion, USS Richmond K. Turner, DLG

20. TURNER was one of those incredible misfits spawned by the deep thinkers of the Pentagon – a good sized warship, at least twice our size, with missiles fore and aft. Great for air defense, but... “Oh My God, we forgot the guns!!!” So this marvelous warship needed the protection afforded by a 25 year old relic of WW II, and her four five-inch guns. Just in case a goddam sampan decided to sink her.



And the North Vietnamese did have armed sampans, but also torpedo boats, a wellhidden air force, and even, if you could believe it, an adventurous biplane which could attack at very low altitude. So said Naval Intelligence – more great thinkers?  
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“Mr. Heins!” – it was RD1 Stone, the senior Radarman. A really squared-away sailor.

Late 20’s, with maybe ten years in the Navy. Intelligent, industrious, serious. "On the ball".

“Yes, Stone? I tried to shake off the lethargy accumulated over the last hour and a half.

“Jolly Green checking in.” Jolly Green was the call sign of the USAF patrol plane

patrolling the Gulf tonight. We had very little contact with these planes. They were Spooks in a

way, laden with electronic intercept equipment, I thought. They had the capacity to carry plenty,

that’s for sure. If they stayed aloft. A big, prop-driven, triple-tail Super Constellation, like those

flown by TWA and Pan Am in the 1940’s and 50’s.

Our purpose in being here – more properly the purpose of North SAR, as we were really there mainly to protect the more capable ship – was Search and Rescue in the event of an overwater bailout following an air strike on Hanoi or Haiphong. CIC was jammed with electronic equipment, including surface search and air search radar consoles, maybe twelve different radio stations, and three big Plexiglas status boards – one for a short range surface plot, one for a longer range air plot, and tabular plots for contacts, call signs, radio freqs, and events such as air strikes expected later in the day. Two separate spaces contained ASW and ESM equipment – Antisubmarine Warfare and Electronic Signals Monitoring. The Gulf was not deep, but we believed it possible for Russian and Chinese subs to operate. Hard to believe they would bother with us, but we still had to watch. Electronic Support Measures (ESM) intercepts were theoretically the best way to obtain early warning of attacks. You can see a radar emitter, for example, on your ESM long before there is enough of an echo for the transmitting platform to see you. Unfortunately, there was nothing automatic about ESM, and quality of the operator was everything. We had one man, RD1 Delatte, who was really good at it. CIC, and the supporting spaces, were equipped with a lot of air conditioning. Nowhere near enough when the spaces were jammed with people at Battle Stations, but now, with no sun and a normal watch, it was delightfully cool. Twenty feet forward of CIC, on the bridge, Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Riley Whitman sniffed the heavy tropical air. There was essentially nothing to see, inboard or out. No contacts,

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except for TURNER a mile off to Starboard, and a sprinkling of stars bright enough to penetrate the haze. The Quartermaster maintained the ship's position on the provided chart table, illuminated by the red-filtered desk lamp. The helmsman steered the course ordered by Whitman, and another sailor stood by the Engine Order Telegraph ready to issue orders for the engineering spaces in the unlikely event of a change in speed. Port and Starboard lookouts on the bridge wings gazed ever and only outward – seeing nothing except the TURNER. The ship was going nowhere, just maintaining comfortable steerageway. Our orders were to remain within twelve miles of center of station, so six knots was plenty of speed.

My Evaluator station consisted of a comfortable chair, a small desk area, and a communications bonanza. I had selector switches which could join me to any radio circuit, or any of the sound-powered phone circuits on the ship. Of course, at this time of day, the only one likely to be in use was the 1JV – with talkers on the bridge, in CIC, and in Main (Engine) Control. The lookouts and Radarmen worked closely together on that circuit, to correlate any visible ships with the radar blip seen on radar. Range, bearing, course and speed were plotted on one of the status boards, along with the projected Closest Point of Approach – CPA.

Coffee and cigarettes fueled most of the people on watch. “Butt kits” were strategically mounted everywhere, including on the bridge and in CIC. The bridge was even provided with electric cigarette lighters, mounted on the bulkhead and operated with a little lever. (Using an open flame would ruin night vision for long minutes.)

“Intermittent surface contact, bearing 350 true, range 40 miles.”

“That’s OK – probably a fishing vessel – watch and report” I responded. “Talker, let the bridge know.”

Fishing vessels weren’t really that common, because they never knew if they would be judged hostiles – but usually they were safe if they avoided coming anywhere near the warships.

“Any updates?” I asked after a couple of minutes

“No sir – contact is in a fade.” “Wait – there he is again, range 35 miles”

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Based on the change in location, either the contact was flaky, or this fishing vessel was moving out – at more than 100 knots! Well, with just two glimpses, I’ll bet on flaky.

At 03:05, the operator reported a solid track; “Contact bearing 340 degrees true, course

170, speed 150; evaluate low flier!”

Nothing was visible on our air search radar, despite the close range. I picked up the radio

handset: “TURNER, THIS IS PARKS; CONTACT BEARING 335 YOUR POSITION,

RANGE THREE FIVE MILES, EVALUATE LOW FLIER. CAN YOU CONFIRM? OVER”

TURNER had nothing on radar. A figment of imagination? Flight of geese? Or that damned biplane???

“Stone, can you see any IFF?” “Identification, Friend or Foe” was a system which is

supposed to help you distinguish between hostile and friendly contacts. The radar platform

triggers the tracked target to send this identifying signal, and it is displayed on the radar console

at the detecting site.

“Negative IFF, sir.”

This is preposterous! I don’t want to wake up the entire ship for a flight of geese!

At 3:09, we still had the contact, which was becoming more clear with

every sweep of the radar. Still heading in our general direction, still at 150 knots (plus or minus), still no IFF.

“BRIDGE, COMBAT – TELL THE CAPTAIN!”

And seconds later, I made the call: “SOUND GENERAL QUARTERS!”

The terrifying klaxon, unchanged from all those WWII Navy movies, sounded in every space of the ship. After what seemed forever, but was really about 15 seconds, the Boatswain’s

Mate of the Watch barked into the 1MC: “GENERAL QUARTERS, GENERAL QUARTERS, THIS IS NOT A DRILL. SET CONDITION 1AA” Then back to the klaxon.

Within seconds voices were joining into the sound-powered phone net, reporting spaces manned. One minute thirty seconds after the alarm, the ship was manned and ready for whatever

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might come. Fire control was locked on the target. Guns were loaded and synched to the fire control signals. The Captain, in his bathrobe and slippers, was in CIC, gazing intently into one of the radar consoles. Then...

“RANGE TO TARGET 8 MILES – IFF – SIR I HAVE AN IFF RETURN!”

“GUN CONTROL HOLD FIRE – TARGET MAY BE FRIENDLY” This seemed a sensible precaution at this juncture.

“Sir, Jolly Green reports transiting our location – says his IFF may be a little weak”, reported RD1 Stone.

That bastard! Now he tells us. Too low to track on air search, too far out for surface search radar, I had no idea he would be overflying us on his way south.

“SECURE FROM GENERAL QUARTERS”

So now it’s nearly 3:30. I’m off watch at 3:45. Everyone’s up

already...

“Stone: who’s my relief? “

“Mr. Jordan, sir – Weapons Officer“

Great – I dial down to his GQ station – “Hey Wes – you’re up next – why don’t you

come on up and relieve me now?”

“Screw you, Heins – I’ll see you in 15 minutes!”

## Lost over Vietnam by Dick Jones

In going through flight school, I had two good friends, both US Marine Lts at the time. While studying at NAS Saufley, Pensacola, Fla, we many times car pooled with a number of other basic flight students. One of these good friends we will call "Lt Smith," just to protect his rightful identity. Smith was a flight student, but Smith did not like to fly! How, and more importantly, why could this be? Do not know, but it was. I remember many times while carpooling to Saufley on a day when Smith was scheduled to fly, we encountered the need to stop somewhere along the way so that Smith could get out of the car to throw up because he was so upset about his upcoming flight that day. Talk about strange! At any rate, Smith completed the T-34 syllabus satisfactorily and, in fact, actually advanced to the T-2, Buckeye, basic jet syllabus at NAAS Chase Field, Meridian, MS. He also completed that program and advanced to the F-9 and F-11 programs in Texas. Smith got his USN Wings of Gold in Texas and received orders to a USMC A-4 squadron. Smith ended up in Vietnam same time that I was there, 1966-1967. He was assigned to an A-4 squadron flying out of the East Field, Chu Lai. At the time, a new pilot would typically spend 6+ months in an operational squadron. They were then typically assigned to some alternate billet, possibly a job with the Marine Aircraft Group or an assignment in the field as a forward air controller with an infantry unit, or some other similar billet. Once Smith had flown enough missions to be considered respectable, he lobbied hard to get out of the squadron as soon as possible. Smith got a job with MAG-12 at Chu Lai. After assignment to such a billet, the newly reassigned pilot still had to complete enough flight hours each month to qualify for flight pay and continuation in a flight status. Most did so via periodic temporary assignment back to a squadron to fly on that squadron's flight schedule in order to acquire the needed flight hours. One might also be assigned to ferry aircraft both to and from Japan where the heavier maintenance was done on the aircraft. Smith worked his way into those ferry assignments and completed a number of these

to/from ferry flights. On what I recall was his third or fourth upcoming flight leg from NAS Cubi Point, PI back to the USMC base at Chu Lai, RVN, a memorable event occurred. The Cubi Point air controllers operated under the call sign "Yardstick." It was common knowledge that their radio capabilities were marginal, meaning that they frequently had limited or no radio contact that could be maintained. Cubi was also famous for a Tacan site (radio navigation site) that did not lock on well and frequently gave one an unlocked, or "spinning," tacan needle in the cockpit. Well, Smith launched out of Cubi one clear afternoon headed for Chu Lai, RVN on what was his third or fourth such flight. As one might expect, neither his radio contact with Yardstick nor his Tacan site lock worked well. Oh well, "it's just another day of flying out of NAS Cubi," was Smith's reaction. The flight from Cubi, PI to Chu Lai, RVN is about 500 miles, almost absolutely due west, compass heading 270 degrees. At 350+ knots, one should begin seeing the Vietnam coastline in 75 minutes or so. Approximately half way across that 500 mile distance and right on that 270 degree course, there is a huge reef right there in the middle of the South China Sea. It is donut shaped. That means that one can see a light blue/green shallow water donut down there in the middle of a deep blue South China Sea. It is actually quite pretty, especially to one who can use it as a backup navigation aid when making that 500 mile trip. On a clear day when one is at cruising altitude, it can be seen from 50+ miles away. A pilot sighting that reef knows that he is "right on track" in heading for Chu Lai. Well, Smith never saw that reef! Remember that his Tacan had been spinning and he had no radio contact with anyone for approximately the past 30+ minutes. If things had been working properly, his Tacan needle in the cockpit should have been pointing to the Cubi Point Tacan behind him for the past 30 minutes or so. At approximately the halfway point in the flight, proper procedure would have had Smith retuning the Tacan to Danang Tacan out ahead of him and retuning the radio to a Danang radio frequency. If working properly, the Tacan needle would have swung around and begun pointing at the nose of his aircraft and toward the Danang Tacan up ahead. At some point, he should have made radio contact with Danang. When he made that Tacan adjustment to the Danang Tacan station, the needle did not lock on to Danang Tacan, but kept spinning as it had been doing

since he departed Cubi. THEN THE TACAN LOCKED ON. It pointed approximately 40 degrees off to his starboard side. His reaction was to say to himself the following. "Self, there must be big winds out here today. I have been blown well South of my intended flight path and that must be why I did not see the halfway reef." He turned northward to a heading of approximately 320 degrees and put the Tacan needle on his nose to correct and get back on intended flight path. He was now flying happily along at 320 degrees and headed for home at Chu Lai. In Viet Nam, we had some potential problems areas with our Tacan equipment. First, it was at times subject to a built in error called a "forty degree lock on." It was also suspected that the "bad guys" had installed a decoy Tacan somewhere up north of Channel 109 which was a Tacan site in the vicinity of the DMZ. Smith pushed on to the Northwest until he finally sighted a coastline up ahead at about just over an hour of total flight time. Reaction, "ahh good, getting closer to home." Not long after, Smith found himself over the coastline, and there below him was an airfield. He spiraled down from cruise altitude to approximately 14,000 ft and began circling the airfield while attempting to identify what he intended to be the field at Chu Lai. "Ah good, concrete runway, revetments, gun positions, etc." "But I do not recognize the field as being Chu Lai." He felt that the wind had pushed him really far southward and that he was circling the new Air Force field recently built approximately 90 miles south of Chu Lai. I no longer remember the name of that field. At any rate, his conclusion was to turn northward, fly off the approximate 90 miles, and land at home base of Chu Lai. He turned northward up the coastline and climbed back to cruising altitude. Time of flight was now approximately 80 minutes or so and fuel was beginning to be a concern. After flying northward for 10 minutes or so, Smith decided that he was not doing the smartest thing that he could think of. He was lost in an unfriendly environment, getting low on fuel, could communicate with no one, and he was flying northward into an environment that was becoming more unfriendly with each mile that he flew. He turned southward and flew back over the airfield he had just left. Back down to a lower altitude and circling the field. His radio suddenly crackled on Guard frequency. Guard is a frequency normally reserved for emergency situations. "Aircraft on the 010 degree radial, 180 miles, Danang Tacan, come up frequency

XXX.XX. Smith switched frequencies on his radio and checked in. The radio crackled on the new frequency. "Aircraft on the 010 degree radial, 180 miles, Danang Tacan, go Buster, descend to minimum altitude practical, vector 190 degrees." "Buster is code for 100 percent power. In other words, go fast! On previous flights, Smith had become accustomed to running practice radar intercepts for the controlling agency in Danang, and he thought them to be setting such an intercept situation. Smith responded, "Danang radio, this is XXXX. Please be advised that I cannot play today." Danang radio's response-"Aircraft on the 010 degree radial, 180 miles, Danang Tacan, go Buster, descend to minimum altitude practical , vector 190 degrees." It was a repeat of their previous transmission. Smith's response-"Danang radio, I told you that I cannot play today. I am lost and low on fuel. I need your help for vector to Chu Lai." Danang radio repeated their previous transmission for the third time. Smith's respons-"Danang radio, I told you that I cannot play today. I need your help. Give me your controller number. I am going to turn you in." Danang came back once more thusly-"PLEASE SIR, Aircraft on the 010 degree radial , 180 miles, Danang Tacan, go buster, descend to minimum altitude altitude practical, vector 190, 180 miles for Danang airfield." Smith had twice been circling the Red Chinese Mig base on Hainan Island, North Vietnam, and did not realize it. We always speculated that he was not shot down as they hoped that he was a defector with a USN A-4, Skyhawk aircraft. This is the same base where a USN P-3, Orion, aircraft landed about ten years ago after being "buzzed" and damaged by a North Vietnamese Mig aircraft. Smith made it to Danang. More speculaton was that they would either pull his wings for such a stunt or they would give him an award for getting the aircraft home in an undamaged status. Don't know what ever happened to "Smith," but now you know the rest of the story. Be well all. Blessings. RCJ.

## Through the Looking Glass by Dave Moore

***PROLOGUE:*** As the Navy began to ramp up for the Vietnam War, they introduced several exciting new programs such as Swift Boats and PBRs that really appealed to young men. However, I heard from several sources that those who aspired to a naval career should stay in the "blue water Navy" as service in the "brown water Navy" would not enhance your long term career.

My year in Vietnam, and some of the 6 months leading to it, was strange in many regards-perhaps even weird or surreal. I refer to the early months of this story as "Through the Looking Glass".

With apologies to Lewis Carroll.

I was serving on a FRAM I destroyer enjoying a Midshipman Cruise as we returned from a port visit to San Francisco during the Great San Francisco "Summer of Love" - 1967. The helo brought the mail which included a post card from my good friends at BuPers. The formatted post card had three blank spots with the critical pieces of information: Detach in September; Report DUINS at NavPhibBase Coronado in October; ULTDUSTA: Advisor Coastal Group 26 (Junks). For the next two months I contemplated a future straight out of "Terry and the Pirates" on a big sailing junk like I had seen in Hong Kong. WTF

The three months of training in Coronado was really good and roughly divided into three parts: History, Customs and Culture of Vietnam; Tactical Training at Camp Pendleton and Warner Springs; and Language Instruction. The SERE Training took place in mid-December just before Christmas Vacation. Monday night was

sleeping on the beach at North Island in our green utilities; we were invited to dig for clams with our hands if we were hungry and so inclined. Tuesday and Wednesday nights were really cold at Warner Springs. Groups of 7 or 8 were given a half a parachute to keep warm which didn't help much. The irony escaped no one that we were freezing our asses off to get ready for duty in Vietnam. A healthy amount of homophobia kept us from getting "too close" to each other under the parachute but by dawn we were all nestled like spoons. Thursday night was the POW Camp phase that was much like Plebe summer. About 4 am on Friday came the best bowl of oatmeal I have ever had in my life.

I think we completed training on Friday, 26 January, 1968 - Very normal event. We were each given 3x5 index card telling us to call Tiger 4110 when we reached Tan Son Nhut airport and everything would be taken care of for us. We all proceeded in different directions and schedules. I went to Norfolk to see my mother about the time the TV news started to talk about something called the Tet Offensive. I reassured her that the news people were blowing this whole thing up out of proportion.

By 6 February I showed up with my B-4 bag at Travis AFB and proceeded to the assigned gate. There stood the brightest YELLOW Braniff Airlines plane you ever saw in your life. Since the TV was still reporting fighting at Tan Son Nhut airport and Cholon areas, I cogently inquired where we would be changing planes. "Oh, no. This plane goes all the way".

As we paused at the end of the runway at Clark AFB, the pilot of the YELLOW airplane hit the throttles. Just then, the music system started playing the song by the Vince Guaraldi Trio - "Cast Your Fate to the Wind". I took note that I was sitting in lucky seat 13F.

We landed at Tan Son Nhut on 8 February late in the afternoon or early evening. Forget dialing Tiger 4110. We were told the last convoy of the day for downtown had left but we were welcome to settle onto any concrete of our choosing for the night. Luckily, a few hours later a convoy did show up and we went downtown. The BOQ

bed was all one could hope for. The employees had not returned to work since Tet broke out but we were welcome to make our own sandwiches in the kitchen. We were also assigned watches on the roof (and perhaps elsewhere). There was no longer fighting evident in the city but at night from the roof you could still see lots of parachute flares and some tracer rounds in the night on the outskirts of Saigon. The streets were still pretty empty of traffic.

A day or so later, I received a phone call from my old plebe summer roommate, Ed Hutcheson, the Protocol Officer at COMNAVFORV. I was invited to a Sunday noon lunch and he would pick me up but I needed to wear my khakis. He took me to The International House (commonly called I-House) which is run by the State Department for their own purposes. We walked into a very large room with lights dimmed with many candles burning in candelabras. Long tables with white linen, vases with flowers, massive amounts of food in silver serving pieces, a group of 4 or 5 musicians playing soft music. And floating around the room were gossamer visions of lovely Vietnamese ladies wearing their traditional ao-dai dresses. Sure beat ham sandwiches in the BOQ.

At COMNAVFORV Hqtrs I met the Senior Naval Advisor, had several briefings, received green utility uniforms, black beret, an M-16 and lots of "web gear". One briefer said: "You noticed that we gave you lots of web gear. The USN has the coastline under control with their Swift Boats and other units. What we now want you to do is go inland." Mentally I checked the front of my uniform to make sure it still said US Navy.

I flew to NhaTang in a C-7A Caribou so I could meet my immediate boss, a Navy Commander who ran the Second Coastal Zone and its Coastal Surveillance Center and all Navy advisors therein. I stayed in the BOQ there for one night. On the second floor of the BOQ was a bar/lounge where I sought refreshment. An officer brought out a cassette tape recorder with a tape for me to listen to. It seems that located kitty-corner behind the BOQ was a nice house with large lot where the Korean Army general lived in charge of security in that part of Vietnam. During Tet the VC rushed into the house to kill the

general but he was not there. The Koreans surrounded the house with the VC inside and completely dismantled the house with small arms fire. The officers in the BOQ just kept on partying and making recordings of the action. As I listened to the tape, the gun fire was amazing but so was the sound of people ordering more drinks while the Beatles "Penny Lane" was playing in the background.

I hitched a ride in the back of a 2-1/2 Ton truck to Cam Ranh Market Time Base at the most southern tip of the peninsula. There on the beach near the PCF pier was our EN2 waiting for me. I said hello - let's go out to Binh Ba Island. He responded that a new laundry facility had just opened on the Market Time Base and the BM2 would be back shortly with the first load of fresh laundry. He soon arrived but there was another delay. Every other Wednesday our four man advisor team was visited by a Red Cross girl(s). Sure enough, in a few minutes this cute Red Cross girl arrives with a very nice pineapple upside down sheet cake. All right ! ! ! ! The four of us got in our very own Coastal Group 26 Advisor boat. It was a US Army 12-14' plastic boat which I believe was designed for crossing rivers in Europe once before being thrown away. The plastic is very thin. There are no seats or thwarts. The engine was about 5 or 10 horsepower so our one mile trip was quite leisurely.

As we rounded a rocky point, there stood my new home dominated by two large, two-story yellow stucco buildings with Mediterranean red tile roofs. Built by the French Army prior to WW2, they featured high ceilings and a wonderful balcony that wrapped completely around the second floor. The four man advisor team had one half of the entire second floor. We could have stabled 6 horses or cows inside if we had wanted to (and coaxed them up the stairs). Below us were one room apartments, no windows, for the VNN sailors and their families.

We had no running water; the entire base survived off a garden hose at the PCF Pier. But we had a propane stove and a kerosene refrigerator that was able to keep our sodas and beer cold. The four of us took turns with all domestic chores. The base had a big 40 KW generator the Navy got from the USAF but it had never worked. We also had a 10 KW generator that provided partial power for the VN

officers in their Headquarters building and the Advisors and the family community center with the only TV. Coleman lanterns provided much of our lighting. The advisors also had their own outhouse nearby painted haze gray and the door featured a lock and a crescent moon.

The VN personnel on the base always gave us knowing smiles whenever the Red Cross girls visited because they well knew how the French did things. In fact, there were three small brothel building beside the (ungated) main gate in the same Mediterranean architecture as our main buildings. Each of the abandoned brothels was barely big enough for a card table and three cots. I do not think the VNs believed our protestations of innocence.

Our small family of 4 advisors was rounded out by three dogs. My predecessor was a conservative person from the South and he named the dogs: the black and white dog was called Great Society; the brindle female was Eleanor Roosevelt, and the yellow dog was named Stokely Carmichael. Many months later we adopted a black puppy we named Stewpot. They were wonderful watchdogs who barked and growled at any VN visitors to our abode. They did not like the Vietnamese especially when the base dog butcher who lived below us would butcher a dog about once a month - a slow and noisy procedure.

The large building I lived in is still standing and can be seen in the photographs of Binh Ba Island (Cam Ranh Bay) on Google Earth.

## Service In The Field Artillery by Steve Jacoby

### In Germany and Vietnam

My command in West Germany was of a 155mm self propelled howitzer battery. We were located in the historic and idyllic town of Bamberg.

The Army sent me to their German language school so that I could perform civil affairs duties if necessary. Since I was able to speak German, my duties were not solely limited to technical aspects of being an artillery officer and a battery commander. I was actually called upon to be the civil affairs officer they needed from time to time and was required to translate at various social affairs on the post that involved German civilians and German military officers.

One of my most interesting duties was to patch up our biggest blunder. On a cold, icy and snowy morning, a convoy of our self propelled howitzers was moving through a German village near the Kaserne on the way to field maneuvers. One of our biggest guns started slipping down the hill leading into the village and turned sideways - thus projecting its large cannon over the side of the road. As much as the crew tried to get it stopped, they were not successful until the cannon took out the entire side of a German house and destroyed 150 feet of fence. Our boys thought it was quite funny to see the startled German family sitting at their table having breakfast completely exposed to the elements from one side of the room. However, the American and German officials were not quite so happy, and I was sent as a representative of the Army to deliver the humble apologies of the command and to reimburse them financially for the damage to their property.

Perhaps one of my most pleasant duties in Germany was to play the role of Santa Claus or Kris Cringle for two Christmases at the German orphan's Christmas Party. The German Santa Claus differs from the

American version in that he wears a red stocking cap and sports a brown rather than a white beard. Instead of having a big black belt around his gigantic stomach, Kris Cringle does not need to be quite so fat and gets by with tying a white rope cord around his waist. So, that was me – good old Kris Cringle.

The first year that I was Santa Claus, we had about 60 orphan children come to our mess hall for the affair. I particularly enjoyed the fact that our battalion ladies organization obtained the services of a number of local fraulines to assist in handling the children and communicate with them. I not only had fun communicating with the children in German but also established some good relationships with the fraulines.

We arranged to give each child three gifts. The first was a toy, the second an item of clothing to wear and the third a small parcel of candy and fruit. The children were just overjoyed for having any gifts at all for Christmas, and they particularly enjoyed the games organized for them by Kris Cringle. 2

By the time the second year of my stay in Germany in 1965 rolled around, my reputation as Kris Cringle had grown far and wide and I had 135 orphans for my second annual Christmas party.

### **Back To America At Last**

After arriving back at the caserne from our final European vacation, I learned that I had orders to join an artillery battalion in the states that was preparing to move as a unit to Viet Nam. Two weeks later we were on a Transworld Airline Boeing 707 on the way back to the Air Force Base in New Jersey. It was about an 8 hour flight on the TWA Boeing 707 from the Rhine Main air base in Frankfort West Germany to the field in New Jersey.

We arrived in the dark of midnight, and Melissa and I went to sleep after getting off the plane in the quarters that had been provided for us. It was like a dream, just a few hours before we had been in the foreign land we had lived in for three years. We had transgressed through a dark tunnel in the night. When we woke up in the morning, we were back in the United States.

I will always remember catching the bus to go over to Philadelphia to pick up my automobile at the ship yard. It was such a joy to see a sign in English and to board and pay for the fare in real American money. The driver even spoke English. As a matter of fact, all of the people around me were speaking English.

It was a beautiful fall day at the end of 1966, and all of the trees were turning color in the high class suburban communities that we passed through on the way to Philadelphia. It was the time of the morning for the local children to go to school, and their conversation with their old friend the bus driver as they got on and off the bus was music to my ears. I was so happy to be back in America, and until that moment I did not realize how much I had really missed it and what a good country it is and how much it has to offer.

As I looked around me in these early hours as the sun was just beginning to illuminate the new day, I saw many things that I had missed for the three years that I was overseas. I was so happy to be back, I got chills up and down my back and tears of joy came to my eyes.

Melissa and I split our 30 days leave between our two families and then headed for my new assignment at Ft. Bragg North Carolina. We purchased a house there because we knew it was where Melissa

would be staying while I would be serving in Viet Nam with my new unit.

My first three months with the new outfit were spent in quiet yet busy and hectic preparation for overseas shipment to Viet Nam. Finally, all of our equipment was packed and on its way, and the dreaded night had come that I was to depart for a year's separation from my family. There were no bands or cheering crowds to hail our departure. It was as if we were going on another training mission a short distance away. It was not World War I or II or Korea, it was just a battle that was going on in that distant Asian land that nobody in the states really gave a dam about and wanted to wash their hands of. I got the feeling from passers by as we left that they were just glad it wasn't them that had to go. 3

I had never been able to cry, but the tears welled in my eyes and streamed uncontrollably down my face as I had to say goodbye to Missy and my 18 month old baby daughter. She was able to conceal her emotions and hold her tears back much better than I. After saying goodbye, I had to walk alone in the darkness of the night to dry my eyes and gain enough composure to face my troops and make the move to the flight line for take off.

To most of the younger men in the battery, going to Viet Nam was a great adventure. They had not yet acquired the ties of a family and children. However, I could see that the strain of going away from their families for a year had taken its effect on our senior noncommissioned officers. Their eyes were as red and puffy as mine, and all of us were polite enough not to look each other in the eye. We just went about our business to get the job done.

### **Odyssey to Viet Nam**

We started our long journey to Viet Nam from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina and flew nonstop across country in our C-130 transport plane to Travis Air Force Base in California. We stayed there just long enough for refueling and processing and to get some free time to take in the acts of Carol Doda and some of the other topless Go-Go girls in San Francisco.

From this point on in our travel half way around the world, our aircraft became a veritable maintenance headache. We landed at Hickham field in Hawaii and were delayed for 2 days while various fuel line problems were being taken care of. I did not object because we were not only able to see Pearl Harbor but the gorgeous scenery at Waikiki Beach as well.

Our next stop was Kwajalein which is a remote island spot on the water in the Marshall Islands. In fact it is such a small spot that as we landed on it in our C-130 we could see water on all four sides as the plane taxied and made the various turns on the runway. The only current reason for Kwajalein existence is that it is the end of the Air Force missile testing range and the point from which the Nike Zeus and Sprint missiles are launched.

All Kwajalein amounted to was a piece of volcanic rock sticking up out of the ocean topped with huge radar masts and missile launching areas. This god forsaken place was actually a duty station for some

people, and they certainly had to be a special breed of animal to put up with it. We were delayed again at Kwajalein for mechanical difficulties with our C-130 but we were able to pass the time by feeding ourselves with steaks at the officers club and getting some exercise in the swimming pool.

Our final stop was Guam which at that time was the primary base for the launch of B52 Bombing Raids against North and South Viet Nam. We spent three days there because one of our four engines on the aircraft had to be replaced. As I think back now, we were quite lucky that we didn't all end up victims of an air crash some where in the middle of the Pacific. The only thing to pass the time at Guam besides eating steak 4

and drinking at the officers club was to learn as much as we could about the B52s and their crews.

Another captain and I buddied up with one of the crews upon arrival at Guam. The next night they slipped us aboard their aircraft to go along on a bombing mission which was to drop a load of bombs on suspected enemy concentrations along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Even though it was an actual combat raid, the air of the whole thing was quite relaxed because the crew knew that there would be no resistance met during the entire 21 hour mission.

Once they got the bird into the air, they slipped it into automatic pilot and began cooking their TV dinners, reading books and playing chess to while away the hours. The actual bombing run was quite routine and could be controlled automatically by remote radio control stations that locked us in on the target. However, the bombardier took the system out of automatic and let me push the button to release the bombs. I never did find out what effect our raid had. Nevertheless, I am sure it came as a surprise to some poor unsuspecting Vietnamese, because we were flying so high we could neither be seen nor heard from the ground.

Although I had navigation courses at Annapolis, I marveled at the ability of the crew to find that tiny island of Guam out there in the middle of the ocean as we returned. The sight of all those B52s lined up on the island was quite awesome as we made our approach. Each aircraft was isolated in its own revetment with its tall black tail stuck up above the walls like a mysterious yet powerful shark slithering through the water yet showing its fin.

Two days later, we took off on the final leg of our 12,600 mile journey to our ultimate destination, the air field at Pleiku in the Central Highlands of South Viet Nam. Our group was a small battalion advance party of officer sand men. The mission was to put up a headquarters and prepare an area for the arrival of the rest of the battalion.

None of us had been into combat before, and we each had our own visions as to what we would see as we touched down in Viet Nam. I pictured a highly guarded Air Field surrounded by considerable defenses. I fully expected to have our C130 get shot at as we attempted to land and that I would hear rifle shots and artillery resounding in the background as we got off the aircraft. I further

envisioned that the air field would be cut out of the virgin jungle and that after debarking from our craft we would travel through the woods to another area that had been hewn out of the virgin timber.

I then assumed after an initial briefing we would be dropped into yet another area to clear away the trees, strip the vegetation and establish our headquarters command post. My comrades and I discussed these very thoughts we were having, and they imagined much the same things as I did.

We were all quite excited when the crew informed us that the coast of Viet Nam was in sight and we would be passing into the combat zone. Like the big heroes that we all were, we donned our flack jackets, steel helmets, camouflage gear, ammunition belts, hand grenades and weapons and nervously awaited our first combat landing. Nobody talked too 5

much, and we all understood what was going through the minds of others. We pretended to be very brave, but deep inside we were all scared to death. At least I was!

The landing we made in the C130 was the first of quite a few of the same type I would experience in my year in the war zone. Rather than make a long straight-in approach, the pilot flew the airplane at an altitude of several thousand feet right over the air field and then spiraled down so that the aircraft would be exposed to areas outside of the defense perimeter for the minimum length of time. Enemy snipers just loved to bring down 7 million dollar aircrafts with a few automatic rifle shots.

My first landing of this type was probably the most difficult of all, because the aircraft was loaded to the gills with heavy equipment that we had brought from the states. Making the spiral decent, the pilot literally stood our big four engine monster on its wing and rapidly spiraled it on down to a short approach. This maneuver was followed by the application of full reverse thrust of the propellers and the heavy application of brakes. All in all, it was a very skillful operation and quite thrilling for the first time.

In our preparations for debarking the aircraft, we had even given out assignments for manning the perimeter and for unloading the equipment.

Much to our dismay, upon taxiing up to the parking area, we found it to be a bright warm sunshiny and generally rather pleasant day in Pleiku, South Viet Nam. The temperature was in the high seventies, and there were no sounds of combat activity in the area.

We were met very casually by two jeeps which carried the artillery group commander and his operations officer. We were very shocked to see that they did not have escorts and their armament was limited to their 45 caliber pistols and steel pots. No flack jacket, no hand grenades, no ammunition belt, just their pots and pistols. I was quite relieved at this sight, but some of the younger fellows were dismayed that they would have to wait a few days to kill their first Viet Cong. Soon, a few other vehicles arrived and loaded our personal gear to head for the group headquarters area. Other crews were to come out later to unload the aircraft. It turned out that the area was really quite quiet and that it was generally harassed only during hours of darkness by enemy sniper, mortar and rocket attacks. We found that

the name of our new home was to be Artillery Hill which was just a ten minute ride from the air field. The artillery group headquarters sat on the top of the hill and the headquarters of its assigned battalions were sprawled along the hillside and around the circumference of the hill.

The characteristics of this central highland plain were just the opposite of what I had imagined. There were a few bushes and shrubs, a few rice paddies and lots of open fields. There were probably only about ten trees on the entire artillery hill complex. It turned out that the area that we were to live in was either dry and very dusty or wet and very muddy. Both conditions were quite undesirable. After a hot meal and a few get-acquainted drinks in the officer's hutch, we were assigned an old vacated building as our headquarters and 6

the area around it at the foot of artillery hill for our base camp. We moved out smartly to the area and pitched our tents to get ready to bed down for the night. Fears ran high again as nightfall descended upon us because we were really not sure what to expect.

The perimeter of the camp consisted of triple concertina wire and defensive fox hole dugouts every 50 feet. It was manned by walking patrols during daylight hours, and every fox hole contained two guards during hours of darkness. The wire was also well ensconced with claymore mines that could be triggered from the foxholes, booby traps and tin cans with rocks in them that would rattle and detect the presence of an enemy soldier trying to cut his way through. The defenses of artillery hill were actually quite good because we always kept a few cannons on hand to sock it to anybody who decided to get bold and attack. As a matter of fact, prior to the time we arrived the hill had never been under severe enemy attack.

As darkness settled upon us, we crawled into our sleeping bags with our rifles and grenades in easy range and waited to see what would happen next. Within the hour, there was a tremendous rat tat tat noise outside of the perimeter, flashes and flares, and we thought certainly that we were under attack. After re-containing our hearts which had jumped into our throats, we were able to scramble out of bed, dress and see what was going on.

It turned out that all of this activity was merely the highly routine process of test firing the 50 caliber machine guns and other weapons that defended our whole complex. We soon were to get used to these noises and the sight and sound of perimeter flares going off at regular intervals.

We immediately became quite involved in the details of arranging for the arrival of our main body of men and supplies. They were due to arrive at the port of Qui Nhon within the week and travel over land by convoy with our Howitzers and heavy equipment to Pleiku. I was certainly glad that being in the advance party I would not have to face the dangers of such a convoy during my first few days in Viet Nam. My duty instead was to set up the communications network and get power lines run from our main camp generator down to our headquarters area. The power lines and the communications antennas etc. had to be run on telephone poles. After completing an extensive tour of the Pleiku Air Base, the 4th division camp, the city of

Pleiku and any other place I could think of, I was unable to find any power poles.

I soon learned from the group communications officer that the nearest available poles were in Qui Nhon and they had to literally be stolen or midnight requisitioned. So, even before my friends in the main body of our battalion arrived, I was trapped into making the overland trip from Pleiku through Ankhe and on over to Qui Nhon with the group communications officer – otherwise known as Dirty John.

John had been in country for almost 10 months by this time, and he was not too concerned about the danger of the trip. As a matter of fact, he was quite successful in alleviating most of my fears by relating that he had not been shot at once since he had been in this part of Viet Nam. He also told me of the many female contacts that he had in Qui Nhon 7

and said that he would be happy to take me along on a few escapades in the big city if I was interested.

Being the hunter and seeker that I am, I told him that yes, I would certainly be interested. I also asked that he do his level best to get me to Qui Nhon safely. The trip was a distance of about 200 miles, but because of the poor conditions of the shell pocked roads, it took us every bit of 8 hours to make the trip.

There are few times that I can remember that I felt as insecure as I did traveling through no mans land not knowing if we were to be waylaid by an enemy patrol or sniper or not. Large parts of our route were well cleared, and there was a good distance between the road and the tree line. On the other hand, there were other areas where the tree line came right to the edge of the road, and in these places we had very little visibility to see what was in store for us ahead. My constant companion, the M16 rifle, was fully loaded with a double clip set and in the full automatic position for any emergency situation. Although it was quite a tense trip for me, we didn't encounter any suspicious individuals and met only a hand full of army vehicles that were traveling the other way.

This trip was the first real close look that I had had at the Vietnamese people and I got a good chance to see how they lived, as we passed through or near the quite primitive Montagnard villages in the highlands which slowly transitioned to regular Vietnamese villages as we drew close to the seacoast and the port of Qui Nhon.

I am thankful that the trip was quite uneventful and served mainly as a get-acquainted tour for me. After getting settled in a transient officers billet in the city, Dirty John and I made a tour of the local logistics complexes to try to locate our telephone poles.

### **God, On My Own Little Island**

Within two short weeks, I completed my duties of coordinating the setup of the base camp and battalion headquarters. Just at the time I had completed these tasks, one of my fellow officers who was in command of the C Battery was wounded. I was given his command. I would not have received this fascinating job under other circumstances, because I had already submitted my resignation twice.

My commanding officer knew I would be released from the Army

upon return to the states or shortly thereafter. In spite of this, I was the senior Captain in the battalion and really was the one most qualified to take command. The battery was located among the remains of what used to be the village of Duc Co at a position just a few kilometers from the border of Cambodia and the famed Ho Chi Min Trail.

Contrary to most of the American public beliefs or understandings, the Ho Chi Min Trail is not just a single road, but a whole network of roads and trails that wind their way down through the triple canopy jungles from North Viet Nam and Laos to provide the main supply arteries for communist offensive operations in South Viet Nam. Quite a number of these trails were located in the Duc Co area, and the mission 8

of our fire base was to be an island in the midst of the enemy from which allied search and destroy operations were conducted.

It was quite an interesting game of Russian roulette we played with our friends with the slant eyes, sandals, shorts and bags of rice. Our Infantry and armored patrols conducted their operations during the hours of daylight protected by the umbrella of artillery support that my Howitzers provided. The enemy knew it would be this way and holed up in their scattered hiding places during the day. They were difficult to find out there in no man's land, and we seldom ran across more than 4 or 5 of them at a time.

After a long day of struggling through the rice paddies in the sweltering humid heat, our men would return to their camps within our well defended perimeter. Their noisy departure, of course, was the signal for the turnover of the territory to the bad guys. They again commenced their operations under the cover of darkness.

Nevertheless, I am sure they lived in constant fear of being hit by the barrages of our Howitzers which sent artillery projectiles thundering through the heavens in the darkness like small locomotives running completely out of control.

In spite of the harassment and interdiction by our artillery, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars still managed to slip their supplies through the area right under our noses and continue their offensive operations and well known terrorist attacks.

We fully expected to have our fire base mortared about three nights a week, and it happened on a very regular schedule. All of our control points and sleeping quarters were well dug in under ground and covered with thick layers of sand bags. Thus, it took a direct hit through an entrance to our underground quarters to produce casualties on our side.

Once the enemy began to fire mortars at us, we either visually or by radar pinpointed their firing locations and fired our own counter-battery program which generally silenced the threat. We were never in fear of being overrun by any enemy force – whatever its size - because we had our six artillery pieces positioned in a circle with each of them covering a 60 degree piece of the perimeter pie. Our beehive rounds were also available at all times right next to the breech of each gun. These were special antipersonnel rounds which contained many thousands of little round pointed flechettes which

when fired spread around the center of the firing line and far to the left and right. They literally blew down everything in range. To my knowledge, only one sizeable enemy force ever tried to overrun one of our artillery firing bases, and it met with the terrible, devastating defeat.

One of my friends (whom I had met at nuclear weapons school in Germany) commanded the artillery battery and fire base that the enemy tried to overpower. He had his troops fend off the attackers as best they could by conventional means using rifles, machine guns and claymore mines. When it could be seen that the enemy force probably numbered well over 200 and that they were starting to make headway, my captain friend gave the order for all pieces to load one beehive round and stand by. 9

It was soon seen that the battle was about to be lost. As the enemy started forging their way over the wire, he gave the command for all hands to stop firing and hit the deck. An instant later, he fired all six Howitzers at once covering the entire 360 degree perimeter with barbed steel flechettes.

When I talked to him afterward, he said that after the roar of the howitzers died off into the night, there was almost complete and utter silence on the battle field. In that there was no moon, all that he and his men could hear were the wailing screams of the Orientals who had not been killed instantly by the barrage. The remaining hours of darkness were filled with the sounds of the surviving North Vietnamese dragging their casualties off into the jungle and concealing their dead.

As the sun came up in the morning, the entire perimeter was encircled with stains of red interrupted only by pieces of flesh and uniforms that could not be carried away. Further, there were 15 or 20 bodies that had become entangled in the barbed wire that the enemy could not take with them. It was estimated that of the force of 200 who attacked the artillery base only 50 survived.

The word got around quite rapidly to the enemy about the awesome destructive capability of the beehive round, and none of the artillery batteries in the entire First Field Force had too much difficulty with mass attacks from that time on.

The command of my fire base was really a considerable responsibility. It was entirely surrounded by terrain that was "no mans land" during the daytime and the enemy's at night. Our fire base could be reached only during the daylight hours by armored convoy or helicopter. In addition to my artillery battery of 120 men, I had command over two mechanized infantry platoons, two M60 tanks and crews and some Vietnamese mercenaries.

We also had a Green Beret Special Forces intelligence unit that camped with us. However, these guys were so stuck up and elite that we didn't talk to them. By special order they were relieved from the responsibility of sharing the guard duty. Our only good communications with the battalion headquarters and my commander was over the radio which, of course, could be monitored by the enemy. Thus, it was my responsibility to feed, clothe, arm and motivate my men as best I could because I was the senior officer

present.

Aside from those few excruciating minutes when we were under attack each week, the routine of operating the fire base was really quite dull. It wasn't as exciting and inspiring as a lot of young men think. As a matter of fact, like a lot of wartime activities, it was really very boring.

There was one incident when I had to make perhaps one of the biggest decisions of my life. We worked our men quite hard around the clock, and one morning the whole world came to a frothing disappointing head for one of my men. He picked up an M16 rifle with a double clip of ammunition on it and started taking pot shots at everybody within the perimeter.

The thing that made it particularly difficult is that he decided to do this right in the middle of a fire mission when we were supporting one of

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our infantry platoons that was in contact with the enemy. Thus, it was essential that we get our rounds on the way and right on target in the most expeditious manner possible. Our executive officer turned the guns over to the chief of the firing battery and approached the young Specialist 4th Class and tried to talk to him. He didn't have much effect upon the man, because the Specialist shot and killed our mascot dog and then pumped a round into our ammunition dump. Through the opening in my bunker, I saw him train his M16 on my Exec, and I immediately picked up the radio to call my battalion commander for instructions. I quickly outlined the situation to the Colonel. Being 35 miles away, he said nothing except that the situation was entirely in my hands and that he would back me to the hilt no matter what decision I might choose to make.

I then came out of the bunker and stood around the corner out of sight where I could hear what was going on. I discovered that the moment was near when this errant young man was going to empty his rifle into the body of my executive officer. I drew my 45 caliber pistol and stepped around the corner at the specialist's right rear and fired a shot intending that it hit the boy in the right shoulder and knock the rifle from his grasp. Fate then came into play because as the hammer in my pistol was about to make contact with the round, he raised his right arm to shoot my lieutenant. My bullet was already well on its way and it entered his rib cage under his right arm killing him instantly.

Five minutes before, I had been quite bored with my existence, and now my whole life had turned into a messy quagmire as I moved to determine the condition of the man whom I had just shot. Tears started to uncontrollably run down my face.

My lieutenant looked into my eyes, understanding immediately my plight. He said "It was either him or me, and I am glad it's over". We could both hear the background call on the radio for another fire mission, and my Exec left me standing there with one of my own troopers dead at my feet.

After what must have been just a few minutes, but a period that seemed so long to me, I recovered my senses and asked two of the other men to carry the body to the medic tent. I called the Colonel on the radio to inform him of what had happened. He took the call in flight in his helicopter as he was already on the way to the base.

He took the body back with him to battalion headquarters and wrote the boy's parents to describe how heroically he had died in combat in the service of his country.

I was greeted the next morning by a board of officers from the Field Force Headquarters headed by a Brigadier General who was appointed to investigate all of the happenings of the previous day. After a thorough review, I was exonerated from wrongdoing, and it was concluded by the Board that the right action had been taken. They considered, as I had, the criticality of the situation and the fact that many of our own troops could have been killed in contact with the enemy without support of an artillery battery that was being shot up by a berserk soldier. Later I 11

learned that the autopsy revealed a cerebral hemorrhage in the man and that this, among other things, was probably the cause of his actions.

## **Vacation Spa and Hard Work Too**

Soon, I was only two weeks away from coming to the end of my 6 month command period. I was visited by the Field Force Artillery Commander who I learned to my pleasant surprise was my old Division Artillery Commander and that we had served together in Europe. We had always hit it off quite well, and he offered me a position on his staff in Nha Trang. Needless to say, I was ecstatic at this offer and accepted it on the spot. My replacement flew in two days later, and two days after that I found myself getting off a C130 in Nha Trang to join the Artillery staff at First Field Headquarters.

Nha Trang itself was a former Vietnamese seaside resort town surrounded on three sides by the defenses of the feared South Korean White Horse division and on the fourth side by 30 miles of gorgeous white sandy beach. This port was well defended by the US and Vietnamese Navies. The main avenue of the city ran right on the shoreline and was lined on both sides with beautiful palm trees and the most civilized buildings that I had yet seen in Viet Nam. The architecture was of the French motif. This was a secure area that showed few signs of the war that was going on around it. The officers and men of the US and Vietnamese forces in the corps area always looked for an excuse to come to Nha Trang on official business so that they could enjoy the pleasures of the city.

We often suspected also that the city also served as a rest and recuperation area for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars as well. If any of them were able to make it into town, they certainly could not have been easily detected among their Vietnamese countrymen. I reported into the field force headquarters for assignment. It was located in a large hotel complex that was right across the main thoroughfare from the beach. My job would be as operations officer in the war room. It was my duty to relay the orders of the General's Staff to the field units and insure that communications and the flow of information between the field and the headquarters was well kept up.

I was given a room in a nearby hotel that housed approximately 25 of the junior officers who worked on the Field Force Staff. I then had to get adjusted to my 15 to 18 hour a day work routine 7 days a week.

## **Bad News in Nha Trang**

Upon arriving back in Viet Nam after the long flight, I was dismayed to find that the situation in Nha Trang had deteriorated considerably. The Vietnamese lunar New Year, or Tet as it was referred to, was arriving. It was predicted that the enemy was massing in the countryside for a combined offensive against a great number of cities and towns throughout South Viet Nam. Curfew precautions were tightened down considerably, and at the same time, the length of my duty hours was extended.

My first personal indication of the seriousness of the entire situation came when a Viet Cong mortar squad infiltrated through our defenses and launched an attack which was meant to destroy the four C130's that 12

were frequently parked at our end of the air strip. I was on duty in the war room the night when the attack started. There were no windows available for me to observe what was going on around the building, but it sounded from my location as if an entire new world war had broken loose all around.

I was in the middle of reporting the attack to the Field Force headquarters and directing our local Howitzer crews to fire their counter battery program when a round fell short of its C130 targets and landed in the very next room. The shock of the blast knocked my duty sergeant and me to the floor. After recovering and trying to see if we were still all there, we completed our report to headquarters from the underside of our heavy wooden table.

We later found out that our switch board operator down the hall was doing his job from under the table as well. Somehow, we knew our report did actually get back to headquarters as our howitzers started firing at the enemy. They were driven off in short order. There were only three of us on duty in the artillery headquarters that night, and I remember feeling quite insecure being armed only with a .45 caliber pistol and not being able to tell whether there were good guys or bad guys around the outside of the building. As a result, we just held our posts and hoped for the best.

The long night finally came to an end, and we went to inspect the results of the attack on the runway and around our headquarters. All of the rounds had fallen short of the valuable C130s. The only enemy thrust that did any damage was the stray round that impacted right in the center of the colonel's office next to the war room. The colonel's biggest complaint was not the damage to his office, but rather the destruction of his air conditioner which had been so difficult to scrounge.

At this point, the entire city was becoming quite tense as it prepared in the best way it could for the threatened enemy attacks.

The activities of our off hours were a few thousands of hands of contract bridge. I will always remember the night in our officer's hotel when the celebrations for Tet began. We could hear fire crackers going off in the air all around. We watched for a while and then settled back to a rubber or two of bridge.

However, it soon became evident that there were rounds of rifle fire and other weapons mixed in with the celebrations. The game ended

quickly when we heard shot gun and rifle shots on the street below. We were dressed in our shorts and tee shirts as usual in the warm tropical evenings, and most of us put on our steel pots and flak jackets and grabbed our weapons without bothering to put on any more clothes. We returned to our rooms and took up defensive positions that had been worked out earlier.

We then decided that the roof would be the safest place in the hotel. As we peered over the top rim of the wall, we could see two Vietnamese armored personnel carriers moving down our street along with several squads of foot soldiers. I saw three shadowy figures moving along the courtyard wall in back of the hotel and managed to empty the contents of my pistol into their midst before they fled. 13

There was also an old abandoned school house kitty corner across the street from the hotel. It appeared that the Vietnamese were going after some enemy troops that had been trapped in the school. Upon trying to communicate with the headquarters, we found that our phone line had been cut out. We had no choice but to view the war from our vantage point on top of the hotel. The two old Vietnamese men who served as our door guards then reported to us that the first shots we had heard were reports of their shotguns.

They had killed two North Vietnamese troopers who were but a small part of the enemy force that had moved through the alley in back of the hotel and down the street toward the compound which housed all of the general officers. We could hear a great amount of rifle fire and the reports of exploding rifle grenades from the vicinity of the general's compound, but we didn't know what was going on. When morning finally came, we were still out of communications with the rest of the world and decided that it was best if we stay put until someone could come to get us. We would have moved out on foot together infantry style, but we didn't have enough weapons to provide a proper defense in the open.

Late in the morning, we were finally evacuated by armed MP convoy and taken to our jobs at the headquarters building. We were horrified to find that a force of 180 to 200 North Vietnamese regular troops had infiltrated past our hotel on the way to their target which was the general's compound. It was their mission, we found out, to either kidnap or kill the generals. Between our compounds and theirs, the bad guys had lost their bearings and were checking their maps in the abandoned school house behind the general's quarters when they were discovered.

One of the NVA had fired at the general's driver who was on guard duty on top of the villa. The driver shot back after reporting the presence of the enemy and proceeded to kill 5 of the NVA in succession as they tried to get shots off at him from over the courtyard wall. The military police put the enemy under great strain by firing rifle grenades into the school house, and they kept up the constant barrage all night long. By morning, those NVA who had not fled the area literally had been pounded into bloody hamburger. The generals did not realize the magnitude of the danger to their lives until the next morning. We also realized that we were quite lucky. The

enemy did not know of our presence in the hotel. They could have simply dropped a squad off from their main attack to mop up our hotel, and they would have had no difficulty whatsoever with our limited defenses. The fact that our lights were on and we were playing bridge when the main body of the enemy passed by probably made them think that we were Vietnamese civilians and could not have been army troops. Needless to say, we were quite lucky.

Several days later, we managed to obtain enough weapons and munitions to defend our hotel as if it were the Alamo. I became even more nervous than my comrades because I had- only about 10days to go on my whole tour at this point of greatest danger. I carried an automatic rifle and my pistol and a double ration of ammunition.

Fighting broke out in all parts of the city for the rest of the week, and a Navy destroyer 14

was called in to the bay outside of Nha Trang to lend fire support by blasting away at suspected enemy positions in the hills and mountains behind the city. The huge shells from the Navy guns made quite a terrifying sound as they thundered through the skies over our hotel like great locomotives racing to their destination.

Helicopter gun ships also operated in the area during the day and could react to put down an enemy force anywhere in the city on short notice. During the rest of the week over 800 Viet Cong and NVA were killed in the City and the nearby villages and hamlets. I was very fortunate to be able to slip out of the whole mess and make my way to Cam Ranh Bay for my long awaited flight back to the United States.

I arrived at the replacement center two days early and found that because of repeated enemy attacks that almost all of the flights were departing one or two days late and that I could not count on getting home on time. This was quite a great disappointment as it would be to any man after being in the war zone so long. Although, I will admit that my trials and tribulations were not quite as serious as those of many others. There wasn't much to do while waiting for my return flight to the states so I spent most of the time swapping stories with two of my captain friends who were scheduled for the same flight. Because of the poor luck of our compatriots on other schedules we decided that we would settle down and wait out the situation and not get our hopes up and get excited about going home until we actually walked up the steps on the airplane.

### **Home from Nam at Last**

The time for our flight finally came. As a matter of fact, the one before it and the one immediately after it were delayed 48 hours because of the continuing hostile activities of the Tet offensive. Our aircraft, a beautiful Pan American Boeing 707, was able to slip in during a lull in the activities, and we were soon on our way with a crew of 7 Kimono clad Japanese stewardesses to our first stop in Tokyo. Just like in any other flight departing Viet Nam, all of the fellows were full of vim and vinegar and gave the poor lovelies quite a hard time.

After the 4 hour flight to Tokyo, we were left on the plane in the taxiway while the crews changed. This was arranged so that we would not have to go through customs during the stopover. We took off again within the hour and began our 12 hour great circle route across

the Bering Sea and near Alaska to our destination at McCord Air Force Base in the state of Washington. It was such a relief to get on the ground and come in contact with American soil again.

After processing through McCord I took a real live civilian United Air Lines flight to Chicago and through Atlanta to my temporary home in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Missy and I enjoyed our well earned leave, sold our house and moved to my final assignment at Ft. Polk, Louisiana where I was to serve 8 months in the training center despite my repeated attempts to resign. I could never understand why the government spent so much money on me moving my family all the way to Louisiana and then from there to my civilian address just to have my services for a mere 8 months. 15

In that I was one of the senior captains on the post and on the Major's list, I thought sure that I could land a soft staff job at the post headquarters. However, I was very dismayed to find that the civilian type personnel officer had assigned me as company commander of a training unit in advanced individual training - perhaps the most rigorous assignment that I could have gotten. I expressed very strongly my dismay at this type of assignment and asked for an appointment to see the commanding general. Upon reporting to him, I explained in some detail my situation and the fact that I had been extended on active duty against my will and had been away from my family long enough. I was not ready at this time to accept the grave responsibility of an advanced training company and the long hours of work that it entailed to do a good job. The General was very sympathetic to my views but informed me he had no choice but to give me the assignment in that there was a shortage of veteran officers who were qualified to give realistic Viet Nam oriented training to the recruits. I could see that I would get no where and resigned myself to do the best job possible. The General dismissed me, and I saluted in obedience to his command and the assignment.

## One of the Chief Tigers

My command in Tiger Land (which was the advanced training area referred to) was with the toughest training company on post. It employed such a terrifying reputation that I found considerable bribes were offered to the assignment personnel at headquarters to prevent apprehensive troopers from being assigned to our company. Our Negro First Sergeant was a seasoned veteran of 18 years in the service, and his cadre (which was also 65% black) was the roughest toughest group of dedicated combat experienced drill sergeants I had run across. They had been running the unit pretty much on their own, because there had been a lack of experienced officers in the command.

I was aware of this situation, and during my first meeting with my first sergeant, I leveled with him and explained my situation to him. It was understood that he and his cadre would run the unit according to the training schedule and take care of all the minor disciplinary actions. I told him I didn't want to bother with giving men KP and latrine cleaning for screwing up and so on. If a man was presenting a particularly difficult disciplinary problem, I instructed the first sergeant that I wanted to be briefed on the matter before hand. If the man was to come into my office to talk to me about it, he would come out with either an Article 15 or a court martial. In addition to the discipline, I would handle the administration of the company and would be responsible for the morale and the well being of the troops. I also told the first sergeant not to expect me in the office except between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. during the time I would be with the company. During my presence, however, I would give 100% of my effort to the company.

The first sergeant had been around a long time and understood my position right away. He knew that if I scratched his back he would scratch mine. If he made things look good for me, I would make things look good for him. We quite rapidly began to work together as a team doing our best to motivate and inspire the troops but also the cadre. We piled a great deal of responsibilities on the cadre with relish. The more 16

important we made them feel, the harder they worked.

Things developed finally into the situation where we were scoring very high with our men on all of the prescribed tests and sailing along quite smoothly. All of the NCOs quickly established the position of company commander as some sort of god, and I think they taught the troops to fear me as well as respect me. Whenever I met with the troops and spoke with them, they were spirited and gave me their undivided attention.

The area around my orderly room was set up as some sort of sanctimonious, sacred grounds, and none of the troopers dared make any unnecessary noise or conduct any horse play in the area for fear of disturbing the CO. Because of this quite interesting set up, I was able to carry out most of my duties in about half of a days work and had time on my hands.

## A Vietnam story from Peter Quinton

My first tour of duty after USNA was on board the U.S.S. Black (DD-666). We had 4, single, 5"/38 mounts along with 3, 3"/50 dual-mount, guns. During my tour I served as the gunnery officer firing many missions of gunfire support for Marines and Army personnel during one of my deployments to Viet Nam. I was the director officer in the Mk-37 director and got to pull the trigger during those fire missions as well as spotting and correcting the fall of shot to get on target. On one fire mission, our spotting O-1 Bird Dog (Army aviation) called for a check fire to observe the damage on our targets. As he passed over the beach, he took automatic weapons fire from a grove of trees. Always ready for counter battery fire, it was my job as director officer to immediately respond. I sited the director on the grove of trees, estimated the range (around 1500 yards) and put four, 55 lb projectiles right on target!...."Charlie" was not having a good day! Our spotting aircraft gave a whoop and a holler for our knocking out the machine gun nest. My one war story.....the rest of my career was not too exciting, peace time Navy!

Here's an addition from Art Clark.

My first tour was on the USS John R Pierce (DD-763). Oddly that was the very same ship that we toured as a high schooler that put me over the edge for attending the Naval Academy some years later. Second tour was aboard USS Nicholas (DD-449). Both had 5"/38 and 3"/50 mounts. Whilst aboard the Nick home ported in Hawaii, aviators bombed the wrong island, one ship lost control of a practice torpedo that landed on Waikiki beach, another ship fired a practice Weapon Alpha that promptly landed in their own laundry and last, but not least, the ship berthed in front of us laid a perfect hedgehog pattern of live ammo in the B25 parking lot. How did that happen you may wonder? Well, the ammo was olive drab signifying live ammo. The gunners mates, however, knew they had ordered inert blue rounds,

so the painted them blue. Next their chief noted the color and also noted that the tail fins weren't notched, so he corrected that problem. Next came the Board of Inspection and Survey inspectors who noted the inert rounds, so they hit the rapid fire button on the starboard launcher. The last I saw was the weapons officer being escorted ashore in what looked a straight jacket. Sick but funny.

## Mike Cronin, Exemplary Graduate by Dick Nelson '64

### USNA at Large



Our Exemplary Graduate for today was certainly a heroic figure, both as a Navy attack pilot and then as a POW. However, his greatest accomplishment had nothing to do with his military service. He was instrumental in persuading Congress to pass the War Crimes Act of 1996, to further protect American POWs in captivity. Thus, his legacy lives on: CAPT Michael P. Cronin, USNA Class of 1963.

Mike Cronin was born in 1941 in Boston, Massachusetts. He entered the U.S. Naval Academy in June 1959, and was commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy on June 5, 1963.



ENS Cronin next completed flight training and was designated a Naval Aviator in October 1964, followed by A-4 Skyhawk Replacement Air Group training with VA-44 at NAS Jacksonville, Florida, from October 1964 to April 1965.



His first assignment was as an A-4 pilot flying combat in Southeast Asia with VA-23 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Midway (CVA-41) from May to November 1965, and then at NAS Lemoore, California, from November 1965 to July 1966. LT Cronin then deployed with VA-23 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Coral Sea (CVA-43), again flying combat in Southeast Asia, from July 1966. During that second combat cruise, he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on January 13, 1967. He remembers that experience well:

"I was shot down on Friday, 13 January 1967 by anti-aircraft fire about twenty miles south of Than Hoa. The aircraft broke up and for a while I was pinned in the cockpit and was quite lucky to escape. When my parachute opened I was over the sea, but a strong east wind blew me inland as I descended and I landed one half mile from the water. I was quickly captured by an Army unit which had seen me land."

After spending 2,243 days in captivity, LCDR Cronin was released during Operation Homecoming on March 4, 1973. He was briefly hospitalized to recover from his injuries, and then served as an

instructor pilot with VF-126 at NAS Miramar, California, from August 1973 to January 1976, followed by service as a C-9 Skytrain II pilot with VR-30 at NAS Alameda, California, from January 1976 until he left active duty and entered the U.S. Naval Reserve. He then served as a reserve C-9 pilot with VR-55 at NAS Alameda from 1976 to 1980, remaining in the Naval Reserve in a non-flying status until his retirement on August 1, 1992. After leaving active duty in 1976, Mike flew commercial airliners for American Airlines from 1976 to 2001. CAPT Cronin's decorations include two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit with Combat "V", the Distinguished Flying Cross, four Bronze Stars with Combat "V", two Purple Hearts, 15 Air Medals, and three Navy Commendation Medals with Combat "V".

Silver Star #1:

"The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Lieutenant Commander Michael Paul Cronin, United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam from January to February 1967. Lieutenant Commander Cronin's captors, completely ignoring international agreements, subjected him to extreme mental and physical cruelties in an attempt to obtain military information and false confessions for propaganda purposes. Through his resistance to those brutalities, he contributed significantly toward the eventual abandonment of harsh treatment by the North Vietnamese, which was attracting international attention. By his determination, courage, resourcefulness, and devotion, Lieutenant Commander Cronin reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces."

Silver Star #2:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam. On 1 June 1967, his captors, completely ignoring international agreements, subjected him to extreme mental and physical cruelties in an attempt to obtain military information and false confessions for propaganda purposes. Through his resistance to those brutalities, he contributed significantly toward the eventual abandonment of harsh treatment by the North Vietnamese, which was attracting international attention. By his determination, courage,

resourcefulness, and devotion to duty, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces."

Legion of Merit:

"The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" to Lieutenant Commander Michael Paul Cronin, United States Navy, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam from January 1967 to March 1973. By his diligent efforts, exceptional leadership, devotion and loyalty to the United States, and under the most adverse of conditions, he resisted all attempts by the North Vietnamese to use him in causes detrimental to the United States. While in daily contact with the North Vietnamese guards and officers, he performed duties in staff positions, maintaining good order and discipline among the prisoners. Under constant harassment from their captors, and due to the frustrations of the prisoners during their long internment, many difficult situations arose, requiring perseverance, endurance and ingenuity. Using his extraordinary courage, resourcefulness, and sound judgment, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces. (Lieutenant Commander Cronin is authorized to wear the Combat "V".)"

Distinguished Flying Cross:

"The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Commander [then Lieutenant] Michael Paul Cronin (NSN: 0-668952), United States Navy, for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 2 January 1967 while serving as a jet attack pilot in Attack Squadron TWENTY-THREE (VA-23), embarked in U.S.S. CORAL SEA (CVA-43) during a mission in support of a strike into the Red River Delta, North Vietnam. When his aircraft was severely damaged by a surface-to-air missile during a strike against an enemy missile site, Lieutenant Commander Cronin regained control of his aircraft which had lost all hydraulic power and elevator control, by using horizontal stabilizer trim and manually controlling the

rudder and aileron. Despite low ceilings and reduced visibilities which necessitated an instrument approach, Lieutenant Commander Cronin flew the stricken aircraft through adverse weather to a safe field arrested landing, thus saving a valuable operational aircraft. His superb airmanship, courage and professionalism were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

(Sources: [valor.militarytimes.com](http://valor.militarytimes.com); [veterantributes.org](http://veterantributes.org); [usna.com](http://usna.com); [pownetwork.org](http://pownetwork.org))

Photo legend, clockwise: Mike Cronin in flight suit before capture; by his aircraft; VA-23 A-4 dropping 1000 lb. bomb over Vietnam; Mike during his release in 1973.

## SUNK by Ray Heins

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Dawn had come and gone. I was a US Navy Lieutenant, the “American Advisor”, and the only American on the vessel. I remained asleep in my upper bunk, or half asleep, lulled by the thrumming engines and steady roll of the Vietnamese gunboat, as it plodded northwest at twelve knots just off the coast of Phu Quoc island. It was Sunday morning, and nothing could possibly go wrong with the simple transit to patrol station.

BANG! Followed by more BANGS! The ship’s bell rang with each BANG. The 40mm gun, I was pretty sure. It was almost directly overhead, on the foredeck. “I never knew it made so much noise”, I thought, as I leapt out of bed, heart racing, and dressed. GI green tee-shirt, matching shorts (modified from fatigue pants in Saigon), flip-flops, six gun, and I was out the door.

“What the hell is with that bell?” I shouted. No one paid me the slightest attention. Evidently the bell was being sounded by the shock of the gunfire. But the entire vessel was shuddering with the BANG’s, so that some effort was needed to climb the ladder to the pilot house, overlooking the foredeck. The pilot house was also directly below the 01 level and its smaller gun mounts and the infernal ship’s bell. Lots of activity. Sailors running in all directions. More BANG’s, more bells. One of the sailors, the mess cook, had climbed to the 01 level and manned the

.50 cal machine gun.

He was firing bursts at no target, so far as I could see. The 40mm gun remained on centerline, un-manned.

“We have struck a reef!” reported the Captain, Dai-Uy Quynn.

So... no gun, just pounding of hull on rock. And the resultant shock was indeed sounding

the bell with every impact. The Captain was trying to work the vessel off the reef,

alternately ordering engines full astern, and full ahead.

I returned to my cabin, grabbed the PRC-25 radio, returned to the main deck outside the

pilot house, and set up the antenna clear of nearby superstructure.

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“SPOTTED MOOSE THIS IS NOVEMBER JULIET”, I called. After two repetitions, I

had a response from the Coastal Zone headquarters watch stander.

“NOVEMBER

JULIET HARD AGROUND, GRID COORDINATES CHARLIE MIKE 075-165.

REQUEST FORWARD TO FLEET COMMAND HQ. REQUEST ASSISTANCE.”

“ROGER OUT” was the only response.

By now, reported Petty Officer Nguyen, sea water was beginning to collect in the aft

berthing compartment. The Captain ordered Nguyen and a Damage Control Party to

immediately begin de-watering.

Now two US Navy Swift Boats were arriving from other nearby patrol sectors. The

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Skipper of the first to arrive offered to take off crewmen, if the

gunboat was in danger of sinking.

“No! said Captain Quynn. “We will save the boat.”

I hustled below, gathered clothing, camera, and correspondence into my sea bag, but left

the packed gear out of sight insofar as possible. The radio and pistol I kept at hand.

Edible stores I left in the cabin.

Suddenly the lights went out; up to this point, I had given no thought to the fact that the engine had remained operational, driving the generator. Now the deafening silence emphasized the wash of sea water on the hull. And there was now a pronounced settling of the stern. Maybe we will need that lift, after all, I thought. At least the goddam bell had stopped ringing, as the vessel bounced less.

The engineer officer reported to the captain, in Vietnamese, that the water had risen to a level that continued operation of the generator was dangerous. The damage control team had rigged portable (gasoline powered) fire pumps on the deck, near the entrance to the crew's quarters. Large intake hoses were taking suction from the berthing compartment, each pumping 150 gallons per minute from the vessel, over the side.

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"The pumps are holding steady", reported the captain for my information. "When tide increases, we hope to be free of reef." And then what, I wondered, as I stared at the navigation chart. Do we settle on the bottom in 20 feet of water, rather than on a reef three feet below the surface? The reef upon which the ship had impaled itself was not uncharted, exactly. It showed up as having a minimum of six feet of water above it, but obviously that was outdated.

The mess cook had ceased his firing of the .50 caliber gun after the arrival of the Swift Boats. With Viet Cong-controlled jungle less than two thousand yards away, we might need those bullets yet.

Back in the berthing compartment, the pumps kept clogging up, on

floating pillows, mattresses, clothing, towels – that berthing compartment had not been exactly “ship shape”. Soon it was obvious, the ship was not going to be re-floated anytime soon. After two hours of attempted de-watering, the damage control party had to admit defeat. The pumps were shut down, and the compartment evacuated. “SWIFT 71, REQUEST YOU COME ALONGSIDE”, I radioed. All but certain the ship would be completely lost within hours, I off-loaded my gear, but remained aboard to await the outcome. One or more Swifts could remain in the vicinity indefinitely, and if the gunboat decided to break in two and sink, I was confident I and the crew could be picked up. Every man knew where his life jacket was, and some wore one continuously. EPILOG: The ship sat firmly on the reef for seven long days and nights, until the arrival of a US Navy salvage ship. Divers patched the holes, pumps dewatered the compartments, and, after two days of work, the salvage ship towed the gunboat back to Saigon – a journey of almost 1,500 miles. The highlight of the trip, for me, was the rainfall as we were towed up the Saigon river; it was my first shower in fifteen days. Upon arrival at Fleet Command headquarters, I was reunited with my seabag, permitting me to change clothes for the first time in fourteen days. Arriving at headquarters with a two-week beard, another advisor commented: “You look like Charlton Heston returning from an Indian raid!”

## TRIDENTS in the Vietnam War by A. Scott Wilson

### Recollections from a Generation Ago

LT USN, Patrol Squadron Twenty-Six, NAS Brunswick ME

June 1965 through May 1968

#### LOOKING BACK

As a former pilot in VP-26 I was proud to hear about the safety milestone reached by the "Trident" squadron in 1996, namely 250,000 accident free flight hours over 33 years. The early years of that run go way back to when we still flew P2V-5s, and I was part of it. My 1500 flight hours with the Squadron were logged during the period when we transitioned from the oldest Neptunes in the active fleet to the newest Orions, the P3B model.

