"No one knew what our job was on the ship. Navy Nuclear Weaponsmen were shrouded in secrecy, and entrusted with the most powerful deadly weapons on earth. Our families and countrymen's lives depended on how diligently we performed our duties." -Jim Little

Brotherhood of Doom: Memoirs of a Navy Nuclear Weaponsman

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BROTHERHOOD OF DOOM:

Memoirs of a Navy Nuclear Weaponsman

James S. Little

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Cover: An A-6 *Intruder*, a carrier-based medium attack, all-weather bomber, and his wingman streak away from the blast of a nuclear weapon dropped on target. (An original watercolor painting, by Jim Little)

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Author's Notes

It has long been the policy of the United States Department of Defense to neither confirm nor deny (NCND) the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at nuclear capable activities. Since the presidential order that removed all tactical nuclear weapons from Navy surface ships and attack submarines, on 27 September 1991, this policy has been modified to apply only to trident submarines and certain bases that are nuclear capable. The author was assigned primarily to nuclear capable activities throughout his naval career. Nothing in this book should be viewed as confirmation of the presence of nuclear weapons at any nuclear capable activity during any specific time period. Names of some individuals, time frames, and locations have been changed to protect the privacy and anonymity of persons and their families.

Author's BLOG: http://oldgunner.blogspot.com/

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Chapter 3: Learning about the "Bomb"

I spent five days on leave; the planned wedding did not take place. I was to be in Great Lakes, Illinois by midnight 8 March. I intended to catch a bus in the town of Tulare, about one hundred fifty miles north of Los Angeles, and go to the L.A. airport on the seventh. I stayed at my friends, Don and Shirley, the evening of the seventh; however I fell asleep on their couch, and missed my bus! Don and Shirley drove me to Los Angeles and I caught a later plane. This was to be my first airplane ride. The trip was eight hours long. When the plane landed in Chicago there was a snowstorm, which hampered ground transportation. I became worried about getting to the Navy base on time. I hailed a taxi at the airport, and after a long ride, and a cost of twenty dollars, a small fortune to me, almost one third of a month's salary, I made it to the base and checked in with fifteen minutes to spare.

After getting my orders stamped with the date and time I reported in. Leaving my records at the check-in window of the personnel office, I was directed to a brick barracks. There was two feet of snow on the ground and it was very cold. The inside reminded me of boot camp— same barracks, same bunks, same lockers.

The next day a few other sailors and I were given an exam to determine our level of knowledge in mathematics. Most of us qualified for night school. We had refresher courses in math and algebra all day, and classes at night from 1800 (6:00 p.m.) to 2100 (9:00 p.m.). We had homework that was due in the morning. I stayed up until after midnight struggling with the problems. At this point I wished I'd studied harder in high school.

The school course I was in was entitled: Nuclear Weaponsman Course Phase I, Electricity and Electronics. I noticed immediately that I was more experienced in the Navy than my classmates. I had just come from six months duty aboard ship, whereas, with the exception of one other sailor, they had all just graduated from boot camp. Most had just moved from the other side of the base, which was the Great Lakes Naval Recruit Training Command, the boot camp for the east coast.

I'd been in Great Lakes for a couple of days, when a snowstorm hit, and dumped an additional foot of snow on the ground. All of the students were assigned to working parties shoveling snow off the base roads and sidewalks. Living in the snow was a new experience for me, as I'd grown up in California where it never snowed. In a letter I wrote home shortly after arriving, I said I had a case of "homesickness," I missed my fiancée and parents, I was in a foreign environment, and I was depressed about being back in what appeared to be boot camp.

I continued remedial math classes, and was told that the school course would begin 20 March, and would last until 12 May. Every third day I stood a four-hour barracks fire watch, which included patrolling the barracks watching for fire hazards. Everything on the base was widely spread. The brick-built chow hall, exchange, movie theater, and classrooms were at considerable distances, which meant long walks from the barracks.

The weekend prior to starting school, I had a Saturday off, so a few of us decided to visit Chicago. We wore dress blues and pea coats, and it was very cold. We took a train to Chicago. The train station was close to the main gate of the base. On weekdays and on Sunday nights we had "Cinderella liberty," which meant your liberty expired at midnight, and you had to be through the main gate by 2400.

I remember six of us going to a large downtown Chicago drug store that had a café. We had hamburgers and French fries. What was most memorable was a very large (fat) security guard that roamed among the tables, and as soon as he saw you were finished eating he would order you out. He was very rude, and seemed to enjoy ordering sailors out of the café! After a little sightseeing, looking at the huge buildings, and girls bundled in fur coats, we went to a movie. After the movie we returned to the base

On Monday morning, in our first class we were told that only fifty percent of the sailors that began the course would graduate. This was not encouraging to me, as I wanted desperately to get back to the west coast, closer to my family and fiancée. If I flunked out of the course, it was doubtful that the Navy would spend the transfer money so I could get back to the west coast.

The course started with the subject "basic electricity." We had four hours of homework each evening. We didn't have much time for anything but study, study, and more studying. We were told that this eight-week course in electronics was the equivalent of a two-year college electronics course. We studied series circuits, parallel circuits, power supplies, transistors, and more. I sincerely wished I'd paid closer attention during my high school algebra classes.

In a letter I wrote 26 March, I asked my parents if I could borrow seven dollars, as I had sent my fiancée twelve dollars; this underscored the fact that it was fortunate that I had not gotten married.

I needed the money in order to buy some uniform items prior to a sea bag inspection, which was an inspection to insure we had all our required uniform items. Along with the homework, we had many personnel inspections, and sea bag inspections. The middle of March, I was promoted to Seaman (E-3), as I had passed all the requirements for promotion on the *USS Haven*. I also got a pay raise to seventy-four dollars a month. A sailor named George Holden and I were the only seaman in our class, all others were seaman apprentices.

Typically we would have class for an hour, or an hour and a half, and then take a ten-minute break. Most smoked, so we would stand out in the passageway. Petty officers would roam the passageway, and watch for any "horse play," or improper conduct. You were not permitted to lean against a wall, if you're caught leaning on the wall (bulkhead), you got two hours extra duty, which meant after classes you had to pick up trash, swab and sweep decks, or whatever menial job might be assigned to the violator. One chief petty officer, who was much younger-looking than the usual chief, was particularly diligent trying to find someone he could assign extra duty. He would patrol the passageways continually, and he had a reputation for being "hard-nosed." It was rumored that he was a dropout from Annapolis. He had apparently been a plebe at Annapolis for a couple of years, then, for some reason was not able to graduate and receive a commission as an ensign. He was made a chief petty officer. I guess he enjoyed taking out his frustrations on the younger students.

Our first class subject was D.C. or direct current electricity, how to measure voltage, ohms, current, and how to use ohmmeters, amp meters, and voltmeters. These were the subjects of the first four weeks. Weeks five and six were A.C. or alternating current electricity, and the last two weeks were learning about rotors, motors, and transistors, and the practical application of all we had been taught. Each week we had a final test. I was maintaining a grade of B plus.

After the fourth week of school, a group of us went into Chicago. We went to a movie that had just come out titled *"Ben Hur[7]"* starring Charlton Heston. Six of us walked around town, and through the east side of Chicago. We rented a couple of cheap hotel rooms, just to spend a night off base. We stayed overnight, some even sleeping on the floor.

In mid-April there was a failed invasion of Cuba by U.S. backed Cubans in an incident that became known as the *Bay of Pigs*. We wondered if America might invade Cuba at some point in the future.

The weekend prior to beginning AC electricity, a group of us visited Milwaukee; the people of Milwaukee were much friendlier toward sailors than Chicagoans.

There were thirty-four people who started our class, two flunked out. Not all sailors in the class were striking for Nuclear Weaponsman. Some students were striking for Fire Control Technician (FT); they maintained and used radar, and weapons firing systems.

I was assigned as the class master at arms, as I was one of the only seaman in class. I was expected to maintain order when the instructor was out of class, and also march the class to and from the barracks, and chow hall.

One morning the last week of April, while in class, a chief petty officer walked into our classroom, and said he had announcement. He said, "All of you striking for Nuclear Weaponsman are now striking for Gunner's Mate Technician," he said the reason was for added security. Our rating badge (a device wore on the left upper sleeve indicating what your job is in the Navy) would be changed to crossed cannons, or the Gunner's Mate insignia. Our old insignia had been a bomb encircled by two electrons. We were all shocked by this announcement, and somewhat dismayed, because the Nuclear Weaponsman (NW) rating badge was distinctive, and set us apart from the common sailor. The chief said he didn't know the specific reason behind the change, other than it was to keep the Nuclear Weaponsman rating secret. Later on in New Mexico we were to learn some reasons behind the change. There had been a number of kidnappings of nuclear weaponsmen by the Soviets. Sailors had disappeared in Mexico, and in Japan. Also it was a sore point with the Japanese when they saw the rating badge of a Nuclear Weaponsman, because of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Apparently the victims of the kidnaps were never heard from again, but they were traced to Russia and Mexico where their trail ended. So we, as potential kidnap, and torture victims, should have appreciated the anonymity of the rating badge. No one could distinguish a Nuclear Weaponsman from a common Gunner's Mate.

The last part of April, a friend, Jerry Hecko, got into trouble. Anytime you left your base you had to remain within a fifty-mile radius of the base, as I described previously, anything further than that required an "out of bounds" pass. Jerry traveled home to Indiana one weekend, and was stranded by a snowstorm. He did not have an out of bounds pass. He was set back in class two weeks.

The last weeks of school were very busy. The class material was much more difficult, and my additional duties as class master at arms kept me busy. I was nervous about passing the course.

I was anxious to get out of Great Lakes (the climate was not to my liking), and the base was too much like boot camp. On 12 May1961, I passed my final exam, and had a class standing six of twenty-two.

We were all to leave for New Mexico on 14 May. I was ecstatic about passing; we spent the weekend, and Monday preparing to leave for New Mexico. We were to travel by train. There were twenty-two of us. George Holden and I were assigned co-leaders of the class. We were given all of the service records, and orders were written stating George and I were in charge.

We boarded a bus Tuesday morning, which took us to the train station. We boarded the train, and were directed to the last car. It was a Pullman sleeper with beds; the conductor said we must remain in this car except when we had meals in the dining car. We pulled out of Chicago Station at 10:00 a.m. I felt no remorse, and I was happy to be leaving Chicago. We did not know what to expect in New Mexico. I had visited Albuquerque in the past with my parents on summer vacations.

It was an adventurous trip. George and I as class leaders had all the meal tickets, which were used in the dining car. We gave the meal tickets out at meal times. The train food was good, and the scenery was interesting as the train moved across the country. Many sailors played card games of blackjack, or "twenty-one". I played a little, but preferred watching the sights pass by the train window.

The train had a long stop of four hours in Kansas City, from 1800 (6:00 p.m.) to 2200 (10:00 p.m.), on Wednesday. All passengers had to disembark, and enter the train station. One of our classmates was twenty-two years old. The rest of us were less than twenty-one. The twenty-two-year-old left the train station with six others, and returned thirty minutes later. All had bottles of whiskey, or vodka hidden under their jumpers (uniform tops). At 2130 (9:30 p.m.), we were told to re-enter the boarding area of the station. Suddenly four policemen appeared, and told us to line up. They began to search us, patting everyone down. The policemen took all the bottles of liquor. The policemen were smiling and good-natured. George Holden and I were afraid that since we were in charge, we would be held accountable. The police directed us to get on the train, and wished us a good trip. They kept the bottles, and looking back at the incident, they acted like this was a regular occurrence. These appropriated bottles probably ended up in their liquor cabinets. We all boarded the train frightened and somewhat angry about being searched. After the train had left the station, it was discovered that one guy had managed to smuggle one bottle on the train, so we felt a little better outsmarting the police. It had been humiliating to be searched in public.

Our trip continued, and the train arrived in Albuquerque 1700 (5:00 p.m.) on Friday afternoon. Compared to Chicago it was hot! The temperature was in the 80s. George was disgusted with the conduct of the class during the trip, and mumbled, "We should let you guys find your own way to the base." We called the base, and shortly a bus arrived at the train station, and after a fifteen-minute ride we were at Sandia Base. It was an Army base, we were to discover that the services took turns managing the base for two-year periods; during this time frame it was the Army's turn.

The bus stopped at the Navy barracks, which was across the street from the base movie theater. We off-loaded our sea bags and a petty officer took our orders, and records, and assigned us rooms. We were in for a pleasant surprise. The rooms were like college dorms. It was a far cry from the Great Lakes barracks. The rooms were huge. We had big single beds, and huge clothes lockers. We were told we had liberty until Monday morning. After we'd gotten somewhat settled, most of the class went to the exchange cafeteria. It was then we discovered that if you were eighteen years old you could drink beer on the base. We also learned that civilian clothes were permitted to be worn when we were off duty. We were very excited about all this news, along with the rumors that civilians in Albuquerque liked sailors. Chicago and New Mexico were as different as night and day. I enjoyed the warm weather, and relaxed atmosphere. The barracks was located right next to the chow hall. It was much like being in college, instead of the Navy. I think I appreciated being in this school environment much more than my classmates. I had been in the Navy longer, and experienced shipboard life, all of them, except George, had come directly out of boot camp into the school at Great Lakes. We were encouraged to wear civilian clothes off base. I had a problem. I had no civilian clothes. I wrote my parents asking them to mail me some of my civilian clothes.

Classes didn't start until 2 June, so for two weeks we did very little other than having pictures taken for our security badges, and work occasionally on different work details. One day we worked in the chow hall, other days we picked up trash, or did yard work about the base. About this time I was given news that my mom and dad were expecting an addition to our family. The baby was expected in September.

There were six of us assigned to each room. A sailor who had graduated left his television in our room, so we had a TV to entertain us. One roommate was from New Jersey, one from Texas; George Holden was from Maine, two others, and me from California.

Many in the class hung out at an Albuquerque coffee shop called "The Purple Turk." It was located across from the University of New Mexico College. "Beatniks" were fashionable then, and The Purple Turk featured espresso coffee, poet readings, and ballad singers. The weather was perfect, except for infrequent winds, and the chilly nights. During this time frame, I began doing the correspondence course, Military Requirements for Third Class Petty Officer.

A letter dated 22 May1961, by Captain P.R. Belcher, who was the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Navy Administration Unit, was sent to my parents, it said:

> As your son's Commanding Officer, I'm writing to explain why he has been sent here to Sandia base, Albuquerque, and to express my interest in his welfare.
>
> This command is a part of the Defense Atomic Support Agency, a joint command, which was established to support the Army, Navy and Air Force in the field of advanced weapons.
>
> Your son is here to receive a technical course in advanced weapons, to prepare him for the on-job training onboard ship or at a Navy shore station as a Gunner's Mate Technician. The duration of this course is about eleven weeks.
>
> It is greatly to his credit that he has been selected for this training and I hope he will successfully complete the course. I also hope he will enjoy his stay here at Albuquerque.
>
> In case he has forgotten to furnish you his current mailing address, all mail should be addressed to him at: U.S. Naval Administrative Unit, Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
> I assure you that I am interested in all aspects of the welfare of personnel attached to my command. If I can be of assistance please feel free to contact me.

My mother answered the letter, expressing appreciation for the captain's interest. There were differences in military protocol between the Navy, Air Force, and Army that sometimes caused friction. An example, sailors always remove hats when entering, and while inside a building, and we don't salute with a hat off. The Air Force and Army saluted indoors, and hatless. We were told, if in doubt salute, in order to "keep the peace".

On 2 June1961, I entered a world different from any I'd imagined, the world of nuclear weapons. We were directed to report to a large fenced compound five blocks from our barracks. We all had been issued badges that had our picture, birth date, physical description, signature, and a distinctive Sandia Base decal. This badge was given to an armed civilian guard at the gate guardhouse. The guard would examine the badge, compare badge pictures with faces, then obtain an identical badge from a storage rack, which had a clip for fastening on clothes, and he would give this badge to the person requesting entry. The badge he took from the person was then placed in a storage rack. The badge issued was to be worn in view on the upper left area of your shirt at all times when within the fenced complex. When we exited the compound, we returned the badge with the clip to the guard, and he would return our "outside badge". We were warned to take extra care not to lose this badge, and were forbidden to remove this badge from the base, and were not to take it with us while on liberty.

I was assigned as a student in Navy Nuclear Weaponsman Course, Class Seventy-three. Our courses were grouped in specific "phases". We had ten phases to complete. Each phase had a final exam that had to be passed in order to graduate. One incentive we had for doing well in class was the choice of assignment after graduation for those who graduated at the top of the class. We were told that eighty percent of a graduating class was assigned to sea duty on aircraft carriers. Students who excelled at the top twenty percent got assignments other than sea duty, such as shore duty, and overseas shore duty. I was hopeful that I would be assigned to the west coast near my family.

The topics of our first class were security, the method of classifying classified material, and what was expected of us, as far as the safeguarding of the nation's classified information. It was explained to us why our rating badges (which we wouldn't get until graduation), had been changed. As I've explained previously this change was made so we would blend in with other sailors in the Navy.

We were also told that Juarez, Mexico, which was a one-day trip to the south, was “off limits”. Apparently a sailor attending school had visited Juarez, and disappeared. It was thought that the soviets had him. We were cautioned about telling anyone off base that we were in nuclear weapons school. We were to report anyone who questioned us, or asked inappropriate questions. There were known Russian spies in Albuquerque, and Los Alamos who were anxious to obtain information about nuclear weapons.

We had notebooks, and took notes during our classes, but could not remove the notebooks from the class area. Our notes were classified so they remained locked in safes when not in use. The levels of classification beginning from the lowest to the highest were: “For Official Use Only,” “Confidential,” “Secret” and “Top Secret”. A description of each level was as follows; For Official Use Only: Just as the title implies, this information was for officials with a “need to know”. Confidential: Information if improperly revealed could be prejudicial to the defense of the nation. Secret: Information if improperly revealed could cause serious damage to the defense of the nation. Top Secret: Information if improperly revealed could cause grave damage to the defense of the nation. Nuclear weapons information is further protected by a special statute called “The Atomic Energy Act of 1954”, which placed all nuclear weapons information in a category called “Restricted Data,” or “Formerly Restricted Data”. These categories prohibited the release of nuclear weapons information to any foreign national, or our allies. We were told just because a person has a security clearance doesn’t mean he can have access to any classified material. He or she had to have a “need to know”; an example might be a Nuclear Weaponsman could not be given a classified document about radio transmission codes, unless he or she could establish a “need to know.” The covers of classified documents, or cover sheets are color-coded to indicate classification. Confidential: yellow, Secret: blue, and Top Secret: red. Most of the material we were to be taught was Secret, Restricted Data. Each of our classes began in the same manner, the instructor would tell us what level of classification the information was that he was about to discuss.

We were told the penalty for unauthorized disclosure of classified material was what was called the “20/20 punishment”. This meant twenty years in prison, and $20,000 fine. If caught giving information to the Russians, the punishment could be life in prison, or death.

Our first classes were physics, covering atoms, neutrons, protons, electrons, and the mechanics of atomic fission. We also learned the history of the development of nuclear weapons. New Mexico is considered the birthplace of the atomic age. The Manhattan Project, which was partially based in Los Alamos, New Mexico, was north of Albuquerque. The first nuclear detonation was at Alamogordo, south of Albuquerque. We learned what materials were used in atomic bombs, the most basic material being enriched uranium. We learned about non-sustaining chain reactions, sustaining chain reactions, and multiplying chain reactions. We studied equations, the most basic being Einstein’s formula $E=MC^2$. We were taught the two primary methods of creating a nuclear explosion, or fission reaction: 1. Rapidly bringing together two non critical masses of radioactive material to form a critical mass or as this method is called a “gun type” weapon. 2. Compressing a non critical mass to form a critical mass, or as this method is called an “implosion type” weapon. We were also taught the basics of “H bombs” or thermonuclear weapons. We learned that the thermonuclear process was one of fusion. In order to have fusion you have to intense heat. Fission is a method used to create intense heat. So an H-bomb was actually two bombs in one, a primary or fission bomb, as a “spark plug” and secondary material to cause fusion. We studied the health hazards of radiation. We had all grown up on a diet of horror movies that featured monsters that had been created because of the atomic bombs, and the effects of radiation. We discovered that the public image of radiation was much overstated, and unrealistic.

The types of radiation we studied were alpha, beta, gamma, and x-ray. We learned the methods of protection from radiation, and the effects of radiation on the human body. I recall one story of a worker in Los Alamos in the 1950s, who was carrying two pieces of uranium that he accidentally brought together in a laboratory. There was a blue flash, and his body absorbed a huge dose of radiation. His condition was critical, and he was the subject of intense medical study. Unfortunately he only survived a few weeks. This Los Alamos worker, and the Japanese of Nagasaki, and Hiroshima were the only human subjects who had been exposed to radiation studied by the medical profession. Exposure limits were much higher in the 50s and 60s. Many military people that were exposed to nuclear detonations in the 50s, and 60s, now in the twenty-first century are experiencing medical problems.

My classmates and I studied the types of nuclear detonations, and their effects upon targets, and people. The different types of nuclear bursts are: airburst, surface-burst, subsurface, and underwater bursts. An airburst is described as a nuclear detonation with a fireball created by the explosion that does not touch the earth’s surface at its maximum expansion. A surface burst occurs when the fireball touches the surface of the earth, or water.

A subsurface or underwater burst occurs when the center of the fireball is below the surface of the earth or water. A blinding white flash characterizes a nuclear detonation. A nuclear explosion might be compared to what would happen if the sun in miniature were to suddenly appear on the earth's surface momentarily. The thermal blast causes blindness, and intense heat burns, and melts earthly material. A nuclear explosion on, or above the surface of the earth creates immense overpressures, which spread out from the center of the explosion. As the heat and shock wave expand outward, air rushes back toward the void created by the explosion. This is called a negative phase. An example of the negative phase; the effect that is seen in pictures of houses being blown away from an atomic blast, the siding, roof, and material of the house can be seen blowing away from the blast, then reversing and going inward toward the blast center. This inward movement is cooler air rushing back toward the center of the explosion. This double blast effect is one reason for the devastation of a nuclear blast, which is much more destructive than that of a conventional explosive blast. This is also reason for the familiar mushroom cloud. Tons, upon tons of dirt, rock, and material are sucked upward toward the stratosphere as the fireball rises and diminishes. Just as hot air rises, so does the very hot fireball. When all the material sucked up through the stem created by the rising fireball hits the colder, thinner, upper atmosphere, it spreads out and begins its long fall back to earth; thus the familiar mushroom shape is created. This material falling back to earth is also radioactive. The blast from a nuclear detonation causes the most damage; damage is also caused by intense thermal heat. At the instant of a nuclear detonation there's a pulse of radiation, mostly gamma, x-ray, and neutrons, (a small amount of beta), this radiation is capable of penetrating many feet of shielding material such as dirt, metal, etc. There are usually two major pulses of radiation that expand outward from ground zero (or center of the explosion). The radiation strength levels decrease as the distance increases from ground zero. The bomb material and much of the dirt dust, and rocks that fall back to earth are called "fallout." This material is a radiation hazard, and is mostly alpha and beta radiation. This material must be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through cuts in the skin to be harmful, or deadly.

An air burst detonation is the most destructive of all the nuclear blasts. One effect that causes this great amount of destruction is the creation of the phenomenon called a precursor. This is created when the shock wave bounces off the surface of the earth, and combines with the expanding shock as it moves across the surface of the earth. A precursor as it moves across and through a target has double the destructive force of a single shock wave. A surface burst cannot create a precursor shock wave, and it has diminished explosive power since the fireball touches the surface of the earth or water. In a surface burst there is, however, much more fallout because the fireball touches the ground and irradiates more material. The subsurface bursts and the surface bursts cause huge craters on the surface of the earth, and in water, they create huge radioactive base surges, or tidal waves.

We learned that the size of a nuclear detonation is measured by comparison to the power, or size of an explosion that occurs when 1,000 tons, or two million pounds, of TNT explosives explode. This unit of measure is called a kiloton. Therefore, one kiloton equals 1000 tons of TNT. Another measurement is a megaton; a megaton is 1,000 kilotons, or an explosion equal to two billion pounds of TNT. A weapon's explosive power is expressed either in kilotons or megatons. It has become standard to compare weapon explosive power to the weapon that was dropped on Hiroshima, which was twenty kilotons, or the equivalent of forty million pounds of TNT. An example of the use of the standard might be a statement such as: "The weapon detonated was three times the size of the weapon detonated over Hiroshima," which would be twenty kilotons times three equals sixty kilotons. The destructive force of nuclear weapons was mind boggling to us! A one-megaton blast would have a fireball many miles across, and the radius of destruction would extend more than one hundred miles. We were in awe of the destructive power of these weapons; deaths and injuries were not spoken of in the hundreds or thousands, but in millions. This had the effect of de-sensitizing a person. We did not question the morality or justness of nuclear weapons. Our instructors stated the position that it was hoped these weapons would never be used, but if they were we had to make sure they worked, because it was either us or them, "them" being the Soviet Union. In 1961 the feeling was, as I've said before, that nuclear war was only a matter of time, we as a generation didn't expect to reach middle, or old age!

We learned there was a definite "chain of command" in the world of nuclear weapons. The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), later to be renamed the Department of Energy (DOE), maintained ownership of all radioactive material within the nation. The Army, Navy, and Air Force owned and developed delivery systems, and those components other than the warhead, which was owned by AEC. The final authority on matters of nuclear weapons was the AEC.

The Defense Atomic Support Agency (DASA), later to be renamed Defense Nuclear Agency, headquartered in Washington, D.C., was the liaison agency between AEC and the armed services.

We were told the history of nuclear weapons' development. One interesting story we were told was of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were tried in 1951 and executed in 1953 for spying for the Soviet Union. They provided the Russians with an explosive system called the "lens system," which created an "implosion" force during a nuclear weapon detonation cycle.

Explosives were arranged in a sphere so the force of the explosion was directed inward, versus outward, and thus causing a "squeeze" on the active material within the sphere, and ultimately causing a multiplying chain reaction, or blinding white flash, and a nuclear detonation.

