

Jim Ring's Vietnam Experience

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.