Now I have extra reason to be proud of that record setting achievement, since my son, Lt. Gordon Wilson, was one of the Trident pilots who helped fill it out. But the news of that safety record raised some questions and stirred up vivid memories,... What about the two planes we lost during the Vietnam War?

Apparently, they are considered combat losses and not included in the accident statistics. Still it bothers me that not much has been recorded about the circumstances surrounding those incidents,... nor, for that matter, about the Squadron's operations during that fateful six month period. I was a contemporary participant in those events. And as it happened, I was as close as anyone to both the losses we incurred,... just one sortie removed in each case. The direct cause of the first was somewhat obscure, but the next was a clear shoot down. Because of similar conditions and location, reasoned speculation could reach the same conclusion for the earlier incident. But whatever the cause, the complete destruction of two P3's and 24 airmen killed within less than eight weeks is an intense rate of loss

under any circumstances.

Still, looking back from a historic perspective nearly three decades removed now, it's understandable that except for our own little community, hardly anyone took note. There were plenty of war casualties to fill out news reports of the times. In South Vietnam, hundreds were being killed in action weekly. Over the North, SAM's and AA brought aircraft down daily. And monumental events stunned the world during that very brief stretch of history.... North Korea captured the USS Pueblo on January 23, 1968.... A week later in Vietnam, communist forces launched the TET offensive, the seminal event that turned the tide of public opinion generally against the war.... President Johnson surprised everyone in a broadcast statement to the nation on March 31, that he would not seek re-election.... And four days later, the assassination of Martin Luther King rocked the country. If all is relative, there's little wonder that the combat service record of VP 26 in that protracted war was treated as only an obscure footnote. But prior to our deployment in November 1967, we had no special apprehension about going to Westpac. According to public statements of national leadership at the time, there was 'light at the end of the tunnel'. The war was supposedly entering the mop up and wind down stages. Heck, we were lucky to be getting our tickets punched before it was all over!

That summer I had been honored to get my own crew as Patrol Plane Commander of CAC-12, "the Dirty Dozen". Although several other j.o.'s would move up during the deployment, when it started we were the junior crew across the board. But I had also just been named as NATOPS/Standardization Officer for the Squadron, so we planned to get everyone upgraded, starting with PPC quals for my copilot, Lt(jg) Stu McLellan. Stu was a newlywed; recently married to a schoolteacher he met during our last deployment

in Argentina. Now, we were all undergoing the usual emotions attendant to an anticipated six-month separation from our families.

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The Squadron celebrated Thanksgiving that year by flying all twelve of its aircraft half way around the world,... from Brunswick to Moffet Field on the west coast,.. to Barber's Point, Hawaii,... to Guam,... then to Naval Station Sangley Point in the Philippines. That was to be our principal home for the duration, with a detachment operating from U-Tapao air base in Thailand.

#### ON YANKEE STATION

We arrived at Sangley on November 29th. That night I caught a ride as an observer on one of the last missions for the outgoing squadron so I could get certified for the "Yankee" patrols. These missions conducted surface surveillance during nighttime hours around the perimeter of the attack carriers operating from Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. The purpose was to detect any enemy surface craft that might sortie forth toward our floating bird farms. It was strictly a "radar flooding" operation with no attempt at stealth. We wanted the bad guys to know we were watching. The pattern was flown at a restricted (and supposedly reserved) altitude of 1000 feet and below,... up along the coast of North Vietnam, outside a three mile limit,... past Vinh ,... above the 20th parallel to just below Haiphong,... then continuing clockwise around the formation,... staying at least 25 miles from the carriers and 10 miles away from Red Chinese territory on the island of Hainan. There were usually two, sometimes three attack carriers on line. Along with the CVA's, there was a single CVS deployed with its complement of S2F's and choppers. The "Stoofs" would fly the perimeter surface coverage, fanning out into sectors, when the CVS was on station. The VP squadron from Sangley picked up the job

whenever the CVS was off line. The typical cycle was fifteen days on,.. fifteen off. Whenever VP took over, one aircraft would report on station by sundown, stay until midnight when a second aircraft relieved them to continue the patrol until 0700. So operations from Sangley stepped up every other fortnight as two crews daily were needed for "Yankee" patrols.

It's interesting to note that for all intents and purposes, one P3 aircraft at a time replaced an entire carrier in this role. Another curious aspect of the P3's "Yankee" mission was how we got to and from work.

The commute was 2.5 hours each way. We filed an ICAO flight plan with the civilian control in Manila, and flew the international airway at about 20,000 feet from the Philippines to a designated spot east of Danang. Along the way we shared the corridor with Pan Am or China Air, and made the same position reports as the commercial airlines. Then we would simply sign off with the civilian controllers, announce that we were "going operational" and descend into the area while trying to contact the appropriate military control in the Gulf. What a way to go to war!

When coming off station we had to file a flight plan by radio through the military controller at Danang and hang out at low altitude until he confirmed our clearance. It was usually granted within minutes. Then we would climb out again to intercept the airway and proceed back home toward the Philippines. One of the more critical parts of our indoctrination to the Philippines was how to deal with Manila air traffic control. They were notorious for ignoring you when asking for clearance to descend toward destination at Sangley Point. So it was advisable to simply cancel your flight plan about a hundred miles out,.. just broadcast in the clear and don't expect an acknowledgment,.. then switch to the USN controllers at Sangley tower. If you didn't assert yourself in that way,

and weather was bad, you could wind up circling at 20,000 feet over Manila waiting in vain for a Philippine controller to talk to you.

When VP-26 began flying its first cycle of "Yankee" patrols later in December, we found the most confusing aspect of this mission to be the cacophony of communications necessary to navigate the airwaves. We had VHF and UHF voice radio and single side band HF for teletype messages, with different protocols for all sorts of contingencies. There was even a UHF scrambler,... literally a red phone in the cockpit,... for the pilot to talk directly with the bridge of any ship having compatible equipment. (Most of the times we tried it, nobody answered the phone.)

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Contact reports were made to "AS" the surface search coordinator, an assignment that moved about among various screening ships. But there were also requirements to check in with "AW", the air warfare coordinator, usually on one of the carriers,... with "Red Crown" when the black shoe's gunline was active,... and even with the Air Force "Big Eye", a Super Connie flying a racetrack pattern at 5000 feet above the 20th parallel. They were the air surveillance equivalent to our surface search. Then there were the North and South SAR destroyers on their appointed stations. It was a far cry from the lonely patrols out on the north Atlantic. Everybody crowded into a relatively small pond, and in the dark they get nervous about any low flying aircraft unless they knew who you were. To top it all off, there were also clandestine missions going on,... highly compartmentalized, so we would have only need-to-know identifiers. When ARVN Special Forces were operating small boats to infiltrate to the North, they were to shine a colored light pattern at the approaching aircraft, say red over white over green. The colors of the day would identify them as "our side" so we were not to circle that

contact on the theory that this would alert the "other side" watching us on their radar screens. On occasion, we would come across a destroyer sized contact hanging around Haiphong all by itself, darkened ship. I never did learn what that was all about, but whenever we reported it to "AS", they told us ..."never mind".

#### MARKET TIME

CAC-12 flew only one "Yankee" mission before it was our turn to cycle out to Thailand for "Market Time". The Squadron kept a five plane detachment at U-Tapao (pronounced (oo'- tah - pow) on the Gulf of Siam, and we would rotate crews through there for three week stays. U-Tapao was technically a Royal Thai Naval Air Station. (They did have a half dozen S2F's on the ground there,... although I never saw them fly.) But its principal tenant was the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command. The single N-S runway was enormous, built by Navy Seabees, but designed to handle bomb laden B-52's in temperatures that rarely dropped below 90 even at night. It was more than 10,000 feet long, (those BUF's needed every inch of it) and so wide it was disorienting to us Navy flyers, especially after a month spent landing at Sangley Point. On the Sangley runway you had to stay real close to centerline or your wingtips would overhang the edge. It was 5000 feet long,.. plenty enough for our P3's, but there were no overruns at all. It terminated in rip rap at water's edge giving the appearance of a carrier deck, albeit rock steady. But here we were on final for landing at U-Tapao, approaching a massive expanse of concrete, heat waves radiating from its white hot surface. When we touched down and looked around, it appeared we could take off sideways on that runway. It was that big. Ground control directed us back to the south along a parallel taxiway until we spotted the Navy's sublet patch of concrete on the most remote end of the base. This was our operating

hub,... headquarters for Detachment 72.3.5. We shut down, deplaned, and trundled over to the little trailer that served as our operations center for a mission briefing. "Market Time" was a continuous operation involving U.S. Coast Guard cutters, swift boats from the "brown water" Navy, and patrol aircraft all along the South Vietnamese coast. Its purpose was to form a barrier shield against seaborne infiltration from the North. The principal targets were armed supply trawlers and junks that could mingle with the local fishermen, then surreptitiously run to shore and deliver supplies to the VC. Patrol planes roamed the skies, operating at 1000 feet and below out to about 20 miles from the coast. They coordinated with the surface forces in their sector,... directing them to intercept suspicious contacts they could then board to inspect. VP-26 operated aircraft equipped with all the latest antisubmarine detection electronics and weapons capabilities. But this mission, just as the "Yankee" patrols, utilized only the surface search radar and twelve pairs of eyeballs. The "Market Time" barrier was divided into four Coastal Zones. VP-26 was assigned to Zone IV, the southern most sector,... running from the Cambodian border on the west, around the Ca Mau peninsula, then part way along the eastern coast. Patrol squadrons operating from the Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon, and from Cam Ranh Bay serviced the other zones. The pace of operations at the detachment was constant. We always had a plane in the air patrolling Zone IV, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We relieved on station, and tried to be at the western end of the patrol area to minimize transit time. CAC-12 was on the schedule for the next day, so now we were off to find our quarters,... home, away from home, away from home. The detachment had a couple of pick up trucks and a panel van for crew transport. The trip from our line to the BOQ a few miles away took us around a huge surplus

supply yard filled with equipment left behind by the Navy Construction Battalions,... payloaders, bulldozers, trucks. I guess that's where we got the beat up van we were riding in. There were also tons of unopened crates marked "U.S. Air Force". They contained such war fighting essentials as refrigerators, and air conditioning units,... never been used! It's not that our brothers in blue disdained such luxuries,... they already had all that stuff in their units. This was backup, just in case.

We passed the personnel housing area for the Air Force flight crews, individual air conditioned mobile homes nearby the O'Club. I decided we would try to eat there whenever possible. The first place I ever had escargot was at an Air Force club in Thule, Greenland,... so they probably ate well here too.

Finally we arrived at the Navy BOQ, a two story concrete block structure nestled at the edge of a fetid swamp,... air conditioning provided by screened windows and doors,... with a communal head located at the end of the building nearest the swamp.

The most dominant environmental feature of this exotic place, beside the oppressive heat, was the pungent odor that permeated the atmosphere,... a sickly sweet mixture of rotting vegetation and eau de "binjo ditch", the open sewers that served as public sanitation for the local villages. There was some small comfort in having that swamp guarding our perimeter,... if the Commies ever tried to overrun the base, they wouldn't come that way.

CAC-12 flew its first "Market Time" patrol on December 23rd. We relieved the returning crew on station near the large mountainous island of Phu Quoc. It lies about 30 miles west of the mainland on a line projecting out from the Cambodia/Vietnam border. At its southern tip was the town of An Thoi that served as the base for Navy swift boats and had a 3500-foot airstrip for small aircraft.

Although Phu Quoc was part of Vietnam, it was less than 10 miles from the Cambodian coast to the north, and that country laid claim to its ownership. Cambodia was officially a declared neutral. But Prince Sihanouk was outwardly hostile toward the U. S. In the capital city, he defiantly displayed wreckage from an American helicopter and a transport plane they claim to have downed during border incursions. Many other small, rocky islands in those waters were also in dispute. One cluster about halfway between Phu Quoc and the mainland bore the colorful name, "Isles of the Pirates". We were cautioned not to overfly any of these islands because the natives were known to take potshots with small arms. No one was ever sure whose side they were on. We never felt the effects, but occasionally a flight line inspection by the tinsmiths would reveal a bullet hole in the underside of a wing surface. Communication with "Market Time" surface units was carried on as necessary on UHF and VHF circuits, but we also made hourly position and status reports to our own Ops base in U-Tapao via HF. Likewise, aircraft executed a formal turnover by exchanging an encrypted teletype situation report before departing station. But our most popular radio was the ADF navigation beacon receiver, because it could be tuned to the AM band that picked up Armed Forces Radio out of Saigon. The long, boring patrols were spent listening to the Army disc jockey spinning the latest hits from the Supremes and the Beach Boys.

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#### TIME OFF

The detachment handled its own scheduling, and since the only obligation was to have one of our planes on station at all times, the trick was to work out liberty time for the crews. The local town, a rural village named Sattahip (appropriately pronounced: 's - 'at - a - heap?), was a dump. Most of the structures were

built of shipping crates, still stenciled with the original USAF markings. But Bangkok was a brief 20 minute flight away. The Squadron agreed to endure a slightly more intense pace so we could free up a single crew every few days for an overnight liberty in Bangkok. It was just the luck of the draw that CAC-12 moved into the liberty slot the day after our first "Market Time" patrol.

That next morning, Christmas Eve, we flew up to Don Muong Airport in Bangkok. Its two parallel runways were separated by about a quarter mile of open grasslands. The western side was the commercial area, and the east side was the military airfield, with a USAF contingent holding fort. It had no pretense of operational status, but served as a VIP depot for R & R runs and visiting dignitaries. The U.S. Embassy had an arrangement with a hotel in the city that catered to military and diplomatic personnel. The routine was for us to tie down the aircraft on the USAF ramp, then catch the shuttle bus to the hotel.

As we were walking toward the terminal, a bird colonel came bursting out the door demanding to know what we were doing there.

“ Just up from U-Tapao for an overnight. We'll be leaving in the morning.”

“ I have no notice of this. Let me see a copy of your orders.”

“ Look, we operate independently there,... nothing to do with the Air Force. This is a simple liberty run. We know it's Christmas, but we don't need any fuel,.. and we won't need any of your services when we start up tomorrow.”

We weren't exactly front-line troops, but compared with this REMF, CAC-12 may as well have been a crew of clandestine commandos. And I wasn't about to cancel their Christmas liberty, -- the only time off we could expect for weeks. But while I debated desperately with the colonel, my flight engineer/plane captain went on a recon mission, armed only with a

greenbacked picture of Andrew Jackson.

Twenty minutes later, he came back from the other side of Don Muong with a tow tractor for the aircraft (now I know why we called them "Buddha's") and a broadly smiling civilian Thai ally. To hell with the Air Force,... LK-12 would spend that night in the Thai Airlines hangar!

When we got back to U-Tapao, the SOP for Bangkok liberty was changed. Instead of leaving an aircraft at Don Muong overnight, we would have a local "training flight" drop off the liberty party, and another to pick them up the following day. The slight up-tick in flight time for a ferry crew was well worth it. CAC-12 got its first extended exposure to the operational pace, as we flew six sorties over the next eight days.

These "Market Time" flights were 10-hour patrols. So 'round the clock sequencing meant that your regular diurnal cycle was completely wiped out. Night and day had no meaning,... you were always returning from a full day's work at a different time on the 24 hour clock. The problem was,.. the O'Club followed regular hours. We needed our own, in-house lounge,... something like the "Brass Nut" we had at the BOQ in Keflavik,... operated by the Squadron on the honor system with the boot Ensign in charge of supply and accounting.

Fortunately there were some other compatriots relegated to U-Tapao who felt a similar need, but more importantly had the means to make it happen. They were the U.S. field superintendents for the civilian contractor building the facilities there. In exchange for a "membership" to our club, they came over with a crew of local laborers, all the equipment and materials needed,... knocked down the wall between

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two rooms in the barracks,... and converted it into the "Brass Nut

East". Within two days we had a complete wet bar, with foot rails,... indirect lighting and bamboo shades for atmosphere,... and it was always open. But that idyllic facade still had to compete with the local environment and the swamp that was home to some strange flying Siamese bugs the likes of which I've never seen before or since. Every so often they would rise up in swarms and make a nocturnal raid on our barracks. Drawn by the lights, they plastered themselves against the screens attempting to invade a room. The only defense was to darken down. They had a particular affinity for the wet tile in the head where the lights were always on. After such an attack, the shower stalls and urinals were coated with a blanket of lime green winged creatures that had given their all in the defense of their swamp. Interment was conducted by hosing the entire mass down the drain. I suppose the bodies ultimately found their way back to the swamp by way of binjo ditches. Such is the cycle of life. But I digress. Back to the other war....

#### ROUTINE OPERATIONS

It was quite a spectacle whenever a B-52 "Arc Light" strike was launched from U-Tapao. The grand production was precisely choreographed with the 15 to 20 aircraft taking off at two minute intervals. But, for 30 minutes before the first one rolled, the runway was shutdown and service trucks did a complete FOD sweep. Nobody could land or takeoff once the clock was started on a BUF launch. While the sweep-down was underway, all the B52's were cranked up and assembled in the assigned order. Two standby aircraft were also cranked and in position in case of any pre-launch aborts. With a belly full of iron bombs and more slung in bunches on external pods along the entire length of the underwing, each lumbering juggernaut seemed to take forever on its takeoff run. They roared ponderously down the runway, slowly gathering speed, and barely lifted off before hurtling into the Gulf of

Siam. Each one would continue straight ahead, almost out of sight before it gained enough altitude to gingerly bank left and take up its course to the north. We, on the other hand, took off in the other direction no matter which way the wind was blowing. There was plenty of runway even with a brisk tailwind. We figured that the two mile taxiway trip from our ramp to takeoff from the north end of Runway 18 would do more damage to aircraft than the few feet of takeoff roll it would save. In another stark contrast to the B52's, we carried no weapons at all. The only ordnance we handled were the magnesium parachute flares for nighttime illumination of suspect targets. That always made for an interesting diversion. But the flares themselves presented a distinct hazard on board and we were always alert to the danger. They were launched by hand from the sonobuoy chute, and if it hung up in there and ignited, the fire could not be controlled. The routine for checking targets at night was to make an initial pass while seeking out the contact with the million candlepower searchlight on our starboard wing. That alone could shake up a sleepy fisherman in the dead of night. If something appeared suspicious, we could climb to about 1000 feet, deploy a paraflare to illuminate the area, then spiral down below it for a more careful inspection of the target. Such was how we would while away our "Market Time". By mid-January we rotated back to Sangley and one relatively easy week before picking up the "Yankee" cycle again. We had time for a few training flights, and finished up Stu's PPC quals. There was a seat opening up soon on the XO's crew due to some personnel transfers, and he was going to move over there as the designated plane commander. (Both the CO and the XO had another fully qualified PPC on their crews to take most of the operational flights while they attended to whatever it is that CO's and XO's

do.)

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After that short breather, CAC-12 went back into the fast track mode,... five "Yankee" patrols over a ten day period. The on-station period was only seven hours, but with the round trip from the Philippines, these missions normally clocked a total of 12.5 hours or so. Add to that the interminable briefing and debriefing by the base "IO" and it made for a long, long, day. The old joke about military intelligence being an oxymoron was borne out almost every time we flew a mission. Among other things, the IO would give us all the day's codes and assigned frequencies. But they were almost always the wrong ones. It became routine for the first plane out each night to try once through on each band when approaching station, then just broadcast on fleet common. Someone monitoring the net could give you the right frequency for "AS" and you were in business.

The relief flight at midnight knew they could get the correct frequencies from the first shift. Our squadron call sign then was "Hurdu Gurdu", a vestige of the time when such things were done to defy easy imitation by the oriental tongue. Once when we called in our initial report, identifying ourselves as "Hurdu Gurdu 12", we got back in reply, "Hey guys, how are things back in Brunswick?" So much for security.

Tedium and boredom became the norm after the first few of these patrols, and we were already counting the days until we returned home. Then came news of the Pueblo capture. A carrier and other forces were being moved up toward Korea, and all of Westpac was put on alert. Suddenly, the possibility that we could be extended, or even reassigned, became a serious consideration. But after a few days the prospect for any immediate action on that front died down. Meanwhile, the Squadron also flew routine ship rigging patrols over the South China Sea. These

OSAP (ocean surveillance and patrol) flights were used whenever possible to transfer crews to the Det, originating from Sangley and terminating in U-Tapao. By month's end we were due to rotate back. And now there was an increased awareness that things might be heating up in Vietnam. The siege of Khe Sanh had been underway for ten days with no apparent let-up.

#### THE LOSS OF CAC-8

Departing from the Philippines on January 31 with a new copilot, while Stu McLellan stayed back to pickup the XO's crew, CAC-12 flew an OSAP mission and landed in U-Tapao with more than 130 hours logged that month.

It was at our debrief that we first heard reports about the communist attacks on cities throughout

South Vietnam. What came to be known as the TET offensive had begun. Even the relatively docile

"Market Time" forces became unusually active then. (As it turned out, four armed trawlers were intercepted during that month of February, although only one reached as far south as Coastal Zone IV before being destroyed near shore.)

It was somewhat surreal listening to the morning show on AFRS Saigon as we droned along during that first week of TET. Sounding just like the school closing announcements during a snow storm

back home, they told different support units not to report in until further notice, and gave commuter traffic reports. "Avoid the Cholon district, as fighting there picked up at dawn and heavy back-ups persist." Only a few days later, on February 6, 1968, the surreal became suddenly all too real for us.

CAC-12 was scheduled to relieve CAC-8 on "Market Time" that morning. Instead, we were awakened abruptly during the wee hours to launch early on an SAR mission -- one of our planes was missing!

There had been no radio contact with CAC-8 for two hours now. We

took off sometime around 0400. I recall it was still pitch dark, but we were also still hopeful that this was only an equipment malfunction and would soon be resolved. So we proceeded to their last known position and initiated an expanding square search while calling through the entire spectrum of radio frequencies trying to raise them.

--- No joy.

Sun rise revealed only emptiness over that vast expanse of water and we began to think of the worst case -- they may really be gone. Reorienting our search, we flew a ladder pattern along the projected route based on our knowledge of the routine in the patrol area.

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By midmorning, an Air Force C-130 from the SAR unit in Saigon had arrived on scene. Being properly equipped and fully crewed for this purpose, they took over command and control of the mission. It

was official now, CAC-8 was missing and presumed down.

We were free to leave, but nobody on board wanted to give up yet.

Each of us had friends and

people we knew well on that crew. Lcdr. Bob Meglio, the PPC, headed the Squadron's Maintenance

Department. He was a good pilot and well experienced. Tom Jones, the TACCO, a first tour lieutenant, was

also well qualified and seasoned. My best recollections of Tom were from the intramural basketball league

back at Brunswick. An unabashed Celtics fan, his idol was John Havlicek, and he could shoot the lights out

from long range. Too bad we didn't have the 3-point rule then.

Those thoughts of friends in trouble kept the adrenaline pumping despite the somber

circumstances and lack of sleep. We still had plenty of fuel, so I decided to go freelancing up into the area

of the small rocky islands near the Cambodia/Vietnam border.

Still nothing. Should we go inland? Why not! Who's to know and maybe we'll find something.

Everyone on the crew agreed it was worth a try.

After a brief and wholly unauthorized excursion into Cambodia, we realized it was fruitless.

Having exhausted every other possibility, we went back to the area between the coast and Phu Quoc. There we kept looking while the Air Force prosecuted the official, controlled search well to the south.

Then around mid-afternoon one of the crew thought he spotted something. Banking slightly to port and descending in the direction he indicated, it took a few seconds before those of us in the cockpit could discern what he saw -- the distinct orange color of a life raft.

Overflying, we could confirm that's what it was,... but it appeared empty. Some small, indistinguishable debris was also visible. Nothing else.

We called the Navy's small boat base at An Thoi a short distance to the west, and they dispatched

some swifts to the location as we orbited overhead. Within 30 minutes they were approaching the position we marked with smoke, and began collecting wreckage.

From their descriptions we could confirm that this was what we were looking for. The life raft was

partially deflated and had probably been ejected by the impact when the plane came down. Before we

departed station late that afternoon, two bodies that had risen to the surface were recovered, and all

reasonable hope that there were any survivors was extinguished.

It would be several weeks later before a Navy salvage vessel recovered enough body parts from

the wreckage on the seabed to positively identify all on board. To my knowledge, nothing more was done

to retrieve significant components of the aircraft itself, nor am I aware of any comprehensive investigation

into the incident. I can firmly state that neither I nor any of my crew was interviewed by an investigative

board, so we can assume that none was convened.

I do remember vividly how insignificant that life raft appeared, and how difficult it was to locate

even on a calm sea in clear weather. It's still difficult for me to

imagine how any downed airmen, far out at sea, could be found without benefit of a beacon or much more sophisticated detection equipment than was available to us then.

#### KEEPING UP THE PACE

After the loss of an entire aircrew, the flight schedule was compressed while a new crew was assembled from VP-10 personnel in Brunswick for transfer to VP-26. This would bring us back up to full strength when they arrived a few weeks later.

Meanwhile., CAC-12 was among the crews at U-Tapao that had to pick up the slack as we continued flying "Market Time" patrols through the third week in February. And sure enough, we arrived back in Sangley just in time to start a new "Yankee" cycle on February 23rd.

It was a busy time overall. My log book reveals that we flew a total of 265 hours in February and March. Right in the middle of that, on March 1st, VP-26 conducted a Change of Command and the XO, Cdr Alex Wasilewski, relieved Jim Cochran who rotated out on schedule. My former copilot now had the skipper's crew that was redesignated from CAC-7 to CAC-1 in recognition of their newly elevated status.

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This whole period remains a kaleidoscope of jumbled memories, but as I recall it, the prevailing attitude within the Squadron was "let's just press on and get the job done". And, I'm proud to say, CAC-12 did its job well,.... unorthodox perhaps, but effective nonetheless. Some incidents still stick in my mind.

Once, while approaching Yankee Station to relieve at midnight, the AT's were firing up the radar and it failed. The only mission-downing gripe was the loss of forward radar, and we always check it out immediately after takeoff, then shut down until going on station. Sure enough, it worked then,... but now it was out!

Here we were, already taking the status report from the crew we were about to relieve, so I asked my guys what they could do to fix it.

“ The only thing we can do up here is swap out with the magnetron from the rear radar.”

“ How long?”

“ Well, the maintenance guys allow half a day to replace a magnetron in the hanger. But we could probably do it in an hour.”

I had no clue as to the odds on that, and no idea how you go about changing a magnetron. But we were already 10 minutes late accepting the turnover. So, I got on the radio to the other crew, deliberately leaving the speakers on so everyone aboard could hear what I was saying. I asked the other PPC if they could extend another 45 minutes, and he agreed to delay their departure until 0100.

Nothing more was said as the crew turned to, bouncing along at Angels 1 in the pitch dark with only red lens flashlights for illumination. At exactly 0059, they fired up the forward unit and we were in business. These guys weren't too interested in their spit and polish grades, but no way would they let anybody beat the "Dirty Dozen" when it really counted!

On another "Yankee" patrol we were nearing the end as dawn approached, when "Big Eye" called us with a possible surface contact they were showing. (The Gulf of Tonkin was notorious for false radar images, a phenomenon that has since been acknowledged as a probable factor in the Maddox and Turner Joy incidents of August 1964 that got all this madness started.) The Air Force controller directed us to the spot generally north of our location.

As he counted off the closing yardage we were down at about 100 feet over a glassy sea,...

eyeballs trained straight ahead trying for a clear visual through the morning mists,... when suddenly .....

Whooooosh! Sweeping across our nose from right to left was an A4

Skyhawk--- one of our own. It seems another controller back in the tube of that Air Force Super Connie had talked somebody else onto the same false target. Never mind.

There was always a more heightened tension about "Yankee" patrols, not so much because of proximity to the enemy, but due to the real danger posed by the ever-changing gaggle of friendlies, hurtling around in the same airspace, with a Byzantine command and control system that must have been an early experiment in the development of "Chaos Theory".

Another example of how that worked occurred in mid-March when the CVS was due back on-line.

CAC-12 was scheduled to take the early shift on that last night of our "Yankee" cycle. The usual briefing at base ops loaded us up with the code books, assigned sector commanders, frequencies, and call signs for the day. Then, properly prepped with all the up-to-date intel, we were sent off to work. As always, we flew the airway to the zone, signed off to go operational, and descended into a dark overcast night while going through the routine check-in procedure.

Suddenly, a nervous voice came up on the net --- " What are you guys doing here ?!"

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It seems the CVS was already operational with its Stoofs busy boring holes through the same clouds that we occupied. Needless to say, we firewalled those four big Allison's and climbed out of there ASAP! With that kind of coordination, we didn't need an enemy to justify combat pay.

A few days later we were back on our way to the Det via an OSAP mission on March 19th. All of us looked upon a return to U-Tapao as a chance to recover. The atmosphere was more relaxed on "Market Time", and no brass was around except the "Brass Nut East".

**CAC-1 SHOT DOWN**

It was the end of the month, with CAC-12 looking forward to its turn

at Bangkok liberty. We were near the end of a nighttime patrol and planned to get a ride up to Don Muong shortly after landing around 0800 that morning. Coming out to relieve us was Stu McLellan with CAC-1. They were well within radio contact so we transmitted the turnover message without delay, and started on course to U-Tapao. Through clever and efficient management of our patrol pattern, coupled with precise navigation, we made sure to be at our closest point of approach as soon as they arrived on-station. No time to waste when liberty calls. The morning was bright and sunny, so we could see them passing off to starboard while the radio operator received their acknowledgment assuming the duty. Immediately afterward, the teletype started clacking out a "PS" from CAC-1. "Be advised your trip to Bangkok canceled." A collective moan of disappointment still echoed through our flight deck when, after a brief pause, the teletype continued,.. "PPS- April Fool!" Yes, it was. We had launched before midnight on March 31, but today was April 1, 1968. That little joke was just our good friend Stu, still one of the "Dirty Dozen" at heart, giving the needle to his old crew. So we were all in an upbeat mood when we grabbed our civvies and climbed onto the "Trident shuttle" for the short flight to Bangkok. While the training crew went through the preflight checks on the apron at U-Tapao, the radio was tuned to AFRS so we could all listen to a live broadcast from the White House. President Johnson was about to deliver a televised speech to the nation. It was still prime time that evening of March 31 on the other side of the dateline back in Washington DC. Johnson's announcement of a partial bombing halt in the North caused some ears to perk up a little. But when we heard that deep-pitched drawl go on to say, "I

shall not seek, nor shall I accept the nomination of my party..." , everybody was stunned. The light at the end of the tunnel had long gone dark,... a bombing halt made no sense while more than half a million US military still engaged the enemy over here,... and now the Commander-in-Chief decides it's all too much for him to take.

It's hard to describe the feelings that pronouncement evoked --- resentment? ...bitterness?...

relief?... maybe just confusion. To Hell with it all anyway. We were going on liberty!

Takeoff. Landing at Don Muong. Deplane. The shuttle crew flies back to U-Tapao, and we catch a military bus to the hotel.

Upon arrival there, a message awaited. "Call your squadron ops office immediately".

Over an unsecured phone line, they couldn't say much. But the gist of it was ominously clear --

CAC-1 was in serious trouble, and we were to get back NOW,... by any means possible.

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We spent the next several hours bumping along overland on a rented "baht bus". By the time we

got back, it was all over. I've never seen, nor am I aware of, any written account describing the details of

this episode, contemporaneous or otherwise. So here is mine, as I heard it then, from those who were involved or monitored the radio traffic.

Soon after starting their patrol, CAC-1 went into the area near the Cambodian coast. There they

located a suspicious target and proceeded to investigate. It was a steel gray vessel that appeared to be some

kind of landing craft. (As it turned out, it was a W.W.II vintage LCM, built in the US, given to the French, and acquired by Cambodia when France pulled out of Indochina in 1954.)

While making a low pass, the unarmed P-3 was fired on by the LCM with its .50 caliber

antiaircraft gun. Several rounds ripped into the outer portion of their starboard wing, knocking out #4 engine and starting a fire. They pulled the emergency handle and succeeded in feathering the prop, but could not extinguish the flames.

It was unclear whether the fire originated from the engine nacelle or from within the wing itself.

They were too low to bail out. And with fire raging on a crippled aircraft, it was impractical to climb high enough for the entire crew to get out successfully. A ditching at sea appeared inevitable, but they hoped to distance themselves somewhat from the hostiles before putting her down.

So CAC-1 flew outbound from the coast, while preparing for a forced landing. Flames were still visible, but the fire didn't appear to be extending. Then, realizing they were headed directly for Phu Quoc, with its small airfield less than 20 miles away, Stu apparently thought they could make it there.

Approaching the island on a southwesterly course, they had a broadside view of the 3,500 feet of steel matting that comprised the runway. The landing could be made by passing over and executing a 270 left-hand turn. That would keep them on top of the good engines on the port side, just the way you want it with an engine out.

Across the runway OK,... banking to the left, they reached the 90 turning onto final. Suddenly,... abruptly,... the wing tore off between #3 and #4 engine, and the aircraft tumbled uncontrolled as it plunged into the sea.

Immediately afterward, second-guessers would harbor an unmentionable question. Why didn't he elect to ditch sooner while they still had control? I myself, carry a piece of the burden for Stu's decision. He trained as second pilot under me,... it was I who qualified him for designation as plane commander. And we had covered all the contingencies he faced that day, except one ---

the lure of that island sanctuary so seductively close at hand. On that,... I cannot second guess him. But the shooting down of CAC-1 also compelled some renewed thinking about what had happened two months earlier. Now it was beginning to sink in. The attack by the Cambodians took place in the very same waters where CAC-8 went down.

#### SHORT TIMER

There is little to distinguish events during the final two months of our deployment. Perhaps emotions were cauterized by what had gone before. We continued the same tedious routines to the end, but that sense of duty was permeated by a persistent overhanging cloud of cynicism. Those of us accustomed to launching on Soviet nukes in the North Atlantic, thought of these patrols as a serious misapplication of our mission capabilities. Of course there was no sub threat in this conflict, and this was probably the only way the powers that be could get VP a piece of the action. And we certainly did, having expended the lives of two complete crews in the process of fulfilling our assigned

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tasks. Still, this job could have been done by any slow moving transport fitted out with a surface search radar and plenty of window seats.

For my part, I had become a short timer in more ways than one with orders to detach from VP-26

on May 30 when the squadron was due to return from deployment.

By then, the "Dirty Dozen" had logged

700 flight hours in Westpac and every last man had earned his aircrew wings. Those achievements topped

all the other crews in the Squadron and were my main source of satisfaction when I left CAC-12 in the

Philippines.

All checked out with orders in hand, I flew out on a military charter carrying the advance party of

ground personnel. "Trans International" brought us back on a DC-8 all the way to Brunswick. There we

were met at the ramp by the Wing commander and a small delegation from the base staff. My status for this unexpected reception was somewhat ambiguous since I was officially in-transit on permanent change-of-station orders. But I was senior ranking passenger. So I led the returning Trident sailors down the access stairs, rendered the Commodore a snappy salute, and then simply continued on my way. Next time I came through the gate at NAS Brunswick, it was a generation later.

#### AFTERTHOUGHTS

Among all that's been written about the Vietnam War, you'll find little mention of VP activity. Other than a passing reference in connection with Market Time operations, there wasn't much to tell. Compared with all the other blood and guts spilled in the field of battle, our losses meant next to nothing in the overall equation, because they accomplished nothing of consequence. We did all we were assigned to do there.

Still,... just think about what we could have done. The *raison d'être* for VP aviation may have been to track submarines, but we also possessed another mission capability --- aerial mining. Many historians have come to agree that Vietnam represented a general failure of the political leadership to use its military options wisely.

For instance, they could have stopped the enemy cold by blockading and mining Haiphong harbor.

Instead, they permitted regular, unfettered passage of freight into the port. There, heavily laden ships could freely disgorge all the supplies, equipment and munitions needed to carry on the war. Then the U.S.

military was sent in to chase it all down --- from bombing railheads and bridges in the North,... to attacks on truck parks and storage depots,... to interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail,... to search and destroy missions throughout the South,... even to maintaining the Market Time barrier. Conducted at the direction of the leadership in Washington, virtually all those operations constituted an

ongoing effort, over all those years,  
to stanch the flow of materiel, --- the very stuff that those same policy-  
makers allowed to be poured into the  
mouth of the funnel in the first place.

What if ? -- How much blood and treasure would have been spared if  
VP squadrons had been used  
instead to mine Haiphong harbor early on ? And would it have cost us  
more than twenty-four KIA to do  
that job? I don't think so.

A. Scott Wilson

Plandome, New York

1996

## Tale of Cubi Point and Olongapo City by Dick Jones

This is another story from the Philippines from so long ago that includes a fellow USNA graduate from the Class of 1964. In growing up, and playing sports, in Western PA, I got to know one Richard Earnest, USNA 1964, and from Irwin PA, high school, class of 1960. Back in high school, I tell the story that we actually broke his leg in the first football game of my senior, his junior, year, fall of 1958. Our friendship endured as midshipmen and then it was off to fly the F-4, Phantom, for both of us: Jones for the USMC and Earnest for the US Navy. In approximately February, 1967, the CO of our squadron, VMFA-314 Black Knights, called me in for a special assignment. At the time, we had a pilot who was "stuck" in the PI while ferrying an aircraft back to Vietnam from overhaul work done in Japan. His ferry flights had gotten him as far as the BOQ at NAS Cubi Point, PI, and he had been there for over two weeks. No number of messages nor any amount of threatening from our CO had gotten him out of that PI BOQ and there they sat, both pilot as well as recently overhauled F-4, enjoying the casual life at Cubi Point. My assignment was simple. I was to go to NAS Cubi point via an Air Force transport flight from Danang to Clark Air Force Base and then proceed overland to NAS Cubi Point. At Cubi, our CO had scheduled me for a 4-5 day jungle survival school to be followed by 2 extra days intended for a mini R&R. I was then to pick up the F-4, fly a test hop on the aircraft and then have the aircraft back at Chu Lai by a date designated by the CO. I had orders in hand for the pilot who had been detained at Cubi Point to proceed immediately via either US Navy or US Air Force transport to Chu Lai, RVN where he would either be sent immediately for the rest of his RVN tour to duty as a forward air controller with the infantry along the DMZ or he would be court martialed for dereliction of duty in his ferry assignment, choice yet to be determined by the CO. Off my RIO and I went from Danang to Clark AFB on a Sunday afternoon flight. Upon arrival at NAS Cubi Point, we found the ferry pilot that we were relieving living in the BOQ and having a grand old time on base during the day and then out in

Olongapo City each night. He just did not want to go back to RVN. During the test flight that my RIO and I flew on the aircraft, we lost an engine on final approach into NAS Cubi. That meant an extra day or so there in PI while the engine was repaired. As we sat one afternoon at the bar of what became the infamous Cubi O club (this was 1967 so still before the famous O Club ejection seat that was established in 1969), we looked down off the mountain and saw a US aircraft carrier in the harbor at Subic Bay. Speculation decided it to be the USS Enterprise as I recall. I then said that I thought my friend from USNA, Dick Earnest, was flying the F-4 off the Enterprise. "I wonder if he is on board?" In a telephone call to the Enterprise duty officer, we discovered that he was actually on board and we did, in fact, get him onto that telephone call. Great reunion on the phone! Question from Earnest to Jones-"What will you guys be doing tonight?" Answer from Jones -"Going into Olongapo for drinks just like last night." Statement from Earnest-"I want to come up to the Cubi O club to join you and have myself and some of my buddies go into town on liberty tonight with the US Marines." The meeting was arranged. After dinner for the entire group had been accomplished at the Cubi O club, it was time for the entire group to head for the Sodom of the Olongapo bar strip. We did. Remember the days at USNA when we had a curfew to make on Saturday night at the end of Saturday liberty in town? Always a mad dash to Bancroft Hall to make it by the curfew deadline, specific time now forgotten. Anyway, there was a similar curfew on the base at Subic Bay/Cubi Point, PI in 1967. Just as in Annapolis as midshipmen, we stayed too long at the bars of Olongapo and had to run madly for the Subic Bay gate in order to be off the streets of Olongapo by the 0100 curfew hour. Curfew was only that one could not be out and about on the streets of Olongapo between 0100 and 0500; where they actually spent the time was of no concern to the military police. We all ran like crazy for the main gate at NAS Subic. We made it. The next morning, my RIO and I blasted off with the aircraft for Chu Lai and my brief out of country excursion was over. Upon arrival back at Chu Lai, I made arrangements to call home via MARS radio that afternoon. Kay my two children were living in an apartment in Greensburg, PA during my tour in Vietnam. Dick Earnest had married his high school sweetheart, Pam, and Pam was living in Irwin, PA, their home town

that is about seven miles from where Kay was living in Greensburg. Since they were living so close together, Kay and Pam had become friends who could rely on each other during their husbands' excursions in Southeast Asia. MARS radio was basically a two way radio method of communicating wherein the radio was switched manually by an operator between send and receive modes. For the operator to make the manual switch between send and receive, one had to finish a conversation with "Over" so that the operator knew when to switch modes. Something like this - "George, this is Harry. Over" George could then speak back to Harry. Etc. At any rate, I placed the MARS radio call that afternoon to Kay at home in Greensburg, PA. "Hello, Kay, it's me. Over." Answer back to me - "What the hell did you do to Dick Earnest?" I immediately knew that I had a bit of a problem. My answer was "nothing," but that did not bet much mileage. Seems that Dick Earnest had already been in touch with Pam and the story went something like this. As already stated, we had all stayed too long at the bars when out in town together. As we madly dashed toward the navy base to make it before curfew, we had to cross a bridge over the Olongapo River. Now, the Olongapo River was not really a river at all. It was a sewage ditch in which one might find the most objectionable of things! As our group raced over the Olongapo River bridge, it seems that Dick Earnest was pushed off the side of the bridge into the Olongapo River sewer ditch. His description was something like - "damned Marines pushed intentionally pushed me into the river." Marines would never do such a thing to one of our Navy brethren. At any rate, by the time Lt Earnest crawled out of the river under the Olongapo River bridge and looked at his watch, it was something like 0103 or such. He had missed naval base curfew by three minutes or so. It seems that he spent the rest of the night laying on the river bank under that Olongapo River bridge from 0103-0500 in the morning at which time he crawled out from under the Olongapo River bridge, walked back through the main gate at Subic Bay Naval Station uncontested, trekked on back to his ship, and had a nice day. A shower would not have been the main thing needed. In my opinion, he probably needed a series of booster shots to counter any of dozens of things to which he was likely exposed in that Olongapo River. So much for Navy liberty with his US Marine buddies! Ain't life great? OORAH!!!



## Ken Sanger's Rescue by Ken Sanger

From Ken Sanger comes this tale of inter-service assistance and heroism during the Vietnam War and news of a recent reunion.

On the night of 21 July 1969 I had to jettison an A4 Skyhawk into the jungle of Laos. I also jettisoned myself but, unlike the aircraft, I was rescued by an Air Force Jolly Green crew.

It was the last launch, and my third hop, of the day from ORISKANY (CVA 34). My wingman was a nugget (an inexperienced pilot). At about 2300, we were working with a FAC who had placed flares on the ground near the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos (that country we weren't bombing). The nugget was supposed to be a mile behind and 1,000 feet above me but lost situational awareness and was much closer. I was just making my first run and was in ninety degrees of bank when I felt the plane shudder and immediately go into a violent series of rolls while on fire. I think he took off part of a wing. I ejected at an estimated 360 knots and my radio was torn away. I didn't know my wingman had hit me until I met him on the rescue helo. I thought a SAM or gunfire had got me.

After settling down during the peaceful parachute descent, I soon realized that since I lost my radio during the violent ejection, I was going to have to get my act together to either get rescued or start walking to Thailand. (The Navy was short on funds, so we were provided with only one radio and no beeper.) Since my radio was history, no one knew right away if I were alive. There was another section of squadron aircraft overhead. Knowing that, I pulled out my pencil flare while in the chute; I had nothing else to do! The standard issue flares were red, just like standard issue tracers! I somehow had learned that Sears sold green flares that fit the military pen. I bought a bunch. I fired off a few, hoping they would be seen and recognized. They were. When the others got back to the ship they convinced the air wing commander that I was alive and to hold off sending a MIA report.

The crew of an Air Force Jolly Green rescue helicopter made the rescue the next day. After plucking me and my wingman from the jungle floor, they flew us to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, where we were debriefed, patched up, and sent back to the ORISKANY and our squadron, VA 192 - The World Famous Golden Dragons. I have come to accept that my luck in surviving over 400 combat missions, 600 carrier landings, and a night in the Laotian jungle may be the reason I can't win the lottery!

A friend (Roger Keithly, classes of '64 and '63) recently commented on my jungle camping experience. That got me to thinking I might be able to find and thank the crew who made it possible for me to write this today. I contacted the head of the Jolly Green Association and he put me in touch with someone who could help. In about six hours from my first email, I had the names of the crew members, five formerly secret reports of the Air Force efforts to get me out, and a photo of a happy, young, Yankee Air Pilot Pirate and the crew who risked their lives for me. I am in the middle.



Ken Sanger and his USAF rescuers

The next day, I received the name and contact information for Jerry Jones, the pilot of the helo. On 27 March, 2017, I met Jerry at his home in Carlsbad, CA. We spent two and a half hours talking mostly about each other and filling in details of the rescue from each of our perspectives. The memories of the day of the rescue were amazingly clear for each of us. He recalled being awakened at about 0200 and told that they had a rescue scheduled for first light in a heavy threat area and then being told to go back to sleep! He didn't!

He let me know that there were a major road and a few small towns less than two miles away. A helo had been shot down in the area a few weeks before while on a rescue mission. The crew and pilot were rescued, making the pilot one who had been shot down twice in a very short time! That was why they were a bit nervous about picking me up, since I didn't have a radio and they couldn't be certain at first that I hadn't been captured and the bad guys had my flares.

The courage of the rescue crews was remarkable. There were known anti-aircraft gun sites in that area that could unleash a high volume of fire. The Air Force guys were willing to effect a rescue under conditions that could easily mean sudden death. A hovering helo is an easy target and the guns could have been hidden from view. That is heroism!

Here are two photos showing Jerry and me, then and now. The first was taken at Nakhon Phanom after the mission. In the second, we are holding a framed copy of the same image at his home.



Ken Sanger (left) and Jerry Jones (right)



USN-USAF reunion 48 years later

Jerry mentioned that everyone was very disappointed that the Navy was so damned efficient. A party was planned that afternoon/evening for all involved -- Sandy's, Sawdust, Jolly's, and the rescued -- but the ORISKANY's COD arrived to haul us back to the boat, where we had a welcome back cake waiting!

## CHRISTMAS AT SEA by John McCabe

Christmas Day often (for me at least) brings back memories of other Christmases spent in other times and places, when the world (or at least I) was much younger, and things did not seem as complicated as they are now. One of the more memorable times for me was the Christmas of 1965. . . .

My ship was USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14), where I served as Fire Control Officer, in charge of the four remaining 5inch guns, which by then provided little more than ballast. My primary function was serving as Officer of the Deck, which, given my two prior years on a DDG, gave me (at least in the eyes of the C.O.) an advantage over the other OCS-bred J.O.s. This “celebrity” later worked to my disadvantage, as I shall explain.

We had been “on line” in the South Chia Sea for 40 days, before heading to Yokosuka, Japan in early December, to return to Yankee Station by the 20<sup>th</sup>. The prospect of cool weather and a break from constant flight ops gave all on board an opportunity to celebrate the season before Christmas actually arrived. Yokosuka was known then (in addition to certain other attractions) as the stereo system capital of the known universe. During our stay, I spent my time (and limited savings) acquiring the speakers, amps, and turntable necessary to turn our stateroom into J.O. Party Central. For the finishing touch, I snuck a live pine tree aboard, along with lights and decorations befitting the yuletide season, not to mention canned eggnog and sundry other libations of questionable legality.

By the time we arrived back on station however, it was clear that my plans for Christmas were somewhat optimistic. For one thing, our stateroom, being located immediately below the port steam catapult, maintained a semi-constant temperature of 105 degrees, thus making it difficult to sing “Winter Wonderland” with a straight face. Further,

with flight ops going day and night, the cats would drill gouges in my “Christmas with Coniff” album, and convert “Rudolph the red nosed reindeer” into Ave Maria at the bat of an eye. By Christmas Eve, not a single needle was left on the tree (again thanks to the catapults). Charlie Brown’s tree was a thing of beauty by comparison. So much for the big Christmas party. . .

But all was not lost that Christmas. Ticonderoga had been chosen to host “The Bob Hope Show”, and in due course they arrived, replete with band (Les Brown), women (Carroll Baker and Joey Heatherton), and sundry other show biz folk. I had already picked out my observation spot for the show near my five inch gun mount (they turned out to have some good uses after all) when the Captain’s orderly invited me up to the Bridge. “Mac”, says he, “I want you to be OOD during the show. These damn tin cans (referring to our screening destroyers), want to come in close aboard to watch the show, and I want someone I can trust not to run into them”. Obviously the Captain wasn’t planning to be on the Bridge during the show. “It’s OK” he said, “We rigged up the landing cameras, so you can see it on the Bridge monitor”. Mustering a (not so cheery) Aye Aye, I relieved the now smiling OOD of his duties. The show went off without a hitch, while I managed not to collide with any of the smaller ships. I got to watch the Bob Hope Special in glorious black and white (with no sound), and occasionally see the back of Bob Hope’s head from 130 feet up. After I was relieved, I went down to my stateroom, turned on the lights on my “Christmas twig”, and swilled a whole can of warm eggnog.

That was fifty years ago, and a lot of things have happened since to all of us. Still, I can’t help but chuckle at the way things turned out on that particular Christmas. I was glad to have been there.

John McCabe

# UDT/SEAL TRAINING THE REAL STORY by Fred Kaiser

*Lieutenant Frederick H. Kaiser, USN UDT Training Class  
33*

## *UDT-12 SEAL Team One*

Navy Frogmen, SEALs, Commandos,  
Unconventional Warfare Specialists - That  
and More!

The story is not about the bravado that is depicted in so many trendy movies, it is not about the explosions that send huge fireballs into the sky, or the firing of endless rounds of ammunition from automatic weapons by our celluloid heroes. The real story is about individuals, their self respect, their confidence and their pride in knowing they are the best. Once a man has gone through the UDT/SEAL training, and overcome his fears, and gone the limit; he no longer has to prove himself to anyone else, for he has proven himself to his team mates, and above all he has proven himself, **to himself**.



The popularity of movies and TV shows based loosely upon the exploits of the U.S. Navy SEALs has prompted those that knew of my background to ask, what was it really like?

I had the privilege of serving with both Underwater Demolition Team 12, (UDT-12), and SEAL Team One, both home based in Coronado, California, and served with both organizations in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967. I volunteered for UDT training in early 1964, passed my acceptance tests, and began the rigorous training in August of that year. The training program for an officer lasts 21 weeks and covered physical conditioning, swimming, diving with various types of underwater breathing apparatus, reconnaissance operations, the use of explosives, and a myriad of other topics that

were key to enabling you to accomplish future missions, while protecting your life along with that of your comrades. Follow-on training included 3 weeks of parachute jump training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Survival school at Camp Pendelton in California, and an assortment of other programs to meet the needs of the teams. During UDT/SEAL training, the officers and enlisted personnel were treated as equals, no favoritism, no special privileges. If anything, the officers took the brunt of the abuse, for if they were to lead their men in the future, their men had to know they would lead by example, that the officer would and could do any task he assigned his men.

I will never forget that evening many years ago, when my comrades and I nervously awaited 2400 (12:00 Midnight), the designated hour for the beginning of "Hell Week". That term is too easily used by fraternities and clubs, there is only one true Hell Week, and that is in the training program for the Navy UDT/SEAL Teams. It was September 1964 and class 33 awaited the supreme ordeal that would take place at the Amphibious base in Coronado, California. "Motivation Week", the Navy's official designation, was the fourth week of training, and was designed to test every individual's **desire** to continue the remaining arduous weeks of the 21 week program. It did more than that, it tested each of us in those areas where we were uncertain. It built confidence in ourselves, in our minds and in our bodies. Would we gain the respect of those who had passed before, and more importantly would we gain our own self respect?

The following accurate description of "Hell Week" was written by Fred Kaiser 24 hours after completing the military's toughest challenge!

## Motivation Week

"UDT Motivation week" is termed such because it is carefully designed to test the participant's motivation towards completion of the course." Hell Week as it is still called by all Tadpoles and instructors, not only tests the individual's motivation as stated in the above quotation, but it also proves to the individual that his body can withstand and function under conditions that he never dreamed

possible.

I shall relate my experiences and feelings as I went through Hell Week as accurately as possible, although many things now seem very vague.

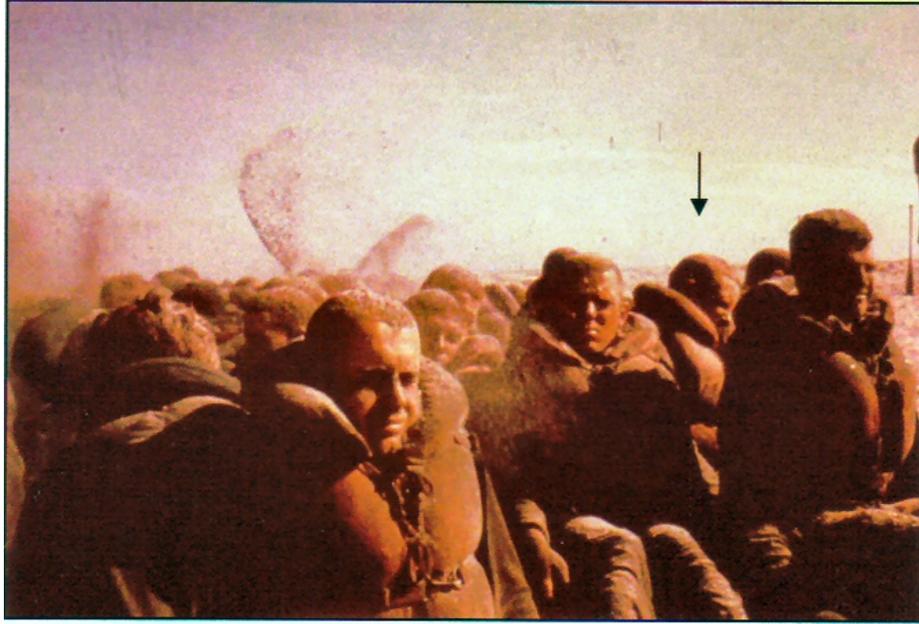
Sunday 6  
September, I  
awoke at about  
8:00 and I spent  
the day preparing  
for the week  
ahead. All the  
officers moved  
from the BOQ  
down to the  
enlisted barracks  
at the UDT  
training area.



Although I tried, I was unable to sleep during the day for all of us were pretty keyed up and anxious for the big event to start.

At 2200 in the evening we mustered in full greens on the company street to insure that everyone was present. We were then sent back to bed, knowing that in just 2 hours all hell would break loose. Needless to say no one slept. We waited and waited and then at 0030 Monday morning the week began. The instructors stormed through the building throwing firecrackers and making as much noise as possible. We were told to be on the company street in full greens in three minutes. This little action was called a breakout, and the procedure would be the same every evening for the rest of the week. We were on the street with plenty of energy and a lot of Hoo Yah! Our tremendous class spirit in full swing. The standard Hell Week uniform is full greens, Kapok life-jackets, and paddle, and never were you to forget any item. Soon we were doing push ups, sit-ups and many other exercises, and then we were marched into the bay to cool off for awhile. Believe me the bay water is not very warm especially in the early morning.

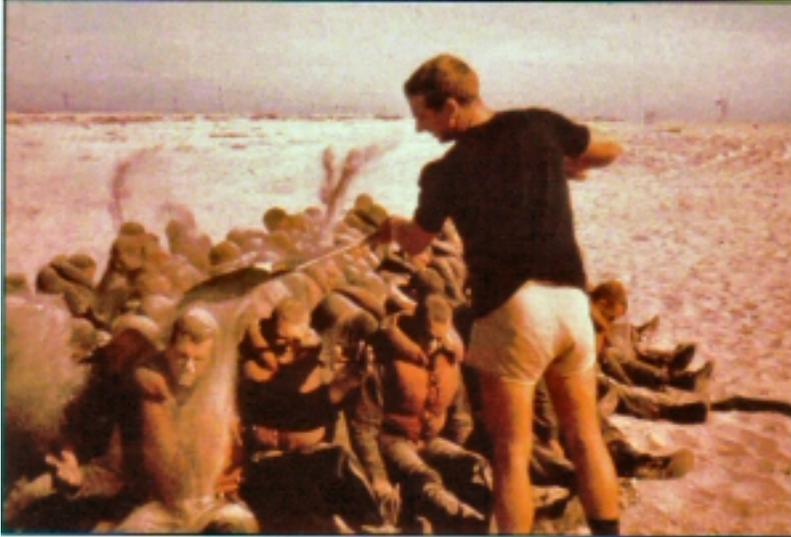
Soon though we were sent back to bed, our rest didn't last long, for in about 15 minutes there was another breakout and we were back



outside. After a few exercises we were told to be back in two minutes in our green helmets. It took a few seconds before we realized that, that was all that we were to have on. The next formation was the most unusual I've

ever been in, fortunately it took place at about 0200 in the morning. We marched over to the metal grating where we assumed a prone

position while the instructors sprayed us with cold water, then over on your back and another wash down. When this was finally over we took a quick hot shower, got dressed and tried to get to bed. It wasn't long though and another breakout. This time in full uniform and soon we were double timing over to the ocean, a mile away. Then we were lying in about 6 to 12" of surf, on your stomach, on your back, sit up, lie down. Then up onto the beach and sit down in a tight little group and throw sand up over your head until you're completely covered and it sticks to, and is down inside your wet

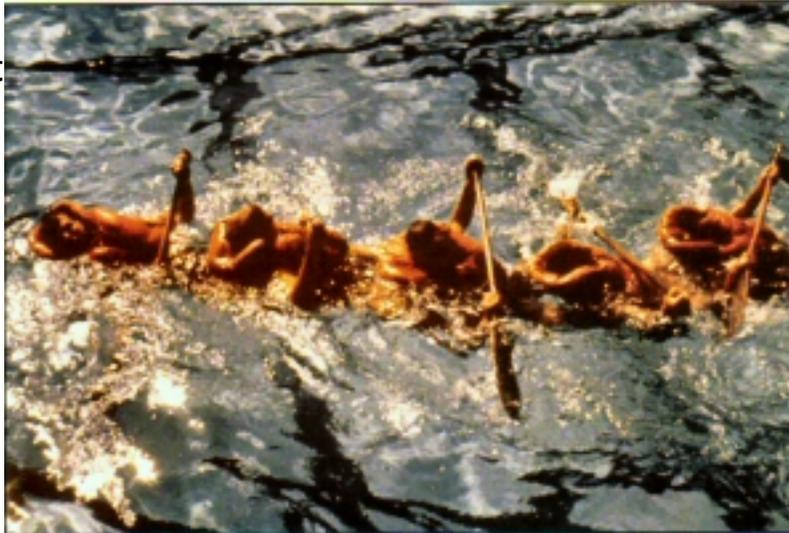


clothes. At last we double time back to the barracks. You take a warm shower and try to get the sand out of your clothes and hair. Before you can get back to bed again it is after 0500 and time to muster for

breakfast, the sun is coming up and the first goal has been reached. Everything is done by boat crews during the week with a seven men per crew. You carry your 150 pound boat on your heads wherever you go. After breakfast it's over to the ball field for PT. There is constant competition between crews during the week for precious points which will bring a reward at the end of the week. PT consisted of competition races of all sorts. It was

then over to the swimming pool for more competition. The uniform was lifejackets, swimsuits, and paddles. The races were of all types including carrying weights, swimming with towels in your hands, etc, etc. After swimming for a couple of hours, we dressed and marched over to the beach with our boats. We had 20 minutes for lunch which consisted of two sandwiches and an apple. The afternoon was

spent either having rubber boat races in the ocean or what they call nuisance races on the beach. This type of race is a relay race consisting of anything that will make you tired, dirty and sore.



You crawl on your stomach, roll, somersault, hop, and generally get completely covered with sand. Finally the afternoon is over and we march back to the mess hall for dinner. After dinner we march back to the barracks and usually have an hour to an hour and a half to shower, wash out your clothes, and put on dry clothes. Next came a 4 mile conditioning run on the beach, which also counted for competition

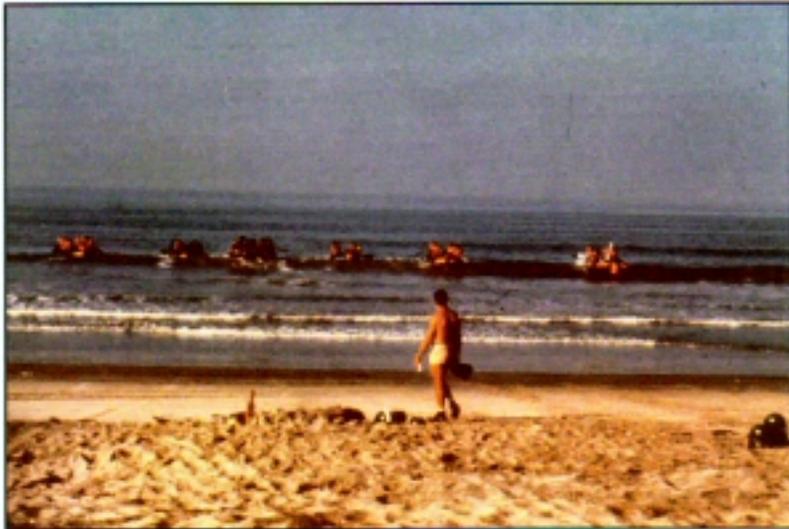


between boat crews.

Usually between 8:00 and 9:00 PM we had a briefing and prepared for the night problem. The night problem consists of paddling your rubber boat - somewhere.

Monday night we portaged to the ocean where the race was to begin. We launched the boats into the surf and about a mile down the beach came in and landed the boats on a rock jetty. It is more than just a little frightening to come in on the rocks at night even if the surf is only 3 or 4 feet high. Next we portaged across the strand and launched our boats into the San Diego bay. We paddled down the bay several miles then again portaged back across the strand to the ocean. Launching into the ocean, we paddled back to our original starting point. Then at about 0200 it's portage back to the mess hall for mid-rations. After chow it is time for a hot shower and to try to get to bed.

After 40 to 60 minutes of sleep, there is a breakout, this time it is in swimsuits. There was the usual yelling, exercises and dunking in the bay. After a few precious minutes in bed, the second breakout of the



morning began and it was probably the worst one of the week. Again in swim-suits we ran to the ocean. Into the shallow surf, get on your stomach, then on your back. The water was about 65 degrees, which felt like ice. The air was cool and the surf kept sliding your bare skin over the coarse sand. Finally, with slightly dampened spirits and teeth chattering, we ran back to the area. A few minutes in bed and we were up again, this time each member of the boat crew was tied to a long line, and each boat crew was dropped into the bay like fish on a stringer. We sat there for about 20 minutes. At last it was time for breakfast and another night was over.

Following chow was the usual PT, and then we were on our way over to the beach again for more boat paddling and nuisance

races. About 1030 we moved down the beach to the demolition area. Here we were to crawl on our stomachs for about 30 feet under barbed wire while half pound charges of TNT exploded about 10 feet from us, both on the right and on the left. We also crawled through some tires and a few more charges went off nearby. It was then time for our box lunches. We sat on the side of a hill eating, while TNT charges went off nearby, showering sand and water over us and our food.



After chow we crossed over to the bay and then paddled south to what is called the mud flats. They consist merely of a small pond of stagnant water which when churned up makes about a foot of thin

mud on top of a foot and a half of thicker gooier mud. (Photo 10)

Naturally we had to have competitive races through the mud. The mud had a strange foul odor to it, plus it tended to sting your skin wherever it was sensitive. At first everyone tried to keep their face out of the water, but the instructors didn't let that last for long. Soon we were swimming in the mud, using all types of strokes. The instructors wound up the day by holding diving contests. We all became totally covered with mud and the only clean spot on a person was the inside of his mouth or the whites of his eyes.

At last it was time to go back, so we washed some of the mud off in the bay and then portaged several miles back to the training area and to the mess hall for dinner. After cleaning up we had a short run around the base



and then the briefing for our night problem. The problem was similar to the one the night before, only it was in the reverse direction, and had one longer portage. No matter what you do you can't keep from getting wet, for each time we went through the surf, we would get drenched by the breakers. You are wet, therefore, throughout the night and usually pretty cold.

Between 0100 and 0200 Wednesday morning we returned from the night problem and went to the mess hall for our Mid Rats (Midnight Rations). It was then time for a quick shower and to bed, but we were not to receive more than a few minutes sleep that night either. There were two breakouts, both of which consisted mainly of standing in the bay. The worst part of the entire day is the night, for you know you won't be getting much sleep, and you know that you'll be wet and cold. The fact that it is pitch black outside, just makes everything seem twice as miserable. You lie down in bed knowing that you may be up again in ten to fifteen minutes, but even a few minutes of rest seem like the most wonderful thing in the world. Your shoes are soaking wet, but you don't take them off, for it would take too long to force them back on again. If you're brave, you take off your wet fatigues and lay down in just wet underwear with a blanket thrown over your body. In a second you're asleep and it seems as if you sleep for hours, but it is only minutes, for then there are the shouts of the instructors and it's another breakout. That has to be the worst moment of the day, for you jump up and slip into your wet greens and lifejacket, knowing

that in a few minutes you will be in the cool water of the bay, or worse the cold water of the ocean. Eventually though, the breakouts are over and the sun is about to come up, so it's pick up the boats and off to the mess hall for breakfast.



Wednesday morning was much like the others; we had PT and then went over to the strand for nuisance races and log PT. Log PT consists of each boat crew working out with a log or telephone pole. Your team

must work together to lift the log over your heads, and do the various exercises that are required. It doesn't take long to get tired and after doing log PT on the beach we move down to the ocean and do it in the surf. When we were good and tired and covered with sand, we were sent back to the mess hall for lunch. The afternoon was spent at the swimming pool with more competitive relay races. At least in the pool we are clean, but the races quickly sap what energy we have left. By this time everyone is getting just a little tired. During the first two days of Hell Week the instructors try to get you fatigued and exhausted just as fast as possible. The rest of the week is spent trying to keep everyone awake.

Dinner was a welcome break for those who could stay awake long enough to eat something. In the evening there was a short run. For those of us who had trouble keeping up, we went right into the bay. It didn't make



much difference though, for after the run everyone was sent into the bay to cool off. The night problem for Wednesday night consisted of a mile portage down the beach, launching into the bay and then paddling halfway down the bay and back again. About this time everyone began seeing weird things on the water, things that didn't really exist. Some would doze off while their arms were still moving with the paddle.

We were back to the mess hall for mid rats about 0100 Thursday morning. The night was filled with the usual breakouts, but by this time everyone just accepted the fact that they weren't going to get any sleep, and that we were all going to stay wet. The night finally passed though, as they all do, and we were back to the mess hall for breakfast. Again after chow it was more PT, then over to the strand with our boats of course, for more nuisance races and log PT. The only difference this time was that everyone was moving just a little slower, and with a few more aches and pains. The fatigue was beginning to become quite noticeable. As long as we were active in some exercise or event, I felt great and fresh as a daisy. As soon as you stopped, however, whether it be pausing on your back during an exercise, or standing up straight, your eyes would close and sleep would come in seconds.



In the late morning we paddled down to mud flats again. This time there was a makeshift sign stuck in the mud which read, "Wardroom". All the officers slopped out into the mud and took a seat. We were then tossed our

box lunches, which we ate while the mud was up to our chests. They always say a little mud never hurt anyone; well we had our share that day. After lunch we had the usual Mud Flats races and diving contests. The only thing that I can say for the mud is that it was warmer in the mud than standing out in the cool breeze, but even that didn't make it bearable. Finally after 3 hours, it was time to get washed off in the bay and paddle back to the training area for dinner. After dinner it was great to take a shower and get rid of the mud and the aroma. The corpsman washed out everyone's ears to prevent infection.

The night problem for Thursday was a special treat, a Treasure Hunt. Each boat crew was given a different clue and then they were to proceed to the place they thought the clue described. If the crew was correct an instructor was waiting to give them another clue. There was only one little hitch, your boat must be carried wherever you go. Some of the clues were a mile, or miles apart. At 2400, after 4 clues, we went to the mess hall for mid rats. I kept falling asleep while trying to eat, but had a few cups of coffee and felt great for the next few hours. I guess it is a proven fact that food can take the place of sleep to some extent, for we proved it night after night. We continued on the Treasure Hunt getting a clue that would take us several miles down the beach to a fence by the Naval Air Station. As we walked down the beach 70 % of the time my eyes were closed. Once I almost began to lose contact with reality, everything seemed hazy; I felt that I was dreaming and that

nothing was real. We passed another boat crew that had one of their men actually start screaming for he thought a cargo net was falling on him out of the sky. When I heard that, it was just enough to snap me back to reality, and I was all right from then on. We finally arrived at the fence and there was another clue saying that we should

reverse our direction and go to a fence about 5 miles in the other direction. Our flickering spirit was completely extinguished, but we started out. About 1/2 mile down the beach we decided to go off to the side and



rest for awhile. One of the men said he had his car parked just down the road, and that although he didn't have his keys; maybe he could hot wire it. We could then deflate the rubber boat, put it on top of the car and take it down to the other fence. Two men set out after the car, and the rest of us hid the boat in the shadows and sacked out. We stopped at 0345; at 0500 an instructor kicked me and asked me where the rest of the crew was. I had to tell him, and after they were found, still by the car, they were sent back to us, and we were all sent off down the beach. At 0600 we were told to proceed to the mess hall.

After chow we mustered back at the training area. Our boat crew was promptly sent into the bay for our foul play. After cooling off we were told to carry the 7 boats over to the ball field. Shortly everyone joined us at the field. Two boats were tied together one on top of the other, for a total of 300 pounds, and our crew had to carry them over to the beach a mile away. When everyone was on the beach we again had log PT, nuisance races, and races on parts of the obstacle course. (Photo 11) When it was time for lunch we came back to the mess hall. The afternoon was spent in the

pool. There was little swimming though, just a lot of getting in and out of the pool, and resting in the water, BUT NO SLEEPING.