One of the foremost considerations during the development of nuclear weapons was safety. The weapons had to be safe to maintain, handle, and transport, and not detonate until the desired time over a target. Nuclear weapons contain conventional explosives of varying sensitivity. This sensitivity is determined in a laboratory by a drop test. Explosive sensitivity is expressed in inches. For example, TDX3 explosive has a sensitivity of twenty-four inches. This meant if TDX3 were dropped from a height of twenty-four inches, it would detonate fifty percent of the time.

Detonators were devices of high sensitivity that set off explosives of lower sensitivity. We learned that explosives are also classed by the speed that they explode. Class A explosives are high explosives, class B explosives are slower burning explosives, class C explosives are pyrotechnics, fireworks, etc. One method of maintaining safety was to store highly sensitive detonators separate from a warhead, and install them just prior to the bombs' use. Another safety consideration was to keep the active material or nuclear component separate, or out of position until just prior to a nuclear detonation. One example is an In-Flight Insertion Device (IFI), which I'll discuss later on. Other safety features include keeping power supplies, and batteries separate until preparation of weapons for use.

Thinking back about the sequence of classes, I realized they were structured purposely. First we were told of the immense destructive power of nuclear weapons, then to ease our fears, and possible concerns, we were told of the many safety devices incorporated in weapons that made them safe to work on and handle.

We were told of the many different methods of delivering nuclear weapons, by aircraft carried both internally and externally. There were missiles, or rockets, which were delivered from silos, and launchers, and aircraft. They were launched from submarines such as torpedoes, Regulus missiles, and Polaris missiles. They were fired by artillery guns, shipboard sixteen-inch guns, and as depth charges, and there were also atomic demolitions carried in backpacks.

Something that had to be taken into account when a nuclear weapon was delivered by airplane was the survival of the pilot and aircraft. Different methods of delivery were developed to ensure that the plane and pilot survived the powerful detonation of an atomic bomb. One method called a loft delivery, involved the pilot flying toward the target and near the target placing the aircraft in the steep climb and during the climb, releasing (or lofting) the bomb to the target so the bomb remained in the air long enough to give the pilot time to turn and immediately fly away. This put enough distance between the detonation and his plane to ensure his survival. Another method was to have a rocket, or jet assist on the bomb so the bomb traveled away from the plane toward the target, which permitted the pilot to put distance between him and the bomb prior to detonation.

We were introduced to fusing, and firing components. Most nuclear weapons, we learned, used electricity for fusing, firing, and detonation. The fusing and safety devices included timers, altimeters, velocity sensing devices, hydrostats, impact crystals, and radars, just to name a few.

We had to learn a completely new language. For instance all nuclear weapons have a mark number, such as Mark 7, Mark 27, Mark 28, etc. The mark numbers were assigned as weapons were developed. Many weapons had nicknames such as Mark 90 depth bomb: "Betty," Mark 30.5 rocket: "Boar," Mark 101: "Lulu," Mark 105: "Hot Point," and so on.

There were three sections of a bomb, a nose, warhead, and tail. The right and left sides of a bomb were determined by standing at the rear of the bomb looking toward the nose, the right and left side corresponding to the person's right and left side. Bombs, and missiles, had "station numbers," used for location identification. For example, "station number twelve", meant exactly twelve inches from the front of the bomb or missile nose, "station number 42.5"= 42 ½ inches, etc. A letter or combination of letters and numbers identified large sections of bombs.

Examples follow, MC-290, MC stood for Major Component, N-43, N stood for Nose, SC-43, SC stood for Shape Component, W28, W stood for Warhead, F-62, and F stood for a Fuze component. We had a maze of terms, and a number of designations to learn. Anything that was used to handle, or test weapons, and weapon parts, had either a "T" or "H" number, the "T" standing for test equipment, the "H" standing for handling equipment. These pieces of equipment had undergone extensive development and research, and had to be approved, or "blessed" by AEC and the services before they could be used on a weapon. An example is an H-12 hand truck that was used for handling the F-7 Fuze, and other components. This hand truck cost as much as two Cadillac's in 1961, which was more than $10,000. Many items of Test equipment, or "T" gear were used to insure that the electric circuitry of bomb's parts, and that bombs themselves were in working condition.

We were told that nuclear weapons have a specific life span of seven phases, beginning with Concept, then Development, Manufacturing, Quality Assurance and Testing, Stockpile, Modification, and finally Retirement.

When a nuclear weapon system is active it is considered to be "in the stockpile." There are different classes of weapons used for different purposes. The "real ones" are called "War Reserves". Bombs used for quality assurance, usually without nuclear components are called "Quality Assurance Weapons." Weapons used by maintenance crews to practice maintenance, and handling, are called "Trainers". There are also classifications for bombs used by aircraft loading crews to practice aircraft loading called Bomb Dummy Units, or "BDU's".

We learned that maintenance operations on nuclear weapons were every bit as strict, and disciplined, and often even more so, as surgery operations on human beings. Maintenance manuals governed all the maintenance operations. Any handling or maintenance operation on a nuclear weapon was in strict compliance with written procedures within manuals that were written and published by AEC, and the services. Defense Atomic Support Agency (DASA) accomplished the actual publishing and authentication of these manuals. The manuals covered different subjects concerning nuclear weapons, and the subject was identified by a number system. A manual entitled TP (Technical Publication) B7-1 would cover the topic of assembly and maintenance on the B-7 bomb. Each service had its own terminology. In the Navy the manuals were called "Special Weapons Ordnance Publication," or "SWOP." A "-4" manual was an illustrated parts breakdown manual showing nuts, bolts, and individual parts that makes up a bomb. As I described "-1" manuals were assembly and maintenance operations, "-0" manuals were weapon summaries, "-6" Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) procedures; "-7" covered fusing options. The manual system called "Joint Nuclear Weapons Publication System" or "JNWPS', is a complicated, exact system that each Nuclear Weaponsman had to master in order to do his job. Every detail of weapons maintenance was described, and accomplished exactly as directed by the "written word" within these manuals. Some typical maintenance operations are as follows, "Removal from Storage, and Preparation for Strike," "Inspection and Test Following Removal from Strike Aircraft," "Inspection and Test Following Removal from Strike Aircraft," "Parachute Removal and Replacement," and many more.

We were to discover that manuals, records and reports, and paperwork were the lifeblood of the nuclear weapons' program. At the time of manufacture each nuclear weapon had a card initiated called an Inspection Record Card (IRC). This was somewhat like a birth certificate, and life history. The IRC remained with the weapon throughout its life. All maintenance operations and significant events that occurred on the weapon were recorded on the IRC. Some weapons had Pressure Test Record Cards (PTR's) that reflected a weapon pressure history. Some weapons were pressurized to prevent high altitude electric arcing, and to maintain watertight integrity in depth bomb applications. The paperwork involved with nuclear weapons was immense. It seemed there was more paperwork than the "nuts and bolts" work.

We had classes on Radiation and Detection Instruments and Computation equipment, or "RADIAC" instruments. These instruments detect radiation. One of the most common instruments was used to detect alpha radiation, which would be used to monitor "fallout" material. Alpha radiation is harmful only if absorbed into the body through cuts in the skin, by breathing, or ingesting. Alpha radiation only traveled in air a little over an inch, so the probe of an alpha detector had to be held very close to the surface being surveyed. We also studied gamma and beta radiation detection equipment.

Another subject we studied was what to do in the event of fire in the vicinity of a nuclear weapon, and what to do if the weapon was engulfed in fire. The older weapons systems had explosives that could possibly detonate if overheated, so it was required to try and determine how long a weapon case had been exposed to fire, and attempt to keep it cool with water spray. The possibility of a nuclear detonation was very low when a weapon was involved in a fire. Future technical advances made the possibility of nuclear detonation in a fire impossible.

One day the class was taken to a remote location on base, and we were given a demonstration. We watched some explosions, which were very impressive. One memorable demonstration was when the instructor placed a small blasting cap under a turned over bucket. The bucket soared into the air when the blasting cap was set off.

I enjoyed the “college atmosphere” of the school. We had weekly final exams, and night school study sessions were available to us. I attended these a few times prior to exams. Most of the time; however after class we had freedom to do, as we liked. We had infrequent duty days. Once every two weeks, we stood a four-hour barracks fire watch.

One day while returning to the barracks after the day’s classes, there was a commotion. The Navy barracks was a two-story building. A sailor had gone out on the second story balcony, tied a plastic water hose, around his neck, and the railing, and then jumped in an attempt to commit suicide. His attempt was a failure, the hose stretched until his feet touched the ground. He ended up with a sore neck. He had been depressed because he’d gotten word that his parents were getting a divorce. Normally such an attempt would have gotten him removed from school, but he remained in school. I won’t reveal his name, but he went on to have a successful Navy career, even becoming a commissioned officer!

My fiancée and I again planned on being married after I graduated from school. I tried to save money. I did ironing for my classmates in the barracks. I charged ten cents for a shirt, and twenty-five cents for a pair of pants.

The first part of July we began doing in class what we would be doing after we graduated, actually working on weapons. The weapons we worked on were not the “real thing” or “war reserves,” but “trainers”. The trainers had the physical components, and circuitry of war reserves, but did not have high explosives or nuclear components installed. The bomb shop classes were held in Quonset huts. Each weapon we studied had its own trainer shop work area.

The first weapon we worked on was the Mark 7 bomb. We were shown all the applicable operation steps by the instructors, then we were split into teams performing the operations with the instructor observing. A team consisted of a sailor, or as he was called a “Team Leader,” or “Hook Leader,” reading the manual step by step, while five or six sailors called “Assemblymen or Team Members” carried out the read steps. An example of the operation procedure follows: Team leader reads, “While supporting the tail, and using a 5/16” allen, unscrew four bolts holding the clamp rings together.” The team assemblymen would perform the steps, and upon completion, loudly proclaim, “Check”. The operation would not continue until a “check” had been stated. It’s not accurate to say the team leader read from a manual, because he actually read steps from “check sheets,” which had been prepared by someone reading the manual, and placing operation steps in order in a check sheet format. The check sheets were encased in plastic cover sheets, for use over and over again. As the assemblymen completed the steps read by the team leader, and proclaimed, “Check,” the team leader would place a check by the step with a grease pencil. If an assemblyman saw something unsafe, or wrong, he was to proclaim “silence,” and everyone was supposed to freeze, until the unsafe, or incorrect procedure was corrected. Speaking of “silence,” no one was to talk during the operation other than the team leader. We all took turns being a team leader; other times we were assemblymen.

The first shop work was on the Mark 7 bomb. We were told about the Mark 5, but did not work on it, as it was scheduled for retirement. The Mk 7 (see photo page) warhead was used in a number of weapons systems, the Betty depth bomb, the Boar rocket, the air-dropped bomb, and the Genie air-to-air rocket, and a number of others, but we only worked these four applications. The Mk 7 warhead had an In Flight Insertion (IFI) device. The nuclear material, which was in the form of a capsule ball, was not inserted in place in the middle of the explosive sphere until just prior to detonation. This was a safety device, as there could be no nuclear detonation until the capsule ball was in place. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima had the nuclear material inserted manually by a Navy Captain on the plane just prior to the bomb drop. An electrical motor operated the IFI device in the Mark 7 warhead. The Mark 7 warhead was a large warhead, and the operations we conducted on this warhead took longer than those on other weapons. The warhead required unique operations that we did not do on more modern warheads. We removed and installed the detonators on the high explosive sphere, and conducted inspections on the nuclear sphere, or ball, which was stored in a metal canister. The metal canister was surrounded by metal tube frame, and was nicknamed a “birdcage”. The Mark 7 bomb contained nickel-cadmium (NiCad) batteries that required frequent maintenance, radars, timers, impact crystals, altimeters, and many other components that required maintenance and testing.

There were many associated test sets with the Mark 7. Test sets were called T-gear. A test set designation might be T-128, T-79, etc. Electrical cables used for nuclear weapons testing purposes were identified as (Cable Test) “CT” cables. Electrical cables within a bomb were identified as (Cable Functional) “CF” cables.

The Mark 7 bomb was unattractive, or ungainly. It had three fins. The fin on the bottom of the tail was retractable, in order to provide ground clearance when the large bomb was hung under small planes that needed ground clearance when on the ground, and during takeoffs and landings. The fin was extended, and retracted by an electrical motor, or manually on the ground with a hand crank. The bomb had two suspension lugs, and an electrical connector for plane power, and assembly tests. There was also an arming wire that was extracted at the time of drop from the aircraft. The yield (or explosive power), of the bomb was determined by the size of the nuclear capsule ball at the time of assembly on the ground before the plane took off. The bomb was detonated by radars or upon impact with the ground by impact devices.

One interesting test we performed on the Mark 7 was, “ringing in the radars”. With the bomb assembled, in a maintenance stand, and power applied to the radars, an assemblyman would cover the nose radome with a special nylon bag, and rub the bag back and forth until the radars rang in, and a green light on the test set lit.

The Mark 7 bomb shop class lasted two weeks. It was one of the more primitive bombs, not too far removed from Little Boy, and Fat Man bombs dropped on Japan. The electrical testing of the bomb took many hours. There was a Completely Assembled Test called a “CAT Test,” a Final Assembly Test called a “FAT Test,” and a Completely Assembled for Strike Test called a “CAS Test”.

During some of the tests we did in the shop, the bomb was cycled through its complete drop sequence electrically. At the end of the test, a light on the test set would flash simulating detonation of the bomb. During this test the high explosives were not connected, nor was the nuclear capsule ball installed, but had they been, a nuclear detonation would have occurred. A common saying in school, instead of saying detonation, or explosion, was to say;”There is a rapid disassembly of the bomb with an accompanying blinding white flash”!

We performed “hands on operations” with the nuclear components of the Mark 7 warhead. As stated previously, the nuclear capsule ball was stored within a metal canister. This canister was airtight. The nuclear ball was encased in a metal cover, two hollow spheres of specific metal. Uranium “spalls” over time, and small specks of the uranium “pop off”. This is a characteristic of radioactive material. At specific time frames it was required that the capsule balls (considerably larger than a softball), be inspected for spalling. The capsule ball was unpackaged, and placed on a table. The ball was placed within a paper sack. The sack containing the capsule ball was placed within a clear plastic box, which had two rubber gloves that extended into the box from both sides. An assemblyman placed his hands in the gloves, and rubbed the capsule ball vigorously rubbing off any loose material on the surface of the capsule ball. After completion of rubbing, the capsule ball was removed, and any material within the paper bag, and box were considered radioactive waste, and treated as such.

After shop work on the Mark 7 bomb we worked on the “BOAR” which stood for Bomb Ordnance Assisted Rocket or as it was also called, the 30.5 inch Rocket. This was a Mark 7 bomb with a rocket motor; the rocket motor was primarily to give the pilot a safe separation distance. The Boar was launched from the aircraft toward the target, while the plane rapidly departed in the opposite direction. We had classroom lessons, but no shop classes on the Mark 90 “Betty” which was a depth bomb that used the Mark 7 warhead.

We studied the Mark 101 “Lulu” which was also a depth bomb, using a W34 warhead. This was the depth bomb that was to take the place of the Betty, with many advanced features. One thing that stands out in my mind about our Mark 101 shop work is that during our shop instruction, part of the operation called for the tail to be removed. One of the sailors in class always did very well in the classroom but wasn’t very mechanically inclined, and had trouble in the shop work. The shop operation had progressed to a point just before tail removal when the instructor told us to take a break. We all left the assembly shop area, except for the one guy I mentioned. After we left and had been in the break room for short while, we heard a huge bang! We all rushed into the assembly shop, and there stood the guy, red faced, with the tail lying on the deck (floor). He had decided to continue working in our absence, but skipped a step, which required having four assemblymen support the tail while the clamp rings holding the tail to the weapon body were removed. The tail was thick gauge steel and quite heavy. Nothing was damaged, but he was embarrassed, and the instructor was upset. This incident emphasized the importance on us of following the check sheets exactly. The Mark 101 tail had holes and a shroud ring, which caused the weapon to sink properly in water. The nose was weighted to ensure a nose down sinking posture. Hydrostats or, timers detonated the bomb. It was normally dropped into water by P2V *Neptune* aircraft (antisubmarine aircraft, or helicopters).

In the assembly phases we discovered that many screws, bolts, and nuts in nuclear weapons were tightened to exact tightness by using torque wrenches. We then had to safety wire the screws, bolts, and nuts. The safety wire was to prevent loosening by vibration, such as might be experienced while the bomb was hanging on aircraft, or at the impact of hitting the water, or ground, etc. Safety wiring, torque procedures, and tool use, was detailed in a publication called TP 45-51 General Maintenance Procedures. It's a true statement that any operation, procedure, or any task involved with nuclear weapons was written in detail in some publication, or instruction, nothing was left to personal interpretation.

After the Mark 101, we were introduced to and worked the trainer on the Mark 105 (Hot Point), which used the same warhead as the Mark 101. This bomb, which was used primarily for airstrip, or runway destruction, was one of the first parachute retarded lay-down weapons. It had a specially constructed nose nicknamed a "cookie cutter". The nose dug into concrete, or blacktop when dropped. The nose was manufactured by General Mills and had the label "General Mills" on the nose. This label "General Mills," which was normally seen on breakfast cereal boxes, looked somewhat out of place on one of the most destructive weapons on earth. We studied both the internal and external version of the bomb. The internal version was carried inside the aircraft bomb bay; the external version was carried on aircraft wing stations or the underside of the plane. The internal and external versions had their own "fairing kits". The fairing kits included nose covering, tail, and other components, such as fins, etc. The Mark 105 was my least favorite weapon, and was very difficult work on.

We had classroom work on the Mark 44 Astor Torpedo, but no shop work. The Astor also used the W34 warhead, and was launched from submarines. The torpedo was guided, fused, and fired, by wire. When the torpedo was launched, an unbelievably long spool of wire unrolled, and trailed behind the torpedo.

The next weapon we studied was a giant not only in physical size but also in yield size. It was the Mark 27 bomb, the largest in the Navy arsenal, excluding the Polaris missile. The A3 *Skywarrior* aircraft, which was the Navy's largest aircraft carrier-based aircraft, carried the Mark 27 internally (see photo page).

Following classes on the Mark 27, we studied the Mark 28 bomb. Aircraft carried the Mark 28 both internally and externally. An interesting feature on the external version, was folding fins on the tail. The fins would unfold at the time the bomb was dropped from the aircraft. The Mark 28 had varying yields from ten kilotons, up to the megaton range. (see photo page)

We studied the Regulus missile, which was launched from submarines, and followed by a "chase airplane" that transmitted commands to the missile. The chase aircraft transmitted all guidance, fusing, and firing commands.

A surface to air missile we worked on was the Talos, which used the W30 warhead. We also were given classroom instruction on the "Genie," which was an air-to-air missile, and used the Mark 7 warhead. I believe this was the only air-to-air missile developed, and when you consider that a missile explosion in the range of kilotons was used to knock a plane out of the sky, this was an example of "overkill!"

We had classes on the Polaris submarine launched ballistic missile, and "SUBROC," and "ASROC," which were antisubmarine weapons. We also had classes on atomic demolition devices. These devices are called "suit case bombs." The variety of weapons was amazing! It was a standard nuclear weapons community joke that the only nuclear device we didn't have in the arsenal was a nuclear hand grenade, and that would be developed as soon as we found a marine dumb enough to throw it!

We had classes on what was considered a modern "wooden bomb". Wooden bombs contained many advanced features and required much less maintenance by nuclear weaponsmen than their predecessors, such as the Mark 7 and W34 warhead, and others. The Mark 43 (see photo page) was delivered by aircraft, and in the Navy normally carried externally on a wing pylon, or the aircraft centerline. We were also told of new developments in the world of nuclear weapons. A new airdrop weapon was expected in the fleet. It was the Mark 57 bomb (see photo page).

Each of the weapons system we studied required not only electrical and mechanical hands-on-training, but we also had to learn the "drop sequence" of each weapon. This meant we had to know the sequential operation of each bomb component when the bomb was dropped, the missile launched, or weapon initiated, until detonation. The drop sequences were diagramed in the technical publications, showing for example, in the case of an air-dropped weapon numbered actions until detonation such as; 1.Bomb release, batteries start. 2. Radar ringing begins 3. Timer T1 ends, firing capacitor charged…and so on until the final numbered event, detonation. Something interesting, the person who illustrated these drop sequences always showed a miniature city as the target, which had Russian spires, such as the ones in Moscow, and other Russian cities.

All the weapons' systems had many, many safety devices incorporated in their designs. It was very apparent that the United States considered safety to be of great importance. It was even expressed at times that our weapons have so many safety devices built in, that their reliability was degraded. Each safety device prevents an inadvertent nuclear detonation, or a saboteur's detonation. The more safety devices, the less assurance the weapon will detonate when desired, over an enemy target. Of course another very important reason to consider safety devices during handling, shipment, and storage of nuclear weapons was the safety of the people working on the weapons and the safety of innocent civilians that might live or be near the storage vicinity of weapons. Any serious accident, especially involving the nuclear detonation of a weapon, could cause a public outcry, and outrage, that might seriously hamper our country's ability to deploy, store, and transport weapons, and thus hamper our defense, and ability to wage war.

Reliability was also an important issue. Nuclear weapons are "dual channeled". This means components are installed in weapons in "pairs," and all electrical circuits are dual and in parallel, so if one should fail, there's always a "back up".

I'll list a few safety devices, which were also called "ground handling safety devices." A complete list could fill volumes of books. Many safety devices interrupt electricity flow, in circuits. Most circuits remain open until the desired time of electrical detonation. Items called differential pressure switches, usually located on the external skin of a weapon, sensed airflow. The differential pressure switch has to sense wind velocities in excess of 250 miles per hour, before it closes the circuit it controls. This wind velocity would only be sensed at the time of airdrop from an aircraft, and would be difficult to duplicate on the ground. Other safety devices sense changes in velocity, such as a sudden G-force change that might be sensed during a parachute deployment, or sudden direction changes by a missile. Another safety device is called a "Strike Enable Plug," or SEP. This is a plug in certain weapons that is stored in separate safes, and only installed when the weapon is being prepared for loading on a strike aircraft. Without the SEP installed it is impossible to complete the fusing circuits. All weapons have Ready/Safe switches. These switches are normally visible to all who look at the skin of the weapon. While on the ground Ready/Safe switches are always kept in the Safe position, this switch indicator was colored green. The only time a Ready/Safe switch was placed in the Ready (red) position was just prior to drop from an aircraft. Some weapons had high voltage batteries that were in storage positions until preparation for loading on strike aircraft, at which time they would be placed in the operating position. Safety devices sense velocities, or forces that can only be sensed in a drop from aircraft, or firing environment, and are almost impossible to duplicate on the ground. We also were told of built in devices that provide safety in the event a weapon is exposed to fire. These devices open, and prevent electricity flow if they are exposed to extreme heat conditions, as would be experienced in a fire.

I enjoyed the daily classes, and the relaxed life. There was always anxiety as Fridays approached, as each week we were required to pass a final written exam on the weapon, or weapons we had studied that week. These exams usually contained sixty questions or more.

I relaxed at the base swimming pool one weekend, and got a Southwest sunburn, I suffered with it for a week. Another weekend a group of us stuffed ourselves into the car of my roommate, and visited Sandia Crest, which overlooked Albuquerque. It was a beautiful view. I remember much vacant land near the base, which in years to come would be priceless real estate as the city grew.

During this time frame there was a mystery in the barracks. We had laundry rooms in the barracks with washers and dryers for cleaning our soiled clothes. From time to time, if someone left clothes in the dryer, and neglected to check on them for an hour or so, upon returning to the laundry room he would find his clothes removed from the dryer and neatly folded. We all wondered who the "phantom clothes folder" was. Eventually the mystery was solved: the "phantom" was a guy in a class a few weeks behind ours, who was secretly dating an Army captain (male), in a homosexual affair. We guessed his feminine side prompted this folding behavior. He and the captain were discharged.

On 27 July we all filled out Duty Preference Sheets, also called "dream sheets," listing where we desired to be stationed after graduation. I was maintaining a class position of fourth, in twenty-two, so it was a good chance that I would not be going to sea duty. The preferred choices I put down were: Shore duty in San Diego or Long Beach. Preferred ship duty was an aircraft carrier home ported on the west coast. Preferred overseas duty: Hawaii.

Nationally this was a time of great world tension. In July everyone was talking about Russia beating us into space with the sputnik satellite. President Kennedy had made a number of speeches about the diversity between the U.S. and Russia.

The president had also extended the enlistment of all in the military service who had less than a year left to serve. There was a sense of something about to happen. There was talk of a national emergency being declared. Many thought that nuclear war was right around the corner.

Our graduation day was scheduled for 15 August 1961. Prior to graduation we all sewed our rating badge of crossed cannons above our rate, on our upper left uniform sleeves. In my case it was above my three Seaman stripes. We were all to become Gunner's Mate Technicians. After graduation my rate would be written "GMTSN".

Throughout school, George Holden and I had been class leaders. Each day after class we would assign people to clean up, dump trash, and do other menial tasks. We both had learned a few leadership skills, and gotten a few headaches from the stress of being "responsible".

Everyone was anxious to learn where his duty station would be. A few days before graduation we were told our duty assignments. I could not believe my assignment; I could never have guessed it! My future duty assignment was Keflavik, Iceland! I could not have been assigned further from home, and in what I thought was the most isolated part of the world! Most of my classmates were assigned to aircraft carriers home ported on the east coast. At this point I'd been in the Navy a little over a year. After graduation we were all granted two weeks leave before going to our new duty station. I began making plans to travel home. One of my roommates had a 1953 Mercury, and was from San Francisco. He and I, and two others planned to drive to California; it was to cost us ten dollars each for gas.

On 15 August, the twenty-two sailors that made up our class, formed into ranks, and the Captain of the Naval Barracks handed us our diplomas and shook our hands. The course had been from 5 June to 15 August. We were all now proud finally to be GMT's. After we were congratulated, we left the fenced and guarded training area for the last time, and handed in our badges. We spent the next day checking out, getting our orders, and records, and saying goodbye. We all felt sad to be leaving Albuquerque, but we also felt fortunate to be leaving at this time. Things at the barracks were changing. It seems there had been some concerns and complaints by the Army about how the Navy walked about the base. We did not march back and forth as a group going between the barracks and the training side of the base, or back and forth to the mess hall. We walked casually, and often not as a group. Future classes would be marching when they went to and from classes.