At dinner more people slept than ate, several falling forward into their food. After dinner a strange thing happened, we were told to muster in inspection greens with a blanket and a pillow. After doing so we marched to the ball field. We were then told to make ourselves comfortable on the grass with our blankets and listen to the music that was being played on a radio. Once again, there was a hitch, anyone falling asleep would have to go jump in the bay. Guys started dropping off like flies, and as the instructors awoke them, into the bay they went. Although my eyelids were as heavy as lead, I didn't want to go into the bay, so I fought with myself and was able to stay awake the hour that we were on the field. It was one of the most difficult things I've done. Staying awake didn't really do me too much good though, for we were all sent into the bay before beginning the night problem. (Photo 12)

The Friday Night Problem was to paddle to the south end of the bay and then return. By this time we were all dead on our feet, and paddling a boat at night is a very boring thing to do. No one was able to take more than a few strokes with the paddle before dozing off. We inched our way down the bay, often going in near circles. We saw all sorts of strange objects that night, none of them real, until we finally made it to the end of the bay and were told to return to the base. Coming back we were going against the current. Yelling, trying to keep each other awake, we fought against the current, and finally about 0300 we arrived back at the base. As we took a shower I couldn't believe we had really made it to the other end for none of the night seemed real. I didn't ponder the subject too long though; for we had 1 1/2 hours sleep, uninterrupted, before breakfast.

After breakfast on Saturday we had PT, but since the end was near it was conducted by members of the class. We had such things as finger exercise, eyelid exercise, etc. Soon even that was over and as we stood in ranks, glassy eyed, the senior instructor informed us the Hell Week was over and all that remained to be done was to clean up the weeks accumulation of dirt in the training area.

47 out of 49 men had made it, a highly unusual feat. By 1200 everything was clean; by 1330 I was back in the BOQ asleep.

## Final Battle by Grant Telfer

# Zulu Platoon's Final Fight in Vietnam Grant Telfer Commanding 1971

'It was a dumb operation,' said U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Grant Telfer. 'We had gone through the entire six-month deployment without having anyone wounded.' Yet at the last minute, shortly before the members of Telfer's Zulu Platoon of SEAL (sea-air-land) commandos were due to return home in January 1971, disaster struck. For five of the SEALs, the trip home would be delayed. Three of them, in fact, would be alive only through medical miracles. Telfer himself would be one of those miracle stories.

Born in July 1941 in Seattle, Wash., Telfer grew up in that area, graduating from Seattle University Preparatory School and attending the Naval Academy. He did a lot of skiing at places such as Stevens Pass, near Seattle, went out for football (defensive guard) and was a strong swimmer. Telfer remembers that he often swam from Beaux Arts, on Lake Washington, to Mercer Island, a round trip of about two miles. Unlike many SEALs, he did no shooting or hunting as a youngster.

At the Naval Academy, Telfer spent much of his first year studying under a blanket with a flashlight in a dormitory. That experience probably contributed to reduced sight in his right eye, which resulted in his nickname, 'Cyclops.' His night vision was reduced to zero, which made shooting difficult unless he wore glasses.

During his SEAL training, Telfer found it next to impossible to fire at least one weapon used by the Viet Cong (VC)—the 57mm recoilless rifle—because of the location of its sight. Telfer could not fire such weapons without glasses, yet he was unable to use glasses in combat conditions because they might become smudged and affect

his marksmanship or light could be reflected off the lenses and warn the enemy of his presence. It is a tribute to Telfer's conscientiousness and dogged persistence that, in spite of his right eye, he insisted on running night operations.

At the end of January 1971, Telfer was not particularly happy with the latest operations of his platoon. He preferred to work at night, but all the operations that Zulu Platoon had participated in so far during that month had taken place during daylight. The SEALs had been supporting a civilian resettlement effort during the previous weeks.

During the last part of 1970, the South Vietnamese government had decided to resettle the citizens of An Xuyen province, located in the lightly inhabited and VC-terrorized region to the east of Nam Can, on the Ca Mau Peninsula. Telfer's Zulu Platoon was based at Solid Anchor, a Navy Civil Engineer Corps base area on the site of badly damaged Nam Can. Zulu Platoon served as a security force to support the resettling of Vietnamese citizens into a new living complex near Nam Can. The Vietnamese government moved the people and their belongings during daylight hours, and the SEALs began to run a daylight pattern of operations in support of the resettlement.

Zulu Platoon carried out several operations using Navy transport helicopters to make daylight landings in an area known as 'the plantation,' east of Nam Can. The SEALs, along with Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and local forces, kept the VC guerrilla fighters from interfering with the removal of the citizens. Trained and conditioned as they were for clandestine missions, some members of Zulu Platoon grew uneasy about the openness of the operations. To the SEALs, it seemed that daylight helicopter landings were virtual advertisements for their operations. Telfer summarized their concern in understated fashion: 'It is difficult to be clandestine in broad daylight.'

Zulu Platoon had run one of its routine resettlement support missions on January 28. Since they had met little opposition during their security patrols, the SEALs had developed a routine approach to the

daylight sweeps. The platoon members had already packed most of their gear for the move back to the United States and were going through the period of their deployment known as the stand-down, or disengagement from serious operations. In a week, they hoped, everyone would be home.

The Vietnamese requested an additional security patrol, and Telfer began to plan a daylight security sweep. He approached the commander of the Seawolves, a Navy light attack helicopter detachment at Solid Anchor, and pried away two Seawolf choppers to be used for fire support during the mission. In the evening of January 29, Telfer and Lieutenant J.G. Nelson, commander of the two Seawolves made available for the operation, drank beer and continued planning the security sweep.

That same evening, Telfer issued a warning order to the platoon. He assigned five SEALs to the operation and listed the mandatory equipment for them to carry. Telfer also placed a three-beer restriction on his men for the evening. He and the soldiers who would join him on the next day's mission were all in good health, with no ailments that might have reduced their efficiency. Morale was high because the men had suffered no casualties and had been effective on about 58 previous missions.

At about 0930 hours on January 30, 1971, Telfer and Nelson went together to find a transport helicopter to insert the SEALs at a suspected VC complex, which was located approximately one mile north of the Cai Ngay River. Their approach to locating transport for the team was informal. The two officers knew that a helicopter arrived with mail every day from Binh Thuy, farther north. They also knew that the mail run was not the most exciting duty available in Vietnam. Telfer had no trouble convincing the pilot, Lieutenant j.g. Dyer, that it would be more interesting to deliver the SEALs to their insertion point than to continue on his regular mail route.

Around noon, Telfer presented his patrol order to the five SEALs of the action squad. He also had the helicopter pilots attend the same briefing to ensure that everyone involved in the mission would be

well-informed. He asked the team to take along a relatively light load of ammunition and some demolition materiel, so that they would be able to selectively eliminate some VC structures.

At 1330 the six-man squad lifted off in a helicopter from the base at Nam Can. Telfer might have taken more than five men with him, but the helicopter had strict weight limits and could handle only six American passengers. Through clear skies, the chopper headed northeast for the approximately 20-kilometer trip to the insertion point.

About one mile from where they had planned to land, Gary Lawrence, the automatic weapons man who was sitting next to Telfer, shook him and yelled over the noise of the helicopter, 'Arroyo's been hit!' Telfer had heard no shooting. Thinking that Marcus Arroyo, the radioman, must have been hit by a piece of equipment in the helicopter, Telfer shouted back in some surprise, 'He's been hit by what?' He then glanced over at Arroyo and realized that the radioman had obviously been shot.

Donald Futrell, another automatic weapons man, had a large medical kit with him. He and Lawrence began to work on Arroyo. The wounded man had two 7.62mm AK-47 bullets in his left shoulder. The two men took off Arroyo's vest and shirt and applied compress bandages to the wounds. After the first shock, as the pain began to increase, they gave him a shot of morphine. In the meantime, Telfer had signaled the helicopter pilot to turn the chopper around and head back to the base at Nam Can.

The squad delivered Arroyo into a waiting ambulance at Nam Can. The SEALs were shocked and angered by the fact that they had taken their first serious casualty in six months. The attack also had a freakish, almost supernatural quality about it. After an intensive search, the helicopter crew and maintenance men were unable to locate any bullet holes in the aircraft. Yet two bullets from an AK-47 rifle had hit Arroyo within inches of each other. The bullets had entered the helicopter through one of the two open doors in the passenger compartment, making the wounding, at the least, a statistical absurdity.

As Arroyo settled into the ambulance, he managed to yell back to the rest of the team, 'How about getting one for me?' At that point, the operation began to take a new, emotional course. It was an article of faith with SEALs that, once they had come under attack by gunfire, they should withdraw and not return to the same area. But Telfer and his men were uniquely frustrated on this operation. The January 30 insertion was the last one that they could possibly make during their tour in Vietnam. Any revenge against the VC who had shot Arroyo would have to be accomplished that day, or never.

The men of Zulu Platoon were acting on emotion when they lifted off the second time. Telfer decided that they should land at the point where Arroyo had been hit. Along with the transport chopper pilots and crew, the SEALs had determined that the rounds fired must have come from a tree-and-grass-covered dike about one mile west of their original objective. Telfer ordered the two Seawolf helicopter gunships, commanded by Lieutenant Nelson, to be ready to make firing runs against the dike from south to north. The SEALs would land to the west of the dike next to another dike that ran parallel to the objective.

The loss of Arroyo severely reduced the squad's firepower and its ability to communicate. Arroyo had carried a combined over-and-under CAR-15 commando rifle (a modified M-16A1 with a shorter barrel and a short, expandable metal stock) and a 40mm grenade launcher as well as the squad's radio. Telfer had asked his second in command in Zulu Platoon, Lt. j.g. Thomas Richards, who carried a Stoner light machine gun, to accompany the patrol. Richards also carried the squad's radio, a model PRC-77. He had met the aircraft when it arrived with the wounded man and did not need much prompting to accompany the team.

About 15 minutes after taking off from Nam Can for the second time, the SEAL squad approached its new objective from the southwest. The helicopter inserted Telfer's squad at 1430 in an open, dry rice paddy about 250 meters southwest of the dike from which the gunfire had come on the previous flight. The Seawolf light fire team—the two gunships under Nelson—was hovering only a few minutes away to

provide fire support if it was needed. The insertion went smoothly. Telfer's SEALs moved away from the transport helicopter toward an intervening dike about 50 meters to the northeast.

Small-arms fire started hitting around the squad as soon as the men began to move north, up the intervening dike. The fire was aimed, moderately heavy and clearly dangerous, and it came from the dike that was their objective, which was now about 150 meters away from the platoon. Telfer recalled that the fire seemed to be largely from AK-47 rifles. That kind of fire was a bad sign. It raised suspicions that either a VC Main Force or an extraordinarily well-armed local unit was involved. On the other hand, the SEALs did not hear any machine-gun fire, and the absence of that kind of fire was a good sign.

Telfer called the Seawolves on the PRC-77 radio and requested a heavy strike from south to north on the dike where the VC were positioned. The Seawolves put on a good show. Each gunship made one run firing rockets and miniguns (extremely high-speed machine guns capable of firing up to 6,000 rounds per minute). Telfer later remembered seeing a palm tree near the VC being lofted end-over-end into the air. Futrell was hit in the face by either a casing fragment from a rocket or a piece of palm tree. The noise, smoke and debris that resulted from the Seawolf attack were impressive, and the VC fire died away.

Over the radio, Nelson announced from his gunship that he could see two VC lying in the open, motionless and apparently dead, just to the east of the dike line. He could also see weapons near them, as well as at least one VC fleeing to the north, away from the area. In retrospect, Nelson's report represents the crucial juncture of the operation. The SEALs had been detected and fired on, and Telfer was faced with the distinct possibility that he was moving his squad into danger. But two things nagged him on. First, he wanted to be able to report some concrete evidence of VC casualties and damage when he saw Arroyo and the rest of the squad. Second, he was encouraged by Nelson's report of two VC killed in action and one running out of the area.

Telfer ordered the Seawolf commander to work over the VC who seemed to be disengaging to the north. The patrol leader then moved the column slowly northward along the grass-covered dike that paralleled what he hoped was the former VC dike positions, about 50 meters to the east. He was satisfied with the mood of the squad. No one seemed to hold back or have a premonition of disaster. To the contrary, James Rowland, the pointman, said, 'Let's go get them, Mr. T.' Telfer then passed the word: 'Don't be too sure they are all dead. Keep your patrol interval. We are going to take our time going over there.'

The day was warm, not too humid, and there were fluffy white clouds in the sky. The patrol moved north along the dike a few more meters and then turned to the right onto another dike that ran directly east toward the silent, apparently empty VC positions. Rowland edged out on the connecting dike and started slowly across. Nothing happened until Oliver Hedge, the rear security man, stepped out onto the same dike.

Rowland at that point was about 20 meters from the VC dike. Telfer, who was about 6 meters behind his pointman, heard nothing but saw Rowland suddenly spin around to the right, face almost rearward, and then fall into the dry paddy. The bullet that felled Rowland had passed from left to right through his abdomen and came out the right side of his back, lodging in a block of C-4 plastic high explosive that he was carrying. Miraculously, the projectile had not perforated a single organ in its passage through his body. As he rolled over on the ground, he was hit by one more bullet, this time in the back. Though seriously wounded, Rowland would survive.

Rowland had been hit by rounds from either a Soviet Simonov SKS 7.62mm semi-automatic rifle or a Soviet Tokarev Type 51 pistol. The rest of the platoon was now under heavy fire from VC with similar weapons and AK-47s, and the enemy was positioned in the tree-and-grass-covered dike to the front of the patrol. Instead of dropping to the ground and starting to fire, Telfer instinctively stepped forward to help Rowland. After moving about four feet the platoon leader was hit

from the left by a bullet that spun him around to the right and into the paddy. He joined Rowland there, lying on his stomach.

Like Rowland's wound, Telfer's was somewhat unusual. The 7.62mm AK-47 bullet that struck Telfer entered the front of his left knee from the left of the dike, knocking him off the dike and into the paddy. Instead of simply perforating the knee, however, the heavy-grain projectile almost killed Telfer by changing direction 90 degrees and coursing directly up the young officer's left thigh, into the left side of his groin, where it changed direction again to pass through the groin into the right leg, lodging up against the femoral artery. If the bullet had traveled an additional half inch, Telfer would have died. Amazingly, he felt practically no pain at first. Within seconds, however, both his legs began to go numb.

Telfer crawled back up onto the dike he had just been on, intending to locate the enemy fire and counter it with SEAL fire. His crawl up the dike was tough and professional, an aggressive offensive action. Wounded in both legs and lower abdomen, he could—without risking any criticism—have handed over command to Richards, his second in command, and concentrated on doing what he could to defend himself while lying flat on the ground in the rice paddy.

As Telfer got back onto the dike, Richards came up with the patrol radio, and the pair called to the transport helicopter for an immediate extraction about 80 meters behind them and to the west. The extraction area was in an extensive dry paddy, covered by the large dike to their rear. Small-arms projectiles continued to crack and whine around them. As bullets began to dig up earth nearby, the two officers realized that VC fire was coming not only from the left of the dike—the direction from which both Rowland and Telfer had been hit—but also from the right. The SEALs no longer had cover. They were in trouble.

Lawrence, with his Stoner light machine gun, and Futrell, with his M-60, came up close to Telfer, who told them to help Rowland. Lawrence began to fire along the dike and to the northeast while Futrell gave first aid to Telfer. Seeing where the VC rounds were

striking, Lawrence also started shooting to the east and southeast. By that time both Hedge and Richards were firing as well.

In spite of his wounds, Telfer managed to get off one round with Arroyo's 40mm grenade launcher and emptied one 5.56mm magazine from his CAR 15. When he reached into Arroyo's ammunition vest, which he was wearing, for another automatic rifle magazine, he was surprised when he instead pulled out Arroyo's instamatic camera, which the radioman had stored along with his extra ammunition.

The action at that point had lasted for approximately seven minutes, and the time was about 1503. Telfer was concerned about the rescue operation, but he felt that the situation was under control in spite of his wound and the possible death of Rowland. A few seconds later, however, events took a dramatic turn for the worse. Futrell was facing away from Telfer and firing his M-60 machine gun with its belted ammunition draped over his shoulders when he was hit by a heavy 7.62mm bullet that spun him around. Now facing Telfer, Futrell exclaimed, 'I'm hit in the chest!'

The bullet had struck him in the left side of the chest, and drilled through him, passing within a fraction of an inch of his heart and missing the left lung and the big arteries and veins of the chest.

Telfer, dragging his numbed legs behind him, began to crawl toward Futrell. For the first time he began to worry that his whole unit might be annihilated. To Richards he yelled, 'Get that helo in here!' Moments later, Richards shouted, 'Ouch!' and shook his right hand. He had been hit by another 7.62mm bullet, becoming the fourth casualty from enemy fire in the few minutes that the action had lasted.

Covered by Lawrence and Hedge, the wounded SEALs crawled over the dike to the north side. Even though two of the team had been hit by bullets fired from that direction, the patrol felt that they might find cover in the small ditch that paralleled the dike along the north. And the VC fire had been heaviest from the south side of the dike, some

of it seeming to come from a small house directly to the south, about 100 meters away.

The three severely wounded men—Rowland, Telfer and Futrell—were unable to climb to safety over the bigger intersecting dike at the end of the ditch. In spite of his wounded hand, Richards pulled each in turn over the big dike. (Richards would go on to become chief of Naval Special Warfare Command, a rear admiral commanding all SEAL operations.) The transport chopper landed only a few meters away. Joined by the rest of the patrol, the men painfully made their way into the helicopter. Fingers and forearms were burned on hot weapons. Telfer's wound began to hurt along its entire complex path. The helicopter was hit several times as it lifted off. 'Barndance 59,' as the action would be called in the official record, was at last at an end.

The four badly wounded men—Arroyo included—were evacuated to an Air Force hospital in Japan, where the doctors made it plain to Telfer, Rowland and Futrell that they had narrowly escaped death. During their stay in the hospital the men discussed their last, nearly fatal mission, going over the various turning points in the operation.

As they talked, one question came up again and again: 'How did they ever get out alive?' All of them agreed that they never should have been on the dike. They also agreed that the intensive SEAL training they had received had been crucial to their survival. They had been conditioned by their training to react coolly and effectively to crises like the one they had faced together on January 30. And they came to believe that one part of their training in particular—the rite of passage in SEAL school known as 'hell week'—had prevented their unit from disintegrating when the going got tough.

The Vietnamese and American forces at Nam Can launched a vigorous follow-up to the January 30 firefight. Most of the Seawolves stationed in the delta region were scrambled and sent into the area. For the rest of the afternoon after the SEAL extraction, the helicopter gunships made firing runs on the VC dike positions. In an unprecedented display of tenacity, the VC fired on most of the gunships.

A Vietnamese agent reported several days later through an intelligence network that a 65-man VC company dominated the area where Zulu Platoon had landed. Approximately 30 enemy troops had engaged the SEALs on January 30, 1971, and had probably been joined by the rest of the company for the late afternoon engagement with the Seawolves. Clearly, against such odds, the Zulu Platoon members had been lucky to survive their encounter.

This article was written by Russel H.S. Stolfi and originally published in the June 2002 issue of Vietnam Magazine. His article is based on SEAL after-action reports at the Center for Naval History and interviews with participants. For more great articles be sure to subscribe to Vietnam Magazine today!

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An add-on from Grant on 5-5-17

As an add on, I got my ass chewed royally for that op. We were the first SEAL platoon who would not be relieved, as all U.S. forces were gradually being withdrawn. We had been doing very well, getting into the groove, and we had some good intel. One of my men talked about staying a little longer, and we took a vote. As a result, I flew up to Saigon and told my O-6 boss about our desire to stay another month or two. He told me to get my ass back to Solid Anchor, get packed out and go home, and not in any agreeable terms.

I went back and passed the bad news . We did our stand down, loaded up everything and were going to leave Feb 1. On Jan 30, we got some intel about a supply depot with only an old man and a boy guarding it. I had more volunteers than I could use. We broke out our weapons and gear and went in. As the story narrates, the intel was bad. It was six of us against about 65 VC regulars, and we barely made it out, with 5 of the 6 wounded.

Next time I saw my boss was in the 3rd Surgical Hospital in Can Tho, after my surgery. He was not happy. He was with the RADM running the Navy ops in the Delta and told the admiral to pin the Purple Heart on my bare chest, "and make it hurt."

A few months later, after he got back from Vietnam, we were at a party and he told my wife about the platoon voting to stay over our tour. That resulted in a good two months in the doghouse, and she never stopped reminding me about it.

My answer to it all was that I brought all my men back alive, and all eventually went back on full duty. Plus, we had done many, many very successful ops.

That day was probably my worst active duty experience. My best was before I became a SEAL, while serving in USS Princeton (LPH-5). Princeton was an Essex Class converted to carry Marine helicopters, and was still in an axial configuration. It handled like a dream, and the captain liked to go fast. I was in communications but, because I had been a Fleet OOD on a destroyer, the captain had picked me as one of the 'combat OODs'. I had the deck and the conn for H-Hour of Operation Jackstay, then the largest Marine assault. It was into the Rung Sat Special Zone, which bordered on the bay south of Vung Tao, where all the shipping passed going in and out of Saigon.

We normally launched with the ship at 5-7 knots, in a racetrack pattern. On that day, however, the skipper was watching the Marines load into the H-34s and knew the birds were overloaded. He summoned the SLF commander and told him because of that and the heat, we were going to launch 'at speed.' The deck people were told to leave one set of tiedown chains on until each bird was launched. We got all 8 boilers on line, and I told him I wanted to take the ship out far enough to get a good build up.

We timed it all, went a good 20 miles further out, came up to speed and made the turn. I felt nothing but thrills as the 240,000 horsepower was let loose. We were at 31 knots, heading straight towards the harbor, when we began to launch. Even at that speed the helos barely made it off the deck. Anything less and we would have had dead Marines. We were entering the harbor as the last helo lifted off. We popped safeties to take off speed, and I asked

permission to do a Williamson turn to avoid the shipping. I had practiced it and knew the turn parameters. We were still doing 24 knots in the turn, and everything in the harbor scattered.

The empty helos came back aboard within 10 minutes, we reloaded them for the second wave on the way back out, and did it again. This time the harbor was all ours. After that we were taking back wounded and sending in supplies. My relief came up, but the captain waved him away. He wanted me to keep doing it. No problem. I was loving it. We accomplished the mission perfectly.

The next deployment was with the H-46, and they didn't need any ship wind.

I've driven a lot of ships and boats in my life, but Princeton will always be my favorite. The Vietnam era Princeton wardroom still does occasional reunions.

## New Year's Deck Log USS Weiss by Grant Telfer

### USS WEISS (LPR 135)

Through restless seas we steam with ease  
As phosphorescence glows  
In eerie swirls midst foamy curls  
And ever sternward flows.

A white-gold moon shows fullness soon  
Through a veil of clouds  
That mask the night from starry light  
With rolling, coursing shrouds.

In the South China Sea alone are we  
Enroute to Subic Bay,  
An upkeep trip to fix the ship  
On our forthcoming stay.

By OpNav decree this APD  
Is today an LPR  
(Our task the same will still remain  
No matter what we are.)

Eastward now we point the bow,  
The Philippines ahead.  
By orders of ComSeventhFleet  
In his quarterly sked.

The screws are turning and fires are burning  
Neath Boiler Number One,  
And cross-connected we stay protected  
From low fuel ere we're done.

Away from war at Condition Four  
Of readiness we be,  
And Yoke throughout is our redoubt  
Against an angry sea.

Our course through night is shown in light  
From sides and stern and mast,  
So ships may know which way we go  
And thus are safely passed.

The silent guns with tompions  
Fixed tight against salt spray  
Belt the roar they lashed ashore  
In many a recent day.

Steaming alone is nice, for the CO of Weiss  
Is SOPA and OTC,  
His duties, too, include CTU  
Seven-Six-Point-Zero-Pt-Three.

The waves cut through, the course is true-  
Zero Seven One-  
Twin motors drive Sixteen Point Five,  
Our speed towards rising sun.

As the hours go the soot doth grow,  
So at the stroke of two,  
We quickly slow, boiler tubes to blow,  
And speed again renew.

While shipmates sleep the watch we keep  
And ask with silent prayer,  
That fighting cease, and bring us peace  
And freedom everywhere.

LT G. R. TELFER, USN

## MY SEABEE TOUR IN VIETNAM by Jud Pearson

I just found our web page with the many entries of our classmates' involvement in the Vietnam War. I was encouraged to also write a summary for inclusion in the record, very much aware that I did not go "in harms' way" nearly to the extent that others did, in stark contrast to the marines, aviators, SEALs, and many others who were constantly exposed to unfriendly fire. I was fortunate that the better part of two years in-country with "boots on the ground" came rather late in the war when the U.S. was in the process of disengaging. Like all of us who survived the war, not a day passes that I do not give thanks to the Lord that my family and I were spared the personal tragedy that others suffered. "The Wall" is a great reminder to us all.

My story actually begins back at Annapolis during Second Class year. Some of you may recall that CAPT Charles J. Merdinger, CEC, USN, an Academy graduate and Rhodes Scholar, was assigned to the Naval Academy during our time there as Head of the English, History and Government Department. It was because of him that I, along with several others in our class, became interested in the Civil Engineer Corps and the legendary Seabees of WWII. I even wrote an article that was published in Trident Magazine, entitled, "The Seabees as a Military Peace Corps."

The term, "Seabees" refers to those enlisted personnel in the Construction Ratings, Builders (BU's), Steelworkers (SW's), Utilitiesmen (UT's), Construction Electricians (CE's), Equipment Operators (EO's), Construction Mechanics (CM's), and Engineering Aids (EA's). Additionally, the term is also used to refer to those officers and enlisted in other ratings serving with units commanded by Civil Engineer Corps Officers in the Naval Construction Force (NCF), including Naval Mobile Construction Battalions (NMCB's), Amphibious Construction Battalions (PHIBCB's), Naval Construction Regiments (NCR's), Naval Construction Brigades (NCB's), Construction Battalion

Maintenance Units (CBMU's), Underwater Construction Teams (UCT's), Seabee Teams, and Construction Battalion Units (CBU's).

As it turns out, many of us who had been interested in the CEC, were found physically qualified for unrestricted line, and Walt Pierce garnered the only CEC slot reserved for those in our class who were otherwise physically qualified for unrestricted line. So, on service selection, I selected a DLG out of Mayport for my first assignment.

My two years aboard USS FARRAGUT (DLG-6) following graduation, set the stage for my later involvement in Vietnam, and more importantly, gave me an enduring appreciation and high regard for Surface Warfare Officers and the extremely difficult and arduous challenges with which they are so often confronted. While aboard FARRAGUT, I was selected for transfer to the Civil Engineer Corps and subsequently received an MSCE from Stanford University. My first CEC assignment was in contracts at NAS Lemoore during some of the most difficult years of the air war over North Vietnam. The many CACO (Casualty Assistance Calls Officer) calls to the wives and families of deployed carrier pilots gave us all a heightened awareness of the dangers they faced while on the line.

After the inauguration on 20 January 1969, the Nixon administration “gradually developed a two-track policy of negotiation and what came to be called “Vietnamization”—that is, unilateral withdrawal of American combat troops combined with a major effort to strengthen Saigon’s armed forces.” Naval assets were concentrated principally in the “Brown Water Navy” engaged in riverine operations in canals, rivers and tributaries of the Mekong Delta. With the President’s call for Vietnamization, COMNAVFORV developed the ACTOV program for accelerated turnover of naval assets to the Vietnamese. Previously, the Seabees were engaged primarily in ICorps in support of U. S. Marine units in III MAF, with project sites in the local vicinity of the headquartered battalion. With the gradual withdrawal of 1st Mar Div, coupled with the need to construct bases for Vietnamese riverine operations, the Seabees were soon tasked with construction of temporary Advanced Tactical

Support Bases (ATSB's) and more permanent Intermediate Support Bases (ISB's) in the Mekong Delta at great distances from the headquartered battalions in I-Corps. With that as the backdrop, my time in Vietnam was characterized by both force withdrawals and accelerated turnover of tactical missions and facilities to the South Vietnamese.

The following is a summary of my Seabee involvement in Vietnam written for posterity at the request of my family:

“From Jan 1970 to Jan 1972, as a young Lieutenant and Lieutenant Commander, I served in Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE (NMCB FIVE), homeported at CBC Port Hueneme, CA. Shortly after I reported, we learned that we were going to relieve NMCB ONE at Camp Haskins North in Danang RVN, but with detachments in the Mekong Delta at Nam Can, Rach Soi, and Ha Tien, and also move on to new construction sites at Long Phu and Kien An. This represented a significant departure from the manner in which mobile construction battalion assets had been previously utilized, and presented a unique and almost unprecedented challenge. Battalions were not staffed, configured, nor equipped for the distinctly different effort required to support dispersed operations of this magnitude.

Following military training at Camp Pendleton, I deployed to the Republic of Vietnam as Officer-in-Charge of the Advance Party, arriving in DaNang, RVN on 27 Feb 1970. I served first as Equipment Officer and Alpha Company Commander (A6), in charge of 270 men, primarily involved with resurfacing QL-1, the national highway, over the difficult and dangerous Hai Van Pass, but with Equipment Operators (EOs) and Construction Mechanics (CMs) involved in equipment operation and maintenance of more than 450 pieces of equipment. Our battalion was headquartered at Camp Haskins North, located at Red Beach, just north of Da Nang on the China Sea, across from 1st MarDiv at FLC, but the majority of our 750 men were scattered all over the Mekong Delta, constructing Advanced Tactical Support Bases (ATSBs) and Intermediate Support Bases (ISBs) for the Vietnamese Navy. As the Battalion Equipment Officer, I made several trips to construction sites throughout the Delta, catching rides

whenever

I could from one site to the next on UH-1 Huey's, OH-6 Loach's and OH-58 Kiowa Super Loach's .

In July of 1970, I became the Battalion Operations Officer (S3), in charge of all construction operations at Nam Can, Cho Moi, Rach Soi, Kien An, Long Phu, Tuyen Nhon, Ha Tien, Chau Doc, Phuoc Xuyen, Vinh Gia and other sites throughout the Mekong Delta, including the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ), with support operations in Saigon, Bien Hoa, Vung Tau and Binh Thuy. Logistics support of these detachments was a major challenge. At the time, we were only the second battalion to have detached unit operations of this magnitude. We profited from NMCB ONE's experience, having been suddenly required to deploy their assets to the Delta, and had great difficulty communicating with, and tracking battalion assets (personnel, equipment, tools, material, etc.) to and from these extremely remote sites. Our battalion acquired and utilized Motorola single side band (SSB) radios designed for long distance land communications, and developed effective systems to partially overcome these challenges. Supplies and materials were transported by any means available, often by tractor-trailer convoys over un-improved roads through hostile territory, and sometimes by LCM's. Nevertheless, transportation to these remote sites was often a "hit or miss" proposition. We were able to finally obtain improved tasking of helicopter assets after we provided some construction assistance to the Navy's Helicopter Attack Squadron (HA(L)-3) headquartered in Binh Thuy, but with nine detachments scattered throughout III and IV Corps, at Nha Be, Rach Gia, Chau Doc, all very near our construction sites, and other detachments next to our sites at Ha Tien and Nam Can ("Seafloat").

My Ops office was located at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and I lived at "the Five Oceans" BOQ in Cho Lon, the Chinese district of Saigon. Late in the deployment, I remember returning from a two-week tour of our sites in the Delta and remarking to my Ops Chief next to me as we neared Saigon, "Master Chief, it's going to be great to get home, isn't it?" I knew as soon as I said it that I had been in-country too

long, after I referred to Saigon as “home!”

The most important tasking was at Nam Can where we were tasked with construction of an ATSB that would accommodate the task group operating from “Seafloat” and a more permanent ISB to be turned over to the Vietnamese, also accompanied by construction of a 3000 ft runway.

Numerous challenges and obstacles were overcome, and on 2 Sep 1970, our site at Nam Can officially was renamed “Solid Anchor” and (HA(L)-3) Det 1 moved ashore from “Seafloat,” along with the rest of the task group. In October, we turned over our unfinished projects (those with insufficient time remaining to allow for completion) to NMCB 74. The main body redeployed back to homeport, but I stayed on as OIC of the Delayed Party, focusing our total attention on the one remaining site at Kien Nan in order to turn that ATSB over to the Vietnamese Navy. We successfully completed work at Kien An, and departed Bien Hoa, RVN on 10 Nov 1970, returning to CONUS and CBC Port Hueneme, CA.

During our four-month homeport period, we made pre-deployment visits to Guam, Adak, and the Philippines. Our 75 man detachment to Adak was tasked with building a new “Acey-Ducey” EM Club, and a 75 man detachment at NAS Cubi Point would be involved with the relocation of operational units and facilities, along with some housing, from NAS Sangley Point to NAVSTA Subic Bay and Cubi Point.

We were informed in late January that in addition to our previously assigned tasking in Guam, Adak and the Philippines, our battalion was going to be also tasked with sending a major detachment to RVN two months early and relieve NMCB THREE’s detachment at Ca Mau, and NMCB 74’s detachments at Mui Dinh and Ta Kou, along with completion of punch-list items at Tan Chau, Chau Doc, and Cho Moi. Because of the politics of force withdrawals, the total number of Seabees in-country were limited to just 350. So, it was pretty much a “no-brainer” that the CO and XO would deploy with the main body to Guam, and I would be tasked with taking 350 men back to RVN. After our two weeks of military readiness training with the Marines at Camp Pendleton, my staff and I were totally immersed in staffing and

equipping each detachment to successfully accomplish construction tasking.

Just before we were scheduled to deploy, NMCB THREE's detachment at Ca Mau was attacked by a VC squad, armed with B-40 rocket launchers, in the early morning hours, inflicting a number of casualties.

I deployed to Vietnam shortly thereafter, serving as Officer-in-Charge of the advanced arriving at Bien Hoa, RVN on 2 Mar 1971. We were to relieve NMCB 74 headquartered at the Army Base at Bien Hoa, and their detachments at Ta Kou and Mui Dinh on the coast, and NMCB THREE's detachment at Ca Mau with support operations at Binh Thuy.

Soon after arriving in-country, I visited the NMCB THREE construction site at Ca Mau in an attempt to assess the threat to NMCB FIVE's future detachment. Discussions with numerous sources revealed that the VC attack might have been an outright assassination attempt on NMCB THREE's USMC advisor, an aggressive master sergeant who had perhaps unwittingly harassed locals by leading nightly patrols in the area, accompanied by nightly mortar fire support. We maintained a strict defensive posture after we relieved NMCB THREE later on that month, and fortunately for us, Ca Mau was never attacked again.

On my initial visit to our future site at Ta Kou, a U.S. Army district advisor was ambushed in a jeep on the same coastal road on which we were travelling, just moments after we passed each other going in opposite directions. This obviously got my attention and was definitely a concern, because the only road leading to the site was this dangerous coastal road with numerous potential ambush sites, not easily defended. After we relieved NMCB 74, we decided to construct an airstrip next to our base camp to support tactical aircraft. This proved to be a tremendous asset over the course of our deployment, in transporting personnel, tools, light supplies and equipment.

I was a little uncomfortable on our previous deployment when traveling to remote sites by jeep, helicopter, LCM, etc., armed with only a 1911 .45 Cal pistol and twenty-one rounds. On the 2nd deployment, I augmented my .45 sidearm with a newly acquired CAR-15 Carbine with a retractable buttstock and shortened barrel, along with 100 rounds of 5.26 ammo. My Ops Chief accompanied me with an M-79 Grenade Launcher and an ammo vest of HE, Flare, and Smoke grenades. Fortunately, we never had to engage.

Because the mission of the Naval Advisory Group (NAG) was winding down, my Seabee detachment was augmented with an additional 70 former Naval Advisors (1st , 2nd , and chief petty officers). These were a tremendous asset, freeing up that many more Seabees for construction operations and also provided us with the means and capability to operate an LCM to transport materials and supplies from Binh Thuy through the U Minh Forest to our site in Ca Mau .

Essential to our success in pioneering the access road to the mountaintop ACTOV radar sites at Ta Kou and Mui Dinh, was the Army's approval of my request for augmentation equipment, providing two new Caterpillar D-8 Bulldozers, four new Caterpillar Scrapers, and two new huge Allis-Chalmers Front-end Loaders. Effective logistics support was also key to our success. The approval of air-tasking by CG, Third Regional Assistance Command, led to 1st Air Cav rotary and fixed-wing assets being placed at our disposal. Although the division redeployed to CONUS shortly thereafter, a brigade remained behind in support.

The Army Helicopter Detachment at H-3 in Saigon also agreed to make their air-assets available. Additionally Air America agreed to provide air assets to remote sites using the legendary Fairchild Porter. (I landed on the air-strip next to our site at Ta Kou in a fully loaded Air-America Fairchild Porter. We came to a complete stop in 87 feet. We measured it with a tape measure! Years later, a Fairchild representative told me one of their pilots had landed on the Pentagon Helo Pad, and on another occasion had landed and come to a complete stop in less than one length of the aircraft—27 ft!) We no longer had to just “catch” helicopter rides by chance on a “hit or miss”

basis.

Soon after we relieved NMCB 74 at Mui Dinh, I received a message from the OIC on site that was troublesome. The U.S. Army Senior Province Advisor informed him that intelligence indicated an NVA Sapper Platoon, armed with mortars and B-40 rocket launchers, was headed in their direction. There was a known VC supply trail passing near their coastal lighthouse site, long a target of VC activity, since it was located in President Thieu's home province. I caught the next flight from Tan Son Nhut to Phan Rang, taking my USMC Gunnery Sergeant and Ops Chief with me. On the flight, I sat next to a U.S. Army helicopter pilot, a Warrant Officer, who offered to fly us down to the site at Mui Dinh. (It turns out, he was the son of VADM Joe Moorner, and nephew of JCS Chairman, ADM Thomas Moorner.) We met with the Province Advisor in Phan Rang who committed additional assets to oversee our defensive posture there. We spent a few days on site at Mui Dinh, and after things had calmed down a little, we left our "Gunny" behind for a few weeks to further bolster our defensive position there.

We had to re-supply Ta Kou via just one access road off of QL-1, over five miles in length. The VC made it difficult by mining the road almost daily. Our OIC, a LTJG, was wounded after his vehicle encountered a mine. Fortunately, he recovered quickly and returned within weeks, but we then engaged mine dogs on loan from the U.S. Army to successfully reduce the threat, logging more than 54 "dog-days" of effort during the deployment. That same road crossed an obvious low drainage point and we were concerned about access during the monsoons, so we "upgraded the crossing, using two 72" culverts in our design. After they were washed out during a prolonged outburst, we replaced them with a hundred-foot long timber bridge. During the height of the monsoons, one of our Seabees waded out to the middle of the bridge, demonstrating that the bridge deck was under five feet of water! Our "engineering" solution significantly underestimated the potential flood threat.

As it often seems, time "flew by," challenges were met, obstacles were overcome, and we successfully completed work at all of our

sites. Over the course of the deployment, almost nine million pounds (4500 tons) of materials and supplies were shipped to our construction sites at Ca Mau, Ta Kou and Mui Dinh from our support detachments at Bien Hoa and Binh Thuy, over half by surface craft, 43% by convoy, and the rest by air.

The ACTOVRAD site at Mui Dinh was turned over to the Vietnamese on 25 Sep 1971, the ISB at Ca Mau was turned over on 27 Sep 1971, and the ACTOVRAD site at Ta Kou was turned over on 20 Oct 1971. Accordingly, with all work completed, on 6 Nov 1971, the THIRD Naval Construction Brigade was decommissioned during a ceremony at Bien Hoa, in which I served as Commander of Troops, closing the last chapter of Seabee involvement in country. I departed Tan Son Nhut, RVN, as Officer-in-Charge of the Delayed Party on 7 Nov 1971, returning to CONUS and CBC Port Hueneme, CA.

My time in Vietnam was characterized by the hardship of almost two years of family separation, but was otherwise both challenging and rewarding. The memories, however, are not so much about that, but mostly about the extraordinary men with whom I served, so many of whom I thankfully “tip my hat” and applaud their dedication and perseverance under the most arduous and stressful conditions. I was not sure that I would ever be called on again to serve with the Seabees. In retrospect, that tour laid the groundwork for my CEC career, having been given the opportunity to deploy to Vietnam with the Seabees in a responsible position, in spite of the fact that I was relatively junior, and also a Line-to-Staff transfer to the Civil Engineer Corps.”

Following my detachment from NMCB FIVE in January 1972, I attended the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, where I underwent five months of joint service training. I was thrilled when I received orders to report that summer to the Bureau of Naval Personnel as the Seabee Rating Assignment Officer, and later on as Branch Head for Seabees, Divers, EODs and SEALs.

Fast forward to 1989 when I was called on to serve again with the Seabees for my third and final command as Commanding Officer of

CBC Port Hueneme and Commander, 31st Naval Construction Regiment. (Three of my battalions, along with my Chief Staff Officer and other staff officers, deployed to Saudi during “Desert Shield/Desert Storm” in support of the Marine Expeditionary Force.) It is pure irony that I ended my career as a Seabee, in light of my enduring interest in them dating back to my days in Annapolis.

## Vietnam Experience by Jim Ring

Vietnam - I only participated in some interesting events in Vietnam not the actual combat that many of our classmates did. As I read through the stories of our classmates, I realize we have true heroes among us. Most people we meet today have no concept of the sacrifice that the military has to endure. And we did it with no money during the draft. In 2001, I found out that during the 10 years I was on active duty (including the 4 at the Academy), I made \$37,000. That is over a 10 year period and I was receiving full LT pay for almost 3 ½ of six years of active duty, thanks to a spot promotion. During my first deployment to Westpac in SAMUEL N. MOORE (DD-747), in May 64, we were hastily called from Hong Kong to join up with KITTY HAWK (CVA – 63) steaming to the Gulf of Tonkin. Our old DD had trouble keeping up with them as they steamed in excess of 30 knots. We patrolled off and on off of Vietnam from May to Sept. In July 64, TURNER JOY relieved us because of problems with our boilers. We headed back to the Gulf on Aug. 2 to relieve them, when we received a message from MADDOX that they were being attacked. We relayed the message to TICONDEROGA. This was a daylight attack and MADDOX was hit by one bullet. I later went aboard and saw the hole where it hit. Our classmate, Ward Bond, was on MADDOX and I took this picture of him with the ELINT unit on the deck above.



It was used to intercept N. Vietnam radio traffic. Two nights later, I was in the gun director on Condition III watch, when we received a message that MADDOX AND TURNER JOY were being attacked. I recall it was a dark and stormy night and I was surprised to see them with all their running lights on, beating feet out of the Northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin. Later we transferred ammo to MADDOX including depth charges, which they expended fictitious acoustic torpedoes. Our classmate, Jeff Niss, was on TURNER JOY. Our ship was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation and the other DD's were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Pays to be the first when there is action.

I reported on my second ship PAUL REVERE (APA-248) in August 1965. (Coincidentally, I had roomed with our classmate, Paul Revere, 3/c year and he still is one of my best friends.) Peter Rabbit, as we called the ship, was fully loaded with Marines and their equipment and the next day, we left for a non-stop trip to Okinawa. Amphib life was a lot more relaxed than DD life with uptight DD CO's worried about making 0-6. After we offloaded Marines, we proceeded to Pusan, Korea to pick up the Korean Tiger Division to take them to Vietnam. (I was told later, if we had more Korean troops, we would have defeated the North. They were mean SOB's). After debarking them, we picked up Marines in Qui Nhon and on Nov. 10, 1965, we had an amphibious assault, despite a bad storm with 10 foot surf, which caused us to lose two 56 ft. landing craft, but I guess we had to make it because of the Nov 10 date. It was supposed to be a top secret landing but I think Morley Safer of "60 Minutes" fame with his camera crew, was on the beach when they landed. I was on the ship not to boats during the landing. Sporadic sniper fire from VC wounded Marines and a Corpsman was killed. We later observed another assault a few days later with only amtracs and close air support from Marine planes. One Marine F-8 flew too low after a bomb was dropped and hit by its own explosion and the pilot had to eject. We watched him float down. It was supposedly the last flight of his deployment. In Jan 1966, we participated in another amphibious assault in Operation Double Eagle II, supposedly the largest amphibious assault since Inchon with eight waves. The first one was with amtracs and the rest were boated with LCM's and LCVP'S. Again it was supposed to be top secret. Because of high seas and

the coordination required of the number of ships and landing craft, it took us hours past our scheduled landing time to actually start the assault. I was wave commander and it was quite exciting as we headed in with my wave. Because we were so late, the Beach Masters were already on the beach. They were waving a flag that I thought meant land here. After we hit the beach, they told me to back the LCM's up and proceed about 100 yards south of that location. Again there little enemy action initially. I believe that was the last boated amphibious assault in Vietnam. Most of the rest were by helicopters.

Some interesting things during that deployment:

The incongruity of the War. I was Sea and Anchor OD on REVERE bringing it into Danang harbor. I could hear artillery being fired in the distance, then I heard one of the lookouts shout, "Mr. Ring, watch out for the water skier on the port side". Sure enough there was an American soldier water skiing with a boat from China Beach, the R and R facility in Danang.

During Double Eagle II, we sat at anchor for a number of days off the beach and because we were the flagship, we had newsmen and senior officers coming on board either by boat or helicopter on our small flight deck. I was the Mess Treasurer and it was a mess trying to get all these visitors to pay up for the lunches. One day, I noticed Morley Safer and his two man crew were leaving without paying and I chased him down the deck to get him to pay up. Wasn't a whole lot but he paid up.

During this time, we had helicopters landing regularly and as flight deck officer (meaning I said they landed safely or took off safely, that's all), I got to make friends with the Marine pilots. One day they invited me go ashore with them. They took me to a big tent in Chu Lai that served as the Marine's Officer Club. We spent all afternoon drinking beer and then we went back to the ship. I don't know how much they had to drink, but I could barely see the flight deck. One other time, at anchor in Danang harbor, there was an old CH-34 helicopter on the flight deck, loaded up a Marine Colonel and his big heavy sea bag. As it took off, someone yelled "it's in the water" and I looked and it was straining to stay aloft with all its wheels in the water. All of sudden, they started throwing things out of the

helicopter to lighten the load including the sea bag. It then made it aloft.

Finally I remember looking at those beautiful beaches over there and saying they would make a nice resort. Look in most travel magazines today and you see resorts there with rooms \$400 to \$500 or more a night.

## Vietnam and a Nuclear Incident by Michael Krause

I have read all the submissions by classmates you have posted on the RVN site. The reports are very interesting and obviously, we have a lot of heroes in our class. It is tragic that we lost some, but this project will help preserve their sacrifices for their classmates and others who visit the site. I am very proud to be a part of their legacies.

I thought I'd share my experiences with you and the others, although having been primarily aboard destroyers for my brief 6 years-3 months & 26 day Navy career.

Upon graduation, I reported to USS MAHAN (DLG-11) in San Diego. My first assignment was as Deck Division Office and I was shuffled off to RPS School which was a concern given the stories about RPS Custodians in Leavenworth! MAHAN left for WESTPAC in October 1963 along with USS ORISKANY (CVA-34) and USS KING (DLG-10) and we returned the following March. These three ships were the only NTDS ships in the Pacific fleet and usually cruised together. That cruise was relatively calm with two to three weeks at sea followed by port visits to Hong Kong, Yokosuka, Sasebo and Subic Bay. However, we did spend time in the Gulf on plane guard with ORISKANY and KING. Following our return to CONUS, we went into the yards at Long Beach from June through October 1964 to have our Terrier Missile Fire Control systems upgraded and some other repairs and updates. We went through underway training the first half of 1965 and left for WESTPAC in October 1965. On this cruise, we spent all our at sea periods on plane guard on YANKEE Station and had a couple of NGFS missions in I Corps. We were primarily a Air Intercept Control ship having height finding RADAR and several AIC controllers on board.

We returned to San Diego in March of 1966 and I received orders to Destroyer School for the class entering in June through December. I received orders to USS OZBOURN (DD-846) home-ported in Yokosuka reporting on board in January 1967 as Weapons

Officer. As I recall, Paul Tobin was the only other classmate in my Destroyer School class. Paul was also on the MAHAN's sister ship USS KING (DLG-10) also stationed in San Diego.

OZBOURN spent most of its time on Sea Dragon in the Tonkin Gulf off North Viet Nam. We were one of a couple FRAM I ships equipped with Snoopy, a system that used our drone helicopters equipped with TV cameras for spotting NGFS. As a result, we were able to conduct firing missions inland in enemy territory in the north, primarily hitting targets along Highway 1 and targets of opportunity without using NGLO spotters. The Snoopy system worked fairly well, but we lost several drones through mechanical failure and one confirmed casualty due to enemy fire. One of the creative things we did was arm the drones with hand grenades to drop on personnel and other targets. The grenades fit perfectly into and were secured with the pins pulled in 81 MM Mortar shipping tubes that were held in place by the bomb racks. Probably not the most effective weapon, but a lot of fun.

During Sea Dragon missions, we were fired at by shore batteries several times with one direct hit in the after crew's after berthing compartment adjacent to the Mount 52 Upper Handling Room. The armor piercing shell exploded in the berthing space and killed two of the men handling ammo.

OZBOURN was also involved in the PUEBLO incident. We were designated to steam into Wonson harbor, slip the PUEBLO's mooring and tow her out to sea. Lucky for me and the entire crew, the mission was cancelled. Intelligence reported that the Gooks had eight inch guns protecting the entrance to the harbor! We spent over 60 days in the Sea of Japan, which is the coldest place on earth.

Probably the most interesting incident in my Navy career occurred 25 March 1967 at the DMZ during an amphibious operation. As it turned out, it was (apparently) the first and only incident of a nuclear weapon being damaged in combat.

It was interesting how I was contacted by the author of Broken Arrow

II, Mike Maggelet, a retired USAF LCOL. He was writing a book on nuclear accidents and incidents from 1945 through 2010. I got a call at home one afternoon in the fall of 2010 from LCOL Maggelet who asked if I was the Weapons Officer on the OZBOURN during "the incident"! He assured me that everything concerning the incident had been declassified, but was incredulous that not much was available from his research about the "real story". I briefly related my recollections and after a short discussion, I agreed to write them up for him. The manuscript is attached along with some photos and a copy of a redacted letter mentioning it on White House letterhead if you care to consider it/them of interest and want to include it on the website. (See attached below)

Here's the info on the book:

Broken Arrow - Vol II - A Disclosure of U.S., Soviet, and British Nuclear Weapon Incidents and Accidents, 1945-2008

Nov 21, 2010 by Michael H. Maggelet and James C. Oskins

The preceding is the sum of my active duty, but I did remain in the reserves for ten additional years and attained the rank of CDR. Give me a call or email if you have any questions. Congratulations on this very worthwhile addition to the Class' legacy.

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## USS OZBOURN (DD-846)

### 25 March 1967 Nuclear Incident

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The USS OZBOURN (DD-846) or the "OZ", as the crew referred to her, was a Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization Version I (FRAM-I) Gearing Class DD with twin 5"/38 cal. mounts, one fore and another aft on the main deck. She also carried two Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopters (DASH); six MK 44 torpedo tubes; and an Anti-Submarine Rocket (ASROC) launcher with eight cells. Payloads for ASROC were either MK-44 acoustic homing torpedoes or Rocket Thrown Depth Charges (RTDC) armed with MK-44 nuclear warheads. The DASH could carry either a MK-44 torpedo or an MK-44 Depth Charge. The ASROC launcher cells were normally loaded with four RTDCs in the center four cells and the four MK 44 torpedoes in the outboard cells. The OZ was unique as she carried DASH drones called "Snoopy" fitted with TV cameras used as an observation platform for shore bombardment on Sea Dragon operations in North Viet Nam. The drone was tracked by the MK 37 RADAR so we knew the observer's location. The drone's gyro compass provided the Observer Target Line (OTL). When the OTL was combined with the known location of the drone, the MK-1A Gun Fire Control System (GFCS) was able to compute the Gun Target Line (GTL) to targets identified by Snoopy. It was effective but we lost several drones throughout the deployment due to enemy fire and crashes. We had even rigged drones to drop hand grenades from their weapons racks. On the date of the incident, I was a Lieutenant USN serving as Weapons Officer aboard the OZ. The OZ was home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan in Destroyer Division 92 and was the Division Commander's flag ship. During our deployment the OZ participated in several counter battery incidents with North Vietnamese batteries and was hit twice – this incident and another on 4 December 1967 when two men were killed. My memory of the incident remains clear

after 43 years. The following is drawn from my personal experiences and are accurate to the best of my recollection. I never saw an official report of the incident, and if there is one, perhaps these recollections can be confirmed as fact. There was a mention of the incident in *Stars & Stripes* when the 4 December engagement was reported as follows:

*“Last March 25 the Ozbourn was hit while operating just south of the Demilitarized Zone. The ship suffered minor damage in the earlier shelling, but no casualties”*

### **25 MARCH 1967**

At the time of the incident, a Casualty Report (CASREPT) had been issued for two of the ASROC launcher's eight cells. The inoperative cells were two of the four center cells where we carried the RTDCs. As a result, we had removed the RTDC's from the CASREPT cells and stored them in the ASROC magazine located on the 01 level, port side. Inside the magazine were nine ASROC cradles, three tiers of three cradles stacked one on top of the other. Each cradle could accommodate either a fully assembled RTDC or ASROC torpedo of un-mounted MK-44 torpedoes or MK-44 nuclear warheads. When configured with rockets, they were stored with the rocket motors nozzles forward and the weapons pointing aft. The forward bulkhead of the magazine was fitted with nine blowout ports with manhole-like steel covers aligned with each weapons' rocket motor. These hatches were hinged at the top with a shear pin on the bottom designed to open and release gasses from the magazine in the event of a rocket motor ignition and close after the ignition was complete. The RTDCs from the CASREPT cells were stored in the top two cradles closest to the outboard port bulkhead of the magazine.

We arrived off the Cua Viet River at the DMZ about midnight Friday 24 March 1967 to assume our assigned gunfire support area in preparation for an amphibious operation. There were three gunfire support areas and we were assigned to the northernmost one. There were several other ships in the area including a LPH involved in the operation. As we approached our assigned area, our plan was to anchor since a ship at anchor provides the best solution for Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS) missions. Our assigned area was a triangle with the leg parallel to the beach about 3000 yards long and 1200

yards offshore. The apex of the triangle was to the east (seaward) and the other two legs were about the same length.

I was on the foc'sle with the Anchor Detail when we dropped the anchor that evening. After the anchor was set but before the detail secured, the Commanding Officer joined me on the foc'sle. I vividly recall us discussing the situation and me saying, "Captain, that's North Viet Nam about 1200 yards over there". After a brief discussion, we decided to get underway again and steam throughout the night in the assigned area. We were at Readiness Condition II with Mount 51, the forward gun mount, manned. We steamed back and forth all night on the leg paralleling the beach at 3 knots reversing course 180° every half hour on the hour and half hour. Since the steam requirements were minimal at 3 knots, we had cut back to one boiler to conserve fuel but limited our speed and maneuvering capabilities.

The next morning when I went out on deck, there was a low hanging fog or topical inversion just above the water; there was little or no breeze; and the water's surface was like glass. My guess is that the red aircraft warning lights located on the masthead were above the inversion and visible throughout the night from the shore. The enemy probably watched these lights all night and marked the positions where we turned every half hour.

The Captain had scheduled a Department Head meeting in his sea cabin just behind the bridge for 0800 Saturday morning 25 March. Those present included the Chief Engineer, Supply Officer, Operations Officer, the Captain; the Executive Officer and me. We were crammed into the Captains sea cabin just behind the bridge. I sat on the "shit can", the Captain in his chair at his desk, the rest were sitting on his bunk or standing wherever they could. The first topic discussed was coincidentally Damage Control, and the Damage Control Assistant (DCA) was Officer of the Deck (OOD) on the bridge. Almost exactly as the Captain started the meeting at 0800 we were at the northern end of the leg getting ready to turn south when we heard a loud "clattering" sound, not really an explosion. Although I am not positive, this may have been an air burst or the round may have detonated when it hit the water. The hull was not penetrated, but I believe what we heard was shrapnel hitting the hull above the waterline just aft of the port bow where the Chiefs' quarters were

located. Someone remarked, "What was that?" This was followed by, "We must be testing the .50 cal machine guns". We had one Browning M2 50 cal. machine gun mounted port and starboard on the 02 level astern of the bridge wings. The Gunners Mates test fired them at 0800 each morning. I recall saying, "That's not the 50's!" The second round hit the exterior bulkhead, port-side near the Destroyer Squadron Nine insignia on the 01 level, destroying the MK 37 Radar. The MK 37 RADAR provided ranging and direction information to the gunfire control system for laying the guns for AA and surface targets. As a result, the guns and director had to shift to manual control without the ability to measure range to any target. The Paint Locker was located directly below the MK 37 room on the main deck. Several seamen were at the Paint Locker drawing supplies for work assignments when the second round hit the just above them. Fortunately, no one was hurt as they were protected from shrapnel by the overhang.

The ASROC sentry on the 01 level amidships where the ASROC launcher was located heard the commotion and ran toward the port side ladder leading to the main deck to see what was going on. At about that time, a third round passed between the lifelines and in front of the sentry and aft of the door to the passageway to the MK 37 room and Radio Central on the 01 level. The sentry immediately turned around and ran aft toward the ASROC magazine. The next round hit the magazine's port side bulkhead. The detonation ignited the rocket motor and destroyed the MK 44 RTDC warhead in the uppermost rack. The sentry turned around and ran forward, stumbling down the ladder to the main deck and suffered some very minor scrapes and bruises.

We were now at General Quarters (GQ) and the OOD the ship was in a turn to starboard. The fire rooms were bringing on more boilers as our speed and maneuvering capabilities were limited with only one boiler on line. We immediately went into counter-battery mode and went to my station in Combat Information Center (CIC). The Gunnery Officer was already in his Condition II and GQ station as Director Officer. Due to the loss of power and the destruction of the MK 37 system and concomitantly the entire Gunfire Control System, the director and guns were being operated manually. This meant that the Gunners Mates (Pointers and Trainers) had to elevate and train both

gun mounts and director manually, a very slow process. The fact that we were maneuvering with only oral commands to the guns from the director compounded the situation. The ship's counter battery was less than effective and some rounds landed near the support ships to seaward of our location.

As Weapons officer, I had possession of the magazine keys which were kept in the safe in my stateroom directly below the ASROC magazine. Once we ascertained what the situation was in the ASROC magazine, I went to my stateroom to get the keys so the DC party could enter the magazine to fight the fire. I was unaware of the extent of the damage, but suspected the worse. As I was trying to open my safe using my flashlight in a dark smoke filled stateroom with water dripping from the 01 level above, I thought to myself, "I could be vaporized any second". By the time I arrived back on the 01 level, the DC Party had broken through the door on the after bulkhead of the magazine and was fighting the fire. Fire hoses were also directed into the magazine through the open blow-out hatch. All this happened in a matter of a couple of minutes.

The blow-out hatch operated as designed, except for the fact that the hinge-pin also sheared. As a result, the hatch took off like a Frisbee; hit the deck on the port side 01 level near the ASROC launcher; bounced off the deck and wound up on the 03 level near the flag bag on the signal bridge. Had it hit someone, it would have been deadly.

By the time I entered the magazine, the fire was out. I am not sure if the MK 44 warhead's high explosive exploded or was simply ruptured or experienced a low grade detonation. When I entered the magazine I saw the weapons core with its stainless steel tritium gas bottle attached by a short piece of tubing lying on the deck. There was some high explosive from the warhead spread around the deck as well, some of which had obviously burned. The rocket motor of the RTDC in the lower cradle did not ignite, although I believe the RTDC suffered some shrapnel damage. The RTDC was still strapped securely in its cradle.

Later that day, several EOD types came aboard from one of the carriers and began dismantling the damaged weapons. We proceeded to Subic Bay, arriving Monday morning where the weapons were off-loaded and the Ships Repair Facility in Subic repaired some of the battle damage. I believe shortly after the

incident, all nuclear warheads were removed from ASROC capable ships in the combat zone. We also heard that President Johnson and his advisors went to GQ in the White House and tracked the situation closely.

All the events described above occurred in a relatively short period of time. It is hard to imagine the unintended consequences, political and otherwise had the weapon detonated. The safety features built into the warhead obviously worked. It is a credit to the training and professionalism of the crew that the ship was not lost and I thank them that I am here today to relate my experience.

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Michael S. Krause is a graduate of the US Naval Academy, Class of 1963. He served as First Lieutenant, Gunnery Officer and Terrier Missile Officer in USS MAHAN (DLG-11) from 1963 to 1966. He attended Destroyer School at Newport, RI in 1966 and served as Weapons Officer in USS OZBOURN (DD-846) 1967 -1968. He was a Project Officer at DEPCOMOPTEVFORPAC in 1968-1969 when he resigned and joined the reserves where he attained the rank of Commander.



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

✓  
3

~~SECRET~~

March 25, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: [redacted] Destroyers Patrolling  
Offshore North Vietnam

3.3(b)(4),(5)  
6.2(a)

The attached report [redacted] aboard the [redacted] which was caused by offshore mortar fire from North Vietnam raises sharply the question of why U. S. destroyers on these patrols [redacted]

3.3(b)(4),(5)  
6.2(a)

Although in this case no serious problem resulted from the North Vietnam attack, I can foresee the possibility of a misleading news report in the event the circumstances of this attack leak to the press.

[redacted]

3.3(b)(4),(5)  
6.2(a)

I called this report to the attention of Ben Read who spoke to Mr. Katzenbach. Katzenbach expects to discuss this question with Mr. Vance today.

BKS

Bromley Smith

~~SECRET~~

SANITIZED  
Authority NLS/RAC 09-110  
By Cbm, NARA, Date 12-12-10

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THE JOINT STAFF

THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

3a

25 March 1967  
9:30 AM EST

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Report of Nuclear Incident

1. At 241918 EST the [redacted], operating approximately 4,000 yards offshore east of the DMZ, was hit by what was estimated to be three rounds of mortar fire. [redacted] was conducting a Naval Gunfire Support patrol for BEACON HILL I operations and was not firing a mission at the time of the attack. [redacted] opened range and fired 78 rounds of counterbattery fire with unknown effect. The mortar ceased firing at [redacted] when the range to the beach was about 7,800 yards.

2. Results of this attack were two direct hits in the ASROC (anti-submarine rocket) magazine and the third in the radar room. One Rocket Thrown Depth Charge (RTDC) motor ignited. The magazine was flooded and the fire extinguished. [redacted]

[redacted] Eighteen torpedoes with conventional warheads were also stored in the magazine. All of the weapons in the magazine were damaged to varying degrees from shrapnel holes in fins to heat and water damage. There was no apparent damage to [redacted] No personnel were injured.

3. CINCPAC has directed an investigation to determine if any [redacted] received damage. [redacted]

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*H. J. Trum*  
H. J. TRUM III  
Rear Admiral, USN  
Deputy Director for  
Operations (NMCC)

SANITIZED  
E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.5  
By *isj* NLJ/RAC 09-111 appeal  
NARA, Date 3-31-11

E.O. 13526  
3.3(b)(4)(5)  
6.2(a)

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## Operation Market Time 1965: The Beginning by Austin Seay

Prior to July 1964, US military assistance to the Republic of South Vietnam (RVN) had been primarily covert, but in the early morning hours of 31 July 1964 all of that was about to change.

Two South Vietnamese patrol boats opened fire on two North Vietnamese islands. The USS Maddox (DD731), later that same day, headed into the area and suddenly found herself facing down three Soviet built North Vietnamese torpedo boats which had come to chase Maddox away. Maddox fired warning shots across the bow of one of the challenging North Vietnamese boats. The torpedo boats were undeterred and opened up with machine gun fire and torpedo fire. Assisting Maddox were F-8 Crusader jets from a nearby US carrier in the area. With the exception of a single bullet round in its superstructure, Maddox emerged from the skirmish with no other damage.

It was on 2nd August 1964 when word reached Washington D.C. that an American destroyer had been attacked in the Tonkin Gulf, in the South China Sea, by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Two days later a second destroyer, USS Turner Joy (DD 951), was sent to assist Maddox. The next unsettling news received was that both Destroyers had been ambushed by North Vietnamese gun boats, which fired some 22 torpedoes at them. President Lyndon B. Johnson appeared on television that evening of August 4<sup>th</sup> to tell the American people that the North Vietnamese had not only committed aggressive acts of terror against South Vietnam, but also, had committed acts of open aggression against the USA.

Privately it was said that LBJ expressed doubts about the reports from Maddox and Turner Joy. He reportedly remarked to State department officials that, "Those dumb, stupid sailors were just shooting at flying fish"!!

Maybe so, maybe not, but the outcome was clear. LBJ asked Congress to pass the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" which it did on

August 7, 1964. This gave him all necessary power to employ any and all measures to repel armed attacks against the forces of the United States, and to prevent any further aggression. The House voted unanimously and the Senate voted 88 to 2 to pass the resolution. It was “game on” for a war that would last eight years and cost over 58,000 American lives.

Meanwhile in mid to late 1964, my vessel, USS McMorris (DE 1036), home ported in San Diego, had completed two overhauls in Long Beach and San Francisco, respectively. However in January 1965 our home port was changed to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii with us arriving there on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1965.

In February 1965 a 100 ton North Vietnamese trawler had been discovered in Vung Ro Bay, some 200 miles south of the South Vietnamese port of Qui Nhon. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) air force attacked the 130 foot North Vietnamese trawler and that wreckage revealed a plethora of Soviet and Chinese made armaments. Rifles, sub machine guns, millions of rounds of ammo for small arms, grenades, mortar rounds and explosives were found.

The discovery of that contraband led to the establishment of the USN and USCG patrol forces to complement the existing RVN anti-infiltration program for the 1,200 mile length of the entire South Vietnamese coastline. Code named “Operation Market Time”, this coalition was created to halt the smuggling of North Vietnamese munitions and contraband destined for the Viet Cong in the various South Vietnamese villages along the coast.

Shortly after our arrival in Pearl Harbor, McMorris underwent refresher training, a required USN training period of about 5 to 6 weeks, for all USN vessels, to reestablish on board combat readiness skills lost after having been idle during months of shipyard overhauls. After completion, McMorris was nominated for the Operations E, Communication C, Gunnery E for both three inch/50 mounts and their director and the Squadron Battle Efficiency award. When summarizing the vessel’s performance after its final Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI), the senior inspector commented, “Excellence is a way of life aboard this ship”!! This was a

fitting tribute to the dedication and cooperation of the hard working officers and men of McMorris.

With only 13 days notice, Mc Morris sailed from Pearl on 17 May 1965, under the cover of darkness, bound for South Vietnam. We were now the flagship of Commander Escort Squadron 5, carrying the first off shore commodore in the Vietnam War to perform search and surveillance operations in conjunction with the RVN's junk force.



USS McMorris (DE 1036), max length 312 ft, max width 38 ft, max draft 18 ft, deadweight full 1916 tons/1314 tons light. Commissioned 4th March 1960, 4th and last of the Claude Jones Destroyer Escort Class. Powered by four Fairbanks-Morse diesel engines with a single shaft/propeller, max speed 22 kts. Range 7,000 nautical miles. Armed with two 3"/50 Mk 33 gun mounts and one Mk 70 Director/Fire control System. Two Mk 42 torpedo tubes firing Mk 46 torpedoes. One depth charge rack. Crew capacity: 12 officers and 159 men. Radio call: Gray Warrior.

There were two stops in route, the first was on May 28<sup>th</sup> at Guam for about ten hours, to refuel and replenish food supplies. At the entrance of Apra Harbor, there was a small soviet intelligence ship, anchored to monitor USN vessels' movements East and West. Our Captain, Dick Kemble, with a wry sense of humor, sent a flashing light message: " Gosh you are a long way from home....from home". As Second Division and Gunnery officer, I used most of the ten hours while at Guam to unsuccessfully try and locate grenades and a flame thrower to augment our supply of small arms. However all was not lost, as I was able to find my way to the Officer's Club bar called the "Pump Room" for a cold beer or two. Once back on board the ship, we steamed past the anchored Soviet ship with Captain Kemble sending his final flashing light message, " Bon Voyage, until we meet again". Needless to say, the Soviet ship had no sense of humor and did not reply to either of the Captain's light hearted messages. We arrived at our second stop on the Philippine Island of Luzon at Subic Bay on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Subic Bay had become the primary support base for replenishment and repair of the US Seventh Fleet's naval operations in South Vietnam. In 1965 there were about 98 US warships visiting the facility per month and on any given day there were about 30 ships in port. (By the end of the war, these numbers would nearly triple). Although there were six wharves and two piers, we were assigned one of the 160 anchorage points and our 26 foot motor whale boat acted as the water taxi to ferry our personnel to and from the shore based facility.

The Subic Bay Supply depot and ship repair facility was a bee hive of activity, employing some 4,300 American military and civilian employees plus another 15,000 Filipino workers. Then there was Olongapo City which provided a "liberty call" for all USN personnel, in case they chose not to use the Enlisted Men's Club or Officer's Club, located within the confines of the base. Outside the base's main gate there was Magsaysay Road, which led directly into the city; first one had to cross the "Olongapo River" via a foot bridge. The river was as muddy, as "muddy can get", as it was essentially a 40 foot open sewer, filled with floating feces and trash of all descriptions. Poised on wooden dolphin structures and on small boats in the river, were

young boys waiting to catch coins tossed by the sailors as they made their way across. The stench coming from the river was enough to “gag a maggot”. The words “filthy” and “putrid” are about as acceptable a description as can be used in polite company.

After crossing the bridge, the almost nonexistent concrete sidewalk disappeared into the dirt road. The smell of sewage and exhaust fumes from mopeds, motor bikes and “jeepneys” overpowered the food smells from street side kiosks and cafes. The main street was lined with bar after bar including strip clubs. For me one visit was enough. However that was not necessarily the case for some of our intrepid sailors. As the “Officer of the Day” aboard ship one evening, I saw one of our young 19 year old gunner’s mates sitting on the mess deck. As I approached him, I could see that his neck had these garish, lurid, almost purple, splotches (i.e. “hickies”) and it looked like he had been attacked by vampires! So in passing I asked how he was doing. He replied that he had been into Olongapo City for the evening and then blurted out: “Mr. Seay, I am in love”!! A short chat about the “birds and bees” followed, as I attempted to dissuade him from further visits to the “City”.

There were a number of readiness exercises that we had to complete before sailing from the Philippines to South Vietnam. In my case, one of the most important was a gunnery exercise for firing at shore based targets in an area called the “Tabbones”, and for firing at a sled being towed by a tug. As gunnery officer I was lucky to be blessed with 20/20 vision and an incredible gift for depth perception. Those physical gifts were complemented by a set of scaled, spotting binoculars. On one such firing run at the shore based targets, I knew we had scored well. As I descended from my general quarters (GQ) battle station atop the pilot house to the bridge, the captain began to “rain on my parade” by saying: “You only scored a 98 out of a 100, why didn’t you score the 100”? “Sorry captain, I’ll do better next time”, I responded.

In preparation for what was to come during our search and seizure operations, junk boarding party number #1 and number #2 were formed. Each party consisted of about six or seven men,

headed by an officer. These parties, along with a RVN officer as interpreter, were trained to board the various Vietnamese junks and sampans that would be found in our designated RVN offshore sector. As it later turned out, these inspection parties would board and search some 400 small vessels during the course of our deployment.

There was, however, a third group called the “Landing Party”, whose objectives were to meet any offshore emergency, render aid to US forces or helpless RVN villagers, assist pinned down junk patrol forces, and to investigate any suspicious islands. From time to time the Landing Party would be called upon to augment either Junk Party #1 or Junk Party #2. This Landing Party consisted of 12 specialized petty officers and was headed by me, as gunnery officer. Each man was selected following my review of the individual’s medical record, (held by the ship’s corpsman in sick bay), and after reviewing each individual’s particular skills. Some of the special skills needed for the “Landing Party” were being a radio operator, being a communications expert, being a small arms specialist, being a corpsman and in one case just being large enough to carry and handle a Browning automatic rifle (B.A.R.). Initially, some of the selected men were not perfect physical specimens. So in order to achieve that end, the Landing Party crew arose one hour before reveille at 5 AM to work out together on the foc’sle when at sea. If in port, such as we were in Subic Bay, there was a second work out at 4 PM, usually ashore.

With regard to being a perfect physical specimen, there was one second class gunner’s mate that had the proverbial “beer belly”. When standing, he could not see his toes and had probably not seen his toes for several years! When the training period ended, he had firmed up, lost an enormous amount of weight and several inches from his waistline and was as proud of himself, as a new father would be of his newly born child.

By the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1965, we had sailed from Subic and were on our way to begin “Operation Market Time”. The voyage to our assigned corridor was fairly short, being some two days, covering 715

miles. Once we arrived, McMorris became the flagship for COMCORTRONFIVE (Commodore of Escort Squadron Five and a unit of Destroyer Flotilla Five) and served as "Market Time Force Commander". Our assigned patrol corridor was 100 miles long and 40 miles wide. It was bounded by the volcanic islands of Cu' Lao Re' to the North and was located NE of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. To the South was the port of Qui Nhon, which had been upgraded in 1965 to serve as a main port for military operations. Our 100 mile corridor was but one of numerous corridors that featured a picket line of US warships patrolling the 1,200 miles of the South Vietnamese coastline. Little did we know, as we sailed from Subic Bay, that McMorris was destined to become the first US Destroyer Escort to open fire against the VC in support of troops in South Vietnam.

Our Mission was simple. We were there to provide the RVN with a naval blockade up and down our prescribed corridor to prevent the North Vietnamese or Viet Cong trawlers from supplying contraband to the VC, and to prevent the smuggling of contraband into the coastal villages controlled by the VC. The blockade could take the form of search and seizure or alternatively, gun fire support missions to stop any unwarranted VC coastal activities.

As we reached RVN coastal waters on/about the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, I had completed reading a book that I started to read after sailing from Pearl. The book was the history of the French in Vietnam when the country was called "Indo China". The Viet Cong had originally been taken lightly by the French and the French generals had made a number of major errors on the battle field. In 1954 the French lost a significant battle at Dien Bien Phu, which later caused the French to permanently withdraw all forces and influence from Vietnam. The new era between North and South Vietnam had begun. I couldn't help but wonder if the US brass had learned anything from the French years of occupation, and would they have learned from the French mistakes.

Now that we had arrived at our offshore destination, the realization of the mission had sunk in. The craggy, rock islands protruded from the sea like boney fingers. By day the rocky islands belonged to the RVN, but by night, they belonged to VC snipers.

As McMorris made landfall in our assigned corridor off the South Vietnamese coast, the Vietnamese mountains loomed high in the distance. A light haze veiled them in mystery and intrigue. I mused that somewhere in the darkness, men were dying; probably for a cause that many never really understood. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June in the light of day, a trio of US destroyers were assembled a couple of miles from the beach. A change of command was taking place in which CDR. Bailey was assuming command of the entire Vietnamese blockade, with McMorris, commanded by LCDR R.E. Kemble, as his flagship. The mission of CTF.71.1.2 was to seek out VC junks, board them and inspect for arms and ammunition.

This appeared to be a simple enough set of orders. However, the ship's patience would be tested to the Nth degree, for as many as 500 junks or sampans roamed this particular coastline on any given day or night. Decisions such as, which boats to board and where to search once on board had to be made. Throughout this search process, the prestige of the US was at stake. After all, the vessels being searched did not fly an enemy flag. Any Viet Cong present would be dressed in "black pajamas" like all the other Vietnamese fishermen and boat crews. Our search parties were very dependent upon the RVN interpreter to make that judgement as he perused the vessel's official documents. We represented the RVN government and did not want to appear to be anything other than a friendly ship doing its job, supporting the people of South Vietnam against its enemy.

That same night the stage was set for what seemed to be more theatrics. As darkness fell, an illumination shell exploded high above the beach. The scene was lit up and death came from an arc of red tracers from friend and foe alike as the tracers pounded the earth. Faraway, a beautiful yellowish orange glow appeared on the slopes of two mountains. Poor South Vietnamese villagers were having their grass homes and entire villages burned by the Viet Cong.

Overhead there were US aircraft taking pictures by photoflash of a suspicious junk. All of this would continue until the light of day. In

the morning the living would collect the dead from onshore and prepare themselves for the many coming nights of the same actions. At dusk on June 13<sup>th</sup>, USS Ullmann (DD 687) slipped into an anchorage off the coast and began blasting a VC hideaway with its five inch projectiles. The onslaught continued for several hours before she weighed anchor and disappeared into the black night.

At a nearby beach location, it was near midnight when a number of junks were seen to assemble. The moon was bright, silhouetting McMorris as a sinister shape as she lay motionless in the calm water. Men hurried about the boat deck with anticipation and excitement as the first boarding party was about to be dispatched in the vessel's 26 foot motor whale boat.

As the boat was lowered from its davit, the tension of the men inside mounted. The engine coughed twice as the boat touched the cool waters of the South China Sea, then cranked over and began to hum as the boat plowed ahead toward its destination.

Three sleepy South Vietnamese fishermen cowered in their junk as the search party approached. The whale boat's coxswain pulled alongside the junk and cut its engine. The RVN interpreter jumped aboard the junk and vetted the certified RVN documents to his satisfaction

One of the fishermen aboard the junk used his feet as if they were hands. He latched his feet onto the gunwale of the of the whale boat with his left foot and held it fast alongside. Meanwhile the other people aboard the junk moved quietly around as we searched the junk. The RVN interpreter finally signaled his satisfaction to the search crew, so with them all back aboard the whale boat, the search party headed to its next destination.

Two more searches aboard two different junks yielded nothing more than baskets of fish. On one of these, it appeared that a mother and her two sons had had an exceptional evening catching fish.

The first search and seizure mission had ended without mishap as we received radio orders from McMorris to return to the ship.

Several days later it was determined that the VC had begun to build up contraband some 70 miles North of Qui Nhon. We were about to perform our first gunfire support mission.

As Gunnery control officer, my General Quarter's (GQ) battle station was in Gun Control, located just aft and above the pilot house where the captain was located. My battle garb consisted of a steel battle helmet, flak jacket, calibrated spotting binoculars and a set of sound powered phones, connected to the bridge/pilot house. Standing beside me, dressed in the same battle attire, was another of the crew wearing a set of sound powered phones, connected to both the three inch gun mounts (fore and aft) and the director, which controlled both mounts when in automatic mode. The gun mounts direction of fire could be controlled and fine-tuned to move right/left and/or up/down from a particular setting.

For this mission a spotter plane similar to a single engine Cessna had been dispatched to the area from Qui Nhon. Before we fired any rounds, it was agreed that the plane would fly at tree top level and drop a smoke bomb onto the VC encampment, I would then order one gun mount to fire one red tracer into the smoky area. The pilot would report whether the round had landed right or left and over or under the target. With my calibrated spotting binoculars, I would then order an adjustment to the director that was controlling the mount(s). Once the bearing and range to the target had been approved by the pilot, the salvos would begin.

Unfortunately the spotter plane flew too close to the VC target. His plane's fuel tank took a hit from VC small arms fire and began leaking fuel. At first it appeared that we would have to rescue him rather than continue the mission, however, he did manage to continue and drop his smoke bomb. The end result was that we poured 50 three inch rounds into the deeply wooded area. According to the pilot, we destroyed the VC camp. His fuel, though low, was fortunately sufficient for him to safely return to Qui Nhon. This completed mission was important to the ship because it enabled McMorris to become the first Destroyer Escort to engage the enemy in the Vietnamese combat zone in Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS). Though but a footnote in the overall war effort, McMorris had made history.

A day or so later we were ordered to return to the same area. Our second mission was to consist of three targets: two VC shelter rest areas and one entrenchment in a bunker. The firing process

would be exactly as for the first mission. Only this time the spotter plane was to remain clear of enemy fire and fly at a higher altitude. We were able to direct over one hundred, three inch rounds of destructive fire power.

This spotter was as much dare devil as he was spotter. He again flew very low to the target, and again the VC opened up at him with small arms fire from the densely wooded area. The VC fire was so close to him that he wanted revenge and retaliation, so he flew over the spot at tree top level and dropped his smoke bomb. I ordered the mounts to mix up their three inch shells into what I called, "Austin's fruit salad". This was a lethal mix. VT frag projectiles, containing proximity fuses that would explode when near a fixed object, like a tree top, combined with pointy detonating projectiles that would explode upon impact, producing a terrifying bombardment of steel fragments hurtling everywhere. The spotter was delighted with the result. He reported to us that we had given excellent coverage and had been the best service of any destroyer yet. In navy "lingo" that's called a "bravo Zulu". Market time area of responsibility was approximately 1,200 miles of RVN coastline and 40 miles wide, out to international waters.



This third mission had resulted in our firing at the extreme range of our fire control system which was designed to fire at a maximum of five miles. The land battle was taking place at the system's outer limit. Even with spotting binoculars, all that was visible from Gun Control was a smoky haze, so from McMorris, it was impossible to determine the "good guys" from the "bad guys". We were totally dependent on the US spotter's ability to follow our red tracers to the point of impact and then rely on that spotter's advice. We were firing in the blind. We continued to fire our salvos of point detonating rounds until US jets arrived. We then became spectators and watched as eight aircraft carrier based USN Sky Raiders and four USAF F-100s blasted the VC with bombs and napalm along with strafing for about two hours. I watched in awe as the smoke billowed above the mountains and the planes swooped in their dive bomb tactics. Fire and flames ravaged the VC as the napalm swept the land. The planes circled like vultures awaiting their turn to fly in and pick off any remaining enemy.

Shortly after completing this third mission, the South Vietnamese government awarded the crew of the McMorris black berets, bearing special metal insignias for the McMorris' part in supporting their cause. It goes without saying, we were all very proud of those berets. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July Mc Morris engaged in its fourth and final gun fire support mission. It was a beautiful day with a blue sky and some large fleecy clouds. The bright sunlight glinted on the lovely sandy beaches and just off shore there was some activity. About 50 yards from the beach, two men were swimming with their heads bobbing up and down with their torsos occasionally visible. It would have been an exceptional time for enjoyment had it not been for one thing. These men were VC, and they were swimming for their lives!!

Just North of Qui Nhon, a couple of American advisors aboard the RVN patrol junks had seen two VC junks off the small South Vietnamese fishing village of Degi. The RVN junk force had chased the VC vessels onto the beach and radioed back to Qui Nhon for assistance.

Soon thereafter, two US Sky raiders whined as they fell out of the sky in a deep dive, spewing 50caliber ammunition at the two VC swimmers, who appeared to be hiding in the water. Suddenly the water around one of the VC seemed to boil. White spray engulfed him

and the sea hid him from view. Several minutes later his body floated to the surface. His corpse had joined the surf as it sloshed upon the beach.

Further up the beach there were some 22 junks laden with VC contraband and munitions. Freshly dug foxholes contained the hidden location of the anxious Viet Cong.

The US planes continued to fire until all their ammunition was spent. While all this was unfolding, McMorris' gray hulk lay silently offshore about 1,500 yards from the beach, underway with no way on. With the crew at General Quarters (GQ), the vessel was like a rattle snake, coiled and ready to strike.

After the Sky Raiders had cleared the area, the captain of McMorris granted permission to open fire. My orders were relayed to the Gun mounts. Before the salvos started, single rounds of red tracers were used to spot our three inch on to the VC junks and fox holes alike. Secondary explosions occurred as our rounds struck VC junks filled with munitions.

Satisfied our rounds had achieved their proper bearing and range, all hell broke loose. On the beach, salvos of point detonating rounds caused explosions of sand to fill the air. In the wooded area, VT frag filled the air with shrapnel. For the VC there was no place to hide as steel was exploding at their feet and over their heads. Several of them made a run for the other side of the beach. Chasing these runners were bullets from our 50 caliber machine gun, which was mounted on the main deck, mid ship of McMorris' starboard side. At first the bullets skipped behind them before they hit their mark. Two or three more VC bodies joined the other corpses sloshing in the surf. Out of the corner of my right eye, I noticed a tiny sparkle of flashes coming from a small wooded hill about 1,500 yards up from the beach. At first I thought it might be reflected sun light, but then realization hit me. The sparkle was a VC machine gun as splashes were landing harmlessly about 100 yards from the inshore side of the ship. I ordered adjusted spotting coordinates to our aft three inch gun mount. Mount 32 then belched several salvos of "Austin's fruit salad" until the sparkle stopped.

From stem to stern, smoke filled the air as both gun mounts expended their pay loads. Our forward gun mount's barrel began to blister. Then it turned black from the enormous heat caused by the unrelenting salvos. Three inch empty brass shells littered the deck. As dusk ended our mission, 187 rounds of three inch and over two thousand rounds of 50 caliber ammunition had been expended.

After McMorris ceased firing, two US helicopter gunships moved in with their rockets. They were there for about 30 minutes blasting away until they ran out of rockets. As if that wasn't enough, USS Perkins (DD 877) moved in with her five inch guns to continue what McMorris had started. She blasted away until 2 AM the next morning. Then she moved out and disappeared over the horizon. At first light a US Army plane surveyed the area. In the battle's aftermath, lay 25 dead VC and 22 destroyed VC junks. For the US and the RVN, this mission had been accomplished without one single injury or casualty to US personnel or equipment. This mission had apparently created enough of an impact and was successful enough to get the attention of the UPI news service. Various US newspapers reported the incident on their front pages. Of note was, "The Los Angeles Sunday Times". in their 24 July 1965 issue, which headlined its article: "Planes, Warships destroy junks, US Warships destroy 24 Viet Cong Junks". We would not know it until a few days later, but our deployment in the South China Sea had been completed.

Following our final gunfire support mission, McMorris anchored in the harbor of Qui Nhon for several hours. This afforded me the opportunity to take a motor whale boat ride into the port city and although I was only there for about 30 minutes, the scene reminded me of one from the old US "Wild West" movies. No military personnel were allowed to walk around unless they had a .45 caliber pistol strapped to their side. Signs in buildings reminded you to check your weapon upon entering and exiting the building. Although all the

beaches had the proverbial South Pacific palm trees, the beauty of the beach was marred by the installation of rolls of razor sharp, barbed wire and stacks of sand bags, which formed machine gun nests.

After our short visit to Qui Nhon, McMorris weighed anchor and prepared for her return to Pearl Harbor. McMorris and her crew had performed in an outstanding manner during this deployment. Our Vessel was recognized by being nominated as the outstanding unit in Destroyer Flotilla Five.

We arrived back in Pearl in late August 1965 to ready ourselves for a completely different deployment. After being outfitted with intelligence equipment and an intel group, we were on our way to the North Pacific to monitor the splash down of Soviet fired missiles (ICBMs) from the Kamchatka Peninsula.

Another interesting sea story, saved for another time.

The End

## EPILOGUE

In addition to the author, class'63, there were several other USNA graduates aboard McMorris, namely: LT. Jerry Haynes, Executive Officer class '58, Operations Officer, LTJG. David C. Brown class '62, LTJG . D. (Duffy) C. Doherty, M Division Officer class '63 and LTJG. Ronald J. Gregg, Fox Division Officer, class'64.

For me the story of my relationship with Vietnam had more to come. From McMorris, I was transferred to Destroyer School in Newport, RI, in November 1965 and graduated in June of 1966. I then received orders to the USS Bridget (DE 1024) as Head of the Weapons Department. Another Vietnam deployment ensued in 1967 whereby Bridget was used primarily as a plane guard for carriers in the Tonkin Gulf. I resigned my USN commission in 1969 and started a new career.

Interestingly, my association with Vietnam would resurge in August 1993. By then I was based and resided in Singapore, where my international business career had taken me. As Vice President of Tidewater Marine International's Asia Pacific division, I had

managerial responsibility for a fleet of 55 vessels operating in ten countries, ranging from Japan to the North to Indonesia to the South. After US citizens were officially permitted to visit Vietnam in 1993, I made several visits to Hanoi, beginning in August of that year. The purpose of the visits was to try to obtain long term boat leases with Petro Vietnam, the national oil company. Within sixty days of President Clinton's repeal of the Vietnamese embargo in February 1994, Tidewater became one of the first US companies to do business with the new Vietnamese Government in Hanoi. In May 1994, there were six Tidewater vessels operating in Vietnamese waters. My new era with Vietnam had begun.

### References

Most of the detailed descriptions of the NGFS missions came from my eye witness recollections and from numerous letters written to family .To augment other historical details, the USS McMorris January 1965-January 1966 yearbook, UPI news service articles from July 1965, Wikipedia historical facts and Google maps have been utilized

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## Chapter Four

# The Naval Profession and USS Carronade (IFS-1) by Stephen Duncan



*It is in the military service only, where men freely sacrifice their lives for a faith, where men are willing to suffer and die for the right or the prevention of a great wrong, that we can hope to realize leadership in its most exalted and disinterested sense.*

*Leadership is a composite of a number of qualities. Among the most important I would list are self-confidence, moral ascendancy, self-sacrifice, paternalism, fairness, initiative, decision, dignity, courage.*

MAJOR C.A. BACH  
Address to Graduating Student Officers  
Fort Sheridan, Wyoming, 1917

In the summer of 1965, developments in Vietnam assumed an even more somber hue. On 28 July, President Lyndon Johnson, who had campaigned for election in 1964 on the theme that “We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves,” held a noontime press conference. He announced at the conference that he was sending 44 additional combat battalions to Vietnam increasing the American military presence there to 125,000 men. Monthly draft calls were doubled to 35,000. “I have asked the Commanding General, General Westmoreland,” the President declared, “what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. And we will meet his needs. We cannot be defeated by force of arms. We will stand in Vietnam.”

Five days earlier, I had reported to the Commander of the U.S. Naval Shipyard in Long Beach, California for temporary duty in connection with the reactivation of the USS *Carronade* (IFS-1).<sup>1</sup> I had just completed an eight-week Weapons Department Officer course at the U.S. Fleet Training Center in San Diego and I was anxious to see the ship on which I would next serve. It was common knowledge that the ship was being readied to go in harm's way in Vietnam.

When I arrived at the shipyard, I could barely make out the lines of the ship. She had been taken out of her cocooned slumber in the Navy's Reserve or "mothball" Fleet and scaffolding, civilian shipyard workers, hoses, and miscellaneous other equipment covered her super-structure and main deck. Despite the mess, my first sight of the ship grabbed my complete attention. I had never seen anything like her. This was not surprising. She had highly specialized and devastating firepower capabilities. And, she was the only ship of her kind in the world.

\* \* \*

The earliest representation we have of naval warfare is of a fight between the warriors of the Pharaoh Rameses III and the Sea Peoples in the Nile delta in 1186 B.C. Since that conflict, war at sea has changed as new weapons systems have been introduced. Before the invention of the naval gun, sailing ships were less effective fighting platforms than oared ships since the latter did not depend upon the wind and were more maneuverable in battles where the respective crews of the combatants sought to close hand-to-hand with spears, swords, and battle axes. The oared ship, however, also had serious deficiencies. It was not sea worthy in bad weather and because it was so shallow and narrow, it could not carry sufficient food and other supplies to permit it to be away from a re-supply port for more than a few days.

From the beginning, most naval battles were fought within sight of land or very close to it. One respected analyst has explained that navies were never autonomous instruments of strategy, but extensions of armies on land. "The inshore wing of a galley fleet," he believes, "normally hinged on the coastward flank of an accompanying army, in operations that were amphibious in the strict sense of the term. The fleet maneuvered so as to isolate an enemy

coastal base from support by its own naval forces, while the army advanced with supplies to positions from which the galleys could be reprovisioned.”<sup>2</sup>

Even after the advent of the big-gun sailing ship, few battles were fought upon the high seas. There were several reasons. Battle under sail was almost impossible in rough weather and inshore waters were calmer. Because seventy percent of the globe's surface is water, sailing fleets also had great difficulty finding their adversary. Finally, the objects for which naval battles were fought—“free access to the high seas from port, protection of coastwise shipping, defence against invasion—[had] their locus in coastal waters.”<sup>3</sup> The pattern continued even to the Second World War.

For almost a hundred years after the burst of exploration at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th Centuries, Spain and Portugal were the world's premier maritime nations. By the turn of the 17th century, however, Britain and Holland, the young and ambitious imperial powers, were preeminent. Conflict soon arose between the two nations over a central issue: trade. “Whoever commands the sea,” wrote Sir Walter Raleigh in the early 1600s, “commands the riches of the world, and consequently, the world itself.” Just before the commencement in 1652 of the first two Anglo-Dutch naval wars, one English captain spoke for most of his countrymen: “The trade of the world is too little for us two, therefore one must down.”<sup>4</sup> As a result of their aggressive competition for worldwide markets, each nation began to build new warships and to form great national Navies. While there was no clear-cut winner, the Anglo-Dutch conflicts did produce the prototype of the modern navy and a set of tactics that lasted for 250 years.

The most important development in naval warfare was the invention of the naval gun. Small cannon were placed on northern European ships as early as 1406, but they were too small to inflict serious damage upon an enemy from a distance. Interestingly, the major contribution to the development was made by England's King Henry VIII, who built much larger guns and mounted them low on the cargo deck of one of his ships to minimize interference with the ship's stability and keep it from capsizing. The guns were fired through portholes cut in the ship's hull. The golden era of naval warfare is considered by many to be the period from 1793 to 1815 when

Britain's Royal Navy ruled the waves. The period was marked by great naval heroes such as Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, heavily-gunned Men-O-War, and the clash of navies at very close range. The battleships and frigates of the day were little more than floating gun platforms that could be dispatched to anyplace in the world for conflict. The primary function of the ships was to “seek out, fight and destroy enemy vessels and support large-scale coastal attacks and landings.”<sup>5</sup>

The Royal Navy's fighting ships were divided into six rates, or groups, depending upon the number of guns carried. The armament of the larger first-, second-, and third-rate ships, consisted of either 32-, 24-, 18-, or 12-pounder guns. First-rate ships were armed with between 100 and 120 guns and were manned by a crew of approximately 850 men. Second-rate ships carried between 90 and 98 guns on three decks, the lighter guns being placed higher in the ship. The crews comprised 750 men. Third-rate ships carried between 64 and 84 guns on two decks. The size of the ship's company varied between 550 and 700 men.

Guns were sized according to the weight of the solid round shot (cannonball) that they fired. Thus, a ‘24 pounder’ fired a ball that weighed 24 pounds. A three-decked ship of 100 guns, such as Lord Nelson's HMS *Victory*, could deliver a devastating broadside weight of over a half a ton of iron shot.<sup>6</sup> A two-decked ship of 74 guns could deliver a broadside weight of about 780 pounds. Standard guns were mounted on carriages made from elm, which was a good wood for withstanding the shock of firing. The carriages were mounted on wheels and recoil forces were restrained by heavy breeching ropes that passed from the breech, or rear of each gun. Unrestrained, a 32-pounder gun could recoil some 40 to 50 feet on a flat surface—the width of most ships.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the weight of the shot fired in a single broadside by the combatants, the outcome of battle was often determined by the respective rates of fire and the accuracy of the fire. For this reason, captains in the Royal Navy who could afford the cost, often spent their own money to purchase powder and shot over and above the often meager allowance authorized by the Admiralty. The additional munitions were then used in long, arduous training. A well-trained ship could fire three well-directed broadsides in five minutes. A few

highly-skilled crews could fire three broadsides in a little over three minutes.

Jack Aubrey, the central figure in Patrick O'Brian's fictionalized account of war at sea, rejected the notion that briskness in maneuver, polished brass, gleaming paintwork, and “natural British valour” would answer for all purposes. Training with the ship's guns was everything.

*It was rare that quarters passed without at least small-arms being fired, rarer still that the great guns were not run in and out—the fouler the weather the better the exercise—since you could never be sure of coming up with an enemy on a smooth and placid sea, and it was as well to learn how to heave your five hundredweight a man against the slope of the wildly-heaving deck long before the knack was needed. There were two chief reasons for this steady preparation: The first was that Jack Aubrey thoroughly enjoyed life; he was of a cheerful sanguine disposition, his liver and lights were in capital order, and unless the world was treating him very roughly indeed, as it did from time to time, he generally woke up feeling pleased and filled with a lively expectation of enjoying the day. Since he took so much pleasure in life, therefore, he meant to go on living as long as ever he could, and it appeared to him the best way of ensuring this in a naval action was to fire three broadsides for his enemy's two and to fire them deadly straight. The second reason, closely allied to the first, was that his idea of a crack ship was one with a strong, highly-skilled crew that could out-maneuver and then out shoot the opponent, a taut but happy ship, an efficient man-of-war—in short, a ship that was likely to win at any reasonable odds.<sup>8</sup>*

In 1779, a different kind of naval gun was introduced by the Carron Iron Company, an iron foundry located beside the River Carron, near Falkirk in Stirlingshire, Scotland. The gun was a short, light gun of large caliber. It could deliver a far greater size of shot in proportion to the actual weight of the gun than the standard carriage-mounted gun. A cross between a cannon and a mortar,<sup>9</sup> the gun fired a spherical projectile at a lower velocity over a shorter range than the naval long gun. By ploughing into the wooden hull of an adversary and sending great splinters flying, the shot of the gun inflicted far greater damage than shot that went deep or punched through timber. If charged with grapeshot<sup>10</sup> or canister shot,<sup>11</sup> the gun was lethal to personnel at

close range. Known as the Carronade, the gun was a more powerful naval version of the military howitzer.<sup>12</sup> Because of its destructive power, British sailors nicknamed it “the Smasher.”

Carronades were produced in several sizes. The largest in general use were 68-pounders. The weapon had two great advantages. It required a much smaller gun crew than traditional guns, only seven men or three in an emergency. And, because it delivered its bigger shot at close range, it needed no elaborate sighting. Since Carronades weighed so much less than long guns, they were usually placed on each side of a ship's forecastle or on the Quarter-Deck. The conclusive action in the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar, fought some 20 miles off the Atlantic coast of Spain and probably the most decisive naval battle since Salamis,<sup>13</sup> opened with a devastating blast from a bow-mounted Carronade. As part of his plan to break the line of battle of the Combined Fleet of French and Spanish ships, Lord Nelson sailed closely astern of the French Admiral's flagship *Bucentaure*. The *Victory* fired its 68-pounder port forecastle Carronade charged with one round shot and a keg of 500 musket balls. In a terrible moment, the balls destroyed most of the *Bucentaure's* stern. The *Carronade's* blast was the signal for the 50 guns of the *Victory's* port side to begin raking the two-decker. Most of the guns were triple-shotted and by the time *Victory* sailed past the stricken French vessel, an estimated 400 members of the enemy flagship had been killed or wounded.<sup>14</sup>

\* \* \*

At the conclusion of World War II, the U.S. Navy possessed many specialized amphibious support ships, including the Landing Ship Medium Rocket (LSMR). Unfortunately, even before the Korean War, the LSMRs had been adjudged unsatisfactory. They had inadequate living quarters, a limited fresh water supply, very limited speed, and an inefficient weapon system made up of rocket launchers, a single 5 in/38 gun, and mortars. The Marine Corps was interested in a new ship that could take a large armament in close to the beach to deliver accurate close-in fire. Over a period of ten years, several design characteristics were considered. A 1951 design called for a ship that could operate in water as shallow as 10 feet. The main armament

would be Mark 105 rocket launchers which fired 5 inch, spin-stabilized, solid propellant rockets. The ship would also carry a 5 in/38 gun for destructive effect against pillboxes and enfilading<sup>15</sup> the beach upon which Marines were landing. It would also carry two twin 40mm guns for anti-aircraft defense and a specialized mortar locating radar to make counterbattery fire more effective.

Because the Mk 105 rocket launcher could fire 48 rounds per minute, it was determined that eight launchers would meet Marine requirements. To reduce damage from accidental grounding, the ship was to be provided with a double bottom over 80 percent of her length. Diesel fuel tanks would be fitted for ballasting, so that if the ship should become grounded, water could be pumped over the side to reduce the draught. The final design of the ship gave it a length of 237 feet (at the waterline) and a displacement of 1,425 ton fully loaded. The World War II engines of 3,100 bhp would drive her at slightly over 15 knots with an endurance of 5,000 nautical miles at 12 knots. The shallow-draught hull form was developed from an existing 220 foot aluminum minesweeper.<sup>16</sup> The front-half of the ship would be made fuller than resistance considerations would normally dictate so that space could be provided for large rocket magazines which could accommodate 6,060 rounds (about 20 minutes of sustained fire).<sup>17</sup>

Each of the propeller shafts would be powered by a single 1550 bhp diesel and the ship would be fitted with variable-pitch propellers. This part of the design “improve[d] maneuver- ability, eliminate[d] the necessity for reverse gears or reversible engines. . . and compl[ie]d with [the shallow-water operating requirement] that detachable propeller blades shall be provided to facilitate repairs.”<sup>18</sup> It also helped to prevent the kind of vibration of the deck plates which usually resulted from the cavitation of the propellers of larger ships.

The rocket launchers, the 5 in 3/8 gun and one 40 mm gun mount would be located forward of the bridge. Only a single 40 mm mount would be placed aft. As a result, the ship eventually acquired the name “Bobtailed Cruiser.” The rocket launchers were designed with longer hoists down into the magazines so that the latter could be placed below the waterline for protection from shore fire.

The ship was constructed by the Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging Company of Seattle, Washington. Christened the USS *Carronade* (IFS-1), the new inshore fire support ship was first commissioned in

May 1955. After only five years of active service, it was decommissioned in 1960 and laid up in the Pacific Reserve Fleet in San Diego. No other ships of her class were constructed.

\* \* \*

Soon after I reported to the shipyard in Long Beach for outfitting work related to the re-commissioning of the *Carronade*, I learned of its planned operational future. While some 256 shipyard workers were climbing all over the ship and the nearby USS *White River* (LSMR-536), other workers were engaged in similar work aboard the USS *St. Francis River* (LSMR-525) and USS *Clarion River* (LSMR-439) in San Francisco.

The post-World War II decommissioning of battleships and heavy cruisers had left the Navy with an insufficient number of naval gun platforms that could be used for the high intensity barrage gunfire support that was essential to the success of traditional amphibious operations. Contemporary “double-ended” frigates could not provide the support, destroyers were limited by the rate of fire of their 5-inch guns, and the urgency of the need for gunfire support in Vietnam made the slower and much more expensive reactivation of battleships an unattractive option. Plans had been made to form a new Division consisting of the *Carronade* and the three LSMRs, with *Carronade* serving as the flagship of the Division. The ships would be sent to the western Pacific as soon as possible. Two of the ships would provide gunfire support in Vietnam while the two remaining ships underwent upkeep in the Division's new homeport of Yokosuka, Japan. Every few months, the two groups of ships would exchange place.

On 1 August 1965, eight days before I reported to the shipyard, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article describing the work on the four ships (already dubbed the “Little Armada”). The prospective Commanding Officer of the *White River* was quoted as saying that any one of the four ships could deliver more firepower on a given target for a brief period than a battleship or a cruiser “by pounds or rounds.”<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant Commander Roy McCoy, the prospective Commanding Officer of the *Carronade* and Commander of the soon-to-be formed IFS Division 93, was quoted as saying that “*Carronade*

would have new fire control instrumentation that would be so accurate that a deluge of rockets could be “concentrated on a fencepost.”<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the original fire control computer was beyond repair because of a lack of spare parts. A primitive new system took its place. Working with me, officers who would become the Weapons Officers of the three other ships at re-commissioning, and Fire Control Technicians from each of the ships, the staff of the Amphibious School at Coronado, California constructed a manual, ballistic slide rule. Using target coordinates, each ship's fire control team learned how to determine the proper deflection, angle-bearing, and elevation for the twin-tubed launchers. The theoretical work of the classroom, however, had not been tried in actual firing. Even though all of the ships were equipped with a battery stabilization capability, most planners expected the firing effectiveness of the vessels to be significantly reduced in severe sea conditions.

Skepticism among many of those for whose benefit the ships were being reactivated was both predictable and justified. Even though rockets had been used in Europe as early as 1258 at Cologne, at Metz in 1324 and in England in 1327 in the Scottish War, and despite the fact that the British had used Congreve rockets against Boulogne in 1806 and Baltimore's Ft. McHenry in 1814 (“The rocket's red glare”), the weapon had a history of instability and unpredictability. Misfires and rockets exploding off target might be acceptable in a naval gunfire support mission for pre-landing beach bombardment, but there was significant reason to wonder if the four rocket ships could provide accurate support to small numbers of troops engaged in isolated firefights with an enemy close at hand.

It has been said that “the hallmark of all professions, even beyond the prototypical practices of each, is the ubiquitous condition of uncertainty, novelty, and unpredictability that characterizes professional work” and that “the essential challenges of professional work center on the need to make complex judgments and decisions leading to skilled actions under conditions of uncertainty.”<sup>21</sup> Our efforts to develop a skilled method of effective naval gunfire support in very uncertain conditions certainly met this definition.

On 2 September 1965, firing teams from *Carronade* and *White River* visited the Naval Ordnance Test Station at China Lake, California for their first observation of the weapon they were soon to

use in combat. Each of the Mk102 launchers on *White River* could only fire 30 rounds per minute, but all of the four ships would fire the same types of rocket. The rockets fell into three categories. The size of the rocket's warhead was inversely proportional to its range. A short-range (2,000-2,500 yards) rocket carried a warhead roughly equivalent in destructive power to the shells of an 8 inch naval gun. The medium range Mk 7 rockets (5,000 yards) carried warheads equal to the shells fired by a 5 inch gun. The long range Mk10 rockets (9,600-10,000 yards) carried warheads equal to those fired by a 3 inch gun.

I decided to ask about a matter which was causing me some concern. If the ship should become immobilized within the range of a shore battery, it would only take a few minutes before enemy artillery began to hit the ship consistently. Having no desire to become a future sitting duck, I started a discussion with one of the Test Station's technical representatives. I inquired about the procedures we should use to get sailors out of the magazines if we should be hit by gunfire from the shore or attacked by a torpedo boat and have to abandon ship. After a pause, he responded. "Lieutenant," he said, "I wouldn't worry about it. Your ship is a floating ammunition dump. It carries no armor around the magazines. If you are hit with something as small as a Recoilless Rifle round, the ship will simply explode and sink." It was a sobering day.

On the sunny morning of 2 October 1965, I stood with *Carronade's* new crew of eight other officers and 125 enlisted sailors who were assembled in white dress uniforms on Pier 61 next to the ship for the formal Re-commissioning Ceremony in the Long Beach Shipyard. The speakers at the ceremony included Major General Robert Cushman, USMC, the Commander of the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton, and Rear Admiral Robert Erly, USN, the Commander of Amphibious Group Three. Lue sat with our good friends Priscella and Barry Clement in a section reserved for guests. After the reading of Navy Department Orders to Re-commission *Carronade* and *White River*, the Navy Band played the National Anthem while the Ensign, Union Jack, and Commissioning Pennant were hoisted.

The ships were now in commission. The first watch was set. I immediately assumed my primary responsibilities as Weapons

Department Officer and Senior Watch Officer, and my new collateral duties of Protestant Lay Leader,<sup>22</sup> Legal Officer, and Athletic Officer. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a Navy sword was used to cut a cake made for the occasion. By tradition, the wife of the senior Chief Petty Officer received the first piece of cake.

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For the next two months, *Carronade* engaged in sea trials and work was continued by the yard workers getting the kinks out of the engines and a wide range of other equipment. I concentrated on the nuts and bolts of the weapons system and the training of the ship's company. Even the seasoned hands were unfamiliar with the operational doctrine and firing procedures unique to the world's only inshore fire support ship. By the year's end, U.S. troop levels in Vietnam had reached 184,000. Approximately 50 percent of the countryside in South Vietnam was under some degree of Viet Cong (VC) control.

More serious work aboard the ship commenced in January. After two weeks of shakedown and refresher training near San Diego, and an ammunition loadout, the four rocket ships conducted their first bombardment and air/surface gunnery exercise off San Clemente Island. The results were barely satisfactory. Many of the ship's company in *Carronade* had only recently graduated from boot camp and it was clear that additional rigorous, underway training with the rocket launchers was essential.

The crews of the 40 mm gun mounts achieved considerably better results. A gunnery exercise on 12 January involved our attempt to sink a remote-controlled 17 foot *Firefish* target boat. Designed by the Ryan Aeronautical Company to emulate North Vietnamese torpedo and coastal patrol boats by riding low in the water and performing a full spectrum of evasive maneuvers at speeds up to 30 knots, the boat was a difficult target. After we sank it, becoming the first Amphibious Force Ship to do so, an article and photograph on the accomplishment appeared in the San Diego newspaper.

While I was at sea engaged in daylight, nighttime, and counterbattery firing exercises, Lue was busy making arrangements for our move to Yokosuka, Japan where the four ships would be

homeported and where they would undergo repairs between deployments to Vietnam. We had been informed that Navy housing was likely to be unavailable and that while I was in Vietnam, she would have to live “on the economy.”

On the morning of 8 February, the four ships were underway from the 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego for the 5,000 mile transit across the Pacific to Yokosuka. Most of my time during the transit was spent training the rocket and gun crews, but I also regularly stood watches as Officer of the Deck (OOD). Every fifth day, I served as the ship's Navigator. I even found time to prosecute a case as Trial Counsel in a Special Court Martial.

How quickly the rigor of naval life at sea came back to me! How quickly I settled into what O'Brian called the “immutable regularity” of a life of Boatswain's pipes and the ship's bell, of the swabbing of the decks in the early morning, of quarters, of announcements like “the Smoking Lamp is lit,” of lights out, and all the rest. How comfortable I was with the orderly work of the ship in accordance with the posted Plan of the Day, with the steady though not particularly appetizing food of the Ward Room, with the “association with men who, if not brilliant company, were almost all sound, solid, professional seamen and far more agreeable than any mere chance gathering of the same size.”<sup>23</sup>

While we were in transit, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Senator J. William Fulbright, conducted televised hearings examining U.S. policy in Vietnam. In an appearance before the Committee, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara declared that the American objectives in Vietnam were “not to destroy or overthrow the Communist Government of North Vietnam. They are limited,” he said, “to the destruction of the insurrection and aggression directed by North Vietnam against the political institutions of South Vietnam.”

*Carronade* and the other three ships of the Division were scheduled to stop only briefly in Hawaii for a couple of days of liberty for the crew and shore bombardment practice at Kahoolawe Island. We entered Pearl Harbor at night. As the ship moved toward our designated pier for a portside mooring, the Captain ordered reverse engines to slow it down. When the engines didn't respond quickly enough, he ordered “all back full.” This time, the engines responded

and we started backing at full speed toward a cruiser which was moored at the adjacent pier. The Captain attempted to stop the ship, but we crashed into the cruiser's starboard side. The stern of *Carronade* was buckled badly. The good news was that the engineering compartment aft was still watertight. The bad news was that the Senior Officer Present Afloat (SOPA) was aboard the cruiser. I spent most of the weekend helping the Captain write an official report about the incident.

The remainder of the trip to Yokosuka was uneventful except for the fact that much of the crew, including the almost all of the officers became very seasick. I never did. As a result, it became necessary for me to stand most of the OOD watches. I almost lived on the bridge.

*Their eyes are sunk by endless watch,  
their faces roughed by the spray,  
Their feet are drawn by the wet sea-boats  
they changed not night and day.<sup>24</sup>*

I was standing watch on the morning of 11 March 1966 when one of the ship's lookouts identified a new contact off of the ship's port bow. I could see no evidence on the radar screen of another ship on that bearing. In a few moments we realized that even though we were still 75 miles at sea, what the lookout saw was the sun reflecting off of the snow-capped peak of Mount Fujiyama. We were about to enter the land of ancient *samurai* and *kamikaze* warriors, cherry blossoms, Buddhist and Shinto shrines; a country against whom my father had fought only 20 years earlier; and now, the new home of my bride.

Yokosuka had been a center of Japanese naval activity since at least the middle of the 19th Century when French engineers had set up a dockyard there for the Imperial Navy. Several of the submarines which supported the Japanese task force that had attacked Pearl Harbor had left from Yokosuka. As we approached our mooring pier in *Carronade's* new homeport, we could see the Japanese flag flying from the fantail of several ships of the Japanese Self-Defense Force. Whatever else it might be, Japan was a strange, unfamiliar, foreign country. And, I would have only a very few days in port to help Lue become situated before I left for Vietnam.

Not long after the mooring lines were secured, Mike Harman, an Academy classmate, wrestling teammate, and old friend, contacted me. I had been a groomsman in Mike's wedding. He informed me that he and his wife Sandy lived nearby and that they had an extra bedroom. Unfortunately, he said in a tone of apology, it only had a single twin bed. Still, if I was interested in staying there for a couple of days after Lue arrived, we were very welcome. I accepted his offer with alacrity. I didn't bother to say that an apology for the single bed was less than necessary.

After a couple of days with the Harmans and a couple of more in a tiny room at the Naval Base in Yokosuka, we were able to secure a room at the nearby Hayama Marina Hotel, a small, relatively new western-style facility. It would serve as temporary quarters for the junior officers and wives of all four ships of the Division until they could find rental housing in nearby Japanese communities that could be "approved" by the Navy. Approval of proposed rental housing by Navy officials meant that it had to have indoor plumbing and running water. By contemporary standards, that would seem easy enough, but in 1966 such housing was sufficiently difficult to find that it took most families 30 to 60 days to find suitable permanent accommodations.

We had only a few days together and then Lue would be left on her own to find housing. Aware that *Carronade* would be the first ship to leave for the "gun line" in Vietnam and that it was scheduled to get underway on 28 March, my birthday, my energetic bride organized a birthday party for two. Somehow, she obtained and decorated a chocolate fudge cake, my favorite. She also managed to find two perfect gifts, a kimono-style bathrobe and an easily portable screen for the 35mm slides that we were rapidly accumulating.

On the foggy and damp morning of my birthday, seventeen days after our arrival in Japan, *Carronade* and *St. Francis River* pulled away from the pier and prepared to steam south out of Tokyo Bay. The two ships were the first two elements of IFS Division 93 to depart for gunfire support duty in Vietnam. Even the skippers of the ships were only vaguely aware of current developments there.

*O Eternal God, who alone spreadest out the heavens,  
and rulest the raging of the sea; Vouchsafe to take  
into thy almighty and most gracious protection our*

*country's Navy, and all who serve therein. Preserve them from the dangers of the sea...*<sup>25</sup>

The presence of a North Vietnamese division in the mountains and jungles of the Central Highlands in 1965 had presaged an enemy plan to drive to the sea in an attempt to divide the country and then to conquer the northern provinces. By February 1966, intelligence reports indicated that the North Vietnamese were also changing their policy of infiltrating only through Laos and Cambodia and were pushing southward across the demilitarized zone. Some 4,500 men per month were being infiltrated into the South. To meet this threat, two-thirds of the 1st Marine Division had been assigned to operate in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces, while the 3rd Marine Division was already in a tactical war in the relatively unpopulated northern I Corps area.<sup>26</sup> Such events made it highly unlikely that the two rocket ships would be called upon to provide saturation fire for traditional amphibious landings. Nevertheless, given the urgent need for naval gunfire support, the expectations of the two crews were high.

As the elderly, shallow-draft vessels steamed along at 12 knots, our crews continued the now established daily routine of ships' maintenance and intense "dry run" rocket firing practice by the Weapons Control teams in CIC. The clatter of hammers chipping at rusty bulkheads competed with the noise of small arms practice on the fantails and the occasional firing of the .50 cal machine guns mounted on the two bridges. In closed, hot, rocket magazines, seamen stripped to the waist went about the arduous task of preparing thousands of rockets for immediate call. Topside, lawn sprinklers attached to garden hoses cooled dangerously hot main decks in order to keep magazine temperatures under reasonable control.

Now administratively under Landing Ship Squadron 9 and Landing Ship Flotilla 1 of the Seventh Fleet Amphibious Force, the two ships paused briefly in transit only for a firing demonstration and a visit by the Commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet in Okinawa, and to top off ammunition in Subic Bay. As the ships entered Vietnamese waters for the first time, they passed to the operational control of the Seventh Fleet Naval Gunfire Support Unit, Task Unit 70.8.9, a part of Cruiser-Destroyer Group 70.8.

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Naval gunfire from a ship's batteries in support of ground forces, has been an important part of the success of military actions in nearly all littoral operations. Naval guns have been employed to conduct shore bombardment missions against enemy coastal installations, to disrupt or destroy enemy shore defenses prior to a landing of troops in amphibious assault operations, and even to support the maritime flank of a land campaign. Naval gunfire has also been important to related naval and air operations, e.g., flak suppression during air strikes, reconnaissance and demolition operations, mine warfare activities, air-sea rescue operations, and interdiction of railroads, air fields, etc. Naval gunfire has been classified in various ways, e.g., on the basis of the effect sought,<sup>27</sup> the tactical use,<sup>28</sup> the degree of pre-arrangement,<sup>29</sup> the technique of delivery,<sup>30</sup> and the type of fire.<sup>31</sup>

Fire control, i.e., the technique of delivering effective naval gunfire on a selected target, whether the target is another ship or located on shore, has always been complicated. A mid-twentieth century U.S. Navy document described the challenge this way:

*The fundamental problem... is to direct the gun in such a way that the projectile will hit the designated target. If the target is stationary and close enough, the problem is not difficult. Complications are introduced by increasing the range, by shooting from a moving platform such as a ship, by shooting at moving targets, and by shooting many guns at the same target with centralized control. The increase in range increases the time of flight of the projectile, allowing gravity to exert its influence over a longer period of time and to cause the projectile to fall more and more below the projected axis of the bore of the gun. The increase in time of flight also permits greater accumulation of errors caused by motion of own ship and target or by ballistic factors such as wind and drift.<sup>32</sup>*

The selection of the weapon to be used in naval gunfire support, e.g., a 5-inch or larger caliber gun, a rocket launcher, etc., is determined by the nature and the size of the target to be engaged and by the distance between the target and friendly troops. The selection of the type of projectile depends upon the type of the target and the

effect sought on that particular target. In the case of rockets, it also depends upon the distance from the ship to the target. The rockets we fired used point-detonating fuses. Naval guns can use mechanical variable time (VT) fuses for air bursts. An important part of the set procedure for a firing mission is the spotting of the fall of the shot, i.e., observation of the actual fall of the projectile so that corrections in range and firing angle can be made. Spotting from the ship or ashore is much less effective than spotting from an aircraft.

In Vietnam, ships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet would provide naval gunfire support in both unilateral and combined operations. Flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of ground commanders would be paramount. Typical targets would include infiltration points on off-shore islands and along the Vietnamese coast and specific targets such as command-centers, artillery or mortar positions, troop concentrations, and installations and supply dumps.

There would be three types of missions: pre-planned, non-scheduled, and emergency missions. A pre-planned mission was a scheduled operation where the requirement for gunfire support was known for at least 48 hours in advance. The non-scheduled mission required a quick-reaction response. An emergency mission was one where friendly troops were under attack and sufficient fire support was not available. Any ship on call for such a mission would proceed to a firing position at the fastest prudent speed. *Carronade* would routinely participate in all three types of missions.

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En route to Vietnam, *Carronade* stopped in Buckner Bay, Okinawa for a demonstration of the ship's unique gunfire support capabilities and the first of what would be many future visits by interested senior military leaders. The visit by Vice Admiral John Hyland, the Commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet was immediately followed by a visit from the Commanding General of the Third Marine Division. Eleven days later; on Easter morning, the ship arrived in Subic Bay to load ammunition. We were soon visited by Rear Admiral Wulzen, the Commander of all amphibious forces in the 7th Fleet.

On 18 April, only one day before *Carronade's* first scheduled arrival in Vietnam, all eight of our rocket launchers began to vibrate badly.

Working throughout the night, we succeeded in making repairs just as the ship entered Da Nang Bay at 0730 on the 19th. We mounted a .50 cal. machine gun on each side of the Bridge so that our Lookouts and other watchstanders there could have both a means of defense and the capability to fire shots across the bow of any of the dozens of Vietnamese “fishing” boats that came too close. We also made sure that the four new .30 cal. machine guns we picked up in Okinawa were made ready for quick use.

Two hours later; the Commanding Officers, Weapons Officers, and Operations Officers of *Carronade* and *St. Francis River* met with Seventh Fleet representatives aboard USS *Canberra* (CAG-2) to make final preparations for the deployment of the rocket ships in the developing tactical situation in I Corps. Even at this late conference, significant doubts were expressed by staff personnel about the use of a centuries old weapon for precision gunfire support.

On 20 April, off the coast of Chu Lai, *St. Francis River* became the first element of IFS Division 93 to fire a combat mission of rockets. Three days later; in company with *St. Francis River* and USS *Thomason* (DD-740), *Carronade* was called to its first mission. Almost immediately after the shrill pipe of the General Quarters Alarm, the air spotter looked on in what was later described as awe as 158 Mk 10 rockets left *Carronade* in a huge roar amid large flashes of exhaust flame. Arching high into the air the rockets fell with devastating destruction and surprising accuracy on a target nine thousand yards away. As her 5”/38 joined the intense, crashing chorus, *Carronade* quickly leveled numerous structures which were being used as enemy storage areas. As the ship turned seaward from its firing track only a few hundred yards offshore, it immediately received small arms fire from enemy troops hiding behind nearby sand dunes. Given the absence of protective armor around all of the ship's vulnerabilities, such fire had to be taken seriously. It was. Suppressing that fire with our own machine guns, *Carronade's* gunners observed heavy black smoke from the target area, secondary explosions, and numerous fires which would soon become a familiar and vivid sight to both friendly and enemy combatants all along the coast of Vietnam.

As the small ships continued their gunfire support operations over the next several weeks, a dramatic change in attitude from the earlier

skepticism about the capabilities of the ships began to develop. As the crews gained experience and improved tactics resulted in greater success, observers were surprised to find consistently high performance in indirect rocket fire, including coordinated rocket fire and 5"/38 night illumination, as well as indirect and counterbattery fire. Using high explosive warheads with both point-detonating and VT fuses, the two ships were able to collapse enemy underground storage caves which had not been previously susceptible to damage by available gunfire support weapons. Within two weeks of the ships' first on-call mission, the I Corps NGLO (Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer) spotter had seen enough to report that "from personal observation, the destroyed structures, damage and KIA registered from IFS-LSMR within their range capabilities far exceeds and surpasses anything delivered by rifle barrels of destroyers as far as area saturation is concerned."

*And the Irish move to the sound of the guns  
Like salmon to the sea.*<sup>33</sup>

A new problem arose, however, in connection with the strategy being employed by MACV Commander General William Westmoreland. Relying on the crushing force of U.S. military power, he was emphasizing large search-and-destroy missions. American combat units were to kill as many of the enemy as possible. Ripping "a page out of the 1916 German playbook at Verdun, when the principal objective had not been to gain territory, but to bleed the French white,"<sup>34</sup> he believed that the more casualties he could inflict, the more he could undermine the enemy's will to fight. As a result, we were fighting in the Era of the Body Count. After each firing mission, we were expected to report how many of the enemy we had killed. The staff officer who sought the information obviously knew nothing about ships because more often than not, we could not see the targets at which we were asked to direct our fire.

On 22 May, senior U.S. and ARVN Officers came aboard *Carronade* for an intelligence briefing. Two days later, our work to date was recognized in an unusual ceremony. At 0615, only hours after we had engaged a battalion-sized North Vietnamese force, I joined a small group of officers and enlisted men from both ships in a Junk Boat for a quick ride to the Junk Force Headquarters at the

mouth of the Song Nhuc Tra River. Because of the recent action, we were armed with rifles and pistols. None of us rested easy. We then boarded a Huey helicopter for a flight to the Headquarters of the 2nd ARVN Division in Quang Ngai province. In a ceremony conducted by Colonel Phu, the Assistant Division Commander, I was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star.<sup>35</sup> After an intelligence briefing and a quick jeep tour of Quang Ngai City, we returned to our ships.

*A cheer and salute for the Admiral, and  
here's to the Captain bold,  
And never forget the Commodore's debt  
when the deeds of might are told!  
They stand to the deck through the battle's  
wreck when the great shells roar and screech—  
And never they fear when the foe is near  
to practice what they preach:  
But off with your hat and three  
times three for Columbia's true-blue sons,  
The men below who batter the foe  
—the men behind the guns!<sup>36</sup>*

The two ships soon settled into a pattern of firing and rearmament that would become routine. Replenishing fuel and supplies both at sea and in Da Nang Bay, the ships alternated making the 5-to-7 day round trip to Subic Bay for rearming. After the pressure of several continuous days of combat duty, the ship's company, including the officers, were always anxious to go ashore for liberty. Given the limited options in the nearby town of Olongopo, that usually meant heavy drinking and girls. I was always disappointed when some of the married officers engaged in such behavior, but it was not the first time that I risked being characterized as a prude. I had long had sufficient self-confidence to withstand the peer pressures of the herd.

When the ship was at sea, all of the ship's company were isolated from their loved ones. Cellular phones and e-mail were things of the future. Policy prevented use of the ship's radio for anything other than official business. Regular mail was very slow in the war zone since the ship was constantly moving. Except when we conducted underway replenishment with another ship or pulled into port, we had no way to send or receive it. It routinely took two-to-three weeks to

receive correspondence written from Japan and it often took twice as long.

By the end of May, *Carronade* and *St. Francis River* had mastered both the inevitable navigational difficulties associated with gunfire support missions conducted only a few hundred yards offshore and the recurring electrical and mechanical problems caused by their prolonged period of backwater inactivity. Ranging up and down the coastal areas of I Corps, we continued our engagement of battalion strength VC units which had been attacking isolated units of the ARVN 2nd Division, answering other emergency calls for gunfire support, conducting interdiction fire on VC infiltration routes, and in many other ways making our now well-known presence felt.

One munitions problem lingered. And, it was a serious one. One day during a fairly routine call fire mission, a rocket with a ruptured ballistic (solid propellant) motor barely left one of the firing tubes of a launcher. It fell to the deck. It continued to careen about banging into gun mounts, launchers, and even stanchions, all the while spinning in such a way as to arm its point detonating fuse. As I waited at my Weapons Control Combat Station in the ship's CIC, I knew that all we could do was hold our breath with the knowledge that if the rocket became armed, the next impact would result in an explosion that would surely destroy the ship. I wrote a report of the incident and requested assistance. In response, civilian technicians in Indian Head, Maryland implied that the problem was not serious because all of the lots of our rockets had been randomly tested. We were outraged at the response so we radioed a description of the issue to the Admiral who served as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan. We were soon informed that the civilian technicians would meet us in Subic Bay, Philippines when we were next there to load ammunition. Not long thereafter, we arrived in Subic Bay. The technicians met us at the pier. They had been instructed to ride the ship during the next set of combat operations.

During the 48 hour transit back to Vietnam, I reflected upon the matter. We had already fired thousand of rockets and only one had malfunctioned with such devastating potential consequences. I calculated that it was very unlikely that another, similar malfunction would occur while the technicians were on board. It was with some amazement, therefore, that on our first day of renewed combat

operations, I heard someone yell over the ship's 1 MC speaker system that another rocket had failed and was spinning on the main deck. Once again, all the crew could do was wait to see if we would survive the moment. After the rocket stopped spinning with no explosion, I looked around the Weapons Control Room for the technicians. Each was crouched down beside or behind some large piece of equipment holding their arms over their heads in a protective manner. When order was restored, they were the truest of the True Believers. They immediately sent a radio message to the U.S. directing that every round of rocket ammunition be tested.

When one of my First Class Gunners Mates donned an asbestos suit and hood to go pick up the rocket to throw it overboard, I asked him to bring the point-detonating nose fuse back to me. It was dented from the several impacts of the rocket. Ever since that day, the fuse has been prominently displayed in my office or on a shelf at home. When I'm having a tough day and things aren't going my way, I often look at the fuse and remember how close I came to not having any more days at all.

On 25 May, after firing a record 1,400 Mk 10 rockets in the morning (including 956 rounds in a ten minute period) in support of Operation *Mobile* in the Chu Lai area, *Carronade* was relieved on station by *White River* off Cape Batangan. Simultaneously, *St. Francis River* was relieved by *Clarion River*. In a 38 day period, *Carronade* had fired 6,867 spin stabilized rockets, 381 rounds from the 5"/38 caliber gun, 948 rounds from the 40 mm guns, and hundreds of additional rounds from our .50 cal. and .30 cal. machine guns. As the first two units returned to Japan for a brief upkeep period, their replacements quickly picked up the gauntlet and, during the next two months, participated in a wide variety of operations in the I and II Corps areas.

On 27 July, *White River* and *Clarion River* completed their first tour of gunline duty and, after being relieved by *Carronade* and *St. Francis River*, returned to Yokosuka for their own repairs and upkeep. Our operations began immediately and the tempo remained high. By day, the ship's rocket and gun batteries were used in offensive operations directed by ground and airborne spotters and in defensive operations to protect scattered friendly outposts along the coast. At night, the ship provided harassment and interdiction fire to keep enemy forces away from small pockets of friendly ground troops. The daytime work

was difficult and, under the baking Vietnamese sun, very hot. It was often made more difficult by the shortage of fresh food and water, which necessitated restricted water hours, salt water showers, and powdered eggs. The nighttime work made sleep little more than a future goal. As the Weapons Officer of a ship that was designed to be nothing more than a gun platform, my work was intense.

I eventually concluded that because we were in combat operations around the clock, I needed to quickly train one of the other officers to assume my responsibilities in Weapons Control during nighttime missions. I could then hope for at least a few hours of sleep. After I felt comfortable with the performance of the officer I trained, I obtained permission from the Captain to remain in my Stateroom during certain nighttime firing missions. Even though the rocket launchers, the 5"/38 caliber gun and the forward 40 mm gun were all mounted on the deck immediately above my pillow, and even though the ship rolled and pitched, I found that I could brace my back against the bulkhead, grab the bar which prevented me from being thrown from my rack to the deck of the Stateroom, and sleep like a baby when the guns roared. To this day, I sleep very soundly.

The morale of *Carronades* crew remained high. We knew that we were making a difference. The 5 August edition of *Time* magazine carried a lead article on our work. "Slowly but steadily," it said, "the rocket men overcame the built-in limitations of their ships and in the process wrote a new manual on shore bombardment," soon becoming "one of the most valuable units in the South China."<sup>37</sup> The *St. Paul Dispatch* referred to the four ships of the Division as the "rocket rainmakers."

By the Fall, the four ships had become not only a familiar sight in Vietnam, but also a highly popular institution. Additional attention was recorded in articles in *U.S. News and World Report* and other leading newspapers. Military leaders also sent messages of encouragement. Upon the completion of his duty as Commander of Cruiser Task Group 70.8, Rear Admiral T. S. King Jr. sent a message saying "I commend you ... for your outstanding contributions to our Navy's effort in the Vietnam conflict. You have demonstrated an enterprising and aggressive professionalism that has made the Little Armada a big gun in our force. Keep the sprinklers going and the decks cool." The Commanding General of the ARVN in I Corps radioed a Letter of

Commendation which described us as “expert professionals.” A senior U.S. Army Advisor's message said “You really saved our tails. Your fire stopped Charley (Viet Cong) in his tracks. . . the nearest rounds were no more than 50 meters away. A joy to see.” The Commander of CTU 70.8.9 congratulated us on the “high degree of professional competence” in providing “emergency defensive fire support” to an outpost which had been under attack.

The most warmly received recognition, of course, were messages like the one received by *Carronade* on 10 September, a message which was typical of others received by each of the ships of the Division. As he was preparing to leave Vietnam, the NGLO for I Corps sent the following message:

*I would like to add my personal thank you to the message sent by 2nd Army Advisory Group, 4th Regiment, 3rd Battalion. I was the spotter calling your firing and if you had not fired as well as you did, Charley would have run over us. The spots were answered exactly where I called them. In my opinion, rockets are the best for troop support. Off the record, the troops were in the Gun Target Line and at times you dropped rounds within 25 meters of us. The troops were kind of shook-up, but the spots were right in there. I have only 6 days left over here and if I ever come back I hope you're out there supporting me.*

\* \* \*

On 15 September, *Carronade* arrived back in Subic Bay to rearm and to make minor repairs. There was pressure to return to Vietnam as soon as possible, so the entire crew labored through a warm night in pouring rain loading ammunition. Taking a brief break, I walked to a telephone booth at the end of the weapons pier and called Washington, D.C. I suspected that the Navy Detailing Officer had made a decision about my next duty assignment. When I finally got through, he informed me that a letter had been sent to me weeks earlier and that they were concerned about my lack of response. After explaining to the officious, desk-bound officer that mail was slow in the war zone, I asked him to explain my options, if any.

It took a few minutes for his explanation to sink in. The Navy was going to assign me to a Naval ROTC Unit at a college or university to serve as an Assistant Professor of Naval Science. My choices were

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute or Dartmouth College. You mean “shore duty” I asked? “Yes,” he replied. “Will my wife be able to be with me?” Again, he replied “Yes.” It was to be an “accompanied” tour of duty. I would probably be directed to report to the new duty station around the first of the year.

I didn't even know exactly where the two schools were located, but after a few more inquiries I selected Dartmouth. It was an Ivy League school and I was informed that it was located in a small town on the border between Vermont and New Hampshire. I had one last question. “Where's the closest military base?” The Detailer answered that that was the one drawback to the job. The nearest base was either Pease Air Force Base or the Naval Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Both were located on the east coast some 2-3 hours from Dartmouth. While I would wear my uniform each day at the College, my day-to-day work would be just like that of any other Ivy League Professor. “Draw back?” Was he kidding? When I put the telephone down, I was numb. After almost two years of separation, of constant moves, of uncertainty, of risk, and of life in a war zone, my new bride and I would finally be together. It was almost too good to be true. In fact, it almost was.

When *Carronade* returned to Vietnam from Subic Bay this time, morale was sky high. In only a couple of weeks, the second deployment would be over. Before returning to Japan, the ship would stop for a few days of rest and relaxation in Hong Kong. Messages had already been sent to the families informing them of the new schedule. I had just learned that Lue would be flying to Hong Kong with Louise McCoy, the wife of *Carronade's* Commanding Officer. I knew few details, but I had no doubt of her ability to make it happen.

During the last week of September, we participated in Operation *Meng Ho Six*, providing gunfire support to an elite Republic of Korea infantry division that was fighting alongside the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. When the operation ended on 30 September, we thought that we had fired our last round. We had not. An unexpected call for help from other nearby ground troops required us to slug it out again. At midday on 2 October, the shooting did stop. Within a minute, *Carronade* was heading north to Hong Kong—at Flank Speed!

I had no idea of when or how I would first see Lue. Because she was with the wife of the ship's Commanding Officer, it was likely that

she knew as much about where the ship would tie up as I did. Very slowly, we glided into the Hong Kong harbor. The setting was unreal. It was such a dramatic contrast to the environment in which we had been working only 48 hours earlier.

Hills rising straight from the water, skyscrapers, glitzy hotels, bright lights, the hustle and bustle of a thriving island city were all around us. Finally, we were informed of our anchorage. We would moor to large buoys in the shipping channel. Suddenly, there she was! We had just secured the Sea and Anchor Detail when a boat pulled alongside with two beaming American ladies. One was mine!

*Carronade* arrived in our homeport of Yokosuka on 16 October. In between a visit to the ship by the Chief of Naval Personnel and the daily maintenance and repair work, I helped Lue make arrangements to ship our few belongings to New Hampshire. I was also busy with the administrative chores that were necessary to ensure a smooth turnover to the officer who would relieve me as the ship's Weapons Officer. A farewell party for us was held at the Base Officer's Club. A few days after I was formally relieved of my duties, *Carronade* departed on its third combat deployment to Vietnam.

On 1 December 1966, I was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant, U.S. Navy. One week later, I was officially detached from the *Carronade*. I returned to the United States alone under circumstances that were heartbreaking.<sup>38</sup> Despite those circumstances, my professional life at sea had been very rewarding. I had every reason to apply to my own experience the words used by World War II German Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz to describe his own service: "It gave me everything in life that a man who is a man can desire—responsibility, success, failure, the loyalty and respect of other men, the need to find oneself, and adversity."

\* \* \*

Over the course of the next few months, and during much happier times, additional professional recognition relating to my service aboard *Carronade* came my way. On 15 March 1967, I was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device for service of at least six months while contributing direct combat support to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. On 30 June, I was

awarded the National Defense Service Medal. On 10 June 1967 I was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat “V” (for valor).<sup>39</sup> I was subsequently awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation, and the Navy Unit Commendation.<sup>40</sup>

At the end of 1966, U.S. troop levels in Vietnam had reached 389,000. Some 5,008 American combat deaths had occurred and more than 30,000 Americans had been wounded. By the time American involvement in the Vietnam conflict officially ended in 1973, 58,226 Americans had been killed in action or classified as missing in action. In contrast to their World War II predecessors, American Vietnam veterans received benefits from the nation which were no better than those of the prior peacetime service. Many veterans experienced social exclusion, often by some of the thousands of Americans of the Baby Boom generation who had evaded the draft and refused to serve the nation. On the day after his inauguration, President Jimmy Carter pardoned nearly all of the draft evaders.

Despite the fact that the U.S. Armed Forces had decisively won the major engagements and had withdrawn its troops from Vietnam at the time of the Paris Peace Accords two years before the end of the conflict, the war in Vietnam is still popularly considered to have been one of a strategic defeat. During a conversation on 25 April 1975 in Hanoi, five days before Saigon fell to the communists, a U.S. Army Colonel who was serving with the U.S. Delegation in negotiations with the North Vietnamese, said to his counterpart: “You know you never defeated us on the battlefield.” The North Vietnamese Colonel pondered the remark for a moment, secure in the knowledge that within days his communist government would control all of Vietnam. “That may be so,” he replied, “but it is also irrelevant.”<sup>41</sup>

In a speech before the Vietnam Veterans POW Association several years after he retired, General Westmoreland said that: *Our children must know that we answered our country's call, to fight a war the military was not allowed to win, that we fought on even after our Congress, and indeed our people, lost their will to continue the battle, and we came home to a greeting of hostility or silence.*<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the domestic social upheaval which the war caused and the incompetence of the nation's political leadership at the time,

my service in Vietnam was always a source of great pride to me. It always will be.

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## Notes

### Chapter 4: The Naval Profession and the USS *Carronade* (IFS-1)

1. Lue was not entitled to military transportation home from the Philippines since the Navy had done everything possible to discourage her from coming to the area in the first place. Nevertheless, we gambled. She accompanied me to Clark Air Force Base, north of Subic Bay. After negotiations with the Air Operations Office there, a deal was struck. Lue would join me on my flight home and I would serve as a courier for classified materials. A locked attaché case was soon hand-cuffed to my wrist and we flew to Anderson Air Force Base on Guam where I turned over the case to Air Force security personnel. After two days of freedom, during which we explored the island, we boarded a second flight to Travis Air Force Base near San Francisco.
2. John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p.65.
3. *Ibid.*
4. David Howarth, *The Men-O'-War* (Alexandria: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1978), p.6.
5. Peter Goodwin, *Men o' War: The Illustrated Story of Life in Nelson's Navy* (London: Canton Publishing Group, 2003), p.28.
6. *Ibid.*, p.20.
7. *Ibid.*, p.29.
8. Patrick O'Brian, *The Far Side of the World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), p.175.
9. John Munday, *Naval Cannon* (Aylesbury, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 1987), p.26.
10. The term 'shot' described all solid metal projectiles fired from a naval gun. It came in many forms, from round-shot (the normal cannonball) to 'langridge,' which was metal scrap fired as shot. Bar shot and chain shot two shot connected by a chain or a bar was especially effective against the spars and rigging of the sailing men o'-war. Grapeshot, an anti-personnel form, was one inch in diameter. It was usually pre-packed in a canvas bag, scattering as it left the gun muzzle so as to kill and maim the men on the deck of an enemy ship.
11. Canister or Case Shot was a metal can containing about 500 musket balls.
12. Peter Goodwin, *Nelson's Victory* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), p.29.