We all had fond memories of New Mexico, and for many years anytime a GMT spoke about where he'd like to be stationed, it was more than likely Albuquerque. In the personnel office there was a First Class Yeoman named Adams, who was highly liked by everyone. He was one of the most helpful, personnel administrators I ever met. I heard that he died of cancer a couple of years later. He was admired and respected by all the students.

On 17 August at 7:00 a.m. in the morning, four of us checked out on leave. On this same day in Berlin, Germany, construction of the Berlin Wall began. This visible barrier, called the "Iron Curtain", against freedom built by communism between East and West Germany was to remain in place for almost thirty years.

With our four sea bags in the back of the 1953 Mercury, we drove off the base, and headed for California. One sailor was going to Los Angeles, then I was getting off at Lindsay, and then the owner of the car and the other passenger were going on to San Francisco. I expected to get home in about twenty-three hours. We were taking turns driving. We made good time through New Mexico, and Arizona, anxious to get to our respective homes. Then about 2:30 a.m. in the middle of the Mojave Desert, we had a flat tire on the left rear. We were on Route 66, and it was very dark. We checked the spare and it was flat too! Two guys hitchhiked to a gas station we had passed about twenty-five miles back, with the flat tire. I and another sailor stayed with the car. Luckily the two with the tire got a ride right away, and the station was able to repair the tire, and we were on our way before daylight. We stopped again at another station, and had the spare flat tire repaired. After dropping off the first guy, we went on another 150 miles to Lindsay. I told them to drop me off, and then go on up Route 99, but they insisted on taking me to Lindsay, which was about fifteen miles out of the way. I arrived in the town of Lindsay about 3:00 p.m., and after a kiss and embrace was reunited with my fiancée. I bid my classmates farewell, and they continued on to San Francisco.

I had an enjoyable two weeks leave. Once again the planned wedding did not take place. My mom was expecting a baby in September; I was disappointed that I would not be home when the baby arrived. The only complaint I had about my leave was that it went by much too quickly.

Chapter 6: Beginnings of the Vietnam War

It was wonderful to see my family. They lived among an orange grove at the base of the Sierra Mountains, near Strathmore, California. I tried to look up some of my boyhood friends, but most had moved away long ago. I did find Butch Coley, who was now a milkman for a local creamery. Butch told me about a correspondence course on law enforcement he was completing. Butch went on to a highly successful career in law, achieving a master's degree from Pepperdine University, and becoming the elected Sheriff of Tulare County, California. Early one morning I went with Butch on his milk route. After he completed his route, we were sitting in his house in Lindsay; the date was 22 November 1963. Butch's wife, Janice came in and said, "The President has been shot." We turned on the television and learned of the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. The church bells were tolling in town, and after a while I left Butch and Janice's house. I had been out of the Navy for two days, I wondered if I would be called back on active duty.

I put in an application for employment at the state hospital where my mother worked and I began dating a girl I'd vaguely known when I was in high school. Allison Konrad had been a friend of my ex-fiancée, and lived on the same block as my ex-fiancée. I was celebrating my "freedom" as a civilian, with little thought of my future. The killer of President Kennedy, Oswald had been murdered, and we wondered if our country was falling apart. Many people remained glued to the television set watching the events unfold.

Twenty days after my discharge from the Navy, I made one of the worse decisions of my life: Allison and I drove to Las Vegas late at night, and were married in a Las Vegas wedding chapel on 10 December 1963, two days after my twenty-first birthday. In retrospect, the marriage was made on the rebound from my failed engagement with Donna, and with little thought of the future. The look of sorrow on my mother's face when I told her of the marriage remains frozen in my memory. She sensed as I did that I had made a serious mistake.

Allison's parents gave us a wedding shower at a church in Lindsay. Now I was really forced to consider the future. Allison did not have a job, and the only work available in the winter were "smudging" jobs, lighting oil pots in the orange groves during the night to prevent the oranges hanging on trees from freezing and spoiling. I passed written and oral exams at the state hospital, and had passed a physical exam. I was given a date to go to work, but I had a change of heart. I wasn't sure if I could do the job of changing diapers, caring for patient needs, and the compassionate things that my mother had done so well over the years.

I ran across a close boyhood friend, Ashley Caudle, who had just spent two years in the Army. We spent a lot of time talking about the good times we had in the service. Allison and I lived in her apartment, and the money I had saved in the Navy was becoming short. I had doctor bills, and my car needed work. My wonderful dreams of a carefree civilian life had turned into a nightmare.

At the time of my discharge I had been recommended for re-enlistment. If I should reenlist within ninety days following the date of my discharge, I would not have "broken service", which meant I'd be able to keep my second class petty officer rate. If I waited beyond the ninety days, I would probably be enlisted as a third class or seaman. By the end of January things was looking bleak, and my ninety days would be up on the 18th of February. The last of January, I got a haircut and went to see the Navy recruiter in nearby Visalia.

The recruiter arranged for me to travel to San Francisco for my physical exam and re- enlistment. Allison had gotten a job as a checker in a nearby grocery store. She was not happy that I had to leave for San Francisco, but she was going to have to adjust to times of separation in the Navy.

Before I left for San Francisco, Allison with my sister Linda went shopping in the Chevy convertible, and it stopped with engine trouble. I decided to trade it in. I got a 1963 Chevrolet Monza, one of the first American cars to have a rear engine. If I had the 56 Chevy convertible today, it would be priceless, as that model became a much sought-after collector's car.

On 4 February 1964, I boarded a bus at Visalia, California bound for San Francisco. In my suitcase I had a set of dress blues. In San Francisco, I checked into the YMCA, and spent a sleepless night with doubt and indecision running through my mind.

The next morning I walked three blocks to the federal building, where I underwent a physical. The recruiter in Visalia had checked with authorities to make sure I hadn't gotten into trouble as a civilian, and he had given me a green light. That afternoon I recited the same oath I had taken three and a half years previously. I signed an enlistment contract for six years. I received a re-enlistment bonus. This was a month's pay for each year I signed up for, and came to $1,320. I was also given thirty days' leave, and told my transfer orders to my next duty station would be mailed to my parents' address. Late that afternoon I walked back to the YMCA, and changed from civilian clothes into my dress blues.

All the doubts I had about going back into the Navy, disappeared as soon as I was back in uniform. I felt relieved to be back in uniform, it was almost like returning home. I rode the bus back to Visalia with $1,320 safely tucked in the inside pocket of my uniform jumper.

I paid off all my bills, and a couple of weeks later, a packet from the Navy arrived at my parents' mailbox. I was being assigned to *USS Ticonderoga*, (CVA-14), an aircraft carrier home ported in San Diego, California. I was very relieved not to be going back to the east coast. I especially did not want to go back to the *Independence* at this point, because I could imagine the teasing I would be subjected to now that I had become a "Lifer."

The *Ticonderoga* was much smaller than the *Independence*, and much older. She was an attack aircraft carrier[15]. She was the lead ship of modified 27,100-ton *Essex* class aircraft carriers, was built at Newport News, Virginia. She was commissioned in May 1944 and made a West Indies shakedown cruise prior to transiting the Panama Canal to the Pacific in early September. During the next few months, *Ticonderoga* transported aircraft to Hawaii, took part in underway ordnance replenishment experiments and trained her crew and air group for participation in the war against Japan. After steaming to the western Pacific in October, her first strikes were on 5 November 1944, hitting targets ashore and afloat in the northern Philippines area. As part of Task Force 38, she continued her attacks in the vicinity for the next two months, riding out a major typhoon in mid-December.

In January 1945, *Ticonderoga* took part in raids against Japanese assets in Indochina, China, Luzon and Formosa. Hit by two "Kamikaze" suicide planes on 21 January, she lost over 140 crewmen and had to go to the U.S. for repairs. *Ticonderoga* returned to the combat area in late May. For the remaining two and a half months of the Pacific War, her planes made regular attacks on the Japanese home islands. From September 1945 into January 1946, she transported veterans' home across the Pacific. Inactive after that, *Ticonderoga* was decommissioned at the Puget Sound Navy Yard in January 1947.

Five years later, *Ticonderoga* was temporarily reactivated and sent to the New York Naval Shipyard to receive an extensive modernization. Redesignated CVA-14, she recommissioned in September 1954 and served with the Atlantic Fleet for two years, making one Mediterranean deployment in 1955-56. More modifications followed in 1956-57, providing an angled flight deck and enclosed bow to fully suit her to operate high-performance jet aircraft. She then returned to the west coast, her home for the rest of her career. Up to 1962 she had completed four deployments to the Western Pacific as part of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. The name *Ticonderoga* was often shortened to *"Tico"* by her crew.

Allison and I left for San Diego the last of February. We rented a small apartment for a few days on Coronado Island, near the North Island Naval Air Station. The base had piers that the *Ticonderoga* tied up to. I learned that the ship was scheduled to get underway for the Western Pacific in six weeks. I also learned that Allison was pregnant.

I reported aboard *USS Ticonderoga* 15 March, 1964. I had brought my sea bag up to par by shopping at Lemoore Naval Air Station, near Visalia, California. As I said before, *Ticonderoga* was a large ship, but much smaller than the *USS Independence*, and not nearly as modern. The berthing compartment was not as comfortable as the *Independence*. The bunks on the *Tico* were stretched canvas with thin mattresses, and were stacked three and four high. The first and second class petty officers had a section separated from the common berthing area by a curtain.

I began my check in as soon as I reported to the personnel office. The ship had just undergone a series of inspections, and was scheduled for more prior to departure. There were thirty-five men in W Division. The Division Officer was Lieutenant (jg) Burkhardt; Electrical Officer LTJG F.L. Richardson; Junior Division Officer ENS. J.A. Gelsomino. The Leading Chief was GMTC Catron; our Leading Petty Officer was GMT1 Gaddley. W Division was somewhat top heavy, we had an unusually large number of second class. I'd not met any of the sailors before, except Dan Hoover, who I remembered being in a class behind me in Albuquerque A school. Compared to most W Divisions on carriers we were very well manned. Thirty-five men was twice the normal size of a W Division on a carrier the size of *Ticonderoga*.

As usual, my security clearance had to be confirmed, so I was put to work supervising cleaning of W Division berthing compartment. After a couple of weeks I was told some wonderful news; instead of getting underway with the ship, I would remain in the states and attend school for six weeks. A second class named T.J. Cherney and I were to attend loading school at Lemoore, California, and also a nuclear weapon refresher course at Nuclear Weapons Training Center Pacific, in San Diego, which was located on Coronado Island, a few blocks from where the ship tied up.

One convenient aspect was that Lemoore Naval Air Station was only a few miles from Lindsay, California where my new in-laws, Ernie and Effie Konrad, lived. Allison had returned to Lindsay and was staying with them.

On 12 April, Cherney and I left the ship for Lemoore. *Ticonderoga* was to get underway for the Western Pacific in two days on the fourteenth. In our absence, *Ticonderoga* would be undergoing an Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI); this was an inspection that was conducted on naval vessels before they went into potential combat areas to insure they were battle ready.

I was attending the loading school in Lemoore in order to be qualified as a technical monitor on *Ticonderoga* as I had on the *Independence*. The airplane types on *Tico* were different from those onboard *Independence*. *Ticonderoga* had the F-8 *Crusader*, a jet fighter; the A-1 *Skyraider*, a propeller driven fighter-bomber; the A-4 *Skyhawk* jet fighter-bomber, and the A-3 *Skywarrior* dual jet bomber, the biggest carrier-based aircraft in the Navy. *Tico* also had early warning radar planes, COD's, and helicopters. Cherney and I checked into loading school on Friday, and were given the weekend off, Cherney checked into the barracks, and I drove to Lindsay. On Monday I left my in-law's house at 5:00 a.m., and arrived at school at 7:00 a.m. The loading school was casual, and the only GMT stationed there, was also a GMT2 who taught us. Our school lasted two weeks, and we had an additional week before we were to report to San Diego, 320 miles south of Lemoore. After the class completion we volunteered to paint two of the weapon trainers that the school used for loading classes. The trainers' surfaces were scratched, and chipped. We sanded and painted the trainers during this last week. Our effort impressed the school. In reality we would have been bored sitting around for a week with nothing to do. Word about our volunteer work eventually got back to the ship, and it helped the reputation of *Ticonderoga*'s W Division.

I was becoming aware of a truth in the Navy. There were actually "two navies" within the Navy, the East coast Navy, and the West coast Navy. There were of course two different fleets, but the way tasks were performed, working relationships, and outlooks were very different. The East coast Navy was much closer to the Navy's origins, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Boston, etc., and steeped in tradition. It seemed there were more distinct lines of separation between officers and enlisted men. There seemed to be less emphasis on job performance, and more emphasis on military behavior. On the West coast it seemed that job performance, along with a "can do" attitude was the main goal. I enjoyed the West coast Navy, not only because it was nearest my home, but also because of the personality of the West coast Navy. There was a saying in the Navy, and particularly of the East coast Navy: "Navy; over 200 years of tradition unhampered by progress"!

I enjoyed the time at the loading school in Lemoore. This was to be the only time in the Navy I was able to return nightly to my hometown after work was over for the day. Cherney and I checked out of school, and drove south to San Diego, where we checked into Nuclear Weapons Training Center Pacific, one block from the main gate of North Island Naval Air Station. The school was within a large brick building surrounded by a tall fence. In order to get to North Island, or Coronado, you took a ferry that carried cars and passengers back and forth between San Diego and the island. Although in reality it was not an island, as a strand of land to the south connected with the mainland (called the Silver Strand). To drive this strand took about an hour, versus the ferry ride, which took about twenty minutes, and cost forty-five cents. There were also smaller boats that transported sailors back and forth between the island and the main city of San Diego, nicknamed "nickel snatchers." We attended these classes for four weeks. They were more structured than the classes at Lemoore, and covered warhead maintenance procedures. We had instructions on all the air-dropped weapons we would be working with.

One GMT2, who was a classmate, had completed Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) School. He described an interesting aspect of his training: For one week during school he remained tied to another sailor by a short length of rope. This rope could not be removed for seven days, the purpose being to teach them the "buddy rule", or need to rely on each another, while scuba diving or defusing explosives.

We graduated from our course, and were directed to report to Travis Air Force Base, near Sacramento, the latter part of May, for a flight overseas to catch our ship. I spent the weekend at home, bid my parents and Allison goodbye, and caught a bus to Travis Air Force Base, where I met Cherney. We flew to Hawaii, Guam, and then on the Clark Air Force Base, Philippines.

It was 100 degrees, with very high humidity when the plane landed at Clark. Since Cherney and I were in transit, we had to wear our wool dress blue, which were miserably hot. We had a four-hour bus ride through the Philippine countryside to Subic Bay Naval Base where the *Ticonderoga* was alongside a pier. The bus was not air-conditioned, and the heat was almost unbearable.

The countryside was green and tropical, and we saw farmers plowing fields with caribous. The villages we passed through looked very poor. Most of the houses were built on stilts and had palm thatched roofs. Some homes were made of concrete with tin roofs. Children playing by the roadside were either naked, or scantily clothed. The open sewage was pungent to smell. Two hours into our ride the bus stopped at a small restaurant and bar called the Halfway House. I assumed their biggest customers were the travelers on the military bus between Clark Air Force Base, and the Subic Naval Base. There were two buses, with sixty sailors in each bus. The last hour of the ride we climbed steep, winding mountain roads, with thick jungle on each side of the road. We arrived at the naval base, and took a base taxi to the pier where the ship was. I was glad to finally be onboard; it had been a long hot journey, and I was exhausted.

I was assigned as an Assembly Team Leader in the after-magazine. Just as on the *Independence*, W Division was split into a forward and after magazine. The ship got underway the day after I arrived back onboard. *Ticonderoga* participated in a war game called *Operation Ligtas*, which lasted seven days. Afterwards, we anchored in the bay off the Philippine Capitol of Manila.

I did not know many people in W Division at this point. I went on liberty with Ray Steele and a couple of other second class GMT's. I noticed many World War II vintage jeeps that had been converted into taxis. These vehicles were called "jeepneys." The drivers decorated the jeepneys with flags, catholic statues, and all kinds of gaudy decorations; they were very colorful.

The currencies used in the Philippines were pesos. We were not paid with American currency while overseas, but with military scripts. This was paper money specially made for military payrolls. This method was intended to prevent black-market trading of American currency. We called the money "funny money." Each denomination, one, five, ten, and twenty dollar bill, was a different color; red, green, yellow, and so on. If we wanted to spend money off the ship, we had to change our "funny money" into pesos before leaving the ship. The disbursing office set up tables in the hangar bay for this purpose.

After we explored Manila for a couple of hours, we went to a bar where most of the W Division sailors were. Later that night I decided to go back to the ship alone; this was a mistake. It was about an eight-block walk back to the liberty boat pier. After I had walked three blocks, down a dark deserted street, a small Filipino came at me out of the shadows. He didn't look very old, perhaps sixteen. He had a knife, and thrust it forward toward my stomach. I grabbed the blade of the knife. At that same moment a hand came from behind me, and grabbed my billfold, which was hanging flap down from the right front pants pocket of my dress whites. Then in a flash the kid with the knife pulled it from my grasp, and he and the person with my wallet ran down an alley out of sight. I had grabbed the knife with my right hand and blood was seeping from my clenched fist. I kept my fist clenched to control the bleeding and continued walking toward the liberty boat pier. At the pier I found the shore patrol and explained what happened. A duty corpsman at the pier examined my hand, cleaned and bandaged it. Luckily stitches were not required, but it hurt. I was thankful the knife had not found its way to my stomach. My cut hand hurt, but I think my pride was hurt worse. I'd lost my driver's license, ID card, and about eight dollars in pesos. I didn't go ashore again in Manila during that in port stay. Never again in a foreign port did I take my driver's license, or anything other than my ID card, and I very seldom walked alone down foreign streets.

My sister Linda had just graduated from high school, and for my brother Joe's sixth birthday I had gotten him some toy golf clubs before leaving home. These were typical sacrifices in a sailor's life; missed milestones in our families' lives. With pro pay, sea pay, and family separation pay I was making $468 a month, before taxes. As a married sailor I was making a little more than during my single life. I was anxious for my baby's birth, which was to happen in November. The ship was due back in San Diego 16 October. Our next scheduled port of call was Sasebo, Japan.

The weather was hot and humid, and as on the *Independence*, one of the coolest places in *Ticonderoga* was W Division magazines. As well as performing the duties of an assembly team leader, I was also a technical monitor when the squadron loading teams would practice loading weapons. One requirement at that time was a drill held every three months simulating going to nuclear war. This quarterly drill on *Ticonderoga* was code named "Crew-cut." The ship would go to general quarters battle stations, and W Division would send up ordnance to be loaded. Everything was performed up to the point of aircraft launches off the ship, and then the drill was over. Timing was critical, and all those involved worked as quickly as possible.

We worked under a plan called a Strike Integrated Operation Plan, or "SIOP." This meant each carrier operating in the Western Pacific (West Pac), and other areas of the world might be assigned specific targets. Our planes could reach targets 600 miles away, and return.

We could steam at thirty knots for twelve hours and that range extended to 960 miles, steaming for twenty- four hours that range could be 1,320 miles. There might also be target missions that would call for the pilot to divert to other landing areas instead of returning to the *Ticonderoga*. We felt sympathy for the A-1 *Skyraider* pilots. They piloted the single prop bomber that was much slower than the jet bombers. They always asked if we thought they would escape the blast when they dropped their weapon. We always told them of course they would be safe, but it was questionable whether they would survive. We trained on our weapon trainers to keep our technical and mechanical skills sharp. We completed a full cycle of training operations once a month.

On 23 June we pulled into Sasebo, Japan. This was my first visit. The currency in Japan was yen and we changed our “Funny Money” into yen at the rate of $1.00 = 366 yen. Japan was somewhat how I’d imagined it. All the houses, streets, cars, etc., were very small by American standards, almost like a land of dolls. The odor of “benjoe” ditches was overpowering. These were sewer ditches in front of all the homes that were covered with concrete slabs that doubled as a sidewalk.

The ship tied up at a pier at the Sasebo Naval Station. On liberty I found everything was very inexpensive. As at other naval bases, shops and bars outside the naval base main gate catered to American sailors. The bars had names like, “American Bar”, “Lucky Bar”, “Rainbow Club”, etc. We were busy during this in-port period because of a pending change of command ceremony. Captain Cooper was relieving *Ticonderoga*’s commanding officer, Captain Weinel. The change of command on a carrier is usually elaborate. Most of the crew changed into dress whites, and stood in ranks in the hangar bay during the ceremony.

One night Ray Steele and I were on liberty in a small Japanese bar, when suddenly the walls began swaying, bottles fell from the shelves, and the floor bucked wildly. It was an earthquake, and everyone ran out of the bar except Ray and me. We sat there for a long while, but no one returned, so we helped ourselves to drinks, and snacks. We even tried some pickled octopus tentacles; the suction cups were chewy. After we’d eaten to our capacity, we left some yen on the bar and departed.

A typical change of command ceremony pamphlet lists a biography of the departing C.O., and the new arriving Commanding Officer. Departing Captain Weinel’s “bio” read[16]:

> He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1939. Prior to being designated a naval aviator in 1942 he served in cruisers and destroyers. During World War II he was Executive Officer of composite Squadron 33 and later Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron 22. Later he commanded Fighter Squadron 14, Fighter-Bomber Squadron 98 and Air Group 5. He served on the *USS Antietam* and *USS Valley Forge* as a ship’s officer. He was Operations and Plans Officer Carrier Division Five Staff in 1956-57. He commanded the *USS Great Sitkin* in 1961-62. Captain Weinel is a graduate of the NATO Defense College, Paris, France, and the National War College in Washington, D.C. He assumed command of *Ticonderoga* July 20, 1963. He is married to the former Ann Mayhew of Coronado, California, and has three daughters.

I’ve included this biography as an example of the type of naval officers commanding aircraft carriers. Without fail they were naval aviators, and often following their tour as a commanding officer of a carrier, they would be promoted to rear admiral, or retire. An assignment as a commanding officer of a carrier is considered the apex of a naval aviator’s career. It’s necessary not only for naval aviators but for any naval officer, that they progress through a variety of jobs that give them the experience and job training to prepare them for command. This progression through jobs is called “getting your ticket punched.” In other words, an officer had to complete each job before getting on the “train (commanding officer position).” To fail in a job, could mean a sudden and fatal stop in the climb toward command.

Also onboard *Ticonderoga* was Rear Adm. R.B. Moore, who was Commander Task Force 77 in the Seventh Fleet. He was the Task Force Commander of two or three carriers, and numerous vessels within the Seventh Fleet in the Far East. Admiral Moore had his own staff of nine officers, and a number of enlisted men. The admiral had his own living and working area for himself and his staff. Most of the senior officers, commander and above had been in the Navy during World War II. The number of enlisted men that had gone through that war was gradually diminishing as their twenty-year retirement approached; some would not retire until the thirty-year time frame – the Navy was slowly losing the sailors who had wartime experience, other than the Korean Conflict.

While in Sasebo, we had a change of command ceremony, and also a “visitor’s day.” All the Japanese civilians that wished could come on the ship on the designated day and tour the ship. Thousands of Japanese took advantage of the invitation to visit the ship. This was extra work for us, as many sailors were assigned tour guides to insure our visitors didn’t go into unauthorized areas of the ship.

Around the middle of June Allison had an argument with her mother, and moved in with my parents. This was the first of many conflicts in Allison’s relationships with others during our married life. At this time I also found out how small the world was, I discovered the brother of a high school friend was stationed on *Ticonderoga.* His name was Melvin Keith. He was a seaman scheduled to get out of the Navy in a year.

We pulled out of Sasebo on 28 June, and pulled back in on 2 July. We were scheduled to stay a week, but a typhoon was threatening the area, and we pulled back out to sea on the 5th. Our next scheduled in port visit was Hong Kong, China. We were to be there on 16 July. We didn’t know it then, but we would not be in port again for fifty-seven days. On the 10th the captain addressed the crew over the 1MC, ship’s loudspeaker, and said our visit to Hong Kong had been cancelled. We were to relieve a carrier that had been steaming off the coast of Vietnam. This was a surprise to us all. Vietnam had been in the news, North Vietnam and South Vietnam fighting had intensified the last couple of months. The carrier we were relieving had major problems, needing repair, we were stuck with their job. On our way to relieve the carrier off the coast of Vietnam, we were involved in a war game exercise. We anchored in an area called Buckner Bay for a few hours hiding from a fictitious enemy in the war game.

The war game was a training exercise that was a common training operation that was not uncommon to us. I had time to write letters, and turn my thoughts to home. My brother Jerry’s latest comment was, while playing with brother Joe, “throw your gun down!” he had just started talking. My parents were planning a camping trip to an area called Mineral King in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California.

Mid July found the *USS Ticonderoga* steaming in the Tonkin Gulf off the coast of Vietnam. On 2 August 1964, we were standing on the brink of history. Sailors in W Division were enjoying the relaxed routine we usually had on Sundays. Each Sunday at sea, unless the ship was involved in inspections or battle training, reveille would not be held, and sailors could sleep in. This was a day of relaxation, catching up on lost sleep, and attending church services. The church services were poorly attended. Sixty men out of 3,500 men attended protestant services, and about the same number for catholic services. After this day, however, church attendance increased dramatically.

Normally the chiefs and officers would not come down into W Division spaces on Sundays, so we enlisted men would relax in the coffee locker/break room. The daily requirements such as taking magazine temperatures and routine magazine security checks would be accomplished by whoever was on watch. There were always two W Division sailors on watch within the division, standing a four-hour watch. The launching and landing of aircraft were a sound you soon got used to. Thuds, thumps, and the squeal of catapults became everyday sounds of our life on the ship.

On the evening of the 2nd, the captain announced over the ship’s loudspeaker that our aircraft were involved in protecting one of our destroyers from a PT boat attack. This was exciting news to us. Everyone was excited about the prospect of being in combat. Rumors flew about the ship. We wondered if it were North Vietnamese, or Red Chinese attacking our ships. We all thought about what we would do in the event *Ticonderoga* was torpedoed. W Division compartments were under the water line of the ship. Our battle stations were on the fifth and sixth deck below the hangar deck. We very seldom talked about it, but we all wondered what it would be like being deep within the bowels of the ship after an attack, sinking down to the bottom of the sea, knowing that when you used up all the oxygen within the compartment your life was ended. I think we all hoped we would be courageous and die like men.