13. The Battle of Salamis was a naval battle between the Greek city-states and Persia in September, 480 BC. The battle took place in the straits between Piraeus and Salamis, a small island in the Saronic Gulf near Athens. The Athenians had fled to Salamis after the Battle of Thermopylae. The Greek fleet joined them there. The Greeks had 371 ships. The Persian fleet consisted of 1207 ships. The Persians, led by Xerxes I, decided to meet the Athenian fleet off the coast of Salamis Island, and were so confident of their victory that Xerxes set up a throne on the shore to watch the battle in style. After the Persians sailed into the straits to attack the Greek fleet, they found that they could not maneuver in the gulf. A smaller contingent of Greek ships flanked the Persian navy. When the Persians attempted to turn back, a strong wind sprang up and trapped them. Those ships that were able to turn around were trapped by the remainder of the Persian fleet that had jammed the strait. At least 200 Persian ships were sunk. Because the battle saved Greece from being absorbed into the Persian Empire, it effectively ensured the emergence of Western civilization as a major force in the world.
14. Joseph E Callo, "Lasting Lessons of Trafalgar," *Naval History*, October 2005, p.21.
15. Enfilade fire is gunfire directed along the length rather than the breadth of a formation. The fire strikes a target squarely in flank.
16. Norman Friedman, "Amphibious Fire Support," in John Roberts. ed., *Warship, Volume IV* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1980), pp.234-238.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. Julian Hartt, "'Mothball Fleet' Stirring for Action in S. Vietnam," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 August, 1965.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Howard Gardner, Lee S. Shulman, "The professions in America today: crucial but fragile," *Daedalus*, Summer 2005, p.15.
22. Religious Lay Leaders are members of military commands who are appointed in writing by a unit commander to provide identified faith group requirements when a chaplain is not available. Lay Leaders promote opportunities for worship, provide devotional services, and offer prayers.
23. Patrick O'Brian, *Blue at the Mizzen* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), p.39.
24. Rudyard Kipling, *The Scholars* (1919).
25. Excerpt from the prayer given each Sunday morning during the Protestant worship service in the Naval Academy Chapel by the senior chaplain.
26. For military planning purposes, South Vietnam was divided into four areas, or corps. I Corps was the northernmost military region. II Corps was the Central Highlands military region. III Corps was the densely populated fertile military region between Saigon and the Highlands. IV Corps

- included the marshy Mekong Delta southernmost military region.
27. The possible effects include the destruction of a target, maximum damage (where destruction is not possible), and neutralization (a temporary effect for the purpose of interrupting enemy movement or action).
  28. Tactical uses include Close Supporting Fire (delivered on enemy targets which present a serious and immediate threat to the supported unit), Deep Supporting Fire (used to destroy enemy troops, supplies, etc. which are not in the immediate vicinity of friendly forces), Harassing Fire (sporadic fire intended to lower enemy combat efficiency and morale), Interdiction Fire (designed to prevent the use by an enemy of certain bridges, airfields, etc.), Illuminating Fire (the employment of Star Shells to illuminate the enemy or to aid the observation of friendly forces), Preparation Fire (delivered just prior to an amphibious landing), Counterbattery Fire (delivered against enemy guns and fire control systems), and Screening Fire (which employs smoke projectiles to hide the movement of friendly units).
  29. Prearranged or scheduled gunfire is usually planned well in advance of an operation. Call Fire is delivered at the request of troop units ashore or a spotting agency. Opportunity Fire is usually delivered without much advance planning, usually on newly discovered targets or those of a transitory nature.
  30. Direct Fire is delivered on a target by using the target itself as a point of aim. Vision of the target (by optics or radar) is necessary. Indirect Fire is used on targets which are not visible from the ship.
  31. Point Fire is directed at a specific target. Defilade (reverse-slope) Fire is delivered on a target behind a terrain feature, such as a hill, which masks the target. Enfilade Fire is delivered in such a manner that the fall of the shot coincides with the long axis of the target. Area Fire is delivered in a prescribed area. See Bureau of Naval Personnel, ed., *Naval Ordnance and Gunnery, Volume 2 Fire Control*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), Chapter 22.
  32. Bureau of Naval Personnel, ed., *Naval Ordnance and Gunnery, Volume 2 Fire Control*, Chapter 15.
  33. Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards* (1918).
  34. Laura Palmer, "The General at Ease: An Interview with William C. Westmoreland," in Robert Cowley, ed., *The Cold War: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2005), p.308.
  35. I was informed that the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star was awarded for extraordinary gallantry in over 150 combat missions. The citation accompanying the award was translated for me as follows:

*LT.jg. Duncan, officer aboard the USS Carronade, is an outstanding officer. Specifically, in the operations organized by the 12th Tactical Group recently in the nearby mountains region*

*and coastal areas belonging to the Province of Quang Ngai, Lt.jg. Duncan...directed his guns in the timely support of friendly forces and efficient shooting at... enemy targets, and therefore has caused the enemy to suffer great loss in material and personnel.*

36. John Jerome Rooney (1866-1934), *The Men Behind the Guns*.
37. "McCoy's Navy," *Time*, 5 August 1966, pp.26-27.
38. See Stephen M. Duncan, *A Woman of Noble Character* (Alexandria, Annapolis: Private Publication, 1999), pp. 90-92.
39. The accompanying citation read in part as follows:

*A tireless leader, Lieutenant Duncan's constant enthusiasm and outstanding professional performance were an inspiration to all. Reporting aboard prior to the ship's re-commissioning, he organized his inexperienced department and trained his men to an exceptionally high level of efficiency. On several occasions, his foresight and professional ability enabled CARRONADE to meet her operational commitments. Lieutenant Duncan's competent supervision of the Weapons Department and untiring efforts were, in large measure, responsible for the effective naval gunfire support operations of CARRONADE. His contributions to the United States war effort in the Republic of Vietnam were significant. Lieutenant Duncan's outstanding performance was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.*

40. The accompanying citation read in part as follows:

*The destruction and devastation brought upon the enemy, and the support provided the ground forces during this period, by the officers and men of this small unit, has been unsurpassed. Inshore Fire Support Division NINETY-THREE has an outstanding record of striving for operational readiness, and of meeting their missions, tasks, and commitments in a manner reflecting the team effort and leadership so manifested by their exemplary performance. Their determined and inspiring efforts were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service,*

41. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1982), P.21.
42. Laura Palmer, "The General at Ease: An Interview with William C. Westmoreland," *op cit.*, p.310.

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## Mighty Anachronism: The Brief But Pyrotechnic Life of IFS Division by Stephen Duncan93

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The conflict in Vietnam presented many examples of Naval combat and doctrine being tailored as necessary to fit the environment of that conflict. A prime case was the four small, ungainly, ugly – but deadly – ships of Inshore Fire Support Division 93. They were designed to saturate enemy-held beaches with barrage rocket fire in amphibious assaults. Armed mainly with freely rising rockets, not unlike those first developed as instruments of war by the Chinese in the year A.D. 1225, these ships proved once again that even in an age of particle beam weapons, space grenades and anti-satellite missiles, a centuries-old idea may have great utility. Their adaptation to the unique requirements of the fighting in Vietnam constituted perhaps the most significant development of naval gunfire support during the entire course of that war.

The story began in 1965 with the realization that because of recent developments in ship construction and the decommissioning of all World War II vintage battleships and most heavy cruisers, there were not enough naval gun platforms that could be used for the high intensity barrage gunfire support essential to the success of traditional amphibious operations. The "double-ended" frigates could not provide such support, destroyers were limited by their five-inch guns, and the urgency of the situation made the slower and much more expensive reactivation of battleships an unattractive option.

At first quietly, and then in the midst of increasing media interest, work on the reactivation of the four ships began in the Spring of 1965 in two locations. In the Long Beach Naval Shipyard some 256

shipyard workers began reactivating two members of the San Diego group of the Pacific Reserve Fleet, USS Carronade (IFS-I), and USS White River (LSMR-536). In San Francisco, similar work began on USS Clarion River (LSMR-409) and St. Francis River (LSMR-525).

The armament and characteristics of the ships stood in striking contrast to the main elements of the fleet. Carronade, the only ship ever originally commissioned as an inshore fire support ship and the newest of the four, had been launched in 1953 and, had never seen combat before being decommissioned in 1960. Deriving her name from the short, iron cannon first made by the Carron Iron Works in Scotland, she was only 245-feet long with twin, variable pitch screws and a shallow draft for the specialized task of navigating close in-shore for rocket bombardment. Armed with eight rapid-fire Mk 105 rocket launchers, a single 5"/38 caliber gun, two twin 40mm and various mounts for .50- and .30-caliber machine guns, she could fire three types of five-inch spin-stabilized, solid fuel rockets at more than 300 rounds-per-minute depending upon the size of the warhead (approximately equal to 8", 5", or 3" shells) or the range (2,000, 5,000 or 10,000 yards). Thus, for any particular target, the ship could concentrate more firepower for a brief period of time than a battleship, in terms of pounds of TNT or number of rounds.

The three LSMRs (medium landing ship rocket) were built during the closing months of World War II and were used to good effect later in Korea. Only 206-feet long, the LSMRs carried a smaller crew than the 9 officers and 130 men aboard Carronade, 8 Mk 102 rocket launchers, a single 5"/38 gun, two twin 40mms and the usual assortment of machine guns. Each of the LSMRs was capable of firing up to 240 rockets per minute. But many observers were highly skeptical of the four rocket ships, for solid fuel rockets fired from tubes with no rifling and with no other means of guidance were presumed to have little accuracy. To make matters worse, only Carronade had a fire control computer, and it was beyond repair for lack of spare parts.

That skepticism among those for whose benefit the ships were being reactivated was both predictable and justified. Even though rockets had been used in Europe as early as 1258 at Cologne, at Metz in 1324 and in England in 1327 in the Scottish War, and despite the fact that the British had used Congreve rockets against Boulogne

in 1806 and Baltimore's Fort McHenry in 1814 ("The rockets' red glare"), the weapon had a history of instability and unpredictability. Misfires and rockets exploding off target might be acceptable in a naval gunfire support mission for pre-landing beach bombardment but there was significant reason to wonder if the four rocket ships could provide accurate support to small numbers of troops engaged in isolated fire-fights with an enemy close at hand.

In the absence of fire control computers, it soon became apparent that it would be necessary to develop an entirely new doctrine for the four ships. Working with the ships' weapons officers and fire control technicians, the staff of the Amphibious School at Coronado, California, constructed a manual, ballistic slide-rule. Using target coordinates, each ship's fire control team soon learned how to determine the deflection, angle-bearing and the elevation for the twin-tubed launchers. The theoretical work of the classroom had not yet been tried, however, in actual firing, and even though all of the ships were equipped with a battery stabilization capability, most planners expected the firing effectiveness of the vessels to be reduced in severe sea conditions.

Throughout the summer and early fall of 1965, reactivation of the ships continued. On 2 September representatives of each ship visited the Naval Ordnance Test Station at China Lake, California for their first observation of the weapons they were soon to use in combat.

On 18 September the ensign, jack and commissioning pennant were hoisted aboard Clarion River and St. Francis River in San Francisco. Fourteen days later, Carronade and White River were recommissioned in Long Beach and IFSD 93 was born with the C.O. of Carronade in command of the Division. By late October, the ships had completed their ammunition load-out and were together in San Diego for the first time to commence outfitting, sea trials and shakedown training.

During the ensuing weeks the young, inexperienced crews engaged in rigorous underway training. On 12 January 1966, during practice off the coast of California, Carronade's gunners sank a 17-foot, 30-knot, remote controlled target boat simulating the evasive tactics of enemy PT and coastal patrol boats. In doing so, Carronade became the first amphibious force unit in the Navy to do so.

On 17 January the Division commenced an intensive five-day period of training involving the firing of rockets for the first time. Most of the members of the respective crews had never previously seen a rocket fired and little did they realize that, except for a brief shore bombardment demonstration at Kahoolawe Island, Hawaii, en route to Vietnam, this was to be their only significant experience before entering combat.

The ships sailed from San Diego on 8 February for their new home port of Yokosuka, Japan

. On a foggy and damp 28 March, some seventeen days after their arrival in Yokosuka, St. Francis River and Carronade became the first two elements of the Division to depart for the gun line in Vietnam. As they proceeded south, even the skippers were only vaguely aware of current developments there. The presence of a North Vietnamese division in the mountains and jungles of the Central Highlands in 1965 had presaged an enemy plan to drive to the sea in an attempt to divide the country and then to conquer the northern provinces. By February 1966, intelligence reports indicated that the North Vietnamese were also changing their policy of infiltrating only through Laos and Cambodia and were pushing southward across the DMZ. To meet this threat, two-thirds of the 1st Marine Division had been assigned to operate in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces, while the 3rd Marine Division was already in a tactical war in the relatively unpopulated northern I Corps area. Such events made it highly unlikely that the two rocket ships would be called upon to provide saturation fire for traditional amphibious landings. Nevertheless, given the urgent need for gunfire support, the expectations of the crews were high.

As the elderly, shallow-draft vessels steamed along at 12 knots, their crews continued the now established daily routine of ships' maintenance and intense "dry run" rocket firing practice by the fire control teams in CIC. The clatter of hammers chipping at rusty bulkheads competed with the noise of small arms practice on the fantails. In closed, hot, rocket magazines, seamen stripped to the waist went about the arduous task of preparing thousands of rockets for immediate call. Topside, lawn sprinklers attached to garden hoses cooled dangerously hot main decks in order to keep magazine temperatures under reasonable control.

Now administratively under Landing Ship Squadron 9 and Landing Ship Flotilla 1 of the Seventh Fleet Amphibious Force, the two ships paused briefly in transit only for a firing demonstration and a visit by COMSEVENTHFLT in Okinawa, and to top off ammunition in Subic Bay. As the ships entered Vietnamese waters for the first time, they passed to the operational control of the Seventh Fleet Naval Gunfire Support Unit, Task Unit 70.8.9.

Suddenly, without warning, and only one day before the scheduled arrival in Vietnam, all eight rocket launchers on Carronade began to vibrate badly. Working throughout the night, the ship's gunners succeeded in making repairs just as the ship entered Danang Bay at 0730, 19 April. Two hours later, the commanding, weapons and operations officers of the two ships met with Seventh Fleet representatives aboard USS Canberra (CAG-2) to make final preparations for the deployment of the rocket ships in the developing tactical situation in I Corps. Even at this late conference significant doubts were expressed by staff personnel about the use of a centuries old weapon for precision gunfire support.

On 20 April, off Chu Lai, St. Francis River became the first element of IFS Div 93 to fire a combat mission of rockets. Three days later, in company with St. Francis River and USS Thomason (DD-740), Carronade was called to its first mission. Almost immediately after the shrill pipe of the General Quarters alarm, the air spotter looked on in awe as 158 Mk 10 rockets left Carronade in a huge roar amid large flashes of exhaust flame. Arching high into the air the rockets fell with devastating destruction and surprising accuracy on a target area 9,000 yards away. As her 5"/38 joined the intense, crashing chorus, Carronade quickly leveled numerous structures used as enemy storage areas. As the ship turned seaward from its firing track only a few hundred yards offshore, it suddenly received small arms fire from enemy troops behind nearby sand dunes. Given the absence of protective armor around all of the ship's vulnerabilities, such fire had to be taken seriously. It was. Suppressing that fire with their own machine guns, Carronade's gunners observed heavy black smoke from the target area, secondary explosions and numerous fires which would soon become a familiar and vivid sight to both friendly and enemy combatants all along the coast of Vietnam.

As these small ships continued their gunfire support operations over the next several weeks, a dramatic change in attitude from the earlier skepticism about the capabilities of the ships began to develop. As the crews gained experience and improved tactics became increasingly successful, observers were surprised to find consistently high performance in indirect rocket fire, including coordinated rocket fire and 5"/38 night illumination, as well as in direct and counter-battery fire. Using high explosive warheads with both point detonating and VT fuses, the two ships were able to collapse enemy underground storage caves which had not been previously susceptible to damage by available gunfire support weapons. Within two weeks of the ships' first on-call mission, the I Corps NGLO Spotter had seen enough to report that "from personal observation, the destroyed structures, damage and KIA registered from IFS/LSMR within their range capabilities far exceeds and surpasses anything delivered by rifle barrels of destroyers as far as area saturation is concerned."

As spring turned into summer, the two ships settled into a pattern of firing and rearmament that would soon become routine. Replenishing fuel and supplies both at sea and in Danang Bay, the ships alternated making the five-to seven-day round trip to Subic Bay for rearming.

By the end of May, the two ships had mastered both the inevitable navigational difficulties associated with gunfire support missions conducted only a few hundred yards offshore and the recurring electrical and mechanical problems caused by their prolonged period of back water inactivity. Ranging up and down the coastal areas of I Corps, they continued their engagement of battalion strength VC units which had been attacking isolated units of the ARVN 2nd Division, answering other emergency calls for gunfire support, conducting interdiction fire on VC infiltration routes and in many other ways making their now well-known presence felt.

On 25 May, after firing a record 1400 Mk 10 rockets in the morning (including 956 rounds in a ten minute period) in support of Operation Mobile in the Chu Lai area, Carronade was relieved on station by White River off Cape Batangan. Simultaneously, St. Francis River was relieved by Clarion River. As the first two units returned to Japan for a brief upkeep period, their replacements quickly picked up the

gauntlet and, during the next two months, participated in a wide variety of operations in the I and II Corps areas.

On 27 July, White River and Clarion River completed their first tour of gunline duty and, after being relieved by Carronade and St. Francis River, returned to Yokosuka for their own repairs and upkeep. Meanwhile, a new problem had reared its ugly head. On several occasions the four ships had incurred the horrifying experience of watching rockets with ruptured ballistic motors careen around the main deck banging into launchers, gun mounts and even stanchions, all the while spinning in such a way as to arm their point detonating fuses. Given the vulnerability of the rocket magazines to any type of explosion topside, it was essential that this problem be corrected immediately. Fortunately, it was. After the difficulties had received the direct attention of technical representatives flown in from the U.S., success was soon achieved in separating bad lots of rockets.

By the Fall of 1966, the four rocket ships had become not only a familiar sight, but a highly popular institution. Press attention spawned in articles in *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report* and leading newspapers. The ships and several crew members had received various forms of recognition. Perhaps the most warmly received, however, were messages like that received by Carronade on 10 September, a message typical of others received by each of the ships. As he was preparing to leave Vietnam, the Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer for I Corps sent the following:

I would like to add my personal thank you to the message sent by 2nd Army Advisory Group, 4th Regiment, 3rd Battalion. I was the spotter calling your firing and if you had not fired as well as you did, Charley would have run over us. The spots were answered exactly where I called them. In my opinion, rockets are the best for troop support. Off the record, the troops were in the GTL and at times you dropped rounds within 25 meters of us. The troops were kinda shook-up, but the spots were right in there. I have only 6 days left over here and if I ever come back I hope you're out there supporting me.

Over the next two and a half years, the four ships operated both together and independently all the way from the northern provinces to the Mekong Delta area. In December 1966 rockets were staged in Cam Ranh Bay enabling the ships to rearm in the II Corps area

instead of having to return to Subic Bay. In some cases, the ships spent as long as 60 or 70 days on the gunline between ports where cold iron time and upkeep facilities were available. A measure of their efforts may be made by the observation that in the 18-½ month period between 19 April 1966 and 1 November 1967 the four ships fired 189,000 spin-stabilized rockets in excess of 13,000 rounds of five-inch ammunition, 76,000 rounds of forty-millimeter ammunition and an untold number of machine gun rounds in support of U.S. and allied operations.

The final chapter of the story took place in 1969 and 1970. After unfavorable inspections and surveys, White River, St. Francis River and Clarion River were struck from the Navy list in 1970 and sold for scrapping, the sale price of the latter being a mere \$29,000. A similar fate awaited Carronade. Such an inglorious demise, however, could not detract from the spectacular gunfire support record set by the anachronistic "rocket rainmakers" of IFS Div 93.

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## My Tour in Vietnam David B. A. Moore, Cdr. USN Ret.

The following is an Operations Summary of my year as Advisor to Coastal Group 26, VN Navy located on Binh Ba Island in the Cam Ranh Bay (CRB) outer harbor. All of the places mentioned can be seen on Google Maps, especially the satellite views. The viewer will appreciate that the population, economy and infrastructure of the area has changed dramatically in 50 years.

I would like to begin with a bottom line assessment. The only valuable contribution of Coastal Group 26 to the war effort during my year was: (1) Providing five English speaking petty officers to the Swift Boats going out on 24 hour patrols each morning and (2) Transporting a US Army medical team from Cam Ranh to Binh Hung Island every other Wednesday to help the small fishing village there. Although I had many unusual experiences and I take pride in my

service in that year, my service pales in comparison to most who served in Vietnam.

Background. The French Army built a base on Binh Ba before WW2 which supported four gun emplacements on the mountain top to defend Cam Ranh Bay. The main structures consisted of 2 large and one small two story barrack buildings made of brick, yellow stucco and tile roofs. A two story family-style house provided lodging for the four Vietnamese officers (and the C.O.'s wife). Just outside the perimeter fence line south of our building were three small "cottages" in the same Mediterranean architecture with barely room for a card table and chairs with 3 alcoves with barely room for a cot in each. These were French Army bordellos and a popular photo spot for our visitors. Only one of these remains in satellite photos. The base had a small stone and dirt pier. The Binh Ba fishing village was about 100 yards from our barrack building and not even visible due to a small ridge between and vegetation. Unlike today, there were no fishing sampans anchored in the water.

Our four man advisory team (LT, LTjg, Bosun Mate 2/c and Engineman 2/c) occupied one half of the second floor. The interior dimensions of our "hooch" were about 30' x 120' with very high ceilings. About every ten feet of wall space there alternated a 10' high double door or a high window with bars but no glass so we had plenty of ventilation. At the very south end was a room 10' x 15' that served as our shower/shaving room with a concrete urinal in one corner of the shower area. Also, there was a 6' wide balcony with concrete balustrade around the hooch with an incredible view of CRB. Where the outside staircase penetrated the second floor a door frame and hinged door were installed and festooned with barbed wire. At night a large chain locked the door and our three dogs stood guard. Below us lived many VN sailors and their families. One of the sailors below was also the dog butcher for the base and our dogs disliked the VNs because of that.

We had no running water but we had about a dozen 5 gallon "jerry cans" which we could fill from a garden hose at the Swift Boat piers (as did the entire Junk Base). Carrying two cans (80 lbs) from the

pier, up the slight hill, up the staircase on a hot day was not fun. Our shower was a 55 gal drum mounted horizontally on a 7 foot angle iron frame. To conserve water the shower head was set at the exact point where droplets became a steady drip; each drop moved a lot of suds. About ten yards from the south end of our building was a regulation haze gray outhouse complete with crescent moon cut in the locked door; thank goodness for our big box of lye.

The base had a big new blue USAF 40KW generator that no one was ever been able to make work. Luckily, the base had an old 10KW generator which at night provided power to the Advisors and VN officers and one light bulb on the pier. It also allowed us to charge batteries for our PRC-25 radio that connected us to COSDIV 14 and their Swift Boats. We had a Roper stove with butane tanks and an old Servel refrigerator that ran on kerosene burning from a wick sufficient to cool beer and sodas. We also had two new 6cf refrigerators with associated butane tanks that we could never make work. Our food was obtained from the Market Time Base in large cans and ten lb frozen boxes. We all 4 shared equally in domestic chores.

On Day 2 my predecessor set up an Orientation Cruise to our primary OpArea. In general my area of responsibility was from Nha Trang to Phan Rang. But CRB and Nha Trang were urban areas and defended by a large contingent of the Korean Army. A large mountain called Dong Bo was located between CRB and Nha Trang as well as Hwy 1 and the ocean but it reportedly had NVA troops so that was a “no go” zone for us. That left about eight miles of coast line that was devoid of people and thus a “Free Fire Zone”. Hwy 1 ran from Phan Rang north to CRB through a mountain valley. I estimate the mountain ridge to the east of Hwy 1 was approximately 2000 feet high and sloped to the ocean. In the southern half of that stretch of coast, there is a flat bench of land about ¼ mile between the mountains and

ocean. In the northern half, the mountains crowd the coastline and are heavily forested.

Our Orientation Cruise passed by Binh Hung Island where a fishing village is located and the Army medical team would visit. We rounded a curve in the coast line and reached the entrance to Vinh Hy Bay, which is more of a narrow inlet leading to a mountain stream. Bosun Mate Ramiriez called out that he saw people in the boulders near the entrance so we swung the bow around. We could see two people hiding in the rocks and fired an M-79 grenade in their direction. One person ran and the other hunkered down so we jumped ashore and took him prisoner. It turned out he was a fourteen-year old Montagnard who lived with his group high on the mountains. He had never worn shoes in his life and had callouses on his feet that were very thick. He said that the VC would sometimes cross Hwy 1 and come into their mountain home for R&R. They would force the villagers to act as porters and carry their gear. We headed back to base where our "prisoner" became a "house boy" for the VN officers and lived with them. Later he would guide a VN army unit from Hwy 1 to various VC supply and weapon caches in his home mountains.

In the early afternoon of 29 February I received a transmission from COSDIV 14 that they needed five more interpreters in about one hour. I went to see my counterpart and set it up but had no idea what it was about. It turns out the North Vietnamese were trying to simultaneously infiltrate four armed, 100 ft. steel hulled trawlers full of weapons but they had been spotted and trailed by Navy aircraft. Now they had turned toward the coast. At the last moment the northern trawler turned back but after midnight the other three were greeted by many hostile units including seven Coast Guard cutters, one USAF AC-47 Gunship, seven Swift Boats, two Army helo gunships, one VN gunboat and two VN Yabuta junks (probably from nearby Coastal Group 25) who had themselves a field day. The Swifities said that the next day there was an unpleasant confrontation near Nha Trang over who would get the weapons as trophies.

A few days later we were told by VN Navy Headquarters to bring all our men and junks to the Hon Heo Peninsula north of Nha Trang where Trawler #2 had run aground. CG-25 was also there in force as well as several VNN blue water ships. All the “junkies” debarked on the beach and lined up at the water’s edge. At a given signal we all charged up the beach line abreast at port arms while photographers took pictures. (Note: Several months later I visited VNN Headquarters in Saigon and saw framed copied of those photos hanging on the walls.). I took the CG-26 “junkies” about 100 yards inland where we found two crude lean-to’s and some sort of cultivated crop which, I was told, was used for smoking. We cut down everything.

As I became more familiar with my counterpart, I would encourage him to schedule some operations to search for VC but he was not interested. They were safe and sound on a remote island with their families and had a sweet deal for themselves. I was surprised in March when he informed me we were going to “make an operation at night”. So after dark we took two Yabuta junks and perhaps a twenty man landing force plus the four advisors. While enroute, the CO informed me that we had to stop briefly at Binh Hung Island to pick up a guide who was familiar with the trails. We landed on the coast only about 200 yards south on Binh Hung. We were single file with the guide and CO near the front and the advisors in the middle. After a few minutes I noticed that the men up front were shining flashlights which alarmed me. I told my three men that something was not right and we were going to slide to the rear of the column. Just then a shot rang out and everyone ran forward. There was the guide crouched down next to a deer and proudly showing off the bullet hole between its eyes. It turns out that a Vietnamese holiday was approaching and they needed extra meat at the base to celebrate. I later told the CO that anytime he wanted to go on a hunting trip I would be happy to coordinate with other agencies but do not tell me it is “an operation”. I was very naïve.

A month or so later my counterpart told me we were going to “make another operation” and we were going up to the village of Sui Hai. I had never heard of the place but they said it was at the far north end of CRB. (Lana had several USO employees who lived there). So we grabbed our battle gear and off we went – this time in the daylight. After we passed under the pontoon bridge that connected the CRB peninsula to the mainland the waterway became much more narrow and shallow. Soon our two junks found ourselves in a maze of mudflats and we could not find our way forward or out. A solution presented itself in the form of two water-skiers being pulled by speedboats from Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation. We waved then down and they guided us out of the maze. As we cruised back home, someone let it slip that the reason we were going to Sui Hai was to buy blue crabs.

One of my most valuable contacts in Vietnam was our local Navy Intelligence Liaison Officer (NILO) named Eric Ernst (USNA '65). We jointly decided that since our 14 year-old Montagnard had been so useful, we ought to do a “body-snatch” and get another assuming that they go down to the same area in Vinh Hy Bay to catch fish on a regular basis. A good plan – or at least better than sitting around doing nothing. I went over to the Market Time base to eat an evening meal in the mess hall and be ready for our Swift Boat ride. I was joined at the dinner table by a SEAL officer and he eventually asked what I was doing and I told him. He told me I was out of my mind or words to that effect. Coming from a SEAL, I did not know if that was a compliment or a warning. A few hours later Eric and I jumped off the bow of a Swift Boat on the beach in Vinh Hy Bay and travelled a few yards to the remaining corner of a bombed out stone farm house. Since there were no known VC in the area the major concern spending a night in the rubble was snakes because there are big cobras in Vietnam. In the wee small hours we actually heard some distant voices but we could not see anybody and were not going to give up our concealed location. In the early morning light we crawled back over the nose of the Swift Boat and went home. The location of that bombed out house is now a swimming pool at a resort. (Note: I finally decided that the SEAL’s comment was a compliment and it was the only personal award I received in Vietnam).

I received a thick packet of glossy photographs that some photo reconnaissance plane had taken of my OpArea between CRB and Phan Rang. I put the over-lapping photos on a 4x8 sheet of plywood in the hooch. It appeared that near the top of the mountains someone had dammed up a stream to make a pond of fresh water. It seemed to me that if the dam could be destroyed, life would be made more complicated for the possible VC up there. I checked with the four-man EOD Detachment on the Market Time Base and they said they could get me some C-4 and furthermore would be pleased to go with me and the Vietnamese of CG-26. I then sold the idea to my counterpart. The plan was dependent on total surprise and we would go up the mountain using the dried creek bed coming from the dam. At the last minute the EOD said that their boss would not let them go but they gave me 10 bricks of C-4 plastic explosive with detonators and fuses and 30 minutes of instruction. We used our Yabuta junks to reach the mouth of the dry creek bed and about 30 VN sailors came with our four advisors. Two VN sailors carried the small wooden box with the C-4 and detonators. The creek bed idea did not last long due to very large boulders that were unclimbable so we so we went up the forested slope making liberal use of the vegetation to pull ourselves upward. I had radio communications with the NILO who was flying his Cessna overhead but we could not see each other due to the forest canopy. After about 30 minutes of scrambling uphill, we heard a rifle shot in the far distance and were forced to conclude we had been seen. We headed back down the hill going much faster than we came up. When we reembarked on the junks, I asked where the box of C-4 was but no one had a clue. In the following weeks on at least two occasions I heard a muffled explosion and then saw a tall geyser of water in the area in front of our base followed by a rush of sampans to pick up dead fish.

In April, the Senior Naval Advisor and his staff thought it would be better for Coastal Group Advisors to receive more training in non-naval subjects such as base defense and ambushes. The overrunning of Coastal Group 16 in August 1967 (and death of Bill Fitzgerald) may have been part of this decision. I think I was in the first group of "Junkies" to be selected for this training from the US

Army. In late April I flew to Saigon and the next day was taken by vehicle to the NE of Saigon, past the big US Army base at Long Binh to a small auxiliary base named Bear Cat. It was a fairly small and rudimentary base, triangular in shape with a 155 mm artillery battery at each corner. The make-shift barracks had metal cots with a thin mattress covered in factory plastic which was covered in red dust. There was very little “hands on” training that applied to our situation; we mostly attended lectures with a group of new Army arrivals from Fort Lewis, WA., and I assume they had never heard of the Vietnam War as the information provided was really basic. We were scheduled for a practice ambush outside the berm on Thursday night and I did learn that in a cool weather ambush you take your poncho liner and not the plastic poncho that rustles. But in the early morning hours of Thursday the night quiet was shattered by the roar of artillery and outgoing rounds. The enemy was marking May 1 as an occasion by launching a mini-Tet Offensive in many places around Saigon. All training was cancelled for the week and we spent the day at an open field waiting for an ad hoc helo ride to someplace else. I was finally taken to the coastal resort city of Vung Tau where I checked into a billeting hotel. I was enjoying a late afternoon beer with some strangers in the hotel bar when suddenly there was a very loud explosion. There was instant chaos as we all fled for cover. Apparently, a depressed GI decided to pull the pin on his grenade and hold it to his chest as he sat on the patio of the bar. Later, as I inched toward the patio to scope out the situation, an MP picked up the man’s head with two feet of white spinal column – a vision not easily forgotten.

The next day I went back to the helo landing field and waited for a ride to Saigon. Finally, my turn came for a Huey ride. They put me in the door gunner’s seat, put a helmet on my head and plugged me into the intercom system, showed me the safety and trigger on the M-60, told me it was loaded and ready to go, and then closed the door so that the M-60 and I were on opposite sides of a plexi-glass window. (????) We flew north over the Rung Sat Special Zone, which had been heavily doused with Agent Orange making all the snaky canals and bayous looking like hell on earth. While the intercom played pop

music from AFVN Radio, the cockpit crew spent the whole trip talking about oil pressure.

The arrival of June brought the extra hot weather but also good new developments:

The Market Time Base did not have an Officer's Club. The COSDIV 14 officers had a lounge area at the end of their barracks called "The New Kid Memorial Library and Coffee Mess" and it was the size of four rooms. My assistant and I always had our names on the "tally sheet" on the refrigerator door so we could get a soda or beer whenever we wanted. But in early June a real "O Club" opened right next to the beach. The inside of the new facility was fairly small but the kitchen could make good burgers. The best part was a large wooden deck over-looking the beach complete with tiki torches. It was "THE" best place to be on a Sunday afternoon when a few beers could expedite the military planning process.

Coastal Group 26 received a new CO: DaiUy Ho Dac Cung. He was previously a school teacher, very smart, and a good administrator. He tightened discipline: if the sentry at the pier was caught sleeping he spent a few days in the sun in a wooden crate not unlike a crate for a large dog. Cows no longer wandered on the base at night to eat grass. My job as Co Van My (Advisor American) was made much easier but I still felt I needed to exercise initiative to set a good example.

The Navy gave us a new 18' Boston Whaler with a 25 HP engine and a steering wheel up front where we could sit in relative luxury. That was followed up by an M-60 machine gun (with no recoil) and a new hybrid over/under M-16/M-79.

My boss, CDR Flynn, Second Coastal Zone Advisor, was expecting a new Ford Bronco to replace his existing Bronco which he was giving to me to replace my jeep that was falling apart. Except that the night after the new vehicles arrived in Nha Trang the VC mortared the cargo storage yard and the new Bronco was destroyed. Close but no cigar.

COSDIV 14 got their hands on an old Boston Whaler (BW) and people started to develop some ideas (another beer please) for Boston Whaler Ops. I volunteered to help the Swifties and went on one of the first such efforts. We departed in a Swift Boat about dusk and headed north with the BW in tow. We were quite a few miles north of NhaTrang where there is a long, long white beach in a free fire zone. Three officers got in the BW with an M-60, three M-16s, one M-79 grenade launcher and a Starlight Scope. We slowly approached the beach and then slowly paralleled the beach about 100 yards out. All we needed was for someone to come out on the beach. We traded turns being the “engineman” which was not easy because the handle on the engine that is used to steer the engine and to adjust the throttle was broken off. So you sat on the transom with your arms around the engine casing to turn it and, if necessary, reach down to the bottom of the opposite side of the engine to adjust the throttle linkage. After a few hours with no contact, we turned out to sea only to discover we were now inside a very shallow reef. We went out the way we came in. (Note: Some while later LTjg John Kerry would also do the same mission but when he fired the M-79 it detonated very prematurely slightly injuring his arm and eventually he received a Purple Heart).

On 18 August I had my first date with Lana Arthur who was the Director of a USO facility located in the heart of the CRB military complex. But that is a whole ‘nother story.

In late September the notion of “volunteer ops” was alive and well on the Market Time Base. And since I wore a beret, I was the obvious choice to lead something. (Another beer please). I made it perfectly clear to my advisory team that this had nothing to do with our advisory role and I think the enlisted men exercised good judgement since they were short timers. And we were going to use the Boston Whaler again. My display of intel photos clearly showed that an old dirt road ran along the base of the mountains from Phan Rang to Vinh

Hy Bay and that would be a good place to meet anybody moving around in the free fire zone. About 10 pm a Swift Boat dropped ten of us off the bow touching the beach. Included were one interpreter from Coastal Group 26, my Assistant Advisor Frank MacRory, and seven men from various commands on the Market Time Base.

In spite of the moonlight, the first problem was some navigation as the farmer who lived in that spot many decades ago had planted solid fences of cactus to keep his livestock penned up. We finally got around the cactus and reached the dirt road and headed south. As my photos clearly showed, there is a rocky vein coming perpendicular off the mountain range which creates a hump in the dirt road and then proceeds to the coast ending in a promontory about 80 feet above the surf. We used that constricted area of the road to set up our ambush among the large boulders. I also deployed a claymore mine. By this time I had also learned to bring my vial of prescription amphetamines to keep awake. But nothing happened.

When the sun came up, we picked up the claymore and proceeded south around the rocky vein and turned left to the coast line below the 80' promontory. We could see the Swift Boat about a half mile away and told him we were ready for pick up. A few minutes later the PCF said he was having trouble starting the BW engine but should have it running soon. Based on those reassurances, I decided to walk out on the shallow reef to facilitate the BW pick-up. Our group of ten were about waist deep when bullets started dancing in the water around us. A little further out were two large rocks sticking up from the water so we put five men single file behind each rock. But now we were chest deep. We could see where the firing was coming from two or three guys on the promontory but we discovered that our M-16s were not working apparently due to the salt water. The PCF started to use his three 50 cal on the promontory and that reduced the incoming rounds. Soon we had a spotter aircraft overhead from Phan Rang Air Base and two more PCFs going to southern stations and then two more PCFs returning from southern stations. Now we had overwhelming fire power but the spotter told me we better get out of their ASAP as he could see people coming out of the mountains

toward us. We waded ashore and started south down the beach to the nasty little fishing village of MyTan.

(Again, I emphasize that there was nothing in this area in 1968, especially the highway DT702 along the beach. Google satellite photos clearly shows all these locations.) A Swift Boat picked us up at My Tan which is the very southern end of my AOR. Just as the Swift Boat got us back near the promontory, two F-100s from the Colorado Air National Guard came over and put a several HE and napalm bombs on the promontory.

I was later told that the people in Saigon were happy with the day's adventure.

I believe it was in October when I noticed a FRAM destroyer anchored in outer CRB. I finally contacted an officer on the ship and he said they were told to just hang around that section of coastline for a few days. That gave me an idea ( another beer please). Perhaps they could shoot some H&I fire into the mountains above Vinh Hy Bay and I would be in position to see if anyone was curious enough to come down to the coast. I call this next experience "A Day at the Zoo".

We assembled a four man team including my assistant Frank MacRory, the NILO (radioman), and a Swift Boat OinC. With the DD positioned a mile or so off the beach, a PCF dropped us off at the bombed out farmhouse previously mentioned. Step 1 was to spread out to search the perimeter of the large (40 acre ?) farm field to find the best trail leading into the mountains. The mountain stream that emerges there spreads out in a small delta with streamlets about 1 or 2 inches deep. After I walked across the little delta, I looked backed and was shocked to see a (crocodile?) running straight at me across the delta with its legs wildly thrashing and water being kicked up right and left. The animal stopped and turned and I could see it was only an iguana/water monitor about 4-5 feet long. Whew! I continued on to the far south edge of the field where the two foot grass met thick bushes. As I walked near the bush-line I suddenly heard a loud rustle to my immediate left; for a second I thought I was about to die. But then a big buck deer jumped out right in front of me and trotted across the field. Whew! I moved away from the bush-line and continued

walking through the grass when some kind of grouse jumped up right in front of my feet. Whew! After scouting the large field we decided to use the trail next to the stream. (Saw my first punji sticks). But the deeper we went into the forest the less we could see. We saw a climbable tree on a rocky knob and two of us went up there to spot the H&I fire. But the forest just swallowed up the 5” shells and we could neither see nor hear them.

Then we discovered that the tree we were in was full of thousands of angry red ants and now they were on our uniforms. End of the noble experiment. I am glad I did not meet the tigers that lived in that area.

In late November, the NILO was flying his Cessna over that rocky vein discussed above. The south face of the vein is a 40’ – 50’ vertical escarpment. The NILO thought he saw a cave in the cliff or it could have been a shadow and he asked me to check it out. We organized another volunteer op with 12 men but eliminated any idea of using the Boston Whaler. A Swift Boat dropped us off at the village of My Tan. My counterpart warned me that My Tan residents had mixed loyalties even though some of the men were issued small, lightweight M1 Carbines and were classified as Popular Force Militia (paramilitary). The village was very poor with most shacks made of flattened cardboard boxes. There was tremendous infestation of flies which probably caused the white irises seen in the eyes of so many residents of all ages. South of the rocky escarpment the land is very dry and sees little rain; it looks much like the Sonoran Desert in Arizona.

We headed north and once close to the cliff could see it was a shadow and not a cave. We moved closer to beach where the September fight took place and then headed south. Because of the scruffy vegetation and cactus, I put nine men including myself in line abreast about 10 yards apart. I put three men on the beach. As we got closer to My Tan, I noticed that the men on the beach were falling behind so I started moving to my left and rear to get them to catch up with the rest of us. As I neared the dune line, my mind suddenly went blank .....

I was later told that there were two VC hiding in a bush on top the dune line. I know that we must have surprised them as there was a pile of fresh excrement by the bush. One of the VC shot the nearest American on the beach and he fell face down on the sloping dune – a bullet hole in the top of his foot. The VC jumped down the dune to the prostrate American, put his rifle muzzle against the upper back and fired. He then threw down his old rifle and grabbed the M-16 nearby. The two VC then began running north through the desert vegetation.

.....When my mind began functioning again, I saw two men in typical VN “black pajamas” running away through the brush and my first thought was “That’s strange !!”. Then I figured out what was happening and I emptied my magazine in their direction as was everyone else. I told the men to stand fast and not run after them as they were not worth it. Just then, the Popular Force men in the village became alarmed and starting shooting their M1 carbines in our direction. The M1 Carbine has very low muzzle velocity and it seemed to take several seconds for a bullet to go chugging by. We hit the deck and waited for the bullets to stop.

Our wounded man had the bullet enter his back just inside the shoulder blade and out his chest near the collar bone. Nothing critical was injured. We got a medevac helicopter from Phan Rang very quickly and they took him directly to CRB hospital. Later that night he called his girlfriend in the USA from his hospital bed. He was pleased with his Purple Heart. Higher authority wanted to know how somebody from the CRB Harbor Defense Unit got shot ten miles to the south.

My last operation started when my counterpart announced that we were going to make a joint operation with Coastal Group 25. Excitedly I asked “where we going” and he replied “the Dong Bo”. I kept my mouth shut. It turns out we landed about a mile or less from Nha Trang in what had been a coconut plantation. It was a lovely spot with lush green grass but the neat rows of coconut palms made me uneasy. We had a large group with six junks and sixty people. We only went in about 150 yards and then sat down in the soft grass

for a meal break. No lookouts were posted so I took my three men and moved about 30 yards away to better observe and stay out of the line of fire. Then the VN sailors started to have some wrestling matches. My counterpart directed his men to dig up the coconuts that were taking root in the ground and take them back to Binh Ba for base beautification. With all the palm trees our junks reminded me of a funeral barge for some ancient king. Since this was my last operation my after action report was much like this paragraph; my boss in Nha Trang was not amused. The following week the Koreans had a large sweep higher up on Dong Bo Mountain and killed 386 NVA.

In early February I turned things over to my relief. I took him and the rest of the team on a jeep tour of the harbor front inside Cam Ranh Bay; I was given a traffic ticket for having 5 people in a jeep. Later I told him that if he ever went back to the spot where I got stuck in the surf, he should take it very, very seriously. Later I learned that they did go back to that exact spot. The VC were waiting for them in force and DaiUy Ho Dac Cung was shot through the head. The next day there were B-52 strikes in that location.

When I went through 12 weeks of Advisor Training in Coronado, they told us that the field advisors were getting medals including Bronze Stars. I had just finished four years in destroyers where nobody received medals except Good Conduct Medals for enlisted. I really wanted to earn a Bronze Star and that was often my second motivation for my extra-curricular activities. My primary motivation was to show my counterpart what could be done and perhaps even embarrassing him into taking action. In January 1969, my boss's assistant phoned me to ask that I write myself up for an award. My admin system on Binh Ba consisted of a Navy gray metal desk, lined yellow paper tablets and Skillcraft ball point pens. I had never seen the Navy Awards Manual. I advised Nha Trang that I could never and would never do that.



# USNA63 Valor

## Citations for Valor



*USNA Class of 1963*

With the passage of over 40 years since we first came together on that hot July day in Annapolis, we have cause to reflect on the contributions the Class of 1963 has made through our active duty and reserve service. The war in Vietnam defined our early and mid-career experience: most of us served in-country or offshore. Thirteen of us died there. Others were wounded in action.

The extraordinary heroism of three of our classmates - William Fitzgerald, David Robinson, and Willis Wilson - was recognized by the award of the Navy Cross. The citations that accompanied these awards are well worth reflection.

The Army Distinguished Service Cross holds the same order of precedence as the Navy Cross. One of our classmates, Frank Wroblewski, served in Vietnam as an Army Officer and was awarded the DSC for his actions.

Several of our classmates were awarded Silver Stars. Steve Toth received his posthumously, after the attack by the Israelis on the USS Liberty in 1967. The entire list of our classmates awarded Silver Stars:

<u>John Cecil Bender</u>	<u>Daniel Andrew Hitzelberger</u>
<u>Robert Atticks Black, Jr.</u>	<u>Wilson Denver Key</u>
<u>Ronald Joel Calhoun</u>	<u>Anthony John Nargi</u>
<u>George Candelori</u>	<u>Coral Vance Schufeldt</u>
<u>Michael Paul Cronin</u>	<u>Peter Wolcott Soverel</u>
<u>James Hutchings Cunningham (non-grad)</u>	<u>Stephen Spencer Toth</u>
<u>James Edward Gill</u>	<u>Frederick Eugene Trani</u>
	<u>Joel Marvin</u>

## Warshaw

One of the toughest duties for any officer is to undergo imprisonment by the enemy. Two of us endured years of confinement as prisoners of war: Mike Cronin and Denver Key. Personal recollections are linked.

A posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross was made to Kelly Patterson and Carl Doughtie.

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### Awards of the Navy Cross

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**William Charles Fitzgerald**  
**Lieutenant, USN**

**CITATION:** award of the Navy Cross

For extraordinary heroism on 7 August 1967 while serving as senior advisor to Vietnamese Navy Coastal Group SIXTEEN in connection with combat operations against the communist insurgents (Viet Cong) in the Republic of Vietnam.

When Coastal Group SIXTEEN was taken under a coordinated attack by numerically superior Viet Cong forces, Lieutenant Fitzgerald established communications with the Vietnamese Navy commanding officer, and attempted to coordinate assistance with free-world forces in the area. The enemy fire soon became too intense for the outnumbered base defense force to resist successfully and the Viet Cong completely overran the base. Aware that his bunker was the only remaining source of resistance, Lieutenant Fitzgerald requested an artillery barrage to be laid



down on his own position and ordered his men to evacuate the base toward the river. He gallantly remained in the command bunker in order to provide cover fire for the evacuating personnel. Before Lieutenant Fitzgerald could carry out his own escape, he was fatally shot by the Viet Cong aggressors. By his fearless dedication to duty, courage under fire, and heroic actions in defense of the base, despite overwhelming odds, Lieutenant Fitzgerald served as an inspiration to all persons engaged in the counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

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Additional Decorations  
Purple Heart



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**David Brooks Robinson**  
**Lieutenant Commander, USN**

**CITATION:** award of the Navy Cross

For extraordinary heroism while serving as Commanding Officer of the patrol gunboat USS CANON (PG-90), during operations against enemy forces in the Republic of Vietnam on 11 August 1970.

While Lieutenant Commander Robinson was directing his ship's harassment and interdiction fire as the craft proceeded up the Bo De River, the ship suddenly came under intense enemy automatic weapons, rocket, and small arms attack from an estimated forty-man force located well-concealed positions in a mangrove swamp both banks of the river. During the initial hail of enemy fire, Lieutenant Commander Robinson



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on

sustained a broken leg and numerous shrapnel wounds when a rocket exploded on the port side of the flying bridge. Despite his serious wounds and loss of blood, he continued to direct his ship's fire until the enemy attack was suppressed. Refusing medical evacuation, Lieutenant Commander Robinson submitted to first-aid treatment and then requested that he be strapped in a stretcher and placed in an upright position so that he could continue to direct the actions of his ship until it cleared the enemy ambush site. Only after the ship was anchored at an advanced tactical support base and he was assured that his ship and crew were capable of continuing their assigned mission, did he allow himself to be medically evacuated. By his extraordinary courage, resolute fighting spirit and inspiring personal example in the face of a fierce enemy attack, Lieutenant Commander Robinson upheld the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

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Additional Decorations

Bronze Star

Purple Heart



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**Willis Charles Wilson**  
**First Lieutenant, USMC**

**CITATION:** award of the Navy Cross

For extraordinary heroism as a Platoon Commander with Company B, First Battalion, Third Marines, in connection with operations against communist forces in the Republic of Vietnam on 2 April 1966.

During Operation Orange, Lieutenant Wilson's platoon became heavily engaged with



the enemy near the hamlet of Lap Thuan. Intense enemy mortar fire, close-range small-arms fire, and barbed wire obstacles covered by automatic weapons prevented the forward movement of the platoon. Although painfully wounded during the initial mortar barrage, Lieutenant Wilson courageously moved up and down his platoon's positions, directing his men and judiciously ordering the deployed squads to bypass the barbed wire in an attempt to eliminate the Viet Cong threat. When his platoon sergeant was wounded and became entangled in the barbed wire, Lieutenant Wilson, with complete disregard for his own safety, started across seventy-five meters of open terrain in an attempt to retrieve the mortally wounded man, who was still being hit by small-arms fire. Before he could reach the sergeant's position, Lieutenant Wilson was caught in the hail of small-arms fire and seriously wounded in the shoulder. Although thwarted in the rescue effort, he competently resumed direction of the platoon and established a strong base of fire to provide cover for a deployed squad. When a radio operator was wounded in a sudden flurry of Viet Cong fire, Lieutenant Wilson again braved the withering fire to assist the man. For the third time, he was hit, sustaining a serious wound in the chest from small-arms fire. With extraordinary dedication and presence of mind, he continued to maintain direction of his platoon. Increasing the rate of fire from his base squads, he launched an attack by the enveloping squad which finally silenced the Viet Cong fire. By his exceptional valor despite his suffering from multiple wounds, daring initiative and unswerving dedication to duty throughout, Lieutenant Wilson upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

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Additional Decorations

Purple Heart



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**Award of the Army Distinguished Service Cross**

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## Frank Matthew Wroblewski

**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Service Cross

For extraordinary heroism during operations against enemy forces in the Republic of Vietnam on 28 September 1967.

For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Captain Wroblewski distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 28 September 1967 while serving as commander of an infantry company on a combat mission in Hau Nghia Province near the Cambodian border. During the first few minutes of a heliborne assault on a Viet Cong bivouac area, his unit was savagely attacked and pinned down on the landing zone by withering enemy automatic weapons and small arms fire. The insurgents completely surrounded the landing zone. Captain Wroblewski dauntlessly led his command group through a curtain of fire to a relatively protected position. He then discovered two of his platoons had lost radio contact with the command group and immediately moved to locate and lead them to join his other elements. He moved across two hundred meters of open ground, ignoring bullets striking all around him, to reach the first platoon. While he called air strikes to within fifty meters of their positions, the men began their movement toward the established defensive perimeter. Again moving across the battlefield alone, he reached the second platoon which was hopelessly trapped by extremely intense fire. The relentless barrage prevented movement without losses, so Captain Wroblewski moved into the open to direct artillery strikes within one hundred meters of his position. As the platoon withdrew, he remained behind to personally cover their movement. For four hours he continually moved among his men, inspiring them to fight furiously until reinforcements arrived and the combined forces routed the Viet Cong. Captain Wroblewski's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service



and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

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Additional Decorations

Bronze Star

Purple Heart



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Awards of the Silver Star

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Stephen Spencer Toth  
Lieutenant, USN  
USS LIBERTY (AGTR-5)

**CITATION:** posthumous award of the Silver Star

As intelligence officer, LT Toth was on the starboard wing of the flying bridge, 04 level, when the strafing attack occurred. It became a vital matter to quickly establish the national identity of the aircraft that had initiated the vicious attack in order to inform higher authority. With complete disregard for his own personal safety he fearlessly exposed himself to overwhelmingly accurate rocket and machine gun fire to obtain this data. While engaged in this task a violent explosion on the starboard side of the bridge inflicted fatal injuries.



Additional Decorations  
Purple Heart



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**Michael Paul Cronin**  
Lieutenant Commander, USN

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star (with Gold Star)

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam. On 1 June 1967, his captors, completely ignoring international agreements, subjected him to extreme mental and physical cruelties in an attempt to obtain military information and false confessions for propaganda purposes. Through his resistance to those brutalities, he contributed significantly toward the eventual abandonment of harsh treatment by the North Vietnamese, which was attracting international attention. By his determination, courage, resourcefulness, and devotion to duty, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces.



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**CITATION:** award of the Legion of Merit (with Combat Distinguishing Device)

For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam from January 1967 to March 1973. By his diligent



efforts, exceptional leadership, devotion and loyalty to the United States, and under the most adverse of conditions, he resisted all attempts by the North Vietnamese to use him in causes detrimental to the United States. While in daily contact with the North Vietnamese guards and officers, he performed duties in staff positions, maintaining good order and discipline among the prisoners. Under constant harassment from their captors, and due to the frustrations of the prisoners during their long internment, many difficult situations arose, requiring perseverance, endurance and ingenuity. Using his extraordinary courage, resourcefulness, and sound judgment, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces.

The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized.

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight on 2 January 1967 while serving as a jet attack pilot in Attack Squadron TWENTY-THREE, embarked in USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43) during a mission in support of a strike into the Red River Delta, North Vietnam. When his aircraft was severely damaged by a surface-to-air missile during a strike against an enemy missile site, Lieutenant Commander (then Lieutenant, Junior Grade) Cronin regained control of his aircraft which had lost all hydraulic power and elevator control, by using horizontal stabilizer trim and manually controlling the rudder and aileron. Despite low ceilings and reduced visibilities which necessitated an instrument approach, Lieutenant Commander Cronin flew the stricken aircraft through the adverse weather to a safe field arrested landing, thus saving a valuable operational aircraft. His superb airmanship, courage and professionalism were in keeping



with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

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Additional Decorations  
Prisoner of War Medal



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Wilson Denver Key

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam. On 22 November 1967, his captors, completely ignoring international agreements, subjected him to extreme mental and physical cruelties in an attempt to obtain military information and false confessions for propaganda purposes. Through his resistance to those brutalities, he contributed significantly toward the eventual abandonment of harsh treatment by the North Vietnamese, which was attracting international attention. By his determination, courage, resourcefulness, and devotion to duty, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces."



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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Commander [then Lieutenant] Wilson Denver Key (NSN: 0-669207/1310), United States Navy, for heroism while participating in aerial flight on 17

November 1967 as a Pilot in Attack Squadron THIRTY-FOUR (VA-34), embarked in U.S.S. INTREPID (CVS-11).

While serving in a surface-to-air missile suppression element as part of a multi-air-wing strike against a boat yard and transshipment point two miles southeast of Hanoi, North Vietnam, Lieutenant Commander Key skillfully evaded hostile anti-aircraft fire and missile attacks to launch an attack at point-blank range against a surface-to-air missile site as two missiles lifted off their launchers. His bombs engulfed the site and caused the lifting missiles to go off course. During his recovery, two missiles from another site were tracking his section. Despite hard evasive maneuvering, Lieutenant Commander Key's aircraft received a direct hit, causing it to burst into flames. As the fire continued to rage, he ejected into enemy territory and was captured. By his accurate weapons deliver, courage, and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of grave personal danger, Lieutenant Commander Key contributed significantly to the success of the mission, thereby upholding the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.



Action Date: November 17, 1967  
Service: Navy  
Rank: Lieutenant Commander  
Company: Attack Squadron 34 (VA-34)  
Division: U.S.S. Intrepid (CVS-11)

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**CITATION:** award of the Legion of Merit (three awards)

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" to Lieutenant

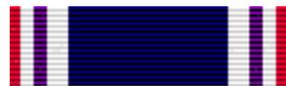
Commander Wilson Denver Key (NSN: 0-669207/1310), United States Navy, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States while interned as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam from June 1968 to January 1973.

During this period, although under constant surveillance from his captors, he performed duties involving highly classified material in an exemplary and professional manner. Through his zealousness and ingenuity, he generated new ideas and improvised techniques greatly enhancing covert operations. Although in a hostile environment, he never wavered in his devotion and loyalty to the United States and his fellow prisoners. By his inspiring courage, exceptional skill, and resourcefulness, he reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the United States Armed Forces. (Lieutenant Commander Key is authorized to wear the Combat "V".)



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Additional Decorations  
Prisoner of War Medal



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**John Cecil Bender**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star  
"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while attached to and serving with Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron TWO as



pilot in command of an armored helicopter, flying a search and rescue mission against enemy forces over North Vietnam on 18 July 1967. From a position off the coast of North Vietnam, Lieutenant BENDER was notified that two Navy pilots were downed four miles west of the heavily defended Phu Ly road, river and rail intersection. Fully aware that another helicopter had sustained heavy battle damage the previous day during the rescue of another downed pilot in the same area and realizing that this area would be the focal point of increased enemy opposition, Lieutenant BENDER courageously elected to attempt the rescue. During the 105 mile over- land flight, carefully navigated by Lieutenant Bender, MIG aircraft closed to within 10 miles of the helicopter prior to interception by friendly aircraft. Arriving in the SAR area they descended to a low altitude in order to prosecute the search effectively. Thereupon intense ground fire from three sides laced the area with tracers at such close range that the sound of automatic weapons and small arms firing was audible above the engine and rotor noise. Without regard to his personal safety, Lieutenant BENDER continually exposed himself outside the cockpit window to search for the survivor in the dense jungle growth and rugged karst cliffs and To assist the gunners by effectively directing sub-machine gun fire against the enemy troops. After 12 minutes in the difficult hover under intense gun fire the first crewman was mortally wounded by a bullet which pierced Lieutenant BENDER's window. Knowing that an Air Force rescue helo was standing by, Lieutenant BENDER made the decision to withdraw and seek medical aid for his dying crewman. The rescue was successfully effected, aided in great measure by Lieutenant BENDER's persistence in locating the survivor, and tenacity in remaining in the area, suppressing enemy fire. Lieutenant BENDER's superb courage while in command of the helicopter under fire, his gallantry in pressing the rescue effort, and extraordinary devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

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**Peter Wolcott Soverel**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action on 16 August 1968. Lieutenant SOVEREL commanded a column of River Assault Squadron NINE boats conducting operations in support of U.S. Army elements along the Ben Tre River in Kien Hoa Province. Late in the day, after heavy enemy contact was broken, Lieutenant SOVEREL coordinated the landing of a portion of the embarked troops and ordered approximately two-thirds of his boats to establish a defensive position at the beach. He and the remainder of his craft and the embarked infantry were proceeding downstream to another landing zone when a large Viet Cong unit opened fire from ambush position. One of the minesweepers received a direct hit from a recoilless rifle round and careened out of control toward the enemy bunkers. Lieutenant SOVEREL realizing the danger, initiated a devastating barrage of return fire on the enemy positions and ordered the other lead boats to cease minesweeping and take the damaged craft in tow. Lieutenant SOVEREL's accurate fire control succeeded in disrupting the enemy fire thus enabling him to turn the formation into the beach and land the infantry to assault the enemy. Lieutenant SOVEREL noticed that the two lead boats had not turned with the formation and realized they had not heard his command. When further efforts to communicate by radio failed, he instructed the monitor on which he was embarked to overtake the damaged craft and its tow. The intensity of enemy fire increased as the three boats passed deeper into Viet Cong territory, thus requiring Lieutenant SOVEREL to direct the monitor's gunners to engage several enemy positions simultaneously. After several minutes of pursuit, Lieutenant SOVEREL climbed on top a gun mount exposing himself fearlessly to continuing enemy fire to effect visual signals to turn the boats around. He maintained this position until finally gaining contact and reversing their course. On the return transit, he interposed his monitor between the two vulnerable craft and the enemy fire and covered their return. His outstanding professionalism, sense of responsibility and courage



under fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

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Additional Decorations



Bronze Star

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**Robert Atticks Black, Jr.**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as the Commanding Officer of Company B, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division, in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Viet Nam. On 6 July 1968, Company B was occupying a defensive position on Hill 881 South in Quang Tri Province when the Marines suddenly came under an intense North Vietnamese mortar attack. Disregarding his own safety, Captain BLACK fearlessly maneuvered about the fire-swept terrain while directing the recovery of friendly casualties. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, he ably supervised the movement of his company to Hill 689, unhesitatingly exposing himself to hostile fire while ensuring that his men were expeditiously embarked aboard the extraction helicopters. Arriving at the designated area, he skillfully established his company in a defensive perimeter and directed his men to positions from which they could effectively support elements of the battalion operating in the area. When the battalion was attacked on the night of 7 July by a numerically superior North Vietnamese Army force, he immediately deployed a reinforcing platoon, enabling the Marines to successfully repulse the enemy.



Despite a critical shortage of personnel and the imminent danger of hostile attack, Captain BLACK steadfastly refused to withdraw from his vital position. Subsequently, after numerous enemy probes, his company was assaulted by a numerically superior hostile force employing mortars and recoilless rifles. Ignoring the intense fire, he courageously moved about the hazardous area, encouraging his men and directing their fire upon the advancing hostile soldiers. Continuing his determined efforts, he skillfully adjusted extremely close artillery and 81mm mortar fire and aggressively controlled his company until the enemy was forced to flee in panic and confusion. His bold initiative and resolute determination were a source of great inspiration to his men and enabled his company to account for numerous enemy killed. By his courage, aggressive leadership and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger, Captain BLACK contributed significantly to the accomplishment of his unit's mission and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service."

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**CITATION:** award of the Republic of Vietnam  
Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star

"An excellent officer, rich in the experiences of the battlefield and in commanding, always protecting the freedom of the Republic of Viet Nam.

During the communist attack into Hue City on the Lunar New Year, Captain BLACK performed his demanding duties in an exemplary and highly professional manner. He did well to engage violently with the enemy, routing them out of the city. As a result of his diligence and seemingly unlimited resourcefulness, he gained the respect of all who observed him and through his outstanding leadership, professionalism and loyal devotion to duty, he contributed remarkable merit to the glorious



victory obtained."

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## Ronald Joel Calhoun

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as Patrol Officer of River Patrol Boats 71 and 76, in the Upper Dong Tranh River, Rung Sat Special Zone, Republic of Vietnam, on 22 September 1967.



Lieutenant CALHOUN was proceeding into a hostile area for the purpose of inserting a U. S. Navy SEAL Team in a night ambush position of the north bank of the Upper Dong Tranh River. Without warning, PBRs 71 and 76 were attacked by enemy automatic weapons, small arms and B-40 rockets. Lieutenant CALHOUN immediately responded to the surprise Viet Cong attack by closing the initial ambush position and directing a heavy volume of .50 caliber machine gun fire thereby protecting the withdrawal of the cover boat from the area. Lieutenant CALHOUN then radioed the Tactical Operations Center and requested the assistance of a Helo Fire Team. Although under fire from enemy positions on three sides, Lieutenant CALHOUN effectively directed his boats in suppressing the enemy fire and assisted the Helo Fire Team by directing them to the heaviest concentration of Viet Cong. After having cleared the area, Lieutenant CALHOUN was informed that one of the SEAL Team members had fallen overboard. He immediately returned deep into the kill zone and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, exposed himself to enemy fire and directed the recovery of the man in the water. Lieutenant CALHOUN's exemplary leadership, courage under fire and devotion to duty upheld the highest traditions of the United

States Naval Service."

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## George Candelori

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star  
The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Captain George Candelori (AFSN: FR-70821), United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a Helicopter Pilot near Duc Yap, Republic of Vietnam, on 12 February 1968. On that date, while flying a helicopter gunship, Captain Candelori aided in the rescue of a six-man long range reconnaissance team that was on the verge of being surrounded and overrun by a hostile force of company size. Captain Candelori made numerous low level firing passes at this hostile position to give the team protection and time to move to a suitable landing zone for rescue. Despite intense automatic weapons fire that damaged his aircraft and wounded one of his gunners, Captain Candelori continued to make low level firing passes to keep the unfriendly forces occupied while an unarmed helicopter made a successful rescue of the team. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Candelori has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-2518 (August 15, 1968)

Action Date: February 12, 1968

Service: Air Force

Rank: Captain

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Captain George Candelori (AFSN: FR-70821), United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a Helicopter Pilot near Duc Yap, Republic of Vietnam, on 12 February 1968.

On that date, while flying a helicopter gunship, Captain Candelori aided in the rescue of a six-man long range reconnaissance team that was on the verge of being surrounded and overrun by a hostile force of company size. Captain Candelori made numerous low level firing passes at this hostile position to give the team protection and time to move to a suitable landing zone for rescue. Despite intense automatic weapons fire that damaged his aircraft and wounded one of his gunners, Captain Candelori continued to make low level firing passes to keep the unfriendly forces occupied while an unarmed helicopter made a successful rescue of the team. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Candelori has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-2518  
(August 15, 1968)

Action Date: February 12, 1968

Service: Air Force

Rank: Captain

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**James Edward Gill**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star  
(Citation Needed)



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**Daniel Andrew Hitzelberger**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star  
Awarded for actions during the Vietnam War

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Captain Daniel Andrew Hitzelberger (MCSN: 0-87413), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as Commanding Officer of Company G, Second Battalion, Ninth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On 22 January 1969, Captain Hitzelberger's company was helicopter lifted to an area in Quang Tri



Province with a mission to reconnoiter enemy controlled territory as phase one of Operation DEWEY CANYON. The landing was completed, he rapidly organized his men and immediately commenced an assault along an eight kilometer ridgeline. Encountering numerous hostile reconnaissance patrols during the next several days, he effectively deployed his men and quickly overpowered these units, seizing numerous documents of significant intelligence value in addition to accounting for three North Vietnamese Army soldiers confirmed killed. Directed to occupy commanding terrain farther to the south in preparation for the arrival of additional units, he rapidly reorganized his company and, on the afternoon of 31 January 1969, commenced the most difficult phase of his mission. Quickly overrunning a hostile outpost line, he killed three enemy soldiers and maneuvered his men in the direction of the Da Krong River, crossing it that night and deploying uphill. Continuing the mission early the next morning, Captain Hitzelberger met and defeated sporadic North Vietnamese opposition and, despite heavy rains and thick fog, proceeded to ably lead his men up the increasingly steep mountain. Resolutely determined to attain his objective despite sheer rock cliffs which halted the company's progress, he dispatched patrols to locate alternate routes of advance. Slowly climbing up two thousand exhausting meters of muddy terrain in rapidly deteriorating weather which made re-supply completely impossible, his men met and successfully overcame isolated pockets of hostile resistance, unearthing additional valuable intelligence information. On the fourth morning of the mission, with visibility at twenty meters or less, the company encountered two additional North Vietnamese patrols and, in the ensuing fire fight, killed four enemy soldiers. After attaining the summit, repeated attempts to re-supply the company were thwarted by the adverse weather conditions, and Captain Hitzelberger was directed to return to the valley floor near the Da Krong River. Coming under a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire from a well-concealed hostile force, he found his ability to maneuver severely restricted by the terrain. Undaunted, he fearlessly led an aggressive assault on the hostile position which inflicted numerous casualties on the North Vietnamese unit. The remainder of the descending route was marked by almost impassable terrain which frequently necessitated utilizing ropes to transport

casualties down the cliffs. On the evening of 6 February, the company arrived at an area of improved visibility and was reinforced in addition to receiving their first supply of rations and ammunition. Two nights later, under the superb leadership of Captain Hitzelberger, the battle weary but still aggressive company arrived at its final destination. Captain Hitzelberger's foresight in ensuring that his men initially carried extra rations and ammunition, and that they were thoroughly trained in fire discipline, were significant factors in the accomplishment of his unit's mission. By his extraordinary courage, resolute leadership and unfaltering devotion to duty at great personal risk, Captain Hitzelberger upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service.

Action Date: January 22 - February 8, 1969

Service: Marine Corps

Rank: Captain

Company: Company G

Battalion: 2d Battalion

Regiment: 9th Marines

Division: 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF

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### **Anthony John Nargi**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Lieutenant Anthony John Nargi (NSN: 0-669356/1310), United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action as a Pilot of a jet aircraft while attached to Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN (VF-111), Detachment ELEVEN, embarked in U.S.S. INTREPID (CVS-11).

On 19 September 1968, Lieutenant Nargi briefed and led a section of fighters on a combat air patrol mission over North Vietnam. Lieutenant Nargi's section and a section of fighters from U.S.S. HANCOCK (CVA-19), were vectored to engage two sections



of MiGs. Lieutenant Nargi conducted a successful intercept, sighting a MiG just as it commenced an evasive vertical loop. Lieutenant Nargi skillfully led his section through offensive maneuvers which resulted in his section gaining a significant tactical advantage over the MiG. Aggressively pursuing the enemy through violent evasive maneuvers, Lieutenant Nargi improved his tactical advantage, and with calm deliberation, maneuvered into the optimum firing position. He then fired a missile scoring a direct hit that resulted in the destruction of the MiG and the subsequent ejection of the pilot. Lieutenant Nargi's extraordinary airmanship, exemplary courage and determination in aerial combat were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Action Date: September 19, 1968

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant

Company: Fighter Squadron 111 (VF-111)

Division: U.S.S. Intrepid (CVS-11)

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

Lieutenant Anthony John Nargi (NSN: 0-669356/1310), United States Navy, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight while attached to and serving with Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN (VF-111), Detachment ELEVEN, embarked in U.S.S. INTREPID (CVS-11), in Southeast Asia.

Action Date: Vietnam War

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant

Company: Fighter Squadron 111 (VF-111)

Division: U.S.S. Intrepid (CVS-11)



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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Anthony John Nargi (NSN: 0-669356/1310), United States Navy, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight while attached to and serving with Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN (VF-111), Detachment ELEVEN, embarked in U.S.S.

INTREPID (CVS-11). On 1 August 1968, Lieutenant Nargi as flight leader of a two-plane section was vectored off MIGCAP station against a reported eight bandits. While completing his own intercept, Lieutenant Nargi alertly aided another section of fighters to the intercept by relaying all vectors from the controlling agency. Upon engaging a MiG, Lieutenant Nargi skillfully maneuvered his section to provide cover for the other section already engaged. During the course of the battle Lieutenant Nargi courageously closed to quarters with the enemy aircraft damaging it with his 20-mm. cannon. His timely transmissions coupled with his determined pursuit of an enemy aircraft contributed to its final destruction. Lieutenant Nargi's outstanding airmanship, courage and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Action Date: August 1, 1968

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant



Company: Fighter Squadron 111 (VF-111)  
Division: U.S.S. Intrepid (CVS-11)

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### Coral Vance Schufeldt

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as an attack pilot, serving with Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE, embarked in USS ORISKANY (CVA 34), on 25 October 1967.



Lieutenant SCHUFELDT was a member of a 23-plane Air Wing strike, the third in a series of coordinated, tri-service strikes on the Phuc Yen Airfield located 11 miles north of Hanoi, North Vietnam. He was a wingman in a three-plane element tasked with delivering air-to-ground missiles against the hanger and control tower of this strategically significant target complex. As the strike group approached the target, the element, of which Lieutenant SCHUFELDT was a member, detached and proceeded ahead of the main strike group. These aircraft were immediately taken under attack by four surface-to-air missiles and were forced to take violent evasive action. Lieutenant SCHUFELDT detached, as planned, and was immediately hit by an 85mm flak burst. He rapidly assessed the damage to his aircraft then proceeded to his prebriefed launch position while maneuvering continuously to avoid the increasingly intense anti-aircraft artillery barrage. He circled north of the airfield and delivered his air-to-surface weapon against the control tower, his designated target, scoring a direct hit. Lieutenant SCHUFELDT then positioned himself over the field a second time

and attacked the buildings adjacent to the tower, again inflicting heavy damage and rendering the nerve center of the airfield useless. He then recorded the damage inflicted by making several exposures with a hand-held camera. As he egressed from the target area, Lieutenant SCHUFELDT's outstanding aggressiveness and determination in the face of multiple surface-to-air missile firings, damage to his aircraft, and heavy, sustained anti-aircraft artillery barrages were extremely exemplary. His actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant, Junior Grade Coral Vance Schufeldt (NSN: 0-669508/1310), United States Navy, for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a jet aircraft attached to Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE, embarked in U.S.S. ORISKANY (CVA-34), during a strike against the Sac Le Petroleum, Oil and Lubricant Storage Area in North Vietnam on 29 September 1966.

. Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Schufeldt was a wingman in the two aircraft flak suppression element of a 13 aircraft strike group assigned to this target. Because of the extremely poor weather conditions en route to and at the target, the strike group was forced to attack in two waves. He proceeded to the target with the first wave and single-handedly attacked and silenced two separate flak sites. Compelled by the obvious threat to the second wave and without personal regard for his own safety, he remained in the target area to support the second wave. Upon their arrival, he tenaciously brought a threatening



flak site under attack and was successful in its destruction. Upon retirement from the target area at low altitude he observed and subsequently attacked an automatic weapons site with his one remaining bomb. Again he succeeded in damaging this new threat. Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Schufeldt single-handedly silenced three enemy flak sites and severely damaged an automatic weapons site by his judicious use of six VT fuzed bombs, thereby making a significant contribution to the success of the strike without damage to the strike group. His tenacious and heroic actions, professionalism and extraordinary accuracy in the delivery of his weapons were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Action Date: September 29, 1966 Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant Junior Grade

Company: Attack Squadron 163 (VA-163)

Division: U.S.S. Oriskany (CVA-34)

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Coral Vance Schufeldt (NSN: 0-669508/1310), United States Navy, for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a jet aircraft attached to Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE, embarked in U.S.S. ORISKANY (CVA-34), in Southeast Asia on 21 August 1967.

. Lieutenant Schufeldt was one of six strike aircraft during a 20 plane attack on the largest thermal power plant in North Vietnam which is located one mile from the center of Hanoi. Because of the target's location and strategic significance, Lieutenant Schufeldt spent many hours assessing the development of a strike



plan to ensure success, in spite of the enemy's in depth air defenses. Prior to reaching the target, Lieutenant Schufeldt detached in order to carry out his individual attack. He proceeded 35 miles through a gauntlet of intense anti-aircraft fire of all calibers and repeated attacks by many of the 38 deadly surface-to-air missiles which were launched against the strike force. With utter disregard for his personal safety, he pressed home his final diving attack in the face of a fusillade of barrage and tracking anti-aircraft artillery fire. His bomb impacted precisely at the pre-planned aim point. As Lieutenant Schufeldt pulled off target, he immediately rendezvoused with another strike aircraft which had been hit in order to give assistance. Satisfied that the damaged aircraft would be escorted, he rendezvoused with his wingman whose aircraft had also been damaged. Lieutenant Schufeldt escorted the badly damaged aircraft to the ship and even though he had an extremely low fuel state, would not land until assured that the damaged aircraft would recover safely. Lieutenant Schufeldt's superior airmanship and bravery in the face of massed enemy resistance contributed significantly to the heavy damage inflicted on a critical target and the safe return of all strike aircraft, and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. Action Date: August 21, 1967  
Service: Navy  
Rank: Lieutenant  
Company: Attack Squadron 163 (VA-163)  
Division: U.S.S. Oriskany (CVA-34)

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**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Second Gold Star in lieu of a Third Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Commander Coral Vance Schufeldt (NSN: 0-669508/1310), United States Navy, for heroism while participating in aerial flight as a pilot of jet aircraft while attached

to Attack Squadron TWO HUNDRED TWELVE (VA-212), embarked in U.S.S. HANCOCK (CVA-19), on 26 May 1972.

. Lieutenant Commander Schufeldt was a division leader in a major air wing strike against the Vong Bi highway bridges, strategic elements in the enemy's logistic network spanning North Vietnam. On numerous occasions, Lieutenant Commander Schufeldt was forced to maneuver his division to evade volleys of lethal surface-to-air missiles and a relentless hail of anti-aircraft artillery fire. Despite these adversities, he maintained division integrity and placed his division in optimum position to place the ordnance on target. His aerial aggressiveness and leadership proved to be enhancing factors in the outstanding level of success achieved by the main strike force. Lieutenant Commander Schufeldt's superior airmanship and courage in the face of the enemy reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.



Action Date: May 26, 1972

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant Commander

Company: Attack Squadron 212 (VA-212)

Division: U.S.S. Hancock (CVA-19)

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**Joel Marvin Warshaw**  
**Captain, USMC**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Marine All Weather Attack Squadron 242, in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on 31 October 1967.

Captain Warsaw launched as Flight Leader of two A-6 attack aircraft assigned a night interdiction mission against a vital highway and railroad bridge in the midst of a heavily defended area in North Vietnam. Despite the lack of radar significant checkpoints, he effectively utilized his aircraft's complex navigational system to fly by instruments through the darkness to arrive at the initial point of approach to the target area. Aware that his aircraft had come under hostile radar surveillance, he skillfully flew his aircraft in a high speed low altitude approach, often descending to seventy-five feet, in order to break the North Vietnamese radar lock on his plane and to avoid the anti-aircraft fire as he approached the target. Undaunted by the enemy's surface-to-air missile defense, radar-controlled anti-aircraft weapons, large barrage balloons trailing cables to the ground throughout the target area and the threat of hostile aircraft, Captain Warsaw courageously maintained his low level approach to the target. Less than a minute from the target release point, he observed a surface-to-air missile launched against his aircraft. Instantly, he maneuvered his aircraft in evasive action that succeeded in eluding the missile. At tree top level, he rapidly made precise heading corrections and climbed to 500 feet to deliver his ordnance with pinpoint accuracy on the target. Returning to a low level flight pattern, often at only fifty feet altitude he maneuvered his aircraft through extremely intense fire as he departed the area. By his bold initiative, dauntless courage and superb airmanship, Captain Warsaw was instrumental in the destruction of a vital target, reflecting great credit upon himself and the Marine Corps and upholding the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.



**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight while serving as a Pilot with Marine All Weather Attack Squadron 242, Marine Aircraft Group Eleven, First Marine Aircraft Wing in connection with operations against the enemy.

On the night of 12 April 1967, Captain WARSHAW launched as Pilot of an A-6A Intruder aircraft, armed with sixteen 500 pound bombs and four Zuni rocket pods, on a mission over North Vietnam. Despite the fact that the enemy targets were heavily defended and that turbulent weather conditions over the target area required navigation by instruments, Captain WARSHAW displayed exceptional professionalism and determination in locating and attacking the enemy. As a result of his superior airmanship and courage, he delivered his ordnance against five moving targets. After expending all of his ordnance, Captain WARSHAW continued to reconnoiter the target area to ensure the successful completion of his mission. Captain WARSHAW's exceptional aeronautical ability, daring initiative and selfless devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service.



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**James Hutchings Cunningham**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star  
*[research requested: the Class would appreciate*



*any information that can be provided on James Cunningham, a non-graduating classmate awarded the Silver Star]*

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**Frederick Eugene Trani, Jr  
Lieutenant, USN**

**CITATION:** award of the Silver Star

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against Communist insurgent forces on the hostile island of Cu Lao Dung, Ba Xuyen Province, Republic of Vietnam, on 26 July 1967. While leading a small combat patrol, Lieutenant TRANI, serving with SEAL Team Detachment ALFA, encountered and subsequently was surrounded by a numerically superior enemy force. Unable to maneuver out of the enemy encirclement, Lieutenant TRANI attempted to contact supporting helicopters by radio, but before he could effectively communicate his unit's position, he experienced radio failure. Undaunted by lack of communications with supporting arms, he maneuvered his small unit into a tight defensive position. Though pinned down by constant enemy automatic weapons and rifle fire in a position that afforded only minimal protection for himself and his squad, and despite growing uncertainty of the arrival of assistance, Lieutenant TRANI courageously moved among his men and succeeded in keeping morale high. Faced with a limited supply of ammunition and the imminent threat of a coordinated enemy attack that might easily overrun his small unit, he methodically employed every conceivable means to attract the attention of armed helicopters which he could hear operating in the distance. Four unnerving hours passed before the armed helicopters arrived to assist his beleaguered unit. Able to employ only primitive methods, he succeeded in marking his position for the helicopters and directed



their fire onto part of the Viet Cong forces surrounding him. He directed another helicopter to a safe location to land for extraction of his unit. He then organized his men and maneuvered them under continuing enemy fire to the extraction craft without casualties or loss of a prisoner who later yielded valuable intelligence information. Through his exemplary and professional leadership, unwavering courage under fire and inspiring conduct throughout a desparate situation, Lieutenant TRANI upheld the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service.

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**CITATION:** award of the Legion of Merit (with Combat Distinguishing Device)

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" (Posthumously) to Lieutenant Frederick Eugene Trani, Jr. (NSN: 0-669618), United States Navy, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States while serving in the Republic of Vietnam from 15 May to 26 September 1968. As the Senior Advisor to the Vietnamese Navy

SEALS, Lieutenant Trani provided advice and assistance to the SEALS in all matters pertaining to their training, utilization and administration. He participated in numerous combat operations and was often subjected to direct enemy fire. Through Lieutenant Trani's keen insight and outstanding professionalism, the Vietnamese Navy SEALS were reorganized, equipped and trained to conduct unconventional warfare type missions throughout the Republic of Vietnam. Their motivation and performance during many difficult and dangerous assignments is directly attributable to Lieutenant Trani's efforts. His devotion to duty, courage under fire and sense of responsibility were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United



States Naval Service. (Lieutenant Trani is authorized the Combat "V".)

Action Date: May 15 - September 26, 1968

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant

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Additional Decorations

Bronze Star



Purple Heart



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**James Kelly Patterson**  
Lieutenant Commander, USN

**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight on 10 April 1967 as a naval flight officer serving with Attack Squadron THIRTY-FIVE, embarked in USS ENTERPRISE (CVAN-65), during aerial combat operations in Southeast Asia, Lieutenant Commander (then Lieutenant) Patterson flew as leading bombardier/navigator on a pre-dawn air strike against a vital and heavily defended steel mill in the heart of North

Vietnam. By navigating his aircraft at dangerously low altitude in instrument flight conditions, over mountainous terrain, he successfully evaded enemy defenses until within six miles of the target.

Disregarding four surface-to-air missiles fired at his aircraft and numerous anti-aircraft-artillery shells bursting around and ahead of him, he maintained steady radar tracking of the target until bomb release, ensuring an optimum bombing solution. Because of his



superb navigational and radar-bombing skill, his bombs found their mark and inflicted heavy damage upon the target. Lieutenant Commander Patterson's performance contributed materially to the disruption of enemy war materials production and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

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**Carl Louis Doughtie  
Lieutenant (jg), USN**

**CITATION:** award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

Awarded posthumously for actions during the Vietnam War

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumously) to Lieutenant, Junior Grade Carl Louis Doughtie, United States Navy, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as Pilot of an aircraft in Attack Squadron TWENTY-FIVE (VA-25), aboard U.S.S. MIDWAY (CVA-41), during operations against enemy aggressor forces in North Vietnam on 10 June 1965. Participating in a mission against the Than Hoi power plant, Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Doughtie pressed home damaging attacks in the face of heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire, which ultimately cost him his life. His airmanship, courage and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

General Orders: All Hands (August 1966)

Action Date: June 10, 1965

Service: Navy

Rank: Lieutenant Junior Grade

Company: Attack Squadron 25 (VA-25)



Division: U.S.S. Midway (CVA-41)

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Additional Decorations

Air Medal



Purple Heart



# Stories From the Naval Academy

## The West Point Tests by Dirck Praeger

### A Journey to Fort Leavenworth

My quest for an appointment to one of our nation's military academies started

during my last two years of high school and, being unsuccessful after graduation,

continued during my two years at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. I

had received alternate appointments to West Point and Annapolis, but was so far

down the list of applicants that my chances for getting an appointment were slim.

But being an alternate qualified me to receive physical examinations and to be

tested academically, so during my time at K-State I travelled to Naval Air Station,

Olathe, Kansas for Naval Academy testing, to Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha,

Nebraska for the Air Force Academy, and to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for the

U.S. Military Academy. Schedules for these examinations were published and

candidates were on their own to show up at the various bases for the tests.

The trips to Offutt and Olathe were routine as groups of candidates were tested,

usually in one day, and sent home. I passed all the Air Force Academy tests, but

was surprised to learn that I had failed the Navy physical because of needed dental

work. All I needed for passage was to get the work done and send

documentation  
to Olathe to become qualified, which I quickly did.  
The sojourn to Fort Leavenworth was more interesting. It preceded  
the Olathe and  
Offutt trips and required us to be there for two days. It occurred  
sometime after  
New Years 1958, because I remember that it was winter, and I was a  
freshman at  
K-State. I took a bus from Manhattan to Leavenworth for the 100 mile  
trip. I had  
been at K-State long enough to adjust to the requirements of college  
student life  
having had a hard time with academics initially. I didn't know how to  
study or  
manage my time because high school had been a breeze for me. I  
seldom had  
homework being able to complete most assignments during class or  
study hall. My  
introduction to the college level engineering curriculum was a  
profound shock. It  
took me a month or two to learn the ropes of studying and managing  
my time, but I  
finally got the hang of it and started doing well in my classes. In  
retrospect I'm  
glad I had some college before entering the Naval Academy because  
I would have  
had a terrible time there surviving Plebe Year as well as  
simultaneously taking  
college courses.  
So I had learned how to handle college academics, but in my mind I  
was still a  
shit-kicking farm boy from Claflin, Kansas, which was little more than  
a wide  
place in the road. This thought preyed on me as the bus travelled  
east toward Fort  
Leavenworth. How was I going to compete with all these hot shots  
from Kansas  
City and Wichita that had their principal appointments to West Point

and knew that they were going the next summer? I envisioned them all sitting around the barracks at the fort studying highly technical text books and working with slide rules (this was before the advent of the electronic calculator). The closer we got to Fort Leavenworth, the more inferior I felt. By the time we arrived at the barracks where we were to live for the next two days I was almost ready to slink back to Manhattan. I walked into the squad bay and there they were, but they weren't studying. Most of them were sitting around playing cards and smoking cigars. I thought to myself..."Maybe this won't be so hard after all." It didn't take me long to fit in with the crowd, and we had a good time going through the physical exams and academic testing over the next two days. By the time we left at the end of the second day, I had made some good friends. The next step was to wait and hope I lucked out with an appointment. You know the story about how I learned of my appointment to the Naval Academy during the early summer of 1959 just a few weeks before the entrance date. I had made three attempts for an appointment and finally my patience paid off. But in spite of the fact that I had two years of college behind me when I entered Navy, I was still a shit-kicking farm boy. I suppose I still am after all these years. In fact I was the only farm kid in my USNA company, and I suspect that I was in a small minority for the entire Class of '63. A number of classmates visited the farm I

grew up on  
during leaves and after graduation, but I was the only true shit-kicker.  
To add a little perspective, when I was a defense contractor after  
retirement from  
the Marines, I worked with an Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Kent  
Guffy, who  
graduated from West Point in the late 1980s-early 1990s. He came  
from the small  
town of Byron, Oklahoma which is just a few miles from the central  
Kansas  
border. He had grown up on a farm and we shared stories of our  
childhood  
experiences. He told me that after almost 20 years in the Army and 4  
years at West  
Point that I was the only one who really understood what he was  
talking about  
when he related stories of farm life. As I thought about that, it  
occurred to me that  
this was true for me as well. In effect it took a complete military  
career, and then a  
second life as a defense contractor before I was able to find a real  
shit-kicker who  
knew what I was talking about when the subject of farming came up.  
Pretty  
amazing when you think about it.  
So that is the story of part of my convoluted path from the farm to the  
U.S. Naval  
Academy. Good memories of times past.

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Steve Coester added this:  
I could almost have taken your story and just changed your name to  
mine  
other than I was a poor city kid not a farm boy. I also had two  
Missouri  
second alternate appointments behind Ron Schowalter and Mike  
Bracy and  
only found out I was admitted a week or two before induction. I had  
my

USAF Academy physical at Scott AFB in Illinois and it was a fun two days of physical aptitude and medical testing. I flunked the eye test and the EKG. While there I was wandering around and went in a hanger where I was promptly "Arrested". It was the home of the top secret U-2 spy plane. They gently shooed me on my way told to forget anything I had seen. My USNA medical was also at Olathe and I also flunked teeth and had to get a bad mouth repaired. Plebe year they pulled out all that work and redid everything. Navy didn't take an EKG and after the four grueling years at the Academy with no trouble it was the problem Air force had found that almost killed me and got me kicked out of the navy. I lived outside of St. Louis and had to get to Olathe outside Kansas city in January. My parents just said If I wanted it I'd get there. So I took the train from St. Louis to KC and got out on the road to Olathe and stuck out my thumb. some farmer stopped and had me jump in the bed of his pickup. I about froze to death by the time he dropped me off at Olathe. I have no remembrance of how I got back home after the physical. My only entrance exam was the SAT for Air force and Navy. for the Coast Guard Academy I took a 16 hour killer of a test in St. Louis. Afterwards I couldn't remember where my car was or how to get home. It was a killer but I did well and had an appointment to CGA.

## My Unlikely Journey to a Varsity Letter by Stephen Coester

I began playing tennis when I was thirteen and got good enough to make my high school team. Kirkwood (MO) High was a tennis powerhouse and during my junior and senior years we compiled thirty-five wins and just one loss. I wasn't a star player just holding down the number three or four spot.

Still I figured I was good enough to play at USNA. But during plebe summer I signed up for boxing instead of tennis because I liked all those sit ups while pounding on my stomach. I figured I could go out for tennis in the Spring. I soon found out that boxing wasn't for me because my hand speed was nonexistent and I tended to get hit a lot. So after a few weeks and a broken nose I quit boxing and headed out to

the tennis courts. The plebe coach told me to go away because they had already chosen the plebe team. This was still during plebe summer for gosh sake. I finally convinced the coach to let me try out with the condition that I had to start at the bottom challenging each person above me. Eventually I made it up to the number five position which meant I made the starting team of six singles lines plus three doubles lines. I earned my plebe letter.

Youngster year I went out for varsity not expecting to make the team even though I had matured and improved a lot plebe year. One day we

showed up for practice and Coach Bos said "#1 play #13 and loser turn in your gear. He went through all the other combinations with me at #10 having to play the #3 firstie, a tall studly looking mid with a big game. To everyone's surprise I defeated him in three sets and certainly to his surprise he was cut from the team.

During the spring season I wasn't on the first string and never played a match.

Second class year I was looking forward to a great year. I was playing #5 singles and played about the first eight matches of the

season. Suddenly I had a freak accident to my right wrist and had to try to play heavily bandaged. Didn't play any more matches and failed to letter by a match or two.

First class year Coach Potter who was brand new called me into his office and said he didn't want any non-lettered firsties on the team. I explained about the injury that kept me from lettering and finally he agreed that like plebe year I could start on the bottom and challenge my way up. If I made the starting team he'd keep me. This was during the Fall season.

At that time Lee Pekary and Corky Graham ('64) who were #1 and #2 were starring on the squash team so as I challenged my way up the ladder I finally reached #1. They had a set of blue and gold name boards by the varsity courts and it felt good to see my name at the top

even though I knew Pekary and Graham would have been there. Impressed my OAO, future wife Yvonne.

During the Spring season Coach Potter played me at number five or six singles and number three doubles with our #1 player, Lee Pekary. With Lee to carry me I don't think we ever lost at doubles. I won about two-thirds of my singles matches. In 1963 we lost to Army 5-4 after our number three player sprained his ankle and had to retire. I managed to win both my singles and doubles. so at least I had done my part.

Overall in my non-glorious career at Navy I had 29 wins and twelve losses. And significant to me I finally earned my varsity N.

I guess all this shows that determination counts for a lot. I'm a mediocre athlete but it meant more to me to prove myself athletically than to earn academic honors, which came more easily to me.

Tennis came in handy while on cruise. During aviation summer I was invited to play tennis with the admiral at Pensacola and first class year

Lanny Cox and I played with the admiral on the USS Randolph against

the mayor of Valencia, Spain. Nothing like patting the admiral on the butt with your racket and saying, "Nice shot, sir. The Admiral was thrilled that we won the match and invited Lanny and me to a party for the mayor. We considered that an order and showed up in our dress

uniforms. The Flag Lt took one look at these two mids and told us to go away. I suggested he talk to the admiral and he disappeared.

Shortly

thereafter who arrives at the door with drink in hand but the Admiral.

He

put his arm around my shoulder and introduced me to all the bigwigs

as

his tennis partner!

By the way, I'm still playing at age seventy-three. I have two leagues and play four or five times a week. Because of my severe arthritis I quit at age thirty-five for twenty-eight years, but picked up the game again at age sixty-two when my grandson started playing. Thank goodness for lightweight modern rackets.

## Herndon Monument Climb by James Cheevers



The Herndon Monument Climb  
*USNA Class of 1963*

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*By James Cheevers, Senior Curator, USNA Museum--January 17, 2008*

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What has love got to do with it? The Plebe Recognition Ceremony or Herndon Monument Climb at the U.S. Naval Academy had its origins in the fact that plebes or freshmen were not permitted to date or fraternize with women.

Among the locations inside the academy grounds where midshipmen could meet women on a Sunday afternoon was a walkway in the central part of the yard which became known as "Love Lane," later also called "Lover's Lane." The walk was most likely established in new landscaping created after the return of the Naval Academy to Annapolis from its Civil War sojourn in Newport, Rhode Island. The lane was provisioned with benches and led past the Herndon Monument, which had been erected in June 1860, and later the bandstand. Midshipmen were prohibited from walking on "Love Lane" during their plebe year.

Following the graduation of the last section of the class of 1907 in the new armory, later Dahlgren Hall, on June 6, 1907, the plebes, class of 1910, after sitting "through the graduation with ennui ... finally swooped out to swarm around the Herndon Monument, cheering everyone and everything" on what they called "the day we rated youngsters." They had become third classmen or sophomores, also known as youngsters, and they were now permitted to walk on "Love Lane." The "swoop out" became an annual ritual snake dance called "tain't no mo' plebes." In their Lucky Bag yearbook the class of 1911 history states: "Impatiently we waited for the word 'dismissed,' and then what a race for the heretofore forbidden precincts of the Lane! How we sang and capered round the monument! The memory of that bright day is still with us, and perhaps none but our own graduation day can eclipse it."

The ritual snake dance with the wearing of uniform jackets and hats reversed can be traced through pictures, captions, and class histories in the Lucky Bag yearbooks from 1907 onward, learning the nuances in uniform changes, the number of participants, and the eventual increased attention given to the Herndon Monument itself. Finally in 1940, the plebes of the class of 1943 actually began climbing up the monument. The original objective was to have a member of the class

perch himself on the very top of the obelisk. It appears in pictorial evidence that the tradition of placing an officer's white hat on the top to show that they had conquered plebe year became the practice beginning in 1947. The further refinement of replacing a plebe "dixie cup" hat placed on top beforehand by the upper classmen with a naval officer's white cover does not come along until 1962.

The first evidence that the shaft of the gray, granite, obelisk-shaped monument was greased to make the climb more difficult appears in the Lucky Bag yearbook of the class of 1952. Their climb took place following the graduation ceremony held on June 3, 1949. Grease was not used again until 1953, when a fairly heavy coat was applied. The gooey residue eventually led to a change in the participants' uniform for the occasion with dress whites replaced by work whites and then yielding to shorts and tee-shirts in more recent times. In 1962, the class of 1965 as plebes dealt with a heavy coat of cosmoline grease by throwing a cargo net over the top to achieve their goal of the hat exchange. In 1969 and 1970 record climbs were set in time because the monument was either lightly greased or not greased at all.

Although it was thought for years that the first recorded time for the Herndon Monument climb had been kept in 1962, it has been discovered that the Navy Times newspaper published in June 1960 the time for Midshipman John M. Truesdell's, NA '63, conquest at 12 minutes. The fastest times have been one minute, thirty seconds in 1969 by the class of 1972, and one minute, fifty seconds in 1973 by the class of 1976. The longest time was recorded in 1995, when the upper classmen played dirty pool and fastened the plebe "dixie cup" hat to the top with the strongest glues and tapes they could find. It took the class of 1998, four hours, five minutes, and seventeen seconds to accomplish their goal.

At some point in the annual tradition, and probably after greasing added to the difficulty of the challenge, it began being said that the midshipman who got the hat on top would become the first admiral in his class. None have achieved flag rank as of yet. But, in 1973, the Superintendent of the Naval Academy, who usually observes the ritual from the steps of the chapel, decided to provide a gesture towards this lore. On June 1, 1973, Vice Admiral William P. Mack

presented for the first time, and it is now part of the tradition, a set of admiral's shoulder boards to then Midshipman 3/C Lawrence J. O'Donnell. Upon graduation Mr. O'Donnell selected the Marine Corps negating his chances of ever becoming an admiral.

From the completion of Dahlgren Hall in 1903 until 1957, graduation ceremonies were held in the armory except for a few held outdoors at the seaward end of the hall in Thompson Stadium. It was therefore a short distance to Love Lane and the Herndon Monument and the ritual of "tain't no more plebes" remained the last event of June Week. From 1957 to 1965 graduation exercises were held in the new field house, later Halsey Field House. The Herndon Monument climb continued to follow graduation. But, in 1966, when graduation was moved to the distant new Navy-Marine Corps Stadium, the Plebe Recognition Ceremony was made among the first events of June Week. It was held at 4 p.m. on the Friday afternoon preceding graduation the following Wednesday morning. Instead of the armory or field house and a snake dance, the plebes assembled in Tecumseh Court and at the roar of a cannon signal ran en masse to the Herndon Monument. In more recent years the cannon continued to fire every ten minutes to track the time it takes for the climb.

After 1979, June Week, no longer falling in June, became known as Commissioning Week. Beginning in 1986, the Herndon climb was moved to 2 p.m., and it was later on the Monday afternoon preceding Friday morning graduation exercises. In 2004, the monument climb was moved to 9 a.m. on Thursday preceding Commissioning Week. The reason for this dramatic change in the schedule was to free up hotel space in Annapolis for first class families during Commissioning Week itself.

The Plebe Recognition Ceremony, begun because plebes were denied Love Lane and originally called "tain't no mo' plebes," is a tradition which is practiced only at the U.S. Naval Academy. It has no equivalency at the other service academies. It draws thousands of spectators each year. It will no doubt continue to evolve in the years ahead as rituals do and continue to cap the arduous plebe year for as long as the Herndon Monument can bear it.

## Authenticity of Cannonball Recipe by Bill Kennedy

I can attest to the authenticity of the cannonball recipe. I served them to the crews of both USS Lester (DE-1022) and USS John Marshall (SSBN-611). The latter was celebration of mid-patrol of the last run before returning to the ZI for refueling and overhaul.

What was notable to me, but probably inappropriate for the cannonball citation was that I was able to obtain the CO's permission to use medical brandy to make the hard sauce. We had phoney brandy and rum flavorings we used for mincemeat pies and fruitcakes, but for hard sauce they ain't makin' it. Before I taught the baker how to make them, I had been ashore and made some hard sauce with brandy from the USAF Class VI store. We made cannonballs for a wardroom dessert and I presented the captain with two containers of hard sauce; the one I had made with brandy and the other made with galley flavoring. When the wreckage was cleared away there was none of my hard sauce left, the other barely touched and the captain instructed the doctor to prescribe brandy when ever I was going to make hard sauce.

Thus the site has annotated the cannonball recipe with a citation or certificate of authenticity noting that they had been served in John Marshall on the 38th submerged day of the last patrol before overhaul inside the Arctic Circle at 105 feet and five knots (standard patrol depth and speed for

a

prompt stop, hover, and launch). Bottom line: sailors like cannonballs too.

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## Submarine Supply Officer vs XO by Bill Kennedy

I need to sketch in some background briefly so this will make sense. Jim Forsythe grew up in the school of hard knocks. He is one of the finest naval officers it has been my privilege to serve. He took command of Polk gold after his tour in *John Marshall*. He played bridge like an assassin (self taught) read voraciously, and was bald as a cue ball, some by God, the rest by razor. He had four words for his department heads "Fix it" and "Well done". Now you know the man, now the story will work.

XO was sitting at the table in his stateroom, I was standing in the doorway trying to persuade him that Ship's Office should prepare a report that would be prepared by the Supply Office on a ship with a supply officer. At that time submarines were classified as without a supply officer, fewer than twenty had one. I maneuvered, bobbed, and weaved and made four or five points that got the "Fix it" response. I got deeper into the technicalities of why I thought his yeomen should do it rather than my storekeepers, each attempt greeted by "Fix it". I was getting desperate, it appeared that he was going to insist that I do something I certainly knew how to do. I finally

blurted

that since the CO was technically the "accountable officer" for the general

mess (he was, normally the porkchop is), this was a Ship's Office job. He

dropped his head so that he was looking up at me through his bushy eyebrows and

held up his left collar point with his finger pointing to the gold oak leaf.

"Bill, does this look like a **CROSS** to you? **FIX IT!**"

Lesson learned, report prepared and submitted, but I'll never forget it. I hope my description of the man and recitation of the facts gave you a grin. I've never tried repeating the tale other than orally, I hope it worked for you in phosphor. He had a distinguished career and retired from his last job as COMSUBRON Two in New London.

## Most Exciting Six Minutes by JJ Calande



As a VP Pilot I was assigned as a rag instructor from 1968-70. I was chosen as one of the seven pilots to go to Lockheed to get their training and delivery of the P3C when it was ready for the navy. We then returned to train the other instructors to get ready for fleet RAG training. These are the most exciting six minutes of my twenty year career. The C.O. called me in and asked me to get something ready to introduce the Navy's newest aircraft (P3C Orion) to the public at the proper time. I inquired as to what he wanted and he said it was up to me and my imagination because there was a fund raiser by a local navy league with the Blue Angels as the main event. I was on the same agenda but was to follow in my new P3C. My only limitations were NATOPS and the six minutes I was assigned by the tower (NAS Patuxent River) and the FAA personnel. So I ended up doing the following little airshow to introduce the new P3 to the 250,000 spectators who had just seen the Blues perform. I began 25 miles out to sea where I could build up to max speed at low altitude

and appear over the tree tops at 405 kts IAS down the center of the runway as a beginning. I also had my total of 53 photoflash cartridges loaded in the fuselage so that when I hit the jettison switch they would all fire off at once with a loud bang and a flash that looked like a lightning bolt attached to my tail. I pulled the nose up nearly vertical to decrease the speed and do a port wingover up to 3000 feet! after the 180 degree turn, I did a short field landing of 800 feet at slower speed. Then I used reverse props to back up to my short field takeoff position at light weight and max power, I took off in a short distance trying to impress my audience with my new aircraft abilities. After I landed at the end of my six minutes, I asked my wife what she thought and she really liked my show but when I asked her what she thought impressed the big audience the most she sighed and said it was my backing up to take off because they had never seen an aircraft go in reverse. OH WELL IT WAS MY MOST EXCITING SIX MINUTES AND I WAS HONORED TO BE ON THE SAME ADJENDA AFTER THE BLUE ANGELS.

J.J. Calande

## The Sinking of the USS Buttercup by Stephen Coester

Wasn't Second Class Summer just the best time of your life? First we had memorable weeks at Pensacola and Jacksonville flying everything from T-34, T-28, T2J and P2V to old R4D (DC3) and the Grumman goose amphibian. Ejection seat trainer, Dilbert Dunker. All great fun.

Then over to little Creek for TRAMID and playing Frogman and Marine for a week or so. Jogging down the beach with a eight man raft, parachuting off the thirty foot tower, the obstacle course and an amphibious landing. While most of you spent a miserable night on a troop ship at sea I was selected for the helicopter assault team so we spent that evening in the O-Club with the beautiful local girls, and then the next morning we woke late, loaded up took a little sightseeing flight and hit the beach.

But this tale concerns our stop in Philadelphia for damage control training. Remember fighting fires in that cramped compartment and wandering through a smoke filled building in Scott Air Packs? Once again great adventures for young men.

But the highlight was the USS Buttercup. This was an actual section from a heavy cruiser that was hinged to the seawall and could be sunk by opening lots of holes in the hull. The plan was for us to use timbers, mattresses and portable pumps to stop the leaks and keep the ship afloat. Hazardous work in flooded compartments.

Well some genius in my section decided it would really put one over on the establishment to see if we could sink the good old Buttercup faster than it would on its own. This would have to be done in a sneaky manner so the instructors wouldn't have a clue.

The morning of the exercise arrived and we worked hard shoring up timbers and shoving mattresses in holes except we forgot to cover the biggest holes. Also we took the pumps and reversed the flow so we were pumping water into the sinking ship instead out. By Jove I think we succeeded and sank the ship in record time. We were so proud.

At the end of the exercise we were called to formation and told that we were in 'BIG TROUBLE". Liberty was canceled and we were all to report to the smoke building at 1900. Well we thought it could have been worse. We marched to the smoke building expecting to don Scott Air Packs but were told that this time we'd do the walk though without them. Some grizzled old Chief with a cigar in his mouth slowly led us through while explaining the seriousness of our crimes. After we were all hacking, coughing and vomiting he finally released us to a night of restriction to quarters and warnings of what was to come. For unknown reasons that was the end of it and no further action was taken against us.

Actually it was a pretty light punishment from a humorless Navy.

## Class of '63 - The Beginning-by Stephen Coester

Well, it's the Fortieth Anniversary of our entry to the World Famous USNA Class of 1963. We should all remember July 7, 1959 as being one of the most significant in our lives because it marked the start of our change from boys to men and gave us opportunities that have marked our lives forever. As I got to thinking about that day, I thought it would be fun to share what I remember of my feelings of that first day. And I'd love to hear your remembrances.

Forty years ago this week! I left my summer job as a lifeguard at Treecourt Pool. This was a milestone in my young life. I had worked for four years at the pool doing everything from basket boy, to short order cook, to grass cutter, and finally, the world's best job, lifeguard. That filled the period between childhood and young man. I had been notified only a month previously that I had been accepted at the Naval Academy under Public Law 186 for qualified alternates. I had given up on making it because I was only second alternate, behind **Ron Schowalter** and **Mike Bracy**, both of whom graduated in the Class of 63 with some measure of distinction. When I received that telegram from

Western Union, it was definitely the most outstanding moment of my life to that time. I had planned my life since the sixth grade with the intention of attending USNA after reading an article about it in the World Book Encyclopedia and now I'd have my chance. I hadn't made any alternate plans for college, so who knows what would have happened to me if that telegram hadn't arrived.

On July 6, 1959, just one week before my eighteenth birthday, I kissed my mom goodby and solemnly shook my dad's hand and went to board the TWA Lockheed Constellation at St. Louis's Lambert Field. That three tailed, fish shaped airplane in gleaming red and white seemed like the biggest grandest airplane that could ever be built. I had flown a lot in Piper Cubs and Cessnas because my dad worked at Lambert Field, but this was to be my very first flight in an airliner. I don't remember being nervous even though I had no idea when I'd ever see home again, and certainly had no idea what the next days, months and years had in store. I expected that every other new Mid would be six foot three, number one in his high school class, quarterback on the football team, and president of the student council. Here I was five foot eight, "only" a top ten percenter academically, and just third man on the school tennis team. I didn't think I would be a shining star at USNA but I was

happy just to be going.

After landing at National Airport in D.C., things are kind of a blur. There I was with a heavy new leather suitcase, received a month earlier as a graduation present from Kirkwood High School. I lugged it around and must have stashed it somewhere for I decided to see a few sights. I climbed the steps five hundred feet up the Washington Monument just because I was seventeen and could. Then I went to the Smithsonian and looked at the Hope diamond. I gawked at the Mall and the White House. This was big stuff for a kid from the St. Louis suburbs who had seldom been out of Missouri.

I think I sacked out in the bus station overnight so I would be sure to get the first bus to Annapolis on July 7. I certainly wasn't going to be late in reporting. I doubt that I had ten dollars in my pocket. I remember getting off the bus at the Annapolis station expecting to see the buildings and monuments of the Academy. Instead I saw nothing to tell me where to go and no flag waving welcoming committee. After asking around, I got directions and lugged that darn suitcase the several blocks to the Academy gate. The irony was that the next day we were all told to pack up all of our civilian gear and ship it and the suitcase back home.

That first day was a blur of getting uniforms, haircuts, learning (unsuccessfully) how to stencil our names onto our blouses and

trying to  
shape those silly sailor hats into something that looked a bit  
more  
swashbuckling. That first day my roommate had his windup  
alarm clock  
stolen. I was shocked because I had studied up and knew  
about the Honor  
Concept. I guess some had to learn honor as they went  
along. We learned  
that we would receive the magnificent sum of five dollars a  
month in  
cash money. It never occurred to me to write home for  
more. The Plebe  
Detail, those Second Classmen, looked like young gods; so self  
assured,  
confident and omnipotent. How they managed to never break a  
sweat I  
still don't understand. It was impossible to realize they were  
only two  
years removed from us uncoordinated slobs. I was arbitrarily  
roomed  
with **Ron Machens** that Plebe Summer and was fortunate that  
we ended up in  
the same academic year company and roomed together for  
most of the next  
four years. Ron helped me immensely academically and  
psychologically to  
make it through the plebe and succeeding years. Despite my  
humble start  
and beyond my understanding I ended up wearing "stars",  
being on the  
Sup's List, and lettering in Tennis. I was a three striper until  
the  
infamous Christmas Leave Party, but that's another story that  
gets  
better every year. They even made me a Rhode's Scholarship  
candidate,  
but the Rhodes committee made up exclusively of left wing

communist  
pinkos (of course), didn't choose any of Navy's candidates, not  
even our  
number one man, **Dan Hennessy**.

Plebe summer was **HOT!** By the time we put on our  
uniforms they were  
drenched. But we slowly learned our rates, and how to march  
and run and  
swim and shoot. We learned to spit shine our shoes and  
watched them  
crack at that first step. We brushed and brushed blue wool and  
still the  
lint glistened all over. We ate square meals, turned square  
corners,  
saluted and barked, "Yes Sir" thousands of times. And we did  
come  
arounds and braced up and sweated pennies to the wall until  
we were  
ready to drop. And, damned, if I didn't love every darn minute  
of it!  
We watched new friends pack up and go home victims of  
psychological or  
physical stress or academic rigors for which they just weren't  
prepared. Those of us that remained became a part of  
something that  
transcended ourselves. We became part of a tradition that  
started in  
1845, members of the Brigade of Midshipmen, and brothers in  
the Class of  
1963, incidentally the **LAST** class to have a **REAL** Plebe Year.  
It remains an honor to be one of **YOU**.

- *Steve Coester*

*Response by Tom Reemelin to Steve Coester's Class of '63 -  
The Beginning, 7 July 1999]*

Steve, Amen to all of that - great times we all had and the best  
part was meeting such super guys.

During plebe summer Joe Bellino was our 2nd class leader. To show how uninformed I was, I didn't even know that he was the star of the Navy football team. So when he asked if anyone thought they could tackle him I spoke up and said YES SIR! He and his buddies had a great laugh out of that one. (actually I'd have loved the chance because as it was when I went out for plebe football, I tried to figure out where a little guy could play - tried out for end and after unsuccessfully trying to block those 200 pound hunks, I was saved from future embarrassment by getting a heat stroke and deciding that maybe that was a signal!) Fortunately, my plebe summer roomy had gotten me interested in playing lacrosse - they needed a 10th man to chase balls!

So many special coincidences make life great!

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*And here's a couple more remembrances of our first few days from Dave Moore and Jerry Huss. First from Dave*

Well, here it is again. July 7, (2001). Isn't this where we came in???

Its amazing that two significant days at USNA that are a complete blur to me are Induction Day and Graduation.

I can vaguely remember filling out lots of forms in the Mess Hall trying to emulate the example of Midn W. T. Door or Midn Gish.

For the ceremony in Tecumseh Court all I can remember is Capt Bringle telling us that it is very important to keep your sense of humor, both in the Academy and in the Fleet.

And I learned a new word: MUSTER. We must have mustered sixty times in the first 24 hours.

I also know we got shots, a haircut (that was not as severe as I

had expected), and issued lots of gear including stencils, a gray metal lock box (I still have mine - and I bet most of you still have yours), Reef Points, Pratt's Compact History of the U.S. Navy, Blue Jacket's Manual. But I can't remember if these came on the 7th or 8th.

My plebe summer crew (109) was assigned rooms in the Terrible Tenth Company area of the Fifth WIng. We arrived in our rooms to find most of the mirrors had writing on them with a bar of soap: STANDBY 63 ! No translation from navalese to civilianese was necessary for that salutation.

The ultimate moment of glory for me came at reveille the next morning when we were introduced to the thirteen bells. From the bottom of a double bunk bed I jumped out to begin my great naval career. My room mate in the top bunk did the exact same thing creating a time/space problem. Since he weighed at least 40 more pounds than I did, I was totally squashed. A telling comment on the Plebe Year process. I am glad I stayed for the second reveille.

There was a story making the rounds of Bancroft Hall that someone resigned that first day, either before or just after swearing in, as soon as he completed a promise made to his family. Does anyone know if this is a true story ???

When I look back on that incredible summer of 1959, I often think of the fact it was only 14 years after the A- bombs dropped on Japan and six years after fighting stopped in Korea. We do not normally think of ourselves as "post-war" people, but now we realize that 14 years is only a blink of the eye. We were certainly close enough to the great heroes of WWII to consider them part of our lives as well as our heritage.

Can anyone shed light on what happened on July 7, 1959. ??????

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And From Jerry:

Thanks for your detailed memories of the first couple of days of Plebe

Summer. Your point regarding the proximity of WWII and Korea to that fateful day in July of 1959 is interesting; but back then a year seemed like a long time (especially when it was Plebe Year).

My Plebe Summer Crew was also located in the Fifth Wing. I can't remember the exact number, but 104 sticks in my mind. My roommates were Andy Tate and Virgil Markus. Across the hall were the likes of Joe Strasser, Jim

DeFrancia and Dave Nelson. I recall also that the summer of '59 was a warm and humid one, at least by my standards. I enjoyed Mike Moore's comments regarding his White Works' woes. For me it was timing, or lack of it. Due to the heat and humidity, I never seemed to have a dry pair of White Works to throw on to get to that next muster. Invariably, when the bell went off, the only clean jumper was the one I had just stenciled five minutes before.

I also recall spending a lot of time in bed with my issued M-1. That was somewhat related to my first crisis during Plebe Summer. Being a complete non-swimmer, I quickly found myself on the Sub Squad for failure to get across the shallow pool for the 100 yard swim without

walking on the bottom.

At that stage I would have failed a ten yard swim. A week or two later, I was assigned the Mate of the Deck Watch while the rest of my squad was learning the manual of arms. The following drill, when the rest of my crewmates were smartly handling their M-1's, I was all thumbs and was immediately assigned to...the dreaded Awkward Squad. Since the "squads" generally met in the late afternoon, I was faced with the dilemma of which squad took priority. Someone on the Plebe Summer detail directed me to the table of priorities in the Midshipmen Regulations, and the Sub Squad won out. I guess they figured you could drown quicker than you could hurt yourself with an M-1 with a fixed bayonet. Nearing the end of Plebe Summer, I finally demonstrated that I could swim 100 yards (thanks to Prof. Higgens' back stroke lessons), and I extricated myself from the Awkward Squad the following day, since by that time I had figured out how to maneuver the M-1 without hurting myself.

I think the saddest day of my life was saying goodbye to my parents at the end of Parents' Weekend, and certainly one of the happiest was the last day of Plebe Year. You had to be there to understand the highs and lows of the experiences we shared.

And From Frank Hilton:

I vividly remember being in formation on the first deck outside the Batt Office of the Third wing, mustering for a "party" late 7 July. Which party I do not recall, but it didn't fit my concept of any party I had previously enjoyed.

While we were mustering, a short guy passed between the Batt Office and our "formation" in the direction of McDonough Hall. The classmate mustered next to me whispered the gent was "Joe Bellino." I had heard of the Winchester Rifle and imagined him at least 6-1. But here was a short guy in sweats.

Fast forward to several mornings later: 0530 in Thompson Stadium for morning PT (it may have been the result of a Form Two). The leader of the PT is Midn 2nd Class Bellino and his height is the same but his now exposed thighs must each be reviling California sequoias in diameter. Much later, we enjoyed the benefit of his performance in Philadelphia as Joe and his teammates destroyed Army. We are additionally told his classmates enjoyed the benefits of the "Bellino Curve." Did we have one of those?

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From Mike Rubel:

I-Day was a little different for three of us; Paul Tobin, Don Jacobs, and Myself. We were not included in the mass swearing-in ceremony in front of Bancroft because our transcripts from college had not arrived in time. They were holding us back for further scrutiny (I guess). I remember going to the admissions office and asking them what to do since the University of Nevada had not sent my grades. He said don't worry, you'll get in, but we need the transcripts to be official. I should have known!

The three of us were sworn in two days later in Mem Hall, with our words echoing around the great room as we pledged our allegiance to God and Country, and not necessarily in that order. Finally we were allowed the privilege of sweating our you know what off in the pleasant humidity of the East Coast with the rest of the class. Welcome to the rest of our life.

One incident that still is as fresh as the day it happened was with Jack Burke, my roommate for four years. We were sitting in our room when Buzz Needham came in and yelled "brace up". I immediately leaped into position, but Jack thought this was a prank by one of our classmates, and told him to do the same. After a few seconds with Buzz flying into a rage, Jack realized maybe it wasn't someone from '63 and he should follow the lead of the rest of us in the room. Needless to say, Jack did his share of come-a rounds, and Buzz exacted his pounds of flesh for the lack of proper respect.

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From Norm Shackelton:

Here is what comes to mind for me as I entered the Naval Academy with the Class of 1963:

My parents, brothers, sister and my girlfriend at the time drove me to Annapolis on July 6th. Vince Gilroy and his future wife, Robin came with Vince's family to see him off also. Vince graduated a year later than I did from Massapequa (NY) high school. Both families stayed at the Annapolis Terrace Motel on Route 50. We were all out by the pool and met the Reemelin family who came from Ohio to see their son Tom off. I still remember Tom's infectious laugh and his falsetto "Shaaaack" that made me feel great every time I saw him during Plebe Summer and many times from then to now.

I, too remember the terrible heat and humidity. White works were always soaked. I remember on July 7th, dragging a seabag plus armfuls of "stuff" to my fifth wing room. Sitting on

the desk, with a big smile and a cheerful, "howdy" was Jary (Lew) Lewis. He was a sailor from the fleet so, as such seemed like a real old salt. Terry O'Brien (now deceased) also was our Plebe Summer roommate. Lew got us both through Plebe Summer. He encouraged us, showed us how to spit shine shoes, stencil and the like. Most of all he kept us pumped up.

I fondly remember some of our Second Class Detail Leaders. They seemed like bronze gods and turned out to be terrific human beings. I particularly remember Jim Traa, Buzz Galbraith, and Jack Prudhomme. I ran into Jack Prudhomme in GTMO in the summer of 1965 while on a Destroyer School cruise. His carrier was on its way to WESTPAC. I was really devastated when I heard that year that he was shot down over North Vietnam.

With my aging memory, these things still stand out. The times and names may have blurred a little but they still seem clear to me. This was a great start to my adult life and I would not change anything. We're a brotherhood.

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From Roger Mehle:

Apropos of both our 50th anniversary of admission and our recently named Distinguished Graduate, Ron Terwilliger:

On July 7, 1959, by chance Ron stood behind me in a long line in the Rotunda to draw stencils. As we waited, we began chatting and I asked his name. When he told me, I asked him if he were any relation to the Washington Senators former second baseman, Wayne Terwilliger (who's still with us, <http://www.wayneterwilliger.com/bio.html>). I don't remember what Ron said, but I think it was "no."

We continued talking as the line progressed, and, as we got to the head of the line, we saw the numerals "63" on the stencils of the classmate in front of us. I then speculated that I'd be "64"

and Ron would be "65." As the cliché has it -- in more ways than one -- "Boy, did I ever get a wrong number!"

I doubt that Ron remembers this, but I haven't forgotten it in fifty years.

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From Bob Van Nice:

Mike, thanks for putting up the photo of our Plebe Summer crew (at top of this page). It was truly remarkable to see, and it reminded me again how good it was to see you at our most recent class reunion after so many years!

In answer to Dave Moore's question above about a mid resigning on 7 July, yes, it's true. I understand the fellow was named Herb H.... who had received the Principal Appointment from Maryland Representative Dewitt S. Hyde after a 2-year selection process that had started with 75 candidates. I was the fifth alternate from Congressman Hyde's list and, since Herb X had accepted the appointment, I was going off to NROTC at Brown. I don't know for sure that he left on 7 July but I do know he was gone by the 8th!

My own eventual membership in '63 came in late April/early May when I was offered, and accepted, appointment as a Qualified Alternate under P.L. 186.

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John Aucella adds his two bits:

I have enjoyed reading the Plebe summer and 7 July 1959 stories.

I remember the first homecoming weekend, sometime that fall, hearing all the laughing and riotous noises emanating from the evening alumni meal in the Mess Hall and deciding to walk

through Smoke Hall to see what in the world was going on. On my way down I spotted a bunch of alumni with their class of 1934 name tags. They were there for their 25th. I had a nice chat with a few of them and as they left I said to myself "Imagine the Class of 34. My God those guys are old!"

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Ken Metviner chips in:

I enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1957 to avoid the draft, then went to City College to see what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I met an Academy graduate who told me I could never make it there because it took someone special. That inspired me to try, just to see if I could get in. When I told my friends in The Bronx, they told me they would buy Russian War Bonds if I got in. Imagine my feelings when I got the postcard indicating I qualified for a Naval Reserve appointment, then, a few weeks later, when I got a set of official orders to report to USNA on 7 July. Did I really want this? Did I have any idea what I was getting into? Then came the day, and the train ride to Baltimore and the bus to Annapolis. I remembered seeing pictures of Bancroft Hall, and the sight of it was awesome as I entered the Yard through Gate 3. The rest of the day is pretty much of a blur, except for the ceremony in the hot sun and the start of the stenciling of uniforms. Then came Buzzie Needham, the next guy who told me I would never make it. Quit now, he said, because if I thought he was tough, wait until I met the rest of the Brigade. He was right. Things did get worse. I always will remember that admonition from I-Day, that one out of three of us would bilge out. I wasn't going to be the one.

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Bill Haslet's Plebe Memory:

I remember leaving Spokane Washington on the morning of 4 July 1959 with John Bender heading east for Washington DC. We arrived that night during the fireworks display and we

stayed our first night on the east coast at the YMCA. It was HOT !! It was HUMID!! I was 17 years old and I was so homesick that I almost literally got sick to my stomach!!

Even though I actually enjoyed Plebe summer, my two summer room mates didn't fare too well. One of them had attended college for several years in Georgia and liked fraternity life and the other one was a Navy enlisted man who enjoyed giving orders to others but not taking them. At 17, I didn't know any better and did what I was told and everything worked out fine for me but my two room mates didn't last the summer. After 40 years of marriage to my wonderful wife Chauni, I still do what I am told and have found it to be just as successful!

For most of plebe year, Joe Bellino lived directly across the hall and I also can confirm that his thighs were in fact HUGH and he received more mail daily than all the rest of us on the floor combined!

## A '63 Car Tale from Dirck Praeger

That was an interesting article about Second Classmen and cars from the USNA Parents Survival Guide. Things sure have changed. Compare that to our USNA vehicular experience.

In the summer of 1962 during our leave after First Class cruise, Ron Walters and myself purchased a 1949 Chevy from Walt's older brother in Hays, Kansas. Cost us \$50. We named it "St. Christopher" because we weren't sure it would make it from Kansas to Annapolis. We figured that if it didn't we'd just leave it in a ditch somewhere in Ohio and hitchhike the rest of the way. We loaded up the trunk with numerous cases of Coors beer (couldn't get Coors on the east coast then), and a cooler full of iced down cans in the back seat, and headed east. When the cooler was empty, we'd replenish it from the trunk. I think we figured that we averaged a beer about every 27 miles during the trip. We threw the empties on the back seat floor. By the time we reached DC, the pile of empties had reached the level of the back seat.

We arrived too late in the evening to barge into Lionel Banda's house in Chevy Chase, so we pulled off beside the road in a park somewhere around there and went to sleep. The next morning we were awakened by a cop who was astounded by the number of empty beer cans in the back seat. He didn't run us in, so we headed for Lionel's house and arrived there just in time for his mom to make us breakfast.

After that we headed for Annapolis and found a garage for rent just off West Street in a shabby part of town. It was probably about a mile from the Academy. Since we were always short of money back then, we coerced several more members of the Sixth Company to become part owners of "Chris". As I recall the ownership consisted of Walt, Dick Williams, Jim Carter, Bob Borlet, Bill Hughes, Lionel Banda, and your truly. Our combined resources allowed for insurance payments,

garage rent, and gas. You might think that having multiple owners would cause problems, but it turned out that we usually all went on liberty together anyway. Liberty usually meant going to Dave's Corner, a combination feed store and bar/restaurant, and low rent dump in Mayo Beach, MD, which was either right inside the 7 mile limit, or right outside it. Either way we were in violation-outside the liberty limits or drinking within the limits.

Here's how it usually worked. After Saturday evening meal formation we would all head out the gate and walk to the garage. We'd back Chris out a little and leave the headlights on so we could see inside the garage. Sweatshirts and levis hung from nails in the walls. We changed in the garage. As the doors closed you could see overcoats and white covers on the nails in place of the civvies. We'd head for Dave's and spend the evening drinking cheap watered down beer and eating greasy hamburgers. They had no idea that we were Mids with our high and tight haircuts, inside out Navy sweatshirts, levis, and spit shined shoes. Then we'd head back and go through everything in reverse at the garage and stagger back to Bancroft Hall. There were many other adventures with Chris during First Class year, but those are for telling at another time.

Before graduation we "sold" Chris to a member of the Class of '65 for ten cents, fully expecting it to crap out before the summer ended. Much to our surprise, Chris was still around when '65 graduated, and it was handed down to a member of '66. For all I know it is still sitting beside back road in Annapolis as a home for a family of illegal immigrants.

Anyway, a T.I.N.S. tale from the old days. Times change...for better or worse?

Semper Fi,  
Dirck Praeger  
Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: NONE

And some addenda to this story:

From Dick Williams

Even though I was a part owner of St. Christopher, I didn't ride in it too many times. It really wasn't safe. It had all sorts of terrible things happen in it, and to it. I recall one time the headliner caught fire when Lionel ignited it with a cigar ash. And another time when a member of our company got "caught" in a beer can while relieving himself. It never got washed during the time that the principal owners, Messer's Walters and Praeger, owned and operated it. This was definitely not a "chick-mobile".

From Praeger Again

No self respecting chick would ever get into it. Of course no self respecting chick would ever go out with a member of the Sixth Company.

From Praeger Again on Jan.31, 2006

A couple of weeks ago I sent you a story about our 1949 Chevy that the Sixth Company kept in a garage off of West Street. This weekend I was looking at the 1963 Trident Calendar, and an overdue notice for the garage rent fell out! The lady who owned the place must have mailed it to me in Bancroft Hall. It's a handwritten note to "Midshipman Praeger" saying that we owe her two months rent. So I have a document to support one of our T.I.N.S. tales!

From Praeger Again on March 14, 2006

I was surprised to see my story about the Sixth Company car in the May Shipmate Column. Thanks for the consideration. An interesting thing happened as a result of your posting the story on our website. A lady who lives in Mayo, Maryland, where Dave's Corner, the bar we used to visit was, is interested in Mayo history and did a web search which uncovered our site and the story. She lived right next door to the site that Dave's stood on before burning down. You may remember that she routed a message through you to me.

We talked on the phone and it seems her husband, an artist, was going to do a painting of Dave's Corner from an old picture of the place that he had dug up somewhere. After talking to me her husband decided to include our car Chris in the painting. She invited me to join them for lunch sometime in the near future to learn more about Dave's and whatever other aspects of Mayo I may remember from over 40 years ago. Since it was dark and we weren't seeing too well when we left Dave's on Saturday nights, I doubt I'll be much help. We did rent June Week cottages out there as well, as I mentioned in my earlier Ring Dance Great Escape T.I.N.S. tale. Maybe she can draw some history out of me.

Anyway, I have attached both the picture and a copy of the finished painting, for whatever you may want to do with them. From the images it's easy to see how easily it probably burned when it got torched. Just thought that you'd be interested in what you wrought by posting that story on our website.



Photo of Dave's Corner



Painting of Dave's Corner with the '49 Chevy in front

## Adventures in Hitchhiking by Dirck Praeger

### **-Or Don't you get paid much, or are you just cheap?**

During my Midshipman years at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, from July 1959 until graduation in June 1963, we spent about two thirds of every summer training with the fleet. After Plebe year we were assigned to Navy ships of the line to serve as enlisted sailors. In my case that meant the USS Independence (CVA-62), a Forrestal Class aircraft carrier out of Norfolk, Virginia. During the summer after Third Class year we trained with the Marines at Little Creek, Virginia, at the Navy fire fighting and damage control school in Philadelphia, aboard a submarine out of Key West, and with Naval Aviation at Jacksonville and Pensacola, Florida

On the summer before First Class year we served as junior officers aboard ships of the line, which for me meant the USS Allan M. Sumner (DD-692), an old World War II destroyer out of Naples, Italy. We were usually turned loose for our summer leave after cruise; sometimes from our ship's homeport, or after returning to the Academy. We then spent the balance of the summer, usually about 30 days, before returning to Annapolis for the next academic year. Cruises were good times. You learned a lot about the operating forces, had some good liberty, sometimes in exotic places, and made good friends from other companies and battalions of the Brigade of Midshipmen.

Both of my room mates at the Naval Academy were from Kansas; Dick Williams was from Pratt, about 70 miles south of my hometown of Claflin, and Ron "Walt" Walters from Hays, about 70 miles west of Claflin. It seems that all of our summer leaves coincided in time one way or another, and we often hitchhiked from the east coast to Kansas. In those days hitchhiking was not as frowned upon as today,

and we always hitched in uniform. Drivers usually didn't hesitate to pick up a man in uniform in the early 1960s. Usually it took about 3 days to get from the east coast to central Kansas. The down side of travel in this manner is that by the time we got to Kansas, we smelled like we had just crawled out of a pen from the Kansas City stockyards that used to molder on the border as you crossed from Kansas to Missouri.



**Walt-1963  
1963**

**Dick-  
Yours Truly-1963**

Anyway, we used our thumbs extensively during our summer travels. This story is a composite of our experiences during at least two of our summer adventures and two Christmas leaves. After Youngster Cruise (Third Class cruise) Walt and I left the Norfolk area and headed west. He had been aboard USS Intrepid (CVA-11) out of Norfolk, and we decided early on during the summer that we would hitchhike home. On our first day out we were picked up in Suffolk,

Virginia by a gentleman who worked with the Navy in Norfolk, and was a part time cop in a small town in the Shenandoah Valley. He transported us there and we arrived in the early evening. He asked if we had a place to stay, and when we said no, offered to put us up in the city jail. So we spent our first night of leave in jail cells--unlocked of course. We could come and go as we pleased. We each had our own cell.

The next morning we thanked the city police for their hospitality and continued west. We got several rides that took us through West Virginia, and then were offered a ride by a young guy who was headed for Texas. In exchange for gas money and sharing the driving he would take us as far as St Louis, where he would catch Route 66 to the southwest and to his home. We stopped and picked up some beer and headed west. This was probably somewhere in Ohio. As we neared St Louis on Interstate 70 Walt was driving and our benefactor was passed out in the back seat from too much beer. I suggested to Walt that we wake up our friend, get out of the car and thank him. Walt took one look and decided he was too drunk to drive, and besides he was out like a light, so we passed Route 66 and continued west on I-70. I think the guy slept all the way through Missouri and didn't come to until we were well into Kansas. We told him we missed the turnoff and didn't realize it until way too late. This was bullcrap, and I think he knew it, but didn't say anything and we drove on. I wish I could capture in writing the look of dismay on his face when he figured out that for every mile west that we went, we were going about a mile and a half further out of his way. I was dropped off in Claflin and Walt and our friend proceeded to Hays. Walt convinced his mom to at least give the guy a good home cooked meal, and then he headed straight south on the short leg of the right triangle to Texas, 350 miles and about six hours out of his way. Can't let a guy drive drunk, can we?



**"Get your kicks on Route 66!"--Bobby Troup, 1946**

The following summer we were released for leave after returning from Pensacola to the Academy. Dick and I headed for Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C. looking for a hop aboard a USAF aircraft to McConnell AFB in Wichita, Smoky Hill AFB outside Salina, or Forbes AFB in Topeka. There were plenty of hops up and down the east coast, but nothing heading west. After several days of waiting we were able to catch a flight to Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio aboard a Gooney Bird (C-47). We checked into flight operations at Wright-Pat and there was nothing headed west, so we made our way to the main gate and stuck out our thumbs. A number of uneventful rides later we found ourselves somewhere in central Missouri. A car pulled to the side of the road to offer us a ride. We threw our bags in the trunk and got into the car. Besides the driver and his wife, there were about three or four young kids in the back seat. The dad wanted to give a break to a couple of guys in uniform so he stopped. In spite of some misgivings, and the fact that our bags were already aboard, off we went--headed for Kansas City, which was about two or three hours away. It was crowded, hot and uncomfortable, but we crammed ourselves in--me in the front seat and Dick in back with the loud mouthed kids, one of whom was sitting on his lap, and headed west. It was with great relief that we finally reached Kansas City early in the evening. Dick asked the driver to drop us at the train station, and we thanked him for the ride.

I asked Dick "Why the train station?", and he replied, "I ain't hitchhiking another damned step after that last ride!" So we picked up some cheap bourbon at a liquor store and bought tickets on a train to Hutchinson, which is within artillery range of both our hometowns. Unfortunately this train was the nightly milk run and it stopped at every whistle stop town between K.C. and Hutch. Thank heaven for the bourbon. We had it wiped out before we passed Emporia, which was about the mid-way point. We probably would have made better time via the thumb. Our folks picked us up in Hutch, and Second Class summer leave began in earnest, with Dick, Walt and I getting together to make public fools of ourselves on several occasions. Excess beer will do that to a man.

And that tells you of some of our summer leave hitchhiking adventures. But we also travelled via the thumb when returning to Kansas for Christmas leave. One year the governor of Oklahoma

arranged an Oklahoma Air National Guard plane to come east to give the Oklahoma USNA Midshipmen and West Point Cadets a free ride home for Christmas. Walt, Dick, myself, and another Kansan from Wichita named Evan Evans (his parents must have had a weird sense of humor, or else they stuttered) were able to work our way aboard and travelled in style compliments of the Sooner ANG.

After landing at Tinker AFB outside Oklahoma City we started working our way north. Dick and Evan decided to catch a bus to Wichita, but Walt and I were going via the thumb route. It was cold with snow on the ground, and our efforts to catch a ride from a service station on the north city limits of Ok City weren't fruitful. Finally a college kid pulled into the station. We asked where he was headed and he said Wichita. We told him we were going with him. He mildly protested, but we threw our bags atop a trunk full of Christmas presents and got into the car. He was going to have to bodily throw us out or call the cops. But he got in and started driving, finding out that we weren't bad guys after all, according to us.

Several hours later he dropped us off on the western outskirts of Wichita on U.S. Highway 54 and we stuck our thumbs out again. Highway 54 runs due west to Pratt, Dick's hometown, and we figured we could get my folks to drive down and pick us up and I would drive Walt to Hays. By now it was early the next morning and the sun was about to come up. We got a ride pretty quickly. Unfortunately it was from a Sedgwick County Sheriff's Deputy. He asked for our leave papers, which we produced, and said something like, "You boys know that hitchhiking is illegal in Sedgwick County? And I just happen to have a couple of empty cells available at the county lockup." There goes our Christmas leave, we thought. Not to mention what would happen to us upon return to USNA after the powers that be back there found out we'd spent jail time.

We got into the police car, but instead of turning east and heading back into Wichita, he headed west on highway 54 and drove to a truck stop on the Sedgwick-Kingman county line. He then took us into the restaurant, bought us a cup of coffee, and instructed the service station manager to get us a ride to Pratt. Whew--no jail time. He was just screwing with us. As we were standing outside the station the

driver of a car heading east saw us and hit his breaks hard and almost stood the car on its nose. It was Dick's dad Jay. He was heading to Wichita to pick up Dick at the bus station. So we headed back to Wichita and Dick has wondered to this day about the miracle of Walt and me ending up in his family car before him.

One more Christmas leave story and I'll stop boring you. Walt and I were standing on the highway outside Topeka in the dark, freezing our asses off having made our way from the Kansas City airport, when a gentleman picked us up and told us he could get us to Salina. As we drove along the driver discovered that we weren't enlisted men as he had thought, but were Midshipmen--officer candidates in his mind. During his service he had come to detest officers. So instead of taking us into downtown Salina to the bus station he dropped us on the eastern outskirts of town on a dark side road. Unfortunately we needed to be on the west side. We finally got a ride to the bus station and a ride to Ellsworth, where our folks picked us up.

We became pretty good practitioners of the lost art of hitchhiking during our days at the Old Boat School. Of course back then our citizens respected our military enough to rarely bypass a man in uniform with his thumb out. I suspect that if a Mid is caught hitchhiking today he would probably be written up for his efforts. They tell me things have changed at Canoe U. But in the early 1960s Mids were still allowed to indulge their sense of adventure. And we did. And we lived to tell about it. After these soirées of the thumb, especially in the summer, we smelled like the stockyards outside Strong City, but never had to stand a personnel inspection until we were able to take a shower. We looked nice in our uniforms, but you didn't want to get too close.

Semper Fi,  
Dirck Praeger

## Over the Wall by Dirck Praeger

### - **No, this isn't a story about Tarawa or Inchon**

I was a Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland from July 1959 until I graduated in June 1963. I was, generally speaking, a pretty well behaved Mid who tried to follow the regulations and only was caught in violation on rare occasions. The Naval Academy Regulations were contained in a book about 2 inches thick and covered just about every aspect of Midshipman life from how and when to cut your hair through honor violations, which would get you kicked out of the Academy. Officers from the Executive Department, which included our Company Officers, and upperclassmen were always on the lookout for violations of the Regs, and were always putting Mids on report.

Demerits were awarded when you were written up. Minor violations, like unshined shoes or being a few seconds late for a meal formation would get you the minimum of 5 demerits, which required one hour of punishment. The punishment for underclassmen consisted of an hour of calisthenics at 0500 (5 AM to the uninitiated) in the morning. First Classmen (seniors) were restricted to their rooms on weekends. As violations became more serious, more demerits were awarded. If you stacked up a specified number of demerits in a year, you could be dismissed from the Academy as a conduct case. Each year you were at the academy, the maximum allowable number of demerits decreased. Plebes (freshmen) were always being put on report because of the rigors of Plebe Year, so their max was somewhere around 300 demerits, if I remember correctly.

As I said, I pretty much toed the line, at least while inside the yard at USNA. However when we were on liberty in town or in Washington, DC, it was a different story, as some of my other TINS tales have described.

One of the most serious violations was going on unauthorized liberty, or “going over the wall” as it was called. In my day our liberty hours were very restrictive compared to what they seem to be today. Even as First Classmen our weekend liberty on Saturday night expired around midnight. Sunday liberty expired at evening meal formation, which was at 1830 (6:30 PM), as did town liberty in Annapolis on week days. Most of us didn’t go into town on week days anyway. Any other time you snuck out of the yard you were “over the wall”.

Since the Naval Academy is surrounded by tall brick or stone walls, or cyclone fence, and you couldn’t get by the gate guards, you literally had to “go over the wall” to get out. Behind the Field House the cyclone fence literally was built out over the water to prevent Mids from escaping, but that didn’t stop the Spider Men who occupied Bancroft Hall from using that route. There were other places you could sneak out as well.

During my four years at USNA I only went over the wall once. It was during the early winter of 1963, First Class year, and the reward for doing so had to be pretty sweet to make a relative straight shooter like me take such a risk. And therein lies the story. My roommate Dick Williams’ younger sister Monte had graduated from the University of Wyoming. A sorority sister of hers had come to Owings Mills, Maryland to teach school after she graduated at Laramie. Owings Mills is a suburb of Baltimore. Monte had asked Dick to look her friend up, which he did with me in tow, and, as one thing led to another, I started dating the cowgirl from Wyoming. I will refrain from naming her to protect the innocent (her), the guilty (me), and to avoid embarrassment.

She and I hit it off quite well and she seemed not to be too resistant to my amorous advances. She kept me at arm’s length, but the promise of greater things to come was there. We had been seeing each other for several months and the prospects for me were improving every time we got together. She came to Annapolis one Saturday and things got pretty hot and heavy as the evening went along, but time was running out. At midnight Midshipmen turned into pumpkins. I figured that the pump was primed, she was ready, and I couldn’t miss this opportunity that I had worked so diligently for, so I decided that I would go over the wall and meet her for a late night tryst. She agreed

to meet me at a specified location at around 0100 (1 AM) on Sunday morning.

Saturday night liberty expired at 2400 (midnight), and I immediately started preparations for going over the wall. Being a novice at this kind of thing and not knowing the ins and outs of this breach of regulations, I decided to take as little risk as possible. I dressed in dark blue uniform work trousers and pulled on a black sweater that was part of our uniform issue, and topped it off with a black watch cap. I probably would have blackened my face if I could have, but I really didn't learn that art until I was a Marine at The Basic School in Quantico later that summer. Rather than take the shortest route to the wall, I decided I wanted to be as far away from Bancroft Hall as possible, so I headed for Hospital Point, an area of athletic fields, the Naval Academy Cemetery and the Naval Hospital. The distance from Bancroft to the wall on Hospital Point is probably about 1/2 of a mile. I had told her I would climb the cyclone fence near the water at Hospital Point and would wait for her in the ditch. The road ran right next to the fence.

I moved from tree to tree and house to house, ran across the foot bridge to Hospital Point and skirted the edge of the hill near the cemetery until I reached the fence. It was an 8 to 10 foot cyclone fence with three strands of barbed wire on top, leaning outward at an angle. There was a tree growing right beside the fence with a branch pointing across the fence line about 5-6 feet above the barbed wire. That was my route of escape. I would climb the tree, grab the branch, swing out over the barbed wire and drop lightly to my feet in the ditch on the other side.

There was no one in sight on either side of the fence, so I quickly climbed the tree and got ready to swing over on the branch. I swung out, and while still parallel to the ground, the branch broke off with a sharp crack. I landed flat on my back on the barbed wire, the branch falling on my head, and then bounced off the wire, plunging face down into the ditch. At least I had fallen on the right side of the fence. I had gouged a nice hunk of flesh from behind my shoulder when I hit the barbed wire. I carried the scar from that for a couple of years. It would be four years later in Vietnam before I was beaten up that badly again. As I lay moaning in the ditch, the cowgirl drove up, and I got into her car.