Our Weapons Department divisions supplied the Zuni air to surface rockets that *Ticonderoga*’s planes launched at the fleeing PT boats that day. The F-8 *Crusaders*, hit two of the PT Boats with rockets, but they zipped through the boat’s wooden hulls without exploding! The rockets were fused to explode against steel hulls, not wooden ones. After the 2nd our ordnancemen made fusing adjustments so the Zuni rockets would explode when striking the wooden communist boats. The evening of the 2nd, someone brought a box down to W Division that contained 20mm shell casings of the bullets that had been fired at the PT boats. I got two of them for souvenirs.

That night we all slept restlessly, wondering what the future held. The squadrons were flying many more sorties than the previous day. That day we went to general quarters for a couple of hours.

We all ran to our battle stations a little faster, and took extra pains to get into battle dress with our pants legs tucked into our socks, our shirts fully buttoned, and our gas masks ready for use. We tightened the dogs (levers) on the hatches a little more tightly, and took general quarters much more seriously than we had in the past few months.

On Tuesday, 4 August, we went to general quarters at about 2200 (10:00 p.m.). The weather was not good, and the ship was rolling a little more than usual. Our hearts beat faster when we heard the general quarter's announcement over the 1MC loudspeaker. Normally the announcement from the bridge would be, "This is a drill, this is a drill, general quarters, general quarters, all hands man your battle stations." But the announcement this night was, "This is NOT a drill, this is NOT a drill, general quarters, general quarters, all hands man your battle stations." We raced to our battle stations. Down in W Division magazines we could hear aircraft being launched off the flight deck. Each night at 2200 one of the ship's chaplains would say an evening prayer over the 1MC loudspeaker, just before "taps." This evening we listened closely as the chaplain said a prayer for our comrades who were in combat that very instant. After midnight the captain came over the 1MC and informed us that another attack against our destroyers had been beaten off. We remained at general quarters at our battle stations all night. Prior to this, when we underwent readiness training or practiced general quarters, we would not remain at battle stations for more than four hours. We wouldn't have believed it at the time, but we were to remain at our battle stations for two weeks!

The next day, the 5th, the ship was buzzing with activity. The ordnance divisions in Weapons Department were busy breaking out conventional bombs, rockets, and ammunition from magazines. Squadron loading crews were busy loading and arming aircraft. We didn't know about the air strikes that were carried out that day, until later when the captain came over the 1MC and told us of the success of the attack against the Quang Khe oil storage depot.

Being at general quarters kept the ship battle ready, and at the highest defensive level possible, but it drastically changed our normal shipboard lifestyle, and restricted our freedom of movement. All hands had to remain at battle stations twenty-four hours a day, which in my case was the after W Division magazine. Being in the magazine twenty-four hours a day meant sleeping there, and living on a diet of sandwiches and coffee. Food was brought to us from the mess decks, and we assigned a man to pick it up at designated times. There was "no smoking" on the ship, but we cheated by smoking in our coffee locker, without fear of being caught by the master at arms, who could not get into our marine guarded spaces.

As is always the case, we knew very little about what was happening in Vietnam, or the world? We speculated a lot. I was looked upon somewhat as a "veteran", as I had gone through something like this on the *USS Independence* during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I couldn't offer much insight; the Cuban situation had been tense and exciting, yet *Independence* had not gone to general quarters for days on end. This was somewhat alarming to us, because none of us had ever heard of an aircraft carrier being in such an advanced state of readiness.

We were proud of the successful attacks made by our planes on the 5th of August. We were sad about the news that the *USS Constellation*, an aircraft carrier with us in the South China Sea, had lost a couple of planes during air raids in the north. One concern that was bantered about the ship was the possibility of attack from the Red Chinese Air Force. There was a Red Chinese squadron based on the island of Hainan, which we were steaming in the vicinity of. It was thought that the jets based there were not very sophisticated. The bodies of the jets were made of wood, not very reliable, and after a few flights were scrapped. There was always the threat, and remembrance of the Japanese kamikaze attack that our ship had experienced in World War II.

During the day there were few periods of relaxation, lasting only a few minutes that permitted those sailors who did not have access to heads, to make head calls. We in the after magazine did not have a head, so we greatly appreciated these periods when we could relieve ourselves. The days dragged on, we had few opportunities to shower or shave, and it was difficult sleeping on the steel decks. We had a few "mail calls", and we got a few "*Stars and Stripes*", a daily armed forces newspaper that was published daily overseas. This paper was hungrily read when we could get it flown aboard on the mail COD. We wondered what our families were being told, and what the citizens of America thought about what was happening.

Many sailors wrote anxious letters, wondering if each letter might be the last they would write to their family. The days ground on. Finally after two weeks, we went into a modified readiness status. Passageways throughout the ship were reopened, and life returned to a somewhat normal routine. We had been scared, but also determined to do our job. We felt we were "in the right." Our ships had been attacked on the high sea in violation of international law, and we were defending our flag, and our country's honor.

For years after the "Tonkin Gulf Incident", there was speculation that it was contrived in order to involve the U.S. more deeply in the Vietnam War. I cannot address this speculation, other than to say I saw bullet holes in our aircraft, and heard pilots talk of firing on attacking boats. From my limited viewpoint, it happened!

The importance of these days in August was recorded in *Ticonderoga*'s cruise book[17] as follows:

> The first week in August gave us a chance to demonstrate why we are here, and to prove why the attack carrier is so important to the Navy. And because we were ready, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, through Chief of Naval Operations Admiral David L. McDonald, recommended us for the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon. The Navy Unit Commendation is awarded to units of the Armed Forces of the United States for outstanding heroism in action against the enemy or by extremely meritorious service not involving combat but in support of military operations. Admiral McDonald added a "well done" to the officers and enlisted men involved in Gulf of Tonkin operations, stating "The courage, skill and outstanding state of operational readiness displayed by our sailor men was in the finest tradition of our Navy and a source of supreme pride to me, their families and all other Americans."
>
> *Ticonderoga* emerged into world news prominently at 1608 Sunday, 2 August, when she came to the assistance of the *USS Maddox* (DD-731), operating on special assignment some distance from the Task Force. *Maddox*. While operating in international waters some thirty miles off the coast of North Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin, *Maddox* had flashed the message that she was being attacked by three high-speed PT type boats launching torpedoes and firing machine guns. The destroyer had answered the unprovoked attack with gunfire from her five-inch and three inch guns.
>
> Within minutes after the attacks began, *Ticonderoga* advised she was sending four already airborne F8E *Crusader* jets armed with rockets and 20mm machine guns to assist in repelling the attacking PT Boats.
>
> On arrival at the scene, *Ticonderoga*'s aircraft commenced attacking the boats with Zuni rocket runs and 20mm strafing attacks. Two of the PT's were damaged; the third was dead in the water after receiving a direct hit from *Maddox*'s 5-inch gun. Neither the *Maddox* or the *Ticonderoga*'s aircraft sustained any personnel or materiel casualties. President Johnson, commenting on the response to the attack, stated, "The performance of Commanders and crews in this engagement is in the highest tradition of the United States Navy."
>
> Following the attack of 2 August, the destroyer *Turner Joy* joined the *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin patrol, and at 2130 hours, 4 August, a second deliberate PT attack was directed against these ships. *Maddox* and *Turner Joy*, steaming in international waters sixty miles off the North Vietnamese Coast, reported rapidly closing surface radar contacts and then stated they were under continuous torpedo attack and engaged in defensive counter fire. Aircraft from *Ticonderoga* again were immediately on the scene and joined in repelling the enemy torpedo craft.As the result of the engagement, two PT Boats were reported sunk and two others damaged. Once again, neither the destroyers nor the Air Wing Five aircraft from *Ticonderoga* suffered any personnel or materiel casualties.

> In retaliation for the unprovoked aggression on the high seas, President Johnson on 5 August directed the Navy to conduct strikes against the bases used by the North Vietnamese naval craft.
>
> During the day, sixty attack sorties were launched from the *Ticonderoga* and *Constellation* against four North Vietnamese patrol boat bases and an oil storage depot supporting these bases. The oil storage depot was ninety percent destroyed and, in addition to the damage to the torpedo boat bases, twenty-five of the boats were damaged or destroyed. The objective of the air strikes? To make clear the United States' intention to maintain our right to operate on the high seas. Mission accomplished!
>
> Aboard *Ticonderoga* the ordnance crews jumped into action after the initial attack of Sunday, 2 August. The flight deck ordnance and aircraft handling crews were continuously readying aircraft for all missions from 2 August until well after the strikes of 5 August. *Ticonderoga*'s air wing personnel responded magnificently. With the full assistance of the ship's air department, Carrier Air Wing Five's Squadrons and Detachments flew 130 sorties over the Vietnam area in Wednesday's strike, not a singular effort by any means, the teamwork displayed by all Departments in supporting the Air Wing was impressive. Communications, as a result of the increased activity, handled 16,000 messages in the month of August compared with 9,000 in July. Radio and Teletype circuits throughout the Pacific flashed situation reports of the deliberate attack and generated response. Senior Commanders were immediately linked by a special "hot line." The Engineering Department maintained maximum speed capability and plant materiel readiness throughout the around-the-clock operations. In Operations, plans were readied and response actions were assigned.
>
> Under the aggressive direction and experienced coordination of Commander Carrier Division Five, the response to the unprovoked attack was swift, calculated, and undeniably successful. Today, aboard ship, men and officers of the Air Wing and ship's company work in endless preparation for that time when we shall again be called upon to enforce our national policies. For *Ticonderoga*, it is a new generation of professionals who renew her pride in accomplishment – for the men and officers who serve on her, she is a ship beyond compare.

This was what was to become known as the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident," the first direct clash between U.S. and Communist armed vehicles since Korea hostilities ended. The *Ticonderoga* had been the only aircraft carrier in the Tonkin Gulf when the *Maddox* was attacked. The *USS Constellation* was in port Hong Kong when the attack took place, and the ship was ordered to cut its port visit short and join the *Ticonderoga* prior to the air strikes against the PT boat bases. While the air strike was underway, President Johnson went on nation wide television, and reported to America what had happened. He ended his talk with, "Our response for the present will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We will seek no wider war."

The anti aircraft fire was heaviest at Hongay, the northernmost target, on 5 August. From *Constellation*, ten A-4 *Skyhawk* jets, two F-4E *Phantoms*, and four A-1 *Skyraiders*, attacked patrol craft docks with bombs, rockets, and 20mm cannon. Five A-4 *Skyhawks*, Three F-4E *Phantoms*, and four A-1 *Skyraiders* from *Constellation* hit Loc Chao with the same ordnance used at Hongay.

Ticonderoga sent six F-8 *Crusaders* to hit Qunk Khe. The biggest attack was at Phuc Loi, carried out by thirty-two aircraft from *Ticonderoga*. The bombs and ordnance from *Ticonderoga* set dozens of oil storage tanks on fire. During the raids more than twenty-five North Vietnamese Patrol Craft were sent to the bottom, more than half of the North Vietnamese Navy!

LTJG Richard Sather, twenty-six, of Pomona, California, piloting an A-1 *Skyraider*, off the *USS Constellation*, was hit at Loc Chao, and crashed into the sea giving his life for his country. LTJG Everett Alvarez, Jr. of San Jose, California, flying an A-4 *Skyhawk*, from the USS *Constellation*, radioed he was bailing out. Hanoi later announced that he had been captured, and he began life as a prisoner of war (POW), the longest in the Vietnam War (eight ½ years).

This then was the beginning of the Vietnam War for me. It is said each generation has its war, and this was to be my war for many years to come. My parents, sister, brothers, and wife Allison had been vacationing in Arizona, and during the events of the Tonkin Gulf, they had listened anxiously to the radio reports.

Ticonderoga pulled out of the Tonkin Gulf on 31 August, and steamed toward Subic Bay, Philippines. We pulled into Subic for one day on 2 September, ending our fifty-seven day period at sea. Vietnam was becoming more prominent in the news. We headed north for Yokosuka, Japan, and pulled alongside the pier at Yokosuka on 8 September, where we were to stay until the 19th, for a much needed rest and recreation period.

Yokosuka catered to American sailors, much more so than Sasebo. The base was huge, the on- base clubs were gigantic, and the meals they served were fit for a gourmet! I enjoyed going to the Acey Ducey Club and ordering frog legs. I had gone “frog gigging” with my parents as a child, and enjoyed frog’s legs, but none like these; they were as huge as chicken drumsticks!

Everyone “blew off steam” in Yokosuka. It had been a long, tense time at sea. W Division congregated in a bar called New Yokosuka, located in an area outside the base called “Thieves Alley”; this was also called the “Honcho District.” There were blocks and blocks of bars catering to American sailors. Also outside the main gate of the Yokosuka Naval Base was a Navy-managed service club called Club Alliance. This club had many restaurants, bars, and slot machines for the enjoyment of sailors. Much of the sailors’ liberty revolved around alcohol. The standard operating procedure or “SOP,” was to buy a fifth or more of the preferred drink, (W Division’s was Four Roses whiskey), at seventy-five cents a fifth, and then take it to the New Yokosuka bar, and “check it in.” Each Japanese bar had a woman, called the “Mama-san.” She was the owner, or manager of the bar. The Mama-san was usually an older woman; she took care of all the money transactions, and also ruled over everyone who worked in the bar, with an iron fist. To check a bottle in meant you paid the Momma-san a few dollars; she put your name on the bottle, and provided mix and ice for your entire stay in the bar, which often was twelve hours or more.

Outside the side-by-side bars in Thieves Alley, stood crowds of Japanese women dressed in every fashion imaginable, evening dress, casual dress, scantily clad, even some in nightgowns. They would try to entice sailors walking by into their bar. Some would grab the arms of sailors and try to drag them into the bar. If a sailor entered a bar, a girl would immediately grab your arm, and remain by your side throughout your stay. If a sailor did not approve of the girl who grabbed him initially, he could request a different girl. The girls would try to get sailors to buy them drinks, which had inflated prices, and were usually weak tea. Each drink bought for a girl, was counted, and the girl with the highest count at the end of the evening had the highest ranking in the bar society. The Mama-san would permit a girl to leave the bar with a sailor, if the sailor “bought her out,” which meant paying the Mama-san a few dollars so the girl could leave the bar and forgo working the rest of the day or night. All the bars had jukeboxes that blared out American music. The streets were crowded with sailors, and shore patrol. Yokosuka was a wild, wide-open liberty port.

I noticed a common sight on Japanese streets, and sidewalks: blind or crippled Japanese men in World War II Japanese Army uniforms begging. Japanese soldiers received few or no benefits after the war, so many had become beggars. I would always contribute a few coins to these men’s begging baskets. I don’t know what they thought about military victors contributing to them, but to me it seemed the right thing to do. They had gone to war for their country, and flag, probably with little choice, and they now had very little dignity. They stood or lay on the streets with what pride they could muster. These Japanese veterans must have been secretly appalled, and disgusted to see Americans lusting after Japanese women, and spending more money than they could ever hope to have. Most Japanese felt we were “guyjeans” or barbarians, but in 1964 everything was exceptionally cheap, and our dollars were very much in demand.

I had felt an instant kinship with another second class on the ship, named Ray Steele, and we usually went on liberty together. We roamed up and down Thieves Alley. I had resisted the offers of bar girls to sit with me, when one afternoon in the New Yokosuka bar, a girl came over to our table. She was one of the most beautiful Japanese girls I’d seen. She said she had seen me the last couple of days, and would like to sit with me. I became good friends with her; she was half Japanese, and half another nationality (I’m not sure which one). Her name was Tamiko. She never asked for drinks, or asked to be bought out.

The Mama-san never argued with her, as she did the other girls. All the girls within a bar held "rank," with "number 1" being the highest rank. In the New Yokosuka bar, Tamiko was the number one girl. When the Japanese spoke us to, they added a "san" on the end, such as, "Jim-san," or "Ray-san." The bars we frequented would even send us Christmas cards, or birthday cards, if they knew the birth date.

I don't know if Tamiko was trying to avoid being bought out of the bar. She knew I was married, and our relationship was purely platonic. She always seemed to be overjoyed to see me, and I enjoyed her friendship. She certainly didn't make any money from me, as I heard from other sailors. The girls were expert at separating sailors from their money.

We all tried to master the use of chopsticks. Ray and I enjoyed getting a huge plate of shrimp fried, or ham fried rice, at the end of our liberty each night.

A couple of months previously I'd earned the right to wear a "hash mark," which was a stripe seven inches long, worn diagonally on the lower left sleeve of my uniform. This stripe indicated four years service. After twelve years (three hash marks), if a sailor had unblemished service, or three Good Conduct Medals, he was permitted to wear a gold crow, and gold hash marks. My first hash mark was earned 30 June 1964, and marked me as a "lifer."

On 19 September the ship pulled out of Yokosuka for two days, conducting flight operations, and then back into Yokosuka for two days' liberty. We got underway for a few days, and then pulled into Beppu, Japan, on the 28th for three days. We anchored of the coast of Beppu, and took liberty launches back and forth.

One night in Beppu, Ray Steele and I were walking down an alley, when a Japanese guy said, "Hey G.I.'s you want to see good show? Only 700 yen (two dollars)." We said "OK"; he then led us up a set of stairs, into a small room. There were about twelve other *Ticonderoga* sailors sitting within the room, on folding chairs, which faced a small stage. Everyone started clapping and stomping their feet, calling for the show to start. The Japanese guy we had seen on the street appeared, and said, "OK, OK we start show." The lights went out, and it was completely dark. Then a small light in front on the stage came on. There was a nude girl sitting in a chair on the stage. The lights only stayed on a few seconds, and then were turned off again. After a few more seconds the lights came back on and she had shifted to a different position. The light-turning on and off continued, but the girl was very homely. The sailors started booing and saying, "We want our money back." The lights came on, and the Japanese guy reappeared and said, "G.I.'s be nice or I call shore patrol." The show then resumed. Ray saw a cat near where we were sitting; he picked the cat up, and said to me "Let's liven the show up." He waited until one of the dark periods, and then threw the cat toward the stage. There was a loud scream, and yelling noises in Japanese, the lights came on, and the Japanese guy, and girl were running around hollering. Now that was a show! Everyone ran out laughing.

It wasn't long before we learned how each person behaved on liberty. One W Division sailor named Ted Brine, from Arizona, was well liked on the ship; he would go on liberty and look for fights. This was his recreation. We tried to look out for each other, and keep each other out of trouble, but Ted was continually fighting, and eventually he got into trouble over this enough times that he lost his security clearance and was kicked out of the division. Billy Gilbert was a young sailor who was absolutely girl crazy, and spent most of his money on girls in all the ports we visited. John Munson, from Oklahoma was another young sailor who was a hard worker, but was wild when he got a little alcohol inside.

GMT1 Gaddley was one of the least liked sailors in W Division. He was the division leading petty officer. It certainly wasn't a requirement of the job of leading petty officer that he makes friends, and he didn't. His temper was legendary: he would scream, rant and rave if he didn't get his way. He was transferred off the ship the latter part of September, while we were at sea. He was supposed to fly off the ship, but was "bumped" out of his seat by an officer. I remember him ranting and raving at our Nuclear Safety Officer, LCDR Chevalier about being bumped out of his seat. None of us would have dared cursed and screamed at an officer as he did. Not many in the division were sad to see him leave. When Gaddley left, GMT1 Reese, who was very popular, assumed the role of leading petty officer.

In Beppu, many in the division went to a large bar that had a big bandstand. A sailor in weapons department was a gifted drummer, and we enjoyed hearing him play. One afternoon a group of us was sitting at a table in this place, and up at the bar sat Ray Steele, and Charlie Miller, with two girls they had met. The Japanese girls were dressed in beautiful traditional geisha costumes. Unlike Yokosuka, girls who were interested in sailors were scarce in Beppu, and Ray and Charlie had been getting "cozy" with the two girls. Suddenly there was a huge disturbance at the bar. Ray was punching the girl, and Charlie was gagging, and cussing, but they had both been kissing the girls a few moments before.

The shore patrol rushed in, and after everything had settled down, they let Ray and Charlie go. Ray was steaming! They had discovered the girls were not what they appeared to be. They were "benny-boys," or men dressed up like women. We would have teased Ray and Charlie about it, but they were very angry.

We learned that those of us who had been on the ship 2 August were to be awarded two medals, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and the Navy Unit Commendation. The Citation accompanying the Navy Unit Commendation stated:

> The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending United States Naval Task Group 77.5, consisting of *USS Ticonderoga* (CVA-14), *USS Edson* (DD-946), *USS Berkely* (DDG-15), *USS Harry E. Hubbard* (DD-748), and *USS Samuel N. Moore* (DD-747), for service as set forth in the following:
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> For exceptionally meritorious service in support of operations in the Gulf of Tonkin during the period 2-5 August 1964. By participating in immediate, determined, and successful air strike counterattack operations against the North Vietnamese Torpedo boats and supporting facilities. Task Group 77.5 demonstrated the firm intent of the United States to maintain freedom of the seas and to take all necessary measures in defense of peace in Southeast Asia. The outstanding professional and technical competence and effective teamwork displayed by all members of Task Group 77.5 in carrying out this action were in keeping with the highest tradition of United States Naval service
>
> All personnel attached to and serving on board Task Group 77.5 during the above period, including Commander Carrier Division Five, Commander Destroyer Squadron 13, and members of staff, air groups, squadrons, and detachments actually present and participating in the above action, are hereby authorized to wear the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon." The citation was signed, Paul H. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy.

It was pleasing to receive a couple of medals acknowledging our presence in the South China Sea during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. From 1 October to the 24th we were once again steaming off the coast of Vietnam. Our schedule kept changing during this turbulent time. We were supposed to visit Hong Kong the 3rd of November, and then after a short visit to Yokosuka, Japan, steam toward San Diego, and arrive in the U.S. 25 November. This time in the South China Sea, it was not nearly as hot.

The ship flew many missions in support of the South Vietnamese Army. During this time an A-4 *Skyhawk* lost power while being launched off the flight deck by the catapult. The plane slowly dropped down toward the surface of the sea. The pilot "punched out," the ejection seat shot into the air, his parachute deployed and he drifted safely down, while his plane crashed into the sea. This sequence of events was caught on film, and published in the ship's cruise book.

While the pilot of the A-4 was unharmed, there were others that were not so fortunate. Pilots LT Donald V. Hester, Jr., LTJG Gerald W. Taylor and LTJG Richard L. Evans, Jr. lost their lives during this cruise. A Chief, SKC Edward W. White died in his sleep. A death that greatly affected Weapons Department was the death of AO1 Joe Lee Williams, who was highly liked throughout the ship. He was a squadron ordnanceman who worked on the flight deck. He accidentally walked into the turning propeller of a double engine E-1, early warning aircraft, nicknamed a "*Willy Fud*" that was turning up its engines. He had been working for over twelve hours, and was on his way to disarm a plane that had just landed. He was struck in the head, and only survived a couple of days before passing away in sickbay. Another sailor, PN3 Wilmer A. Bolton, Jr., simply disappeared while the ship was at sea. It was assumed that he fell overboard late at night. It was a curious fact that so few men are named "Junior," and yet so many "Juniors"(3) lost their lives during this cruise.

I was busy during at sea periods studying for my first class exam that was to be conducted in November. This would be my first crack at first class petty officer. A name for the expected baby had been chosen, either Bradley, or Sandra. My parents sent me a form to apply to the California Department of Vehicles for a replacement driver license as mine had been stolen along with my wallet in Manila.

On 25 October, we steamed toward Hong Kong, China; we anchored in Hong Kong Harbor on October 29. From our position in the harbor I could see huge buildings rising up among crowded hilly terrain. The harbor was full of Chinese junks, and anchored merchant ships of every description. Motorized boats were under contract to transport us back and forth to the fleet landing on the pier, where we could change our "funny money" into Hong Kong dollars.

Hong Kong was a British Colony leased from China for 99 years. The lease was to expire in 1997. The most memorable thing about Hong Kong was the mass of people. It was very crowded. Chinese people were everywhere; some were "boat-people" who spent most of their lives living onboard floating junks. The harbor water appeared to be very dirty. Garbage barges were positioned alongside the ship, and we would dump our garbage and trash into these barges. One section of the garbage barges was reserved for food only where leftovers from the mess decks were dumped. Groups of Chinese women would carefully comb this food section for useable food. The barges and women were under the control of a woman called "Hong Kong Mary," who had combed the garbage of American and British ships for many years.

Poverty was very apparent in many sections of Hong Kong, with people sleeping on mats on the sidewalks, and beggars working the crowds on the streets. In other sections of the city there were no appearances of poverty, but to the contrary what appeared to be a modern beautiful city. As in many Asian ports, there were sections of Hong Kong that had clubs and bars which catered to American sailors. Many sailors on the ship took advantage of the excellent, inexpensive Chinese tailors, and ordered hand-made suits.

There were many British sailors in Hong Kong. Their initial enlistment in the British Navy was for a six-year period. A popular saying was, "We do four years for England, and two years for the queen." We were warned about speaking disrespectfully of the Queen of England; although the British sailors did continually, they didn't like disparaging remarks about the Queen from non-British. We visited a few British sailor service clubs. They liked warm beer, loved to fight, and played darts almost continually.

One afternoon, a group of us visited an area of Hong Kong, called Kowloon. We visited a large floating ferry that had been converted to a restaurant. The dining area was on the upper deck. Prior to being served, or ordering dinner, we visited the lower deck, which contained aquariums holding large varieties of live fish. It was here that we selected our dinner. Your selected fish was scooped out of the aquarium tank, you then returned to your table, and soon the cooked unlucky fish was served to you on a platter.

Because of the English-speaking population, and the British influence throughout Hong Kong, the city seemed more civilized than other Far East cities the ship visited. The ship contracted ferryboats to transport sailors back and forth from the ship at anchor and Fleet Landing. One large double deck ferry would make the trip between the ship and Fleet Landing once every hour. The ferry would pull alongside a floating platform that was tied to the hull of the ship. A ladder extended down from the ship's quarterdeck to the floating platform. Sailors would enter and disembark the ferry through an opening in the railing on the lower deck of the ferry. Directly above this opening in the lower rail, was a large steel ramp that was secured by ropes in the up position. This ramp was used when the ferry pulled alongside an elevated pier; it would be untied, and let down, then the upper deck would be used as an embarkation, and disembarkation point.