We headed for a secluded park and got down to business. I figured that tonight was the night, and after all the trouble I'd gone to, and the injury I'd suffered, that I was about to receive my just reward. But it was not to be. I strove mightily for a couple of hours, but refused to even consider marriage, and struck out. I finally gave up and asked her to drop me at Gate 3, the Maryland Avenue entrance to the Academy. It was probably about 0400 (4 AM) in the morning by now, and I was sore and pissed off and suffering from a major case of lover's nuts, so I just walked past the sleepy Jimmy Legs gate guard and walked straight back to Bancroft Hall. To hell with the snooping and pooping I'd done to get out. I was tired and needed some sleep. Sunday morning Chapel was in a couple of hours, and in those days Chapel was mandatory. You went to church whether you wanted to or not. There wasn't a soul in sight as I entered Bancroft Hall through the window of Dick's and my room, which was on the zero deck (first floor in Naval Academy terminology) and easily accessible from the terrace. Dick inquired of my success with the cowgirl, and then had a good laugh when I told him I had failed in everything but picking up a good case of blue balls.

So that's the tale of my one and only sortie over the wall at USNA. It makes a good story, I guess, but it really wasn't worth the effort. The cowgirl and I didn't see much of each other after that. Three years later I spent about a week at the US Naval Station at Subic Bay in the Philippines awaiting transportation to my new assignment with the Marine Detachment on the aircraft carrier USS Ranger (CVA-61). The ship was conducting operations against North Vietnam from Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin and I would join her at sea. Somehow I found out that the cowgirl was a Department of Defense school teacher at the US Naval Station, Sangley Point, which was located on the eastern shore of Manila Bay, a number of miles from Subic. I considered making a trip to Sangley to see her, but good judgment finally overcame me and I refrained from further making a fool of myself. Where she went and what happened to her after that, I don't know. Dick's son Jay is getting married in September and his sister Monte will be at the wedding. I'll have to ask her whatever became of my cowgirl from our days on Severn's shore. Until then...

Semper Fidelis

Followup: The ending couple of sentences in my "Over the Wall" tale said that I would ask Dick Williams' wife whatever became of the Cowgirl from Wyoming. I asked her that question at their son's wedding in September, and she didn't know. She had lost track of the Cowgirl years ago. Probably just as well from everyone's perspectives. I guess I need to write another story of the Cowgirl that involved both Williams, myself and another girl during which Dick and I made spectacular asses of ourselves. The girls ended up locking themselves in a bedroom for the night. That was a lead-up to "Over the Wall" and will have to wait until later.

A couple of weeks ago I drove by Hospital Point on Route 450 to see if any of the old landmarks were still there. The cyclone fence is long gone, and has been replaced with some decorative wrought iron fencing, which would have been a hell of a lot easier to climb over, and I probably wouldn't have ended up bleeding in the ditch. There are a number of trees in the area where I climbed the fence and it was impossible to identify which one damn near killed me. Plus there is that big SATCOM antenna, or whatever it is, sitting in the middle of Hospital Point. It is no longer quite the same place.

A friend read the story and left me with a little ditty that somewhat applie..."I have crabs and blue balls too. The crabs don't hurt but the blue balls do."

So there you have my follow up. Oh well.

Dirck Praeger

## The Farm Boy Vs. the Language Department by Dirck Praeger

### - Or, Cross Prof P. at your peril

During my days at the Naval Academy between July 1959 and June 1963 each Midshipman was required to take classes in foreign language during Plebe (freshman) and Youngster (sophomore) years. As I recall the languages offered were Spanish, German, French, Russian, Portuguese and Italian. Choosing which language you wanted to study was the only choice you had during Plebe year. Literally everything else was dictated to you. And if you disagreed with any of the dictates, you were either put on report or sent packing back home with your tail between your legs.

I chose Italian because someone had said it was “the easiest”. What did I know? In my small town Kansas high school language classes were not offered. In fact if you spoke a foreign language in central Kansas in the 1950s other than German, you were eyed with suspicion. Why German? Because the majority of folks who settled in that part of the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were German immigrants. It was said that if the German Army marched through any central Kansas town, that most of the inhabitants would find relatives in the ranks.

My choice of Italian was provident because my Plebe year roommates were Tony DeSantis of Irvington, New Jersey, and Joe Fosella of Brockton, Massachusetts...both of Italian ancestry. In fact Tony had grown up in Naples, Italy, coming to the U.S. at age 12, and was fluent in Italian. Having a roommate like that was music to the ears of a tone deaf farm boy with absolutely no aptitude for languages. Tony saved my language bacon on many an occasion Plebe year.

In the days before political correctness infected the land, we referred to the Naval Academy Language Department as the “Dago” department, and called our language instruction “Dago” regardless of which language you studied. Ethnic sensitivity was not a priority at USNA in those days. Jary Lewis, a company mate, one time asked

Tony what it sounded like when the shit hit the fan. When Tony couldn't answer Lew replied with..."WOP...Guinea guinea guinea guinea."

During my two years of Italian our class section had only two instructors. We called them "Profs". I don't know if they were actually professors. One was an easy going gentleman named Paul Beadle. He was much beloved by the Midshipmen. One incident I recall explains the kind of guy he was. There was a map of Italy hanging above the blackboard behind the Prof's desk which rolled up like a window shade. When the Prof wanted to make a point by using the map, he pulled it down. One time Paul pulled it down and taped to the map was a Playboy centerfold in all her naked splendor. One of my classmates had gotten into the room surreptitiously and had put it there. Beadle just laughed. He thought it was great.

The other Prof was something else. Let's call him Prof P. He was the prototypical Italian. He looked like one of the Italian characters from the Looney Tunes cartoons. He was slightly overweight, had sagging jowls, black slicked back hair, piercing dark eyes and a gigolo mustache. He always looked like he was ready to break into a sweat immediately after taking a shower. He was a firebrand who often cussed us out and called us names when we didn't meet his strict standards in the study of the Italian language. I don't know if there were any other Italian Profs in the department. Probably so, but our section never had any but these two.

During the second semester of Plebe year I had a monumental run in with Prof P. that I will never forget. A number of my classmates from our language section haven't forgotten it either. The incident is remembered at our five year interval reunions by members of my Naval Academy Company, the Sixth, who were in that class section. In fact I write this tale at the urging of one of my classmates fifty years after the fact.

Each academic department at the Naval Academy was headed by a Navy Captain or very senior civilian during my days as a Midshipman. Although I can't remember his name, the Language Department was led by a Navy Captain. One day he came into our classroom to monitor the goings on. He was seated in the back of the room. I was reciting something at Prof P.'s direction and got all tongue tied and confused, so I just quit and muttered..."To hell with it." Things

proceeded on and nothing seemed remiss to me. The Captain finally got up and left maybe ten minutes later.

After the Captain had safely left the room Prof P. stood up reached into the air with our text book, which was fairly thin tome, and slammed it down hard onto his desk top. It wasn't really a desk, but a table, and the book hit it squarely resulting in a loud bang. Steam was coming out of P.'s ears as he glared at me and said, "Praeger, you f\*\*kin' prick. You embarrassed me in front of the Captain! I'm going to Class A you over this!"

I was thunderstruck. There were two types of violations of the USNA Regulations; a Class B offense was analogous to a misdemeanor, but a Class A was a felony. The great majority of offenses that Mids were placed on report for were Class B's...unshined shoes, uncut hair, seconds late for meal formations, messy rooms...things like that. Class A's were for the biggies...unauthorized liberty, drinking in Bancroft Hall, hours late returning from leave. And the numbers of demerits awarded and the punishments meted out for Class A's were severe. We all feared being written up for a Class A offense. In the spirit of earning a letter for athletic achievement at Navy, being charged with a Class A offense was referred to as earning a black "N".

I spent the rest of the day sweating bullets because Prof P. was going to write me up for a Class A offense. It wasn't enough that the upperclassmen didn't like me because of my status as a Plebe. Now the academic instructors didn't like me as well. I didn't know what to do or where to turn. It didn't seem right that I should be so severely punished for muttering four words under my breath. I was still sweating bullets during the next Italian class, which I think was two days later. After the class P. told me to remain and told me that he wouldn't write me up if I apologized to the Captain. I readily agreed and made an appointment to see the Captain later that afternoon.

I knocked on the department head's door. He told me to enter and I marched in, centered myself on his desk and barked, "Midshipman Praeger, Fourth Class, reporting to the Captain as ordered!" He asked me what I wanted and I told him I was sorry for my conduct when he monitored our Italian class two days before. He stared at me quizzically and asked what I was talking about. I tried to explain what I had done, but he had no recollection of me saying anything

untoward in his presence. I am reasonably sure that after a long career at sea being around Navy Chiefs and Bluejackets he had heard much worse than had emanated from my young Plebe mouth. He dismissed me and I returned to Bancroft Hall much relieved. Prof P. never said another word about the incident again.

As I look back on this several things occur to me. What would happen to a Naval Academy prof today if he called a Midshipman a “F\*\*kin’ prick” in a white knuckled rage? Prof P. used colorful language in dressing us down for poor pronunciation and conjugation of verbs, but he was never in a rage when he did this. Did uttering the words “To hell with it” rise to the level of deserving a Class A? Class B maybe, but Class A? I doubt it. To his credit, I think he realized that he had backed himself into a corner and took what he considered to be the best course of action to get himself out of it. If the Captain had been offended by what I had said I suspect he would have jumped on me right then and there. Some of the most profane Naval officers I have known wore four gold stripes on their sleeves. Maybe P. just didn’t know enough about the real Navy to realize this. Maybe P. could have stopped me and told me to apologize to the Captain on the spot, but then there wouldn’t be this story to tell. It is all good for a laugh now, 50 years later, but at the time I was a very frightened young Plebe for a couple of days. I don’t think anything that happened during the remainder of Plebe year scared me like the threat of this Class A offense did. Upon seeing the first draft of this story, Lew Lewis remarked that my run-in with Prof P. was the one exciting thing that happened during two years of Italian instruction. One thing I know for sure. Life and times at the Old Boat School were never boring, with or without Prof P. ...that f\*\*kin’ prick.

Semper Fidelis

Dirck Praeger

## Army-Navy 1962 by Dirck Praeger

### - Adventures in getting there

One of the highlights of the Midshipman year at the U.S. Naval Academy is the Army-Navy football game. Unless you have experienced it, it is almost impossible to explain the emotions associated with this annual event. It usually occurs on the second Saturday after Thanksgiving in Philadelphia, although sometimes the game is played at other locations. During my four years at USNA the game was always played at the old Municipal Stadium in South Philly. Fortunately, Navy won all four games during my tenure as a Mid. Back then if Navy won the game, Plebes were allowed to "carry on" between then and Christmas Leave. That amounted to a period of just a couple of weeks, but to be exempt from "Plebe indoctrination", it was a virtual eternity for Fourth Classmen.

The trip from Annapolis to Philly was made in a huge convoy of buses large enough to transport about 3,800 Mids to the game. Before the game both the West Point Corps of Cadets and the Brigade of Midshipmen march onto the field in company mass formation...first one, and then the other. The march-on is one of the highlights of the game. It is quite a spectacle for those in attendance or those watching the game on television. The Corps and Brigade man the stands when the march-on is completed. For the 1962 game, First Classmen were permitted to travel to Philly on their own as long as they were in formation for the march-on. And therein lies the story of what happened to several members of the Sixth Company, Class of 1963.

Jim Carter, Lionel "Owl Man" Banda, Bob Borlet and yours truly planned to drive to Philly the next morning after being given overnight liberty on the Friday before the game. We stayed at Carter's house in Arlington the night before, and left the next morning for the game, timing our departure to allow us to arrive for the march-on. All of us except Carter were in uniform. He planned on changing when we got to Philly. All went well until we got about 20 miles from the stadium. At that point we hit heavy traffic and came to a screeching halt. We

crept along at a stop and go pace and it just got worse the closer to the stadium we got. Surely most of the traffic was bound for the game.



### **The Culprits...Carter, Banda, Borlet and Praeger**

We started worrying that we may be late for the march-on. Plus several of us were in bad need of a head call. I was about to bust, and since we were stopped, I jumped out the car and headed for some trees on the side of the road. Into the tree line I went unzipping my trousers and whipping it out as I went. The tree line turned out to be very thin, and I found myself standing in someone's back yard relieving myself. I don't know if I was seen or not, but I quickly reassembled myself and ran back to the car, which by now was creeping slowly along.

But it was not me that was suffering the most. Lionel was driving the car and his bladder was increasing in volume with each mile. He was in misery as we crept along. Finally we came to a service station and pulled off. Lionel couldn't get out of the car himself. We literally had to carry him, in a sitting position, into the head. I have seldom seen such a look of nirvana as appeared on the Owl Man's face as he emptied his bladder for two or three minutes.

Then back to the road. We crept along keeping a close eye on the clock, which was also creeping along toward march-on time. We finally found a parking place near the stadium, but had just minutes to make formation. Jim changed as quickly as he could into uniform as we all urged him to go faster. The end result was that Carter was dressed in the Service Dress Blue blouse and trousers, but his shirt was a light yellow oxford button down and his tie was a bluish paisley print. No time to do any better, so off we ran toward the stadium.

The Brigade of Midshipmen came into view. All 24 companies were lined up one behind the other in a field outside the stadium in company mass formation. Between us and the formations was a cyclone fence with strands of barbed wire on top. The fence was about 50 yards from the Brigade formation. The gate was too far away to allow us time to use it without being late, so we charged the fence and started climbing. Three of us made it over without incident. Borlet's tie got caught on the barbed wire and he almost hanged himself. It took us a few seconds to rescue Bob before we started our dash to safety.

While we were climbing the fence Mids in ranks noticed us and started to cheer. Officers were running in our direction, Form 2s in hand. As more and more companies saw us, and saw the officers closing in, the cheers became louder coming from all up and down the line. After rescuing Bob, we put our heads down and sprinted for the Sixth Company, disappearing into the ranks before being intercepted to the cheers of the Brigade. We were winded, but safely into formation just before the march-on started, and except for Jim's yellow shirt and paisley tie, indistinguishable from anyone else in the company. The disappointed officers gave up and headed back from whence they had come.

Navy won the game and we all celebrated at our favorite downtown Philly restaurants and pubs and then made our way back to Annapolis later that night. I can't remember if we drove back or took the bus. It doesn't matter, because there is nothing like the afterglow that results from beating Army, especially during the time that you were a Midshipman. That great feeling is still there years later after a victory, but it is not as sweet as when you lived it.

So there you have another story of some of the antics of the ne'er-dowells from the Sixth Company. A lot of time has passed since then,

but when we get together, "...when two or three shall meet, and old tales be retold...", as the song goes, we have discovered that we still haven't grown up.

Semper Fidelis

Dirck Praeger

## The Weekend Liberty by Dirck Praeger

### - Or, Cowboy boots, whiskey and Broadway musicals don't mix

A while back I wrote a story about the one and only time that I went over the wall when I was a Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy. Starring in that sordid saga was a young lady whom I called The Cowgirl from Wyoming. I avoided using her real name to protect the innocent and to avoid embarrassment. My erroneous assumption about her amorous intentions toward me led me to risk going over the wall in the first place. It didn't work out too well as you will see if you read that tale.

([http://www.mofack.com/over the USNA wall.htm](http://www.mofack.com/over_the_USNA_wall.htm))

My USNA roommate was Dick Williams. The Cowgirl was a sorority sister of Dick's younger sister Monte from their days at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. She was teaching school and living near Baltimore when we were First Classmen (seniors to the uninitiated), and Dick got in touch with her in the fall of '62 at Monte's suggestion. I followed along and started dating her through the fall and into the early winter of '63.

To add a little perspective, the tale I am about to tell happened before the Over the Wall incident. It was late fall and Dick and I decided to take one of our coveted First Class weekend liberties. If I remember correctly, we were authorized two weekends during First Class year. The Cowgirl invited us to spend the weekend in Owings Mills, Maryland, where she lived, to take in dinner and a stage show, and to see where things took us after that. She arranged a date for Dick and arranged to pick us up at the Academy after Saturday noon meal formation and inspection.

A few bills slipped to a Moke (as we called janitors back then) resulted in the magical appearance of a couple of fifths of bourbon of some indeterminate brand which were stowed in our overnight bags. After Saturday noon inspection we hustled to our room and changed into civvies, which in Dick's case included a pair of cowboy boots. We

grabbed our overnight bags, departed Bancroft Hall and met The Cowgirl and Dick's date waiting for us outside the First Wing. Mercifully, I can't remember Dick's date's name, so we'll just call her Ann. We climbed into the car and headed for Baltimore. Dick broke out the bourbon, took a swig and passed it to me. The girls declined to partake. This should have been a warning sign.

We continued to work on the bourbon as the afternoon progressed, and the girls still declined to partake. By the time we entered the restaurant for dinner Dick and I, who have always considered ourselves to be comedians, were only slightly uninhibited in our language and manner and weren't too much of an embarrassment to the girls.

After dinner we headed for a local theater where The Cowgirl had gotten tickets to the Rogers and Hammerstein musical "Carousel". After a few more hits on the bourbon, we entered the theater for the show. It was a "theater in the round" presentation, but that's about all I remember about it. Being the comedians that we were, Dick and I, fortified by the bourbon, spent much of the show making loud and snide comments about the plot, the actors, the scenery and everything else in general. The girl's embarrassment meter crept upward.

We left the theater and headed back for the Cowgirl's apartment, continuing to take slugs of the liquid loudmouth, and the result was...louder mouths. Of course we thought ourselves to be hilariously funny and laughed uproariously at each other. The girls were more circumspect. When we arrived at the apartment we put some music on, I kicked off my shoes and Dick his cowboy boots, we lowered the lights, sloshed down some more bourbon, and figured it was time for some lovin'. Our clumsy advances toward The Cowgirl and Ann resulted in them locking themselves in a bedroom. When they didn't come out we decided that the least we could do was drink the rest of the rotgut. And that's the way the rest of the night went...the girls in the bedroom, Dick and I asleep on the couch and floor, and the music playing.

The next morning we awoke with monumental hangovers as The Cowgirl and Ann cooked us some breakfast. Afterwards, we all loaded into her car and she drove us back to Annapolis. As we entered the yard Dick tipped up the remaining bottle of bourbon and

finished it, tossing the empty on the backseat floor. We thanked the girls for a wonderful weekend and disappeared into Bancroft Hall. I never did figure out why The Cowgirl continued to see me after that weekend, but we lasted into the winter until the time I went over the wall in pursuit of something that The Cowgirl was never destined to give me. What she did give me can be summed up in this little ditty that was recited to me by my fighter pilot friend MOFAK when I told him the “Over the Wall” story: “I’ve got crabs and balls of blue. The crabs don’t hurt, but the blue balls do.”

Dick read this tale and told me that he got rid of those cowboy boots only a couple of years ago. He must have kept them for the memories.

Thus ends one more adventure from Boat School days. How we ever graduated remains a mystery to me.

Semper Fidelis

Dirck Praeger

## Camping on the Shenandoah by Dirck Praeger

### Six ne'er do wells from Sixth Company in the woods

There were several days between the end of final exams and the start of June Week for the Class of '63 at the U.S. Naval Academy. First Classmen were allowed to take a few days leave during this lull in activity, and a bunch of us ne'er-do-wells from the Sixth Company decided that we would go camping. One of us...Bill Hughes...knew of an island in the Shenandoah River where we could settle in for a few days. My memories of this event are a little hazy, but I do remember it, and I'm relying on Bill and his store of photographs to craft this tale.

The participants were Bill Hughes, Walt Walters, Bo Kearns, Chuck Maclin, Clyde VanArsdall and yours truly. Actually only Bill, Chuck, Clyde and I were in Sixth Company. Walt and Bo had been transferred to Eighth Company during the big shuffle at the end of Second Class year, but since they had spent three years with us, they continued to pull liberty with us. And they continue to caucus with the Sixth at reunions.

I had been a Boy Scout, would become a field Marine, and after that became a scout leader and an avid backpacker. I know how to take care of myself in the woods. As I think back on this camping trip I am amazed that we survived the first night and am hesitant to admit that I participated at all. Unfortunately there is surviving photographic evidence of this event which documents my presence. I suspect that the other five share my trepidation at the memory of this trip alongside the other great memories we have of early June 1963 when we pinned on those gold bars and saw USNA receding in the rear view mirror.

We headed west out of the D.C. metropolitan area on Virginia State Route 7 toward Winchester. When we got to the river we turned onto a dirt road that paralleled the Shenandoah and drove several miles

until we found the island. We parked our vehicles and tried to figure out a way to get from the river bank to the island, a distance of probably about 50 yards. The river was fairly shallow but we didn't really want to get wet to start this misbegotten adventure. We scouted around and finally located a flat bottomed boat tied up nearby. We commandeered the scow and ferried ourselves and supplies to the island. Legend has it that I then stripped naked, poled the boat back to the shore, tied it up, and swam back to the island. Why we didn't just leave it on the island for future trips across I don't know since we had "borrowed" it in the first place.



**Chuck, Clyde and Walt underway before graduation**

Our supplies consisted of one dull axe, one knife, Midshipman rain gear for tents, ten pounds of bacon, twenty boxes of Triskets, 20 pounds of potatoes, coffee, toilet paper, paper towels and five cases of Carlings Black Label. We ran out of beer on the third day and had to make a trip to Berryville, Virginia for emergency resupply. We did a little field engineering and built a nice shelf for storage. I can't remember how, or even if, we kept the beer cold...probably stowed it

in the river. In retrospect I'm surprised that a raccoon or some other critter didn't run off with our bacon and potatoes.



### Supply stash

On the first day we did some work getting our camp site prepared, as you can see in these photos, but after that I can't recall much of what we did other than sit around and drink beer, and cook when meal times rolled around. I don't think there any fist fights or other skullduggery over the three days. My memory fails me. As the pictures show, Clyde and Bo spent a lot of time in the sack and the rest of us...just sat around. Bill climbed a tree to take some of the pictures.



Clyde and Bo in Z-land. Chuck, Dirck and Walt working on the Black Label.



**Walt and Dirck diminishing the beer supply. Clyde continues in Z-land. Note the dish drain used as a grill on the fire.**

On the third day we were visited by the farmer who owned the Island and the boat. This guy was a real Neanderthal...right out of "Deliverance". He had an accent that none of us could understand and sounded like he had flunked out of first grade. But he didn't object to us staying on the island as long as we didn't mess with his crops (cotton or beans or both, as I recall). I don't think he knew we had commandeered his boat.

We weren't real environmentally friendly during this adventure. It wasn't in vogue back then. We chopped down a number of small trees to build our supply shelf and to support our lean-toos. This was no small accomplishment considering how dull our axe was. We washed our dishes in the river...a definite no-no for contemporary campers and backpackers. I think we smashed all the empty beer cans and hauled out our trash. I can think of no other reason to

smash the cans. I'm pretty sure we left the island in pretty good shape when we departed in spite of our environmental laxity.



Bo and Clyde awake and on mess duty



## **Dirck and Walt smashing beer cans**

These last two pictures give a good overall view of the camp site and show what a bunch of amateurs we were, and incidentally, how we provided a distinct Naval Academy flavor to the place.



**Robinson Crusoe lives!**



## GO NAVY! BEAT ARMY!

So now you know how several Sixth Company stalwarts spent their time between our last USNA final exams and June Week. As I look back on it I guess it was as good a way to spend the time as anything else would have been, and we would have consumed the five cases of Carlings no matter where we were. Might as well do it where you don't have to shave and take a shower like we did every day we lived in Bancroft Hall. And as I look at these pictures and compare our young faces to what I see whenever the Sixth Company gathers today, we might have decided to camp on the river because all this happened almost fifty years ago. Today we'd probably get swept down the Shenandoah trying to pole the boat from the bank to the island. That's why we let our youngsters fight our wars.

Semper Fi,  
Dirck Praeger

## Second Class Summer Plebe Detail by Dick Jones

### Hitchhiking Adventures

Got a laugh today in reading Dirck Praeger's article about hitchhiking on our USNA '63 website. Made me think of my own similar experiences. They may also give someone a laugh. During our second class summer (summer of 1961), I was selected for the "Plebe Detail" for that summer. Back then, the plebe summer experience for incoming fourth classmen was totally run by second classmen midshipmen for the entire summer. Those of us who worked the plebe detail for the summer did not go to Pensacola for aviation summer, nor did we participate with the Marines. We simply worked the plebe detail for the entire summer. At any rate, the love of my life, even back then, was at home from college in our hometown, Greensburg, PA, for the summer. Those of us on the "Plebe Detail" were free from Friday afternoon at about 1600 until Monday morning at 0700 when we were required to be back in Bancroft Hall and ready to go back to work for another week on the plebe detail. On Friday afternoon, I would put on our summer dress khaki uniform, set off walking through gate 8 and across the old Severn River bridge and get myself set up on Ritchie Highway northbound. That is MD route #2. It was the beginning of what was usually a 6-7 hour hitchhiking journey to the Pittsburgh, PA area mainly to see Kay for a small portion of the weekend. My Mom never seemed to want to understand why I came home that way and tried to convince me that it would be a good opportunity to spend some "family time" there in Greensburg. Remember that back in those days, we did not have the extensive federal highway system

that we would find between Baltimore, MD and Greensburg, PA in making that trip today. I set the USNA navy blue gym bag on the ground in front of me with the large gold USNA logo facing the approaching traffic, and up went the thumb. It was north on MD route #2, Ritchie Highway. Then I went west on MD route #40 through Frederick, MD, on through Hagerstown, MD, westward to Hancock, MD. At Hancock, I turned northward on what I think was MD route #26 to Breezewood, PA. Once in Breezewood, I could make some real time, for it was there that I got to the entrance of the Pennsylvania turnpike. I stood at that turnpike entrance with my thumb in the air until I was able to pick up a ride westbound. In doing so, I really hit the mother lode and was off westbound at 65+ miles per hour. Here I come Katie! I left the turnpike at New Stanton, PA and usually hitchhiked the final 9-10 miles to Greensburg. This process usually got me home to Greensburg at about midnight Friday. Time for a quick shower and then off in my Dad's car to be with my Katie and possibly our high school friends involved in some nefarious activity. Poor Mom! Kay and I usually had a beautiful Saturday together and then a glorious Sunday together until the appointed hour at 1900 on Sunday evening. Kay would then drop me off at the New Stanton interchange of the Pennsylvania turnpike clad in my USNA summer dress khakis and burdened with my navy blue USNA gym bag, now loaded with Mom's chow for the upcoming week. Up went the thumb as I began begging for a driver who now was PA turnpike eastbound. The return trip to Annapolis went one of two ways. Eastbound drivers were going to either the Baltimore area or would leave the MD route #40/US route #70 eastbound at Frederick, MD and turn southward toward Washington, DC. If to Baltimore, it was into the center of the city and then on to St Paul street, southbound. In Baltimore, St Paul was one way southbound while Charles St was one way northbound. I would usually hit Baltimore and St Paul St southbound at about midnight on Sunday night. Not a great deal of traffic moving. I walked so many miles through the middle of Sunday nights going

southbound through Baltimore. After Baltimore, it was back onto Ritchie Highway, this time southbound, and back to Annapolis. If my travels took me southbound at Frederick, MD, I usually hit the middle of DC at about midnight. Remember again, in those days there were limited federal highways and no beltways around either Baltimore or DC. It was into the middle of DC. I then usually walked eastward on East Capitol Street, Route #50, through DC in the middle of the night until I reached the outskirts of DC on route #50 eastbound to Annapolis. I never missed or was late for a Monday morning muster with the plebes at USNA. This all made for some interesting experiences. I can remember crawling up under a bridge overpass in the middle of the night outside Frederick, MD to get shelter from a driving rainstorm. I only ever experienced one male driver who was sure that he was in love with a young USNA midshipman. I rode in many a tractor or a tractor/trailer combo rig with drivers who were "highballing" the PA turnpike between the East and West Coast. One particular experience carrying long term implications. While westbound on Route #40 out of Frederick, MD one Friday evening, a big white Cadillac sedan screeched to a halt and the driver said "hop in." We got to know one another a bit. The driver was one "Zim Zimarel." Mr Zimarel was a Baltimore musician who was up and coming on the Baltimore music scene at the time with his big band style orchestra. He was originally from the town of Turtle Creek, PA, a town not far from my destination of Greensburg, PA. He frequently traveled the route on weekends to visit his mother who still occupied their family homestead in Turtle Creek, PA. I probably made that trip with "Zim," as he became known to me, a total of 3-4 times during that summer of 1961. None of those trips were prearranged. Each time I rode with him, it was simply a random pickup somewhere on the route to Greensburg when he came along, saw the USNA gym bag up ahead, and picked up the kid from Greensburg. Zim Zimarel became a Baltimore musical icon over the years and died in Baltimore in 1999 at the age of

82. Great guy! And what a homerun for me when he came along and I made the rest of the trip with him. So, no nights in jail or anything quite as exotic as described by Dirck. But still interesting and a great time so long ago. Incidentally, that love of my life married me in our USNA chapel on 6/06/1963. Kay McSteen Jones' memorial service was held in our USNA chapel on 12/05/2012. She is buried in our USNA cemetery in a common vault with our first child, Brian Richard Jones. Columbarium location is panel 35-1B. Kay will always be my best girl from Greensburg High School. What a guy does when he is in love! I would pay a lot of money if it would enable me to do it again! Go Navy. Be well. Blessings.

## Mal Wright, Larry Marsh and Adm. Rickover's Picture



This is to announce that there has been another exchange of the Admiral Rickover picture, this time from Larry Marsh to me. As you can see from the photo, the Admiral (Marsh) was, as usual, extremely clever in making this happen (I always lose the "cleverness contest").

Larry and I have been exchanging this picture since May, 1978, and as well as I can remember, this is the 38th passing of the vaunted photo. In the picture, I am pointing to the actual photo (8x10), which was clipped from a May, 1977, article in the Washington Post by Ned Beach ("Run Silent Run Deep" Ned Beach) on what it was like to "live with Admiral Rickover."

The occasion for the original photo was a visit to USS LOS ANGELES (SSN 688) by President Carter, accompanied by Admiral Rickover. As a former submariner, Carter had expressed an interest in seeing one of our brand new ships. Admiral Rickover, who was one of Carter's first guests in the White House after his inauguration, said, in effect, ". . . I can make that happen." Of course, the story got picked up by the news media and the Beach article was one of the results. This 8x10 is the photo that is usually passed between us, often under the most surprising of conditions (e.g. under the swimming pool winter cover, on top of the Christmas Tree as the "angel", under the covers of hotel room bed, etc.).

The "blowup" of the original photo on the poster board was a remnant of a 1994 Exchange of the original picture. Larry had been working at the Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) and was due to leave to be the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel. Of course, there is always a ceremony (medal, nice things, thank wife, etc.) at such times. At this one, the Secretary of the Navy, then John Dalton, presided (he had been clued in on it). The "picture" was staged with the connivance of the Secretary's Executive Assistant (surface nuke, can't remember his name, but he "understood" the cultural significance of all this).

The poster, draped for secrecy and was uncovered at an appropriate time in the ceremony - "gotcha." I guess that Larry has been packing that poster around for 17 years!! The whole thing came back to me two days ago in a huge box filled with pages and pages of balled up newspaper and with a return address at the Department of Energy (I had worked on DOE contracts for years, so this must have been part of the Operational Deception - OPDEC). After balling up all that paper, Larry must have "Popeye Forearms."

The blue items hanging from the top of the poster are airline "barf bags." Many of you know the significance of these. For those that don't, the story takes too long for this e-mail, even for an inveterate talker like me. Needless to say, they are a reminder of a special occasion in 1992 when my dear friend, Paul Middents, came up to me after a speech and said, ". . .Now I've heard it all, Wright gives a speech and women throw up."

## Diego Garcia USO Show 1985 or So by Dave Moore

Last night Lana and I watched the old movie "Dirty Dancing" which reminded me

of a favorite sea story. The second female lead in that movie was Cynthia

Rhodes and she played the early dancing partner of Patrick Swayze until she got

pregnant and had an abortion. She also was in Flash Dance and Staying Alive.

I was the XO at Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia for 12 months ('85-'86).

Every few months we would have entertainment from a USO troupe, often as

they made their way to a carrier in the Arabian Sea. Alongside the carrier pier

was a very long warehouse, which could probably hold everyone on the island.

At one end was a stage with a HUGE American flag as backdrop. As one of the

more senior officers on the island (on the backside of the world even a CDR can

have seniority) I was able to sit on the front row.

As I took my seat, the CO of the Naval Air Facility took out a small roll of toilet

paper and offered me some. I asked what it was for. He explained that a big

drawback to these seats were the humongous speakers located about 12 feet in

front of us that could be deafening and necessitated wads of toilet paper to

preserve your hearing. I followed his advice.

The entertainment was just great and toward the end of the program Cynthia

Rhodes came out on stage. She was 29, nice slim figure and a good voice. She started to sing a sultry, provocative song casting come-hither looks to the audience and like most men in that large audience I thought she had looked at me for more than just a second. As she slowly started to descend the steps from the stage, I even imagined she looked at me again. ( I should explain that I was better looking in those days!)

At the bottom of the stage she looked at me again and it suddenly dawned on me - she is coming over to flirt with me and I have got to get this toilet paper out of my ears ! As she drew nearer she briefly glanced away to the crowd and I quickly removed the toilet paper from my right ear. But now she was "locked on and tracking"; there was no opportunity to clear the left ear. As she stood flirting in front of me the crowd was going wild - and I am sweating bullets: PLEASE

God do not let her find the toilet paper in my left ear. I was suspended between panic and misery. I kept my head turned slightly to the left. She came closer and sat on my lap facing me, legs draped on either side of the chair. The crowd grew even louder. I think she was still singing but not sure. I was dying. I turned my head further to the left. Then being the nimble dancer that she was, she raises her legs and puts them over my shoulders. The warehouse crowd went berserk. She finished her song and returned to the stage. I doubt that Cynthia Rhodes has bothered to remember this episode near the Equator. But I do know that if she

has any  
memory of me at all, it was of the right side of my face.

Dave

P.S. My first week on Diego Garcia I had to entertain the girls from  
the Miss

America Pageant but that is another story.

(Did I mention that I was better looking in those days !)

Editor Note: Judge for yourself!

## WITNESSING A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION By Tom Kelley '63

In July of 1962, USS Kitty Hawk, CVA-63, of which I was a crewmember, was on a Mid-Pac cruise “shaking-down” after an extended repair period at San Francisco. At that time, Operation Dominic, a series of high-altitude nuclear weapons tests, was being conducted at Johnston Island. This specific test was named “Starfish Prime”. At the appointed hour (midnight, local time) on July 9, 1962, the device was exploded. This was to be at an altitude of 250 miles. My recollection is that Kitty Hawk was one thousand “slant range” miles away from the blast. The bow of the ship was pointed towards the explosion site, and the “countdown” was broadcast over the ship’s 1MC. We were advised to not look at the blast at the actual detonation time. We should turn our back, and look only after a number of seconds had passed. No problem. As the time approached, it was my intention to follow the recommended procedure, and to turn away at, say, the three second point. Well, the explosion occurred at (approximately) five seconds remaining on the countdown. The “state-of-the-art” of relaying communications, at that time was, perhaps, not quite as advanced as it is today. Our time information had, apparently, been delayed while being “processed” through a number of paths. Well, upon detonation, the sky was lit from horizon to horizon to a brightness equaling noontime. I recall thinking that one could read a newspaper in that light. This phenomenon persisted for five minutes. (Please understand that this occurred fifty-two years ago, and I can do no better as to what I saw than what I state here.) After the initial brightness, the characteristic mushroom cloud shape was able to be perceived; its color red and orange, and then changing to white. The total length of time of visibility of the blast was fifteen minutes, as I remember.

## CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE KKK by Dick Jones

This from the real life days of Rod Steiger, Archie Bunker and Mississippi Burning. Time was the summer of 1964. Place was Meridian, MS. I had just finished basic flight school in the T-34 in Pensacola, Fla. Kay and I were off to basic jet training in Meridian, MS, at NAAS Chase Field. Our family consisted of a two week old son and our cocker spaniel, Gumdrop. "Gummie" had been my wedding present to Kay and was purchased in Eastport back in Annapolis, MD. We made the trip in a 1962 Chevrolet Corvair, no air conditioning. One needed no air conditioning back in PA where Kay had been teaching school and where the car had been purchased. I tell the story that the Corvair in which we traveled contained absolutely every possession that we had in the entire world. Kay never agreed and always said that a small moving van was following us and would deposit our meager belongings in Meridian as we got established. Who knows? My story sounds better. We got to Meridian on a hot afternoon and had a flat tire. We could not purchase a tire. In those days, credit cards did not exist and we literally had no money. We ended up having the Corvair towed to the local Ford dealer and bought a new 1964 Ford Falcon Squire station wagon, WITH AIR CONDITIONING!!! It was really easy purchasing a car. If we failed to pay, they could just garnish my wages, report me to the base CO and I was really in deep kimshee. Once established in Meridian, we used to go out riding in that Falcon Squire just to turn the A/C onto max cold, high fan and just enjoy the ride. We registered for a motel room in the outskirts of Meridian. The motel was owned and run by two women; a mother (probably in her 60s) and daughter (in her 40s or so) team. Their husband/father had been a retired US Army Colonel and the motel had been their intended retirement undertaking. Colonel passed away and left Mom and Daughter to run the motel. Kay and I had a new baby who was no more than a month old having been born at the Pensacola Naval Hospital on 7/05/1964. Neither Kay nor I knew anything about caring

for an infant. I was to be out and gone most days hoping to learn to fly the T-2, Buckeye, at NAAS Meridian. So, the mother/daughter motel owner team spent most of their time in our rented room caring for baby Brian and helping Kay. They became very good friends. I checked into NAAS Meridian at about 0730 on a Sunday morning. I was immediately assigned to lead a "search party" on the following Thursday. It was an interesting time in Meridian, MS. The three civil rights workers transported to Meridian from up North, Mssrs Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner, had gone missing and been presumably murdered. Our Thursday search, in addition to searches earlier in the week by others, was to be for the missing bodies. The bodies were found on Tuesday as I recall, so I never had to make such a search. They had allegedly been murdered by the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan which at that time was a big thing in MS. The trial was held on the base at NAAS Meridian, presumably for security reasons. As I flew while the trial was underway, an interesting thing took place. By then, we had rented a duplex in Meridian that was shared with another flight student and his wife. Let's say it was a day when I was off flying at the base. Let's say that Kay was at home with baby, Brian. At 1300 or so, the telephone might ring. Kay answers - "hello." Silence on the other end of the phone. Kay might then hear a woman's voice saying something like the following. "Kay, do not ask any questions, just listen. Stay away from the Meridian courthouse between the hours of 2:00 and 4:00 this afternoon." Nothing more, the phone call then just hangs up. Silence. When I return later that afternoon from the naval base, we turn on the TV to the local evening news at 1800. Headline - "Ku Klux Klan burns cross on Meridian courthouse steps at 3:00 o'clock this afternoon." We never really knew and could certainly never prove it, but certainly Kay had a Meridian local angel looking out for her while we lived there. We always thought we knew who that angel was, and that angel might call in two different female voices. Anyone remember "Mississippi Burning with Rod Steiger which then became In the Heat of the Night with Archie Bunker/Carroll O'Connor?" We lived in the middle of it all in 1964.

## Carrier Torpedoed by Bill Pawlyk

Sunny blue sky punctuated by scattered puffs of cloud, a moderate breeze kicking up scattered whitecaps on a sea state two ocean. A great day to be at sea. We were operating in the SOCAL Op Area (Southern California Operating Area) off San Diego with the *USS Bennington* (CVS-20). *Bennington* was a WWII era modified Essex class carrier, now designated to be the flagship for a "Hunter-Killer" anti-submarine warfare (ASW) task force.

My ship was also a WWII-era destroyer modified to excel at ASW. The second of three five-inch caliber gun mounts had been removed, replaced by two triple barrel ASW torpedo launchers, one on either side of the 01 deck just forward of the ship's bridge. Amidships, between the two stacks a rectangular box-like ASW rocket mount stood. Called an ASROC (Anti-Submarine Rocket) launcher, it could rotate and elevate to fire a rocket up to several miles away. Each rocket could carry either a homing torpedo with a conventional warhead or a nuclear depth charge. The Navy would not publicly state whether or not a ship actually carried the nuclear version of ASROC.

Atop the after end of the deckhouse, a hangar space and a small flight deck were constructed. The hangar was about the size of a one-and-a-half car garage, opening out to the flight deck area. This complex was for an early version of the modern drone aircraft, called the DASH (Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter). DASH was a bare-boned construction of a jet engine fixed in an open pipe work frame with skids for landing gear. It was capable of carrying two ASW torpedoes or a nuclear depth charge under its ribcage. In practice, the only authorized payloads were conventional warhead torpedoes. This was because the remote control technology and reliability of the DASH itself was suspect. Several DASH birds were lost in training exercises, as they mysteriously refused to respond to the flight

controller's commands. One climbed vertically to around 30,000 feet on its own until it shook itself to pieces and

unresponsively. They did not have a self-destruct feature, an addition that might have come in handy on these unguided forays. Another of our task force's destroyers that also had DASH, had its helo zoom away in mid ocean with that ship and ours in hot pursuit trying to regain command until it ran out of fuel and fell into the sea.

Back to our bucolic day at sea. On this beautiful day, the Secretary of the Navy was embarked onboard the *Bennington* to observe anti-submarine warfare operations. We were to demonstrate the DASH in all its glory. I was the Officer of the Deck (OOD), conning the ship. My position was mainly on the port wing of the bridge, on the side towards the carrier. My destroyer took position on the right hand (starboard) side of the *Bennington*, a hundred or so feet away, just forward of the carrier's island to afford the SECNAV group a firsthand view of the helicopter as it took off from the flight deck at the rear of our ship. The DASH was then to rise to masthead height, fly forward of both ships and make a racetrack pattern around them, coming up from astern in the gap between the two ships. The DASH carried one dummy torpedo shape that weighed several hundred pounds. The launch was uneventful, and the DASH smoothly rose, flew forward and turned left across the bows of both ships, then proceeded back past the carrier circling astern to come up between the two ships at an altitude of about one hundred and fifty feet. As the drone approached the ships, coming up from the rear, a cacophony of excited voices crackled over several radio circuits in alarm. Just prior to the DASH launch, the *Bennington* had launched a flight of twin-engine antisubmarine hunter aircraft, known as STOOFS for their military aircraft designation, S2F. This flight of four aircraft had catapulted from the carrier, swung out to sea and then back across the ships' course to land at San Diego's North Island Naval Air Station. The flight leader, on his own, decided to give the SECNAV a good show by making a very low pass across the bow of the *Bennington*. Unfortunately, his maneuver proved to be ill timed. His planes were on a virtual collision course with the DASH. Controllers tried to alert him and his wingmates of the danger and to pull up or veer off. The DASH controller on board our ship got similar warnings. At this point, the DASH was just astern of the *Bennington's* island structure, flying about the height of its stack, about midway (fifty feet from either ship). The STOOFS flashed by at almost the

same altitude. The DASH did a little jiggle in midair, and swerved into the mattress spring-looking radar antenna on the *Bennington*. Shrapnel flew about, the fuel tank on the DASH burst into brilliant orange-yellow ball of flames, which spewed over the entire forward part of the carrier's island structure. Chunks of debris fluttered down the side of the island into the sea between the two ships. The torpedo shape flew over the gun director on top of the forward part of the island and down into the carrier's bridge, where it burst through the overhead onto the Navigator's plotting table. The ship's Navigator had just leaned over the table to check a position, when he turned around and stepped back just as the torpedo burst through, into the very spot he had been seconds before.

As fate would have it, the next evolution planned was a crash and damage control exercise. The carrier's fire-fighting crew was on the flight deck, with hoses already charged when the accident occurred. Before all of the debris had finished fluttering to the sea, the damage control teams had the entire forward part of the island foam covered and the fire extinguished. Page 3 wpawlyk 11/10/2015

This also meant the bridge personnel could not see a thing, with the bridge enveloped in thick foam. They also were deaf and blind electronically. The crash severed their radio and radar connections. Immediately, I ordered right full rudder and increased speed to pull safely away from the crippled carrier. Within a few minutes, the situation stabilized. Fire hoses swept the carrier's bridge free of foam, to restore visibility. Fortunately, no one was injured in the crash and fire. The damages limited to the carrier's island structure, including its antenna arrays and some scorched paintwork down the side of the island - and of course the destroyed DASH. The bridge of the *Bennington* had the torpedo securely imbedded in it, the tail still outside with the nose resting on the Navigator's table.

All ships immediately returned to port in San Diego. A formal investigation ensued. The upshot was not good for the S2F flight commander, whose career abruptly ended. Although it turned out that technically flying the DASH in the area we were operating in was in violation of Navy policy (too close to land), no one else suffered since lots of brass from the Admiral, to the Commodore of our destroyer squadron and my Captain were involved in approving the flight. My ship's flight controller was exonerated since no one could be sure exactly what caused the DASH to veer into the carrier's antennal. Conjecture included electronic interference from the high-powered radars, which were just feet away from the DASH; the turbulence from the low pass of the four aircraft; or a jittery hand of our DASH controller due to the excitement and the noise of the low pass of the aircraft.

The next day I was tasked to go to the shipyard, where the *Bennington* was docked for repairs, to retrieve the torpedo shape from the bridge. I stood on the carrier's bridge and watched as a shipyard crane slowly pulled the torpedo up and out, leaving a gaping hole in the overhead. I marveled that no one had been killed or injured. Within a week, the *Bennington* was as good as new. And so, that is how I was involved in the torpedoing of an American aircraft carrier. We did not paint a carrier silhouette on our bridge as a memento, however - although it might have been fitting.

## Raising the Fifty Star Flag in New York City by Jon Harris

Each time a new state enters the Union, a newly designed flag (with a different field of stars) is created and then first unfurled on the next Independence Day. The last two states admitted to the Union were sandwiched around the entry of the Class of '63 into the Naval Academy; Alaska in January of '59 and Hawaii in August. President Eisenhower decreed first in January that a 49-star flag be created for Independence Day, 1959, and then again in August he decreed that the 50-star flag be prepared for July 4th, 1960.

That date coincided with a portion of the consolation prize experienced by the many members of the classes of '61 and '63 assigned for the summer cruise to the USS Northampton (CLC-1), President Eisenhower's command ship. The Northampton's mission for that summer was to steam over to Paris, France to pick up the President, and then take him to a summit meeting with Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Russia.

That was the plan. In fact, those of us assigned to the Northampton had to take finals early and miss all of June Week to make the ship's schedule.

But that plan was not to be. In May, U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers had been shot down on a spy mission over Russia, and so the invitation by Khrushchev was revoked, and the Northampton was all dressed up with no place to go.

And so Plan B was executed, and our ports-of-call, instead of Paris and St. Petersburg, turned out to be Montreal, New York City (over the Fourth of July), and (“a tough duty but somebody had to do it”) Bermuda.

We arrived in New York City on about July 1st, so by the Fourth, most of us Youngsters were tapped out (in energy as well as finances). So, when a call came in to the enlisted quarters where we were billeted for two Mids in Dress Whites “needed for a volunteer mission”, not a lot of hands went up.

But I considered the situation to be potentially positive...I mean what wrong could come of going somewhere in SDW with White Gloves.

So, I volunteered. Another of our classmates also did, but not someone that I was acquainted with (and to my chagrin, in the fog of a half century of memories, I have lost his name).

We met at the Quarterdeck and asked the Officer of the Deck what we would be doing. He pointed to a van on the pier and said that all he knew was that we were to go into town on that van. When we got to the van, the driver said that all he knew was that he was to pick up two Army Cadets at a hotel and the four of us were to be deposited somewhere downtown. Hmmm.

After picking up the Cadets, we drove for a while and then stopped in front of a building in what the driver said was the "Financial District" (which meant nothing to me).

A naval officer met us and said that we were going to the roof of the 15- (or so) story building. That was a tad unnerving, until he told us what this was all about.

It seemed that we were about to raise the first 50-star flag over the city...and, if I heard correctly, the second one raised over the 48-contiguous states, after the first one was raised at 12:01 AM over Ft. McHenry in Maryland. Precisely at noon, a band down below (in the large 5-sided intersection) would begin the Star Spangled Banner, and two of us (one mid and one cadet) would raise the flag, and the other two would stand as honor guards.

Our first responsibility was to determine which each of us did what...so each couple did the tried and true "Rock, Paper, Scissors". I won and chose to be one of the two to raise the flag.

After that, I went over to the ledge around the roof and looked down to the street. Wow, there was band, some military types, and what looked like politicians and spectators. This was a bigger event than I had assumed. But it still didn't kick in to the reality of my being a part of an historic event in our nation's history...especially in looking back from July 4th, 2014, realizing that the 50-star flag has been unchanged much longer than any flag in that history.

Precisely at 12:00 noon, as we heard the first notes of the National Anthem from down below, the officer gave the command to slowly raise the flag and for the honor guard to hand salute. After we raised it and tied the lanyard down, we also saluted the newest edition of "Old Glory".

Not being familiar with New York City at all, I didn't really ever hear or

know of exactly where this took place, other than in the "Financial District". But some 52 years after the fact, I was perusing NYC on Google Earth, looking down around the Stock Exchange area, when I suddenly saw something that had etched itself into my memory...the five-sided intersection that contained the band and everyone else when I looked over the ledge of the roof.

And, sure enough, it was not only in the "Financial District", it was the tall building right next to the shorter and iconic "New York Stock Exchange"...the corner building at the corner of Wall Street and Broad.

Thus endeth the saga of "The First Fifty-Star Flag". Then on to the azure-blue waters and sparkling sands of Bermuda, with the terror of motorbike touring of the island on the wrong side of the roads. But those are "Tales for Another Time."

## Army-Navy Coin Toss 1962

Steve Hoy-Navy Team Captain

At the game, Army was the visiting team was entitled to make the call "Heads or Tails". John Ellerson was the Army captain. John later became a Major General and is the older brother of the current Army coach, Rich Ellerson. As it turned out, John called it wrong and after JFK picked up the coin, he handed it to me saying, words to the effect, "I believe you get the coin". As the president then turned to be escorted to the Army side, John leaned close to me and said "I think I should turn him in for giving away government funds" (words to that effect) .... my memory is that JFK turned and smiled. John was one cool customer, he stood very relax through it all, whereas I was hyped and so anxious about the game I could barely speak, or keep my knees still. You can almost see that in comparing John's posture to my own. No wonder he became a Major General ... cool under fire. So, I brought my coin to the sidelines wondering where I could secure it. Peyton Carroll, who was the birddog from the west coast that had recruited me, along with about 16 other players from California, was there so I gave the coin to him to hold for me. From there, I did not see the coin again until after graduation. On graduation, my mother gave me a small plastic case containing a silver dollar and a small photo from the coin flip. She told me Peyton had given the coin to her after the game. I had always wondered if it was the real thing or if mom had just substituted another coin and added a bit about Peyton giving to her. The coin in the case was dated

1923, which seemed odd.

When I read about Tom's coin that he received from Cyrus Vance with a note that it was the coin that JFK would have flipped, I noticed that it was 1923. Of course, I then knew that my coin was most likely authentic. I wrote Tom a note, telling him just about all of the above. Tom wrote back, saying "Thanks for the remarkable history on your coin toss in 1962 which helps me because knowing Army was the visiting team in 62, then they were the home team in 63 and explains why Cyrus Vance as Sec Army had the Kennedy coin. I guess he sent it to me because I won the toss and we won the game.....a wonderful gesture by him. I do not know who flipped the "other" coin in 63."

# Olden Times Upon the USS TULLIBEE - by Pete Savage

## SSN597

USS TULLIBEE - SSN597 was in dry dock at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for refueling and retrofits under the SUBSAFE Program established after the loss of THRESHER. It was a very long dry dock period.

Jerry Jordan was the Supply Officer. I was the Communications Officer. We were both nuc trained and stood watch in-hull during refueling. Jerry got "emergency orders" one day to report to a sub in Hawaii, and I relieved him as Supply Officer. Jerry was a very conscientious guy with an exceptionally well organized five drawer file cabinet filled with detailed documents of every aspect of the Supply Department. But more about that later...

Because Jerry left TULLIBEE immediately, there was no time for a handover of the Supply Department. Thankfully, Jerry had a very competent Supply Petty Officer reporting to him named Troxell. Shortly after Jerry left, Troxell asked me if he could order a few Igloo Coolers that would be placed in hull and at the gangways to keep drinks for the crew who were on watch at the gangways and in hull. He said he'd like to order five! I signed the requisition.

Now remember, this was back in the OLDEN days, before computers and tablets and smart phones. When something was ordered, Troxell would fill out an IBM card requisition by hand, and take it to the Shipyard Supply Department, which would then order the requisitioned material.

When Troxell filled out the requisition for the Igloo Coolers, he wrote "5" in the "quantity" field.

A few days went by and 3 or 4 Igloo Coolers were delivered to the barge where our offices and bunking spaces were. A few days later several more Igloo Coolers showed up. We were busy with the overhaul and refueling and didn't pay much attention. A few days later I received a call from the Shipyard Supply Department saying they had a freight car of material for TULLIBEE. I asked them to send it down to the siding alongside the dry dock as it certainly was overhaul

material.

When we opened the door of the freight car we found IGLOO COOLERS!!!! An entire railroad freight car filled with IGLOO COOLERS!

How did that happen?

Troxell wrote "5" in the "quantity" block of the IBM card requisition. His "5" was dutifully keypunched by the Shipyard Supply Department in the left hand digit of the "quantity" block. The computer then filled in the remaining four digits of the "quantity" block with zeroes, thereby entering a requisition for 50,000 Igloo Coolers for USS TULLIBEE!!! As we unraveled what happened, we learned the "computer" had issued shipping orders for Igloo Coolers to TULLIBEE from all over the United States. And because the Federal Supply System didn't have 50,000 coolers on hand in warehouses, the "computer" had issued a contract to Igloo to produce more coolers!

Now... about that five drawer file cabinet filled with meticulous files! Running both Communications and Supply, and standing Engine Room watches didn't leave me much time to go through those five drawers.

We had an annual Supply Inspection conducted by SUBLANT and didn't need anything in those five drawers. Because Jerry Jordan and Troxell had done such a great job of organizing and running the Supply department on board, we finished the inspection with flying colors!

When we moved back on board TULLIBEE, there was no room for the five drawers of files. Reasoning that we got high marks on the inspection without ever touching those files, Troxell and I dumped

them all!

## Mister "B" by Bill Kennedy

Mister B was an enigma to the Executive Department that spanned two Naval Academy classes and four academic years. It was fairly well known in the Brigade that the Superintendent's wife, Mrs. Davidson didn't like the flat black appearance of the midshipmen's blue winter uniforms. It is rumored, and may be true, that she persuaded the shift from blues to whites several weeks before it was really warm enough to be wearing white. It gets cold in Annapolis and outdoor morning meal formations in early spring 1961 were often cases of the shivers.

John Arthur, '62 was on watch on one such nippy morning and rigged his stereo system in a window of Bancroft Hall with a microphone and pointed the speakers into Tecumseh Court. When the morning meal formation stabilized he called out in a booming voice:

"Good morning Brigade of Midshipmen! My but you look cute in your little white sailor suits! My name is Mister B, husband of Mother B, and subconscious of the Brigade."

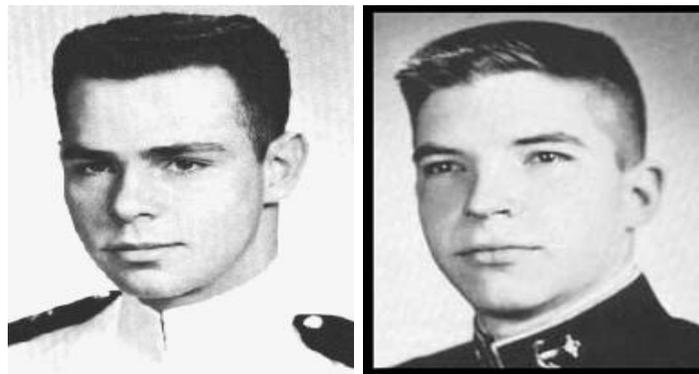
We often called the Bancroft Hall dormitory "Mother B". John's effort was laudable but he was apprehended and disciplined for it.

Bill Kennedy, '63 became intrigued with the concept of poking friendly fun at the Academy administration with special emphasis reserved for the Executive Department. His delivery method, however, was quite different. His weapon of choice was the public address system in the midshipmen's mess hall, normally used for instructions and announcements. Starting shortly after John Arthur stopped being Mister B (John was still running off extra duty) Bill made his first morning meal presentation. It, and the many that followed, began shortly after the Brigade was seated and led off with a theme song, a rollicking parody of Nancy Lee (Sailing Sailing Over the Bounding Main) and the now infamous "Good morning Brigade of Midshipmen! My name is Mister B". Another "feature" often heard in a presentation

was a perfectly disgusting audio clip of vomiting and wretching accompanied by vigorous splashing sounds that added authenticity. This was Mister B's special way of expressing how he felt about some things.

These presentations were made somewhat at random until September 1963 when the introduction changed slightly to "My name is Ensign B". The content ranged from complaints about the morning menu to dirty tableware but the most entertaining for the Brigade and irksome to the Executive Department were when someone had done something sufficiently bone headed to be celebrated with a Mister B presentation. What probably made them as entertaining as they were was that every midshipman knew that Mister B was in no way affiliated with or controlled by the Executive Department and how it nettled the officers that they couldn't catch and punish him. The pieces have been called irreverent, amusing, and sometimes boring. The persistent thread, however, was that the authorities were powerless controlling or stopping them.

### The Protagonists



Johnny Arthur, '62 (left), was the first Mister B. His distinguished career was brief. He made one presentation one morning in Tecumseh Court and was captured and tried for it. His successor had a longer and more distinguished career, making countless presentations and was never caught or tried. Although Johnny Arthur ceased to be Mister B, he was an active contributor. Most notably the

trademark vomiting sound was recorded with Johnny leaning into his first wing tiled shower making the wrenching noise while I sloshed water from a wastebasket between his legs to make the splashing sound. The revolting sound following the nausea seizure was courtesy of the drain in Johnny's shower.

### Who Knew?



To my certain knowledge the only officer in the Executive Department with certain knowledge of Mister B's true identity was USAF Captain R.W. McLain. He was OinC for WRNV, I was recording engineer for WRNV. More than once WRNV was suspected of being at least an accomplice and I took him into confidence so that he could credibly deny any affiliation between the Mister B presentations and the radio station. There was, indeed some collaboration among WRNV personnel, but the station itself had nothing whatsoever to do with Mister B. If he ever disclosed my identity (and I don't think he did), it didn't have any severe consequences. There were some close calls, i.e. darned near caught, but I think they came with the territory, not attributable to Capt. McLain.

### Were There Any Confederates?

There was, indeed, a sympathizer in the Executive Department, the Conduct Officer LT Phelan. Although he had no idea who Mister B was, he was an invaluable asset. Since he sat in on many of the meetings where strategy and tactics were discussed, he was able to dash off a written note and see to it that John Kelsey '64 got it. He knew that John could get the note into Mister B's hands quickly. LT Phelan's timely warnings of traps and other plans to capture and silence Mister B were among the reasons why it never happened. Is it the ultimate irony that it was the Conduct Officer who kept Mister B out of so



many scrapes?

## The Antagonists

There were certainly more than two Executive Department officers who pursued Mister B but the two most determined and even relentless were the 1962 Third Batt Officer, LtCol R.H. Twisdale, USMC and 1962-63 Operations Department Assistant LT G.E. Biles, USN. The former went so far as to try and trace audio lines in from the old WRNV spaces in the fifth wing (under renovation) and lines from the new WRNV spaces in the eighth wing. The latter had an almost Ahab-like borderline obsession. LT Biles' dedication to capturing Mister B was more than once rewarded by his being the butt of one of the breakfast presentations when he was sure to be in the mess. Mister B was about mischief, not villainy, these two officers never figured that out.



So How'd You Do It?

Mister B was not very clever. Johnny Arthur's concept of a rogue illumination of various stupidity was a good one. The flaw in his approach was that it made him (obviously) vulnerable to capture and discipline. He had to be on watch, excused from the morning meal formation to present to the formation. Further, he only reached half the Brigade by using Tecumseh Court. It made a lot more sense for Mister B to use the mess hall to reach the entire Brigade and to be inconspicuous by not missing any formations prior to a presentation. How to do that?

One day I *happened* to be in the mess hall near the stewards' serving station that handled the staff table. The PA system resided in a closet in the serving station. I noticed it and became curious enough to go examine it. My eyes focused on the right side of the amplifier where there was an input jack marked "AUX" and a similarly marked volume control just above it. That's all I really needed. Some of us may recall that there were some problems with dirty tableware in spring 1962 and then there were the perfectly wretched powdered eggs... I calculated the time it took to form up, march into the mess hall, have the morning prayer, and "SEATS!". It was mechanical



and entirely predictable except for one long winded chaplain one morning (nearly an oops). I simply left enough blank tape preceding Mister B to occupy the time it took me to start a tape recorder, chop to formation, march in, pray, and take my seat. There were never announcements early in the morning meal. The closest timing call was that time when Father Cahill overprayed his welcome. Chairs were still scuffling when Mister B's music started, Whew! I forget what the presentation was but I remember how hard I prayed for him to stop praying.

Yeah, it really was that simple. Walk down there with the tape recorder, plug in to the AUX jack, wait for the time to put the lever on "play", make formation and be in my seat when it started. This was the procedure until late fall '62. Some pinnacle of brilliance figured out that there was a door to the PA locker and it had a lock on it (for very good reasons). I arrived with the recorder and the PA locker door was locked. Remember that they had chiefs supervise the stewards and

march them back and forth? I was not an unfamiliar sight in the mess hall and that morning I must have looked forlorn because a chief boilerman walked over to where I was standing and removed a large keyring from his belt loop and left it on the corner of the table nearest me with a key extended. He then folded his arms and turned his back. I took the key and it **unlocked** the door! I dropped the keys on the table to make a sound loud enough for him to hear and turn around after I had vanished to make formation. I was always careful to make sure the door was locked when I removed the tape recorder after breakfast. This went on until just after Christmas leave. The BTC who had been so obviously helpful stopped me on my way to the PA locker. He told me that he was going back to sea, but his relief was a chief boatswains mate and he had briefed him. I looked over to see a gold crow barrel chested BMC standing next to the table with his back to a ring of keys with one extended. I was still in business.

The last Mister B presentation was made the first day of academic year in Fall 1963. Aforementioned BMC was rustling stewards when he saw me and did a double take. I was wearing tropical white long with supply corps ensign shoulder boards. I had been assigned to stay on after graduation and teach, I had not yet been detached to proceed to supply school, so I did a little welcome for '64-'66. The '67 guys didn't get it, but the others loved it. Once the chief got over the surprise of recognizing me dressed as an officer he put the keys in the customary spot and turned his back, arms folded.

### **How Did You Rig the Army Game PA System?**



To directly answer the question, I didn't. Don Nissley '64 was in the WRNV advance party to Veterans' Stadium. I had asked him to do reconnaissance to find a place where I could patch in the tape recorder. He reported back that they were too smart for that, it

couldn't be done but if I'd meet him in the press box, we'd figure something out. That, as it turned out, was the least of my worries. To keep my word with Capt McLain I could not ask Don to take an active part, so I had to run it myself. I knew I would be too nervous to speak a capella, so I had to tape it and get myself and the tape recorder into the press box before game time. This meant I had to be absent from the march on. I couldn't use my time worn medical excuses, the excused squad didn't go to the game, I had to be an "authorized absentee", i.e. I had to be able to tell my mustering PO, Mike Shelley coincidentally, that my absence was authorized. Well I couldn't do that unless someone authorized it and that meant an officer, Executive Department in my chain of command or something else. It was too early to disclose my identity, too much of the year remained for too much vengeance by the Executive Department. As I pondered the dilemma I was kissed with inspiration. I went to the company office and telephoned the Superintendent's quarters.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick answered and I introduced myself: "Mrs. Kirkpatrick my name is Mister B. Is the admiral available?" she asked me to wait and called to him "Honey there is a man named Mister B on the phone for you." She was doubtless puzzled by his whoop, but he picked up an extension and said "Mister B, I've heard a lot about you, what can I do for you?" I



explained that I wanted to make a presentation in Veterans' Stadium but I needed to be an authorized absentee for the march on, would he please authorize my absence? He cheerfully agreed and I thought I had cleared the highest hurdle. He suggested that it would be courteous to see to it that a transcript of what I planned to say be sent to Captain Burke (Executive Officer) and that he would see to it that only he, and Captain Minter (Commandant of Midshipmen) would be privvy to it. I eagerly agreed. I had correctly guessed that the Brigade would be more pleased that Mister B was on the PA system than they would be with what he had to say. I used the company officer's typewriter and prepared the text.

Things went smoothly right up to game day. I had made several presentations in the mess hall and I prepared the Brigade by using a drum roll, cymbal crash, and trumpet fanfare that would precede the Veterans' Stadium piece. Obviously I didn't tell them that, but I told them to remember those sounds. When the bus arrived in Philadelphia I debarked with the tape recorder and set out for the press box. I had climbed the steps to the first row of bleachers when I heard a clanking noise behind me. I turned my head to see what it was and to my horror the sword clad figure running across the field was **LT Biles!** I quickened my pace to get to the press box door and was nearly out of breath when I arrived and it **was locked**. Mister B was about to be caught red handed. The civilian guard looked through the window and saw my frightened look and the officer racing up the steps behind me. He opened the door and shut it behind me with LT Biles no more than three strides away. I heard the door knob rattle furiously but the guard didn't let him in. All he ever got to see of Mister B was the back of an overcoat wearing first class shoulder boards. I was so rattled that Don Nissley had to show me where the head was... Army marched on first, the Brigade took the stands and both teams took the field for pregame warm ups. A Woopoo was making announcements on the PA when it looked like our team was leaving the field. I had rigged a headset onto the tape recorder. I asked the Woopoo for the microphone, he gave it to me and I stuffed it in an earpiece of the headset and started the tape. The effect was nearly perfect. When the drum roll came over the PA about a quarter of the Brigade heard it and shut up. Half the Brigade shut up when they heard the cymbal crash and the rest shut up when they heard the fanfare. When the Brigade shut up, so did everyone else in Veterans' Stadium. When Mister B's theme song started the Brigade exploded in cheers, but shut up again just before it stopped (it was always the same length). Mister B had the undivided attention of everyone in the stadium.

### Did Biles Ever Figure It Out?

Short answer is yes he did, but the longer answer is more entertaining. One of the rites of the supply corps school is that copies of the commissary returns for the future duty station are given to each

fledgling supply officer. In order to calculate the amount of money available for rations, the personnel office prepares a form reporting the head count. The NavSandA 21 form is signed by the personnel officer. On a small destroyer type, I was being ordered to USS Lester (DE-1022), that is the XO. Imagine my horror when I recognized the signature of the Lester XO, LT George E. Biles. My only consolation was that I was dead certain he didn't know who was really Mister B.

I don't know who told him, but the gun boss on the Lester, Skip Davis, a ROTC, heard some Mister B stories and liked to repeat them in the wardroom over meals. He took special pleasure in that he knew how well the CO liked to hear them and how it irked the XO, the supply officer (me) remained silent. I suspect that Skip got the stories from either Dick McKenna or Eric Turner, but neither of them ever admitted it; he certainly didn't get them from me. One day the CO had gone ashore for lunch so XO was presiding. Skip started yet another Mister B story only to be cut off by the XO, audibly and visibly irritated. "I don't understand why you keep telling these stories when you weren't even there. They caught him you know." I looked up at him from my seat at the opposite end of the table "Sir?". "Hell Bill, he was in your class and I think he was in your company. Didn't you know him?" I hadn't realized they had figured out Mister B was in fourth company... "Well yes Sir. He was in my class and he was in my company, but XO I was **NEVER** caught!" His face flushed scarlet, he sputtered his soup and left the table before the main course was served. Needless to say, XO<->SO relations became more strained from that point forward. In fairness to Mister Biles he was a tough but good XO, a superior ship handler, and all around top notch seaman. Our wardroom was so short of officers that I accepted his suggestion that I stand deck watches. Wasn't any reason not to, I had the same training as they did and payday was only twice a month. I became an unusually proficient gunner and ship handler and most of those skills were developed through the teachings of LT George E. Biles. I will confess that I was relieved that Skip Davis wasn't as fond of telling Mister B stories after the disclosure occurred.

So there you have it. Some you may have known, but fewer than ten of us knew it all. What started as a poke at Admiral Davidson's wife

wanting us in whites before it was warm enough to wear them ended up as a collection of grins lasting for years.

## Space Stories by Steve Coester

### A Space Shuttle Story

I had several nice comments about my Apollo 11 story so I'm going to share one from thirty or so years later concerning an episode that ended up with my being the first individual recipient of the Manned Spaceflight Safety Award along with five other NASA and contractor engineers.

Every day the technicians, engineers and quality control personnel at Kennedy Space Center conduct tests, fix problems and make modifications. Every action is to provide the greatest margin of safety for the astronauts who will ride the Space Shuttle. This story is little different from hundreds of others performed by the dedicated personnel who worked on the Space Shuttle.

By this time I was a Rockwell System Specialist for the Main Propulsion System (MPS) after having been the MPS Engineering Supervisor since the first Shuttle flight in 1981.

I'm going to try to keep this from getting too technical, but that will be difficult. As most of you know, the Space Shuttle is assembled in pieces with first the two large solid rocket boosters being built up on the mobile launcher. Then the big orange external tank is lifted and mated to the boosters. Finally the orbiter is lifted and mated to the external tank and all connections between the orbiter and the tank are joined together. All this occurs in the Vertical Assembly Building (VAB) and system checks are performed prior to moving the whole stack the three miles to the launch pad.

For the Main Propulsion System these checks leak check the connections between the orbiter and the external tank which are located on two large umbilical plates one for liquid oxygen and one for liquid hydrogen. The LOX plate on the orbiter is shown and mates to a similar plate on the external tank. The umbilicals are held together by three explosive bolts that go through the three holes around the

large valve in the brown area shown in the photo.

This story concerns the smaller valve to the left in the photo. It is known as the Gaseous Oxygen two inch disconnect and its purpose is to direct high temperature, high pressure gas at 400 psig from the Space Shuttle Main Engines (SSME) to the top of the Liquid Oxygen tank to pressurize the LOX tank during flight. Here's a schematic of the two inch disconnect.

Okay now you are a Space Shuttle expert. The pre-rollout test for this assembly consists of a simple leak check of the interface between the two disconnect halves at the joint indicated as ET/Orbiter Interface on the photo. Because of external tank pressure limitations it is conducted at only 20 psig instead of its operating pressure of 400 psig. The allowable leak rate is a miniscule .29 scims, which won't mean much to you but picture perhaps a pea sized chunk of gas leaking per minute.