One evening a couple of W Division sailors, and I were returning to the ship on the ferry, along with about 300 other *Ticonderoga* sailors. We three left the ferry, climbed up the quarterdeck ladder, saluted the OOD, and then entered the hangar bay. While walking toward our berthing compartment, an announcement blared out from the 1MC, asking the duty corpsman to report to the quarterdeck immediately. We eventually learned that the ferry upper deck steel ramp had fallen and struck a sailor on the head as he was stepping through the open railing of the ferry onto the floating platform. The sailor was a second class petty officer in the Master at Arms force. He had a reputation for being obnoxious, and sometimes abusing his authority, he was one of the most disliked sailors on the ship. He was very seriously injured, and was taken off the ship. We heard different stories about his condition, ranging from critical to serious. Some said he would never recover. At the time of the incident, there was still a large group of sailors on the upper deck of the ferry, and the victim was the last sailor to leave the lower deck. It was determined that the steel ramp had been purposely untied and allowed to fall. All the sailors on the ferry were questioned, but it was never determined who may have untied the steel ramp.

As much as the second class Master at Arms was disliked, on the other end of the popularity scale, W Division's Leading Petty Officer GMT1 R.D. Reese was popular throughout the ship, or at least very well known. He reminded me of the television character Sergeant Bilko played by Phil Silvers, in the series "*The Phil Silvers Show*[18]." Reese always had a scheme, or plan for making money.

He sold illustrated Bibles throughout the ship, and also had what was called a "slush fund" which was illegal and was his capital for a kind of loan shark business. He lent five dollars for seven, ten dollars for fifteen, and twenty dollars for twenty-seven dollars. The loans would be between paydays, and for a two-week period. He was always at the end of the pay line collecting debts. He also had a used-car lot in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was always conducting whispered, secret business deals. He was "silver tongued," able to talk an Eskimo into buying a freezer. An example of one of his deals, while the ship was in Sasebo, Japan he arranged to purchase 1,500 pairs of binoculars from a Japanese factory. He told the Japanese factory that he would pick up the binoculars when the ship returned to Sasebo. He then began selling the binoculars throughout the ship, giving receipts to the customers promising to deliver the binoculars when the ship returned to Sasebo. The binoculars sold for twelve dollars a pair. I ordered two pairs. I don't know what profit Reese was making, probably at least double. He didn't count on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, the ship's extended stay at sea, and the cancelled return trip to Sasebo. Reese was worried about promises he made to the Japanese factory. His solution: he talked an A-3 *Skywarrior* pilot (the largest dual jet engine plane on the ship), into flying to Japan, landing at the Atsugi Naval Air Station, picking up the binoculars from the factory, and flying back to the ship in the South China Sea. When the plane flew aboard Reese organized a working party, brought the binoculars down to W Division berthing compartment and distributed the binoculars to the buyers. All of this was illegal, unauthorized use of government planes and manpower, selling items on the ship, and so on, but he got away with it. I often thought he looked upon the Navy as a part time job. If he'd put as much effort into his Navy career as he did his money making schemes he would have become an admiral. At this time he was unmarried, and was the older brother of Chief Tom Reese with whom I'd been stationed with on the *Independence*. As W Division leading petty officer on *Ticonderoga*, he was not very strict militarily and had a cheerful, friendly demeanor. He grumbled about chiefs and officers, and he tried to befriend everyone from petty officer down to seaman. He was as lax about discipline, as GMT1 Gaddley had been strict. Their two leadership styles were as different as night and day.

GMTC H.L. Catron was our Leading Chief Petty Officer, and he ruled with an iron fist. He was very technically knowledgeable; he had previously been an instructor in Albuquerque. The W Division Officer was LTJG Burkhardt, who was a Naval Academy graduate. He knew very little about the technicalities of nuclear weapons. He was assigned as W Division Officer in order to "get his ticket punched," a means to experience as many management positions as possible on his climb up the Navy career ladder. This was a situation that I was to see over and over again: an officer placed in charge of a nuclear weapon activity, who knew very little about the business of nuclear weapons. This situation resulted in the senior Gunner's Mate Technicians expending large amounts of time trying to educate the officer about the technicalities of nuclear weapons, instead of spending time on day-to-day tasks.

ENS J.A. Gelsomino was assigned as W Division, Junior Division Officer. This was his first duty station assignment following graduation from the Naval Academy. He was very green, and anxious to succeed. He was the same age as many of the enlisted men, twenty-one to twenty-three years old. He tried to be accepted, and yet maintain a proper distance because of his officer status. The wisest thing for an officer such as Ensign Gelsomino to do is to listen closely to the chiefs. Often a chief will take a young ensign "under his wing," and teach him, and guide him in the right direction. If the young ensign is prideful, or refuses to heed the advice of chiefs, it will take him much longer to assume the role of a leader, if he ever does. Without the respect of his men, an officer has a difficult life.

LTJG F.L. Richardson was assigned as W Division Electrical Officer; he was an older officer, and a Limited Duty Officer (LDO). The LDO program was a program in the Navy that permitted certain enlisted men to achieve commissioned status. LDO's and Chief Warrant Officers, who had come up through the ranks, as I said before, are called "Mustangs". LTJG Richardson was not well liked. He was a very strict disciplinarian, and his nickname among the enlisted men was "Fire and Lightning Richardson," for his initials "F.L." His favorite tactics were to rant and rave, and be all around obnoxious. Instilling fear was his main leadership style; however, he was the most knowledgeable officer in the division concerning technical matters, and the Navy. As an enlisted man he had been an aviation electrician; he had been a first class petty officer before being commissioned an ensign. One of his usual methods of making our lives miserable was to put a padlock on the division coffee locker if he was angry about something. This meant we didn't have a place to take breaks during working hours, or a place to relax after working hours. I recall one occasion when he kept the coffee locker locked while we were at sea, for two weeks.

I'd seen him lose his temper, throw his hat on the deck, and stomp on it, but there was a method to his "madness"; he was disliked, and feared, but when he gave an order, sailors usually "jumped" to carry the order out.

I was assigned the collateral duty of W Division Damage Control Petty Officer. This job was one of the larger collateral assignments. This meant I was responsible for the W Division watertight hatches, doors, and fittings that were closed to make the compartments of the ship watertight. I was also responsible for the firefighting equipment, first-aid equipment, and Oxygen Breathing Apparatus (OBA) equipment, and other equipment. Also within each compartment there was a compartment check off list that listed all of the equipment I was responsible for. Fire hoses were especially difficult to care for. They had to be stored properly, tested frequently, and maintained very diligently. Fire is a very serious matter onboard ship, and especially on an aircraft carrier. A carrier carries flammable propulsion fuel, and also the highly flammable JP5 aircraft fuel. Carriers also carry many more explosive bombs, ammunition, and pyrotechnics, than other ships. The only other type of ship carrying equivalent amounts of explosives would be the ammunition ship whose job it is to supply Navy ships at sea.

One of my weekly duties as damage control petty officer was to tour all of the division spaces with LTJG "Fire and Lightning Richardson." This chore would take two to three hours, and was usually accomplished on Friday afternoon. This was the job that no one in the division envied me having as I spent more time alone with "Fire and Lightning" than others in the division. One embarrassing thing he would do was during our weekly tour of spaces. Our route would take us past three or four enlisted men's heads. Each head contained six to ten toilets. There was an obscure ship regulation that prohibited reading books, while sitting on the toilet. This was supposedly to prevent hemorrhoids. LTJG Richardson and I would walk into the heads, all the toilets had open stalls without doors, and if he saw anyone reading on the toilet, he would grab the book out of the sailor's hand, and then would lecture the sailor about violation of the ship's regulation. The embarrassed sailor would usually be speechless. "Fire and Lightning" would confiscate the book, or reading material, and keep it. When walking out of the head he often would wink conspiratorially at me, but I was very uncomfortable being with him when he did this. He did complement me occasionally about my work as damage control petty officer. Although few and far between, the ones he gave me were unique. The best indication of his reputation on the ship occurred when he was transferred. When an officer transfers off a ship, it is customary, that the OOD on the quarterdeck, have the Boatswain's Mate of the watch ring however many bells the officer rated and then announce "Lieutenant United States Navy departing," when his foot touched the pier the Boatswain's Mate rang one bell. Everyone on the ship was anxious for LTJG F. L. Richardson to receive orders, and depart the ship. This happened while we were in port San Diego. I happened to be in the chow line for lunch, on the mess decks, when the 1MC announced LTJG Richardson's departure from the ship. A loud cheer rang out throughout the ship, and sailors threw hats in the air. We in W Division had been pitied because he was in our division. I did however learn much about being diplomatic, and about damage control from him. I saw LT F.L. Richardson (he had been promoted to lieutenant) once more after he left the ship. I ran across him at Nuclear Weapons Training Command, Pacific, North Island, California. He was stationed there, and during our brief reunion, it seemed he was a different person, much quieter and more reserved. To his credit he certainly had a strong personality; "Fire and Lightning" was a well-earned nickname on the *USS Ticonderoga*.

While the ship was at anchor in Hong Kong, on 8 November, at 2100 (9:00 p.m.), I received some horrible news. I was given a telegram by the communications division informing me that Allison had lost the child she was carrying. This was devastating news.

During this period I also got some other bad news. The ship schedule was changed drastically. Instead of returning to the States, the ship was directed to return to cruising up and down the coast of Vietnam. The ship that was supposed to relieve us, the aircraft carrier *USS Ranger*, had broken down, and was unable to steam. She was in Yokosuka, Japan, for an unknown period of time. It was assumed that we would not return to the United States until at least the middle of December. Our deployment extension, due to the breakdown of the *USS Ranger* was depressing for *Ticonderoga* sailors. One thing that did raise our morale somewhat was a cartoon a sailor on board made, that showed the *Ticonderoga* (with a raccoon tail hat on), with a towrope attached to the *USS Ranger* (with a cowboy hat on), trying to pull them out of port to sea. Thousands of the cartoons were printed, and loaded on an A-3 *Skywarrior.* The A-3 took off while we were in the South China Sea, and flew over the *Ranger* in the Yokosuka Naval Shipyard, and bombed them with the cartoons. Just as individuals have reputations, so do Navy ships. The *Ticonderoga* had a fighting, dependable, solid reputation. She was an older carrier, yet met all of, and often exceeded, the mission requirements asked of her.

The *Ranger* on the other hand was known for breaking down, and being unreliable, with an unhappy crew, although she was more modern, and a larger carrier than *Ticonderoga*.

In November President Johnson was re-elected as president over the Republican Candidate Senator Barry Goldwater. I took the November Navy wide advancement 150-question exam. I would not know for three months whether I passed or failed.

This was what I said in a letter to my parents on 26 November 1964:

> I guess the Navy is going to maintain carrier patrols down here indefinitely, until the war is decided one way or another. When we were down here for sixty days, it appeared we were close to war with China. I think even more so than with Cuba a year ago. It sure did shake everyone on this ship up! Quite a few nights we stayed up all night maintaining battle readiness, and a couple of times it was almost positive that we were going to be attacked by Red China planes. I doubt if the United States will get anywhere with this war in Vietnam. I think the only way we could win, would be to turn this into another Korea. It's exasperating knowing that our boys are getting killed daily over here, of course they get their name in the paper, but the big concern in the States seems to be civil rights, etc., and the war doesn't take on any importance until election time.

Everyone on the ship began to wonder if we would be home for Christmas. The 1964 *Ticonderoga* cruise book printed an article called "Why carriers?" and reads as follows[19]:

> The mission of the United States Navy is the protection of national interests on the high seas. In time of war the word protection is synonymous with control. Of the many varieties of control one of the most important is martial in nature, the exercise and deployment of power. For the modern Navy control includes not only the neutralization of the high seas but also that of the coasts and interiors of the lands that open on them. The combination of air power and sea power has made the land subject to sea in a curious reversal of logical order. The lands that open on the seas are now as important a strategic object as the seas themselves.
>
> Our early history was made possible by the protective insulation the seas afforded, and it is obvious that our more recent history has been determined by the degree we could maintain that natural isolation for national advantage. Our seas have protected us, and our Navy has protected the seas. This is no less true in the era of missiles and long-range bombers, since the ability to jump oceans and continents with nuclear weapons is not the same as tactical, day-to-day control. There is little advantage bombing Moscow when the issue is being decided in Saigon. While it is not intended to minimize the long-range striking power of the modern aircraft carrier the fact remains the unique capabilities of a carrier strike force are best used in the disturbances that plague the vast borderland between Russia and the Asian seas. Ever since De Gama's voyage around the Cape of Good Hope in 1499 this land has been the area of East-West confrontation and the aircraft carrier has proven the most effective weapon for the implementation of Western policies. The carrier fleets are ubiquitous reminders that treaties will be upheld and commitments met.
>
> This threat of an ever-present force in depth has virtually strangled overt aggression in the fluid stream of Afro-Asian relations whether the pressure comes from within in the case of Vietnam or is directed from a distant capital.

> A beleaguered country has only to call for assistance and, as Lebanon discovered in 1958, that call is swiftly answered.
>
> The capability of a fast, pinpointed show of military strength anywhere in the Asian periphery is the modern-day answer to the old British policy of containment. At the height of imperial power the foremost concern was to prevent a Russian seizure of vital lines of communication. It was an unending duel between land and sea power, between heartland and rimland.
>
> As long as there is a power center in the heart of Asia and an equal center of power outside it, the conflict will continue. Undoubtedly the present situation is quite different than when Britain built her empire, but the fact of confrontation remains the same. Nonetheless the differences are worth noting, for in them lies the ultimate justification for a carrier oriented Naval establishment. Unlike the British the United States does not have imperial interests to defend. Through diplomacy or ideological persuasion we have established a chain of strategic alliances around the periphery of the communist world. Although these ties often hamstring us, mutual interest now affords a foundation for survival rather than imperial gain.
>
> We consider that the very lands that once fell to Britain remain vital to our own security. If our objective is a potential control of the seas, we cannot afford to lose the coasts that surround them. We cannot abandon Iran for fear of losing India, and with India the Indian Ocean. Vietnam is on the road to Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and points east.
>
> The second difference is political: communism versus capitalism. Things have simplified, two ways of life struggling for the exclusion of the other. Each seeks to win the uncommitted people to their own cause, and the balance is so delicate that the augmentation of one is at the expense of the other. Between the two powers the people of the rimlands have become spiritual commodities, the collection of which adds to the wealth of an ideal.
>
> The ideological and nature of the conflict gives a peculiar impermanence to the accomplishments of diplomacy. Governments topple, insurrections become endemic, and the people alternately clamor for peace, bread, and war. The residual fear of colonialism, fumbled intentions, and the rising spirit of nationalism besmirch our position. We cannot occupy a country in the same way Britain garrisoned an imperial outpost, even when stability requires our presence. The American carrier fleets are the free world's major force in the Asian rimland, and with their independence of land bases they effectively prevent overt aggression within this troubled area. While unwilling to violate national borders and internal affairs they are at the disposal of our allies and friends.
>
> The communist leaders know that there is a world to conquer under the nuclear umbrella, but they also grasp the futility of such an action under the sharp eyes of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets.

Time has not confirmed some of the ideas in the cruise book article, but this was the view held in 1964.

The first of December, we finally left the South China Sea, after being relieved by the repaired *USS Ranger.* We pulled into Yokosuka, Japan, for two days, and then began the transit to San Diego. By coincidence the ship crossed the International Date Line on 8 December, my birthday. The ship was steaming east, so 8 December was repeated, therefore I had two birthdays in 1964! I was twenty-two years old.

The quarterly evaluation marks I received for my first period on the ship averaged 3.6 in Professional Performance, Military Behavior, Leadership and Supervisory Ability, Military Appearance, and Adaptability. The description of assigned tasks read: Crew leader of special weapons assembly team, Technical Monitor. Evaluation of Performance read: "Little reported aboard 14 March 1964 and attended school six weeks thereafter. His performance at school was very good and his work as a crew leader in the after magazine has been well organized and efficient. He has adapted himself to shipboard life and duties very well and appears to show promise of becoming an outstanding Petty Officer."

When the ship reached the midpoint of our journey to the United States, something happened that was to repeat again and again as aircraft carriers crossed the Pacific. The Russians sent three long-range bombers (called *Bears*); out toward the ship to see how close they could get before being detected. Upon detection, and interception by the ship's fighter planes, they would wheel around and head back for their base in Russia. It was as though the Russians were saying, "We know where you are, and we want you to know it."

As I previously described, in the world of nuclear weapons, accidents or damage to weapons are classified according to severity, and when reported, set into action many preplanned actions by many local and national authorities. The level of severity is identified by a codeword. The most serious incident is called a "Broken Arrow". This heading on a message would alert authorities that a weapon had been lost, detonated, stolen, or caused radioactive contamination. By coincidence the code word "Broken Arrow" was also used by the Army when an American unit was about to be overrun by enemy forces, and meant all American aircraft were to immediately respond to support the troops that were in peril. In some cases this meant bombing the position of the overrun troops, even though it was likely to harm and kill friendly troops, along with the enemy. The *Ticonderoga* was to experience a Broken Arrow in the future. The next lower category of severity is a "Bent Spear"; this might be an accident with a weapon that caused the weapon to be returned to AEC for repair. The lowest severity is a "Dull Sword," which might report an electrical malfunction, or an unsafe handling practice, etc.

Throughout the history of nuclear weapons, the United States safety record has been admirable. The Navy has had the fewest accidents, and the Air Force has had the most. It should be explained that the Air Force has been much more involved with alert flying, (flying in Strategic Air Command (SAC) with bombs in the bomb bays, such as B-52's, etc.), than the Navy. Many accidents have been the results of aircraft crashes. This description of classes of accidents is very brief and not all-inclusive. A big part of a GMT's technical knowledge and training was directed toward what to do in the event of an accident, fire, or contamination, and minimizing the spread of damage.

The reporting of a Broken Arrow, Bent Spear, or Dull Sword was by electronic, instantaneous method, by message within minutes of the accident. A message called a "rainbow message" was transmitted by the highest priority within five minutes of the happening. The rationale behind the rapid sending of a rainbow message, was that if a weapon were involved in an accident, fire, etc., and detonated, and the ship or base suddenly vaporized, disappearing off the face of the earth, this would prevent higher command from starting to press buttons and beginning World War III, thinking an attack had been initiated by our enemies. The rainbow message would inform higher authority that the command's demise had been caused by an accident. The addresses on the accident messages began with the White House, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and included the entire military chain of command.

On 16 December, the *Ticonderoga* pulled alongside the pier at North Island, San Diego. Bands were playing; banners and flags waving, and there were hundreds of people waiting on the pier. Ray Steele and I left the ship together. Allison and Ray's wife, Marie, had rented houses on the same block in San Diego. I didn't know it at the time, but shortly after Allison's miscarriage while living with my parents, Allison had decided to move, with her brother's help, back in with her parents, she made the move without telling my parents, and at a time when they were gone. I was to learn this erratic behavior was common with Allison.

Everyone was happy to finally be home. I discovered the Corvair was running poorly, so I had it tuned up. The house Allison had rented was a large two-bedroom house; Ray and Marie lived directly across the street.

Not all homecomings were happy and joyous occasions. GMT2 Charlie Miller's wife was not on the pier when the ship pulled in. He went to his San Diego apartment, and found all of his furniture gone, with nothing in the apartment other than his wife's wedding dress hanging in the middle of the living room with a note attached telling him "goodbye." He was to find out that she had left him for a woman!

Upon the ship's return to the states, we were granted a liberal liberty period. Until after the New Year we worked every third day, and were granted liberty on the other two days.

Allison, and I traveled to Strathmore to visit my parents; it was wonderful to see them. The boys had grown, and sister Linda was busy with college. My parents were planning to move to another house that they had built ½ mile from their current home. My parents told me how they had listened closely to the news reports, while on vacation to Arizona, during the time the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was taking place.

When we drove back to San Diego from Strathmore, a trip of about 300 miles, it was often very foggy. Each time I drove home I had to request an out of bounds pass, which was required anytime a sailor left the 100 miles imaginary circle encircling *Ticonderoga.*

On 22 December, while seated in my San Diego living room, and with Allison in the bedroom, at 1:00 p.m. an earthquake struck. I hollered to Allison to get outside. We ran outside, and everyone in the neighborhood including Ray and Marie were outside in the middle of the street. We waited outside for a long while to see if another earthquake would come. There was no major damage, other than a few things knocked over, and pictures' falling off the wall, but it was unnerving for a few days.

I had duty on Christmas Day, so we were not able to travel home to be with our families. Following New Years, W Division was busy with off-loads, and preparation for a yard period. The yard period was to take place at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, San Francisco. I did not look forward to this as I had experienced the noise, dirt, and discomfort, and all around unpleasantness of living on a ship during a yard period, while on the *Independence* in the Norfolk.

I and two other W Division sailors, GMT2 E.J. Carroll, and ET1 R.E. Meyer, were informed that we were to attend Shipboard Instructor Training School at the San Diego Naval Training Center. We began school on 11 January 1965. This was the first time I'd returned to the training center since my graduation from boot camp four and a half years previously. There were boot camp recruits walking through the area our classes were held, and we were told to return any salutes the recruits gave us. We three car-pooled each day. This was a two-week school that was to teach us the proper way to prepare a lecture, and how to conduct a class. All of the students were second, first, and chief petty officers. It was an interesting class to me, and I learned much from it, such as the proper way to ask a question while conducting a lecture, (always ask the question before calling on an individual, so each individual in the class tries to formulate an answer, instead of relaxing when they hear someone else being called upon to answer). We learned techniques used to keep the attention of a group, and the proper way to prepare a lecture. We were told the two-week course had been condensed from a two-month course. The homework was grueling, and each night I remained up until near midnight completing my assignment for the following day. Our final exam included presenting a forty-five-minute lecture on the subject of our choice. My topic was the different types of nuclear bursts, and their characteristics. I was pleased to receive an "A" on my lecture; at least no one fell asleep. We three graduated on 22 January.

Allison and I enjoyed living in San Diego. My Uncle Hubert and Aunt Kay visited us for one enjoyable day. Marie Steele would knock on our door late at night almost weekly, and beg me to go look for Ray and ask him to come home. The W Division bar in San Diego was a place called the Hula Hut. I would usually go to the bar, talk with Ray for a while, and then return home, usually without Ray. Quite frankly I was thankful for the opportunity to get out of the house. Marie bought Ray a beer keg machine for his birthday, thinking it would keep him home; it didn't, and they were eventually divorced in 1965.

We moved out of our San Diego apartment the latter part of February, as the ship was soon to move to San Francisco. Allison had a huge fight with the landlord; I never did learn what the argument was about. Allison went to stay with her parents until I could arrange for a place to stay in San Francisco. There were a number of substandard housing units available at Hunters Point for *Ticonderoga* sailors, and I hoped to get one. The squadrons and planes had left the ship when we pulled into San Diego, and many sailors brought their automobiles on board for the trip to San Francisco. It was strange to see cars tied down in the hangar bay where aircraft were normally tied down. The trip to San Francisco was uneventful, I went up on the flight deck and watched the underside of the Golden Gate, and Oakland Bay Bridge slid over the bridge of the *Tico*. The ship went into a large concrete "bath tub," the water lock was closed, water pumped out, and the ship was in dry dock.

Shortly after the ship's arrival in Hunters Point, Ray Steele and I were picked as nuclear weapons inspectors, and told to report aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Midway* (CVA-41), for a week, while she was underway off the coast of California. *Midway* was participating in an exercise called "*Silver Lance*." Ray and I detailed a number of discrepancies. *Midway* was much larger than the *Ticonderoga*, and Ray and I were only required to watch a few of *Midway*'s W Division operations. At the time I could not have imagined what part the *USS Midway* would play in my future.

With the ship's change of ports, I was given a change of jobs. I was reassigned from the after magazine, to the forward magazine as the Technical Repair, Assistant Division Training and Classified Publication Petty Officer; I kept my collateral assignment as Damage Control Petty Officer. These new jobs covered a variety of tasks, the calibration of test and handling equipment, updating of technical publications, and innumerable other tasks.

I was successful getting a base house on Hunters Point, which was actually a Quonset hut that had a partition in the middle; so two families could live in either end. Each end contained two bedrooms, a small kitchen, living room, and bathroom. The Quonset hut we had faced out toward San Francisco Bay and toward Candlestick Park baseball stadium. The substandard huts with partitions were not very private. Families could hear everything being said or done in the adjoining family area. The rent was pro-rated according to rank; I paid thirty-eight dollars a month. The units contained a stove, refrigerator, basic furniture, and beds.

Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was located in a very rough part of town, and was one of the most depressed neighborhoods of San Francisco. We were advised not to walk through the area outside the main gate, but to drive. From time to time shots were fired at the sentry booth at the main gate. Although it was illegal, I bought a small twenty-two-caliber pistol that I carried in my car.

The latter part of March, I discovered that I had not passed my first attempt to make first class petty officer. "Not passed," is not entirely a correct term. I did not have enough accumulated points to be advanced. A sailor was given points for time in grade, medals awarded, time in service, points made from the correct answers to the questions in the exam, and points given for the average of all quarterly marks; these all combined for a "point total." The sailors to be advanced during the promotion cycle were the lucky ones with the highest point totals. One of the first class in the division H.E. Dunn got a big promotion. He made chief.

During the yard period I was busy remodeling the instrument shop, which was to be my office. I was also busy working on damage control equipment, getting ready for the day we would once again be underway. During my off duty time I enjoyed fishing in the bay just outside the front door of our Quonset hut house. It was also a pleasure to have a place away from the noisy, dirty environment of a ship in the yards.

Every third night I had duty and remained overnight on the ship. Since there were no weapons onboard, usually only one person would sleep in the forward division spaces in the coffee locker, on one of the couches. Often late at night I would hear strange noises, and what sounded like footsteps, along with a feeling of not being alone. Many in the division shared the same experiences when alone at night in the coffee locker. We joked that the division spaces were haunted. There had been many sailors in the past that had lost their lives on *Ticonderoga*.

During this yard period there were many transfers in and out of the division. The weekends I had off, we would travel to Strathmore and Lindsay to visit our parents. Driving the Corvair on these trips of about 300 miles, I noticed a very disturbing characteristic of the car. When passing a truck, or encountering wind, it was very difficult to control the car. I tried putting a heavy weight in the front trunk compartment, but this didn't help. I decided after one especially windy trip back to San Francisco from Strathmore that I would not endanger our lives again. I traded the Corvair for a 1963 Ford Galaxy, two door fast back. It was a pleasure to drive, and felt much safer than the little Corvair, although the gas mileage was not nearly as good.

After completing all the work on the ship in the yards, *Ticonderoga* had a change of command, along with a personnel inspection: Captain D.W. Cooper, who had taken us through the Gulf of Tonkin, and the busy times off the coast of Vietnam was being relieved by Captain R.N. Miller. The new commanding officer's biography said he was a 1940 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He served on various ships during World War II, and became a naval aviator in 1943. During the Korean War he served in Attack Squadron 44 aboard *USS Midway* (CVA-41). He served at a multitude of commands before assuming command of *Ticonderoga* in May 1965.

The personality of W Division was changing as the "old guard" left, and new men came onboard. The most drastic change of course was the departure of "Fire and Lightning" Richardson. Also departing were Chief Catron, GMT2 Charlie Miller, and my best friend and "running mate" GMT2 Ray Steele. Our new division officer was an LDO, Lieutenant R.E. Hailey. Our new leading chief was GMTCS R.E. Morgan; his personality was much different from his predecessor GMTC Catron. Senior Chief Morgan always wore long sleeve khaki shirts regardless of the heat. He was not proud of all the tattoos he had gotten in his younger days in the Navy, which covered his body, other than his face and hands. He was quiet, and reserved, and also an ordained minister. GMTC Dunn was more of a motivator and kept the division in line, along with ET1 Meyer, and GMT1 Reese. Not only was the personality of the division changing, but also the physical appearance. A new regulation was published that permitted the wearing of beards.

Many of the younger sailors tried to grow beards, but were not very “manly” looking, mostly peach fuzz, and straggly wisps. I remained clean-shaven, as did most of the senior petty officers and officers. The evaluation marks I received for the period November 1964 to May 1965 were higher than the previous ones.

Shortly after the ship’s arrival in San Diego, Ray Steele and Charlie Miller transferred off the ship. They both were going to Naval Weapons Station, Lake Mead, Nevada. Charlie Miller drank heavily; I don’t think he ever fully got over his wife leaving him. In later years, I heard a story from Ray about a time in Nevada when Charlie drank until almost passing out one night in a Nevada bar. The bartender made him leave, and he fell asleep behind the bar in a ditch, which was on the edge of the desert. In the morning he woke up with a swollen arm. During the night he had rolled over on a rattlesnake! Charlie died of cancer in 1979.

When the ship moved from San Diego to San Francisco, Ray and Marie had separated. Ray wanted to remain on the ship, and since I was also a second class and due to receive shore duty orders in the near future, Ray called our detailer and said I could have his orders to Lake Mead, as he wanted to stay on the ship. The detailer in Washington didn’t agree, and said Ray had to go. Ray prepared to leave the ship, he had a small pickup truck, and loaded his beer machine in the bed of the truck, threw his sea bag in, and we shook hands goodbye. It was hard to say goodbye to Ray, he was a true friend, and I always trusted him to “watch my back,” just as I watched his. We had some great times together at work and at play. I had admiration and, respect for his technical knowledge. Over the years he made huge contributions to the nuclear weapons program.

Years later Ray told me some interesting stories about when he was stationed at the Lake Mead Base. He said many of the GMT’s that worked at the base got part time jobs at nearby Las Vegas, working in the casinos. Ray got a job as a blackjack dealer and working on the slot machine floors. Another GMT named Fred Goshen was also working at the same casino (I was to be stationed with him in the future). Fred turned in a number of casino employees for cheating the casino out of money. There was a big scandal. The employees were forbidden employment in other casinos. Many of the fired people had gangster “connections” in Las Vegas, and there were threats against Fred’s life. For years afterwards, he would occasionally receive a plain envelope in the mail; inside was a plain piece of paper with the imprint of a black hand, which was a symbol of the Italian Black Hand Society. Fred got out of the Navy before the twenty-year point, and moved to the Midwest. One day he was found in an isolated area locked inside his car, dead from a shotgun blast to his head. It was ruled a suicide.

While working as a blackjack dealer, Ray became acquainted with another dealer who worked with him; Don was his name. Don said he had purchased a couple of trailers, stocked them with slot machines, and had purchased some property on the Colorado River, with the intention of making a stop-off place for gamblers traveling the long trip from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. Don asked Ray if he would be interested in going into this business venture with him. Ray declined, saying he was going to remain in the Navy. Today this “stop-off” place is one of the major resort-gambling areas of Nevada. His full name was Don Laughlin, and the stop-off place is called Laughlin, Nevada.

One evening GMT2 Lloyd Wilson and I went on liberty to the W Division hangout Hula Hut in downtown San Diego. When we went in there was a new girl working behind the bar named Betsy. Upon seeing her, Lloyd said, “I’m going to marry that girl.” I thought to myself, “Yeah, sure,” Frankly Lloyd was homely, and this was an attractive, nice girl. Lloyd was persistent in his courtship of her, and they did get married! In the following years when I would run across them, Lloyd would always say to me “Please don’t tell anyone that Betsy worked in a bar.” They were a happy couple, with two children.

In July, *Ticonderoga* had a dependents’ day cruise. This was a day when the sailors’ wives, children, and parents could board the ship and go to sea for a day. Allison quickly became bored.

From 6 July, to 26 July, a group from W Division attended refresher training courses at Nuclear Weapons Training Group Pacific, which was located a couple of blocks from the pier. Before going to school Chief Dunn approached me, and said since we were going to school together, his wife Marilyn and he would like for Allison to come down from Lindsay, and stay with them in their Navy base house, which was located just south of North Island. This was a surprise, as Chief Dunn and I had not been particularly close. I accepted his offer, and Allison came down from Lindsay and stayed with the Dunns. The chief and Marilyn had a boy two years old, and we lived together for three weeks. We all got along together very well. Chief Dunn told me he thought I was one of the best sailors in W Division. This was very gratifying to hear. He also said I didn’t have to call him “Chief” while we were off the ship, but could call him by his first name “Harold.” I told him I couldn’t do that, because to me he was always “Chief”. Although we were good friends, while on the ship it was all business. I expected no favors, or special treatment from him.

I was discovering this was a sign of professionalism, realizing the importance of maintaining the chain of command while on duty, showing respect to higher ranks, and maintaining an awareness of when it's time to work, and time to play.

During this time the Los Angeles Watts riots took place. We watched it unfold on the television. Thirty-four people were killed, and over 800 injured. It was a chilling picture to see armored tanks and troops moving on American city streets.

One day at school, while in the coffee locker during a break, Chief Catron walked in. He had walked over from the ship. He saw me and said out of the blue, "There's that son of a bitch." He went on to say he'd been looking for a certain test set, and couldn't find it. I explained to him where it was, and the system I had set up to locate T and H Gear. He was satisfied, and I'm sure he didn't intend to, but I was very embarrassed to be called a name by a senior in front of the other sailors in the break room. I made a vow that I would try to not embarrass someone who worked for me in that manner.

Chief Catron was scheduled to transfer, and he and his wife scheduled a division party to be held at their house in Chula Vista, which was a town south of North Island. Wives and families were invited and we had a great time. Chief Catron's wife, Pat, was a wonderful hostess, and made everyone feel welcome. Most W Divisions were like a family, some happy and well adjusted, some dysfunctional, some all business. *Ticonderoga*'s W Division for the most part was a functional, happy family. Much of this was due to Chief Catron's leadership, and vast technical knowledge. Sadly, Chief Catron died of bone cancer in 2004.

The division party was a success, although one of our sailors almost got into serious trouble. GMT2 F.P. McAleer (Mac) was the oldest sailor in W Division in his early fifties. He had joined the Navy late in life. He also loved alcohol. During the party at Chief Catron's, after more than a few drinks, he wanted to take a motorcycle for a spin, which belonged to one of the partygoers. He rode the bike a few blocks, and then noticed a police car following him. He stopped the motorcycle at a stop sign, but forgot to put his foot down on the ground to balance the bike. He toppled over, the policeman in the car behind him, got out and helped him up. The policeman gave him a ride back to the party, and a group went to retrieve the motorcycle. The policeman talked to Chief Catron and then gave Mac a warning. Mac was famous for drying out periods when the ship went to sea. Often after being at sea for a few days, Mac would take a shower shoe and begin beating his bunk, and holler for help "killing all the bugs on his bunk!" Many times prior to going to sea he would bring onboard a case of Scope mouthwash, which had high alcohol content. He would drink bottles of Scope to get through the sea periods. All in the division knew of Mac's heavy use of alcohol, but we never saw it affect his technical performance working on weapons. He retired as a second class after twenty years and for a short while worked as a taxi driver in San Diego. Mac passed away in the mid 1970s.

While in San Diego, Allison and I would often drive to Strathmore and Lindsay on the weekends I had off. Many times we would stop at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, and pick up Allison's brother Kenny Konrad, who was a Marine Corporal. One weekend we picked up Kenny early on Friday, and upon arrival at Allison's parents, Kenny and I went trout fishing in a mountain stream near Lindsay. Allison was upset when we returned home (she was seldom happy). I went to bed; in the morning when I awoke I had a pain in my chest over my heart. Looking down I saw what appeared to be a hole in my chest, encircled by a dark black and blue circle. My first thought was that Allison had shot me with my twenty-two-caliber pistol! Upon closer examination, I saw it was a huge tick that had burrowed into my chest. I'd apparently gotten it during the previous evening fishing trip. I went to the Lindsay hospital, and my childhood doctor, Doctor Clark removed it, by cutting it out. He said it was one of the largest ticks he'd seen.

On another occasion traveling north from San Diego, just south of the town of Porterville while negotiating a curve, a Volkswagen that was ahead of me going too fast, left the road and flipped end over end about three times. I stopped, as did a truck driver. Two young men crawled out of the wrecked Volkswagen, very drunk, and uninjured.

Allison's parents accepted me well. They were very different from my parents. Effie Konrad had many physical ailments, either real or imagined, she always complained about her health. Allison and her mother did not get along well at all. Allison and I had a very stormy relationship. She was jealous of my relationship with my family, and seemed happiest when she was in an argument with someone, or imagined she was being persecuted. I truly did not know her, until it was too late after we were married. The feeling I recall most clearly was the feeling of being trapped, but I was determined to be a good husband and father to the baby Allison was expecting in November.

August we were busy preparing for the upcoming deployment to the Far East. We were also preparing for the round of upcoming inspections. The anxiety and stress experienced preparing for Navy Technical Proficiency Inspections was always very high, from the lowest ranked GMT all the way to the commanding officer. I took the GMT1 rating advancement examination again on the first of August. Sadly on 22 August, I received word from my mom that my grandmother had passed away. I was thankful I had seen her while home on leave. Emergency leave was not normally granted for a grandparent's death.

A military pay bill was passed by Congress, which meant an additional twenty-five dollars a month for me. I had been toying with the idea of applying for Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) School, which would mean an additional $110.00 a month. One sailor in the division, GMT2 Clark applied for EOD School, and received orders. We discovered later that he broke his leg during school, and washed out.

The ship received a message informing the captain that the ship had been awarded the "Battle E." This was a very significant achievement. All enlisted men first class and below wore "*USS Ticonderoga*" on their right sleeve, now we were to wear an "E" on our right sleeve below our ship's name. The Battle E was given annually to each ship within a class, i.e., cruisers, destroyers, submarines, etc., and in our case aircraft carriers, that had the highest marks in battle readiness inspections. The "E" in Battle E stood for Efficiency. In the preceding five years the *Ticonderoga* won the "E" four times. We wore three slash marks under "E" to indicate four awards. This meant she was the most battle efficient aircraft carrier among all the Pacific Fleet carriers.

The following statement by the captain was placed in the service records of all the sailors on board:

> You were attached to and serving in the *USS Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) during all or part of competitive cycle 1 March 1964 to 30 June 1965 during which the *USS Ticonderoga* won the coveted battle efficiency pennant. In addition the Communication Department green "C" and Operation Department green "E" were awarded for standing first in the Communications and Operations Department excellence during the competition cycle. Competition was among all attack carriers assigned to Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet.
> The winnings of these awards for standing first in battle efficiency and for standing first in communications and operations is the result of teamwork and cooperation by all hands. In each Department each officer and enlisted man made a vital contribution by hard work, attention to duty and doing his job to the best of his ability. Teamwork, cooperation and mutual respect have paid off. It is a privilege and a pleasure to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks, congratulations and a deserving, well done.

Weapons Departments were always in competition annually for the black "W," but we didn't make it this year. I was pleased that the condition of my damage control equipment played a part in the receipt of the "E." W Division didn't receive any discrepancies in the damage control area.

The ship was scheduled to leave San Diego, and steam toward the waters of Vietnam 27 September. Our schedule called for us to return to the United States 9 June 1966, which meant our deployment would last ten months. We were to be in San Diego on 3 September and remain alongside the pier until our departure. In W Division we were preparing for our big inspection. As an assembly team leader, I was pleased with the way my team was working together.

Around this time the captain mailed a newsletter to the families of the crew that said[20]:

> As the Commanding Officer of *Ticonderoga* and it's dedicated crew of *Tico* Tigers, this message is being sent to each of you on the eve of our departure to the Western Pacific on a cruise which will last for some months. During this time *Ticonderoga* and its embarked air wing, Air Wing Five, will join the mighty Seventh Fleet, and take its place on the front line of freedom.
>
> Our task will be a formidable one requiring long, hot hours of hard, dirty work, little rest, and prolonged periods at sea. I am confident in the ability of "our" Tigers to do the job. In my twenty-nine years in the Navy, I have never had a command in which I had more confidence or pride than *Ticonderoga* and her crew.

> Last week this ship was awarded its fourth battle efficiency "E" in five straight years. I am proud to command her and serve with your men who make her crew.
>
> Your cheerful letters from home will do wonders for the morale of your "Tiger." Mail will be flown to the ship almost daily and usually takes only a week to reach us from the states. Write often, and be cheerful, this is the ticket. If it is necessary to send an emergency telegram to your Tiger, send it to him by name, rate and division, *USS Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) Naval Communication Station, San Francisco, California.
>
> *Ticonderoga* is equipped with a hospital, pharmacy, doctors, dental lab, and dentists to keep your Tiger healthy. The crews mess serves "chow" sixteen hours a day to keep him fed. There is also a soda fountain, hobby shop, library, and two chaplains to keep him happy. I will keep him busy, and your letters will keep him cheerful.
>
> I hope this letter will reassure you, in some degree, about the well being of your *Tico* Tiger. I am proud to serve with him, R.N. Miller.

Allison came down from central California to stay in a motel on Coronado Island until the ship pulled out on the 27th. On Saturday 4 September, I had liberty over the weekend. Early in the morning I left the motel to do some shopping on the base for some uniform items I needed prior to the ship's deployment. Allison didn't feel well, and was staying in bed. I was gone about an hour, and then returned to the motel room.

When I returned, Allison was in the bathroom in pain, and saying the baby was coming! I ran downstairs and asked the people in the motel office if they would call an ambulance, but then I decided I should take her to the base. Since the motel room was on the second floor, I carried Allison down the stairs and to the car. The car was parked alongside the curb, and the door was locked. In order to unlock the door, I had to lay Allison on the ground, remove the keys from my pocket, and unlock the door. I finally got her positioned in the passenger seat. She was in much pain, and kept saying "Hurry, Hurry." I broke the speed limit driving to the base main gate, the sentry waved me through, and I sped to the base dispensary. A few days previous I had checked out the location of the dispensary for such an emergency as this. I ran into the dispensary, and told the corpsmen sitting there that my wife was having a baby. Four people ran outside with me. The only doctor at the dispensary was a young LT Flight Surgeon. The doctor directed the corpsmen to put Allison in a nearby ambulance, he then said "We'll take her to the Balboa Naval Hospital, stay right behind the ambulance." Balboa Hospital was across the bay in San Diego, so this meant taking the ferry. With lights flashing, and siren sounding the ambulance took off, I was close behind. We went through the base main gate, and sped toward the ferry landing area. As soon as the ambulance went through the ferry gate, the gatekeeper closed the gate. I yelled, "I'm with the ambulance," but he ignored me! The ambulance drove up the ferry ramp, and immediately the ferry began moving away from the pier. As the ferry moved away from the pier, I could see the ambulance with flashing lights slowly moving out of sight. I sat in my car stunned; another ferry would not be arriving for thirty minutes. The only other option was to drive south on the strand, and then east to the hospital, which would take almost an hour! This was to be an agonizing wait, wondering what was happening. Finally another ferry appeared, and the ferry gate opened for boarding. I gave a stern look to the gatekeeper, and drove on board after paying the fare. It seemed like a long ride across the channel, and finally the ferry was on the San Diego side. I drove the twenty-minute drive to the hospital. I parked, and not being sure where to go, I went to the emergency entrance.

I explained to the nurse at the reception desk who I was, and suddenly people who said they were reporters, surrounded me. They asked, "How does it feel to be a father?" I was overwhelmed. Then a doctor came in and led me to a room, explaining, "Your wife had a baby boy on the ferry that was bringing her here." The flight surgeon that had been at North Island Dispensary and on the ambulance came into the room. He was all smiles, and said the baby had decided to be born while they were on the ferry. He was congratulating me, and was as happy, as I was relieved! This was the first baby he'd delivered as a doctor.

I was directed to a waiting room, and soon a doctor came in to brief me. He said Allison was fine, but there was some concern for the baby. He was premature, weighed only three ½ pounds, and was being kept in an incubator. I was taken to see him, and he was a beautiful sight. He looked like a perfect baby in every aspect, except for his tiny size. My heart filled with love for him, the moment I saw him.

The doctor said they were watching him closely. He was inside a glass box, with many tubes attached to his small body. I watched him for a long while, and then was taken to the ward where Allison was. She was pretty much out of it from all the painkilling drugs she'd been given. A nurse came into the ward and asked for birth certificate information. We gave his name as James Stewart Little, Junior. Everyone was "buzzing" about the baby born on the ferry. I called the people at the motel, and told them what had happened and that I would be back soon. They said, "Don't worry we're a Navy family too." I also called my parents and Allison's parents and told them of the birth.

Before leaving the hospital, I returned to where James, Jr. was being kept in the incubator. The doctor and the nurses were very concerned about his breathing. He was breathing rapidly, his little chest rising and falling quickly. I finally left the hospital around 10:00 p.m., after giving the doctor my phone number. I then left for the motel, upon arriving I fell into bed. At 3:30 a.m. the phone in the room rang, I had a bad premonition when I heard the ringing phone. It was the doctor at Balboa Hospital, He said they had done everything they could, but James had just died. This was a horrible moment in my life. There is something very wrong and unjust about children dying before their parents. My joy over having a son now turned to pain and sorrow. I made the trip back to the hospital. When I arrived at the hospital, a chaplain was with Allison. I tried to comfort her. The chaplain was not much help, but I appreciated his efforts. I stayed with Allison until the sun came up. I went to the nurses' station and asked if Allison could be moved out of the maternity ward, as there were a number of women there that were having their babies brought in, and this was upsetting for Allison. They agreed and moved her to a private room. Everyone at the hospital was very helpful. It is said that the Navy is a family, and this was one of the times I felt that family kinship.

I waited until later in the morning to call my parents and tell them of James's death. I met with an officer called a Casualty Affairs Officer, and the attending doctor. The doctor explained that James had been unable to expel a membrane covering his lungs that were normally expelled by babies at birth. He said they would like to perform an autopsy to insure this was the cause of death. This was a painful decision but I agreed that an autopsy could be performed, in the hope that it might help future childbirths. This might in some small way prevent this from happening to others, and his death might not have been completely in vain. They said the autopsy would be completed with dignity, but there could not be an open casket. This was all right, as I preferred to remember him as I'd seen him in the incubator.

The headlines in the Sunday edition of the San Diego newspaper carried news of the birth of James, Jr. on the Coronado ferry. On Monday I went to the ship and requested seven days emergency leave. Our W Division big NTPI inspection was to begin the following week, but my assembly team was ready. We had not planned to train the week prior to the inspection. Many in the division had seen the story of James, Jr. birth in the paper, but most had not heard of his death. My emergency leave papers were prepared quickly, and I left the ship. I then had to make funeral arrangements. The casualty affairs officer at the hospital was a tremendous help. I planned to have the burial in the Lindsay cemetery. My parents were a tremendous help. They arranged for a burial plot in the cemetery, and made arrangements for a graveside service. The first part of the week I visited a San Diego funeral home. I was shown a casket room with caskets of every description. I selected a small blue one, and filled out some required paperwork, as I planned to drive James Jr. to Lindsay, and needed a permit to transport the casket across county lines.

On Wednesday, Allison, and I checked out of the Coronado motel. I drove to the San Diego funeral home. The funeral home director carried the small blue casket out to my car. I opened the trunk; I had placed a blanket in the trunk. The casket was placed in the trunk, and I closed the trunk lid. It was a long silent ride from San Diego to Lindsay, a distance of almost 300 miles. I drove into the parking lot of the funeral home in Lindsay. The funeral home director had been waiting for our arrival. He took the casket from the trunk, and said the graveside service was arranged for tomorrow. We then drove to my parent's home.

In the morning as I was dressing in preparation for the graveside service, Allison shocked me by saying "I'm not going to the graveside service!" I did not agree with this at all, I felt that as James Junior's parents it was our responsibility to oversee his burial, and we should show respect for the memorial service. She flatly refused to go, so my parents and I left for the cemetery.

At the cemetery rows of chairs were set up under a sunshade, which also over covered the small blue casket, which was positioned by the grave. Reverend Ira Howden, of Faith Baptist Church of Strathmore, conducted the service. There were about thirty friends and family members seated under the sunshade. The short service conducted by the pastor emphasized that the Bible taught that children who had not reached the age of accountability and died, were taken to heaven. It was a nice service, and very fitting for my son.

It's strange how abstract thoughts run through your mind during important events in one's life. I remember sitting in the front row of the folding chairs which were all connected together and not very stable, thinking if someone on this row leans back too far, we'll all topple over. The service concluded, I'd manage to control my emotions, but I did shed tears while being hugged, and given words of sympathy. Allison's parents were not involved in the preparations, or conduct of the service, I believe this was one of the many times Allison was mad at her parents.

The local newspaper, the *Lindsay Gazette*[21], carried the following story:

> "Cause of Little infant's death is disclosed"
>
> Graveside services were held at Olive Cemetery on Thursday morning for James Stewart Little, Jr., who died the previous Sunday in San Diego, the day following his birth. He was born prematurely; weight 3 pounds and 5 ounces. The cause of his death was Hyaline Membrane Disease.
>
> The birth of the baby made front-page news in San Diego, as he was born on the Coronado Ferry, with a Navy flight surgeon in attendance. Gunner's Mate Technician Second Class Little contacted the Naval Air Station Dispensary to report the impending arrival and the Navy dispatched an ambulance, a doctor and two corpsmen to take the expectant mother to the hospital. The ferry "which waits for no man" waited for the ambulance, but they didn't quite make it to the hospital in San Diego in time.
>
> The baby is survived by grandparents, Messrs. and Mmes. Ernest Konrad of Lindsay and Stewart Little of Strathmore. The parents are in Lindsay now at the Konrad home and will return to San Diego on Monday. Little will leave for Vietnam on September 27, aboard the carrier, *USS Ticonderoga*, for a one-year duty, during which time Mrs. Little will live in Lindsay.

On Friday as I was preparing to return to the ship, Allison insisted that I stay longer. I really did not want to, as there was nothing more that could be accomplished by extending my emergency leave, but she was hysterical in her insistence. I wired the ship requesting an extension of my emergency leave. Within hours I was granted an additional seven days. This meant I would not be on the ship for the inspection I had worked hard preparing for.

During this time and for a long while afterward, I reexamined the events surrounding James Junior's death, to see if it could have been prevented. In the years to come, hyaline membrane's disease was conquered, and because of these medical advances very few babies died of the disease. A few years' previously President Kennedy and Jackie lost a newborn daughter to hyaline membrane disease. One negative fact was that both Allison and I smoked cigarettes, which couldn't have helped his fight for survival. I had many people comment to me "You're young, you can have other children." Since then I've never repeated that comment to anyone as a comforting effort. A child is irreplaceable and the loss is an indescribable pain. As events in my life unfolded, as cruel as it may sound, James's death may have been a God-sent act of mercy, as he would not have had a happy, secure, and normal life. When he died, and was buried, a piece of my heart was buried with him.

At the end of my leave period, I bid my family farewell, boarded a bus to San Diego, and finally arrived back on *Ticonderoga*. The division had passed the inspection with flying colors. I felt guilty about not going through the inspection with them, but my team did very well. The division had sent flowers for the graveside service, for which I thanked them.

On 27 September the ship got underway. This was the third time I'd departed the United States for a deployment, but this time it was different; it was with a sense of foreboding. There was the possibility of never returning. We were off to war, and we did not know what the future held for us. These thoughts went through the minds of most sailors as the coast of our country disappeared from view. In the years to come I experienced these same thoughts and apprehensions each time I deployed to Vietnam.

The next couple of weeks were busy, which was good for me as it kept my mind off the sorrow and pain I had experienced. The aircraft squadrons had returned aboard in August, and now there was a lot of flying, and battle drills. The letters I received from home were discouraging.

Allison's letters were full of complaints, and much griping. I was becoming aware that she was an extremely moody person, even more so since the death of our son.

On 14 October the ship pulled into Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for a few days' liberty. While there W Division contacted Barbers Point Naval Weapons Station, where a large number of GMT's were stationed. They challenged us to a softball game, so most of the division loaded into a Navy bus and rode to Barbers Point for a picnic and ball game. We had a good time, and even won the softball game, primarily because GMT2 Wayne Knowles was an outstanding pitcher. On the bus ride back to the ship the bus passed through a sugar cane field. We persuaded the bus driver to stop and we all picked some sugar cane to chew on. Another day I went on liberty and explored Waikiki Beach. It was a beautiful place. During this in port period I got word that I'd once again not made enough points on the rating exam held in September to promote to GMT1. At least I had company in my disappointment, four other GMT2's that took the exam with me also failed.