So we ran the test and while I don't remember the exact leakage, we flunked the test, although just barely. A problem report was written and analysis began. In the meantime management decided that the "stack" could be moved to the launch pad, which happened the next morning. I had recommended that we don't move to the pad because in all the previous Space Shuttle missions we had never experience any leakage at this joint, but I was overruled.

The design agency and NASA did their analysis and decided that the leakage we saw was acceptable for flight. I couldn't accept their reasoning because the test pressure was so far below the operating pressure and that we had never before seen any leakage. I wrote a letter to my management saying that I wouldn't sign off on acceptance of the leak.

By this time I had a pretty good reputation in the MPS community so management took a second look and decided we would have to look further into the problem. The big problem now was that the Shuttle was now on the launch pad and in order to disassemble the umbilical the Shuttle would have to be returned to the Vertical Assembly building and the orbiter removed from the external tank, which would cause a significant hit to the launch schedule.

I took a long look at the engineering drawings and proposed that it might be possible to do the disassembly in an unorthodox manner from inside the orbiter rather than externally. With help from my

NASA and contractor engineers we developed a plan to try the removal while still connected to the external tank and still at the launch pad.

Here's a schematic of the orbiter aft fuselage.

The work area would be at that big pipe right at the top. What isn't shown is that area is a mass of pipes, tubing and wires where it is almost impossible to even get a hand or tool into the required area. As a System Specialist my job was to be a design representative and advisor to the current launch contractor. But in this case everyone agreed this was my baby, so I prepared the troubleshooting plan and it was decided I would direct the removal operation.

I asked for and was assigned the world's best technician and I can't even remember his name. He should have received all the accolades after the job was done.

The technician and I crawled into the aft fuselage and wormed our way to the disconnect area. The tech reclined on a temporary work platform and reaching full arm length into the maze of tubing sequentially removed the bolts holding in the item called "bellville cover" on the schematic. I crouched beside him directing his actions and modifying the plan as we proceeded. Finally after hours of excruciating painstaking work by this dedicated technician we removed the cover.

What we found astonished us all. The bellville springs whose purpose was to provide 5000 pounds of pressure to seal the disconnect halves were cracked in half. This meant their sealing force was completely compromised and that when subjected to flight temperatures and pressures might have failed completely spraying high pressure oxygen into the aft fuselage and possibly causing a destructive explosion.

This all resulted in a redesign of the springs before putting it all back together and thankfully a safe return to flight.

At a large gathering in Cocoa Beach I was presented with the Manned Spaceflight Safety Award by the NASA Administrator Dick Gregory and received several other awards and perks such as a trip to Johnson Space Center in Houston where Yvonne and I were feted. I also met this young lady who looked like a recent college grad named Eileen Collins. Turned out she was a new un-flown astronaut who would later become the first female Space Shuttle Commander! I

was surprised at all the attention and just considered it part of the job and was thankful that management finally listened to my concerns. A funny sequel to this story is that after receiving the award from Administrator Dick Gregory, as I turned to exit the stage, I fell off of it about three feet to a concrete floor. I was holding the spear pointed award as I fell and it passed between my arm and chest. I was hurt slightly from the fall but fortunately not speared. Nobody even noticed my fall as they were all returning to the bar. I could just picture the headline in the newspaper: " Space Scientist stabbed by Safety Award!".

Sorry for all the technical details.

Steve

# Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster by Stephen Coester

## A Personal Perspective Stephen Coester

Some events are indelibly inscribed in our consciousness such as Pearl Harbor, 9-11-2001 and the Challenger Disaster on January 28, 1986. Here is my personal recollection of Challenger.

By the time we were ready to launch our second Space Shuttle Orbiter, Challenger on its tenth mission the Kennedy Space Center launch team has successfully launched twenty-four Space Shuttles including a Columbia mission just two weeks earlier carrying U.S. Representative Bill Nelson from our home district. The only major flaw in any of those missions had been July 29, 1985 occurring on Challenger when a faulty sensor caused a main engine (SSME) early shutdown and a abort to orbit on two engines, but all mission objectives were achieved.

The launch team and all of NASA were confident and launching had become fairly routine. I had participated in all the pre-launch processing and the Challenger was ready for flight. For the first several Space Shuttle flights I had been the Supervisor of Main Propulsion Engineering (MPS), but after a contract change I was now a MPS System Specialist, an advisor to the new prime contractor. Up to this time I had supported every mission for twenty-one years in the blockhouse or firing room and eventually supported one hundred and fifteen launches including Apollo, Atlas-Centaur and Space Shuttle. But on this particular Challenger mission another System Specialist and I agreed that only one of us needed to support the launch and we would alternate missions. He drew Challenger. So for every launch over thirty-three years that I was involved in this was the only one I didn't directly support on a launch console.

As the countdown progressed I was instead standing out in the

Launch Control Center parking lot with all the other employees looking forward to actually seeing a launch in person and not on a small black and white TV screen at my console.

I was very nervous because the outside temperature was below freezing. I had earlier experience with equipment problems in cold weather back in the Apollo days which caused line ruptures and a pressure related explosion in my GSE which caused some damage on the ground. The previous night's low temperature was an unheard of eighteen degrees and icicles were hanging from the launch tower. I kept trying to come up with a good reason to approach management but analyzing the MPS and engine systems couldn't come up with a cold related problem. After all, these systems operated in a range from -423 degrees to 3000 degrees so a little cold shouldn't affect them. I presumed all the other systems and contractors were doing the same thing.

The launch occurred without incident and at T+73 seconds right at the "Go for Power Up" call the explosion occurred. I saw the big cloud and solid rockets fly off wildly and immediately knew something had gone terribly wrong. I raced the few yards into the control room and asked my vice president what I should do. He told me to go home, come in early the next day because we'd have lots of work to do. The firing room was locked down and everything was sealed. For several weeks I poured over all of the thousands of pieced of flight data from the MPS system. Every instrument was totally normal until suddenly data just stopped at T+73 seconds like it had been cut by a knife. So a review of MPS and SSME data didn't provide any answers. Considering all of the onboard systems, the MPS and SSMEs had to be a prime suspect for any explosion like this. Barges, submarines and surface ships combed the seabed and recovered most of the Challenger pieces. These were laid out in a big tent. I had to walk through all this wreckage and examine each broken piece of my system to try to find a cause of the explosion. It was very emotional. The SSME power heads looked fine although everything was bent up. No obvious culprits were found in my systems.

I considered the most likely part of the MPS system that would cause an accident of this kind were the two seventeen inch disconnects between the external tank and the orbiter. Inadvertent closure of

either valve in a 17-inch disconnect during space shuttle main engine thrusting would stop propellant flow from the external tank to all three main engines. Catastrophic failure of the main engines and external tank feed lines would result.

There had been test failures and we had performed modifications on the valves to prevent them from slamming closed during 25000 gpm flow of LH2 and LO2 to the engines. Finally both disconnect plates were retrieved from the ocean and thankfully for me both were still locked in their open position. This eliminated them as a cause of the disaster.

Finally a sharp eyed engineer who was reviewing the launch camera films discovered a puff of smoke from one of the solid rocket segments and then flame from that joint. The cause had been found. The SRB leak occurred in exactly the wrong place impinging on the strut that held the external tank to the solid rocket and cutting through it. This caused the SRB to swing away from the external tank at the bottom and crush it at the top causing the explosion.

Finally the cause had been found and in my sorrow I could at least be thankful it wasn't my system that had caused the accident. Quickly it was determined that the cold weather had hardened an o-ring in one of the solid rocket joints. It didn't seal and the leak occurred.

I stayed in my position as MPS system Specialist for another eleven years and the day to day test and operations work was fine, but the last few minutes before launch was misery for me and I was extremely nervous at liftoff. Never after the Challenger disaster did I enjoy those last few minutes leading to lift off. It wasn't until years later that I understood how profoundly the Challenger accident had affected my psyche.

I've recently visited the KSC Visitor Center and each time I gazed at the SRB my first thoughts are about the accident. I would bet that virtually every other KSC employee has the same feeling.

## Launching Apollo 11 to the Moon by Stephen Coester

In 1969 I was a 28 year old engineer, one of several responsible for fueling the giant Saturn V rocket with Liquid Hydrogen.

My favorite Apollo memory was performing my final walkdown of the LUT just before launching Apollo 11. We were so aware of the enormity of what we were about to do. The MSS (mobile service structure) had been rolled back revealing the enormous Saturn V to full view. It was after dark and the spotlights were casting their cones of illumination on the stack. I was virtually alone on the tower as I examined every component of the LH2 system to be as sure as I could that "my" system would do its job. It was just me and the Saturn V with a bright moon overhead. I would look at the moon, then at the rocket and think, "I don't want to be anywhere but right where I am right now"

Long forgotten is the fact that the Apollo 11 launch was almost scrubbed on July 16. I was assigned to the launch console (C4HU) that maintained 100% liquid hydrogen level in the Saturn third stage which was used to propel the astronauts from earth orbit to the moon. Late in the propellant loading as we were beginning the S-IVB replenish operation, a large liquid hydrogen leak at -423 degrees occurred on the third stage replenish valve on the 200 foot level of the launch umbilical tower. Loading was terminated and the lines drained to prevent a fire or explosion and a Red Crew went to the Pad to fix the problem.

Using troubleshooting that I developed the Red Crew torqued packing and flange bolts and cycled the valve. then we resumed liquid hydrogen flow, but were unsuccessful in stopping the leak which prevented maintaining the 100% fuel level in the Saturn third stage. Without a full tank of liquid hydrogen there would be no launch. Finally the leak was isolated by freezing the valve by pouring water over it, but that made the critical valve inoperable. We then developed a way to use the large main fill valve which was not intended for that purpose to maintain the level and the launch countdown could finally

continue. For several hours another engineer (CPH1) manually cycled the valve from his console as I reported the tank level as it fell below or exceeded 100%. See the PCR (procedure change request) that I wrote.

For the actual voice transcripts by Public Affairs during this problem see <http://history.nasa.gov/ap11fj/01launch.htm>.

If we hadn't controlled the leak and maintained proper LH2 level the moon launch would have been scrubbed for at least July 16 and probably for several days.

I was twenty-eight years old when we landed on the moon, responsible for loading 600000 gallons of LH2 on the "moon rocket". The managers were in their early thirties and someone over forty was "the old man". Exciting times!

## Memories of Space by Stephen Coester

In 1964, I was medically separated from the Navy in California at age 23 with a wife and a newborn child. My parents were then living in Hollywood, Fl so we headed East to see them and figure out what a Naval Academy grad was going to do with the rest of his life. After searching the Miami want ads I chanced upon an ad from Boeing looking for engineers on the Apollo program at KSC. I interviewed and was hired by Boeing by John Redmond into the Systems Engineering department in November of 1964. I was about the four hundredth person hired by Boeing (led by Wendall Clark) which would eventually grow to several thousand.

1964-1973

Shortly after hiring in I was assigned to the team preparing Boeing's response to the Apollo/Saturn RFP and acted as coordinator along with Charlie Friend to compile the inputs of all of the many engineering disciplines into a proposal. Based on my performance in that task, Mitch Hart requested me to be his Administrative Assistant while setting up and hiring personnel for the Procedures and Specifications and Requirements group. During the buildup this was exciting but I became bored and wanted to become part of the hands on Launch Team. I requested a transfer to the Test Engineering group under Howard (Hardy Hardcastle) and reported to the Liquid Hydrogen group on Pad 39A under Rocky Calvetto. The Lead engineers were Stu Woodward and Wes Westmoreland. Gail Griebel patiently taught me the ins and outs of the LH2 System. Jack Kramer was my co-hart in getting every job done right. About that time they were conducting cold flow tests to validate the LH2 transfer system and preparing for the first Tanking test of the non flight Facilities Integration Vehicle, SA-500F. I was assigned to monitor the S-IVB tanking as C4HU in Firing Room One and supported the rest of The Saturn V launches from one console or another. On SA-508 I

controlled the LH2 tanking as CCLH. Incidentally this was Apollo 13.



We often referred to the Liquid Hydrogen system as a big vacuum system that also transferred hydrogen. I became expert in operating vacuum pumps and performing mass spectrometer leak checks of the vacuum jacketed piping. There were about forty vacuum sections each on LC39 A & B; and over twenty on each of the three LUTS (Umbilical Towers). Of course we also had to offload countless trailers of LH2 into the 800000 gallon storage dewar, perform component, subsystem and system level tests. The burn pond where vented hydrogen gas was disposed of was a continuous challenge with approximately 1500 individually adjusted bubble caps to maintain the proper vent pressures. We also prepared all of the system level test procedures and worked with the Test Conductors on the Launch Countdown and Tanking procedures. Also there were endless modifications and problems to resolve.

My favorite Apollo memory was performing my final walkdown of the LUT just before launching Apollo 11. We were so aware of the enormity of what we were about to do. The MSS had been rolled back revealing the enormous Saturn V to full view. It was after dark and the spotlights were casting their cones of illumination on the stack. I was virtually alone on the tower as I examined every component of the LH2 system to be as sure as I could that "my" system would do its job. It was just me and the Saturn V with a bright moon overhead. I would look at the moon , then at the rocket and think, " I don't want to be anywhere but right where I am right now"

On the eve of the fortieth anniversary of Apollo 11 I was confused because of the above story as to whether I was on the prime Firing Room crew or was on the back up team for that historic launch. I wrote my fellow systems engineer Jack Kramer who wrote the following:

*"You were C4HU for Apollo 11. I was CPH1. You were in charge of the SIVB level while we bypassed the replenish valve because of the leaking valve. I have (at home) the Procedure change you wrote so*

we could do it.

PROCEDURE CHANGE REQUEST			1. TCP TITLE	2. DATE	3. CONTRACTOR		
			2V Auto/17m LOX/LH <sub>2</sub> LOAD & DRAIN	7/16/01	BEING		
4. PCR NUMBER		5. TCP NUMBER		6. REV	7. VEHICLE	8. SHEET	
B-37-JIL		V-35014		004	504ESV3	L OF 2	
9. PAGE	10. TIME	11. SEQ.	12. CHANGE		13. REASON		
			REAL TIME - ONE TIME ONLY				
73		AFTER 1-1	ADD (A) PLACE S-IVB REPLENISH VALVE MAN/AUTO SWITCH TO MANUAL		TO MINIMIZE EXPOSURE OF A3311		
			(B) VERIFY THUMBWHEELS SET TO "00"		TO CRYOGENIC TEMPERATURES DURING RE-LOADING		
74		SECT 22	DELETE SEQUENCES 1, 3				
74		SECT 22	ADD NEW STEP AFTER STEP 2 2-1 143 CCHU CPHI MAINTAIN S-IVB LH <sub>2</sub> AT FLIGHT MASS BY CYCLING S-IVB FILL VALVE A3321 TO REDUCED, THEN CLOSED WHEN FLIGHT MASS IS 100%. REPEAT AS REQUIRED				
<del>75</del>		<del>NEW 9</del>	<del>AT T-10 MINUTES CPHI VERIFY A3321 CLOSED CCHU PLACE REPLENISH VALVE AUTO/MAN SWITCH TO AUTO</del>				
14. CONTRACTOR APPROVAL		DATE	15. KSC ENGINEERING		DATE	16. KSC TEST COND.	DATE
[Signature]		1-1-01	[Signature]		1-1-01	[Signature]	2/14/11



*Wayne Gray and Red Davis, a safety guy and I were on the launcher while you detailed the plans for torquing the valve bolts and leak checking the valve. When we warmed up the valve with the hard hat bucket brigade I came back to the firing room and you and I controlled the level by cycling the main fill valve using the slow fill mode. If we hadn't controlled the leak and maintained proper LH2 level the launch would have been scrubbed for the day."*

I was twenty-eight years old when we landed on the moon, responsible for loading 600000 gallons of LH2 on the "moon rocket". The managers were in their early thirties and someone over forty was "the old man". Exciting times!

Things were way different back then safety wise. Often I would climb outside of the handrails on the 240 foot level of the tower and shinny out on the vent line to inspect a pipe or expansion joint. Never gave a thought to a safety belt! During one cold flow test I got permission to stand out at the burn pond to monitor the flame patterns during venting which caused a hundred foot square by hundred foot high conflagration. And once we had a leak on the twelve inch vent valve from the storage tank. At that time helium for inerting was a rare and expensive commodity and it was going to take months for the tank to warm up enough to inert it with nitrogen so we decided to remove the vent valve with a partially full tank. We all had on anti static clothes and leg stats and fans to blow the hydrogen away, but as soon as the flange was loosened we were enveloped in a cloud of hydrogen vapor. I was sure an explosion would ensue, but we had little choice but to complete the job. Somehow we survived.

After the Apollo program was prematurely canceled, I was assigned to modify Pad 39B to support the launch of the Saturn-IB from the milkstool for the Skylab program. What a clever idea that was! During that period I received my MBA from FSU. After supporting all of the S-IB launches to Skylab, as the workforce was being decimated, I volunteered for layoff when a job launching Atlas-Centaur became available at LC36.



Skylab 2 on the Milkstool

## Burning up Security Vehicles

While I'm in a story telling mood here's another Tale from the Rocket Wars. Apologies to Stew Woodward, my old lead engineer whose account I've freely taken. For this story I was just an observer from my liquid hydrogen post in the Firing Room, but it's a good one. By the way Apollo 13 was lifted on Saturn 508 and for this flight I had been honored to operate the main LH2 loading console directing the loading operation. Liquid oxygen which combined with either RP-1 (kerosene) or liquid hydrogen powers the Saturn V rocket was stored on the perimeter of the launch complex in a large 800,000 gallon insulated tank (as was liquid hydrogen on the other side of the Pad). It was transferred across the field and up the Umbilical Tower using huge centrifugal pumps. Because the main transfer line was uninsulated a long chill down operation had to be performed to cool the line and provide high quality LO2 to the rocket. So hours before the loading of the Saturn V started, a small amount of LO2 (about 25000 gallons!) was allowed to flow through the pumps, lines, and

launch vehicle and out a drain into a ditch in the adjacent swamp. This was normally not a problem. The LO2 vaporized and the wind blew it away. It quickly mixed in with O2 already in the air. Apollo 13 was different. and we all know what happened later on its way to the moon. But this tale has nothing to do with that disaster.

We were doing a CDDT, Countdown Demonstration Test, a simulated countdown including fueling the rocket to show we could do it right on the Apollo 13 launch day. The day was overcast, not a breath of wind and the humidity and temperature were just right. On that day the pure oxygen draining into the ditch next to the road did not dissipate. It just sat in the ditch. You have all heard the stories of what happens in a hospital oxygen tent if you light a cigarette. In a 100% oxygen atmosphere it almost explodes it burns so fast.

The Security Police manned the guardhouse at the entrance to the launch pad. Just before we started loading the launch vehicle with fuel and oxidizer the pad was officially cleared, except for the police who did a final sweep of the Pad. They would get in their patrol cars and drive around the pad perimeter road with red lights flashing and loud speakers blaring, "Clear the Pad." They would then report to the test conductor that the pad was officially clear for propellant loading and launch and exit the Pad through a gate near the LO2 facility. That day as we followed the patrol cars around the pad and out the gate on our console television monitors, they entered a fog bank where the dirt road was near the ditch. Normally this would have been condensed moisture from the humid air caused by the cold oxygen gas, but for Apollo 13 it evidently was pure oxygen. As the patrol cars drove through the cloud the hot grease on the engines caught fire. We saw the Security Police jump out and run to safety. A second car and then third followed and exploded in flame. No one knew what the heck was happening. We watched as the patrol cars burned with the oil, grease and gasoline acting as the fuel and the pure oxygen. The vehicles melted down to the engine blocks. Fortunately all of the patrolmen escaped. Once the excitement died down we resumed the

simulated countdown. Never again did the police use that Pad exit!



## Burned in fire Training

All of us who worked on the Launch Pad during Apollo took continuous safety courses in things like safety showers/eye washes, Scott Airpack breathing, safety harnesses, hazardous gases, pad egress, etc.

My favorite was always fire training. We would learn to use fire extinguishers on small fires and hoses on actual large oil fires.

I had done this course every year and while exciting was relatively safe. Well one year we were fighting fires and the day was extremely windy with about a 30 mph north wind. One drill was for five guys to follow a trail which had several small fires. The first and last had

extinguishers and the center three were just along for the ride. Well, on this day the wind had whipped the flames to 20 feet high and I questioned the professionals whether it was safe. They said to quit being a chicken and go for it.

We entered the trail with me being the last guy all of us in coveralls, gloves, and breathing apparatus. The first guy attempted to knock down the first raging fire, but it flared right up. I hit it with my extinguisher to no effect. Suddenly we were surrounded by a wall of flame and all discipline was lost. We all bailed out through the wall of fire.

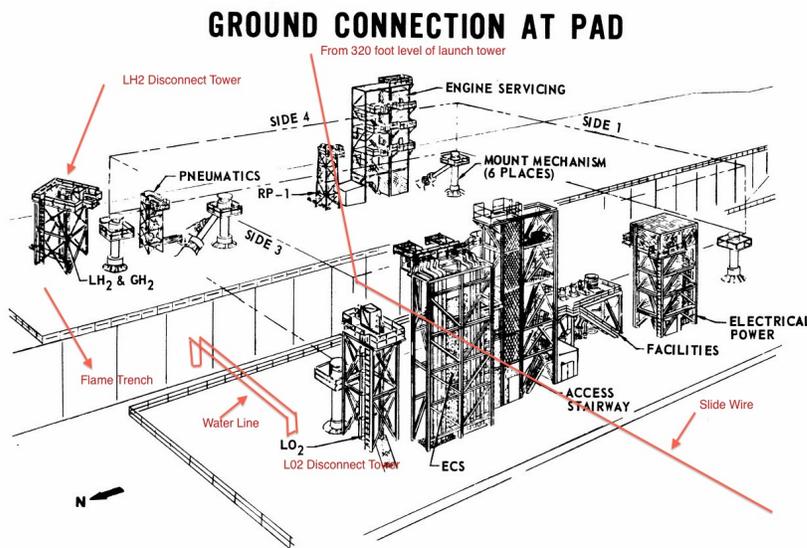
The fire fighters called us together to chew us out for our failure, but by this time I realized that all my exposed skin was feeling hot. I told them I needed to go to Medical and they said nonsense. I insisted and another engineer said he was also burned. At Medical they took it seriously and quickly applied ice water pads to our burns.

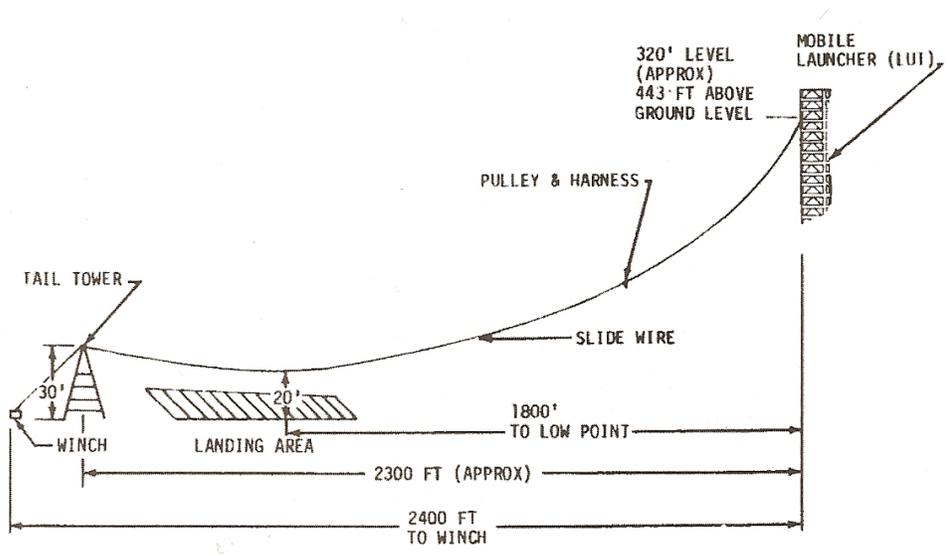
The other engineer was burned worse than me, but both of us lost all the skin on our necks, ears, wrists and anywhere not covered. The medical personnel said we were within seconds of being burned to death.

After the "smoke" cleared the Fire Chief in charge was fired and they toned down this safety course.

Life was sure exciting back then.

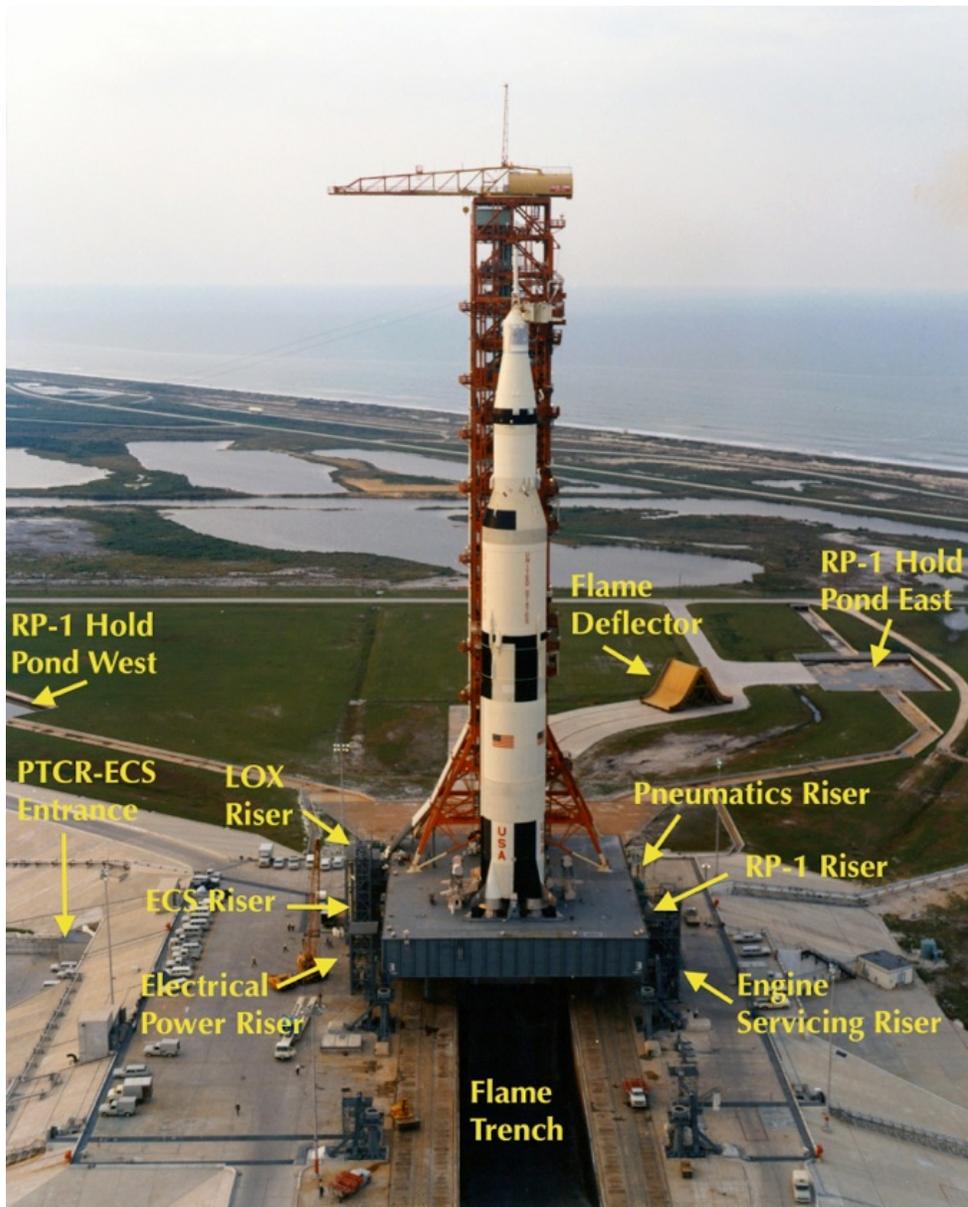
Tales from the Rocket Wars Sometimes I feel we should have received "Darwin Awards" instead of Performance Awards.





EGRESS SYSTEM





**The first I'll call Slidewire for Dummies.**

During planning for Apollo astronaut safety a big rubber room was constructed under the pad. The idea was that in case of a fire or other emergency the astronauts would exit the capsule, ride the elevator down to inside the launch platform, slide down a teflon chute into the safe room and ride out whatever was happening above.

Soon they figured out that if the disaster was below them they probably would never make it to the room so they started designing a

slide wire which would take them from the 320 foot level of the tower, just outside the capsule to 2300 feet away from the pad. Eventually they decided on a basket system where the astronauts would climb into the basket, hit a release and zoom down the wire. The same system was used for Space Shuttle but fortunately it never had to be used on either program.

One of the early designs was to have the astronauts wear a harness that would clip onto the wire. One day I was walking in the pad surface near the L02 Disconnect Tower (see sketch) and I heard a scream to take cover. They were testing the harness system with a life-sized dummy and it fell off the wire at 320 feet above the pad surface smashed into the L02 Disconnect tower, bounced off and landed pretty near me. so much for that idea.

[t](#)

### **The second Tale is about a water test on the launch pad.**

Water for fire suppression and exhaust cooling was supplied to the pad through giant 36 inch pipes and at high pressure to reach all the way to the top of the Saturn rocket. One day I was performing some test on the LH2 Disconnect Tower and noticed tech configuring the water system. They connected a reducer to the 36 inch flange bringing it down to 12 inches. Then ran a pipe about forty feet from there over to the flame trench with an elbow pointing down into the trench (see sketch). Obviously they were going to do some kind of flow test of the water system.

They cleared the immediate area and hit the button to start flow. The tremendous pressure hit that 12 inch pipe like a rocket engine and ripped the whole forty feet of big pipe off of the 36 inch flange. Two things happen at once. First we now had a 36 inch column of water shooting hundreds of feet straight up. Secondly and more important to me standing just across the flame trench was that forty feet of pipe launching up a couple of hundred feet and slowly tumbling as it decided where to land. We had nowhere to go since we were 30 feet

up on our little tower so we just watched. Thankfully the pipe fell into the flame trench missing us and our tower.

During the Apollo program a tech unbolted a 12 inch flange from the water system not knowing the system was pressurized. The flange broke the last few bolts, hit the man in the chest, killing him instantly. Everything was dangerous on the launch pad.

## Another strange story from Tales of the Space Wars





When Launch Complex 39 was built the liquid hydrogen tank (See first photo) was painted per some federal spec with white on top and tan on the bottom and with simply "Liquid Hydrogen, No Smoking".

That worked just fine until OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) was created in 1970. One day we received a directive that our one of a kind hydrogen tank was not in compliance with OSHA regulations. The proper color was all white and the terminology had to be "Liquified Hydrogen, Flammable Gas" (second photo).

We thought this was pretty ridiculous as the tank is eighty feet in diameter and you can imagine how much paint that is and we kind of like the way it looked and the simplicity of the words. We hemmed and hawed and delayed but were finally threatened with fines (your money, not ours). I put in a work order to have the tank painted per the new design. Obviously this was a massive job with painters in protective berating gear and big spray guns and it took several weeks.

Finally the tank was all white and they started painting the three foot tall lettering. first I questioned the spelling of "Liquified" since the preferred spelling is "Liquefied" but OSHA ruled.

Then one day I went out to see how it was coming along and there's this painter high on his scaffold merrily painting. He had completed "Liquified" and I notice the first three letters of the second word were "NIT", not "HYD". I yelled up to him to stop immediately and that his was a hydrogen tank, not a nitrogen tank. He reached into his coveralls and produced a piece of paper and said, " I paint what's on my work order", and continued painting.

I was tempted to let him compile the whole word, "NITROGEN", but didn't and made a few phone calls. Eventually they got it right.

Bet you never heard that one!

## **Another tale from the Rocket Ranch.**

As shown in the photo above the 850000 gallon liquid hydrogen tank has a big pipe sticking out the top of it. LH2 is liquid at -423 degrees and it continuously trying to turn to gas. That pipe is the vent to safely disburse the "boiloff". Hydrogen gas is extremely flammable and lightning or even static will ignite that venting gas making it look like a giant blowtorch. Early in the Apollo program we would get almost nightly calls from the test conductor saying our tank was on fire. We would call in a crew to come in and close the 12" vent valve and purge the pipe with gaseous nitrogen (GN2) until the fire was extinguished. After a year or two we figured the darn thing could safely burn until first shift came in to put it out. That leads into another tale. The last thing that the LH2 team had to do before clearing the pad for launch was to open the big manual valve at the bottom of the tank that allowed flow up to the Saturn V, and to switch the venting gas from that top pipe to the closed A3306 valve that let us pressurize the tank to 60 psi and pushed the LH2 up the tower and into the rocket. When A3306 was opened to vent the tank it created. 10000 square foot conflagration in the hydrogen burn pond for Apollo

or burn stack for Shuttle. Very impressive to see. Anyway one night I was on that final preps crew and was waiting in our office trailer for the call to switch the valves. Early in the Apollo program they would tow all the trailers from the pad to prevent blast damage. Finally they determined more damage was being done removing them than letting them get blasted. Unknown to me the move crew had come in and moved the steps for the trailer about two feet out in preparation for the move. I got the call from the test conductor to perform our final preps and like I had done a thousand times opened the door and stepped out ...into nothing. As I fell the three feet to the ground my shins scrapped along the back of the steps ripping them to shreds. Then my elbows slammed into the top step. I was really in pain and bleeding from my legs, but I struggled up , rounded up my technicians and went out to finish our launch preparations. Then I cleaned myself up, cleared the launch pad and headed to the Firing Room to support the Saturn V launch on one of the hydrogen consoles.

## **Incorrect Bellows on the Fill Line**

The only moon launch from LC-39B: Cernan's Apollo 10 mission was launched on AS505 from LC-39B, the only mission to the moon launched from that pad. All others were from LC39A. Pad B was advertised as being identical to LC39A but during activation we found some significant differences. I was performing the initial fill of 850,000 gallons of super cold (-423 degrees F) highly flammable liquid hydrogen into the storage tank. This was done from numerous LH2 tanker trucks that held either 5000 gallons or 11,000 gallons. In the photo the fill manifold is shown in the foreground and we could offload five tankers at a time. We hooked up the five tankers, opened the valves, pressurized the tankers and started pushing liquid hydrogen into the giant storage tank. We had done this hundreds of times on Pad A so it was a hazardous but pretty routine operation. I was leaning against the fill manifold controlling the operation when suddenly I heard a bang and saw the four inch diameter fill line bowing up out of its restraints like a writing snake. I immediately terminated fill and vented the tankers and watched as all the

expansion bellow started cracking spewing clouds of vapor into the air. Everything looked identical to the same configuration we had used so long at the other pad so what had gone wrong. After safing the system I headed for the installation drawings. What I discovered was that unlike Pad A which used Inconel as the metal for the pressure carrier, the designers has switched to 316 stainless steel on pad B. But on both pads had used exactly the same expansion bellows. Inconel has extremely low contraction under cryogenic temperatures while stainless steel can shrink quite a lot. When the super cold hydrogen hit the stainless steel lines, the line contracted causing it to bend within its restraining supports and over stressing the bellows to the point the cracked and split. Quick reaction prevented a break of the pressure carrier line so no hydrogen was released. The system was down for several weeks while the bellows were replaced with much larger ones. After redesign and repair the tank was finally filled and thereafter successfully supported Apollo10/AS505, Skylab and Apollo- Souez and the Space Shuttle program.

## **1973-1978 General Dynamics/Convair**

I spent five wonderful years launching like the early space pioneers. General Dynamics had only about three hundred people on the whole program at CCAFS versus the tens of thousands on Apollo at KSC. There was no doubt who was responsible when something good or bad occurred on your system on Atlas-Centaur. I worked for Silas Baker and Clay Dennis with Dave Rogers as Lead Engineer. Hank Eskinsen was my mentor while learning the Centaur systems. I was the Centaur Pneumatics engineer and brought some valuable vacuum knowledge to the Centaur program. One of the prime purposes of performing a tanking test was to verify the integrity of the Centaur intermediate bulkhead which separated the oxygen and hydrogen tanks. Almost inevitably the bulkhead would fail its vacuum check under the cryo condition resulting in a myriad of leak checks and another expensive tanking test. I suggested many changes to the Centaur bulkhead hardware and the ground vacuum monitoring

equipment which after implementation resulted in never again failing the test. I participated in about thirty Atlas-Centaur launches. With the advent of the Space Shuttle it was announced that all unmanned launch vehicles would be discontinued so I went to KSC in search of some job security. As we know now some 23 years later they are still launching Atlas-Centaurs as a result of the Challenger disaster.

I tell a lot of stories and naturally, I suppose, I relate those that put me in a good light. Well the last one about how I fixed the Centaur vacuum system reminded me of this one that didn't turn out so well. We worked a modification to install three state of the art pressure sensors on the Centaur upper stage. They were extremely accurate and sensitive and while I forget their exact function had something to do with controlling the RL-10 engines. I'll bet Gary Reichley remembers. After installation it was on me and my two experienced and fun technicians, Jimmy Jones, a Pearl Harbor survivor as a young sailor in 1941, and Tex Arnold a sharp mechanic who liked to play the part of a Florida redneck to check out and calibrate the newly installed transducers. Armed with flex hoses, pressure panel and extremely accurate Heise gage Jimmy and Tex performed my test procedure to verify that the transducers met their specifications and would use two out of three voting logic to control the engines. Everything was going great when it became time for lunch break. The techs closed the valves on the test panel and we left the launch tower to get a bite. When we returned thirty minutes later I glanced at the Heise gage and it was spiked out high way over the rated pressure of the new transducers The inlet valve of the test panel had leaked and in retrospect we should have taken more steps to cut off the pressure. We had just over pressurized the three brand new instruments destroying them. Each cost \$10000 in 1975 dollars when similar but less accurate ones cost a couple of hundred dollars. Fortunately there were three spares and we repeated the installation which involved de-brazing the ruined ones and brazing in the new and completed the testing without impacting the launch. I don't even remember getting yelled at and certainly didn't get fired but remember that booboo to this day.

## 1978-1997 Rockwell International/Boeing Space Shuttle

I was at KSC interviewing with Rockwell and James Walker/ Walt Antonewski for ECLSS when Bob Bucina saw me and said if I was going to work on Shuttle it would be in Main Propulsion. Bob had been lead engineer on the Liquid Oxygen system on Apollo and we had worked closely together on that program. He was now Manager of MPS. This was in 1978 and we didn't have a Shuttle, any test procedures and no software for the new LPS computerized launch consoles. Many a long hour was spent learning the system and preparing test requirements, system and integrated procedures, and the software to operate, control and monitor everything. Bill Heink was my supervisor and Gary Frank, Bob Bowman and I prepared almost all of the first round of MPS software and test procedures. Roy Austin, Ken Kirkland Dick Carlson were instrumental for the SSME group. It was amazing that everything came together to support a STS-1 launch in 1981. By that time I was Supervisor of Main Propulsion/SSME and remained in that position until Lockheed won the Launch Processing Contract. I stayed with Rockwell as the MPS System Specialist along with Ken Smith, and later Larry Fineberg,

Gary Shirey, Tom Thorson and now astronaut, Frank Caldeiro.



I'll always remember the first Dry CDDT (Countdown Demonstration Test). It took weeks to get through the Count. Now it is routinely a half day test. Also during Dry CDDT in March 1981 where two men were killed after being cleared into the aft fuselage before the inerting nitrogen had been removed. The major fire that virtually enveloped the Space Shuttle after a SSME main fuel valve failed to close following engine abort. Inadvertently dry spinning the LH2 recirculation pumps to 40000 rpm before STS-1, and overpressurizing the MPS helium tanks to almost 6000 psi (4000 psi normal). The discovery of out of round disconnect seals that caused leaks on both 17 inch disconnects and required a roll back to separate the Orbiter from the ET to repair. Developing the leak isolation test that checked out the whole MPS at one time, a major step in reducing processing time. The Big Bangs that shook the whole shuttle stack, blamed on creaky MPS expansion joints but later proven to be caused by TSM (Tail Service Mast) struts. The major modifications to the Orbiter-ET 17 inch disconnects after they slammed closed during flow testing. Removing a leaky Gox disconnect and discovering broken

belleville washers. Endless meetings to ensure all criticalites were properly categorized. The same for the OMRSD (Requirements Document). Working with the most excellent engineers at KSC, Houston and Rockwell Downey. Solving problems with John Tribe, Horace Lamberth, Bill Heink, Bob Lang, Phil Cota, Hugh Brasseaux, Don Previtt, Dave Rigby, Harv LeBlanc, Don Jones, Jay Yohinaga, Tom Shupe, Herb Wolfson, John Kremer, Bill Marumoto, Charlie Sosa, Lee Solid, John Sterritt, John Plowden and so many others. Dick Carlson for helping me spell SSME and understand its workings. The whole PSIG (Propulsion Sytems Integration Group). Most significantly, the Challenger Explosion which brought the program and all of us to our knees, only to rise again to greater accomplishments. Getting to know John Young before his first historic Shuttle flight. Working with the Test Conductors and Test Directors who did a fantastic job of integrating everything into a workable Countdown. Being a part of the finest Launch Team on Earth There were so many challenges and always the team came up with solutions.

During my service I was awarded the Silver Snoopy by Astronaut Jim Newman, the Rockwell President's Award (twice), the NASA Manned Space Flight Safety Award, and numerous NASA Achievement Awards.

The Challenger accident affected us all and after that the job lost much of its thrill for me. The last few minutes of each subsequent countdown was very emotionally trying for me and made my decision to retire in 1997 much easier.

Over the years I helped launch 115 vehicles into Space, all from the Firing Room or Blockhouse. When I think of the twists and turns in our paths, I still say, " I can't think of anywhere else I'd rather have been."

## Class History: 1963

The Class of 1963 was inducted on 7 July 1959, numbering 1,205 young men comprised of appointees from 48 States (no member from North Dakota), the Territory of Hawaii (not yet a state), the District of Columbia, the Canal Zone, and six foreign countries. We were the only class inducted under a 49-star U.S. flag, Alaska having been admitted to the Union in January of that year, while Hawaii was not added until August.

Our class was the first at Navy to take the SATs as part of the admissions process. Previously, each candidate had been given a special entrance examination prepared by the Naval Academy. We were also the first class since 1931 not to receive Plebe Summer flight training in the two-seat N-3N seaplane (the "Yellow Peril"), a fleet of which was still maintained across the Severn River. These antique bi-planes, which were almost 30 years old by 1959, had just been declared un-airworthy, to our great disappointment. We were the first class to participate all four years in the then-new majors program, and 106 of us received major-credits on our diplomas. We were the last class to wear detachable collars with our white dress shirts; the last to have our names stenciled across our white works uniforms; the last to wear cloth cap covers and cape-style "rain gear"; and the last class to go through all four years using the old Navy 4.0 numerical grading system, where 2.5 was the minimum passing grade. By the end of our Youngster Year, the growing variety of academic courses had eroded the universal curriculum and, as a result, we no longer marched to and from classes.

We beat Army in football all four years. This string of victories continued with a fifth consecutive win the November after we graduated. We were the first class never to lose in football to either Army or Air Force, although we played Air Force only once, beating them 35-3 in the first encounter between the two teams. Evidencing strong, early spirit, members of the class painted "63 sez Beat Army" on the freshly refinished laundry smokestack at the beginning of Youngster Year. (The large laundry building stood at the present site of Rickover Hall and the tall smokestack was a prominent feature in The Yard.) The feat was accomplished in a deft, night time climb and the encouraging words remained until we graduated.

The inaugural game at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium was played in September 1959, against William & Mary (Navy won 29-2). The occasion was made memorable by the personal appearance of President Dwight Eisenhower, who flew in from the White House by Marine helicopter and officially dedicated the new stadium.

We were the last class to enjoy "Exchange Weekend" with West Point, where all 2/c Midshipmen, in successive small groups, spent several days at The Point, stepping into the life and academic schedule of a counterpart cadet while cadets did the same in our places at Navy. This was a unique experience in seeing "how the other half lives" and strengthened the close relationships that exist between Navy and Army.

At our commencement on 5 June 1963, Vice President Lyndon Johnson presented diplomas and commissions to a class whose ranks numbered 876. The great majority of the graduates accepted Navy commissions. The largest number, 324, went into the surface line; 209 chose naval aviation, and 138 entered the nuclear power program. The remaining 54 new Ensigns were spread among the Supply Corps, the Civil Engineering Corps, and Engineering Duty Officers. Only 66 entered the Marine Corps, reflecting the limits on commissions into that service. Almost as many -- 60 graduates -- were commissioned in the Air Force. (The USNA and USMA classes of 1963 were the last allowed to send significant numbers of graduates to the Air Force, a vestige of the days before the Air Force had its own academy.) In addition, 20 new officers chose Army commissions. Five graduates were found not physically qualified for commissioning. Foreign students from Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Philippines, and Peru returned to service in their own countries.

Subsequent to graduation, members of the Class served with distinction in all the services during the years of the Cold War, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War. Thirteen graduates were lost in Vietnam and two were held as POWs. Another 15 died in the line of duty over the years; among these were three men lost in the sinking of SCORPION and one who perished in the LIBERTY incident. Classmates serving in combat were awarded three Navy Crosses, one Army Distinguished Service Cross, and 15 Silver Stars. One

Navy warship was named after a heroic classmate lost in Vietnam – the USS FITZGERALD (DDG 62).

In 1974, the Class established a Foundation to provide educational assistance to the children of deceased classmates. Over the ensuing 30 years, that Foundation has provided nearly \$900,000 in scholarship aid to more than 90 children, while also contributing substantial funds to other efforts memorializing the class, especially the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence at the Academy. Twenty 1963 graduates achieved flag rank, 19 in the U.S. Navy and one in the Peruvian Navy. Four of the U.S. flag officers attained the rank of Vice Admiral. Class members not serving a career in the military achieved notable success as physicians, actors, dentists, writers, artists, educators, jurists, clergymen, scientists, lawyers, and leading business executives. Class members also served widely in both elected and appointed governmental office at the national, state, and local levels.

It is an established fact that the Class of 1963 had the last true Plebe Year.

# Road Trip by Ross Anderson

*Editor's note: During Labor Day weekend at the beginning of our First Class Year, September 1962, 4<sup>th</sup> Co mates **Ross Anderson** and **Vic Dean** set out to drive a Model A Ford 900 miles from Tallahassee, FL to the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Fifty-five years later, Ross' widow Susan Anderson discovered that this trip was chronicled:*

"A few swipes of the dust rag around Ross' Lucky Bag caused more than a stir of dust bunnies today when a 4 page single-spaced, hand typed piece of history fell out of the USNA yearbook. It appears to be an addendum to a letter written to Ross' parents chronicling his three day adventure returning to Annapolis (from Florida) in a forbidden car for 1st Class year....a model A, of all things! I believe Vic Dean was R's co-conspirator, though his name is not spelled out fully. Well written, funny, a grease monkey's mechanical delight, it offers a view of the high spirited nature of the USNA attendees that ought to be treasured and perhaps preserved."

*"Vic" is indeed Victor Edwin Dean, appointed from Winter Park, Florida, now of Daytona Beach, and Ross' company mate from 4<sup>th</sup> Co., USNA '63. Vic had memories of this trip after 55 years:*

Ross apparently wrote this letter soon after we got back to USNA. I had not seen it or heard about it until you sent it to me. I remember I did tell the story at one of our reunions but don't remember which one. Here are my memories of how this trip came about:

Following First Class cruise in August 1962, I returned to our family home in Winter Park, a suburb of Orlando, Florida. Shortly after arriving, I received a phone call from my classmate Ross Anderson who lived in Tallahassee. He asked if I wanted to ride back to USNA with him in a 1928 Model A Ford. He had just bought the vehicle and planned to drive it back to Annapolis and then sell it for a good profit. The Washington area was sure to have a lot more people interested in these cars so he would get a good price for his.

Well, it certainly would be a different way to end First Class Summer, so I agreed. I took a bus to Tallahassee and met him and we left on Sunday of Labor Day weekend. We had to be back to USNA before 1700 on the following Tuesday.

*What follows is Ross' letter, with some footnotes providing Vic's 'rest of the story.' Susan asked that it be shared with the class.*

Speaking of old cars... To begin with Vic and I made it back on time all right. But we made it with only ten minutes to spare before the 6 P.M. deadline of Tuesday September 4. This was the culmination of three quite adventurous days on the road.

After our departure for the Northland from the steps of 502 East Call, Tallahassee that pretty Sunday morning, we headed up the Thomasville highway. Zipping easily along at about fifty mph, it looked like the beginning of a very enjoyable trip even if it was a slight

bit bouncy.<sup>1</sup> Then about 9 miles out, not 15 minutes on the road, the engine broke into the most horrible choking, coughing and missing fits I had ever observed in the three previous days in which I worked on it. In fact we sounded like mobile Fourth of July with all the backfiring.

Then with one helluva big bang the whole exhaust system blows off at the manifold joint, leaving nothing but a short pipe spewing red hot exhaust gases on the metal and wood frame in the engine compartment. The racket was so bad that we had to pull into a wayside park to try to remedy the situation. We broke out our very sparse supply of tools and proceeded to bolt the exhaust back on after having cooled it off with some water. Which, incidentally, was afforded by some wide-eyed Latin tourists who were having a late picnic breakfast on the side of the road.

With the exhaust barely hanging on, we then proceeded northward. The engine persisted obstinately to miss and vibrate terribly, producing barely enough power to boost the car over the gentle hills at 25 mph. The frequency of backfires increased and by the time we arrived in Thomasville we were nervous wrecks, swiveling our heads constantly to search out any nearby aggressive "fuzz."

The total time for 35 miles was three hours. My God! Maybe we are gonna have to call for help from home like Dad said. But nawwww... WE'D MAKE IT!

After some attempted repairs in midtown Thomasville and some volunteering of help by some pretty gals with a set of sugar-coated southern drawls that could not be beaten, we proceeded ever onward. Then another fireworks display and then onward again at an excruciatingly slow 30 mph. Needless to say, we were off to a very poor start for a 900 mile trip.

Slowly we worked our way toward Moultrie and through that community and on toward Tifton. By this time the motor was running so poorly that I thought the trip was over for sure. Then a stench filled

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<sup>1</sup> [Vic] When were speeding down the back roads of Georgia it was my responsibility to hold on to the inside of the roof to keep it from flying away. It was made of wood and was not attached to the frame at all.

the car and smoke started pouring through the floor boards. It swirled around Vic's feet and clogged the interior of our fine vehicle. The heat was unbearable. It had to be a fire!

I jammed on the brakes and drove the "A" Model into the ditch alongside the road. Vic bailed out and threw open the engine hood. The smoke billowed out and I jumped out to help. Somehow we extinguished the flames. It seems as though the terrific heat coming from the open manifold had ignited the wood part of the chassis and also the floor boards. Things were really black at this moment in the trip. Really black!

Then we figured that if we could get to a gas station by driving fast enough we could keep cooling air flowing over the wood so that combustion temperature of the wood would not be reached. Maybe we could keep the thing from burning up.

By extracting a few more miles per hour out of the auto, we managed to make it to the outskirts of Tifton and a rundown gas station. It was quite a perplexing problem. I tinkered and tinkered and just could not figure out the difficulty.

Then it hit me: The points! Of course, they were loose and probably had vibrated shut. Sure enough that was the problem. By stripping the threads slightly after making the proper gap, they were properly set. But we couldn't fix the exhaust: the pipe just would not fit into the manifold securely enough so it would not be blown out by the high pressure of the exhaust.

The heck with it, we'll drive fast and keep the frame cool so it won't catch fire. We'll just have to risk the terrific noise and the cops. On the road again, the engine for the first time was purring just fine now and we were making 60 with no strain at all. It looked good now, really good!

The small Georgia farms and towns now started to really fly by with increasing speed. We were golden, so to speak, now. The countryside gradually developed into the rolling hills of northern Georgia with the "A" pulling over the slopes at no lower than 50 mph.

Then we pulled off of the side of the road 10 miles south of Soperton, a small rural community 100 miles from Augusta.. The

purpose of the stop was to check the engine and also the maps. With everything okay we hopped back into the buggy and cranked her up.

There was then a tremendous backfire; stunning us momentarily and then billows of black gasoline smoke. We sprang from the car and tore open the hood. Good God! The whole engine is on fire! What to do? No rags to smother it with, nor any water. The ditch! Plenty of sand. By this time the flames were licking dangerously close to the gas tank, which was located in front of the driver's seat. I glanced at our only worldly possessions piled high behind the front seat and shuddered. This damn thing could blow up!

We dove into the ten foot ditch and clawed at the sand. Scrambling up the steep sides we desperately blasted the flames with the sand in hopes of blowing the flames out. But there was no apparent result for a while. Then finally we snuffed the fire out after about 10 minutes of frantic labor. Then we sprawled exhausted along the roadside trying to catch our breath while two carloads of farm families watched in amazement.<sup>2</sup>

Whew ... that last one was way too close.

When we had regained our composure, we climbed in and crossed our fingers. There was no apparent damage from the fire so we hoped she'd start. Sure enough the old baby cranked right up with not a bit of difficulty. We were rolling again.

The cause of the fire was really pretty simple. It seems as though while we were stopped, gas had overflowed on the block of the engine from a leak in the carburetor. When we drove at high speed the air flowing over the carburetor evaporated the leakage. So when we stopped gas dripped on to the engine and the backfire ignited it. We'd have to keep at a good speed to keep this from happening again. No more unnecessary stops after that one, brother!

The hills grew steeper and, steeper. But everything was working fine, so no sweat for a while. As we crested the top of a high hill, we

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<sup>2</sup> [Vic] I vividly remember the flaming carburetor when we were in the middle of nowhere with nothing to put it out. It was burning very close to the gas tank which was located in the firewall between the engine and the passenger's seats. We finally thought of the sand in the ditch along the road. It worked and then amazingly the car started right up and we drove over the foot high pile of sand and on our way.

ran over an apparently large rock or sumpin' because the rear end literally jumped off the ground, jerking the car around slightly. Nothing bad we surmised as the speedometer began to show 65 on the backside of the hill.

**Poww!** What was that? The car swerved crazily and stated to fishtail horribly. I fought the wheel. I pawed the brakes but then thought no, it may be a blowout. I flicked off the key but the car continued to accelerate on the long incline. Then it careened up on the two right wheels; then back on all four with the fishtailing increasing. Vic and I glanced swiftly at each other and gulped. We're gonna roll for sure! Somehow the old buggy stayed upright and we plowed into the ditch at the bottom of the hill. A '56 Chevy then pulled up behind us and a fellow jumped out bringing a battered muffler with him. It is ours. How did he get that thing?

It turned out that we had again blown our muffler and exhaust system from the manifold and the wires holding it to the car had given way. The exhaust system then fell to the road and we proceeded to run over it, slicing our right rear tire in the process. That was the big bump. The tire had then blown and we had quite a joy-ride.

The fellow in the Chevy had been following us and had picked up the muffler when it fell off. He smiled a toothy grin and was off. We flagged the next car and drove to a nearby gas station to have the thing fixed. We finally got on the road again and then to Soperton. It sticks in my mind because a couple of pretty girls waved at us as we went through and also we had another damned blowout.

Augusta was finally made at 10 that night and I do say the circumstances were most unpleasant. A driving rain combined with a wiper-less car and also very leaky made finding a motel difficult. However we got on Route One and found a pad which needless to say was ecstasy after the primitive road trip.<sup>3</sup>

After a hearty breakfast the next morning at Hiram Johnston's (I had had nothing solid all day Sunday while on the road, but had merely bloated my stomach with moon pies and cokes at every stop)

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<sup>3</sup> [Vic] The first night we stopped in Augusta and I calculated our average speed including all the stops for repairs etc for the day was 25 mph. We had traveled 250 miles in 10 hours. Even mids could calculate that this rate was not going to get us to USNA before 1700 Tuesday.

we were over the Savannah River and into South Carolina. The car was just purring now with the exception of no muffler. We were stopped twice by S.C. highway patrolmen and given official warnings for "a defective exhaust system". That was a real joke because we had no exhaust system at all; it was in the back seat. We then hit Columbia and took 2 hours out to have our exhaust pipe welded on securely. All was well now.<sup>4</sup> By 1 in the afternoon Monday we had left Columbia in our oil smoke and were well on our trek northward.

We really were making time now. Camden, Cheraw, then across the N.C. line and Rockingham, Sanford, and Southern Pines flew past at 60 mph. Man, we were rolling now. The looks we received from people are almost a story in themselves. I remember in particular one gas station we flew by. A group of colored gentlemen were working with their heads in the hoods of several hot rods. As we blasted by and waved they snapped up to attention in unison and stared, bug-eyed and slack jawed. What a sight.

We slipped on through Chapel Hill and Durham where Vic used to live. We passed through these very pretty towns at sunset and were soon on the way to Petersburg, Va. to spend the night at Vic's aunt's farm. Darkness fell and the car was still clipping off the mileage to the tune of 60 mph. We were beginning to wonder if we really had a good car on our hands.

Then at about 10 P.M. approximately 40 miles south of Petersburg on the rolling hills of southern Virginia and US 1 the engine started chattering terrifically. It was the most penetrating godawful noise one can imagine. We slowed down. Still it continued. We hit the next gas station and dumped several quarts of oil into the engine. Still it clattered wildly. All I could think was loose rod, loose rod. This could mean real trouble.

With the chattering as loud as ever, we finally made the farm in Petersburg.<sup>5</sup> After a good night's sleep, Vic and I proceeded to drop

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<sup>4</sup> [Vic] When we arrived in Columbia the second day to get the muffler repaired we asked at a service station if there was anyone in the area who knew about Model A Fords. We were directed to a repair shop where the man who owned 4 or 5 of them was listening to a NASCAR race on the radio. He asked his friend if he would weld the muffler. After hearing about our travel adventure he completed the job and with no charge!

<sup>5</sup> [Vic] The second night we spent at my Uncle's farm house outside Petersburg. He lived in a house

the oil pan. Working desperately, for we had to be at the Academy at 6 that night, we located the trouble. Sure enough we had lost some shims on the crankshaft and #2 rod was as loose as a goose. With no way to obtain a replacement part we were forced to hit the road. We were really short of time now. Only 6 hours to go. Plus the rod would surely throw between here and Washington. We were in a corner now and we had to move. On to the turnpike to Richmond. On that fine road we were again forced to bathe as we ran through a heavy downpour. The chattering got worse. We ground on through Richmond and hit US-1. I informed Vic as calmly as possible that it would be nigh on to a miracle if we made it to Washington.

Traffic was heavy on that four lane highway that Tuesday afternoon at 1 P.M. The road itself was also dangerously slick from the recent rain. A "Washington 95 miles" sign flashed by and then a ripping end grinding metal sound was heard on the roar of the wind. It lasted but a few seconds. Quickly I flicked off the key and headed once again this time for the last time, for the ditch with the clutch disengaged and the gears in neutral. It was a steep shoulder ending in a shallow ditch lined with rain-slick grass. The right wheels slipped off into the mud and grass and grabbed with a jerk. Up went the left side of that top heavy old baby and down we slid, skidding and sliding crazily, the both of us holding on for dear life. But true to form the old "A" Model came to a halt upright and three hours from USNA at 1:30 in the afternoon. We were dead for sure.

Penniless and with a mile-high load of baggage in the pouring down rain with only four hours until the deadline, we were truly in the definition of "a bind". Resorting to the humblest form of transportation, we extended our greasy wet thumbs. We must have been a pathetic sight in filthy white T-shirts with spotted bermudas. Then inside of 10

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about 100 yards off the highway. It was a dirt driveway and when we drove towards the house it was almost midnight and very dark. As we got closer I told Ross that when we stopped that I would get out and start shouting "Uncle Earl. It's Victor!. Don't shoot! it's Victor!" as loud as I could. I was sure that he would be behind the door with a rifle. Thank goodness he heard me and understood who it was because as he opened the door he did have a rifle in his hands and saying he was glad I identified myself. I was even more glad he remembered who I was...

minutes a nice looking young fellow driving a '56 Ford pulled up. We threw the luggage in the back and we were off to D.C.<sup>6</sup>

We fought our way through the 5 o'clock traffic of the teeming millions of government workers and grabbed a cab at 5:05. 55 minutes to go! We changed into suits in the filthy rest room of a gas station while the cabbie gassed up for the run.

What a sight! Suit and ties with greasy hands and dirty faces. We zoomed to Annapolis with 9 or 10 minutes to spare.

The next day I called a wrecker in Ashland, Va. and had them haul it to their garage. And there it sits until I can get my first weekend. It has apparently thrown a rod and I'm hoping I can fix it. The resale value is great for that type of car in the area around here.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Vic] [Tuesday morning] the Model A finally gave up and could not go another inch. The man who picked us up from hitchhiking was named Stuckey. I remember asking if he was related to the Stuckey stores we see along the highways. He wasn't but I still remember his name... He was traveling through Washington to go further north and his schedule wouldn't allow him to drive us to USNA. But he would take us to a taxi stop. The next problem--- we didn't have money for the cab to Bancroft. He again came through again and gave us the \$25-30 for the cab fee. We repaid him a few days after we were safe in the arms of Mother B, good ol' Bancroft Hall. I don't know if he was a real angel but he certainly appeared and helped us with a very difficult situation.

<sup>7</sup> [Vic] **Epilogue:** As I recall, after Ross had it towed and after finding out the repair cost he decided to sell it "as is". I think he only broke even after all his expenses. The trip was not always a lot of fun but a great adventure...

## Best Fourth of July Ever

Emilo (Doc) Varanini

In the summer of 1962, I was assigned a summer cruise from the US Naval Academy on CVA 62 Independence in the Med. When I arrived in Naples to join the ship via the Azores and Port Lyautey in Morocco, I was assigned a state room because the Chiefs' quarters where my classmates were bunked ran out of space. It was a really good time to be a V. Following quarters assignment we were allowed to pick a Division to serve with on the ship, and I chose the US Marine Detachment. We were authorized to eat in either the ship's company mess or the aviators' mess which was cafeteria style and completely informal as the aviators were in flight jump suits most of the time. The aviators took us under their wing (no pun intended) and the Jolly Rodgers, flying Crusaders and the Sunday Punchers, flying ADs picked up plenty of drinks and pizza on the beach. (The Jolly Rodgers didn't tell us that they had a skull and cross bones of a "former" squadron mate on board). We were in Naples and offered a trip to Rome subsidized by the ship's special services fund. We then sailed for Cannes France.

We were in Cannes for the Fourth of July, and the Independence had developed a major production for guests and dignitaries which involved presenting the historic flags of the United States from colonial days forward. The flags were presented by sailors and Marines in period uniforms, under spot lights, and with music from the ship's band. Some staff genius arranged for the production to be paired with an appearance with the Monaco Symphony Orchestra in a special Fourth of July super celebration.

In preparation for the event it was necessary to coordinate with the Monaco government, so on a beautiful July afternoon Prince Ranier drove Princess Grace (Kelly) out to the accommodation ladder on Independence. Practically everyone volunteered to be station on the transfer platform from the yacht to catch the Princess, but that was the job of Senior Officers. As the Prince maneuvered the yacht there was a loud bang and several antenna were sheared off its superstructure. A couple of minutes latter we saw a guy in a workman's jumpsuit clime up on the top of the yacht with a set of wrenches and go to work. Holy cow, it was the prince.

After all of the niceties were completed we were assigned to fleet landing to stand at attention in our formal white uniforms and greet guests of the United States (ie open and close doors). We were reminded by the Officer in Charge that these were real VIPs and we were lowly midshipmen. In particular we were told one elite group would come by limo and we were to be particularly courteous . The OIC inferred that this particular group might be a little "different", and we were not to comment on their dress, cologne, or mannerisms. (Today of course he would have said that the group around the VIP were gay.) We did our duty for God and Country, and yes the VIP and his entourage were impressed and quite chatty among themselves.

The festivities went on without a hitch - concert, flag ceremony, refreshments and a spectacular fireworks display of rockets etc. At the end we were still at fleet landing supporting the movement of folks from the liberty launches to their limos. After the VIP landed the OIC told us that he had invited the Midshipmen to be his guest at the Casino at Monte Carlo. We would have to go back to Independence and change into civilian clothes and then return to fleet landing. Most of us declined (the reasons were as varied as the Mids, but I suspect in honor of political correctness and history nothing would be served by going into their motivation in detail).

However, it turned out that the VIP had a secretary or other female employee dressed to the nines to escort the Mids that did take the offer, and they had funds from the VIP to pick up all expenses for a full night on the town.

Other than the Fourth of July of my boyhood, which was the wedding anniversary of my Grand Parents and an Irish blow out, 1962 takes the cake!

Dirck Praeger Tells another Princess Grace Story

## **The Skippers Meet Princess Grace, Almost**

**...or "The Ugly Americans Avoid an International Incident"**

While India Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines was in Villefranche on the French Riviera in April of 1971 during our Med deployment, I came within a few minutes of meeting Princess Grace and Prince Ranier of Monaco. Those of us who are old enough remember the beautiful blonde actress from Philadelphia named Grace Kelly who married Ranier and became the Princess of Monaco.



**Grace Kelly**

Rear Admiral Issac C. Kidd, Jr, Commander U.S. Sixth Fleet, had invited Prince Ranier and Princess Grace to dinner aboard the flagship, and had invited our Amphibious Squadron Commander, Captain Don Whitmire, USN, and his Landing Force Commander, Lieutenant Colonel "Duff" Rice, USMC, my battalion commander, as well.



### **Prince Ranier and Princess Grace of Monaco**

The word was out throughout 3/8 that Colonel Rice was going to have dinner with Princess Grace. India Company and its ship, the USS Terrebonne Parish (LST-1156), were in Villefranche, but the rest of the battalion and the remaining ships of the squadron were 10 miles down the road in Nice. However the USS Little Rock (CLG-4), flagship of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, was anchored in Villefranche harbor. A scheme started to develop in my head. Maybe I could work a deal where I could meet Princess Grace on her way to the Little Rock. I didn't care about Prince Ranier, but I'd always had the hots for Grace Kelly.



### **USS Little Rock (CLG-4)-Flagship of US Sixth Fleet**

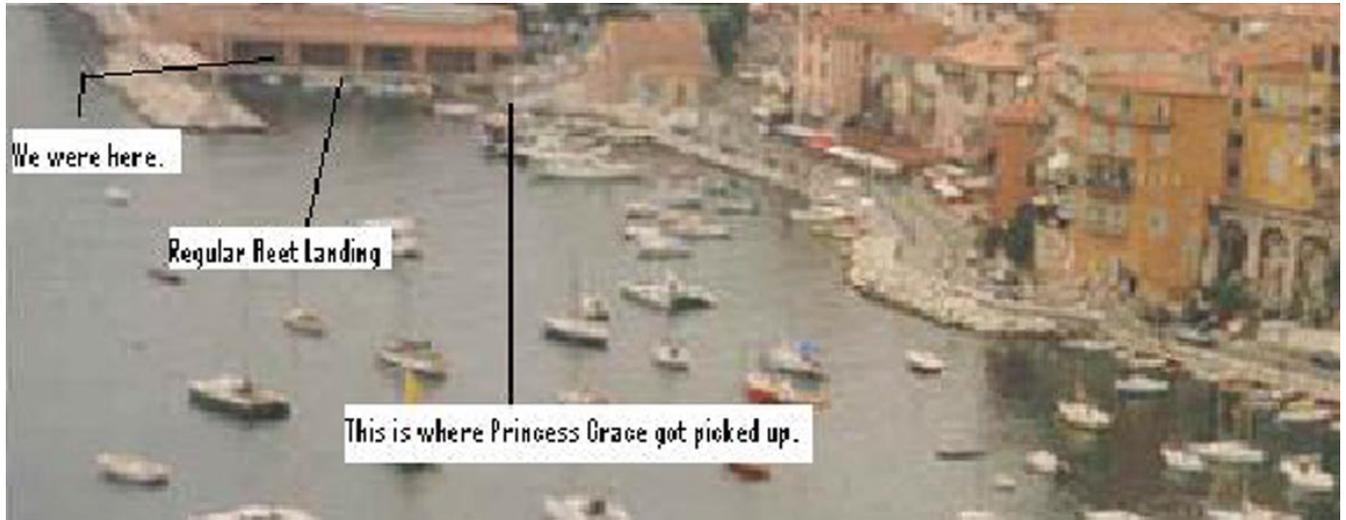
I saw my buddy Capt Dan Phipps, the commander of Mike Company 3/8 at a battalion staff meeting in Nice and told him of my plan. He

said he was coming to Villefranche to join me, as he also had the hots for Grace. Our plan was to "accidentally show up" at the fleet landing just as Ranier, Princess Grace, LtCol Rice and Capt Whitmire were getting ready to board the Admiral's barge for the ride to Little Rock's anchorage. We figured that Duff would introduce us to the royalty since we were his Rifle Company commanders and we were "there".

The fateful evening approached and Dan showed up aboard Terrebonne Parish late in the afternoon. We checked out on liberty upon his arrival and sailed for the local waterfront tavern for a cool one. We figured that we needed a few hooks to brace up our courage for that magic moment when we were introduced to the beautiful Princess Grace. Well, we had a few hooks alright. When it was time to depart for the fleet landing we were feeling no pain and had stored up enough courage to charge machine guns across open rice paddies. "Banzai!" In a word...shit faced. OK, two words.

We made our way to the vicinity of the fleet landing. There were some brick columns holding up the roof covering the fleet landing. Dan and I hid behind the column closest to the landing (see the picture below), figuring that we'd "appear" just as the Admiral's party was getting ready to board the barge. You know the drill..."Oh, Colonel Rice, Commodore! What a surprise to see you here."

We saw a Navy sedan pull up across the harbor from where we were and Rice and Whitmire disembarked. We figured they would then walk to the fleet landing, but they just stood there. (See the below picture for our relative positions.) At about this time, the Admiral's barge pulled into the harbor and tied up near where Rice and Whitmire were standing. It started to dawn on us, to our horror that they were going to leave from that location. Just as this lightbulb came on in our heads a small convoy of black Citroens pulled up and stopped across the harbor and out stepped Princess Grace and Prince Ranier. At this point the only thing we could do to get there in time was to swim across the harbor, and this thought actually crossed our sodden minds. The party boarded the Admiral's barge and shoved off and we watched from behind our brick column as Princess Grace disappeared into the night.



### Villefranche Harbor

The next day Colonel Rice regaled us with stories of his dinner with Princess Grace and Prince Ranier. To this day he repeats the stories when prompted. It was just this year, over 35 years after the fact, that I told him that Dan and I were hiding behind a brick column across the harbor in an inebriated state watching Princess Grace sail by. When I told him of our scheme to pop out from behind the column and expect to be introduced he remarked, "It was only by the Grace of God that the pickup point was changed from the fleet landing at the last minute. If you two bozos had shown up, I would have had an international incident on my hands."

And so the adventures of Dirty Dirck and Daring Dan continue.