On the 18th the ship got underway from Pearl Harbor, and headed for Subic Bay, Philippines. A few days out of Hawaii a serious sabotage incident occurred. Someone went through the hanger deck with wire cutters, and reached up into the wheel wells of many of the jet fighters tied down in the hangar deck and cut as many wires as he could reach! The captain ordered marines to stand watch on the hangar deck to protect the planes. It was not a comforting thought that someone in our midst would do such a thing. The guilty person was never caught.

The Russians once again sent out their long-range bombers to see how close they could get to us without being detected. We in W Division were told we would be working with conventional bombs and ammunition when we began steaming off the coast of Vietnam. We were given a number of familiarization and safety classes on bombs and rockets.

The latter part of October we pulled into Subic Bay. Wayne Knowles, "Mac" McAleer and I had liberty one day, and we decided to do some golfing. We went to the Subic Naval Station golf course. We had to have a Filipino caddy, because if we hit a golf ball into the rough (jungle), we were not permitted to search for it, as there were cobras and vipers in the rough. The caddy was the only one permitted off the fairways. The ninth hole of the course was a bar that sold cold San Miguel beer. After we three played eighteen holes (not very well), we went to the clubhouse. It was a beautiful tropical night. We sat at a table in the clubhouse, and had dinner. Most of the people seated around us were high-ranking officers with their wives, enjoying drinks and dinner. After we ate dinner, we three began playing a dice game called "Ship, Captain, and Crew." We were betting a quarter on each game. After time passed, Wayne and I were constantly winning, with Mac losing every hand. Wayne and I were teasing Mac, after he lost another round; he said in his gravelly "whiskey" voice, "Boy, you're a bunch of hungry sons a bitches." His voice carried throughout the entire dining area. Wayne and I gasped, the entire room became silent, and you could have heard a pin drop. Mac looked around the room and said "Well they are!" The whole room erupted in laughter.

The first of November we headed for the war zone, we were once again in the hot, humid area off the coast of Vietnam. Some of what I wrote to my parents in a letter dated 9 November 1965 follows:

> We got into Subic Bay the last of October then pulled back out, right now we're back out by Vietnam, flying about 150 combat missions a day, and boy, am I tired! My division is split into two crews and we're helping push, load and store conventional bombs. I work for twelve hours, and then off twelve hours. I can't tell you how many bombs our planes drop a day, but its tons and tons. We have to replenish our ammunition about every other day from ammunition ships, because we drop all we have onboard. We've only been here seven days, but it seems like we have dropped enough to wipe out all of North Vietnam, and there are two other carriers out here. I work down in a bomb magazine, and you wouldn't believe how hot it gets, usually around 105 degrees! After working a few minutes I'm completely soaked in sweat! I think I've had a couple of heart attacks from seeing bombs dropped accidentally, they are very rugged, and not supposed to go off, or so they say.
>
> I guess the war over here must seem unreal to the people back in the States.

> I read a newspaper article that said the war being fought from carriers was being carried on in an antiseptic world of crisply starched dungarees, and buttered popcorn! If the character were here that wrote that article, I think I'd punch him in the nose! He couldn't have been onboard this carrier. I get so tired and miserable at times, I don't think I can move! I don't know if the people over here will ever try to take a carrier, but a lot of people say that they'll have to, because that's where the majority of the bombs are coming from.
>
> Today we had an officer killed by a net load of bombs, while an ammunition ship was replenishing us; the net fell on him, crushing him to death. It was ironic because he was a safety observer for the on-load!

One of the benefits we were given by Congress while off the coast, or in Vietnam, was free postage. When we mailed a letter while off the coast, instead of placing a stamp on the upper right corner of an envelope we wrote the word "free." Our return address had to include our complete address as well as rate, and service number. We also would eventually get hostile fire pay, which amounted to about sixty dollars a month. Also, while in combat zones we did not pay federal income tax on our earned wages. Underway replenishments, or "UnRep's," were conducted when an ammunition ship pulled alongside the *Ticonderoga*, and while steaming at the same speed, a line was shot across with a shotgun, with this small line as a beginning, eventually larger lines and cables were strung across the span over the sea between the two ships so bombs and ammunition could be passed across. There were also Vertical Replenishments "VertRep's," which involved helicopters flying back and forth between the supplying ship and the *Ticonderoga*. Our work as ordnancemen deep within the bowels of the ship was hot, dirty, and grueling. Our life was not as glamorous, or exciting as that of the pilots. In *Ticonderoga*'s 65-66 cruise book there is written a "pilot's story[22]," by John Bates, which I'll partially quote from:

> One breed of flier is employing the latest in modern war technology and flight strategy in the Vietnam War effort today. He is the Navy Attack Pilot operating from the mobile air base of the high seas, the attack aircraft carrier.
>
> LTJG Robert W. Sturgeon, a fledgling twenty-four-year-old pilot of Attack Squadron Fifty Six (VA-56) aboard the attack carrier *Ticonderoga* is such a pilot.
>
> A redhead from Atlanta, Georgia with a deep southern drawl and a quick sense of humor, Sturgeon jockeys A-4E *Skyhawk* jets twice daily in raids over hostile Viet Cong installations in Vietnam. His daily routine seldom varies; it's mostly hard work-and risky. His job is to deliver his bomb payload on target and return to his Mother ship.
>
> Bob Sturgeon has undergone intensive training in such technical fields as aerodynamics, higher mathematics and structural mechanics to prepare for his job. His ability is exceptionally high; his dedication absolute, he is bound by the Navy flier's creed: "I am a United States Navy flier. My countrymen built the best airplane in the world and entrusted it to me. They trained me to fly it. I will use it to the absolute limit of my power.
>
> With my fellow pilots, aircrews, and deck crews, my plane and I will do anything necessary to carry out our tremendous responsibilities. I will always remember we are part of an unbeatable combat team-the United States Navy.
>
> When the going is fast and rough, I will not falter. I will be uncompromising in every blow I strike. I will be humble in victory.
>
> I am a United States Navy flier. I have dedicated myself to my country, with its many millions of all races colors and creeds. They and their way of life are worthy of my greatest protective effort.

I ask the help of God in making that effort great enough."

Sturgeon was commissioned Ensign in the U.S. Navy in 1963 after graduating from Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in aerospace engineering. He attended flight training school for nearly two years.

His first assignment after flight training was VA-125 where he was introduced to the A-4 *Skyhawk*. His second assignment was VA-56, a unit of Carrier Airwing Five, presently operating off the *USS Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) in the Pacific. He has been flying strike missions over Vietnam for three months.

The plane he pilots is a single engine, lightweight bomber, the smallest jet-powered combat aircraft ever built for the United States. The stubby A-4E is thirty-nine feet long and has a wingspan of twenty-seven feet. The plane carries a two-ton payload at speeds of over 600 miles per hour.

The average day would find the Lieutenant Junior Grade hustling through an early morning: reveille at 0600, shower, breakfast, possibly a chat with his fellow pilots in the officer's wardroom. His first briefing for the day goes at 0700. This day finds him preparing for a major strike at 1030.

"The morning briefs give us the big picture of what to expect in the target zone," says Sturgeon. "The pilots are given the weather forecast around the target area, enemy and friendly forces distribution and "rules of engagement." Rules of engagement specify just how the pilots are to attack.

At 0800 the pilots gather in the squadrons "Ready Room" for a secondary briefing. "This" explains Sturgeon "is where we find out how our "hop" will be conducted, what radio frequencies will be used, emergency procedures and plans of attack." Sixteen A-4's forming flights of four *Skyhawks* each will bomb a railway bridge in North Vietnam.

One half hour before the flight, Sturgeon dons his flight gear. The bulky outfit includes an oxygen breathing unit, life vest, a survival vest, a torso harness for the parachute, an anti-"G"suit, a portable emergency radio transmitter-receiver, pistol, ammunition and a crash helmet. All together it weighs about fifty pounds. Dressed, he works his way to the flight deck via ladders, goes through an inspection of his A-4 with an enlisted plane captain who maintains the plane and then clambers into the cockpit. The signal to start the jets is given fifteen minutes before launch.

"A flight deck full of strike aircraft preparing for a launch," relates Sturgeon, "is quite an impressive display of American might." Flight deck personnel are rushing about making last minute checks and counterchecks. Loose tools and gear are tied down or put away-a hammer or chisel could become a deadly missile if caught in the exhaust blast of a jet. The deafening crescendo of twenty jets turning up lends an air of immediacy to the operation.

The 42,000-ton *Ticonderoga* pivots slowly and majestically into the wind to aid in giving the planes the air speed needed to lift them aloft. The jets, one after another, are positioned on two powerful steam catapults forward and launched in rapid succession.

One can feel the carrier shudder as 125,000 pounds of thrust slams the aircraft off the ship-one "cat" at full power can throw an automobile one-mile in the air.

Bob Sturgeon is the eighteenth pilot to go off the cat. He taxis into position and his plane is hooked up to the catapult harness. He jams the throttle forward to full thrust and checks his cockpit instruments. "Here's where I get a bit excited," says Sturgeon. "The cat shot that begins each hop has a sensation all its own."

Sturgeon salutes the catapult officer signifying he is ready for launch. The cat officer returns his salute and signals the cat crew to fire the catapult. In a little over 200 feet, the 23,000-pound A-4 is accelerated to 175 miles per hour and launched into the sky. The cat shot takes about two seconds and Sturgeon is busy raising his landing gear and flaps as he scans the horizon searching for the other planes in his flight.

Sighting his flight ahead, Sturgeon joins up and the planes head for the coast of North Vietnam. "The carrier is usually 100 or 150 miles from the coast," reveals Sturgeon. Today it was closer because of the distance to our target." The planes fly at about 400 miles per hour until they reach the target zone.

The pilots approach the railway bridge at about 10,000 feet. "We began to pick up some flak as we neared the target," recalls Sturgeon. "The muzzle flashes were clearly visible on the ground and the shells left small gray-black puffs of smoke as they exploded around our aircraft. Since we were constantly changing our altitude, heading, and airspeed, the gunners on the ground couldn't track us. Only a lucky hit would have downed us. "As we rolled in on the target, I didn't have time to worry about enemy defenses-my hands were full just concentrating on delivering my weapons on target." Accelerating to over 500 miles per hour, the A-4's swoop down on the railroad bridge and release their loads. They level off by about 3,500 feet, pulling five"G's" in the process.

"We were "jinxing" or flying irregular flight patterns" Sturgeon says, "All the way back to the coast today to elude enemy retaliation."

One A-4C pilot from VA-144, a fellow squadron aboard *Ticonderoga* does not make it back this day. He was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire over the target. "After we reached the coast" Sturgeon recalls, "we headed for home."

Sturgeon approaches *Ticonderoga* in a landing pattern making a large orbit of the ship to begin his approach to the carrier's flight deck.

"We're on a frequency with the landing signal officer who guides us down, but a flight deck landing is strictly solo. It's the pilot who handles the controls," Sturgeon explains. "From on high, the carriers flight deck looks the size of a postage stamp," says the young pilot. "It doesn't look any bigger from astern as you approach for the landing. Unlike a stationary runway, our "landing platform" isn't always steady. A carrier sometimes pitches and rolls in heavy seas."

Sturgeon makes the approach at approximately 150 miles an hour-slow enough to be caught by the arresting cables on the flight deck, fast enough to take off again if he misses.

> Today Sturgeon snags the number two arresting cable on the first try is thrown forward violently in his seat as the plane is slowed to a stop in two seconds from 140 mph. He taxis forward to a "parking area," climbs out of his plane and goes down below to the Ready Room.
>
> After the flight Bob Sturgeon will go down below to the ship's Air Intelligence Office to a "debrief." Here he gives a run-down on what he experienced on the mission and his opinions-both pro and con. Sturgeon will probably take an hour or so break for coffee after the debriefing. Later, he may find time to write a letter home. At 1330 the flight routine begins again for the afternoon hop scheduled for 1530.
>
> "Why do I fly?" asks Sturgeon, "well it's like this. I like flying and I like the Navy. Out here "on the line" I get a lot of personal satisfaction using the skills and training I've acquired for some tangible reason-to support our national policy."

The middle of November marked the end of another evaluation period for me. My "evals" for this period averaged 3.8. In November I was on a very static work schedule. One week I'd work from noon to midnight on conventional ordnance tasks, then the next week from midnight to noon. The third week I'd work an eight-hour day in W Division trying to catch up on the work I'd not been able to do while working the twelve-hour conventional bomb shifts.

The usual routine when we bombed targets further north, would involve steaming in a northerly direction, with the ship at general quarters battle stations. The planes would launch for the air strike, then return. At that point we would steam south, and finally secure from battle stations. Sleep was a precious commodity and scarce. When the ship went to general quarters, regardless if it was your sleep period, you had to be awake and man your assigned battle station. There was always the constant concern about air attacks, especially when we were in the northern section of the South China Sea. We had a few anxious moments when the ship would go to general quarters because of a "bogey" (unidentified airplane) flying toward the ship. It usually turned out to be an Air Force plane, or a commercial airliner.

The news from home was that Allison had a job at the stationary store in Lindsay. Brother Joe had a case of the measles; Dad had a new job at the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District. Mom was beginning work again at the Porterville State Hospital. I wondered if there was something "going on" with Allison. Her letters were full of complaints, she was fighting with her mom, and I also got word that she was seeing one of her old boyfriends. I sensed I wasn't being told the whole story about what was going on, but I couldn't do anything about it.

In mid-November our planes attacked large numbers of North Vietnamese Regular soldiers fighting the U.S. 7th Calvary at Ia Trang Valley. This was the first major battle between U.S. and North Vietnam regular forces in the war. Our troops were overrun by the North Vietnamese, and the commanding officer of the 7th Calvary called in air strikes to save his troops. The battle November 14-17 left 234 American soldiers killed. A total of 305 were killed in action during the Pleiku campaign in the highlands, October 25 – November 21. As I have said, the code word used to warn of an American unit about to be overrun by enemy forces, is "Broken Arrow", the same code word used to report a serious accident with a nuclear weapon. This battle between regular U.S. troops, and North Vietnamese regulars, is described in a book called "We Were Soldiers Once…and Young©[23]," written by LTGEN (ret) Harold G. Moore, and Joseph L. Galloway. The battle was also portrayed in a movie™©[23] with the same name, starring Mel Gibson.

The different work schedules, from noon till midnight, and midnight to noon, were used to rotate bombing requirements between the carriers stationed off the coast of Vietnam. There were always at least two carriers off the coast. The South China Sea was split into two sections of responsibility at different times during the war. The northern section became known as "Yankee Station", and the southern section, "Dixie Station". Steaming off the coast was called "being on the line."

The latter part of November we broke away from being on the line. One big relief we experienced when leaving the South China Sea was that the weather became cooler. When we were on the line, the uniform was a T-shirt (skivvies), and dungaree pants, which without the dungaree shirt made the heat much more bearable. Chiefs and officers however remained in full khaki uniforms. Our schedule called for the ship to pull into Subic Bay, Philippines for a few days, and then to Yokosuka, Japan.

After Japan we were to be back on the line, and remain on the line during Christmas. On 27 November a large anti-war demonstration took place in Washington, D.C. involving over 25,000 demonstrators.

The Philippines, Subic Naval Station, and Cubi Naval Air Station (as well as Anderson Air Force Base) had been U.S. Bases since the end of World War II. These three bases were the largest bases on the island. There were also smaller bases scattered about in the Philippines. Subic and Cubi were all within one huge fence that encircled the base. Within the base there were a Ship Repair Facility, and Naval Magazine. The base had large clubs, and recreational facilities such as bowling alleys, horseback riding, skeet shooting ranges, and much more. Many Philippine nationals worked on the base, as shipyard workers, grounds keepers, waiters, bartenders, taxi drivers, and in the many occupations necessary to keep a base functioning. One unique job within the clubs on base was the "rent a girl" in each club. Young Filipino girls dressed in evening gowns, or casually dressed, would sit in a designated section of the club, and dance with sailors for ten cents a dance.

There were many restaurants that catered to sailors and their dependants. The restaurants offered a variety of food, fast food such as hamburgers, and pizza, to traditional Filipino food, also steaks. A restaurant called the Spanish Gate served the best filet mignon steak I've ever tasted for a dollar. One thing the sailors on the ship all craved was fresh milk. On *Ticonderoga* we were served recombined or instant milk that tasted horrible.

Marines manned the gate that led to Olongapo, the city right outside the main gate. Filipino soldiers also manned the gate with the U.S. Marines. In order to leave the base you had to show your ID card to the marine guard (non-rated sailors had to show liberty cards as well). The marine also inspected sailors for uniform correctness, haircuts, and general appearance. We were always in dress white uniforms in Subic. Just beyond the gate were money exchange windows where "funny money" (military script) could be exchanged for pesos. After leaving the money exchange windows, you immediately stepped on a bridge that spanned a river. The first thing you noticed was the sewer smell, and the odor was horrible. This four-lane bridge crossed over Subic River, which was known to sailors worldwide as "Shit River," because frankly that's what it smelled like! The water was brown and filthy, with human feces floating on the surface. However, all along the water under the bridge were canoes with young boys, some naked, others with swimming trunks on, shouting for sailors on the bridge to throw pesos into the water. If a coin were thrown, there was a mad dash by all the swimmers to retrieve the coin. When the coin was found, the boy would rise to the surface holding the coin aloft, usually with a big smile, encouraging the sailors to throw more money. It was amazing that they could find anything at all in the filthy water! In the evening hours young girls dressed in flowing white wedding gowns, often holding white parasols would stand on the canoes trying to attract sailors, and entice them to throw money so their young swimming helpers could dive for the thrown coins. The white gowns were a startling contrast against the murky, dirty water, and a sight that I've never forgotten.

Lining the bank of the river across from the naval base was a large community of tin and cardboard shacks, homes of people living in unbelievable poverty. The main street of Olongapo was Magsay Drive. This main street was lined with literally hundreds of bars. Some of the bars were "holes in the wall," while others were exotic nightclubs. These bars were entirely supported by American sailors and marines. The city looked a lot like the towns of the American Wild West must have looked. Each bar had two or more heavily armed Filipino security guards, many with sawed off shotguns, and bandoliers of shells draped across their chest. The streets were filled with gaudy, brightly painted, decorated jeep taxis, or "jeepneys." The jeepneys had covered bench seats that could transport twelve or more persons. The drivers drove up and down Main Street, honking their horns looking for fares. There were also motorcycles with sidecars that would transport people for a few centavos. There was the constant sounding of jeepneys horns, and smoke hung in the air from all the vehicles belching exhaust fumes. This smoke mingled with the smoke from vendor's barbeques that lined the street, selling meat that was skewered on a wooden stick. The meat was usually very tasty, some type of pork or beef (we hoped it wasn't dog or monkey). A nickname for this barbequed meat was "monkey on a stick." As sailors walked down the sidewalks of Olongapo, dodging all the vendors trying to sell food, cigarettes, or trinkets, the calls of the bar girls would ring out from each bar trying to entice sailors to come in. Olongapo was like no other city in the Far East.

Each of the hundreds of bars in Olongapo had its own group of girls. When word was spread that a carrier was in port, sometimes two at a time, which meant thousands of sailors with pockets full of money, girls from all the surrounding provinces would rush to Olongapo to try and get their share of pesos from the free spending American sailors. American rock and roll music and country music blared from jukeboxes. There were small children begging for money, or cigarettes. Pickpockets and thieves were everywhere.

Sailors were cautioned about leaving the "main drag," as law enforcement was not apparent just a couple of blocks off the bar-lined street. Here you could be robbed, just as I discovered the hard way while in Manila when I had my wallet stolen. It was common for sailors who strayed away from the main street to be beaten, or even killed. There were bars that catered only to black sailors that white sailors did not frequent. There was entertainment of all types, trying to entice sailors into particular bars. Many of the bands that played in the bars were very good at mimicking American bands. One Filipino singer who was famous for many years, sounded exactly like the singer Johnny Cash. One bar not far from the main gate had a large concrete pit near the sidewalk, which contained a crocodile. At certain times of the day the crocodile was fed live baby ducks, sailors could buy a duck for a few pesos and fed it to the reptile. Crowds would gather to watch this gruesome meal.

One potent concoction prepared by Olongapo bars upon request was an alcohol punch, usually made by the gallons, called "moejoe." This was a mixture of vodka, rum, and fruit juice, which was the downfall of many sailors who drank it. Moejoe did not taste like an intoxicating beverage, and this lead to over indulgence. There were stripper acts of every description. There is no delicate way to describe what was a common act displayed on stage in many of the bars. There were girls called "peso pickers," who would be on stage completely nude, and would call for sailors to throw money on the stage, and they would pick up the money with their private parts! They would also pick up a stack of pesos and expel the coins' one at a time, or "smoke" a cigar or cigarette. There were also dancers that would dance with boa constrictors. The depravity of Olongapo was as I said like the old west, but I don't think the "old west" would have tolerated the nudity and x-rated entertainment that was geared to entice young men to spend money freely. The contrast of poverty, and wealth was evident throughout the country. Apparently Olongapo was very much aware of where its cash flow came from, as everything was geared toward accommodating sailors. Girls working in the bars were required to undergo periodic exams for venereal disease; they were then issued a card, which was referred to as a "blue card," which proclaimed their clean health, until their next physical exam. Venereal disease was common; sailors were warned not to solicit streetwalkers, as these were usually girls who could not get a blue card. Sailors were also advised not to wear wristwatches in Olongapo. Wrist watches were favorite targets of thieves who were expert at pulling wrist watches with expandable wrist bands off wrists, or cutting the leather strap of a wrist watch and running away with the watch, often cutting the owner's wrist. Pickpockets frequented the streets of Olongapo. The local police tried to deter pickpockets with severe punishment if they were caught. While standing shore patrol duty one night I saw a room at the Olongapo Police station that contained a table upon which there were two parallel boards. An accused pickpocket would be forced to lay his fingers across the span of these two boards. While the pickpocket was held, a policeman would swing a steel bar down across the fingers with enough force to break the four fingers. The pickpocket would then be released. Olongapo doctors and medical clinics were forbidden to treat broken fingers without checking with the police station, as it was against the law to set the broken fingers of a pickpocket.

As in Japan, the girls in Olongapo were experts at separating a sailor from the contents of his wallet. There was an established "buying out the bar" procedure. All the Olongapo hotels issued two cards at the time of registration, one for the sailor paying for the room, and the other for any companion he might find during the day or night. Room service was available in all the hotels, providing both food and drink. There were restaurants on the main street interspersed between the bars. The only beer sold was a Philippine brew called San Miguel. The alcohol content of this beer was not as consistent, nor regulated as American beer. One bottle of San Miguel might be as potent as water, while the next might have very high alcohol content. San Miguel also had a laxative effect until a sailor's digestive system got used to it after a day or two. Sailors were cautioned not to drink the water, or use ice in drinks, while off base.

Many young, (and a few old), sailors "fell in love" with a bar girl, which was what most of the girls were looking for, "a ticket" to the United States. The "grapevine communication" system of the bar girls was amazing! Most were very possessive of a particular sailor (and his money), and became very jealous if their sailor sat with, or bought drinks for another girl. They called this disloyal behavior being a "butterfly." If a sailor walked through the main gate headed for a bar a mile or so down the main street, by the time he got to the bar, the girl he had been dating would know what time he came through the gate, where he may have stopped, and eaten, or perhaps if he stopped at another bar.

As in other liberty ports, W Division hung out in one particular bar. The bar's name was "The Australian." GMT's could not afford to get into trouble, so we tried to watch out for each other. Sometimes this was a full time job, as in the case of Ted Brine who was from Arizona, and always looking for a fight.

Anything could be bought on the Olongapo “black market.” Many sailors bought drugs that supposedly would cure venereal disease, because they didn’t want to go to sickbay and be restricted to the ship while in port. One sailor in W Division was constantly trying to cure himself with these illegally bought drugs.

One group of people we were warned about was the “Huks.” They lived in the jungles surrounding Olongapo, and wore loincloths. They were heavily tattooed and heavily armed, most carried huge machetes, and even the police gave them a wide berth. They were considered vicious, merciless fighters, and many of the sailors stationed on the base that had homes in Olongapo would hire Huks to guard their house, and possessions. The Huk would often stand guard in a nearby tree. Any house guarded by a Huk was untouchable. On infrequent occasions the head of a decapitated sailor would be found near the main gate. Perhaps the victim of a robbery, or perhaps the sailor insulted a machete welding Huk warrior? Most of the married sailors resisted the temptations of Olongapo, and the very real possibility of catching a venereal disease. They tried to “ride herd” on the single sailors. A very dangerous time on liberty was when it was time to return to the ship late at night either by liberty boat, or liberty bus. This involved hundreds of sailors, most inebriated, and some looking for a fight, trying to get back to the ship. In Subic Bay the ship often tied up at the Ship Repair Facility Pier, which was about ten miles from the main gate. The ship would contract semi-trucks pulling large-covered trailers with benches inside to run on a specific schedule back and forth between the main gate and the ship. The sailors called these vehicles “cattle cars.” You haven’t experienced excitement until you climb into a cattle car full of drunken sailors, and the doors close, then it’s every man for himself. There was no effort to try and enforce order. Only the senior petty officers attempted discipline. They tried to identify those who started fights, and would report names, if known, to the ship’s master at arms in the morning. Friends would sit back to back and try to watch for swinging fists. We in W Division would stay near our marine friends. Upon arrival at the ship, everyone would disembark, and often the ship’s corpsman would be called to tend to those that might be hurt. Not all the cattle car rides were violent; many were cheerful with sailors singing and in good spirits. Fortunately I was never hit too many times, or hurt seriously on a cattle car ride, but one year in Subic I was at a liberty boat landing awaiting a boat to get back to the ship when a huge drunken brawl broke out; many sailors were hurt, and one marine was choked to death by someone with a coat hanger!

The expiration of liberty was “prorated” just as the commencement of liberty was. Higher ranked sailors left the ship earlier than junior sailors, and the reverse was true when liberty was over. Junior ranked sailors reported aboard sooner after liberty than those senior to them. Liberty expired overseas earlier than liberty expiration in the states. This was primarily because it was often dangerous to be on the streets after dark in many of the Far East ports we visited. Also considered were the political agreements made between the host countries and America. The times liberty was permitted in Olongapo varied greatly over the twenty-five years I visited there. In order for sailors other than chiefs and officers to spend over night ashore, a special request chit had to be submitted to a sailor’s division officer. During the years of President Marcos’s reign, martial law and a nightly curfew were in effect. This meant no one was permitted on the streets or in public between midnight and 6:00a.m. During the times of Philippine elections, sailors were not permitted off the base until after the polls closed, as the election voting periods were often violent, and sometimes deadly. During most of the years I visited Olongapo, a political dynasty was in charge. The first member of the dynasty was Mayor Gordon. After many years he was assassinated, and was replaced by his wife Mrs. Gordon. After she served a few terms, the Gordon’s’ son became Mayor. Just as President Marcos ruled with an iron fist, so did the Gordons. They would often be seen about Olongapo escorted by heavily armed guards carrying submachine guns.

There was a large population of retired Navy sailors living in Olongapo. Many had married Filipino women, and now made Olongapo their home. They were able to get medical care at the base hospital, and shop at the base commissary and exchange. The cost of living was cheap and they lived well on the Philippine economy. There were two large Veterans of Foreign War (VFW), and Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) clubs located on the main street of Olongapo.

As well as being cautioned about drinking water, streetwalkers, and going on liberty alone, sailors were warned about being invited to sit down at the poker games that were in many of the clubs. Most of these games were crooked, with marked cards, and other cheating tactics. Some even went so far as to make a small slit in the palm of one hand, and slip a small mirror in the slit so the cards that were being dealt face down to all the players could be read by the dealer with the small mirror. Sailors, who thought they were experienced poker players on the ship, would soon become losers in Olongapo!

In 1965 liberty in Olongapo, although cheap, cost a little more than liberty in Japan. While the ship was in the Philippines, many sailors would remain onboard preferring to save their money for liberty in Japan.

In the years to come this economic strategy was to change, as Japan eventually became much more expensive, and Olongapo became the liberty port of choice. Olongapo was an economy based on sex and alcohol.

Many young sailors were away from home for the first time, and being in a city with few restraints created a situation that required long hours of counseling, and advice, as well as discipline from senior petty officers and officers. The free flowing, cheap San Miguel beer, hot tropic sun, abundant availability of women, combined with young male egos (often looking for fights) resulted in the writing of many, many report chits, which would keep the division officers, executive officer, and the captain busy for many days after pulling out of Subic Bay. The *Ticonderoga* 65-66 cruise book[24] contains a very revealing statement:

> Olongapo, and the bar community outside Clark Air Force Base, was not representative of the people of the Philippines, it is disappointing to have so little space (in the cruise book) for the Philippines. Certainly by the end of a Western Pacific cruise Subic Bay is the port most often seen by American sailors. Unfortunately the Philippines are hard to know. To judge the entire nation by the port town of Olongapo is hardly fair, and, after all, one is hardly escaping anything just outside the gate. In fact whatever Olongapo has is most likely catching.

I agree wholeheartedly with this statement. I had many Filipino friends that were honest, polite, hardworking, and morally upstanding. Some of the hardest working and most patriotic sailors in the Navy were Filipinos. Olongapo was an exceptional city in the country, a city that was driven by greed for money, and fed upon the loneliness, frustration, lust, and exuberance of young American sailors.

The first part of December we left Subic Bay, and headed north. It was time for our quarterly readiness exercise. This exercise involved loading strike aircraft, pilots manning their planes, and positioning on the flight deck just as though they were about to fly off on a strike. Then the exercise would end and the planes would be unloaded. Something happened during this exercise that I was unable to talk about for twenty-four years until it was made public in 1989.

It was a clear, sunny autumn day the day of the exercise. The sea was calm with occasional rolling waves. The word "Crew-cut" had been passed over the ships 1MC loudspeakers, setting the exercise in motion. W Division had been preparing a week for this busy exercise. My assignment was as a technical monitor, roaming the hangar deck, observing the loading crews on the aircraft, and watching movement of the loaded aircraft in the hangar bays up to the flight deck. The loaded planes were lifted up to the flight deck by means of aircraft elevators, which were platforms that hung out over the water. These platforms moved up and down between the hangar deck and flight deck level. Planes were moved and positioned on the ship by small yellow, four wheel, motor powered carts hooked to the front landing gear of the airplanes. Planes were also moved by "muscle power": men called "plane pushers" moved the planes by pushing just as you would push a stalled automobile. The plane pushers were on the lowest rung of the ship's chain of command ladder. These sailors pushed planes all day. In the hot, humid tropical climates this was a very physically demanding job. A plane-handling supervisor directed the plane pushers. The handling supervisor was assisted by sailors watching the plane's wing tips and tail to ensure the plane didn't strike anything, including other planes, while moving in the close quarters of the hangar bay area. The handling supervisor directed the plane pushers by blowing on a whistle, which was carried around his neck on a chain. Two plane pushers always carried "U" shaped blocks of wood that were placed around the two wing landing gear wheels, and served as chocks, or wheel stops, when the plane came to a stop. The plane pushers also carried heavy tie down chains that were used to hold the plane in place any time it was parked or stationary for any length of time. Tie down wells were generously placed on the hanger deck, and flight deck as attachment points for the tie down chains. When a plane was being moved, either the enlisted plane captain (a squadron sailor assigned to a specific plane who cleaned, waxed, and accomplished various maintenance tasks) or the pilot assigned to the plane would be in the cockpit to apply brakes on the landing gear when called on to do so by the handling supervisor directing movement of the plane.

As the aircraft loads were completed in the hangar bay, the plane pushers pushed out the loaded planes onto the aircraft elevator. Two armed marines accompanied each plane. After sounding a warning horn, the aircraft elevator operator would push the "UP' button and the elevator would begin rapidly moving the loaded plane, pilot, plane pushers, and marines up to the flight deck.

Another GMT and I were technical monitors on the hangar deck; there were also two technical monitors on the flight deck. GMTCS Morgan was the roaming technical monitor supervisor.

From time to time the word would be passed “Now stand by for a roll to starboard (or port).” And we would experience a roll of the ship in the direction of the announcement. The sea was a little rough, and the ship was making turns trying to keep itself as stable as possible during the exercise.

A loaded A-4E *Skyhawk* was being pushed out onto the aircraft elevator. The pilot was in the cockpit, and the cockpit canopy was in the up position. As the plane was being pushed out onto the elevator, the ship began a roll to starboard, accelerating the rolling plane. The handling supervisor blew his whistle loudly indicating the command for the pilot to apply the landing gear brakes. The two plane pushers on each side of the plane stood ready to throw the wheel chocks on the rolling wheels. The pilot’s head was down in the cockpit and the plane was accelerating faster. The handling supervisor blew his whistle wildly, and all the plane pushers trying to hold back the accelerating plane, began hollering “brakes, brakes,” as the plane rolled closer and closer to the edge of the elevator. The pilot continued looking down into the cockpit and was oblivious to the loud whistling and shouting. Two of the plane pushers threw the wheels chocks around the wheels, but without the brakes being applied the momentum of the heavy plane could not be stopped. The tail of the plane extended out over the edge of the aircraft elevator, and then the wheels jolted off the edge, tearing out a portion of the safety net that encircled the elevator. The plane pushers’ efforts were futile trying to hold back the rolling plane, and they leapt clear of it to keep from falling into the sea. As the body of the plane slammed against the deck of the elevator, the pilot finally looked up. I’ll never forget the startled look on his face. He grasped the edges of the open cockpit, and appeared to attempt to stand up, but he was restrained in his seat by the seat harness. All of this happened in a matter of seconds, but it was as though it was happening in slow motion; the plane pushers, marines, and all of us stood there in stunned shock. The plane’s nose lifted, and the plane rolled off the elevator with the shocked pilot struggling to stand up. The plane flipped completely upside down, and fell toward the sea. There was a huge splash, and as the ship moved away, the plane and pilot disappeared under the blue-green surface of the water.

I glanced around for Chief Morgan who had been there a moment ago, but he was gone. I immediately ran to a phone in the hanger bay, called the W Division office, and told them I was preparing a “rainbow message.” All technical monitors carried a blank rainbow message that just needed blanks filled in. I filled it in, read it to the division officer, and then ran up the many ladders that led to the ship’s bridge. As I had been calling the division, the word was being passed over the ship’s loudspeakers, “Man overboard, man overboard, starboard side.” The ship had slowed, and made a turn to starboard to move the ship screws away from anyone who might be in the water. It had been a miracle that none of the plane pushers had fallen into the sea with the plane.

I arrived at the bridge, gasping for air, and explained to the officer of the deck, that I needed the captain’s release signature for the message. The captain called me over to his bridge chair, and I showed him the rough message that detailed the loss of the loaded plane in the sea. The captain took his time, and after looking at the high level of addresses, which were from the White House down, finally said “Well, I guess we have to send this one?” There was a five-minute time limit on messages of this type: but we didn’t make it, it was twenty minutes before the message was released. There was a reason for urgency, because if there had been a nuclear detonation and our entire task force disappeared in a fireball, the White House thinking we had been attacked might begin pressing buttons starting World War III. After the captain signed, I ran to the communications office, where the message was sent by “flash precedence.” The message informed the entire military chain of command what had happened. A “Broken Arrow” report was also prepared, the beginning of a small “mountain” of paperwork that was associated with this accident.

The *Ticonderoga* and our escorts circled the area where the plane had gone over the side for a long while, hoping to find the pilot. The plane had dropped off the ship into one of the deepest areas of the Pacific Ocean. Finally the search ended. There was no hope of finding the pilot.

I’ve often thought of the horror of those final moments of that young pilot’s life, as he plunged down into the dark depths of the sea, with the sunlight on the surface rapidly disappearing, knowing that he was entombed within his coffin plummeting to his grave. It was speculated that as the plane hit the water, the cockpit canopy slammed down upon him, pinning him in. We also hoped that the canopy’s slamming down also mercifully rendered him unconscious. The horror and helplessness of those few moments have remained burned into my memory.

During this cruise we lost a number of pilots to hostile fire over Vietnam. This young pilot was also a victim of war, as he was killed while perfecting the readiness for nuclear war. We learned it was LTJG Douglas M. Webster, and he was married, which made the tragedy even worse.

I recalled those occasions when he would come into W Division to sign the custody paperwork for the weapon he would use in the event of nuclear war. He was a cheerful, likeable officer who we enjoyed working with. The exercise was completed in a somber mood as we realized one of our shipmates had just been killed.

Twenty-four years after this accident, in May 1989, the incident was made public, and newspapers reported:

> The United States told Japan that a hydrogen bomb lost overboard from an American aircraft carrier 24 years ago almost certainly burst under intense water pressure and spread radioactive plutonium on the ocean floor. A team of American weapons designers from several national laboratories assured Japanese officials that there was "no environmental impact" from the accident. American officials offered no indication that radiation had escaped during the accident. The disclosure came after the Pentagon confirmed reports that it lost the bomb eighty miles from a small Japanese island in December 1965, when an A-4 aircraft carrying the weapon fell off the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga.* The pilot was killed and the bomb immediately sank.

Those that gave their lives for our country that 65-66 cruise were:

CMDR John C. Mape
LT Richard W. Hastings
LTJG John V. McCormick
LTJG Gerald L. Pinneker
LTJG Douglas M. Webster
LTJG Stephan G. Richardson
AN Charles O. Dixon

LCDR Render Crayton was declared missing in action, but was captured, and survived the war.

On the 8th of December I celebrated my twenty-third birthday. We were to spend Christmas "on the line." After being on the line for a few days, we were told there was to be a lull in the bombing. There was also to be a thirty-hour truce during Christmas, and an overall slowdown of bombing strikes. The first visitor to fly aboard on 22 December was the entertainer Martha Raye. She gave two shows, one in the forecastle, and one on the flight deck after dark, and after completion of flight quarters.

Our cruise book reads[25]:

> On December 22 we had the pleasure of two performances given by Miss Martha Raye, the woman who, (except for age that is in no way excessive,) could be called the Grande Old Lady of the American Stage. She has been delighting audiences for years and years.
>
> Aboard the *Ticonderoga* the audience was similar to one she had performed before many times since her arrival in the Western Pacific Theater. At the conclusion of her last show Miss Raye told the appreciative crew, "I want you to know why an American woman should be proud she is an American…it is because of men like you." And she meant it. Everyone was sorry to see her go, and we all wished she could have stayed indefinitely. With her example of spirit and gumption we would never flag.

I watched the evening show, and it was very enjoyable. On Christmas Day it was a day much like any other, except for the huge turkey dinner, and free cigarettes handed out on the mess deck.

Francis Cardinal Spellman, Cardinal Archbishop of New York, was flown aboard the ship the 26th. The cruise book says about this visit[25]:

> His Eminence, whose advanced age enhanced the significance of his visit, offered mass in Hangar Bay One while attack aircraft were launched to their targets in Vietnam. The roar of the jets often obscured the sound of his words, but the meaning of his benediction was not lost on *Ticonderoga*'s men, some of who were fortunate enough to talk to him. Cardinal Spellman departed later that afternoon to continue his Christmas visit to servicemen in Vietnam.

On the 27th, Bob Hope's show flew aboard. His show was to be on the 29th. I looked forward to seeing the show; however, I was not destined to see it. The show troupe included actresses Carroll Baker, and Joey Heatherton, singers Kaye Stevens, Jack Jones, and Anita Bryant, Miss USA-World 1965 Diana Battsa, the dancing Nicholas Brothers, Jerry Colonna, Peter Leeds, and a large support crew. There was an incident on the 28th, the night before the show that was reported worldwide. The 28 December 1965 Sacramento Union newspaper[26] is partially quoted here.

> "War mishap stuns Hope Troupe"
>
> Aboard the USS *Ticonderoga* (UPI)-Comedian Bob Hope and his troupe got a taste of war Monday when they saw a U.S. Navy A-4 *Skyhawk* miss a recovery cable and plunge into the darkened sea in a ball of flames.
>
> The incident cast an immediate gloom over the showstoppers, but a few moments later the cast cheered when the pilot, who had ejected, was pulled from the water. Dancer Joey Heatherton ran into his arms and planted a big kiss on his cheek. The rescued pilot Lt (j.g) William Braugher of Newark, Ohio; grinned and added "It was almost worth it."
>
> During the suspense-filled minutes, while the carrier and its two escort Destroyers the *USS Turner Joy*, and the *USS Swanson* scoured the water for the pilot, Miss Heatherton said the cast was "stunned" by the incident. "This really brings the war home to you," she said.
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> Hope and his cast came to the aircraft carrier after Christmas weekend shows for G.I.'s at various posts in Vietnam.
>
> The group of entertainers watched jets roar off into the tropical sunset for strikes against Viet Cong bases in South Vietnam. "This is the biggest treat of the trip,"Hope said. The girls with him shouted "whoopee" and "boy-oh-boy" as the jets thundered down the deck and soared into the air.
>
> Hope and Capt. Willy House, Chief of Staff of Carrier Division Nine, played a golf tournament on the carrier deck. They drove golf balls off the carrier into the sea. "I was aiming for the 13th white cap," Hope said.
>
> Jan King, Hope's traveling secretary, who has made ten trips with the comedian, said this trip was different from any of the others. "This is the first time we felt there was any danger" she said. Bob's family felt it too. "Each time he goes on one of these trips his four kids ask him to bring back gifts.
>
> This time they asked for camouflaged helmets. Then Nora, she's nineteen, grabbed my arm and said "Make sure Poppa gets back safe."

I was looking forward to it, but was destined to miss the Bob Hope show (see photograph page). On the 27th I saw him and his accompanying crowd on the mess decks, which was the same day I received a telegram saying that Allison was seriously ill, and I was needed at home. The Red Cross had confirmed the telegram. I was very worried. This had been a complete surprise; I'd not heard anything from home about Allison being ill. On the night of the 27th, after hurriedly packing a suitcase, I was flown off the ship on a COD with emergency leave papers in hand. This was the second time in 1965 I'd gone on emergency leave. In Subic Bay, I took the long bus ride to Clark Air Force Base. As soon as I showed my emergency leave papers at the terminal desk, I was given the highest possible travel status. Before long I was on the long trip across the Pacific Ocean. After stopping in Guam and Hawaii, my plane landed at Travis Air Force Base in California. I called home as soon as the plane landed. Allison said she was fine! I don't recall which day I arrived in the states. My internal clock was messed up from all the travel, and I was groggy. When I got to Lindsay, Allison looked healthy and well. Allison said she had been in the hospital for a couple of days.

I was baffled why the doctor had asked that I be brought home. My parents could not understand it either. I was to find out the true reason I had been called home a few years later.

In December the American casualty count in the war was over 1,300, with 6,100 wounded Americans. After a week at home I checked into the Naval Receiving Station, Treasure Island, and went to the dreaded transit barracks in preparation for the long trip back across the Pacific. I checked in on 16 January, and reversed my direction of travel back to the ship. I had an uneventful trip back, except that when the plane was dropping for a landing at Clark Air Force Base I experienced one of the worst headaches I'd ever had. The pain was unbearable, but subsided when the air pressure in the plane's passenger compartment changed.

At Clark Air Force Base Terminal I had a surprise. GMT1 Reese was in the waiting room. I expected him to be on the ship. I greeted him, but he was acting strangely, and very secretive. He said the captain had kicked him off the ship, and he was headed for San Francisco for reassignment. When I arrived back at the ship, I was to discover that the captain had learned of his "slush fund" business, lending money for profit. He had finally been caught in one of his moneymaking schemes. This was to be the last time I saw GMT1 R.D. Reese. Over the years I heard stories about him, one being the time he was traveling across country with a pickup truck that had been severely damaged on one side, and he sold it to a guy he met at a gas station, without ever letting the guy see the damaged side! He sold the truck, and quickly left. I also heard a story that he was caught in an insurance scam with a mutual friend, Fred White, and Fred ended up in prison for it. Some time after his retirement from the Navy, Reese and his wife were traveling to meet his brother Tom Reese (the chief I'd been with on the *Independence*), in their recreation vehicle. They hit black ice on the roadway and both were killed in the accident. Years later at a reunion get together Tom Reese took me aside and asked me if I knew why his brother was kicked off the *Ticonderoga* those many years ago. I told him the truth. Tom said he had never told him the reason, but he had always suspected that it was because of one of his schemes. Tom joined him in death in 2002 succumbing to cancer.

Fortunately I didn't have to catch the ship at sea when I arrived at Subic Bay by bus. The ship was tied alongside the pier at Cubi Point; I walked aboard on 22 January. I had a surprise waiting when I returned to the division; my transfer orders had come in. I was being transferred to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington. I was to go first to an intermediate station, Naval Nuclear Weapons Training Center Pacific, North Island, California for a two-week school. This meant I would be leaving the ship in a little over a month, and retracing my long trip across the Pacific Ocean. I also had a letter from GMT1 Wiesenhahn, who had been with me on the *USS Independence*. He was now stationed at the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. He told me a little about the Advanced Underwater Weapons (AUW) Shop that I'd be working in with him. It sounded a lot like the AUW Shop I'd been at in Iceland.

The ship's schedule called for us to return to the line for thirty days, and then back to Yokosuka for a port call. When the ship had last been in Yokosuka in December before I left on emergency leave, I happened to be in my bunk one night a little after midnight, unable to sleep. My bunk was a bottom bunk in a tier of three. A young sailor who had been moved into W Division berthing from the engineering department came into the berthing compartment. We had extra bunks that were used by other departments from time to time. I had gotten to know him because he was from a town close to my hometown in California, the town I had been born in, Porterville. That night, however, he did something that shocked me and that I found hard to believe. He put his hand into the pockets of a pair of dungarees that were hanging on a Second Class GMT's bunk. He rummaged through the pockets of the other sailor's pants, and it looked like he removed something. The next morning I asked GMT2 Baxter, whose pants had been the ones the sailor had been looking through, if he was missing anything. He said "yes," he'd lost fifteen dollars out of his pants. I then put the sailor I'd seen in the berthing compartment on report for stealing.

On the same subject of thievery, a number of things within W Division had disappeared. Not only within the berthing compartment, but also within our working spaces, it was someone who could only enter with a security clearance and a badge. The thief had been operating for a long while. A number of times immediately after something were reported missing, such as dishes bought in Hong Kong, pool sticks bought in Japan, etc., and then everyone would undergo a surprise locker inspection to see if the thief could be caught. This was a very uncomfortable situation, and everyone suspected everyone else. There was someone in our midst that could not be trusted. A thief is despised on board ships, because you live in such close quarters with everyone, you have to trust each other to respect your possessions. In history most navies dealt out the harshest punishments to thieves, often the death penalty.

The thief was never caught, but there was one person that was strongly suspected, and after his transfer the thefts stopped. I'll not say his name, but he was a high-ranking petty officer!

Returning to the sailor I'd put on report for stealing, upon my return from emergency leave I learned that there was to be a summary court martial, which is one level below the most serious court martial, a general court martial. GMT2 Baxter and I were the only witnesses for the prosecution. I testified how I'd seen the sailor digging through Baxter's pockets. I was asked about the lighting in the berthing compartment, and if I were sure about what I'd seen, etc. The end result was that, the sailor was found innocent, because there were not enough witnesses. I was disgusted, and ashamed that he was from my hometown. He was moved out of W Division berthing compartment. However, in the end justice was served. He continued getting in trouble, such as going AWOL, and committed many other infractions, and was eventually given an administrative discharge.

On the first of February, I didn't feel well, and began coughing up blood. I went to sick call, which was in the ship's medical department, and held at 8:00 a.m., and 1300 (1:00 p.m.) each day. The doctor committed me to sickbay and I was required to bunk in the compartment that was the ship's hospital. I had x-rays, a blood test, etc.; the doctor said that it might be acute bronchitis. Anyway, I was diagnosed as having "hematology of an unknown etiology." I didn't like lying in bed all day, or all the shots I was given.

While in sickbay, a marine friend of mine was brought in with his hand heavily bandaged. While preparing to assume the watch at the after W Division magazine, he had accidentally jacked a round (bullet) into his forty-five-caliber pistol, and shot himself in the palm of his left hand. I saw the wound as a corpsman was dressing it. The bullet had caused a huge hole in his hand. His Marine Captain was very displeased with him, because of his careless handling of a firearm.

A friend of mine, GMT2 E.J. Carroll, from W Division visited me in sickbay. He was the only sailor from the division to visit me in a week's time. This experience made me realize how important it was to visit people when they are hospitalized. I vowed that I would visit people I knew in the future when they were hospitalized. Finally after a week in sickbay, I was released and given a prescription of vitamins. It was never clearly determined what the problem was, but I think it was a ruptured sinus from the flight back from the U.S., associated with the pain I felt during that flight.

In February I got word that my sister Linda had been married. She had married Walt Wilson, a guy who had gone to the same high school in Strathmore that I had attended. They were living in Fresno, California, while Walt attended college.

We pulled off the line, and went to Sasebo, Japan, arriving there 21 February. The middle of February I'd once again taken the first class exam; I'd not learn the results until May. I was anxious to leave the ship for my new duty station. I was not happy about my last visit home; it seemed to have been one continuous argument between Allison and her mother, Allison and me, and Allison's mother and father. I was uncertain about the future of our marriage. Allison was not inclined to change. She had not saved any of the money I had asked her to, and she seemed to thrive on arguments and strife.

Sasebo, Japan, was the last liberty port I was to enjoy with my shipmates. I was anxious to leave the ship, but not anxious to leave the friends I had made. The entanglement in the war seemed to be never-ending. It was backbreaking work. We complained amongst ourselves, but never to outsiders. A constant question and topic of discussion was what did our countrymen think about our efforts in the war? We hoped we were supported, and thought of as defenders of freedom, but the newspapers read differently. A common saying was, "We trained for war, and Vietnam is the only war we have." As is most common, men engaged in war did not fight with conscious ideas of patriotism, or glory, but fought consciously to help and protect friends. We were a group that looked out for each other, against the communist Viet Cong, and even against our own bosses, as was the case with "Fire and Lightning." We'd gone together "to the brink," during the Gulf of Tonkin, and at times on the line, seen death first hand. We'd experienced the boredom, and infrequent terror of warfare. We'd worked hard, and played hard together.

On 18 March, 1966, I wrote to my parents of working twelve hours a day, and sometimes more, in a magazine during ammunition on-load. I and two other sailors brought aboard, and stored fifty tons of 500-pound bombs. "500 pounders" were the most commonly dropped Navy bombs. Some of the bombs we were handling and dropping were very old. They had been manufactured during and before World War II, thirty or more years previously! Years later I read of how short the U.S. supplies of conventional ordnance were during this time, and there was real concern that our stockpiles would run out. An intense bomb manufacturing effort was instituted to build our national supplies up. When *Ticonderoga* returned to the states after this cruise, sixteen planes, and five pilots had been lost in combat.

My last evaluations on the *Ticonderoga* read: "Little is a mature, motivated Petty officer. With his technical competence and demonstrated practical abilities, he is an effective GMT. Accepting orders and commands cheerfully, tasks assumed by Little are completed with thoroughness. Wearing the uniform with great personal pride and with a cheerful disposition, he promotes good morale while maintaining effective supervision."

I was to leave the ship on 27 March. After a checkout process, I bid everyone farewell. I was flown off the ship, my last experience on *Ticonderoga* was a jolt and I saw a blur of gray as the plane was catapulted off. As I began the long trip across the Pacific, leaving the war zone was a great relief, yet mixed with these feelings of relief was the nagging feelings of missing out on the action! Also I had feelings of concern for my friends who I was leaving behind, but I was looking forward to shore duty.

On 1 September, 1973, the *Ticonderoga*[27] was decommissioned after a board of inspection and survey found her to be unfit for further naval service. Her name was struck from the Navy list on 16 November, 1973. The ship was disposed of, sold by Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) for scrapping 1 September 1975. It wasn't the glorious end I would have wished for her!

"No one knew what our job was on the ship. Navy Nuclear Weaponsmen were shrouded in secrecy, and entrusted with the most powerful deadly weapons on earth. Our families and countrymen's lives depended on how diligently we performed our duties." -Jim Little

Brotherhood of Doom: Memoirs of a Navy Nuclear Weaponsman

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